



Ministry of Preschool
and School Education
Republic of Uzbekistan



UZBEKISTAN PARTNERSHIP COMPACT FOR EDUCATION REFORM

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ECD	Early childhood development
ECE	Early childhood education
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standards
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information Communications Technology
ISDB	Islamic Development Bank
LEG	Local Education Group
LMS	Learning Management System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoPSE	Ministry of Preschool and School Education
MoVs	Means of Verifications
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PFM	Public Financial Management
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
QAR	Quality Assurance Requirements
REC	Republican Centre for Education
SCG	System Capacity Grant
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SBC	Social and Behaviour Change
SitAn	Situation Analysis
STG	System Transformation Grant
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study
TLM	Teaching-Learning Materials
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank

1. INTRODUCING THE PRIORITY REFORM

The following National Partnership Compact (Compact) aims to ensure the prioritization and operationalisation of education reform interventions in the Republic of Uzbekistan during the mid-term period of 2023-2026, in order to ensure equitable access to transformative quality education.

Acknowledging the pathbreaking transformation being implemented in various sub-sectors of education, which followed the adoption of the new laws on preschool and general secondary education, the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan together with Development Partners recognize the momentum and opportunity to strengthen coordination and alignment of education reforms, while ensuring the prioritization of education financing to ensure human capital and sustainable development in line with the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan.

The reforms addressed by the Compact take into account the high-capital investment needed to reap the demographic dividend in light of the needed expansion of preschool and school infrastructure to accommodate additional 620,000 preschool children and over 1.2 million school places needed in public education by 2026. Along with the infrastructural requirements, the Compact recognizes the need to continuously invest in quality, inclusive and technology-enabled education with a focus on teacher professional development and learning assessment. All these reform areas are instrumental for ensuring that all children and youth have access to quality and meaningful learning opportunities.

The development of a Compact for the education sector represents an innovative planning process guided by extensive consultation and co-creation with all relevant stakeholders within the framework of the Local Education Group. The Compact aligns to and operationalises the commitments of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Global Transforming Education Summit of the 77th UN General Assembly. As highlighted in the Summit, *'while there is an urgent need to reignite political and financial commitment to education as a global public good and accelerate progress towards realizing Sustainable Development Goal 4, there is an opportunity for collective reflection and mobilization for education systems to support the societal transformation underpinning this process.'* As such, the strategic priorities defined in the Compact recognize the urgent need to mitigate any learning loss, focusing on foundational skills, while further ensuring that effective school-based mechanisms are in place to reimagine education systems for the world of today and tomorrow; and to accelerate national efforts to achieve SDG4.

The interventions outlined in the Compact reflect a package of policy shifts in education that will require mobilization of Government, Development Partners, teachers, parents, students, and school communities, around the following principles:

First, the Compact promotes and establishes a national dialogue addressing the challenges facing the education systems and catalysing resources and political will to restructure, reform and reinvest in quality learning for all. It builds on the participation of representatives from all relevant national education institutions together with representatives from Development Partners. It defines a joint vision with clear understanding of gaps and opportunities for investment in the education sector reform, while supporting synergy among new projects, clarity of roles, and increased effectiveness and efficiency in the sector.

Second, the Compact adopts a holistic approach that recognizes the role of education in laying the foundation for any socio-economic development in the country, taking into account that learning outcomes are also connected to child wellbeing through socio-emotional learning and healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in the scope of proposed interventions, which takes into consideration the multidimensionality and intersectionality of education, which affects not only the individual development and wellbeing, but also social cohesion, and sustainable economic growth.

Third, the Compact recognizes the lifelong learning cycle that is needed for the acquisition of complex competencies. The achievement of higher learning outcomes can only be attained if learners are supported from early childhood, with a specific set of skills and education that allow them to develop their full potential with a focus on preschool education, to be personally empowered, and to prepare them as active and responsible citizens.

Fourth, the Compact builds on best practices at global, regional and national level, highlighting school/community-level actions that are expected to transform practices and promote strategic shifts in teaching and learning. Teachers are placed at the centre of the education reform agenda, and the Compact fully recognizes the role to be played by teachers and the importance of equipping and supporting them with the capacity and tools required for quality education.

Fifth, the Compact aims at establishing a transparent, accountable, responsible, corruption-free and merit-based education system, recognizing the need of ensuring an equity focus that caters to the needs of all children in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It promotes a new ethics in education based on the recognition and promotion of the rights of the child, relevance of child rights education and students' active participation.

In line with above mentioned principles, the Compact will enable strengthened coordination and the scale up of cost-effective solutions in the field of education, while avoiding the risk of duplications and inefficient use of resources. As such the Compact is an evidence-based policy roadmap endorsed by the Government and signed by Development Partners, further articulating the priorities for investment in the education sector.

2. A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENT

The identification of Compact priority interventions is based on an evidence-based analysis of challenges, opportunities and existing interventions across all sub-sectors of preschool and school education. The consolidated review of each sub-sector is presented in the Annex 1 and substantiates the strategy and how it will deliver maximum impact for the people of Uzbekistan. It further seeks to explain how the different 'windows' of opportunity will be leveraged to deliver maximum impact, as such it constitutes a reference for increasing synergy among existing and new projects and clarifying sub-sector interventions.

The identification of priorities included the analysis of the enabling factors as well as identification of existing bottlenecks for which additional efforts, including capacity building, mechanisms and tools should be put in place to make them as effective as possible. In light of this review, the focus on quality of learning has been defined as a main priority for the Republic of Uzbekistan, substantiated by existing national strategy, sector plan and dialogue. The focus on quality education is coupled with the need to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the national preschool and school education systems with sustained investment and policy reform.

Aligning to defined priorities, the Compact defines a comprehensive package of interventions required towards system-wide reform, transitioning from policy development to actual implementation and service delivery. These interventions have been defined building on the **Conceptual Framework** highlighted in Figure 1, which has guided the sector-wide and systemic approach, by highlighting the various components of the education sector, further recognizing the inter-dependence the following areas:

- Equitable and Quality Service Delivery;
- National Assessment System; and
- Planning, Budgeting, and Monitoring;

The joint review of all the components of the defined Conceptual Framework has been instrumental in the definition of priority reform areas that are expected to address system inefficiencies, obstacles or structural weaknesses.

Along with a sector-wide approach, the Compact puts forwards **a new governance arrangement for the education sector** with the assumption that quality of education is directly dependent on how the education system as a whole is governed. Within the framework of the Compact, governance refers broadly to the principles that underpin the goals, responsibilities, resources and accountability structures that shape the education sector.

The **Governance Model** proposed in the Compact is inspired by the Finnish education system, which has long been an international benchmark due to its high-quality and cost-efficiency (Figure 2). In particular, it draws upon the governance principles that will contribute to the development of educational goals; how these goals are implemented in practice through an experimentalist approach; the centrality of early detection of children risking to fall behind; and the iterative nature of education policy, which allows learnings and new evidence to be integrated to education governance.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Compact

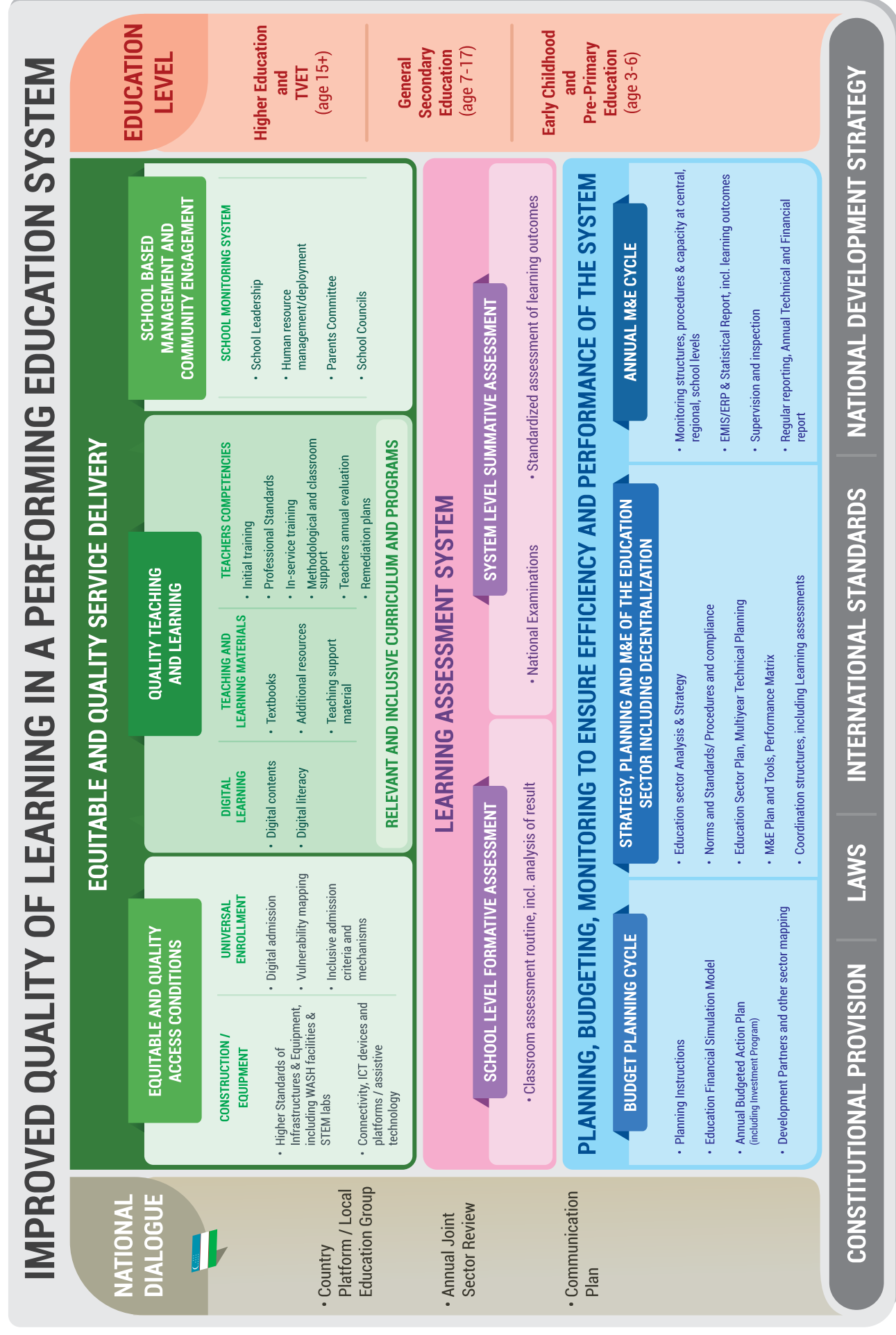
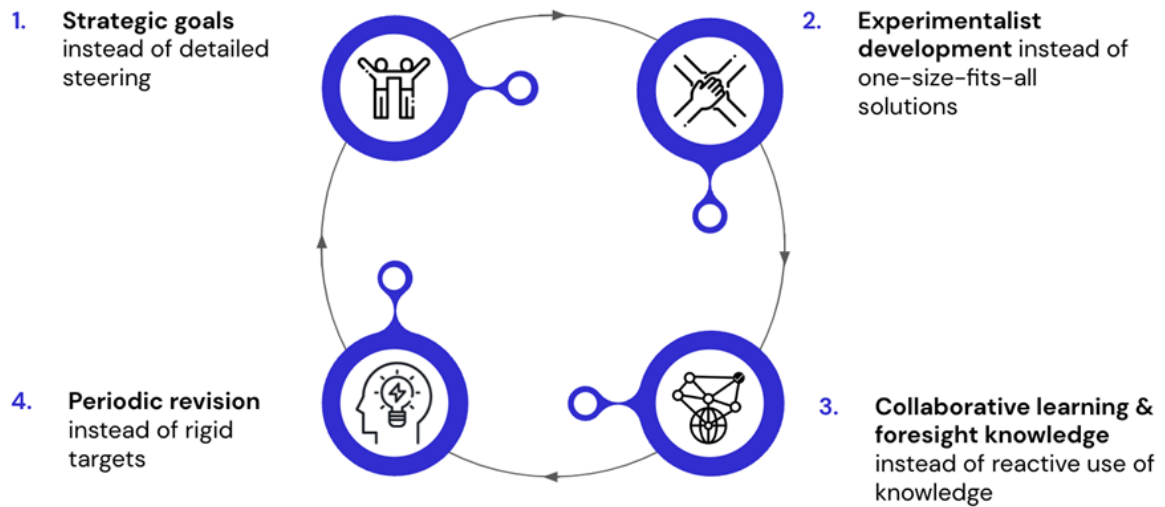


Figure 2: The governance principles of the Finnish education system



The model is built around the experimentalist governance approach, which is premised on the assumption that in a world characterised by uncertainty and complexity, it is impossible to design a well-functioning system top-down. Instead, governance should be developed iteratively based on learnings harnessed from local-level and school experimentation. Bringing these principles into practice requires adherence to key steps as follows:

First, **inclusion**. It is vital to consider the epistemic resources of teachers, teacher trainers, schools and potential parents' associations when identifying desirable results that planning, budgeting and financial management strives to foster. The value of inclusive strategic planning is twofold. First, it ensures that these stakeholders' local-level knowledge and first-hand experiences are considered in the evidence base that the system is built upon. Considering these actors' learnings is vital for ensuring that a system works for those responsible for implementing it. Inclusive planning fosters reciprocity, understanding and commitment at the local level. Thus, it heightens the chances of more effective implementation, as goals have been co-developed rather than dictated from above.

Second, **experimentation** with new approaches at different levels of government has substantial advantages over rigid policy design. It ensures that learnings from other contexts can be applied sensitively and iterated to work in the contexts in which they are applied. It further lowers the risks, as new practices can be piloted at a small scale and abandoned if proven ineffective. Finally, small-scale interventions to harness evidence before moving to large-scale implementation can grant potentially substantial resource savings.

Third, using **foresight knowledge** can bring significant value and support the success of education reform. By using foresight knowledge in a structured and systematic way the government will be better placed to face shocks by strengthening resilience, be better able to identify pre-emptive measures that will usually bring impact in a longer time horizon; support anticipatory innovation; and finally become a tool for collaboration within the government and beyond it.

3. UZBEKISTAN'S ONGOING TRANSFORMATION OF ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Republic of Uzbekistan has one of the fastest growing preschool and school-age population, which will continue to put pressure on the education infrastructure and will require significant capital investment in the coming years. In the 2022/2023 academic year, the total capacity of schools amounted to 5,2 million places providing education to over 6,3 million students, mostly in double shift schools. The total number of school students aged 7-17 years are expected to reach over 7,6 million by 2026 and further increase to 8,6 million by 2030, with 1.2 million new school seats to be established by 2026 (Ibid). In preschool education, the number of children aged three to six years reached 2,7 million in 2022 and is expected to increase to 3,4 million by 2026 (Ibid). In order to achieve the target of 80% preschool enrolment by 2026, it is therefore necessary to create new places in preschool educational institutions for 620 000 children in all regions of the Republic.

The preschool and school demographic growth along with the capital investment required to sustain access to education can be an opportunity for the socio-economic development of the country, provided that children and youth benefit from quality and meaningful learning experiences and acquire the competencies needed for their future life and work in a competitive digital knowledge-based economy.

Recognizing this challenge, the Government of Uzbekistan has been implementing pathbreaking reforms in various sub-sectors of education, which resulted in the adoption of the new laws on Preschool Education (2019) and Education (2020), introducing new decrees for implementing inclusive and quality education, along with an Education Sector Plan (ESP), which has been developed for the period 2019-2023.

In 2019, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted (passed by the Legislative Chamber on October 22, 2019, and approved by the Senate on December 14, 2019) the 'Law on Preschool Education and Upbringing' (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019), by which the state guarantees the right of every child to receive one year of compulsory school readiness preparation in state-funded preschool / early-childhood education institutions one year before he or she enters school.

In order to ensure the implementation of this law, and with a view to ensuring the high-quality preparation of children for primary education, a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers was adopted in 2020: 'On measures for the further development of the system of mandatory one-year preparation of children for primary education', to ensure a clear structure was established for full-scale preparation of children for schooling (Kun.Uz, 2020), i.e. to facilitate 'school-readiness' and phase transition from early-childhood to primary education.

Likewise, in September 2020, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted (passed by the Legislative Chamber on May 19, 2020, and approved by the Senate on August 7, 2020) the 'Law on Education' which enshrines the right to eleven years of education, and one year of school readiness preparation, on a free and compulsory basis for all children in Uzbekistan. This followed the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated April 29, 2019 No. UP-5712 'On approval of the Concept of development of the system of public education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030' which defined targets across all education sub-sectors (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019), including Early Childhood Education, and General Secondary Education.

These reforms have been captured in the Action Strategy for 2017-2021 in Uzbekistan which set several goals and targets to improve the country's education system. Some of the achievements mentioned in the Strategy include:

- **Increasing access to education:** Uzbekistan has made significant progress in increasing access to education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government has implemented various measures, such as providing free textbooks and school uniforms, building new schools in rural areas, and increasing the number of scholarships.
- **Improving the quality of education:** The Strategy emphasized the need to improve the quality of education by introducing modern teaching methods, updating curricula, and providing training for teachers. The government has also launched initiatives to encourage students to pursue careers in science and technology-related fields.
- **Enhancing vocational education and training:** Uzbekistan has developed a comprehensive strategy to enhance vocational education and training, which includes the establishment of new vocational training centres and the modernization of existing ones. The government has also collaborated with the private sector to provide vocational training that meets the needs of the labour market.
- **Increasing international cooperation:** The Strategy aimed to increase Uzbekistan's participation in international education programs and initiatives, such as the Erasmus+ program, to promote academic exchange and cooperation with other countries.

Overall, the Action Strategy for 2017-2021 in Uzbekistan highlights the government's commitment to improving the education system in the country and achieving positive outcomes. However, it is important to note that achieving these goals may require sustained efforts over the long term, beyond the timeframe of the Strategy.

These reforms have also been captured in the latest five-year Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026, which consists of seven priority directions and one hundred goals Uzbekistan aim to achieve within five years across all sectors (Kuchkarov, 2022). Following the Development Strategy, a National Program for the Development of Public Education for 2022-2026 was also approved on 11 May 2022 (UzA, 2022), identifying 6 key priority areas as follows: improving the quality of education based on advanced foreign experience, increasing the authority of the teaching profession, developing inclusive education, vocational guidance for students, improving infrastructure, and digitalization of the education sphere.

These numerous reforms have created a momentum for greater alignment and prioritization, calling for increased priority focus and coordination between Government and Development Partners. The theory of change defined in the Compact takes stock of the achievements of each initiative, while addressing the gaps and targets not yet reached in the operationalisation of current reform efforts.

Main priorities defined in the ESP for the period 2019-2023 were also reviewed as they were deemed relevant to the reform of national assessment systems, results-based monitoring, and the upgrading of standards in WASH, ICT facilities and STEAM laboratories, ensuring

alignment to the new competency-based curricula, and teaching and learning materials (TLMs). It was noted that most of the targets set within the ESP could not be achieved as a result of institutional bottlenecks, including duplication of roles across institutions, and lack of system-wide ownership of proposed reform areas. In this regard, the Compact also takes stock of lessons learned from existing policies, and recognizes the opportunities provided by the establishment of a new Ministry of Preschool and School Education, along with the role of reforming governance and enabling factors, which were not addressed by the previous ESP.

4. RATIONALE FOR THE PRIORITY REFORM

The Situation Analysis undertaken in the first stages of the Compact development process identified a number of challenges across the education sector in Uzbekistan, which represent the rationale for the priority reform. These are presented below:

INFRASTRUCTURE, CONSTRUCTION, AND EQUIPMENT

The Republic of Uzbekistan projects significant increases in learner numbers, arising from demographic shifts, with a significant shortage in preschool and school places projected as a result. To reach 80% enrolment for children aged 3 to 6 years, an additional 620,000 preschool places would be required, while in 2022/2023, the number of enrolled secondary students exceed capacity by 1,135,962 places (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019).

Addressing this shortage would require significant additional preschool and school infrastructure. Despite this, no clear coordination exists at the national level between different responsible ministries in charge of construction (Construction, Health, Education), and a general plan on construction needs to be developed in direct link with the Construction Strategy to be reviewed. This coordination between national, regional, and local level is all the more necessary as significant differences are observed in terms of purchase/procurement/price of meter square between the private and public sectors. This applies to both infrastructure in early childhood education (ECE) settings, and the construction and renovation of schools.

With regard to ECE infrastructure development specifically, standardized designs for early childhood / preschool facilities were developed between 2018-2019, specifying requirements for facilities catering to 90, 120, and 150 learners respectively, to ensure clear guidance is provided to address the specific needs of the users of facilities catering to early childhood learners. The Government of Uzbekistan now plans to undertake a review of these standardized designs, drawing on the guidance and advice of international experts on Early Childhood Education and Infrastructure Development, with a view to ensuring they align with, or exceed, standards established in international good practice.

Even though positive changes have been observed, the quality of construction is still low, especially when it comes to equitable access for children with disabilities, and the regulation of the whole construction process from tender to infrastructure quality assurance review (QAR) and delivery is weak. In preschools / ECE settings, despite efforts made in recent years to facilitate access for all, many ECE facilities still require significant renovation and/or to be equipped with adequate and safe water supply, WASH facilities, and electricity, particularly in remote areas.

Furthermore, both ECE settings and schools are highly dependent on local authorities which receive the funding for constructions, which may explain the difficulty to harmonize construction/equipment practices at national level, since early childhood leaders and school principals may be reluctant to report or raise concerns over bad practices or specific gaps to

the Ministry in order to avoid negatively impacting their relationship with local-level decision makers. At last, the introduction of schools into cadastral plans as well as construction prioritization are done manually, which takes time and does not rely on specific evidence-based criteria. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop electronic tools for construction planning at national, regional, and district levels. It is anticipated that investments in school infrastructure will draw upon up-to-date demographic, data, and population projections, as appropriate.

In terms of equipment and play/learning materials, both ECE settings and schools experience a number of challenges, including connectivity issues, electricity cuts, lack of devices, unfitted sport areas, a lack of adequate or safe play facilities and/or learning resources, ill-equipped STEAM labs, and the use of virtual STEAM labs, which create inequity in terms of access across the country.

A lack of provision of sanitary facilities, particularly in remote, rural ECE settings and schools, impacts particularly negatively on girls. Concerns were raised over a lack of adequate sanitary facilities and access to menstrual hygiene products at schools potentially leading to increased absenteeism among girls, placing them at higher risk of drop-out. Infrastructure challenges for services in all education subsectors include lack of functioning heating and lighting, water and sewage services and appropriate sanitation facilities.

Government records of provision at ECE facilities report that out of 6,549 state preschools, only 77% (5,045) have access to a centralized source of drinking water, while 11% (746) use alternative sources, including artesian water, while children from 12% (764) of state preschools reportedly bring water from special facilities. Likewise, records show that at early childhood facilities, 1,322 toilet facilities are located outside the main preschool building, while only 24% of state preschools are connected to a central sewage system.

Easy access to clean drinking water (through pipe) is available only at 47% of the general secondary schools. More than 81% of the general secondary schools reported having only one set of functional toilets (2-3 outlets on an average) (UNICEF Uzbekistan, 2020). Children with disabilities continue to face physical barriers and inaccessible infrastructure within preschools and schools. There is no verifiable information about the physical accessibility of both general and special educational institutions for children with disabilities.

CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES / TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While Uzbekistan has achieved almost universal school enrolment and significant growth in coverage at preschool level, ensuring quality learning has emerged as a key priority. The results of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), conducted in March 2022 (USAID, 2022; US Embassy Uzbekistan, 2022), confirmed

the findings of the UNICEF-MoPE learning assessments conducted in 2019 (UNICEF & MOPE, 2019), showing learners underperforming in grade level comprehension skills in language, and in applying numeracy skills to more complex and conceptual problems.

In this context it is particularly important that past interventions, and recent innovations, including the introduction of compulsory entitlement to one year of school readiness preparation, continue to be built upon, further strengthening both access and quality across both the early childhood education and school sub-sectors, as well as ensuring effective phase transition between the two.

In this context, in 2019, Uzbekistan launched a curriculum reform, shifting toward a competency-based approach, with a shift in focus from what is taught, and rote memorisation, to a focus on what pupils learn, and the formation of competencies and 21st century skills.

Within the context of early childhood education, Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) were revised in 2018, emphasising the role of preschool educational provision in supporting holistic child development. Drawing on the ELDS, a National Preschool Curriculum has been developed, and introduced on a nationwide basis.

In addition, a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and new curriculum for primary school were developed. However, implementation of the new curriculum remains ongoing. Learning and teaching materials development has been characterized by a fragmented approach, lacking coherence and coordination. This has led to widespread duplication of effort, and associated waste, as well as a disconnect between various (often donor-funded) reforms. Likewise, historically there have been multiple cases of changing course of reforms, disbanding the teams responsible for curriculum reform, and appointing new ones – this impacts negatively on motivation of key personnel.

Other issues identified in the course of the development of the Compact include challenges with the coordination of the curricula of the In-Service Training Institute and the Pedagogical University (pertaining to both early childhood / preschool, and school educator training) and a lack of alignment between ELDS and preschool and school curricula, as well as wider TLM and play-based learning reform. Stability, quality, and coherence are key to ensuring that wider reforms are successful, as well as alignment to parallel initiatives in teacher/educator education, curriculum reform, pedagogy, and assessment – this applies across all sub-sectors, and particularly to the transition from ECE to schooling.

There is also a lack of flexibility in the system of educator and teacher training with no consistent credit system in place. A system of regional and district in-service training for preschool teachers is needed to ensure consistent upskilling, with a particular focus on appropriate, play-based, learning approaches. MOPSE's analysis of preschool managers' capacity also indicates that the managers require additional capacity-building support to strengthen preschool governance and management in line with international good practice. Systems of supportive mentorship and on-the-job capacity-building for both preschool and schoolteachers are de-facto absent also. As the country works to enrol more than one million additional 3-6 years old children in the next decade, it will need to prepare more than 50,000 – 75,000 preschool teaching staff for deployment in the education system (State Statistical

Committee, 2023). Preparing future preschool teachers as per the latest curriculum and ELDS, using child-centred pedagogy, will require revisiting and revising the pre-service training curriculum, and associated approaches to pedagogy.

Furthermore, the historical context in which teachers mostly relied on textbook-driven instruction has undermined attempted reforms of pedagogic practice. An integrated approach by which curriculum, assessment and TLM promote reflective teaching practice in preschool and school settings is necessary if future reforms are to succeed. There is also a clear need for guidance on core aspects of learning and teaching, including planning, lesson delivery, and evidence-based approaches to classroom teaching (including the appropriate use of technology), as well as a need for extensive guidance on assessment practices.

LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

A lack of an established tradition of pedagogy by which learning and teaching is informed by formative assessment has led to a significant capacity gap, impeding wider pedagogical reforms, and impacting on all levels of learning and teaching throughout Uzbekistan. This is compounded by the lack of vision and absence of policy as well as legislative mechanisms to ensure implementation, as well as regional socio-cultural expectations regarding the use of metrics and/or criteria in classroom settings. Unless these issues are mitigated, wider reforms in related areas, such as learning and teaching materials, teacher education, and curriculum, are unlikely to succeed. Current capacity gaps suggest that the use of benchmarks will be necessary as an interim measure, as capacity is developed on an ongoing basis.

Additionally, an historic lack of appropriate early childhood assessment practices has resulted in a context in which learning in such settings is not sufficiently informed by evidence from assessment. In preschool specifically, observation skills to ensure formative assessment of children engaged in everyday activities and play within preschool contexts forms part of the framework setting out developmental milestones in ELDS, as embedded in the National Preschool Curriculum. As such, new guidelines will establish consistent practices for early childhood practitioners, ensuring that development delays are proactively addressed through child-centred, and play-based, approaches.

Within this context, the recently introduced MELQO tool piloting will continue, serving as a potential avenue for improving assessment practices if findings from piloting support this.

Furthermore, national examinations have historically been undermined by a lack of consistent administration, or marking (as well as related criteria), as well as a lack of anonymity and transparency of process. Concerns have also been raised over potential abuse of the process, and subsequent corruption and compliance risks. The current model undermines confidence in qualifications, leading to duplication of effort (i.e. separate entrance examinations for universities domestically), and a lack of credibility in relation to school leaving qualifications (i.e. international universities will not recognise them for entry purposes). Further to this, it is clear that current national examinations do not adequately prepare most school leavers for the workplace or further study.

Finally, an historic lack of external assessment has resulted in inconsistency in assessment practices, rendering assessment data unreliable for comparative purposes, or for planning and executing wider interventions within the education sector.

GOVERNANCE, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Historic interventions in the education sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan have been undermined by a lack of effective coordination, in addition to challenges with the availability of robust evidence to inform decision-making. This has been exacerbated by a 'reactive' rather than 'proactive' approach to budgeting, with the recurring budget often insufficient to address need, particularly in areas such as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). This has also impacted on governance at a school level, undermining learning outcomes across the country.

The actual annual budget process is relying on instructions to the different sub-sectors, which are not linked to sector technical planning, but on the expression of local and regional needs not necessarily linked to a results-based analysis of the performance of the system from one year to another. Moreover, no developing partners mapping exists yet, and external funding is still provided through projects and programmes not directly funded in the national budget, but monitored independently.

Even though a medium-term expenditure framework has been introduced in the preparation of the budget, this tool is still not used as a reference document to develop the technical education system planning in parallel. Difficulties in ensuring the coherence of state policy and budget financing are depending not only on the frequent shifts in policy focus, but also on numerous and conflicting new priorities without consideration of budget, without clear aims, objectives, and target indicators.

Budgeting at preschool and school levels is poorly coordinated at all levels, and district khokims often reallocate funds to expenditures that bring little benefit to the quality of education. The low capacity of the staff in charge of education planning and monitoring explains inefficient practices, especially at the district/grassroots level.

The national budget is not yet flexible enough to be built based on evidence, and the main activities funded through the regular budget are infrastructures, textbooks, sport, materials, musical development, payrolls, and maintenance. Corruption is also still reportedly prevalent across the system.

The system lacks a sectoral forecasting methodology which appeals for sufficient time allocated for the preparation of high-quality multi-year budgeted action planning. Moreover, key research/analysis are lacking to formulate specific policies and activities, and the level of digitalization of budget planning is still insufficient to facilitate the merger of different databases from different ministries (i.e., data from population census, school data, and national

budget database). As a result, there appears to be a weak alignment of sectoral strategies with the national strategy, and confusion between the terms "development program" and "budget program".

No clear mechanism and methodology exist for monitoring and evaluating the strategy. The actual sector development concept presents various indicators of different levels which make an efficient monitoring of the performance of the system impossible, compounded by the questionable reliability of the baseline level of some indicators, and the lack of regular evaluation of certain measures. Again, the process of budget execution is not fully digitalized, which can facilitate many violations at all levels.

Key strategic documents relating to both early childhood and school-level education include the 'Concept of development of the system of preschool education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030', and the 'Concept of development of the system of public education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030,'

The annual report on implementation of the 'Concept of development of the system of preschool education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030' is produced on a regular basis, but not readily available in the public domain.

Further to this, the ministry has a responsibility to report on implementation of the legislative act through the online 'ijro.uz' system. In 2021 a new system for monitoring the implementation of legislation and instructions was introduced, which enables the 'Counting Chamber' to verify the completeness and reliability of the information entered into the 'ijro.gov.uz' system. This system was introduced under the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On additional measures to strengthen the personal responsibility of heads of state administration bodies and local executive power bodies for the effective organization of implementation of acts of legislation', effective from 10.02.2021, № DP-6166.

Neither the monitoring of the Concept 2030, nor the monitoring of the ESP 2019/2023 have been done properly, due to a lack of key performance indicators to be monitored as a priority, a lack of funding for specific M&E related tasks, a lack of clear M&E mechanisms and plans to know exactly who is doing what, when, and with which technical means and tools, and a lack of capacity of experts in the Ministries to produce quality analysis and performance reports able to inform the decision makers.

At last, no external risk analysis of the institution has been produced so far, which would inform on the gaps and ways of improvement of internal mechanisms in place.

MOPSE is lacking a transversal specific monitoring unit, capable not only to link students' assessment results for a results-based monitoring of the national reforms and strategy, but also to improve the coordination between ministries and different national and international agencies and other partners, through the local education group. Moreover, not enough time is dedicated to the development of quality strategic technical and financial monitoring tools. The Agency for Strategic Reforms under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan is currently working on the development of such tools.

There is a need for agreement on what type of data to be collected to identify gaps and monitor performance centrally. Currently there remain a multiplicity of data sources (AVLONIY MTI, 2023; MyGov, 2023; President.Uz, 2023; Agency of Statistics, n.d.) not connected with each other and not comprehensively informing system improvement – these require consolidation in a unified information management system. There is also a lack of M&E specialists able to analyse and report this data. While systems have been established at preschool and school level, these require substantive strengthening, and ongoing investment and capacity building if they are to be effective. Likewise, there is a pronounced lack of integration between preschool and school level data management, which require alignment to ensure effective phase-transition.

There is a misalignment between teacher evaluation and teacher training, as teachers are evaluated on criteria not linked to the quality of their performance in the classroom. The self-evaluation system of teachers and non-alignment of its items with international standards, as well as the lack of a transparent national assessment strategy and system have also been raised as weaknesses of the M&E system.

There is also a lack of coordination between sectors and agencies, as well as a common awareness that horizontal dialogue is a big challenge and thus an area requiring improvement in order to open sector review to all groups of actors, including communities and parents, instead of organizing meetings on an ad-hoc basis.

GENDER, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND EQUITY FOCUS

Official statistical data on ECE participation reports that preschool enrolment rates (3-6 years old) have been continuously increasing, with participation rates of 6-year-olds in one year of 'pre-primary' school readiness education reaching 83.7% in September 2022. However, MICS data released in 2022 suggests inequitable attendance in ECE relating to a range of factors. These include persistent gender gaps, with a c.10% difference between boys and girls (3-4 years old), and with 74% of boys and 69% of girls aged one year younger than the official primary school entry age at the end of the calendar year participating in organized learning.

While Uzbekistan has achieved almost universal coverage in relation to school education, gender disparities along with geographical inequities remain in relation to completion of a full cycle of education, with 94.3% of boys completing upper secondary education compared to 93.3% of girls. There is also a two percent difference in school attendance rates for upper secondary education - 95% for girls versus 93% for boys.

Despite improved access to education, discrepancies are observed in the skills of girls and boys. For example, a UNICEF (2020) study shows huge disparities in young people's (10-29 years) digital skills across location, gender, and economic status of households. For example, the share of computer literate girls in the poorest quintile is more than twice as low as that of boys in the same category (14.7% compared to 34.6%). Girls continue to be underrepresented in

STEAM and ICT fields due to harmful norms and gendered expectations of girls as caregivers, and gender stereotypes are perpetuated through generations.

Public opinion is also still dominated by the medical model of disability. A UN Situation Analysis (2019) found that almost 70% of respondents believed that specialized schools are the best way to educate children with disabilities, and specialized schools are still positioned as the first-choice education for children with disabilities. It is also estimated that most out-of-school children are children with disabilities. According to the UN Situation Analysis on Children and Adults with Disabilities (ibid.), only 34.9% of children with disabilities registered to receive disability benefits attended a preschool educational institution, while this figure among children without disabilities reached 53.2%. Difference in accessing preschools is especially pronounced for girls with disabilities – 25.1% compared to 45.6%. While there is a difference of 22% between the access of students with and students without disabilities to 1-9 grades in schools, that difference is more than twice as large (46%) for access to upper-secondary education.

Numerous studies in the field of neurophysiology, neuropsychology and developmental psychology throughout the last century highlight the importance of early intervention services for children with disabilities to achieve the highest possible level of development for each individual learner. Despite this, there is currently no systematic early detection and intervention system for identifying and supporting children with special needs in the Republic of Uzbekistan. A UN Situation Analysis (2019) reported that families are not aware of the importance of early intervention and learning for the full development of children with disabilities, and do not request early intervention services. Most disabilities, including learning disabilities, are detected at early school age, when it is too late to prevent secondary disabilities, and ensure school-readiness. This may lead to placement of many children with disabilities into institutions, and their educational segregation in specialized schools, undermining commitments to inclusive education. This highlights the importance of strengthened support for early detection, and associated upskilling of practitioners to facilitate this, within Early Childhood Education settings.

Current policy on preschool education has focused on a 'medical' approach, and many children are not admitted either to regular or special preschools due to their medical diagnosis.

Teachers in Uzbekistan currently lack the knowledge and skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, or to ensure learning and teaching are planned and delivered to cater to distinct needs.

There is no system in place to monitor vulnerabilities and ensure access to education for all children with disabilities.

There is no system in place for implementing bridging and catch-up education programmes for children who missed school and/or do not speak school language, or for students with a low level of proficiency in academic subjects. There is little or no use of formative assessment to support different learning needs. No pre-service and in-service teacher training programme exists on adaptive teaching and addressing learning losses, remedial and catch-up programmes. Though Uzbekistan is a multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multicultural country, there

is no pre-service and in-service teachers' training on multilingual education and addressing the needs of students who speak a different language at home.

There are also no mechanisms to provide special education services for children with disabilities in regular preschools and schools, and no regulations and mechanisms in place for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities ensuring their right to progress within the general education curriculum with ambitious and challenging objectives in age-appropriate inclusive settings with individualized support and services.

5. THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change which underpins the priority reform sets out the **causal chain**, contextualising the reform in relation to key challenges and enablers which have been identified in the course of developing the compact.

The following provides an overview of the Theory of Change, its underlying causal logic, and the core components therein, as well as the associated structure.

IMPACT AND OUTCOME OF THE REFORM

The expected **Impact** of the reform is: '*Equitable access to transformative quality education for all*'.

This is to be achieved throughout the achievement of the expected **Outcome**, i.e. that: '*By 2026, all girls and boys benefit from improved competency-based quality of learning in a well performing, accountable, and inclusive education system*'.

This is to be achieved through a set of interventions under five distinct and thematically linked **Outputs**, comprising:

Output 1	Output 2	Output 3	Output 4	Output 5
Increased number of preschool and school facilities, equipped with safe, gender-sensitive and disabled-accessible WASH facilities, digital infrastructure, kitchen/canteens, play grounds, and laboratory equipment, constructed while promoting green sustainability and complying with anti-corruption principles	Competency-based, inclusive, gender-transformative curriculum, and teaching and learning materials (TLM) underpinned by ELDS and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) delivered to preschools and schools	Improved system of transparent, corruption-free and merit-based / competency-based recruitment, retention, and professional development of preschool educators / teachers and early childhood setting / school leaders	Learning assessment system underpinned by comprehensive policy and legislative framework, with consistent approaches to school and system level assessment and benchmarking for quality assurance	Established system of aligned results-based strategic planning for improved learning outcomes and budgeting, supported by strengthened information data collection and management systems, and quality assurance systems

Spanning across all **Output** areas are a set of overarching **Crosscutting Themes**, which are pertinent to, and serve as a lens to focus, all interventions. These comprise:

Gender	Ethics, Integrity, and Anti-corruption	Human Rights Inclusion and Equity Focus
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The Crosscutting Theme of **Gender** applies to all pertinent areas of intervention, from infrastructure and procurement, where provision of WASH facilities for girls is necessary, to curriculum content development, and teacher training, ensuring that both boys and girls are provided with access to quality education.

Likewise, **Ethics, Integrity, and Anti-Corruption** are applied as a cross-cutting theme, seeking to mitigate historic concerns over corruption and related compliance issues leading to waste, undermining public trust, impacting on donor confidence, and potentially raising concerns over the integrity of assessments, the suitability of candidates for roles, and the safety of learners in schools.

Finally, a **Human Rights Inclusion and Equity Focus** adopted throughout will ensure that inclusion, access, and equity are given comprehensive consideration in relation to all areas of intervention, addressing issues such as physical access, and assistive technologies, as well as pedagogic practice, and assessment practices.

These Cross-Cutting Themes are addressed on a Sub-Sector basis, specifically **Early Childhood and Pre-Primary Education** (ages 3-6), and **General Secondary Education** (ages 7-17).

The focus on **Early Childhood Education** serves to ensure that the significance of investment in Early Years provision is recognised and emphasised throughout the Compact. Interventions in this sub-sector provide a particularly strong 'return on investment', while also providing a sound foundation for learners in all other areas of provision. This relates particularly to age appropriate pedagogic and developmental support, including play-based learning approaches. This facilitates effective phase transition, and related school readiness support.

Likewise, the **General Secondary Education** Sub-Sector ensures appropriate focus throughout Primary and Secondary schooling, in line with a wider lifecycle approach.

These reforms are then contextualised in relation to **Enablers**, factors which provide opportunities for interventions to be effective, and in relation to key **Challenges** identified in the course of the Compact's development.

Underpinning the Challenges are conceptual **Pillars** which provide the basis for each area of **Output**.

PILLAR 1: INFRASTRUCTURE, CONSTRUCTION, AND EQUIPMENT

Under this pillar, the reform will aim to improve the regulatory and institutional framework and standards for early childhood settings / preschool and school infrastructure and equipment, reflecting modern standards and sustainable development requirements complying with transparent and competitive procurement; it will also support the renovation of existing preschools and schools and construction of new ones, equipping them with digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and portable solutions, laboratory equipment and school furniture, with a consistent focus on safety, accessibility for children with disabilities and gender-sensitive WASH facilities while also promoting green sustainability, based on updated standards.

PILLAR 2: CURRICULUM AND TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Under this pillar, the reform will focus on the enhancement of quality of early childhood / preschool education through teacher capacity development on improved preschool curriculum, implementation of child-centred practices and pedagogy, and development of TLM with the focus on gender-transformative inclusive approaches; reviewing, validating, and implementing the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS); reviewing and finalising the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), as well as curriculum content, and associated road map for its implementation; and ensuring that all future approaches to the development and procurement of TLM are coherent and underpinned by a long-term strategy making use of private sector engagement and competitive international procurement.

PILLAR 3: TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under this pillar, the reform will support the development of a comprehensive recruitment, retention and teacher training policy; the development of a revised and enhanced curriculum for pre-service and in-service teacher training, ensuring alignment between all training providers, NCF and wider TLM reform and teachers' professional standards; the expansion of regional and district hub teacher training centres for pre-service and in-service teachers' training with focus on ICT, STEAM, climate resilience, and innovations; provision of capacity building for teachers on the improved preschool curriculum «Ilk qadam»; the establishment of systems for supportive supervision, mentoring and on-job support to teachers; improving teachers' knowledge and skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, and to ensure learning and teaching are planned and delivered to cater to distinct needs (while also ensuring the needs of both girls and boys are fully met, and that gendered stereotypes and expectations are addressed); and the development of preschool / school leaders' professional competence standards and formation of 21st century school principal's portrait, as well as development of strategies for practical implementation thereof.

PILLAR 4: LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Under this pillar, the focus will be on reforming assessment by developing legislative framework, developing an action plan and guidelines for operationalization of formative and summative assessments, introducing externally administered and/or marked benchmarks for quality assurance, and deploying national surveys and standardised assessment, to better understand the education system.

PILLAR 5: GOVERNANCE, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT, AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Under this pillar, the reform will focus on strengthening results-based strategic planning aligned with results-based budgeting processes and clear programme and financial indicators; strengthening information data collection and management systems, which will facilitate better decision-making and resource allocation; developing and implementing a comprehensive M&E framework, establishing standardized data collection procedures, and building the capacity of education stakeholders to collect and use data effectively; developing and implementing standards for school and preschool quality, and establishing mechanisms for regular evaluation and monitoring of their performance. The reform will also focus on establishing a complementary system of preschool and school improvement rooted in a model of school-led self-evaluation and school improvement planning based on quality standards; scaling up and establishing enabling environments for public-private partnership for preschools and schools, and alternative models in preschools; establishing systems and mechanisms for identification of children in need and ensuring their access to education; development of conceptual framework, standards/requirements and mechanisms for inclusive preschools and schools; and conducting awareness raising and behaviour change communication activities for parents, communities, and society to change negative (including gendered) social norms and attitudes towards children with disabilities.

Finally, a set of Red Flags are detailed within the Theory of Change highlighting specific barriers affecting children and young people in Uzbekistan, and thereby impacting negatively on outcomes in the education sector.

All these components are reflected visually, for ease of reference, in the Theory of Change:

IMPACT

Equitable access to transformative quality education for all

OUTCOME

By 2026, all girls and boys benefit from improved competency-based quality of learning in a well performing, accountable, and inclusive education system

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

GENDER

ETHICS, INTEGRITY, AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUSION AND EQUITY FOCUS

SUB-SECTOR:

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION
(3-6 years)

SUB-SECTOR:

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION
(7-17 years)

OUTPUT 1

Increased number of pre-school and school facilities, equipped with safe, gender-sensitive and disabled-accessible WASH facilities, digital infrastructure, kitchen/canteens, and laboratory equipment, constructed while promoting green sustainability and complying with anti-corruption principles

OUTPUT 2

Competency-based, inclusive, gender-transformative curriculum, and teaching and learning materials (TLM) underpinned by ELDS and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) delivered to preschools and schools

OUTPUT 3

Improved system of transparent, corruption-free and merit-based / competency-based recruitment, retention and professional development of preschool educator / teachers and early childhood settings / school leaders

OUTPUT 4

Learning assessment system underpinned by comprehensive policy and legislative framework, with consistent approaches to school and system level assessment and benchmarking for quality assurance

OUTPUT 5

Established system of aligned result-based strategic planning for improved learning outcomes and budgeting supported by strengthened information data collection and management systems, and quality assurance systems

INTERVENTIONS

1.1. Improve the regulatory and institutional framework and standards for early childhood settings/ preschool and school infrastructure and equipment, to reflect modern standards and sustainable development requirements complying with transparent and competitive procurement;

1.2. Renovate and construct preschools / schools, equip them with play-based learning resources, digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and portable solutions, laboratory equipment and school furniture, and sport and recreational areas, with a consistent focus on safety, accessibility for children with disabilities and gender-sensitive WASH facilities while also promoting green sustainability, based on updated standards; and

1.3. Procure and transparently distribute individual assistive and accessibility devices for children with disabilities, prioritizing inclusive preschools and schools.

2.1. Enhance preschool quality through ELDS review based on content and age validation; development of TLM; and development and introduction of the program for children under 3 based on ELDS.

2.2. Review and finalise the NCF, including extra-curricular activities, and associated road map for its implementation. Ensure that curriculum and examination content are in line with those in comparable international contexts in relation to age and /or years of education and mainstream transversal competencies, digital learning, and children wellbeing/life skills with effective alignment of TLM, including play-based learning resources, between early childhood education / preschool, school education and labour market demands (including appropriate career guidance content), with a consistent focus on inclusion;

2.3. Foster further learning resource (including play-based learning resources for ECE) development and text

3.1. Develop a comprehensive teachers policy (incorporating a teacher professional development policy, and capacity enhancement plan) addressing all aspect of recruitment, training, retention, and career development, informed by a comprehensive diagnostic review of in- and pre-service training;

3.2. Expand in-service teacher training centres for preschool teachers, and expand regional and district hub schools and further strengthen the "Continuous Professional Education" LMS platform for pre-service and in-service teachers' training with focus on life skills, healthy lifestyles, ICT, STEAM, climate resilience, and innovations, with the training platform facilitating a range of approaches, including blended, on line, face to face, mentorships, and peer support;

3.3. Establish systems for supportive supervision, mentoring and on-job support to preschool and school teachers and school psychologists, including implementation of contemporary approaches to

4.1. Develop legislative framework to facilitate coherent, structured and sustainable reform in assessment including Early Childhood Assessment, unified school exams and entrance to universities exams with corruption risks mitigation measures;

4.2. Develop an action plan and guidelines for the implementation of the legislative framework developed under 4.1, in order to operationalization of formative and summative assessments approaches in line with a new legislation, including roll-out of MELQO should results from pilot prove positive;

4.3. Support for the identification and employment of appropriate use of externally administered and/or marked benchmarks for quality assurance and SitAn purposes, as well as associated capacity building in the use thereof in preschool, and school settings; and

4.4. Deploy national surveys and standardised assessment, to better understand the education system, across all sectors, including Early

5.1 Strengthen system of results-based strategic planning aligned with results-based budgeting processes and clear programme and financial indicators, including effective cross-sectoral collaboration, with Forum engagement at National Level, and collaborative service provision at HUB level;

5.2 Revise system of audit of the implementation of strategic programmes and budget execution to ensure it is transparent, corruption-free and merit-based across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education;

5.3. Strengthen information data collection and management systems to ensure transparency and accessibility of data, facilitating the establishment of effective quality assurance systems, and a complementary system of improvement rooted in a model of preschool, and school-led self-evaluation and school improvement planning based on quality standards to replace historic

	book reform ensuring that all future approaches to the development and procurement of TLM are coherent and underpinned by a long-term strategy making use of private sector engagement and transparent competitive international procurement; and	school management by developing school principals' professional standards and training thereof; 3.4. Enhance the system and capacity for improving preschool education quality in Uzbekistan through increasing the capacity of teachers on the improved preschool curriculum «Ilk qadam» and development of the training module, capacity building by preparing Master Trainers followed by cascade trainings and on-line courses, undertaking implementation research and cost benefit analysis to ensure effectiveness; 3.5. Revise and enhance curriculum content for pre-service and in-service teachers' training (preschool and school), ensuring alignment between all training providers (Regional Teacher Professional Development centres and Universities), NCF and wider TLM reform and teachers' professional standards, including content on child centered practices, pay based practices, and social and emotional learning, as well as engagement with parents and partners, with support from the Early learning playgroup package;	Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education, focused on garnering input from teachers, students, parents, public, with supplementary findings anticipated from PISA, TIMSS, and TALIS and other relevant surveys (anti-corruption, crime prevention, U-report etc).	preschool/school inspection and teacher evaluation practices, with a focus on establishing inclusive preschools and schools promoting children's learning, wellbeing, and safety, with appropriate capacity building to ensure this can be undertaken to a high standard; 5.4. Scale up and establish new systems and mechanisms to facilitate the establishment of effective public-private partnership and alternative models in preschool and school education with proper attention to due diligence checks and anti-corruption compliance procedures; 5.5. Establish systems and mechanisms for identification of children in need and ensuring their access to education, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; 5.6. Develop conceptual framework, standards / requirements and mechanisms for inclusive preschools, and schools; 5.7. Establish model of inclusive preschools, and schools to allow for strengthened
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SUB-SECTOR: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION (3-6 years)

		3.6. Improve teachers' knowledge and skills in universal design for effective and inclusive learning, including the skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, and to ensure learning and teaching is delivered which caters to the distinct needs of all learners; and 3.7. Develop preschool / school leaders' professional competence standards and formation of 21st century school principal's portrait and develop strategies for practical implementation thereof.		understanding of effective practice, linking with employers, and work-based learning providers, as appropriate; and 5.8. Conduct awareness raising and behaviour change communication campaign activities for parents and caregivers, including appropriate engagement with parenting education and parenting modules (including home visiting package in collaboration with other sectors, including Ministry of Health), communities, and society to change social norms, gender-based biases and attitudes towards children with disabilities – in addition to appropriate engagement of youth groups, clubs and other extracurricular providers, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education.
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SUB-SECTOR: GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION (age 7-17)

ENABLERS FOR SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms of coordination between relevant ministries and departments, as well as interaction with civil society and law enforcement agencies in infrastructure construction and equipment, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Political will to shift towards more open and competitive public procurement and disclosure of budgeting data and financial reports; • Improved transparency, public accountability, and responsibility in procurement/construction through incorporating integrity principles and engaging civil society in performance of public oversight of public Early Childhood Settings, PreSchools, schools and universities, public education financing and construction; and • Disclosure of procurement contracts and budgeting data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution of strategic decision-making authority on curriculum reform to ministry level, to ensure clear ownership of curriculum reform moving forward across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Medium-long-term strategy for Early Childhood and School curriculum and TLM reform (including play-based learning recourses) under the devolved ministry authority, to ensure coherence, stability, and consistency of curriculum reform; and • Fostered cooperation between education system and labour market, civil society organizations as providers of learning opportunities, including on extra-curricular activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and protocols to ensure effective governance and oversight of pre-service teacher training, following the recent shift of oversight of the Tashkent State Pedagogic University to MOPSE, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; and • Anti-corruption compliance mechanisms to hiring procedures, complaints handling, and reporting, as well as dismissal. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching vision to reform educational assessment at all levels of education starting from early years and preschools to entrance to university examination; and • Mechanism for use of external benchmarking to ensure consistency, accuracy, and quality of classroom-level assessment in the short-medium-term. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalisation of the process of collecting, accumulating and analysing financial and non-financial indicators that reflect the process of planning and budgeting and budget execution; • Clear mechanism and methodology for auditing of implementation of strategic plans; and • Foster effective partnerships with the private sector to support outcomes in preschools, and schools, as well as an environment in which such partnerships can flourish, with the involvement of both local entrepreneurs, and international investors. |
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CHALLENGES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regulatory and institutional frameworks reflecting modern standards and sustainable development requirements; • No clear coordination exists at national level between different ministries in charge of construction and those responsible for investment and innovations; • Increasing pressure of "crowding in" of additional students in preschools and schools due to demographic situation, and lack of alignment school and preschool infrastructure development with demographic changes in the country; • Preschools and schools struggle with connectivity needs, low play-based learning resources, ICT provision, limited STEAM lab equipment, and a lack of gendered and inclusive WASH facilities; and • Insufficient budget for maintenance and infrastructure, in addition to a lack of systems and tools to ensure good use of resources, including a lack of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of alignment between ELDS standards, preschool and school curriculum and wider TLM reform, undermining phase transition from Early Childhood Settings to Schools, and associated School-readiness; • Lack of alignment with regard to school teachers' expectations and level of curriculum content and examination marking to international standards for age/years of education; • TLM development, including the development of play-based resources, and textbooks, has been characterized by a fragmented approach, lacking coherence and coordination, leading to widespread duplication of effort, and associated waste, as well as a disconnect between various (often donor-funded) reforms; and • New curriculum implementation is impeded by absence of competency-based learning assessment system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is poor coordination between systems of preservice and in-service training and education standards, curriculum and respective pedagogy, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Early Childhood Practitioners, Teachers and psychologists in Uzbekistan currently lack the knowledge and skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, or to ensure learning and teaching is planned and delivered to cater to distinct needs; and • System of on-job methodical support for both preschool and school teachers is de-facto absent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of an established tradition of pedagogy by which learning and teaching is informed by assessment, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; • An historic lack of external assessment has resulted in inconsistency in assessment practices, rendering assessment data unreliable for comparative purposes, or for planning and executing wider interventions within the education sector; and • Lack of vision and absence of policy, as well as legislative mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation of assessment practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The actual annual budget process relies on instructions to the different sub-sectors, which are not linked to sector technical planning but on the expression of local and regional needs not necessarily linked to a results-based analysis of the performance of the system from one year to another, across all sectors; • Audit services perform mostly punitive function instead of focusing on analysis, identification, and risk management to prevent financial violations before they occur; • Early Childhood Practitioner/ Teacher assessment system is not informing teachers professional development and it is not competency-based, lacking transparency and anti-corruption mechanisms. It has strong negative impact on overall M&E system of the sector; • No referral mechanisms between the health sector and the education sector |
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records on usage of equipment, etc, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education.				for children with disabilities and identified at risk of HIV, requiring PSS, and/or suffering developmental delays, etc.; • No system in place for implementing bridging and catch-up education programmes for children who missed school and/or do not speak language of instruction; and • Public opinions and services for children with disabilities are still dominated by the medical model. Specialized schools are still positioned as the first-choice education for children with disabilities.
PILLAR 1: Infrastructure, Construction, and Equipment	PILLAR 2: Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Resources	PILLAR 3: Teachers Professional Development	PILLAR 4: Learning Assessment Systems	PILLAR 5: Governance, School Improvement and Monitoring and Evaluation

RED FLAGS

- Gender gaps in ECE attendance with almost 10% difference between boys and girls (3-4 years old). Difference in accessing preschools is especially pronounced for girls with disabilities -25.1% attend ECE compared to 45.6% of boys with disabilities.
- Significant regional disparities in ECE attendance rate: the highest in Tashkent City (54%) and the lowest in the southern geo-economic region (23%).
- To reach 80% enrolment for children aged 3 to 6 years, an additional 620,000 preschool places will be required.
- 2% difference in school attendance rates for upper secondary education - 95% for girls versus 93% for boys.
- In 2022/2023, enrolled secondary students exceeded capacity by 1,135,962.
- There is a difference of 22% between the proportion of students with and students without disabilities able to access 1-9 grades in schools. This difference is more than twice as large (46%) for access to upper-secondary education.
- In 2021, 13,167 boys studied in special schools for children with disabilities, while the number of girls studying in these schools was significantly lower - 8,463.
- In 2021, overall, 57% of Grade 3 students and 47% of Grade 5 students achieved 80% - a common benchmark - in the EGRA reading comprehension task.
- There is a substantial gap in mean achievement scores in learning assessment between regions, with the lowest performing demonstrating outcomes of c. 77% of those in the highest performing.
- The share of computer literate girls in the poorest quintile is more than two times less than boys in the same category (14.7% compared to 34.6%).
- Easy access to clean drinking water (through pipe) is available only at 47% of the general secondary schools. More than 81% of the general secondary schools reported having only one set of functional toilets (2-3 outlets on average) in the schools.

For ease of reference, the following provide further insight into the interventions anticipated under each 'Output' detailed within the Theory of Change, addressing the challenges identified within the Situational Analysis undertaken in the course of developing the Compact:

OUTPUT 1

Increased number of preschool and school facilities, equipped with safe, gender-sensitive and disabled-accessible WASH facilities, digital infrastructure, kitchen/canteens, play grounds, and laboratory equipment, constructed while promoting green sustainability and complying with anti-corruption principles.

Activities within this output area primarily address capital intensive investment in infrastructure, equipment, and resourcing, with a particular focus on early childhood settings / preschool and school construction and rehabilitation.

This is intended primarily to address increased pressure on early childhood settings / preschool and school capacity, with long waiting lists for preschools, and over-enrolled schools, with a view to ensuring places are available for all learners in Uzbekistan. Likewise, issues relating to infrastructure, particularly with regard to WASH, continue to impact on access, with girls reportedly missing out on learning in contexts where adequate hygiene facilities are unavailable (as noted during the Situational Analysis), and with many schools not accessible to learners with disabilities, while connectivity levels (both to electricity supply, and high-speed internet) remain inconsistent in rural areas.

To facilitate such a shift in provision, it is first essential to establish a clear set of regulatory and institutional frameworks, upgrading standards for both early childhood settings / preschool and school construction, rehabilitation, expansion, and equipping. This framework and associated standards will ensure safe, compliant, and efficient construction, maintenance, and procurement, with a focus on safe, sustainable, inclusive, accessible, and healthy facilities. Such frameworks would also include a clear 'operational plan' and associated 'roadmap', including reference to named bodies, and individuals responsible for actionable steps, and reporting (i.e. who does what when, and in relation to what). It will also ensure that risks relating to corruption and transparency are proactively addressed, allowing for competitive tenders for supply of goods, works, and services, thus reducing costs, maximising efficiency of spending, and providing incentives for domestic enterprise, and international inward investment. By ensuring concerns over corruption are addressed, waste can be minimised, quality increased, and long-term sustainability strengthened – this also has the added benefit of garnering donor confidence to support future interventions.

Once this framework and standards are in place, a systematic process of renovating and constructing both preschools, and schools, will be undertaken, ensuring facilities are safe, well equipped, and meet the needs of all learners. These include provision of gender-sensitive WASH facilities, as well as physical access to sites through inclusive universal design, cognisant of the specific needs of learners with disabilities. Children's health and nutrition will be also addressed through expansion of direct nutrition interventions in schools and the provision of

facilities for the hygienic preparation of food, proactively addressing issues of malnutrition identified during the Situational Analysis. The wellbeing of students will also be promoted through the provision of appropriate sport and recreation areas.

Likewise, with clear guidelines for public-private partnership and procurement in place, early childhood settings / preschools and schools will be able to ensure they can secure both the major equipment and resources they require to cater to learning needs (furniture, laboratory equipment, etc.), as well as accessibility and assistive devices for learners with disabilities and specific educational needs.

In line with Uzbekistan's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability, all such construction, capital works, and procurement would seek to prioritise 'green' and sustainable facilities, including the use of renewable energy, as well as improving water usage, and the energy efficiency of early childhood settings / preschool and school sites (through more effective insulation, etc.).

Activities under this area will therefore enhance **access** for all learners, including those with disabilities, to quality education, ensuring that learning resources and facilities are in place to enable **quality** instruction, with enhanced gender-sensitive WASH facilities, and improved availability of accessibility and assistive technology, enhancing **equity** in relation to educational provision. Practically, this will entail the establishment of aforementioned standards, improved enrolment (with an anticipated 5% increase in preschools, and a 1% increase in secondary schools, over the course of the Compact period, with an additional 620,000 places in preschool settings, and 1.2 million in schools), enhanced provision of basic services at both preschool and school level, improved equity, and greater prevalence of 'green' schools throughout Uzbekistan.

OUTPUT 2

Competency-based, inclusive, gender-transformative curriculum, and teaching and learning materials (TLM) underpinned by ELDS and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) delivered to preschools and schools.

Reforms under this output will proactively address and enhance early childhood / preschool education quality in Uzbekistan through increasing the capacity of teachers on the improved National Preschool curriculum based on Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). Drawing on learning from a systematic review based on both content and age validation of ELDS, to inform effective development of TLM focused on child centred pedagogy. Particularly programmes for children under three years of age envisaged to be developed focused on the specific needs of young children based on ELDS and associated capacity building for relevant practitioners.

In tandem, activities will seek to build and capitalise on the positive work undertaken previously in developing the competency-based NCF for school education, to ensure momentum is not lost, and that there is a clear, consistent, and coherent approach to the development of both curriculum reforms and associated TLM in Uzbekistan moving forward.

With the focus on introduction of the inclusive education in the preschool system, development of training module, TLM and teacher training is envisaged to support modelling and pre-testing inclusive preschools based on international practices.

As such, these diverse contexts will include (i) adapting revised curriculum, pedagogic guidelines, and TLMs/ play materials for facilitating activities in preschools catering to communities with linguistic diversities; (ii) adapting curriculum, pedagogy, and materials for facilitating inclusive education within regular preschools; and (iii) adapting international best practices for regular preschools. These interventions will focus on both preschool learning materials, and those for use within schools, in line with the lifecycle approach underpinning the Compact as a whole, and in recognition of the significant return on investment arising from early childhood interventions. The curriculum review and the development of TLM will apply an appropriate gender lens throughout, addressing gender norms and stereotypes, in addition to ensuring a continued focus on inclusive education through adoption of Universal Design for Learning Principles. Such activities will all be undertaken on the basis of a clear 'operational plan' and associated 'roadmap', including reference to named bodies, and individuals responsible for all actionable steps, and reporting (i.e. who does what when, and in relation to what).

Finalisation of the national curriculum will be undertaken in tandem with wider reforms in assessment structures, to ensure alignment with international standards, and to offset historic concerns over the level of 'challenge' in curriculum and examination content at upper secondary level, while also ensuring that digital learning, themes for sustainable development, wellness, and life skills, are fostered through an enhanced, competency-based, curriculum. The introduction of career guidance tools and content will also seek to enhance engagement with the labour-market and employability. Curriculum content will also address negative and exclusionary public norms, and gendered expectations, addressing challenges in these areas identified during the Situational Analysis, as well as proactively tackling issues of violence and bullying.

All curriculum materials will also be underpinned by a consistent focus on inclusion, with clear and explicit guidance provided to teachers as to how learning for lower attaining learners can be effectively 'scaffolded' to improve learning outcomes, as well as ensuring that additional 'challenge' is provided to high-attaining learners through the effective use of extension tasks. This will be complemented by wider reforms pertaining to teacher capacity-building, with a focus on assessment-informed planning for effective learning and teaching, catering to the specific needs of each learner.

Most significantly, this seeks to precipitate a fundamental shift away from the historic, fragmented approach prevalent within Uzbekistan, by which reforms in this area were often not effectively coordinated, leading to 'siloed' approaches, with resulting duplication of effort, as well as wasteful abandonment of initiatives – this has also demotivated key stakeholders, and caused disruption to learners. This has particularly affected both the development and/or procurement of textbooks, with multiple, sometimes mutually incompatible, approaches adopted, often at considerable cost.

Once the NCF is finalised, therefore, it is anticipated that a long-term strategy will be established, to ensure that future reforms in this area are consistent and stable, as well as being coherent with broader shifts toward a competency-based approach to learning and teaching in Uzbekistan.

Within this context, the focus will be on quality materials, closely aligned to the foundational skills and transversal competencies detailed within the national curriculum framework, facilitating a shift away from 'textbook-driven' instruction. Given historic capacity challenges in relation to the development of quality TLM, revised procurement practices will allow ease of access to tender processes by both national and international providers, allowing for enhanced competition to allow learners to access quality materials, while maintaining spending efficiency. Such approaches will also provide a 'level playing field', stimulating potential local enterprise, entrepreneurship, and resulting economic development, as well as international inward investment.

Such procurement would be underpinned by a robust set of anti-corruption, transparency, and compliance mechanisms, and associated processes, procedures, and capacity-building, to offset historic challenges pertaining to corruption in public-sector procurement, and resulting waste and efficiency losses, as well as undermined public-trust, and donor confidence.

As such, these reforms will seek to ensure consistent **access** to **quality** learning and teaching, while addressing issues of **equity**, including perpetuation of negative gender stereotypes, and problematic gendered expectations, in learning and teaching materials, as identified during the Situational Analysis, and associated pedagogic practice, as well as ensuring that teacher guides provide additional resources to facilitate teaching in inclusive classrooms, catering to the needs of all learners, as well as appropriately adapted materials for learners with disabilities, and special educational needs.

OUTPUT 3

Improved system of transparent, corruption-free and merit-based / competency-based recruitment, retention, and professional development of preschool educators / teachers and early childhood setting / school leaders

Activities under this area will seek to establish a coherent and comprehensive set of systems and processes to ensure ongoing support to school teaching professionals and school leaders. Reform interventions will address all aspects, including recruitment, training (both pre-service and in-service), retention, and a clear system of support, mentoring, and professional development (including, as appropriate, career development). This will cover early childhood / preschool practitioners, school teachers, school leaders, as well as teacher educators, taking account of the increased remit of the Ministry of Preschool and School Education, with a new oversight role over the Tashkent State Pedagogical University, and with additional pedagogic universities throughout Uzbekistan expected to shift to its oversight also. These reforms will be underpinned by a clear, and structured, 'operational plan' and associated 'roadmap', including reference to named bodies, and individuals responsible for all actionable steps, and reporting.

At ECE / preschool level, interventions aim at improving quality of service delivery, by upskilling and building the capacity of practitioners, particularly in relation to their competency in effectively delivering the enhanced «Ilk qadam» preschool curriculum, including through the development of TLM and a specialist training module. Master Trainers will be provided with intensive mentoring, guidance, and support, to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge, and competencies, to support the wider body of preschool teachers in strengthening their pedagogic practice. Training and capacity building work will be supported by development of programmes, equipping with necessary TLM, capacity building of teacher-educators and creating alternative pathways to existing system, such as credit hours.

Finalization and adoption of the Teacher Professional Standards and methodological support in operationalization of Preschool Teachers' Standards Nationwide will enhance further teacher training system. This will be facilitated by the establishment of a complementary system of preschool improvement rooted in a model of preschool-led self-evaluation and school improvement planning to replace historic preschool inspection and teacher evaluation practices, with a focus on establishing inclusive preschools in all contexts.

At preschool and school levels, a systemic approach will initially focus on revising and enhancing current teacher policy and curriculum content for pre-service and in-service teacher training, to ensure alignment and coherence between all teacher education and capacity building initiatives (including Regional Teacher Professional Development Centres, as well as Universities, with increased Ministry oversight, as highlighted previously). This will seek to complement the broader interventions addressing the finalisation and implementation of the competency-based National Curriculum Framework, and associated Learning and Teaching Materials reform, underpinned by the effective implementation of the revised Teachers' Professional Standards.

Training and capacity building will leverage existing work undertaken in establishing regional in-service teacher training centres for preschool and school teachers, in addition to regional and district-hub schools, to provide a platform for regional training, particularly in relation to Continuous Professional Education of teaching professionals. Additional support to and deployment of existing digital resources, in particular the existing Learning Management System (LMS), will focus on fostering skills required for the implementation of the content within the National Curriculum Framework. Specifically, teachers' competencies will need to be strengthened to effectively deliver innovative new content. This will include content on life-skills, ICT, STEAM approaches, climate resilience, and innovation (including digital innovation).

Most significantly, a comprehensive system of teachers' support will be established, combining supervision, mentoring and on-the job support to teachers in preschools, and in school settings. This will foster professional development and upskilling, as well as career development, encompassing support for all teaching professionals, including school leaders in the effective implementation of contemporary approaches to school-management, developing school principals through the use of professional standards, and structured training in support of these.

Such interventions will proactively address issues of inclusion, fostering preschool and school level educators' knowledge and competency in the development and deployment of universal

design for effective and inclusive learning, including the skills required to effectively identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, as well as meeting the distinct needs of girls and boys, ensuring that historic issues around gendered expectations, and stereotypes, are proactively addressed. This will be undertaken in the context of a broader emphasis on reflective practice, by which all teachers seek to ensure that their teaching is informed by ongoing formative assessment, to plan lessons which cater to the distinct needs of all learners.

To ensure such initiatives can succeed, school leaders will also be supported in enhancing their professional competence as 21st century principals, allowing them to develop clear school-level strategies for school improvement, based on a cycle of self-evaluation, using these to inform School Improvement Planning at a school level, validated and supported by Ministry colleagues.

In practical terms, these interventions should significantly increase the proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications (to 100% at both preschool and school level), as well as the percentage of teachers receiving training in the last 12 months (on an ongoing basis), (to 100% in all cases).

Further to this, it will result in the completion and endorsement of a comprehensive recruitment, retention, and teachers training policy, in addition to an increase in other key areas, such as the percentage of Foreign Language teachers with an internationally recognised or national certificate demonstrating competency at a level of C1 (CEFR) or above (50%).

These interventions will enhance **access** to **quality** learning and teaching, as well as addressing issues of **equity**, by enhancing teachers' competencies in inclusively addressing the needs of all learners.

OUTPUT 4

Learning assessment system underpinned by comprehensive policy and legislative framework, with consistent approaches to school and system level assessment and benchmarking for quality assurance

This Output area seeks to address systemic challenges currently facing the education system in Uzbekistan arising from historic and contemporary assessment practices. This is to ensure that all learners in early childhood / preschool and at school level are able to access learning and teaching which caters to their specific needs, informed by effective formative and summative assessment. Further to this, reforms in this area have the potential to offset historic inefficiencies and duplication of effort (for example, school leaving examinations not being accepted for entry to higher education institutions, entry to which is determined by separate assessments), as well as ensuring that examinations and qualifications are better aligned to the needs of the labour-market. Given significant gaps in current capacity, this will be underpinned by the consistent use of external benchmarks, to serve as a quality assurance mechanism, as well as an educational and capacity-building resource for those involved in the administration, marking, and moderation of assessments, while also improving accountability.

This process will be underpinned by the development of a comprehensive legislative framework to facilitate coherent, structured, and sustainable reform in assessment practice, including early childhood assessment. This will incorporate myriad aspects of assessment, from the establishment of unified school examinations, aligned with university entrance. This is intended to provide a clear set of guiding principles for assessment, as well as an overarching vision, as well as establishing the necessary legislative basis for enforcement and compliance mechanisms.

Once this legislative framework is in place, an Action Plan, and associated detailed Guidelines for implementation thereof, will be developed, to ensure a clear step-by-step process is in place to operationalise reforms pertaining to classroom level formative assessment, as well as summative assessment approaches in national assessments and examinations, in line with the new legislation introduced, including reference to named bodies, and individuals responsible for all actionable steps, and reporting.

The situation analysis has highlighted significant shortcomings in current capacity to effectively develop and implement summative assessments effectively. As such, it is anticipated that international, externally administered benchmarks will be utilised as an interim quality assurance mechanism, to validate the accuracy and consistency of both formative (such as predicted grades) and summative assessment practices (including national examinations). This may be on the basis of representative or comprehensive sampling, dependent on sector requirements.

In line with national mandates, and to ensure informed future interventions, these reforms will be accompanied by the deployment of a national survey, and standardised assessment, to provide the government of Uzbekistan with an enhanced understanding of the national education system, and the needs of its learners. This will garner responses and inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, learners, parents, and the public (including Civil Society Organisations, as appropriate). Findings from this process will be augmented by the findings of international comparative learning assessments and associated rankings, such as PISA, TIMSS, and TALIS, as well as indicators on other cross-sector issues, such as anti-corruption and compliance.

This work will complement, and align with, ongoing teacher training and capacity development to embed formative classroom-based assessment practices, ensuring that observation, questioning, monitoring, review of work, and other appropriate methodologies are effectively deployed, with findings drawn upon to plan challenging lessons, meeting the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, and/or special educational needs, in addition to ensuring appropriate challenge for high attaining learners.

Practically, this will facilitate effective reforms in line with international commitments pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goals, such as the effective administration of a nationally representative learning assessment (a) in Grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education.

In preschool specifically, observation skills to ensure formative assessment of children engaged in everyday activities and play within preschool contexts forms part of the framework setting

out developmental milestones in ELDS, as embedded in the National Preschool Curriculum. Teaching and learning have been undermined by a lack of clear guidance, impacting on the practice conducting observation of children by teachers, influencing the quality of assessment on preschool leaders. As such, new guidelines will establish consistent practices for preschool teachers, ensuring that development delays are proactively addressed through child-centred approaches.

Within this context, the recently introduced MELQO tool piloting will continue, serving as a potential avenue for improving assessment practices if findings from piloting support this.

Effective assessment is essential to ensuring **equitable access** to **quality education**, as effective teaching and learning cannot take place without effective assessment informing planning for learning activities which meet the distinct needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, or with special educational needs, to allow them to fulfil their potential.

OUTPUT 5

Established system of aligned results-based strategic planning for improved information data collection and management systems, outcomes and budgeting supported by strengthened information data collection and management systems and quality assurance systems

This Output area seeks to undertake fundamental reforms of governance and systems throughout the education system, to enable wider reforms detailed in other Output Areas, in order to allow for improvements in learning outcomes in both preschool and school settings, as well as evidence-based decision-making, strengthened data collection and analysis, and robust financial systems.

This would, at its heart, focus on the establishment of a robust system of results-based strategic planning, drawing on data relating to enrolment, learning outcomes, quality, and equity, as well as other key factors, to inform medium-long-term budgeting, offsetting historic challenges arising from 'responsive' rather than 'proactive' financial planning, characterised by a lack of sufficient resourcing in recurring budget for key activities, particularly monitoring and evaluation. This would be underpinned by the establishment, and monitoring of clear programme and financial indicators. This work would be validated by robust audits, undertaken in a transparent manner, with proactive integrity and anticorruption mechanisms in place to prevent wastage and inefficiency, including public oversight mechanisms. All such work would be undertaken within the context of a clear, and structured, 'operational plan' and associated 'roadmap', including reference to named bodies, and individuals responsible for all actionable steps, and reporting.

This will necessitate the strengthening of information data collection, M&E, and management systems to ensure transparency, accessibility, and validity of data, and the subsequent emergence of effective quality assurance systems. This will entail developing and implementing

a comprehensive M&E framework, establishing standardized data collection procedures, and building the capacity of education stakeholders to collect and use data effectively, developing and implementing standards for school and preschool quality, and establishing mechanisms for regular evaluation and monitoring of their performance.

The establishment of a strong monitoring and evaluation framework is critical to ensuring the success of the education reform. This includes the development and implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation systems that allow for regular and comprehensive assessment of progress towards the expected outcomes and impacts of the reform.

To achieve this, there needs to be a clear focus on building the capacity of education system actors to collect, analyse, and utilize data for decision-making at all levels. This includes strengthening the capacity of local education authorities, school administrators, and teachers to conduct monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as providing training and support for data analysis and utilization. Critically, this will include proactive data collection to target and track potential delivery bottlenecks and support regular monitoring of key delivery pathways. This is to ensure that, as activities under the Compact are implemented, stakeholders are consistently supported in identifying which bottlenecks are most likely to impede reform progress, and provided with insight into how such priority bottlenecks can be addressed to enable the system transformation.

In addition, there needs to be a strong emphasis on ensuring the quality and accuracy of data collected, and the development of appropriate indicators to measure progress towards the expected outcomes and impacts. This will require the establishment of clear data management systems, including protocols for data collection, storage, and analysis.

Finally, to ensure accountability and transparency in the monitoring and evaluation process, there should be clear mechanisms in place for reporting on progress towards the expected outcomes and impacts of the reform, as well as regular audits of monitoring and evaluation activities to identify areas for improvement and ensure compliance with established standards and protocols.

This will also facilitate the establishment of a complementary system of preschool and school improvement, rooted in a model of school-led self-evaluation and school improvement planning based on quality standards to replace historic school inspection and teacher evaluation practices, with a focus on establishing inclusive schools promoting children's learning, wellbeing, mental health, and safety (including safety from issues of Violence and Bullying, as identified during the Situational Analysis, in the course of developing the Compact).

More broadly, the government has identified weak incentive structures as a potential barrier to private sector engagement in the education field. As such, interventions will be enacted to scale up and establish new systems and mechanisms to facilitate the establishment of effective public-private partnership and alternative models in preschool and school education with proper attention to due diligence checks and anti-corruption compliance procedures – it is anticipated that this will foster domestic enterprise and entrepreneurship, as well as creating an enabling environment for international operators to enter the market, and to foster international inward investment. Practically, such interventions will foster the emergence of an increased

number of PPP education institutions (an additional 140), as well as PPP alternative preschool groups (an additional 112).

Further to this, the government will build on wider reforms relating to assessment and teacher education to establish effective mechanisms for the identification, tracking, and deployment of support for children in need – ensuring their continued access to educational provision, at preschool, and at school level.

National guidelines will also be established on inclusion, comprising a conceptual framework, with a clear set of standards/requirements and mechanisms for inclusive preschools and schools – these will complement reforms in areas of capital investment and infrastructure, as well as informing teacher education, school leader capacity building, and the reforms of national assessment approaches (including classroom-level formative assessment), supported by overarching Quality Assurance mechanisms.

Modelling of inclusive preschools and schools, where new standards/requirements and mechanisms for inclusive education will be tested, will inform development of new legislation and policies to raise inclusive quality learning to higher standard. These schools of excellence will be expanded to research, demonstrate, explore, and disseminate good practice, complementing broader teacher education initiatives, particularly in areas such as links with employers, including work-based learning approaches.

Finally, to support the reforms encompassed by the compact, the government will conduct awareness raising and a communication campaign, including parenting education initiatives, to engage with communities, and society, with a particular view to ensuring buy-in to reforms, and, most significantly, to change social norms, gender-based biases and attitudes towards children with disabilities, including problematic and exclusionary public norms and gendered expectations identified during the Situational Analysis, as well as issues of violence and bullying - in addition to appropriate engagement of youth groups, clubs and other extracurricular providers.

These systemic reforms are essential to ensure **equitable access** to **quality education**, by facilitating and enabling reforms under all other Output areas of the Compact. As such, interventions within this area will provide a through-line of 'capacity development' – there is scope for the GPE System Capacity Grant to play a role in supporting this financially in focused areas, where support for capacity strengthening, has demonstrable, evidence-based, potential to impact on factors that enable system transformation.

6. ENABLING FACTORS FOR SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

HIGH PRIORITY ENABLING FACTOR: DATA AND EVIDENCE

One of the main issues that hinders the achievement of the priority reform is the lack of a system in place at a national level to collect, process and disseminate education statistics on students' participation and trajectories, preschools, schools, learning environments and teachers, etc. Findings arising in the development of the Compact suggest that there currently exists a multiplicity of data sources, not connected with each other, and not comprehensively informing system improvement. The self-evaluation system of teachers and non-alignment of its criteria with international standards, as well as the lack of a transparent national assessment strategy and system have been raised as weaknesses of the M&E system of the sector.

This issue can be addressed by strengthening information data collection and management systems, quality assurance systems, and establishing a complementary system of preschool and school improvement, rooted in a model of school-led self-evaluation and improvement planning based on quality standards to replace historic inspection and teacher evaluation practices, with a focus on establishing inclusive settings in all contexts, and promoting children's learning and wellbeing.

Furthermore, there is currently no system in place at national level to regularly monitor learning outcomes across the country. An historic lack of external assessment has resulted in inconsistency in assessment practices, rendering assessment data unreliable for comparative purposes, or for planning and executing wider interventions within the education sector. This is underpinned by the lack of an established tradition of pedagogy by which learning and teaching is informed by assessment, compounded by the lack of vision and absence of policy, as well as legislative mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation of assessment practices.

These issues can be addressed by:

- Developing a legislative framework to facilitate coherent, structured, and sustainable reform in assessment including unified school exams and entrance to universities exams with corruption risk mitigation measures;
- Developing an action plan and guidelines for the operationalization of formative and summative assessments approaches in line with new legislation;
- Providing support for the identification and employment of appropriate use of externally administered and/or marked benchmarks for quality assurance and SitAn purposes, as well as associated capacity building in the use thereof;
- Deploying national surveys and standardised assessment, to better understand the education system, focused on garnering input from teachers, students, parents, public, with supplementary findings anticipated from PISA, TIMSS, and TALIS and other relevant surveys (anti-corruption, crime prevention, U-report etc);

- Prioritising investments in building the capacity of relevant government agencies and institutions to collect, analyse, and use data effectively; and
- Supporting the development of data management systems and platforms that enable data sharing and collaboration across different stakeholders.

Finally, while data disaggregated by gender appears to be collected at a national level, no disaggregation by disability status exists. There is no system in place to monitor vulnerabilities and ensure access to education for all children. Furthermore, while the Education Sector Analysis (2021) includes some gender statistics, no gender analysis or diagnostic have been undertaken at either the macro or sector level in the past 3 years.

These issues can be addressed by:

- Ensuring that education sector M&E data is disaggregated by gender and disability; and
- Establishing systems and mechanisms for identification of children in need and addressing special needs in regular preschools and schools..

HIGH PRIORITY ENABLING FACTOR: GENDER-RESPONSIVE SECTOR PLANNING, POLICY AND MONITORING

With regard to gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring, historic data collection has been weak, undermining potential for analysis and focused intervention, necessitating enhanced data collection (including the use of benchmarks, as appropriate) to inform evidence-based engagement in this area.

There is lack of a legal framework, or government mandate, to shape the development of gender-responsive strategic planning for all sectors, including education. As such, theoretical aspects and methodology for development of strategic (technical mid-term) plans, as well as the procedure for their formation, organization of experts, coordination of work and further monitoring of implementation of plans, cognisant of gender-responsive factors, have not historically been developed.

As a result of the lack of a clear methodology, current strategic documents do not consistently set out clearly formulated activities – in many cases Monitoring and Evaluation makes use of a large number of performance indicators which overlap and which are in some cases contradictory, and not clearly linked to intended impact. The structure and principle of gender-responsive development in current regulatory documents at country, regional, and sectoral levels vary, often lacking consistency, coherence, or a common development vector.

Systematic gaps in gender-responsive data collection, analysis, and forecasting (including lack of methodology) complicates the process of ensuring the consistency of all data during the preparation of high-quality multi-year budgeted action planning. In addition, there is a lack of research/analysis that can serve as a basis for formulating specific policies and activities.

Further to this, risk assessments are not effectively in place, and there is a limited relationship between technical, investment, and financial planning at national, sectoral, and local levels.

These factors contribute to challenges in gender-responsive, evidence-based technical planning and budgeting, as well as implementation. These are therefore often ineffective in terms of their contribution to the socio-economic development of the country, and education outcomes. In addition, key research/analysis is missing to formulate specific policies and activities.

In this context, it is essential that robust gender-responsive data collection (including the use of benchmarks, as appropriate) be established, informing evidence-based engagement in these areas.

HIGH PRIORITY ENABLING FACTOR: SECTOR COORDINATION

Inclusive Sector Dialogue and Coordinated Action

The lack of inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action has resulted in historically 'fragmented' interventions, lacking consistency and coordination. This has been exacerbated by aforementioned evidence gaps undermining planning processes. Together, these factors have led to policy formulation and sector planning, financing, and resourcing which have not been effectively coordinated. As such, there have been multiple instances of duplication of effort, as well as frequent changes of direction, both resulting in waste and inefficiencies within the sector. Likewise, a failure to engage proactively with the private sector has limited the extent to which private capital can be deployed to augment public funding, and donor support, as well as limiting local enterprise within the sector.

The Compact provides an opportunity to strengthen sector coordination and communication by establishing medium-long-term action plans along with continuity and coherence of programming. The implementation of proposed reform areas will require engaging proactively with the private sector, scaling up and establishing new public-private partnership and alternative models in preschool and school education with proper attention to due diligence checks and anti-corruption compliance procedures. This should be underpinned by ongoing capacity building within the ministry, with school leaders, and the teacher workforce.

Coordinated Financing and Funding

The actual annual budget process is relying on instructions to the different sub-sectors, which are not linked to sector technical planning but on the expression of local and regional needs not necessarily linked to a results-based analysis of the performance of the system from one year to another. Other issues are:

- i) lack of transparency, accountability, and weak involvement of public service end users;
- ii) delays in expenditures disposal, including burdensome public procurement procedures;
- iii) accounting / reporting standards are still in the process of transforming to the international standards; and
- iv) weak monitoring and evaluation tools - therefore, Development Partners prefer not to use national treasury / procedures for education sector projects implementation.

Starting in 2021, the Government started tracking projects financed by Development Partners as part of public expenditures in the annual budget laws for correct calculation of the budget balance and information purposes. Additionally, aforementioned issues can be addressed by establishing a system of results-based strategic planning aligned with results-based budgeting processes and clear programme and financial indicators. The budget process and public procurement procedures should also be improved to meet Development Partners' requirements for using national public financial management (PFM) and procurement systems. The next section provides further detail on measures to be implemented for this purpose.

HIGH PRIORITY ENABLING FACTOR: VOLUME, EFFICIENCY AND EQUITY OF DOMESTIC FINANCING

Efficiency of public spending in education is undermined due to

- poor coordination between technical and budget planning, budget actors in various levels of the government, and budget expenditures' output and outcome indicators, e.g. related to learning outcomes used in very limited manner;
- unreliable information base for budget planning and execution;
- not ensuring value for money in procurement:
 - a) comparison of per unit costs in construction with private sector prices shows considerable overpricing; and
 - b) numerous substandard quality issues.

- weak internal audit and anti-corruption compliance systems;
- outdated methodology of calculating teacher salaries; and
- low capacity of financial and administrative staff.

Moreover, no comprehensive study of equity in the education sector financing has been made, and tools currently used by the Government consider only limited equity dimensions.

As such, priorities for improving PFM performance include:

- **strategic planning of education:**
 - i) improve sector statistics and develop methodologies of sector analysis and forecasting;
 - ii) develop methodology of drafting strategies, concepts, etc., as well as performance indicators; and
 - iii) revise all strategic documents with their indicators and prepare a single list of interlinked and optimized priorities and performance indicators matrix;
- **linking sector planning and budget preparation:**
 - i) finalization transfer to mid-term budgeting;
 - ii) fully transfer to performance/program-based budgeting (develop methodology, capacity building) for ensuring linkage between sector planning and budgeting as well as various public agencies and levels of the government - each performance indicator should have a clear financing source and responsible agency; this measure also allows to consider learning outcomes in resource allocation and financial management;
 - iii) digitization of all data required for budget process, including databases of other public agencies, ensuring interoperability and information exchange with all involved public agencies; and
 - iv) review and update teacher salaries calculation methodology;
- improve system of M&E, internal audit, and transparency / accountability for better budget execution:
 - i) develop a methodology and tools for M&E under performance / program-based budgeting;
 - ii) strengthen internal audit and anticorruption compliance;
 - iii) empower civil society and education service end users to participate in public control and decision-making;
 - iv) enhance list of published financial and non-monetary data as well as their usability for the general public; and
 - v) improve public procurement in the sector for ensuring value for money.

Improving equity in the education sector's PFM will require integrating equity dimensions in M&E for evidence-based decision-making in the budget preparation and execution.

COMPLEMENTARY CROSS-SECTORAL PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATION REFORM

A range of reforms under the auspices of the Compact will be cross-sectoral, necessitating engagement and collaboration between professionals across a range of relevant line ministries, drawn from several sectors, and leveraging their expertise to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed reforms.

In particular, these cross-sectoral engagements will seek to address high-level 'Red Flags' pertaining to issues which have the potential to impact negatively on the safety, wellbeing, and learning of children within the education system in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

These include, but are not limited to:

Issues of malnutrition: Health and nutrition are critical for learning and intellectual development, as well as for shaping attitudes and behaviours. Investing in nutrition, health, and education will help children to reach their full potential and become productive adults while breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. Issues affecting Uzbekistan's population include limited access to quality and nutritious foods, overweight and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies (UNICEF, 2017). Adolescent girls in Uzbekistan suffer from a triple burden of malnutrition: malnutrition, hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies), and overweight, which threatens not only their survival, growth, and development, but also the country's future. One in ten adolescent girls suffers from being either underweight or overweight (obesity), and one in sixteen (16.5%) suffers from anaemia. Three-quarters of girls with anaemia suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. Iron deficiency rates among adolescent girls are alarmingly high, at around 50%.

While there has been significant reductions in rates of excess weight and obesity, as well as child stunting – some challenges remain prevalent. The most significant issue regarding nutrition outcomes for children in Uzbekistan is iron deficiency and anaemia. The Uzbekistan 2017 Nutrition Survey demonstrated that anaemia among children in Uzbekistan aged 6-11 months is 30.5%, and 67% of all cases of anaemia are caused by iron deficiency. Half of the children this age suffer from iron deficiency (50.2%). In Uzbekistan, anaemia among children aged 12-23 months was 26%, and 81% of anaemia is caused by iron deficiency. Nearly three in four (73.3%) children 12-23 months suffer from iron deficiency (UNICEF, 2017).

Mental health issues, particularly for adolescents: Ten to fifteen percent of students in Uzbekistan showed moderate to extremely severe levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, and felt less satisfied with family relations and other life aspects, such as school experience, friendships, themselves, and their body image (UzDaily, 2022). Recent trends in suicide mortality rates among adolescents in Uzbekistan show an increasing trend in self-harm and suicide rates. Besides being structures for academic learning, schools are also places where many adolescents spend most of their time, interacting with peers and developing their social and emotional skills. Educators, school support staff, and peers are well-placed to identify and respond to risk factors and emerging mental health conditions in adolescents, and also connect adolescents to additional resources.

Violence and bullying: According to a study conducted in 2018 by UNICEF and Ministry of Public Education, around 20-22% of students reported having experienced bullying (UNICEF & MOPE, 2019). The results show that children who experienced violence demonstrated significantly lower learning achievements compared to those who did not experience it.

Collaborations between different sectors under the auspices of the Compact will seek to address these 'Red Flags'. A series of interventions have been identified, including, but not limited to:

- Capitalizing on recent and ongoing reforms focused on health. To do this, in line with the principle of leaving no one behind, the proposed priorities for further cooperation between education and health sectors should be addressed with a view to addressing the needs and concerns of the most marginalized social groups are also considered;
- Support in ensuring access to safe and nutritious food through availability and accessibility of healthy and nutritious diet by:
 - Ensuring policies and initiatives are in place to promote and provide nutritious diets for children and adolescents (integrated schools meals, nutrition education, regulation of advertising and marketing of certain foods not conducive to healthy diets, regulation of food reformulation and large-scale food fortification to improve nutritional value of food and food labelling); and
 - ensuring food safety policies and control systems are in place to assess the main sources of foodborne diseases and food safety risks and effectively manage and communicate with key stakeholders on these risks.
- Support in shifting to sustainable consumption patterns by educating and raising awareness among children on healthy diets, food choices as drivers of sustainability, food literacy, and the prevention of food waste;
- Updating and endorsing modern Standard Operating Procedure on prevention and response to VAC in schools and raising additional capacity at all levels, particularly focusing on the training of school psychologists, including in addressing mental health issues for children and young people, as well as combatting bullying, particularly for those living with HIV and children with disabilities, as well as other vulnerable groups;

- Training of school psychologists in addressing mental health issues for children and young people;
- Establishing and maintaining wider referral protocols, procedures, and implementing mechanisms for public service delivery and supporting digital solutions for interoperability between social sector information systems and those in other line ministries in order to establish effective coordination between social workers and education workforce; and
- Additional evidence generation on the child wellbeing with a specific focus on child engagement in economic activities, household chores and hazardous work above age specific threshold considering education and health outcomes, building on the data generated by the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 conducted by UNICEF in 2022 (UNICEF, 2022).

7. EDUCATION BUDGET AND ALIGNMENT DEVELOPMENT PARTNER RESOURCES

The education budget expenditure in the Republic of Uzbekistan has reached 5.9% of GDP in 2022 or 22.3% of State Budget. In 2026, total expenditures to education will reach 82.1 trillion UZS, (24.7% of State Budget and 5.2% of GDP). While recurrent expenditures of the education sector will stand at 63.6 trillion UZS in 2024 and 75.8 trillion UZS in 2025, it is expected that capital expenditure will reach 6.3 trillion by 2026 in order to ensure expected level of enrolment in both preschool and school education. The following table highlights the budget requirement to sustain the education sector:

Public expenditure on education, 2022-2026 (billion UZS, Current Terms)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Total	2,770.39	55,959.16	67,989.00	72,066.00	82,129.74
Recurrent expenditures	47,735.10	52,289.16	63,600.00	66,800.00	75,811.50
Including salaries and wages	37,364.84	42,003.99	46,204.39	50,824.83	55,907.32
Other recurrent expenditures	10,370.26	10,285.17	17,395.61	15,975.17	19,904.19
Capital expenditures	5,035.29	3,670.00	4,389.00	5,266.00	6,318.24
% of Public Expenditure, including Debt Service	22.3%	24.6%	26.6%	25.2%	24.7%
% of GDP	5.9%	5.3%	5.5%	5.1%	5.2%

The following matrix provides an overview of Development Partners financial and technical support to be leveraged between 2023-2026 and aligned with Compact results:

Funding Source	Amount US\$	Output 1 Increased number of preschool and school facilities, equipped with safe, gender-sensitive and disabled-accessible WASH facilities, digital infrastructure, kitchen/canteens, play grounds, and laboratory equipment, constructed while promoting green sustainability and complying with anti-corruption principles	Output 2 Competency-based, inclusive, gender-transformative curriculum, and teaching and learning materials (TLM) underpinned by ELDS and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) delivered to preschools and schools	Output 3 Improved system of transparent, corruption-free, and merit-based / competency-based recruitment, retention and professional development of preschool educators / teachers and early childhood setting / school leaders	Output 4 Learning assessment system underpinned by comprehensive policy and legislative framework, with consistent approaches to school and system level assessment and benchmarking for quality assurance	Output 5 Established system of aligned results-based strategic planning for improved learning outcomes and budgeting supported by strengthened information data collection and management systems, and quality assurance systems
Asian Development Bank*	100 mln	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Finnish National Agency for Education / Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland	~1.1 mln		✓	✓	✓	
GIZ	~3.2 mln		✓			
GPE Multiplier	40 mln	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPE System Capacity Grant (SCG)	2.9 mln					✓
Islamic Development Bank - New education project	160 mln	✓				
Islamic Development Bank - ECE Project	71 mln	✓	✓			✓
JICA	3.5 mln		✓	✓	✓	✓

KOICA	11 mln					
UNESCO	2.3 mln		✓	✓		✓
UNFPA	0.6 mln	✓			✓	
UNICEF	5.5 mln	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
USAID	35 mln		✓	✓	✓	✓
Vision 2030 Joint Fund	43.5 mln	✓	✓	✓		
Vision 2030 Joint Fund (World Bank Grant on ECD)	15 mln		✓	✓		
World Bank - ECD Project	69 mln	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
World Bank – New education project	50 mln	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	613.6 mln					

* In addition to sovereign project (STEM in secondary education project \$100mn), ADB has two Transaction Advisory Service mandates with the Ministry of Preschools and Schools Education to develop new preschool and school facilities in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) modality. The fund to be mobilized under the mandates amounts to roughly \$150 million for the two projects. However, due to the nature of PPP, the funding source as well as the exact amount of support shall be decided upon the tender of the PPP private partner selection

8. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

The M&E Framework developed to track Compact results is intended to complement existing frameworks, by adding a spotlight to the priority indicators that will require high level tracking and reporting. Policy directions and oversight will be carried out by a specialist taskforce to be established within the Ministry of Preschool and School Education.

At the operational level, the taskforce within the Ministry will delegate data collection, analysis, and reporting to technical specialists, while maintaining a named departmental and individual focal point for each indicator (including any sub-indicators, or disaggregation where applicable).

The tracking of progress will require regular reports throughout the implementation process based on:

- a) an annual work plan on implementation, including detailed activities at the various levels; and
- b) periodic progress reports detailing achievements under each activity, progress on each of the indicators in the M&E framework, and analysis of identified gaps and next steps.

The overall performance of the reform will be assessed regularly, including through regular reporting to the Local Education Group (LEG), with interim reporting at LEG meetings, as well as reporting shared on a regular basis.

The table below provides a comprehensive overview of Indicators, Disaggregation, Baseline Data, and Targets, in relation to all Output areas. This will enable stakeholders to track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to ensure successful implementation of the Compact. While they relate to Outcomes under the compact, all indicators are 'Impact' oriented.

It should be emphasised that it has been agreed with the Government, and with Development Partners, during the development of the Compact, that the indicators detailed below relate directly to the impact of 'high level' Outcomes detailed within the Compact document. Programme level reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and indicator resolution, will be undertaken by implementing parties.

IMPACT

Equitable access to transformative quality education for all

OUTCOME

By 2026, all girls and boys benefit from improved competency-based quality of learning in a well performing, accountable, and inclusive education system

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

GENDER

ETHICS, INTEGRITY, AND ANTI-CORRUPTION

HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUSION AND EQUITY FOCUS

SUB-SECTOR:

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION
(3-6 years)

SUB-SECTOR:

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION
(7-17 years)

OUTPUT 1

Increased number of pre-school and school facilities, equipped with safe, gender-sensitive and disabled-accessible WASH facilities, digital infrastructure, kitchen/canteens, and laboratory equipment, constructed while promoting green sustainability and complying with anti-corruption principles

OUTPUT 2

Competency-based, inclusive, gender-transformative curriculum, and teaching and learning materials (TLM) underpinned by ELDS and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) delivered to preschools and schools

OUTPUT 3

Improved system of transparent, corruption-free and merit-based / competency-based recruitment, retention and professional development of preschool educator / teachers and early childhood settings / school leaders

OUTPUT 4

Learning assessment system underpinned by comprehensive policy and legislative framework, with consistent approaches to school and system level assessment and benchmarking for quality assurance

OUTPUT 5

Established system of aligned result-based strategic planning for improved learning outcomes and budgeting supported by strengthened information data collection and management systems, and quality assurance systems

INTERVENTIONS

1.1. Improve the regulatory and institutional framework and standards for early childhood settings/ preschool and school infrastructure and equipment, to reflect modern standards and sustainable development requirements complying with transparent and competitive procurement;

1.2. Renovate and construct preschools / schools, equip them with play-based learning resources, digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, and portable solutions, laboratory equipment and school furniture, and sport and recreational areas, with a consistent focus on safety, accessibility for children with disabilities and gender-sensitive WASH facilities while also promoting green sustainability, based on updated standards; and

1.3. Procure and transparently distribute individual assistive and accessibility devices for children with disabilities, prioritizing inclusive preschools and schools.

2.1. Enhance preschool quality through ELDS review based on content and age validation; development of TLM; and development and introduction of the program for children under 3 based on ELDS.

2.2. Review and finalise the NCF, including extra-curricular activities, and associated road map for its implementation. Ensure that curriculum and examination content are in line with those in comparable international contexts in relation to age and /or years of education and mainstream transversal competencies, digital learning, and children wellbeing/life skills with effective alignment of TLM, including play-based learning resources, between early childhood education / preschool, school education and labour market demands (including appropriate career guidance content), with a consistent focus on inclusion;

2.3. Foster further learning resource (including play-based learning resources for ECE) development and text

3.1. Develop a comprehensive teachers policy (incorporating a teacher professional development policy, and capacity enhancement plan) addressing all aspect of recruitment, training, retention, and career development, informed by a comprehensive diagnostic review of in- and pre-service training;

3.2. Expand in-service teacher training centres for preschool teachers, and expand regional and district hub schools and further strengthen the "Continuous Professional Education" LMS platform for pre-service and in-service teachers' training with focus on life skills, healthy lifestyles, ICT, STEAM, climate resilience, and innovations, with the training platform facilitating a range of approaches, including blended, on line, face to face, mentorships, and peer support;

3.3. Establish systems for supportive supervision, mentoring and on-job support to preschool and school teachers and school psychologists, including implementation of contemporary approaches to

4.1. Develop legislative framework to facilitate coherent, structured and sustainable reform in assessment including Early Childhood Assessment, unified school exams and entrance to universities exams with corruption risks mitigation measures;

4.2. Develop an action plan and guidelines for the implementation of the legislative framework developed under 4.1, in order to operationalization of formative and summative assessments approaches in line with a new legislation, including roll-out of MELQO should results from pilot prove positive;

4.3. Support for the identification and employment of appropriate use of externally administered and/or marked benchmarks for quality assurance and SitAn purposes, as well as associated capacity building in the use thereof in preschool, and school settings; and

4.4. Deploy national surveys and standardised assessment, to better understand the education system, across all sectors, including Early

5.1 Strengthen system of results-based strategic planning aligned with results-based budgeting processes and clear programme and financial indicators, including effective cross-sectoral collaboration, with Forum engagement at National Level, and collaborative service provision at HUB level;

5.2 Revise system of audit of the implementation of strategic programmes and budget execution to ensure it is transparent, corruption-free and merit-based across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education;

5.3. Strengthen information data collection and management systems to ensure transparency and accessibility of data, facilitating the establishment of effective quality assurance systems, and a complementary system of improvement rooted in a model of preschool, and school-led self-evaluation and school improvement planning based on quality standards to replace historic

	book reform ensuring that all future approaches to the development and procurement of TLM are coherent and underpinned by a long-term strategy making use of private sector engagement and transparent competitive international procurement; and	school management by developing school principals' professional standards and training thereof; 3.4. Enhance the system and capacity for improving preschool education quality in Uzbekistan through increasing the capacity of teachers on the improved preschool curriculum «Ilk qadam» and development of the training module, capacity building by preparing Master Trainers followed by cascade trainings and on-line courses, undertaking implementation research and cost benefit analysis to ensure effectiveness; 3.5. Revise and enhance curriculum content for pre-service and in-service teachers' training (preschool and school), ensuring alignment between all training providers (Regional Teacher Professional Development centres and Universities), NCF and wider TLM reform and teachers' professional standards, including content on child centered practices, pay based practices, and social and emotional learning, as well as engagement with parents and partners, with support from the Early learning playgroup package;	Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education, focused on garnering input from teachers, students, parents, public, with supplementary findings anticipated from PISA, TIMSS, and TALIS and other relevant surveys (anti-corruption, crime prevention, U-report etc).	preschool/school inspection and teacher evaluation practices, with a focus on establishing inclusive preschools and schools promoting children's learning, wellbeing, and safety, with appropriate capacity building to ensure this can be undertaken to a high standard; 5.4. Scale up and establish new systems and mechanisms to facilitate the establishment of effective public-private partnership and alternative models in preschool and school education with proper attention to due diligence checks and anti-corruption compliance procedures; 5.5. Establish systems and mechanisms for identification of children in need and ensuring their access to education, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; 5.6. Develop conceptual framework, standards / requirements and mechanisms for inclusive preschools, and schools; 5.7. Establish model of inclusive preschools, and schools to allow for strengthened
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SUB-SECTOR: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION (3-6 years)

		3.6. Improve teachers' knowledge and skills in universal design for effective and inclusive learning, including the skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, and to ensure learning and teaching is delivered which caters to the distinct needs of all learners; and 3.7. Develop preschool / school leaders' professional competence standards and formation of 21st century school principal's portrait and develop strategies for practical implementation thereof.		understanding of effective practice, linking with employers, and work-based learning providers, as appropriate; and 5.8. Conduct awareness raising and behaviour change communication campaign activities for parents and caregivers, including appropriate engagement with parenting education and parenting modules (including home visiting package in collaboration with other sectors, including Ministry of Health), communities, and society to change social norms, gender-based biases and attitudes towards children with disabilities – in addition to appropriate engagement of youth groups, clubs and other extracurricular providers, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education.
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SUB-SECTOR: GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION (age 7-17)

ENABLERS FOR SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms of coordination between relevant ministries and departments, as well as interaction with civil society and law enforcement agencies in infrastructure construction and equipment, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Political will to shift towards more open and competitive public procurement and disclosure of budgeting data and financial reports; • Improved transparency, public accountability, and responsibility in procurement/construction through incorporating integrity principles and engaging civil society in performance of public oversight of public Early Childhood Settings, PreSchools, schools and universities, public education financing and construction; and • Disclosure of procurement contracts and budgeting data. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution of strategic decision-making authority on curriculum reform to ministry level, to ensure clear ownership of curriculum reform moving forward across all sectors, including Early Childhood and PrePrimary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Medium-long-term strategy for Early Childhood and School curriculum and TLM reform (including play-based learning recourses) under the devolved ministry authority, to ensure coherence, stability, and consistency of curriculum reform; and • Fostered cooperation between education system and labour market, civil society organizations as providers of learning opportunities, including on extra-curricular activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and protocols to ensure effective governance and oversight of pre-service teacher training, following the recent shift of oversight of the Tashkent State Pedagogic University to MOPSE, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; and • Anti-corruption compliance mechanisms to hiring procedures, complaints handling, and reporting, as well as dismissal. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching vision to reform educational assessment at all levels of education starting from early years and preschools to entrance to university examination; and • Mechanism for use of external benchmarking to ensure consistency, accuracy, and quality of classroom-level assessment in the short-medium-term. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitalisation of the process of collecting, accumulating and analysing financial and non-financial indicators that reflect the process of planning and budgeting and budget execution; • Clear mechanism and methodology for auditing of implementation of strategic plans; and • Foster effective partnerships with the private sector to support outcomes in preschools, and schools, as well as an environment in which such partnerships can flourish, with the involvement of both local entrepreneurs, and international investors. |
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CHALLENGES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of regulatory and institutional frameworks reflecting modern standards and sustainable development requirements; • No clear coordination exists at national level between different ministries in charge of construction and those responsible for investment and innovations; • Increasing pressure of "crowding in" of additional students in preschools and schools due to demographic situation, and lack of alignment school and preschool infrastructure development with demographic changes in the country; • Preschools and schools struggle with connectivity needs, low play-based learning resources, ICT provision, limited STEAM lab equipment, and a lack of gendered and inclusive WASH facilities; and • Insufficient budget for maintenance and infrastructure, in addition to a lack of systems and tools to ensure good use of resources, including a lack of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of alignment between ELDS standards, preschool and school curriculum and wider TLM reform, undermining phase transition from Early Childhood Settings to Schools, and associated School-readiness; • Lack of alignment with regard to school teachers' expectations and level of curriculum content and examination marking to international standards for age/years of education; • TLM development, including the development of play-based resources, and textbooks, has been characterized by a fragmented approach, lacking coherence and coordination, leading to widespread duplication of effort, and associated waste, as well as a disconnect between various (often donor-funded) reforms; and • New curriculum implementation is impeded by absence of competency-based learning assessment system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is poor coordination between systems of preservice and in-service training and education standards, curriculum and respective pedagogy, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; • Early Childhood Practitioners, Teachers and psychologists in Uzbekistan currently lack the knowledge and skills required to identify learners with special educational needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, or to ensure learning and teaching is planned and delivered to cater to distinct needs; and • System of on-job methodical support for both preschool and school teachers is de-facto absent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of an established tradition of pedagogy by which learning and teaching is informed by assessment, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education; • An historic lack of external assessment has resulted in inconsistency in assessment practices, rendering assessment data unreliable for comparative purposes, or for planning and executing wider interventions within the education sector; and • Lack of vision and absence of policy, as well as legislative mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation of assessment practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The actual annual budget process relies on instructions to the different sub-sectors, which are not linked to sector technical planning but on the expression of local and regional needs not necessarily linked to a results-based analysis of the performance of the system from one year to another, across all sectors; • Audit services perform mostly punitive function instead of focusing on analysis, identification, and risk management to prevent financial violations before they occur; • Early Childhood Practitioner/ Teacher assessment system is not informing teachers professional development and it is not competency-based, lacking transparency and anti-corruption mechanisms. It has strong negative impact on overall M&E system of the sector; • No referral mechanisms between the health sector and the education sector |
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records on usage of equipment, etc, across all sectors, including Early Childhood and Pre-Primary, as well as General Secondary Education.				for children with disabilities and identified at risk of HIV, requiring PSS, and/or suffering developmental delays, etc.; • No system in place for implementing bridging and catch-up education programmes for children who missed school and/or do not speak language of instruction; and • Public opinions and services for children with disabilities are still dominated by the medical model. Specialized schools are still positioned as the first-choice education for children with disabilities.
PILLAR 1: Infrastructure, Construction, and Equipment	PILLAR 2: Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Resources	PILLAR 3: Teachers Professional Development	PILLAR 4: Learning Assessment Systems	PILLAR 5: Governance, School Improvement and Monitoring and Evaluation

RED FLAGS

- Gender gaps in ECE attendance with almost 10% difference between boys and girls (3-4 years old). Difference in accessing preschools is especially pronounced for girls with disabilities -25.1% attend ECE compared to 45.6% of boys with disabilities.
- Significant regional disparities in ECE attendance rate: the highest in Tashkent City (54%) and the lowest in the southern geo-economic region (23%).
- To reach 80% enrolment for children aged 3 to 6 years, an additional 620,000 preschool places will be required.
- 2% difference in school attendance rates for upper secondary education - 95% for girls versus 93% for boys.
- In 2022/2023, enrolled secondary students exceeded capacity by 1,135,962.
- There is a difference of 22% between the proportion of students with and students without disabilities able to access 1-9 grades in schools. This difference is more than twice as large (46%) for access to upper-secondary education.
- In 2021, 13,167 boys studied in special schools for children with disabilities, while the number of girls studying in these schools was significantly lower - 8,463.
- In 2021, overall, 57% of Grade 3 students and 47% of Grade 5 students achieved 80% - a common benchmark - in the EGRA reading comprehension task.
- There is a substantial gap in mean achievement scores in learning assessment between regions, with the lowest performing demonstrating outcomes of c. 77% of those in the highest performing.
- The share of computer literate girls in the poorest quintile is more than two times less than boys in the same category (14.7% compared to 34.6%).
- Easy access to clean drinking water (through pipe) is available only at 47% of the general secondary schools. More than 81% of the general secondary schools reported having only one set of functional toilets (2-3 outlets on average) in the schools.

9. STATEMENT OF ENDORSEMENT BY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



STATEMENT OF ENDORSEMENT BY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

April 5, 2023

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Acknowledging that the Compact is the result of an inclusive and sustained dialogue between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Development Partners to strive for equitable access to transformative quality education for all.

Acknowledging the national education targets defined in the Development Strategy of the New Uzbekistan 2022-2026 as well as global frameworks such as the UN Global Agenda and Commitments under the Transforming Education Summit 2022 on achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recognizing the need for increased coordination and alignment to accelerate education reforms within the framework of the Local Education Group of the "Country Platform," while striving for active participation of Development Partners, the Government of Uzbekistan and broader civil society towards achieving SDG targets and national education results.

Recalling the principles adopted in the Compact concerning its focus on achievable results, strengthened partnerships and national dialogue, transparency and accountability.

We, Development Partners, intend to work together towards the implementation of the priority interventions defined in the Compact and enable the investments, technical support and financing needed to effectively advance the defined reform areas.

The Development Partners hereby intend to support the Partnership Compact and expect to strongly support the Government of Uzbekistan in its implementation.

On behalf of
**Ministry of Preschool
and School Education**


Khilola Umarova
 Minister of Preschool and School Education

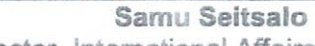
On behalf of
Asian Development Bank


Hiroki Katayama
 Officer in Charge of ADB Uzbekistan Resident Mission

On behalf of
British Council


Denise Waddingham
 Country Director

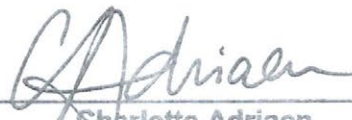
On behalf of
**Finnish National Agency for
Education**


Samu Seitsalo
 Director, International Affairs and Impact

On behalf of
**Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Office**


Sarah Cooper
 FCDO Development Director for Central Asia

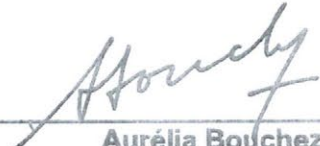
On behalf of
**Delegation of the European Union
to the Republic of Uzbekistan**


Charlotte Adriaen
 Ambassador

On behalf of
**Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit
(GIZ)**


Joachim Fritz
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On behalf of
Embassy of France in Uzbekistan


Aurélia Bouchez
 Ambassador

On behalf of
Islamic Development Bank


Mohammad Mirzaei Kahagh
 Operations Team Leader

On behalf of
**Japan International Cooperation
Agency**

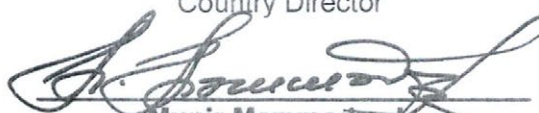

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 Chief Representative

On behalf of
KOICA Office in Uzbekistan



Sunjin Park
Country Director

On behalf of
United Nations Children's Fund



Munir Mammadzade
UNICEF Representative

On behalf of
United Nations Development Programme



Nika Saeedi
Deputy Representative

On behalf of
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



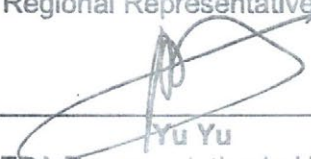
Sara Noshadi
UNESCO Representative

On behalf of
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



Ashita Mittal
UNODC Regional Representative to Central Asia

On behalf of
United Nations Population Fund



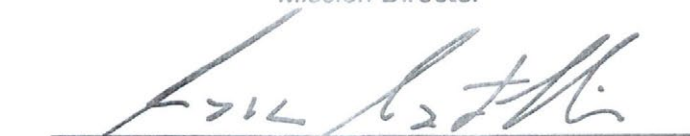
Yu Yu
UNFPA Representative in Uzbekistan

On behalf of
U.S. Agency for International Development



Mikaela Meredith
Mission Director

On behalf of
World Bank



Marco Mantovanelli
Country Manager for Uzbekistan

10. ANNEXES

ANNEX I

ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND EXISTING INTERVENTIONS ACROSS ALL SUB-SECTORS OF PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL EDUCATION

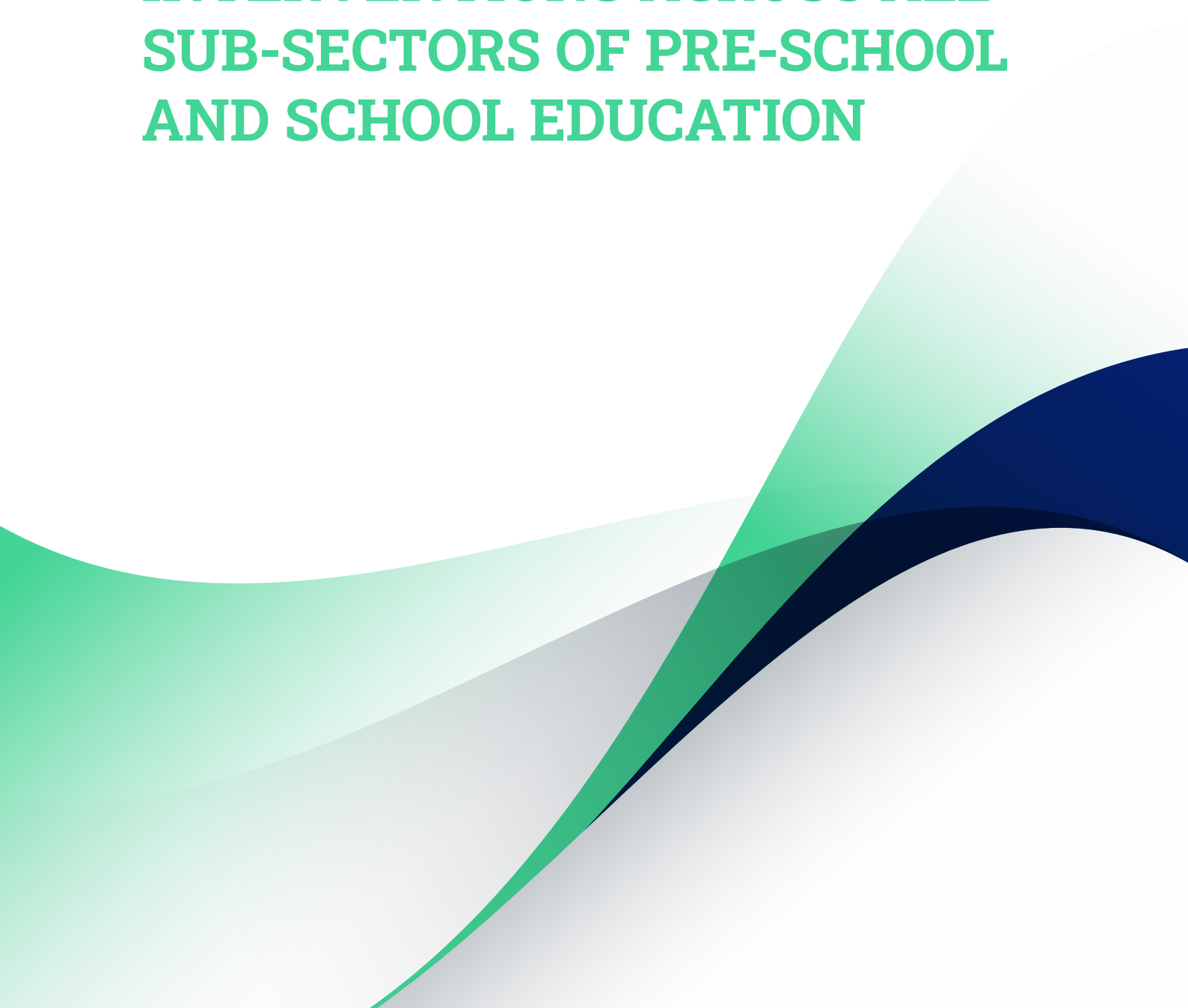


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1. INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING WASH / ICTS AND STEM LABS



1.1. OVERVIEW

1.1.1. INFRASTRUCTURE

From 2017 to 2022, the number of preschools in Uzbekistan increased from 5,211 to 29,420, including 438 state preschools built and 2,000 equipped in the scope of the education reform. Out of the total number of preschools, 6,549 preschools are under the Ministry of Preschools and School Education (MPSE), 48 are under coordination of other ministries, and the rest are non-state preschools (private, family-based and within other PPP modalities).

To expand access to preschool education, alternative models have been created, such as: mixed-age play groups (UNICEF) in 10 settlements (Khorezm/Namangan); Early Development Centres in Samarkand and Namangan (World Bank); mobile groups have been created in the form of mobile buses in remote / rural areas, which are attached to state preschool educational organizations; and non-state family preschool educational organizations with different age groups. A quarter of pre-schoolers are covered by this alternative model (554,000 children, 20,000 kindergartens).

In 2022, 71.8% of the preschool age children had been enrolled in preschools. The Government has announced that by 2026, the enrolment rate should reach 80% (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022).

By the end of 2022, the number of children aged 3 to 6 years reached 2,859,200; according to the expected forecasts, by 2026 their number will reach 3,408,400. To achieve the target of 80% enrolment by 2026, it is necessary to create new places in preschool educational institutions for 620,000 children in all regions of the Republic (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019). Out of total number of required seats 113,750 will be created in the public sector and the rest in non-state preschools. Creation of the state preschools will require an additional 5,385,874 mln soums (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023)

In school education, in parallel with low pupil-teacher ratios (11:1 PTR in 2023; Government targeted to reach 10:1 by 2025) (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019), there is the issue of double-shift classes, with 60% of schools in the country operating in double shifts. By 2025, the government is planning to increase the proportion of schools with a single shift to 50%, and to 60% by 2030 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022).

In the 2022/2023 academic year, the total capacity of schools amounted to 5,200,971 places (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023). According to forecast calculations, the number of children aged 7-17 years will reach 7,642,700 by 2026 and 8,660,800 by 2030 (IFMR, 2022). The Government announced the creation of an additional 1.2 million student places in the public education system and bringing the number of student places to 6.4 million by the end of 2026 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). This will be partially covered by newly created non-state general educational institutions, including on the basis of public-private partnerships. The number

of non-state institutions will be increased to 237 by 2025. Out of 1,2 million places, 140,000 places have been already created in 2022. According to the latest preliminary estimations of the MPSE, to achieve the target by 2026 375 additional schools will be constructed and 1,250 reconstructed. This will require an additional 20,625 billion soums.

Additionally, in 2,203 existing schools, the constructions of gyms will be required. This will need 4,847 million soums (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023).

It is important to note that canteen infrastructure is also critical given the positive impact of school feeding programs on educational outcomes. 3,861 of schools do not have canteens and some of these schools rely on distribution of food by a supplier, which often does not meet the minimum standards. 1,664 schools need reconstruction of canteens. More information is required on the current status and implementation of national school feeding programmes. Construction and reconstruction of canteens in existing schools will require an additional 4,140.5 million soums (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023).

Beyond the need for additional classrooms in the preschool and school sub-sectors, the skills-based approach of the new programs requires quality additional learning equipment to facilitate the concrete application of educational programs implemented at all levels. It is therefore necessary to address norms and standards of constructions and precise equipment which will facilitate quality learning in the classrooms. While revising the standards and norms, it is important to consider and take into account the possible gaps in terms of corruption risks as well as the needs of children with disabilities.

In school education, there is a willingness to develop non-governmental schools as well as prioritize modern schools. The factors that influence learning outcomes positively identified through TIMSS/PIRLS fitted learning assessment on Grade 4 in 2019 and directly related to school environment are: school safety, level of attendance, monitoring of school, temperature of the classroom, equipment, homework, and adapted teaching and learning materials (UNICEF, 2018). During the discussion, one of the suggestions to ensure safety was to provide school busses to transport children to educational institutions.

1.1.2. WASH INFRASTRUCTURE

Continuous water access as well as sufficient and gender friendly toilets are known to be factors that improve access to, and the quality of, learning environments in preschools and schools. The COVID-19 outburst has shown the lack of WASH facilities in many educational institutions in the country, especially in remote areas.

In 2023, according to Agency of preschool education analysis, out of 6,549 state preschools, 77% (5,045) have access to a centralized source of drinking water, 11% (746) use alternative sources, including artesian water, and children from 12% (764) of state preschools bring water from special facilities. The amount needed for equipping these preschools with drinking water facilities is estimated at 54 billion soums (by preliminary calculations) (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023).

Currently 1,322 toilet facilities are located outside the preschool building, and only 24% of state preschools are connected to a central sewage system. Toilets need to be reconstructed by 2026. This will require an additional 159 billion soums (according to preliminary calculations) (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023)

In school education, in 2023, the total number of schools reached 10,104, out of which 8,612 schools (85.2%) have access to drinking water, according to MPSE data. Students from 1,492 schools have to bring water from home. The amount needed for equipping these schools with drinking water facilities is estimated at 223.8 billion soums.

Total number of school toilets reached 11,659 (this means on average only 1.2 toilets per school), as per MPSE data. Only 911 (c. 9%) of 10,104 schools connected to the central sewage system. New toilets will be constructed in the newly created and reconstructed schools. 1,534 toilets need to be reconstructed in existing schools by 2026. This will require an additional 76.7 billion soums (Agency of Preschool Education, 2023).

During the thematic discussion led on the 9th of February, some additional achievements in terms of construction have been discussed, among which a visible change in practices thanks to the existence of normative documents and typical projects of infrastructures both in preschool and GSE (modern school), with modern materials providing advantages, and the improvement of heater availability, more internal toilets, as well as drinking water. It was also highlighted that current building and equipment standards for educational institutions have to include 'mandatory' equipment with water taps with filters for drinking water purification and the creation of hygiene conditions for girls (ensuring that toilets have doors) and for children with limited mobility, etc.

The integration of schools in the cadastral plan but also time saved for implementation period and maintenance have also been mentioned. An initiative for Clean Building exists following a presidential resolution even though the project is unclear so far. Some participants mentioned a decrease in the unit cost of constructions, and an improvement in the calculation of capital investment cost and has also been noted. Moreover, the Prevention of Crime and corruption in education system is covered with specific training provided in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, and there is an evidence base on school safety. A reference document on construction has been developed by the Ministry of Construction.

1.1.3. ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND STEM LABS

Eight out of ten preschools are equipped with ICT facilities and 90% have Internet connectivity (90% of schools). According to the Concept for school development up to 2030, the share of classrooms that needs to be equipped with modern computers has to be increased from 30% in 2022 to 60% (out of total number of classrooms in need) by 2025 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). According to MPSE calculations, by 2026, 8,477 computer classes need to be equipped with modern computers that will require an additional 1,521,622 mln. soums to be allocated.

Nevertheless, there is limited information on the accessibility of these facilities as well as effective use at the school level and during lessons. Moreover, the new competency-based curricula may call for specific software availability and teaching competencies that need to be built to make sure students are provided with quality ICT tools to improve the quality of learning. Also, it is necessary to develop standards and revise approaches to teaching in laboratory classes, as well as to link them with the methodology of teaching in subject areas (chemistry, physics, biology, and IT).

The Concept 2030 is targeting 20% of GSE teachers with technical competencies to use STEM labs during courses by 2025, and 50% by 2030 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019). STEM labs are important to improving the scientific competencies of students. While STEM labs equipment and regular purchase of materials are costly, if well organized and used, it can be cost-effective in terms of learning outcomes.

In 2019, an IT School Model has been piloted during three years in 14 schools, one per region, and was planned to be implemented into 200 new schools with no success. In 2021, ADB funded the implementation of STEM Schools as well. Moreover, special centres for teacher training are provided with ICT solutions



1.2. CHALLENGES

Lack of regulatory and institutional frameworks reflecting modern standards and sustainable development requirements. Even though positive changes have been observed, the quality of construction is still low, especially when it comes to equitable access for children with disabilities, gender-appropriate design, and weak regulation of the whole construction process from tender to infrastructure Quality Assurance Requirements (QAR) and delivery.

No clear coordination exists at national level between different responsible ministries in charge of construction (Construction, Health, Education), and those responsible for investment and innovations. A general plan on construction needs to be developed in direct link with the Construction Strategy to be reviewed. This coordination between the national, regional, and local level is all the more necessary as huge differences are observed in terms of purchase / procurement / price of meter square between private and public construction.

Lack of high-quality real time data in terms of infrastructure, equipment, WASH, and ICT facilities of schools/preschools. As a result, decisions on the selection of schools for renovation and sites for new construction are not evidence based.

Increasing pressure of 'crowding in' of additional students in preschools and schools due to demographic situation. Schools and preschool, despite efforts made these last years to facilitate the access for all, still need to be reconstructed/equipped, including water supply, toilets in the school, and electricity, especially in remote areas.

There is also a need for a more qualitative QAR on the usefulness of construction towards quality of education service delivery complementary to the strictly architectural monitoring done so far. The fact that schools are highly dependent on local authorities which receive the funding for constructions can explain the difficulty to harmonize construction/equipment practices at national level, since principals may be reluctant to report bad practices or specific gaps to the Ministry in order not to affect their relationship with local-level decision makers. At last, the introduction of schools into cadastral plans as well as construction prioritization are done manually, which takes time and does not rely on specific evidence-based criteria. Thus, there is an urgent need to develop electronic tools for construction planning at national, regional, and district levels.

Schools struggle with connectivity needs, low ICT provision, limited STEM lab equipment, and a lack of gendered and inclusive WASH facilities. There is lack of information on level of ICT literacy of teachers including the use of specific software solutions and equipment. The available STEM labs are poorly equipped and there is no regulatory framework for them; the use of virtual STEM labs creates inequities in terms of access in the country.



1.3. OPPORTUNITIES

Update of the regulatory and institutional framework and standards for preschool and school infrastructure and equipment, to reflect modern standards and sustainable development requirements complying with transparent and competitive procurement. Analysis and review of National Legislative Acts for gaps, including corruption risks and consideration of the needs of children with disabilities (including public procurement, ShNK, SNiP and SanPiN, PPP, as well as model projects of schools and preschools). Existing PPP mechanisms in school and preschool education needs to be improved, taking into account international experience (per capita funding). Anticorruption review of construction and procurement procedures is also required along with disclosure of procurement documents, budgeting and financial reports to public, and use of open data in providing statistics on infrastructure development of schools. Anti-corruption compliance procedures should be established in TOR design, competitive procurement, control and transparency of contract performance, and participation of local communities and parents in joint acceptance of construction and renovation results. Once constructed and equipped a school should receive a commissioning certificate (www.transparency.org), after an audit conducted according to previously established N&S, including Sanitation norms reviewed (WASH) but also ICT and STEM labs ones. Anticorruption examination of construction procedures is also required.

Improvement of the mechanism of coordination between relevant ministries and departments, as well as interaction with civil society and law enforcement agencies (anti-corruption). There is a clear need for a national coordination of infrastructure/equipment at the Ministry of Education level, responsible for setting norms and standards to be implemented at community levels and reporting regularly to improve the transparency of school construction activities. Moreover, all construction funding should be monitored by a single ministry.

Improving the data collection. Further regular data collection through EMIS on several measures of hygiene needs according to reference indicators set by the Joint Monitoring Program requirements (accessibility, availability, acceptability, quality, type, food hygiene, hand sanitizer, training, PPE for cleaning staff; financing) will help to better address issues. A two-way mechanism should be implemented to monitor infrastructure needs to improve the learning environment: the first one from the Ministry to the local level using the N&S set, the second one from schools to the ministry to take into account special local needs. This calls for an improved EMIS system with accurate data collected to feed this geoportal. A geoportal including cadastral references and other population, local types of vulnerability, school attendance and existing school equipment data should be developed to prioritize, plan, and monitor construction/equipment according to evidence-based needs.

Improving access to schools and preschools infrastructure and gender sensitive WASH facilities with a consistent focus on safety and accessibility for children with disabilities. This will include creation and equipment of additional alternative groups of preschools; providing uninterrupted access to infrastructure (electricity, heating, Internet cable, sports fields, canteens) and WASH (installation of water filters in schools and preschools); and ensuring safety standards (video surveillance at borders, lighting, roads and crossings, and security). Every school and preschool should be provided with sustainable electricity, and the local population's awareness should be raised on the importance of inclusive education for more equitable access facilities in all schools. There is a need to increase the number of kindergartens and provide preschool users (incl. parents) with additional contents on parenting sensitisation dedicated platforms.

Other aspects of school safety include, among others, safe pedestrian access to school, gender and age-sensitive access to sports facilities and recreational areas, renewable energy sources to support school lightning and ICT system, security cameras (CCTV) outside school perimeter, wheelchair accessibility, etc. A safe school environment will help students to fulfil their full potential, focus on education and learning tasks, and achieve better academic performance.

Improving access to ICT and STEM. Develop a national STEM strategy; conduct an inventory on existing labs, to identify existing problems and assist with equipment needs; develop standards and revise approaches to teaching in labs, also linking them to teaching methodologies by subject areas (chemistry, physics, biology, and IT); equip state preschools with tablets and interactive boards; procure and transparently distribute individual assistive and accessibility devices for children with disabilities, prioritizing inclusive schools.



1.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS INTERVENTIONS

IsDB, Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF Enhancing Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Project in the Republic of Uzbekistan

The project aims to enhance various aspects of quality of preschool education and augment the capacity of the system at various levels to improve equitable access to quality preschool education in Uzbekistan. The focus of this project will be on: (i) improving access to preschool education; (ii) system strengthening; (ii) curriculum and alternative models of preschool provision; and (iii) capacity building of teachers and managers.

The project has the following components: (1) enhancing access to ECCE education facilities; (2) enhancing the system and capacity for improving the quality of preschool education; (3) support to project management; (4) financial auditing consultant; (5) technical review and monitoring consultant; and (6) contingency emergency response component.

World Bank, Transforming Public Education for Economic Growth Project, *Sep 2023 – Jun 2028, US\$50m, Nationwide*

Component 1: Improve the Teaching and Learning Environment: (i) support the gender-specific requirements for girls' menstrual health and accessibility of WASH facilities in targeted schools; (ii) support preparedness of students for future crises and 21st century jobs and improve access to and use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the education process.

UNICEF School Health & Nutrition, Jan – Dec 2023, national level

The aim of this project is to enhance health awareness and skill building among school children through a healthy environment, disease prevention and health promotion, and recognising the child as a change agent in the family.

UNICEF WASH in Schools Programme, Jan – Dec 2023, national level

The aim of this project is to improve the health and learning performance of school-aged children – and, by extension, that of their families – by reducing the incidence of water- and sanitation-related diseases.

UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA JP ‘Laying the foundations for people-centred, climate-resilient primary health care and water, sanitation and hygiene practices at healthcare facilities and schools in Karakalpakstan’, Jan – Dec 2023, US\$ 2,780,000, Regional: Karakalpakstan

The aims of this project are to:

- Increase access to climate-resilient primary healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene services for 320,000 people in Karakalpakstan;
- Expand availability of 10 climate-smart safe and clean schools for 5,000 children and adolescents in Karakalpakstan; and
- Improve inclusive education, the health and climate change needs for 241,000 people in three districts (Kegeyli, Shimbay and Karaozek, including Nukus city for inclusive education).

UNICEF, UNFPA, UNODC JP ‘Investing in a resilient future of Karakalpakstan by improving health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and wellbeing of adolescents and by harnessing the talents of youth during and after COVID- 19’, Jan 2021 – Dec 2023, US \$ 3,550,273, Regional: Karakalpakstan

The main aim of the joint project is to address the immediate needs of vulnerable populations, including adolescents, in terms of safe and clean schools and healthcare facilities, and other health and nutrition needs, and to strengthen human capital and the resilience of youth by expanding opportunities for social innovation skills development in three districts (Muynak, Kungrad, and Bozatau). The project has already supported the construction of 15 schools and 20 HCFs WASH facilities, trained over 1,076 school teachers and 16,000 school children on WASH and nutrition, provided 5 mln iron and folic acid supplementation tablets to 131,000 adolescent girls (10-17 years of age) and 80,000 tablets of albendazole, and organized two rounds of a deworming campaign covering 40,000 school children aged 7-14.

UNICED ‘Technical Cooperation Agreement with ADB on Improving Access and Strengthening Innovations for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Countries and Caucasus’, National

The aim of this project is to improve WASH standards, conduct a KAPN study on WASH in Schools and develop a WASH Social Behaviour Change Strategy.

UNICEF Ensuring Enhanced Access to Inclusive Education, Social Services, and Legal Aid in the Surkhandarya Region (jointly with EU), June 2022 – December 2023,
Technical and financial contribution, Surkhandarya region as pilot with the aim of integrating nationwide

The aim of this project is to introduce formal and non-formal inclusive (multi-lingual) education for school-age Afghan and host community children with a particular focus on girls by introducing new working modalities, methodology, teacher training and offering classes in the mother tongue and transitions to mainstream language while addressing learning losses.

2. CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY, TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS, TEACHER TRAINING



2.1. OVERVIEW

From 1960 to 2022 the population of Uzbekistan increased from 8,53 million to 35,27 million people (stat.uz, 2022). Uzbekistan's population growth will continue and, according to the latest projections, its population is expected to reach 40 million people by 2030 (UNFPA supported projection). Such a rapid population growth poses serious economic consequences exerting pressure across all social services.

According to official statistical data, preschool enrolment increased to over 71% in 2022 as compared to 27% in 2017 enrolment rates (3-6 years old). Participation rates of 6-year-olds in one-year pre-primary education reached 90% in September 2022. However, the MICS data released in 2022 show regional variations, with the highest attendance rate in Tashkent City (54%) and the lowest in the southern geo-economic region (23%).

A total of 6.3 million children attended general secondary education in 2022, out of which 51% are girls. While there are no official statistics available on out-of-school children, analysis based on 2022 MICS data highlights that gender disparities along with geographical inequities remain in relation to completion of a full cycle of education, with 94.3% of boys completing upper secondary education as compared to 93.3% of girls.

In terms of quality of learning, the results of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), conducted in 2021 (USAID, 2022; US Embassy Uzbekistan, 2022), confirmed the findings of the UNICEF-MoPE learning assessments conducted in 2019 (UNICEF & MOPE, 2019), showing students underperforming in grade level comprehension skills in language and in applying numeracy skills to more complex and conceptual problems. In 2022, for the first time, Uzbekistan participated in the Programme for International Students Assessments (PISA) measuring learning outcomes of 15-year-old students; UNICEF provided technical support and exchange of best practices supporting its implementation.



2.2. CHALLENGES

Lack of clarity, coherence and coordination in curriculum and teaching-learning materials reform

Stability, quality, and coherence are key to ensuring that wider reforms are successful, as well as alignment to parallel initiatives in teacher education, curriculum reform, pedagogy, and assessment.

Setting unrealistic targets for curriculum review adds challenges for ensuring inclusiveness of curriculum and teachers' preparation.

Learning and teaching materials development has been characterized by a fragmented approach, lacking coherence and coordination. This has led to widespread duplication of effort, and associated waste, as well as a disconnect between various (often donor funded) reforms. Likewise, historically there are often cases of changing course of reforms, disbanding the teams responsible for curriculum reform and appointing new ones. Capacity-building in this field takes a great deal of time and effort – repeated changes of responsible technical leads, teams and authors would be a huge waste of the expertise and experience, greatly delaying the implementation of the reforms and negatively impacting learning outcomes.

Areas of weakness highlighted during stakeholder discussions include poor coordination curricula of the In-Service Training Institute and the Pedagogical University (both preschool and school teacher training) and lack of alignment between the ELDS, the preschool and school curriculum, and wider TLM reform.

Any future reforms, initiatives, programmes/projects should be underpinned by a principle of coherence, complementarity, and consistency: frequent changes of direction and a lack of long-term stability are harmful and impact negatively on learner outcomes. If stability does not shape interventions, it is unlikely they will succeed.

Lack of support for teachers' continuous professional development

A wide range of evidence demonstrates that by far the most significant variable impacting on learning outcomes is access to quality teaching. This intersects with all wider reforms relating to pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and systems-level interventions, as all are likely to have minimal impact if teaching quality is not improved significantly. Reform in this area is particularly important when working to facilitate a shift away from textbook driven learning and teaching approaches.

As the country gears towards enrolling more than one million 3-6-year-old children in the next decade, the country needs to prepare more than 50,000 – 75,000 preschool teachers for recruitment into the system. Preparing future preschool teachers as per the latest curriculum and ELDS, using the child-centred pedagogy, would require revisiting and reviewing the teachers' pre-service training curriculum and pedagogy as well. There is a lack of the flexibility in the system of teacher training with no credit system in place. The system of regional and district in-service training for pre-school teachers should be revised and established. MOPSE's analysis of preschool managers' capacity also indicates that the managers need to be trained in preschool governance and management in modern ways.

According to the latest statistical data from the State Statistics Committee, there are 521,600 teachers working in 10,522 schools. Each year, the system receives roughly 7,000 young and re-trained teachers and approximately the same number retire. 400 schools are operating without school principals, and there is still a need for hundreds of teachers to fill vacancies at schools. A prominent issue is the disconnection between pre- and in-service teacher training services. The overall teacher training system requires improvement since there is no standardized approach and no appraisal and monitoring mechanisms in TPD. This is even more serious with the absence of the system of training the teacher-trainers. Finally, the practice of induction to teaching at schools is outdated and is only limited to technical questions about the job.

Systems of supportive supervision and on-job methodical support for both pre-school and school teachers are de-facto absent too.

No use of assessment to inform teaching

The historical context in which teachers mostly relied on textbook-driven instruction has undermined attempted reforms of pedagogic practice. An integrated approach by which curriculum, assessment, and TLM promote reflective teaching practice in preschool and school settings is necessary if future reforms are to succeed.

There is a clear need for guidance on core aspects of learning and teaching, including planning, lesson delivery, and evidence-based approaches to classroom teaching (including the appropriate use of technology). Extensive guidance is needed on assessment practices, including, but not limited to:

- Practical approaches to assessment for learning in the classroom;
- Planning for assessment;
- Integrating assessment into wider pedagogic practice;
- Using assessment data to inform learning and teaching;
- Using assessment data to inform interventions, at a classroom, school, provincial, and national level;
- Ensuring assessment data facilitates differentiated teaching, catering to the specific needs of pupils; and
- Supporting a 'reflective practitioner' approach, rooted in 'action research'.

In pre-school education, ELDS-based assessment of child development through observation is done mechanically and there is a lack of practical use of the observation results and planning of educational process.

Curriculum and examination content are below those in comparable international contexts in relation to age and/or years of education as are teachers' expectations of learners at all levels, particularly in upper secondary school

It is also necessary to work to strengthen coherence of the curriculum for preschool education, perhaps drawing upon highly structured models of good practice internationally, such as the EYFS.

Additional challenges identified by stakeholders include:

- Personnel are not trained based on need (lack of teachers in different regions);
- Integrating family-skills & life-skills in training programs for teachers and school psychologists;
- Alignment of TPD courses with Professional Standards and Competency Frameworks for teachers;

- Lack or absence of coherence and mutual communication in the field of training and professional development of pedagogues;
- The fact that the knowledge of the graduates of the teacher training system does not correspond to the established quality and state standards, and through this, the entry of low-quality personnel into schools;
- Students/teachers get more theoretical and less practical opportunities during undergraduate and professional development courses;
- Absence of an effective training procedure in the school for young pedagogues who entered the system;
- Lack of awareness of the results of local and foreign research related to the field of undergraduate and professional development course content;
- The quality of teacher trainers in the field of professional development, and lack of professional development courses for them;
- Inadequate level / lack of connection between undergraduate and advanced courses and educational and professional standards;
- Absence of mechanisms for measuring the quality of training courses;
- Low / lack of 'assessment' knowledge and competence of existing and new teachers;
- Improvement, testing and implementation of curriculum and selection curricula based on international experiences;
- Completion of creation of state education standards (DTS) in all subjects;
- Improvement of educational programs on the basis of DTS, conducting international expertise testing and putting into practice;
- Creation of textbooks for educational institutions, localization and printing of textbooks and teaching-methodical collections of internationally recognized publishers;
- Organization of targeted professional development courses and trainings for pedagogical personnel based on the improved DTS, curriculum, training programs and textbooks;
- Organization of international and local professional development courses and trainings for members of working groups on the creation of textbooks and educational-methodical complexes;
- Introduction of the methodical manual for the 'Preparation for life' program for the heads of upper classes and teachers of physical education in general secondary schools;
- Approval of professional standards for a preschool teacher;
- Improving the system of certification of preschool teachers of distance learning on the basis of a professional standards;
- Insufficient coordination of interaction between various international projects of the education system in particular preschool education; and
- A lack of understanding on the part of practitioners as to effective pedagogical approaches in areas such as ICT, STEAM, and innovation.



2.3. OPPORTUNITIES

Clarity, coherence and coordination in curriculum and teaching-learning materials reform

The recent shifts toward a competency-based curricula should be used as a foundation for continuous reform in this area, which intersects with parallel reforms in teacher training, assessment, and teaching and learning materials development.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and associated plan should be updated with consideration of recent developments and followed ensuring alignment between all subsectors.

Revised ELDS and Preschool Curriculum should be implemented nationwide and the focus should be on developing the capacity of preschool specialists in adapting the curriculum to diverse contexts. These diverse contexts include: (i) adapting revised curriculum, pedagogic guidelines, and TLMs/ play materials for facilitating activities in preschools catering to communities with linguistic diversities; (ii) adapting curriculum, pedagogy, and materials for facilitating inclusive education within regular preschools; and (iii) adapting international best practices for regular preschools.

There is a need to establish a clear strategy to facilitate smooth phase transition from pre-primary to primary and from secondary to secondary specialized, or tertiary education, or work. The recent merging of preschool and public education ministries provides an excellent opportunity to ensure coherence between the earlier stages of education. Likewise, shift in oversight of Tashkent State Pedagogical University from MoHE to MoPSE should strengthen opportunities for the development of training and capacity building which better meets the needs of learners, ensuring a consistent and coherent approach.

Support to teachers' continuous professional development

Teachers Professional Standards for Preschool (developed and pending approval) and School Education (developed and approved) should become the basis for enhancing the pre-and in-service teacher training system and curricula. There is a need to establish a clear mechanism for supporting school leaders and classroom teachers in adopting approaches to effectively improve outcomes for learners, including mentorship, guidance, and capacity building as part of structured school improvement planning rooted in self-evaluation and benchmarking. The In-Service Training Institute for Preschool Education Staff (directors, methodologists and preschool pedagogues) increased quotes for admission to Higher Education, reducing the Bachelor's program for pre-primary teachers to 3 years, allowing acting preschool pedagogues to undergo re-qualification courses during 6 months at the Pedagogical University in order to change their field of study/work, and strengthening practical activity can contribute to this. Work already undertaken on developing methodological manuals for preschool education based on the state requirements and preschool curriculum 'Ilk qadam' and pioneering work

on developing school-level Teacher's Guides provide an excellent foundation for further developments in this area. But there is still a need to support the preparation of the teachers' and preschool managers' in-service training package and establishing in-service teacher training system at regional levels. Pre-service teachers' training curriculum and pedagogy is to be revised in line with preschool curriculum, national requirements and international best practices. Online digital platforms for teachers (Bolalik Academyasi, Teachers Continuous Professional Development by Avloniy) should be widely used by teachers nationwide.

The in-service system of schoolteachers and principals has transformed from a periodic trainings-based model to a continuous professional development model. With the previous system, school teachers had the opportunity to professionally develop themselves once in five years while school principals did so once in three years. With the new model, they have a chance to do CPD every year with any of the four main CPD providers: 'Continuous Professional Development' LMS platform, 14 regional teacher training institutions, private centres, and universities.

The development of the 'Continuous Professional Development' LMS platform also enabled to see the holistic picture of professional development of teachers, principals, and others. It helped digitalise the CPD, allowing key decision makers to make evidence-informed and statics-based policies.

Use of assessment to inform teaching

Recent and ongoing reforms focused on curriculum should be capitalized on, and serve as a foundation for ongoing systemic reform. For this to be successful, it is essential that:

- Formative assessment is not erroneously associated with, combined with, or otherwise allowed to influence, formative assessment of attainment and progress in relation to curriculum content;
- 'Textbook-driven' pedagogic practices are supplanted by lessons planned and delivered to meet needs of individual learners, identified through formative assessment by teachers;
- All teachers are supported, encouraged, and trained to adopt assessment-informed approaches to planning and delivering lessons with C-SMART objectives, within a context of wider school improvement planning rooted in self-reflection and benchmarking.

Lack of challenge in the school curriculum comparing to international standards

Building upon the work that has been already undertaken under development of National Curriculum Framework, there is a clear opportunity to implement targeted reforms at the intersect between curriculum, assessment, TLM and pedagogy to improve outcomes in attainment and progress for all learners. The number of core subjects should be reduced to allow for consistent focus on improved outcomes in key disciplines and higher standards in national examination should be set to raise expectations of learners, and ensure requisite levels of 'challenge' are maintained, in line with international standards, particularly at Upper Secondary level.

Additionally, stakeholders also identified the following opportunities:

- Merging of Ministries of Preschool and Public Education;
- Teacher professional development;
- Creation of additional didactic materials for high school students based on the 'Education for Justice' program;
- Introduce the need to develop guidelines for the development of children from the age of 2;
- Provide training for teachers to work with children aged 2; and
- Existing regional and district hubs have the potential to serve as a platform for future enhancement of practice in the areas of ICT, STEAM, and Innovation.



2.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS INTERVENTIONS

World Bank Transforming Public Education for Economic Growth Project

September 2023 – June 2028

The project seeks to:

- Support the gender-specific requirements for girls' menstrual health and accessibility of WASH facilities in targeted schools;
- Support preparedness of students for future crises and 21st century jobs; component 1 will improve access to and use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the education process;
- Strengthen pre-service training, aligning the training with curriculum changes, and strengthening practicum experience for pre-service teachers;
- Support in classroom coaching and mentoring through regular classroom observations by school headteachers/principals and dedicated teacher mentors who can provide feedback on pedagogic approach and improve teaching delivery; and
- Support the implementation of the improved mechanism, strengthening the CPD system to align with the requirements of the new post-COVID realities of the education system. In addition, the incentive system, such as career growth and remuneration which needs to be linked to the teacher professional performance will also be strengthened through strengthening of the CPD system.

World Bank Project "Promoting Early Childhood Development" 2019-2024.

The development objectives of Promoting Early Childhood Development Project for Uzbekistan are to increase access to early childhood education, improve the quality of learning environments in selected public preschools, and enable a systematic measurement of education quality for informed decision-making. The project supports the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan to expand and improve early childhood development services, as reflected in numerous recent government decisions and regulations.

The objectives of the project are to improve access to education in early childhood, to improve the quality of the learning environment in selected public preschools, and to create opportunities for systematic measurement of the quality of education in order to make informed decisions.

As part of the quality improvement component:

1. activities to implement a training programme for some 14,000 pre-school teachers from public educational institutions and 700 master trainers;
2. equipping 10,800 groups for 6-year-old children with didactic sets, furniture and other products;
3. conducting a study on measuring the quality of preschool education on the basis of international tools "MELKO", which includes "MODEL" and "MELE";
 - equipping the National Center for International Studies on Educational Quality Assessment with multimedia equipment and other goods.

UNODC ROCA 'Education for Justice' Initiative (2018-2022), which will be continued through promoting and organizing educational programmes on rule of law, culture of lawfulness and crime prevention among youth in 2023-2026 (subject to resources mobilization)

The Education for Justice (E4J) initiative seeks to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness through education activities designed for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. These activities help educators teach the next generation to better understand and address problems that can undermine the rule of law and encourage students to actively engage in their communities and future professions in this regard. A set of products and activities for the primary and secondary levels have been developed in partnership with UNESCO and aimed to prevent corruption, violence, trafficking in persons, cybercrime, etc; to develop integrity, ethics, and critical thinking skills. In Uzbekistan, the E4J initiative covered all geographic areas, more than 1,000 secondary schools and 70,000 students. On a primary level, the E4J educational tools (the Zorbs cartoon series) were included into the primary curricula, covering more than 500,000 children every school year.

UNODC ROCA GRACE Initiative 2022-2025 *(its operationalization in Uzbekistan depends on resources mobilization)*

Building on the success of the Education for Justice (E4J) and Anti-Corruption Academic (ACAD) initiatives, which have become globally recognized for their added value in supporting beneficiaries in Member States, UNODC launches the Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment (GRACE) initiative to promote further the role of education and youth empowerment in preventing and countering corruption. In Uzbekistan, the GRACE was presented to the UN Youth Advisory Board.

UNODC “Strong Families” and “Family UNited” family skills training programmes, unique as the only programs offered with parental involvement
(2019-2022, expected to be continued in 2023-2026 subject to resources mobilization)

Together with the Ministry of Public Education, the “Strong Families” and “Family UNited” family skills training programmes were introduced by UNODC in Uzbekistan. The programmes aim at improving parenting skills, child well-being, and mental health. The family skills training programmes introduced by UNODC in Uzbekistan are proven to be a gender-sensitive (affecting both caregivers and boys and girls equally) intervention. These programs are primarily implemented in schools and may also take place in the home or in community settings, in remote rural areas, as well as in areas with limited resources, including such categories as repatriates, migrants, and self-returnees (many of them from Afghanistan). The program includes four two-hour sessions where youth and parents attend the first hour separately and the second hour together. Parent sessions focus on education about the behavioural risk factors, as well as managing family conflict and encouraging positive child involvement in family activities. Children receive education on resisting peer pressure and developing social skills. Ready to use curriculum materials are available in Uzbek, Russian, and Karakalpak. Worldwide, a number of randomized controlled studies have shown a statistically significant reduction in the level of aggression, offenses and social conflicts among students, fewer behavior problems, and an increase in the academic competence of those participating in the family training/parenting program. Through the “Strong Families” initiative, 3700 national facilitators and 20 national trainers were trained, and parenting workshops were attended by 450,000 children and 920,000 family members.

UNODC supported the introduction of “Family UNited” program within the framework of the UNICEF/UNFPA/UNODC joint programme “Investing in a resilient future of Karakalpakstan by improving health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and well-being of adolescents and by harnessing the talents of youth during and after COVID-19” in three pilot districts (Bozataw, Kungrad, Muynak) of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. During the project implementation period, 1,660 families in 60 schools of the pilot districts were able to benefit from the programme. In addition, a pool of 92 facilitators (psychologists and teachers) were trained to deliver the programme with a possibility to scaling the programme up in the whole region. Less aggressive behavior and/or infractions (30%) and higher academic performance (20%) were two of the main benefits.

UNDP Enhancing the Capacities of Surkhandarya Region to Educate and Train Afghan citizens

This project aims to create new, and expand existing, educational opportunities for Afghan citizens, with a particular focus on youth and women, by expanding the provision of vocational education and training programs and short courses, as well as further strengthening the capacity of the Education Center for the Training of Afghan Citizens in Termez (ECTAC). As part of the project, it is expected that more than 330 students will have access to education to obtain a bachelor's degree in such areas as railway engineering and construction, Uzbek language and literature, as well as one-year advanced training courses in sewing, information technology, agribusiness, and tourism. Furthermore, 100 students will have the opportunity to study at 3-month short courses in basic professions such as driving, hairdressing, and sewing. In addition, the technical and educational capacity of ECTAC will benefit from the implementation of this project, as it is planned to procure IT equipment, buses, and other materials for classroom activities, furniture and other equipment, as well as the establishment of an EU-UNDP co-working centre in the Education Centre.

UNDP Preventing Corruption through Effective, Accountable and Transparent Governance Institutions in Uzbekistan *May - Dec 2022 - \$8,000,000 – Nationwide*

The project introduced anti-corruption education in the entire system of national education, including:

- 1 Together with the Ministry of Public Education, educational disciplines were introduced on 'Honesty and Integrity' for schoolchildren in grades 4-8, 'Fundamentals of Anti-Corruption' for schoolchildren in grades 9-10', teaching educational methodological discipline 'Anti-Corruption' for teachers and lecturers on the basis of the Center for Retraining Teachers;
- 2 Together with the Ministry of Higher Education, educational and methodological courses were introduced for students of higher educational institutions on 'Anti-Corruption - the Basis of Integrity'; and
- 3 Capacity building of the Anti-Corruption Compliance Units in the Ministries of People's and Higher Education was provided, in the regional Departments of Public Education, secondary schools, Tashkent State Economic University, Tashkent Law University as pilot projects.

UNESCO and GPE 'Adapting and Scaling Teachers Professional Development Approaches' Global Research Project, *May 2020 – Dec 2022*

UNESCO supported strengthening the capacity of MoPSE and its subordinate entities in designing, implementing, and sustaining at scale the Teachers Professional Development model, based on research. While the previous TPD model of Uzbekistan was limited to offer professional development only once in five years, and to study only subject-based knowledge and pedagogical skills, the new TPD Model allows lifelong learning principles by enabling teachers to access various professional courses anytime from anywhere flexibly and in a cost-effective manner. Before the national launch, the Model was piloted in four regions:

Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya, Navoiy and Tashkent by offering updated curriculum and more than 30 courses for teachers.

UNESCO also supported enriching and enhancing the learning management platform (<https://onlinedu.uz>), which optimized the process of assimilation of training materials, increased user friendliness, and helped to expand professional learning communities (PLC) in the platform, where teachers reflect and assess their knowledge, and distance learning opportunities.

UNESCO and World Bank joint 'Skilled Teachers, Skilled Nation' regional initiative, October 2021 – ongoing

UNESCO and World Bank, in collaboration with the Ministries of Education in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, are leading the preparation of a regional report on teacher policies in Central Asia.

The regional project aims to support Central Asian countries in improving teacher policies through regional knowledge exchange on effective teacher policies and practices. As part of the activities, a Report on Teacher Policies in Central Asian countries will be prepared based on the analyses of the teacher policies in the Central Asian countries and will identify the strengths and weaknesses in the system and trigger the knowledge exchange to support improvements in teacher policy in Central Asia. This report will be a guiding document for the knowledge exchange. The report will be developed under the supervision of UNESCO and the World Bank and respective government departments of the Ministries of Education in the Central Asian countries.

UNESCO 'Skills Development for Employability in Rural Areas of Uzbekistan' project, July 2020 – ongoing

The project's overall objective is to enhance living standards in rural areas through better employability for women and men, and the specific objective is to prepare women and men with relevant skills for the needs of a sustainable, diversified, and modernized agriculture.

This project contributes to improve the quality, relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the skills development system in the agriculture and irrigation sectors, initiated by the Government of Uzbekistan, with a particular focus on the rural regions selected by the national stakeholders (Karakalpakstan, Khorazm, Bukhara, Surkhandarya). It helps the government to develop, test and pilot new initiatives and approaches in the agriculture and irrigation sectors with a view to scaling up transversal methods, high technology agriculture and food processing, and innovative approaches throughout the country.

UNESCO regional project “Promoting the Professionalization of Teaching in Asia-Pacific and Africa through the Development and Operationalization of National Teacher Competencies and Teaching Standards Frameworks”, May 2023 – Dec 2025

The main objectives of the project are to review and enhance the national framework for teacher competences and teaching standards; and to create a Technical Guide for the development and operationalisation of National Teacher Competences and Teaching Standards Framework. The project also aims to build up the capacity of policy makers to provide needs-based trainings on the development of standards for teachers; and to improve the competencies and skills of teachers, school leaders and teacher educators in accordance with the newly developed national framework.

UNESCO regional project “Enhancing Girls’ and Women’s Right to Quality Education through Gender Sensitive Policy Making, Teacher Development and Pedagogy in South, Southeast and Central Asia”, 2023 –2025

The project aims to mainstream gender in teacher education to cultivate gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, and gender-transformative teachers and strengthen the capacity of teacher education institutions on development of curriculum and courses for pre- and in-service teacher education. Within the project, a course on Gender Equality and Education will be developed, and capacities will be built to deliver this course.

UNFPA Healthy Lifestyle Education

UNFPA developed a Healthy Lifestyle manual for teachers which was endorsed by the Ministries of Health, Public Education, and Higher Education. Healthy lifestyle education with a component on promoting gender equality, and reproductive health was piloted in Jizzakh and Samarkand regions' schools.

UNFPA also piloted Healthy Lifestyle education in selected districts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan in 2021-2022. As a result of this pilot, school teachers were trained on how to conduct lessons for school children on reproductive health, gender equality, and HIV prevention. There is ongoing work to include these topics in extra curricular education.

UNFPA Population Projections

UNFPA supported the development of Population projections until 2050 with detailed data disaggregated by age and gender for Karkalpakstan, Tashkent city, and each region of Uzbekistan. The projections take into account trends in births, deaths, and population movements, therefore providing an expected detailed demographic situation for evidence-based analysis and policy decisions.

JICA Technical Cooperation Project 'Strengthening Practice of Inclusive Education', November 2021 – November 2024

The main activities of Technical Cooperation are as follows:

- Trainer Training for specialists from MoPSE (Training center, Imkon SSM PEO with rehabilitation, pre-school) and MoPE (Diagnostic center, Primary school) by Japanese experts.
- Training programs in Japan for two weeks for specialists from MoPSE and MoPE annually
- Development of in-service training program, training materials, trainer's manual, evaluation tools on IE for pre-school teachers and 1st grade primary teachers

JICA SDGs Business Model Formulation Survey with the Private Sector (Gakusho, Inc., Japan) for Eliminating Regional Disparity of Science-Math Education and Improving Supplementary Educational Materials

The purpose of the project is improving the regional disparity of education and lack of educational materials in Uzbek language. The main activities of the project are as follows:

- 1 Localization of a proposed Japanese educational material 'Digital drill (workbook) for secondary school students' (Mathematics);
- 2 demonstration of 'Digital drill' at pilot schools (Grades 6-7) in Tashkent and Bukhara; and
- 3 promotion of business to provide supplementary educational materials in Uzbek with lower prices and high quality.

UNICEF Inclusive and Equitable Early Childhood Education (ECE), January 2021 – ongoing

The project aims to:

- Support the government in promoting Inclusive Education in preschool education;
- Support MoPSE in revision and implementation / scaling up ELDS & preschool curriculum with support in development of teacher guidebooks and methodological support;
- Support in development and modelling alternative models of ECE with the focus on multi-age play groups and multi-lingual education for the most vulnerable children. More groups to be established on multi-lingual education in Surkhandarya region in 2023;
- Support MoPSE in revising of pre-service and in-service curriculum for preschool teacher education to enhance quality of teacher training based on best international practices, preschool curriculum and new teachers' standards;
- Support government in designing C4D and T4D strategies/programmes for enhancing advocacy for ECE, child care practices, parenting and demand for ECE. This includes parenting App Bebbos for parents and caregivers of children 0-6 to receive relevant information on child growth, nutrition, vaccination, and development. Another digital

solution is digital platform Learning Passport Bolalik Akademiyasi for preschool teachers to provide resources for quality teaching and planning based on preschool curriculum, including on IE and resources to support work of teachers with children with special needs.

- Support the government to develop teachers' (preschool and school) competencies related to child rights and protection from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation by introducing the relevant mandatory courses in the pre-service and in-service training curricula.

IsDB, Government of Uzbekistan and UNICEF Enhancing Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Project in the Republic of Uzbekistan

The project aims to enhance various aspects of quality of preschool education and augment the capacity of the system at various levels to improve equitable access to quality preschool education in Uzbekistan. The focus of this project will be on: (i) improving access to preschool education; (ii) system strengthening; (ii) curriculum and alternative models of preschool provision; and (iii) capacity building of teachers and managers.

The project has the following components:

- (1) enhancing access to ECCE education facilities;
- (2) enhancing the system and capacity for improving the quality of preschool education;
- (3) support to project management;
- (4) financial auditing consultant;
- (5) technical review and monitoring consultant; and
- (6) contingency emergency response component.

UNICEF Socio-Emotional Skills Programme for Adolescents in Schools

Life-Skills / 21st Century Skills programme aims to equip adolescents in grades 7-10 with life skills for successful self-realization in their personal and professional life. Specifically, the programme has 16 key topics in the following domains: self-awareness and controlling own emotions, interpersonal and decision-making/thinking skills. The programme was adapted, translated, and successfully piloted in Karakalpakstan, Tashkent region, Tashkent city and two Republican closed residential institutions for adolescents.

UNICEF Social, Employability, Entrepreneurship Skills and Financial Education programme, AflaYouth

The AflaYouth curriculum aims to improve income-generation abilities for vulnerable young women and men aged 16-24+ years old. The AflaYouth includes three curricula books: (1) Social and Financial skills, a core topic for all; (2) Employability Skills; and (3) Entrepreneurship Skills upon young people's choice for their career plan. The programme was customized jointly

with MoELR, MoPE and UNDP. In 2023, AflaYouth will be piloted in Surkhandarya region and the Republic of Karakalpakstan with further aim to integrate it into curriculum of all mono centres and professional education colleges in Uzbekistan.

UNICEF Ensuring Enhanced Access to Inclusive Education, Social Services, and Legal Aid in the Surkhandarya Region (jointly with EU)

Introducing formal and non-formal inclusive (multi-lingual) education for school-age Afghan and host community children with a particular focus on girls by introducing new working modalities, methodology, teacher training and offering classes in the mother tongue and transitions to mainstream language while addressing learning losses.

USAID All Children Succeeding *Sept 2023 – August 2028 (est.)*

The program is expected to support the MoPE in strengthening foundational skills in the early grades of school, with a particular focus on inclusive education and improving learning outcomes for children with disabilities.

USAID Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program (UEEP)

Supporting MoPE efforts to improve classroom instruction in Grade 1-4 Uzbek Language Arts (ULA) and Math, Grade 5-11 Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Grade 1-11 English as a Foreign Language (EFL), through a comprehensive package of curriculum, teaching and learning materials, teacher training and assessment improvements.

USAID Uzbekistan Youth Employment Skills (YES)

Supporting the MoPE to equip youth in Grades 8-11 with the necessary skills to ensure a successful school-to-work transition. The activity is improving the quality of school-based economics and entrepreneurship programs and afterschool entrepreneurship, soft skills, and work readiness programs, including a central focus on private sector engagement and empowering girls/young women and youth with disabilities.

USAID All Children Succeeding

The program is expected to support the MoPE in strengthening foundational skills in the early grades of school, with a particular focus on inclusive education and improving learning outcomes for children with disabilities.

American Councils for International Education English Speaking Nation: Secondary Teacher Training (ESN: STT)

The ESN: STT program aims to strengthen English Language secondary education in Uzbekistan by cultivating a supportive teaching and professional development ecosystem for

secondary school English teachers. American Councils for International Education, in close cooperation with the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, the U.S. State Department, and MoPE, offers an integrated professional development opportunity for English Language teacher trainers and secondary school English Language teachers in Uzbekistan. The three-year program uses a cascading model and a phased approach to build English teachers' classroom English and teaching capacity in Uzbekistan.

American Councils for International Education English Speaking Nation: Coaches Program (ESN: CP)

The ESN: CP is designed to provide training to secondary school teachers of English and teacher-trainers in Uzbekistan by embedding fourteen well-trained and highly experienced American TESL/TEFL experts (six in year one and eight in year two) in strategic locations throughout the Republic of Uzbekistan to directly teach, observe, coach, monitor, and evaluate English teachers in Uzbekistan. American Councils for International Education, in close cooperation with the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, the U.S. State Department, and the MoPE, will place and support the coaches at the regional centre for retraining and advanced training of public education personnel under MoPE (INSETI) centers in seven regional locations. These locations will serve as programmatic staging points over the twenty-four-month program.

American Councils for International Education Youth Employment Skills (YES) Activity

With over 60% of the population under the age of 30, Uzbekistan's youth has the potential to transform the country through their contributions to the labour market and Uzbekistan's economic growth. To accomplish this, the country's growing youth population requires support to secure or create employment in the existing job market, and to develop the knowledge and skills they need for the job market of the future. In January 2022, USAID, in partnership with the MoPE, launched the five-year, \$10 million Youth Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship Activity to increase youth work readiness and employability. The activity aims to equip youth in Grades 8-11 with the necessary skills to enter Uzbekistan's economy as competent employees or entrepreneurs. The activity addresses both school-based and after-school programs to ensure a successful school-to-work transition, while giving special attention to women, girls, and youth with disabilities.

British Council's 'Future English in Uzbekistan' project

The British Council's Future English project is a multifaceted project, the first phase of which is devoted to the study of reliable and reliable data in two directions: determining the level of language proficiency of students and studying the needs of teachers. The results of these studies will help shape the necessary solutions aimed at developing effective systems for the continuous professional development of English teachers, which will lead to better learning outcomes and student preparation.

The British Council's Future English: Pathways to Excellence Programme provides courses on the OTC (Online Teacher Community) online learning platform by creating a virtual learning community with forums and authentic resources for professional development and improved teaching methods. Available 24/7, this course allows the teacher to practice new technologies and teaching methods in practice in their classroom.

The British Council's Future English: English for Teaching Programme gives teachers the opportunity to improve their language skills and take them to the next level. This program, like the Pathways to Excellence program, is run by experts from leading UK universities and moderated by international experts, creating an ideal environment for both collaboration between colleagues from other countries and autonomous education on an online platform.

The Assessment Literacy Webinar Series consists of 27 webinars and provides teachers with the opportunity not only to develop objective assessment skills, but also introduces the principles of creating reliable and practical tests and tasks in all skills. Teachers will not only gain knowledge but will also share their understanding and experience through forums and chats.

Until now, 4 cohorts of teachers, more than 5,000 in total, completed 'Future English in Uzbekistan' project courses and another 1,000 are in the pipeline.

British Council English language PRESETT (Pre-Service Teacher Training), 2009-2018

In 2009-2018 the British Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education, ran a project aiming to achieve lasting improvement in the standard of English Language Teaching in Uzbekistan by enhancing the learning experience of ELT PRESETT students and by setting clear exit standards in language referring to international standards. Among the outcomes of the project:

- A new Curriculum of a 4-year PRESETT programme;
- Assessment profiles and specifications for each course;
- Guidelines for Teaching Practice and Qualification Paper;
- A network of PRESETT curriculum experts, trainers and teachers.

The new Curriculum was adopted by the majority of PRESETT institutions in Uzbekistan (17) and focuses on the professional journey and systematic learning processes, developing critical thinking and judgement and understanding what kind of teaching supports learning.

In 2021-2022 national PRESETT trainers worked closely with the Agency for Presidential Education Institutions and cascaded core trainer training modules of the programme to benefit all subject teachers in Presidential and Creative Schools in Uzbekistan to share new innovative approaches to teaching.

In 2022, to add a new dimension to PRESETT curriculum and to strengthen the link within core elements of the learning system – curriculum, delivery, assessment – the British Council, in

partnership with key PRESETT institutions, commissioned development of a new assessment module to engage with future teachers and explore key principles of modern communicative assessment (further details below).

To support sustainable change is it important that PRESETT institutions, Avloniy and Training/ Retraining Institutes work closely together to ensure a smooth transition from a teacher's pre-service experience to full practising teacher status.

British Council PRESETT Assessment Literacy Module, March 2022 – ongoing

In collaboration with Uzbek PRESETT leaders, the British Council assessment specialists are extending and revising the assessment module for PRESETT to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to assess students both formatively and summatively and have the tools to be able to apply the theory into practice once they begin their careers as teachers.

The project seeks to:

- Design, implement and analyse a language assessment literacy needs analysis survey for PRESETT trainees– with 1164 responses so far collected;
- Develop modules on themes related to language assessment literacy for Year 3 and Year 4 of PRESETT based on current thinking of language assessment literacy for PRESETT trainees and new teachers;
- Promote a shift from conceptualisation or theoretical understanding of language assessment to practical application in the classroom from the onset of teaching career;
- Increase interest in assessment among teachers through developing practical skills to apply language assessment knowledge;
- Develop teacher reflection on assessment practices;
- Trial materials and make revisions;
- Implement new module in 18 universities preparing students;
- Support monitoring and evaluation of new module.

British Council English Curriculum project, 2021-2022

In 2021-2022, the British Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, commissioned a consultancy around national English curriculum reform in Uzbekistan which had the following outputs:

- A summary of recent education reform in relation to English in Uzbekistan;
- A trained national English curriculum reform team who are confident to engage in national English curriculum reform in order to drive changes in public education in a coordinated manner;

- A national English language curriculum delivery strategy articulating approach, key principles, processes and phases;
- A draft English language curriculum structure outlining key elements of the new English curriculum for public school education, developed in consultation with all major stakeholders in Uzbekistan.

With new reform taking place under the Ministry of Pre-School and School Education, it is important that the stakeholders conduct the reform and develop the curriculum and all its elements in a principled way, utilising suggested delivery strategy and curriculum framework.

British Council Aptis for Teachers for salary bonus and assessing Four-skills English Proficiency of English Teachers in Uzbekistan, January 2019 – ongoing

To support four-skills testing of teachers of English, the British Council-developed Aptis for Teachers test was provided to local delivery partners to be administered to teachers of English at school and university level for purposes of meeting English language proficiency requirements for salary bonus.

The project seeks to:

- Provide evidence of English language proficiency in all four-skills of English teachers in Uzbekistan;
- Provide diagnostic information for teachers to understand weakness skills for self-development purposes;
- Offer a standardised English test of international quality developed by the British Council assessment experts to Uzbek teachers of English that assesses communicative use of English rather than focus solely on grammar/vocabulary and reading;
- Offer international standard test aligned to the CEFR with evidence of alignment (standard setting procedures available online);
- Offer an international benchmark to support decision-making around professional development;
- Offer data for comparative purposes to local tests aligned to CEFR;
- Promote positive washback on teacher preparation for language test through the assessment of communicative competence and inclusion of speaking and writing skills;
- Offer professional development and learning opportunities for test developers through transparency of test design and development and specifications for all tasks as well as over 80 published research papers to support validation of test.

British Council English Teachers' CPD (Continuous Professional Development) consultancy, 2022-2023

In 2022-2023, the British Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Pre-School and School Education, commissioned a consultancy around Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and an English teacher's professional development journey in public schools in Uzbekistan. Initial policy level recommendations state that CPD needs to be understood holistically, as a career-long professional journey building. Therefore, there is a need to formulate and adopt a national policy on CPD for state school teachers of any subject; schools and communities of practice should be recognised as hubs of CPD activity; teachers and Heads should be supported with training and guidance on the principles and practice of CPD; the document detailing ways of earning CPD credit points should be reviewed to include recognition only for CPD activities and processes that demonstrably contribute to improvement in teaching and that there should be a balance between CPD focus as professional accountability and CPD as professional learning. CPD provision for state schools should be linked to the same kinds of teacher competencies and standards as are prescribed for Presidential schools. As part of the project a team of national CPD champions represented regions of Uzbekistan trained to offer support and guidance around CPD principles.

(The full report will be presented to the Minister of Pre-School and School Education in April 2023).

KOICA Capacity Building of Early Childhood Teachers (ECT) through the Establishment of Teaching, Learning and Development (TLD) Complex in Uzbekistan, 2021-2026, USD 11,000,000

Project Overall Objective: Improving the quality of early childhood education through the Establishment of Teaching, Learning and Development (TLD) Complex in Uzbekistan.

Project Purposes:

1. Resolving the gap in quality of preschool education through re-education of early childhood teachers and establishment of TLD complex in Uzbekistan; and
2. Providing quality preschool education services through model kindergartens.

3. NATIONAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEM



3.1. OVERVIEW

Systemic shortcomings in assessment policy and practice in Uzbekistan have the potential to undermine the efficacy of wider reforms in the education sector. In particular, curriculum reform, and the shift toward a competency-based approach to content development, and associated learning and teaching practice, necessitates effective assessment (both formative, and summative). Likewise, capacity building focused on effective lesson planning will not succeed if this process is not informed by effective assessment for learning in classroom contexts. Most significantly, if the intended outcome of wider interventions is to improve outcomes for learners, there is a strong evidence-base to suggest these will be unsuccessful if shortcomings with regard to assessment are not addressed. As such, failure to address systemic issues with regard to assessment policies and practice in Uzbekistan will render wider education reforms ineffective, and will likely result in reduced outcomes for children, and other beneficiaries.

Findings from research into classroom assessment in Uzbekistan suggest that the current system is marked by duplication, lack of consistency, disparities between practice and policy, and substantive issues with human capacity (UNICEF, 2021). Findings suggest that current policies do not provide a clear and consistent approach to classroom assessment practices, which remain inconsistent and fragmented. According to the legislation, teachers conduct assessment, which can take the following forms, based on the frequency with which they are undertaken:

- current assessment
- midterm examination
- intermediate assessment
- staged assessment
- step-by-step assessment

Research suggests that practice diverges significantly from policy, and varies significantly between differing geographies, phases, and settings (The World Bank, 2018; UNICEF, 2021). Furthermore, with recent and ongoing curriculum reforms, stakeholders reported, and policy reviews reflect, a lack of consistency and alignment between what is taught (and, in particular, what policies suggest will be taught), and assessment practices (UNICEF, 2021).

Research also suggests that there is a lack of understanding of formative approaches in regular classroom practice among teachers, and that existing training on formative (classroom) assessment practices was insufficient for teachers and practitioners, suggesting a clear need for systematic training needs assessments, as well as a structured and evidence-led approach to capacity building (ibid.).

Assessment results appear to be both reported and used inconsistently, with results not informing classroom practice. Questions have also been raised over claims of anonymity in relation to assessment practices (ibid.).

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

While some stakeholders report attempts to improve outcomes in the observation and assessment of preschool children in 2022, wider discussion suggests that, in most cases, there is no direct assessment of children informing teaching interventions in the preschool system.

Research into current national examinations in Uzbekistan suggests that summative assessment is undermined by a lack of systems, processes, and procedures, as well as a centralized system for both setting and marking summative assessments (UNICEF, 2021).

The State Inspection for Supervision of Quality of Education (SISQE) under the Cabinet of Ministers (CoM) has a broad remit to oversee improvement of 'Uzbekistan's student assessments, including their alignment with international best practices, the introduction of standardized national assessments', though both literature, and stakeholder engagement, suggest that this is currently at a very preliminary stage.

These concerns have been echoed by other stakeholders, noting 'we have very limited information on 'what students know' and 'what they can do' (UNICEF, 2019).

A key intended output of the Uzbekistan National Learning Achievement Study was to 'provide a starting point to demonstrate the use of national assessments (and their analysis) to systematically track effective learning and quality improvement' (UNICEF, 2020).

There also exists a significant degree of duplication with regard to national assessment practices – for example, school leaving examinations are sat in addition to university entrance tests (which are undertaken at significant scale), administered by the Department for Organization and Coordination of Tests, while both SISQE, and the Republican Education Centre, Ministry of Public Education, have varying degrees of input in relation to school-level testing and assessment (in addition to 'Third Party' testing, historically undertaken separately, though currently suspended, as well as various assessments undertaken by the Inspectorate). New legislation has been proposed to allow use of school-leavers examination results instead of separate university entrance tests (UNICEF, 2021).

Additionally, there is a lack of recognition of Uzbekistan school leaving, and university entrance assessments for entry to leading universities internationally (ibid.).

Research also suggests that summative assessment is undermined by a lack of adherence to good practices (particularly with regard to anonymity / 'blind marking', and inconsistency of approach, compounded by a lack of benchmark data to undertake quality analysis on an ongoing basis) (ibid.).

The proactive engagement in policy reform, and associated implementation, in relation to assessment practices in Uzbekistan is positive. However, as there are currently a wide range of reforms ongoing within Uzbekistan in relation to assessment practices, institutional

arrangements are neither clear nor stable – it is important that clarity and stability are prioritized as reforms continue to be implemented (ibid.).

A range of evidence drawn from secondary literature, engagement with stakeholders, and policy reviews suggests there is a clear need for a systematic Training Needs Analysis to identify capacity gaps for teachers, school leaders, and ministry officials in relation to summative assessment (formal / external assessment), as well as strengthened pre-service and in-service training on assessment practices for teachers, school leaders, and ministry official (ibid.).

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

There is no national examination of preschool age children.

Research into external assessment in Uzbekistan suggests that current policies do not provide a clear and consistent approach to external assessment practices (UNICEF, 2021).

The 'Resolution on Confirmation of Criteria for Assessing the Effectiveness of Educational Institutions' sets out broad criteria of an assessment of efficiency of activities of educational institutions, comprising an aggregate of preparation of graduates in general education subjects and the level of quality of education (based on the scores of 11th grade graduates at the entrance to higher education, and the proportion of 11th grade graduates entering higher education), the education level of 9th grade students at secondary school, the proportion of higher and first category pedagogical staff of the general education institution, and the results of a 'public opinion poll' (comprising a survey on teachers conducted with learners, and a survey conducted with teachers on the learning environment). This then informs the 'ranking' of educational institutions (ibid.).

This process is undertaken by a commission, 'formed by January 10th of each year on the basis of the order of the head of the State Inspectorate [...] Representatives of the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan and other state bodies and organizations may be included in the commission by agreement' (ibid.).

External evaluations by the Inspectorate of learning and teaching in schools has divided historic research respondents, with some suggesting that both school rankings and the inspection process were overly punitive, and create perverse incentives to inflate outcomes, or 'game' the process, particularly in a context where school leaders can face dismissal if outcomes are not positive. In contrast, some stakeholders highlighted the perceived importance of ensuring accountability for school leaders (ibid.).

There is limited use of external assessment in Uzbekistan, other than participation in international comparative assessments such as PISA (OECD, n.d.), the use of international assessments in a small number of international curriculum schools (International Baccalaureate, n.d.), and the use of international language assessments such as IELTS (British Council, 2023) and TOEFL (ETS TOEFL, 2023).

To ensure the participation of the educational institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the external assessments, the National Centre for the Implementation of International Research on the Evaluation of the Quality of Education was established in 2018 under the supervision of the State Inspection for Supervision of the Quality of Education. From January 2023, this National Centre was transferred to the system of the Ministry of Preschool and School Education.

The PIRLS 2021 study administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) involved 5,847 4th grade students from 180 randomly selected schools. The results of this study are planned to be announced at the international level on May 16, 2023. The results of this study provide international comparative data on the reading literacy of 4th graders.

In cooperation with the World Bank, in November 2019, the 'Human Capital Index' study was conducted using materials based on the tasks of the international TIMSS survey. 3922 5th graders from 150 schools took part in it. This study provides information about students' skills in the area of mathematical literacy. According to the analysis of the World Bank, the results of the evaluation conducted in general secondary educational institutions in Uzbekistan amounted to 474 points and an index of 0.61.

In cooperation with the World Bank, the 2021 'Assessment of Losses in Education' study was carried out. This study, which was conducted with 5th and 7th grade students from 150 schools, aims to identify the factors affecting the educational gains and losses of students and the quality of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the changes over the last two years.

Uzbekistan also participated in the international survey 'Responses to educational disruption survey - REDS' initiated in 2021 in cooperation with UNESCO and IEA. The results of the survey among principals of 150 schools, 2,911 8th graders and 2,572 teachers will help to understand how much the pandemic has affected the education of the world and Uzbekistan.

202 schools of Uzbekistan and 7,363 students participated in the PISA 2022 study. This study presents international comparative results on the assessment of mathematical, natural-scientific, reading literacy and creative thinking of 15-year-old students. The results of this research are planned to be announced at the international level in December 2023.

In cooperation with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the tests of the International Trends in Mathematics and Natural Sciences – TIMSS 2023 study are planned to be held in April-May 2023.

The country's participation in TALIS 2024 research is also underway, and it is planned to organize a pilot test in 2023 and the main survey processes in 2024.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

'MELQO', international assessment tool, was adopted for Uzbekistan, which includes modules 'MODEL' and 'MELE' - Testing of the MELQO tool is planned to be conducted on the basis of 100 preschools.



3.2. CHALLENGES

Lack of vision, policy, and legislative framework to facilitate coherent, structured, and sustainable reform in assessment

A lack of an established tradition of pedagogy by which learning and teaching is informed by formative assessment has led to a significant capacity gap, impeding wider pedagogical reforms, and impacting on all levels of learning and teaching throughout Uzbekistan. This is compounded by the lack of vision and absence of policy as well as legislative mechanisms to ensure implementation, as well as regional socio-cultural expectations regarding the use of metrics and/or criteria in classroom settings.

Unless these issues are mitigated, wider reforms in related areas, such as learning and teaching materials, teacher education, curriculum, are unlikely to succeed. Current capacity gaps suggest that the use of benchmarks will be necessary as an interim measure, as capacity is developed on an ongoing basis.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

An historic lack of Preschool assessment practices has resulted in a context in which learning in preschools is not sufficiently informed by evidence from assessment.

A lack of clear guidance, processes, procedures, or an associated 'framework' setting out developmental milestones, and allowing for these to be recorded consistently, has led to a context in which there is a lack of comparable data on preschool outcomes. Existing work on school readiness cards can form a basis for this.

Inconsistent approaches to setting, marking, and moderating national examinations

National examinations have historically been undermined by a lack of consistent administration, or marking (as well as related criteria), as well as a lack of anonymity and transparency of process. Concerns have also been raised over potential abuse of process, and subsequent corruption and compliance risks. The current model undermines confidence in qualifications, leading to duplication of effort (i.e. separate entrance examinations for

universities domestically), and a lack of credibility in relation to school leaving qualifications (i.e. international universities will not recognise them for entry purposes). Further to this, it is clear that current national examinations do not adequately prepare most school leavers for the workplace or further study.

Lack of benchmarking resulting in low quality assessment data

An historic lack of external assessment has resulted in inconsistency in assessment practices, rendering assessment data unreliable for comparative purposes, or for planning and executing wider interventions within the education sector.



3.3. OPPORTUNITIES

Vision, policy and legislative framework to facilitate positive reform in assessment

There is a clear need an overarching vision and policy as well as enabling mechanisms to reform practice in educational assessment at all levels of education starting from early years and preschools.

This will facilitate a number of reforms, most significantly, in-service and pre-service training, as well as teaching guides and related resources (including learning and teaching materials, where appropriate) to foster and encourage the use of formative assessment to inform lesson planning, and subsequent delivery of learning and teaching, to target the specific needs of all learners.

There is clear commitment from government and line ministries stakeholders to drive forward proactively with reforms in this area, building on work already undertaken in related areas such as curriculum and TLM reform.

Excellent work done to date in the shift to competency-based curricula and development of associated resources at all levels (ELDS and Ilk Kadam preschool curriculum; NCF and primary school curriculum) can form a catalyst for future systemic reforms in this area.

National examinations reform and benchmarking

Participation in international comparative assessments (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, EGMA, EGRA) provided insight into system-level education reform, and it will continue to maintain accountability, and spur progress at a national level.

This success can be built upon by the emergence of a new and innovative approach drawing from international and external benchmark approaches, taking advantage of the blank canvas which has historically characterized provision in this area.

To improve accountability and consistency, the use of 'predicted' grades, linked to national examinations, should be considered.

Give current capacity gaps, it is likely that benchmarking, such as (but not limited to) ACER IBT (ACER IBT, 2023) will be necessary to ensure consistency, accuracy, and quality of classroom-level assessment in the short-medium-term.

For national examinations to serve as credible indicators for potential employers in the labour-market, as tools to facilitate entry to further education, higher education, or professional education settings (both domestically, and internationally), it is essential that they are reformed as follows:

- i. To enhance the level of 'challenge', to align with international standards;
- ii. To be consistently, centrally, and anonymously set and marked (making use of moderation, and blind double-marking, as appropriate); and
- iii. To garner sufficient confidence from both national and international higher education institutions, such that they can serve as university entrance assessments, removing the need for duplication of effort in this area.

Given the human capacity gaps currently faced, it is possible that the achievement of these reforms may be undermined in the short-medium-term if they are staffed entirely by existing specialists within relevant Government Line Ministries. As such, cooperation with a reputable external Examination Board should be considered as an interim measure, to raise standards as quickly as possible.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

The development of a clear set of assessment and developmental markers, such as the approach adopted in international contexts (i.e. EYFS) would allow for consistent assessment practices in preschool.

The use of examination boards has the potential to serve as an interim measure to mitigate capacity issues which have the potential to undermine national examination reforms.

The continued use of language assessments (such as IELTS, and TOEFL) should be expanded to strengthen the quality of foreign language assessment in Uzbekistan.

Given current capacity constraints, it is likely that benchmarking (either comprehensive, or using a sample-based approach) will be essential as an interim quality assurance tool, if reforms in assessment are to succeed.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION FOCUS:

MELQO tool piloting has only recently been introduced, so evidence of its efficacy remains to be established; it nonetheless provides a potential avenue to improve assessment practices if findings from piloting support this.



3.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS INTERVENTIONS

Strengthening the capacity of the government to reform classroom formative and summative assessment systems and roll out the same in classrooms is one of the priority interventions in a new UNICEF and Government of Uzbekistan Country Programme, 2021-2025 Programme Strategy Note for Education, under Output 2:

'By 2025, the government has improved capacity to design and implement competency-based curriculum, teaching-learning materials, assessment systems, innovative pedagogy and alternative education pathways to address the differential education needs of children.'

To ensure these activities are implemented in a timely manner with acceptable quality, UCO Education Section previously worked with an International Consultant engaged by UNICEF, who provided technical support throughout the process of reviewing and revising classroom assessment systems, and policies, in line with the competency-based approach.

Under the World Bank, the nationwide 'Transforming Public Education for Economic Growth Project', seeks to support Teacher Professional Development (under 'Component 2'), though without explicit reference to assessment, which is addressed under 'Component 3', which seeks to 'Build Capacity in Student Learning Assessments', by specifically working to 'continue to enhance the country's expert and institutional capabilities in carrying out national and international assessments', as well as supporting 'the Ministry and the SISQE to further enhance the capacity in carrying out national and international learning assessment surveys as well as their data analysis and reporting'.

The nationwide JICA-funded 'SDGs Business Verification Survey with the Private Sector (KEI Advanced, Inc. (Japan) for Introduction of a Japanese-style Academic Achievement Test Model in Uzbekistan' has an explicit assessment focus, seeking to undertake:

- '1. Supporting improvement of tests in mathematics for secondary school students (mainly grades 8-10 of public schools: 40 schools * 30 students * 3 grades * 4 times).
2. Share KEI advanced know-how of best practices on elaboration of test questions and analysis of test results by experts as well as individual recommendations for students, teachers, parents and specialists of Uzbekistan.
3. Recommendations to MoPE and other stakeholders on building transparent and objective mechanisms for assessing academic achievements.'

The USAID-funded 'Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program (UEEP)', which focuses on direct intervention in Namangan & Sirdarya pilot regions, as well as support to national scale up, also has a clear assessment component: 'teacher training and assessment improvements'.

One component of the project 'Improving early childhood development', implemented with the participation of the World Bank is aimed at 'creating an education quality assessment system', which includes Uzbekistan's participation in international PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS and TALIS studies, capacity development in this field and national provided measures to improve the evaluation system.

British Council Capacity Building of Uzbekistan State Testing Centre,

February 2023 – ongoing

In response to the Uzbekistan State Testing Centre's aspiration to improve quality of their test development process to international standards and attain international recognition, the British Council assessment team designed and implemented an online item writing course that aims to introduce participants to a foundational background in language testing theory, and the associated practicalities of item writing.

The course is highly practical, and participants are expected to produce their own items, critically evaluate items produced by peers, and engage constructively with feedback. The online course has been taken by several national testing centres around the world to improve their item writing skills, implement more robust quality assurance of items and ensure better alignment of their tests to CEFR.

After completing the course, the participants will be able to:

- 1 have a deeper understand of commercial tests and tasks used globally;
- 2 apply testing principles to local assessment systems;
- 3 improve quality of items in local tests;
- 4 differentiate proficiency levels according to the CEFR;
- 5 understand testing principles and task specifications;
- 6 write receptive and productive items aimed at different proficiency levels;
- 7 use a range of language tools to support quality item writing;
- 8 critique and evaluate items;
- 9 collaborate as a team to produce quality test material.

4. GENDER AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



4.1. OVERVIEW

According to official statistical data, preschool enrolment rates (3-6 years old) have been continuously increasing, with participation rates of 6-year-olds in one-year pre-primary education reaching 83.7% in September 2022. However, the MICS data released in 2022 show inequitable attendance in ECE due to different dimensions. This includes persisting gender gaps with almost 10% difference between boys and girls (3-4 years old) (UNICEF, 2022). 74% of boys and 69% of girls aged one year younger than the official primary school entry age at the end of the calendar year participated in organized learning (UNICEF, 2022).

While Uzbekistan has achieved almost universal coverage by school education, gender disparities along with geographical inequities remain in relation to completion of a full cycle of education, with 94.3 % of boys completing upper secondary education compared to 93.3 % of girls. There is also a two-percentage difference in school attendance rates for upper secondary education - 95% for girls versus 93% for boys (UNICEF, 2022).

Despite coverage by the education, discrepancies are observed in the skills of girls and boys. For example, a UNICEF (2020) study shows huge disparities in young people's (10-29 years) digital skills across location, gender and economic status of households. For example, the share of computer literate girls in the poorest quintile is more than twice as low as that of boys in the same category (14.7% in comparison to 34.6%).

It is estimated that most out-of-school children are children with disabilities. According to the UN Situation Analysis on Children and Adults with Disabilities (2019), only 34.9% of children with disabilities registered to receive disability benefits attended a pre-school educational institution, while this figure among children without disabilities reached 53.2%. Difference in accessing preschools is especially pronounced for girls with disabilities – 25.1% versus 45.6%. While there is a difference of 22% between students with and students without disabilities access to 1-9 grades in schools, that difference is more than twice as large (46%) for access to upper-secondary education. Gender plays a noticeable role in access to school education for children with disabilities in Uzbekistan too. In 2021, 13,167 boys studied in special schools for children with disabilities, while the number of girls studying in these schools is significantly lower – 8,463. In 2022, 986 children graduated from special schools and boarding schools. 28% of them entered higher education institutions, while 23% are not in employment or education (World Bank, 2022).

In terms of quality of learning, the results of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA), conducted in March 2022 (USAID, 2022), confirmed the findings of the UNICEF-MoPE learning assessments conducted in 2019, showing students underperforming in grade level comprehension skills in language and in applying numeracy skills to more complex and conceptual problems. Consistent with global trends, girls outperformed boys in reading in both grades, except in second language Uzbek comprehension in Grade 5. While the differences in oral reading fluency were substantial (8–10 correct words per minute), the difference in comprehension was only 1-2 percentage points. Meanwhile, in

Maths, in Grade 3, girls and boys performed equally well in basic operations, but boys showed a small but statistically significant advantage in application skills. The gap in favour of boys continued in Grade 5, where boys outperformed girls in the overall score by 2 percentage points. In some subskills (number and operations, and measurement) the difference in scores was statistically significant, but not in others (geometry and statistics).

More than twelve thousand children who attend schools for 'children with intellectual impairments' study based on the narrowed curriculum, which includes topics which are taught to fifth grade students in general schools, omitting content for secondary and high school (UN Uzbekistan, 2019). The school certificate which these children receive is of a different type and it does not allow them to be admitted to vocational colleges or higher education institutions. This directly violates their right to quality education and limits opportunities to develop their potential to the fullest and join the labour market in the future.



4.2. CHALLENGES

Not conducive public norms and opinions

As almost everywhere in the world, public norms and opinions are not conducive to education of girls and children with disabilities. Girls continue to be underrepresented or entirely left out on essential learning opportunities in STEM and ICT fields due to harmful norms and gendered expectations of girls as caregivers – and gender stereotypes are perpetuated through generations.

Public opinions are also still dominated by the medical model of disability. The idea of segregating children with disabilities, separating them from the 'healthy' by placing them in various boarding institutions, is widespread in society. As shown by a UN Situation Analysis (2019), almost 70% of respondents believed that specialized schools are the best way to educate children with disabilities and only 12% of respondents believed that the best way for children with disabilities to study in ordinary schools and in classes with peers without disabilities (UN Uzbekistan, 2019). In spite of some positive trends, national education legislation still clearly reflects the medical approach. The language of all regulations related to education of children with disabilities further strengthens medical and 'defectology' models. Specialized schools are still positioned as the first-choice education for children with disabilities. Moreover, children with severer learning disabilities are being placed in boarding houses under the Ministry of Health, where school education is not provided (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

Lack of systems and mechanisms for identification of children in need and addressing special needs in regular preschools and schools

There is no early detection and intervention system. No system is in place to monitor vulnerabilities and ensure access to education for all children with disabilities. Lack of system

outreach and social work among communities and families, especially among families that are included in 'Temir Daftar' and 'Ayollar Daftari' lead to their drop out of education system. There are differences among wealth quintiles of families with children attending an early childhood education programme (55% in the richest quintile and 29% in the poorest quintile) (UNICEF, 2022). Lack of material resources of families which are included in 'Temir Daftar' and 'Ayollar Daftari' lead to their preference that their child to be educated at a special boarding school rather than at a general education school. The medical model is prevailing in identifying the disability and needs. Input during Thematic Discussions noted low access to preschool and school education for children with disabilities due to the lack of parental support, transporting and accompanying the child, and a lack of adequate mechanisms of social support for children with disabilities and their families. There are also no referral mechanisms between the health sector and the education sector for children identified at risk of HIV, requiring PSS, developmental delays, etc.

The social benefits for children with disabilities comprise of monthly cash transfers per child as well as transfers to the caregivers of the children with disabilities. The latter was introduced in 2022. Yet, there is no clear understanding of the costs for the family associated with care for a child with the disabilities. The lack of such information hinders development of programs and services to support inclusion of children with disabilities. There is no system in place for implementing bridging and catch-up education programmes for children who missed school and/or do not speak the school language, including such categories of children as repatriates (charitable action 'Mehr'), migrants, self-returnees (a lot of them from Afghanistan), students with a low level of proficiency in academic subjects, and students returned from special educational institutions, including the Republican educational correctional institutions (closed type schools) to regular schools and others.

There are also no mechanisms to provide special education services for children with disabilities in regular preschools and schools. These would include opportunities for blind and partially sighted students to learn Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, as well as orientation and mobility skills; for deaf and hard of hearing students to learn sign language; or for learners with communication impairments to learn using alternative or augmentative communication. There are no regulations and mechanisms in place for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities ensuring their right to progress within the general education preschool and school curriculum with ambitious and challenging objectives in age-appropriate inclusive settings with individualized supports and services.

Input during Thematic Discussions noted that there is a lack of appropriate child protection policies, procedures and practices in place specifically catering to the needs of learners with special educational needs, with stakeholders raising particular concern over potential for exploitation of girls and mass media reports about violence against children in schools. Child protection shortfalls potentially leave all learners, including learners with special educational needs, disabilities, HIV, and other vulnerabilities, at risk, particularly girls.

Gaps in infrastructure and physical barriers in preschools and schools

A lack of provision of sanitary facilities, particularly in remote, rural schools, impacts negatively on girls. Concerns were raised over a lack of adequate sanitary facilities and access to menstrual hygiene products at schools, potentially leading to increased absenteeism among girls, placing them at higher risk of drop-out. Infrastructure challenges for services in all education subsectors include lack of functioning heating and lighting, water and sewage services and appropriate sanitation facilities (UNICEF, 2020). Easy access to clean drinking water (through pipe) is available only at 47% of the general secondary schools. More than 81% of the general secondary schools reported having only one set of functional toilets (2-3 outlets on an average) (UNICEF, 2020). Gaps in kitchen/canteen infrastructure is also key given the high rates of anaemia among AGYW. Quality implementation of school feeding programmes (renovation of canteens is required) can be the key to reducing micronutrient deficiencies among adolescents. Adolescent girls in Uzbekistan suffer from a triple burden of malnutrition: malnutrition, hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies), and being overweight, which threatens not only their survival, growth, and development but also the country's future. One in ten adolescent girls suffers from being underweight or overweight (obesity), and one in sixteen (16.5 %) suffers from anaemia. Three-quarters of girls with anaemia suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. Iron deficiency rates among adolescent girls are alarmingly high at around 50% (UNICEF, 2017).

Children with disabilities continue to face physical barriers and inaccessible infrastructure within preschools and schools. There is no verifiable information about the physical accessibility of both general and special educational institutions for children with disabilities.

Lack of support to inclusive teaching and learning in curriculum, pedagogy, TLM and assessment

Teachers in Uzbekistan currently lack the knowledge and skills required to identify learners with Special Educational Needs, disabilities, and other vulnerabilities, or to ensure learning and teaching which caters to their distinct needs is planned and delivered. This has been compounded by a lack of resourcing.

The highly gendered workforce (i.e., almost exclusively young and female) in early childhood and primary education was also highlighted, and is reflected in national statistics, establishing a context in which it is important that the distinct needs of a workforce with these demographics are met appropriately. A lack of support for the distinct needs of the teaching workforce has the potential to undermine the quality of learning and teaching. One of the reasons for the poor learning outcomes of children is the low quality of teaching that is a result of lower levels of education of teachers at pre-school level as well as inadequate teachers' training at primary and secondary education levels. Only 8.5% preschool teachers have a higher education qualification. The correlation between lower level of higher education among Uzbek women in general and the education sector that primarily employs female workforce could be one of the reasons for the compromised quality of teaching in the country. UNICEF has supported capacity building of preschool teachers, as well as the development of Teacher Qualification Frameworks and Professional Standards to improve pedagogy gaps in the preschool education system, addressing gender stereotypes and non-discriminatory behaviours of teachers.

Although there are special educators (speech therapists) in each preschool, there is no system for allocating additional staff in case CWD attend preschool and no program of supportive supervision in the introduction of inclusive education. Preschool teachers do not have basic knowledge and understanding on IE and skills to integrate and engage classroom activities with the focus on special educational needs.

Analysis conducted by MOPE and UNICEF (2020) showed that school curriculum and syllabi for most subjects and grades were focused on what is taught, not on what is learnt, mostly describing knowledge and omitting skills or attitudes. De facto, textbooks play a role of both syllabi and teacher's guides, and overall teaching approach could be named as 'textbook-centred'. This prevents teachers from seeing a holistic picture of progressive curriculum attainment, which shapes and nurtures children's cognitive, social, and personal development. Students are expected to learn the same content at the same time with limited opportunities for multiple ways of engagement. There is little or no use of formative assessment to support different learning needs. No pre-service and in-service teachers' training programme exists on adaptive teaching and addressing learning losses, remedial, and catch-up programmes. Though Uzbekistan is a multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multicultural country, there is no pre-service and in-service teachers' training on multilingual education and addressing needs of students who speak different languages at home.

One of the reasons for the poor learning outcomes of children is the low quality of teaching that is a result of lower levels of education of teachers at pre-school level, as well as inadequate teacher training at primary and secondary education levels. Only 8.5% preschool teachers have higher education qualification. Setting unrealistic targets for teacher training and curriculum review add challenges for ensuring inclusiveness of curriculum and teachers' preparation.

Additional issues stakeholders noted include:

- Amendment is necessary to add categories of children to the system of implementation of upbringing and education:
 - underage offenders after leaving special schools,
 - children of prisoners
 - children of migrants
- Development of criteria for children with special educational needs;
- Limited access of children with special educational needs to music education, classes in sports schools, other auxiliary schools;
- Lack of knowledge and skills among teachers and coaches of these schools;
- There is no mechanism for the involvement of parents, no social support for parents;
- Lack of monitoring of the quality of the educational process in medical institutions with children undergoing prolonged treatment from 30 days to 6 months;
- Poor training of staff on providing inclusive education;
- No system of early detection and intervention, including universal screening; and
- There is a lack of clear models of effective pre-schooling, undermining understanding of what effective practice required.



4.3. OPPORTUNITIES

Creating public discourse

Platforms:

There is significantly improved internet access across the country. According to the 2021 Inclusive Internet Index from the Economist Intelligence Unit, 80% of households in Uzbekistan have access to the internet (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021)²⁷. According to the Statistics agency under the President's administration, number of TV sets that were available per 100 household in 2022 accounted for 170 (Agency of Statistics, Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023), which stresses the critical role that TV plays in reaching the population. It creates wide opportunities for advocacy, awareness raising, and a public discourse on issues related to gender and disability. Moreover, such knowledge platforms as 'Internet of Good Things' could further support awareness raising and community engagement interventions in this regard.

Partnerships:

Such influential organizations as the Zamin Foundation and Public Foundation for Support and Development of National Mass Media see gender and inclusion among their priorities, and their engagement is critical for high-level advocacy and creation of a public discourse, inter alia through mobilization and sensitization of media outlets.

Partnership with private sector companies like Korzinka, UCELL and others is important in reaching the population with relevant messages within social marketing campaigns on gender and disability issues.

Gender and disability activists and NGOs are among the most active, and they should be supported to move this agenda forward.

While a more comprehensive and conceptual approach will be needed to identify the strategies, entry points and stakeholders for behaviour change related interventions, religious leaders, influencers, opinion-makers could play critical role in addressing attitudinal and behavioural issues related to gender equality and inclusion.

Systems and mechanisms

Inclusion of potentially marginalized groups is key to ensuring that wider education reforms achieve the wider goal of equitable access to quality education. Understanding of inclusive education as a fundamental human right and as an essential characteristic of quality education, is gradually increasing. Uzbekistan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in June 2021 with a number of government decisions which preceded and followed this, including the Law 'On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' dated 15.10.2020, and the

Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan 'On Preschool Education and Upbringing' dated 16.12.2019, where the concepts of inclusive and specialized education are fixed. In total, 195 schools in all regions of the country opened inclusive classes in line with this government decision, with 504 children with disabilities admitted. Deinstitutionalization of special boarding schools is in process, in line with the road map approved by the Presidential Resolution No. 4860 dated 13.10.2020 (target 80% reduction by 2030). It creates wide opportunities for progressive implementation of inclusive education. The Presidential Decree 'On the State Program for the Implementation of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 in the Year of Caring for People and Quality Education' includes allocation of state budget for the provision of school meals to all primary school students.

Broad shifts in legislation, and ratification of international treaties and agreements should be supplemented by clear, actionable, implementation plans to ensure that these initiatives are impactful. It is necessary to ensure the feasibility of the policy of inclusive education and the relevant Laws, Regulations, Charters and other legal documents to ensure they come into force. These should be developed alongside robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, focused on impact and outcomes (not on activities, or inputs), to ensure that commitments achieve tangible impact on intended beneficiaries. Monitoring the development of inclusive education and highlighting the results of ongoing work is crucial.

The development of the Unified Conceptual Frameworks of Continuous Inclusive Education at all levels of education: pre-school education, schools, colleges, lyceums, universities, and education of parents is seen as a key next step in the improving the system. Conceptual Frameworks can employ Universal Design for Learning as evidence-based approach to improving quality of education for all.

Mechanisms for identification of children in need and addressing special needs in regular preschools and schools should include multi-disciplinary teams to be appointed in school and engaging communities (looking at pyramid approach). Investment in linkages and referral protocols with social workers and other community level service providers are needed to implement intersectoral interdisciplinary support to children and families. Strengthening social assistance to parents of children with disabilities, including providing social support and childcare, strengthening material assistance, and providing the necessary reasonable accommodations (orthoses, wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc.) will lead to an increase in enrolment and completion of a full cycle of education. Within gender responsive education system strengthening work, early warning of school dropout and enhancing out of school pathways are to be explored and strengthened from a gender perspective.

Infrastructure

Construction and reconstruction of preschools and schools are among main government priorities funded by both the public budget and international assistance. Construction of new educational institutions in line with accessibility and WASH standards and based on 'greening' solutions can make Uzbekistan a country model for other countries in the region and beyond.

Workforce, curriculum, pedagogy, TLM and assessment

In 2018, the State Requirements for the Development of Children of Early and Preschool Age and the State Curriculum 'Ilk Kadam' ('First Step') and the respective 'Adapted Curriculum for Children with Special Educational Needs aged 2 to 7 years' were developed. Six teacher guidebooks developed in support of implementation of the preschool curriculum are specifically devoted to individualization of the learning process in preschool education and inclusion of children with special needs. These can be used for further work on improving teachers' training, TLM and pedagogy.

Current school curriculum reform provides opportunities to ensure that curriculum is gender transformative and inclusive. Strengthened capacity in relation to the identification and support of learners with disabilities, special educational needs, and other vulnerabilities, intersects with wider initiatives intended to ensure that all learning and teaching is planned and delivered in response to formative assessment, thereby meeting the distinct needs of all learners. As such, it is inextricably linked to wider reforms in the quality of curriculum, resourcing, and learning and teaching.

Within the preschool curriculum developed based on ELDS, observation lists for children from 3-7 years old have been developed and filled out three times a year in all preschools. According to the observation list, it is possible to identify delays in development for further targeted approach to the education and development of children.

The new curriculum for Maths, Science and Mother Language in primary grades employs a spiral approach and sets up clear learning outcomes differentiated in depth. It can serve as a reliable base for progressive introduction of assessment for learning in classrooms. Further investing in STEM and ICT for girls, ensuring gender appropriate representation of professions and activities in textbooks is a powerful way to combat gender stereotypes and promote gender equality.

Reforms relating to gender, access, identification, and support, both of learners, and of the workforce, ensure an efficient system which meets the diverse needs of all groups, raising standards for all.

Stakeholders also noted the following opportunities:

- Model schools would allow for strengthened understanding of effective pre-school practice.
- Adding 'special educator' into the classifier of specialties and professions.



4.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS INTERVENTIONS

ADB TA-6789 UZB: Preparing the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics in Secondary Education Project - Due Diligence Package.

October 2022 – July 2023

World Bank Transforming Public Education for Economic Growth Project,

September 2023 – June 2028

- Support the gender-specific requirements for girls' menstrual health and accessibility of WASH facilities in targeted schools;
- Support preparedness of students for future crises and 21st century jobs, component 1 will improve access to and use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in the education process;
- Strengthening pre-service training, aligning the training with curriculum changes, and strengthening practicum experience for pre-service teachers;
- Supporting in classroom coaching and mentoring through regular classroom observations by school headteachers/principals and dedicated teacher mentors who can provide feedback on pedagogic approach and improve teaching delivery; and
- Support the implementation of the improved mechanism, strengthening the CPD system to align with the requirements of the new post-COVID realities of the education system. In addition, the incentive system, such as career growth and remuneration which needs to be linked to the teacher professional performance will also be strengthened through strengthening of the CPD system.

JICA Technical Cooperation Project 'Strengthening Practice of Inclusive Education', *November 2021 – November 2024.*

The main activities of Technical Cooperation are as follows:

- Trainer Training for specialists from MoPSE (Training centre, Imkon SSM PEO with rehabilitation, Pre-school) and MoPE (Diagnostic centre, Primary school) by Japanese experts;
- Training programs in Japan for two weeks for specialists from MoPSE and MoPE annually; and
- Development of in-service training program, training materials, trainer's manual, evaluation tools on IE for pre-school teachers and 1st grade primary teachers.

UNICEF Inclusive and equitable early childhood education (ECE),

January 2021 – ongoing

- Support the government in promoting Inclusive Education in preschool education;
- Support MOPSE in revision and implementation / scaling up ELDS & preschool curriculum with support in development of teacher guidebooks and methodological support;
- Support in development and modelling alternative models of ECE with the focus on multi-age play groups and multi-lingual education for the most vulnerable children. More groups to be established on multi-lingual education in Surkhandarya region in 2023;
- Support MOPSE in revising of pre-service and in-service curriculum for preschool teacher education to enhance quality of teacher training based on best international practices, preschool curriculum and new teachers' standards; and
- Support government in designing C4D and T4D strategies/programmes for enhancing advocacy for ECE, child care practices, parenting and demand for ECE. This includes parenting App Bebbo for parents and caregivers of children 0-6 to receive relevant information on child growth, nutrition, vaccination and development. Another digital solution is digital platform Learning Passport Bolalik Akademiyasi for preschool teachers to provide resources for quality teaching and planning based on preschool curriculum, including on IE and resources to support work of teachers with children with special needs.

UNICEF Introducing Conceptual Frameworks and Tools for Inclusive Education

January 2022 – ongoing

The development of mechanisms and tools to address existing gaps and challenges was launched and it is in progress now for each of identified areas: (1) inclusive school-based management with community and parents' engagement; (2) curriculum & assessment reform with focus on UDL and reasonable accommodation; (3) teachers' professional development and supportive supervision; (4) multisectoral multidisciplinary family support services; and (5) data and M&E. Piloting of the model of inclusive education (conceptual frameworks and tools) is expected to start in April 2023 with further recommendations for amending legislation based on the results.

UNICEF Skills4Girls programme for girls and girls with disabilities

June 2022 – ongoing

The aim of the programme is to equip girls and girls with disabilities with social and digital skills (MS Office, Graphic Design, coding and programming) and strengthen their confidence and interest in ICT to continue education and start career in ICT sphere. In 2022, 214 girls - 144 without disabilities and 70 with disabilities - were trained in 4 regions of Uzbekistan. In Tashkent city, training was delivered for girls with visual and hearing impairment from Republican specialized boarding schools.

UNICEF STEM programme for girls, UniSat *June 2021 – ongoing*

The six-month programme aims to equip girls with engineering, coding, 3D modelling and data analysis skills through hands-on experience of building and launching a nanosatellite. Moreover, the programme aims to contribute to positive shift in social gender norms and promote interest of girls to continue education and career in STEM sphere. The programme consists of the 3-4 months online course, hands-on workshops for building and coding a nanosatellite, launch of the nanosatellite into stratosphere and the module on climate data analysis. In 2021-2022, 188 girls from all regions of Uzbekistan were equipped with STEM skills. In November 2022 UniSat 2.0 was launched and 300 girls commenced the education course.

UNICEF Ensuring enhanced access to inclusive education, social services, and legal aid in the Surkhandarya region (jointly with EU)

Introducing formal and non-formal inclusive (multi-lingual) education for school-age Afghan and host community children with a particular focus on girls by introducing new working modalities, methodology, teacher training and offering classes in the mother tongue and transitions to mainstream language while addressing learning losses

UNICEF supported the Government in designing draft Inter-Agency SOPs on prevention and response to VAC as well as the sector specific draft SOPs for prevention and response to VAC in and around preschool and general secondary schools. Both documents are aimed to provide clear, effective, and child-centred guidance as well as spell out the functional responsibilities of school workforce and other professionals in responding to all forms of violence against children. The draft SOPs for preschool and general secondary schools are pending endorsement by the Ministry of Preschool and Public School.

USAID All Children Succeeding *Sept 2023 – August 2028 (est)*

The program is expected to support the MpPE in strengthening foundational skills in the early grades of school, with a particular focus on inclusive education and improving learning outcomes for children with disabilities.

International Fund Zamin 'Meharli Maktab' project

The educational organization 'Meharli Maktab' was established on the basis of the Centre for Paediatric Haematology, Oncology and Clinical Immunology of the Republic of Uzbekistan, providing opportunities for children on long-term inpatient treatment to receive a full-fledged education starting from the preschool level. An educational space was created and equipped, including primary and general secondary education classes as well as preschool groups (2-7 years old), with teachers additionally trained on psychological and pedagogical support. Branches of the 'Meharli Maktab' model will be established in medical treatment institutions of the country.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION, INFORMATION DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, OPEN DATA AND NATIONAL DIALOGUE



5.1. SECTOR/AREA CHARACTERISTICS

5.1.1. EDUCATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION, INFORMATION DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, OPEN DATA

The mechanism for assessing the quality of preschool and school education have been implemented within the education quality assurance (QA) system (within state attestation and accreditation) (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019). The process includes internal pre/school self-evaluation and external quality review (once every 5 years). Both evaluations are implemented based on the quality standards and performance indicators within key quality domains (Republic of Uzbekistan, Multiple Ministries, 2020). The data from schools are submitted through an electronic, web-based platform for QA data collection and management ONAKS (<http://onaks.tdi.uz>) and an online accreditation register (<http://reestr.tdi.uz>), but access to the system is limited and only responsible experts at different levels (preschool/schools, district, region, central) have access to upload the documents or review. The system was launched and is being used in all regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019).

There are two separate information data collection and management systems for preschool and school education. In 2018, the Ministry of Preschool Education piloted an on-line system for data collection based on free open source EMIS software (Open EMIS) that helped to collect basic data at preschool level and was integrated with the different ministries and khokimiyats. It was also used to monitor online payments and the electronic queue for admission of children to preschools. The “Bolalar bogchasi” on-line data collection system for preschools was developed by the Ministry of Preschool Education in 2021, and launched in 2022. Currently all preschools are connected to system.

At school education level, the development of the information data collection and management system (called Single Electronic System) is highlighted as one of the target parameters of the Concept of Development of the Public Education System until 2030 (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019). The target indicator of connecting 50% of schools in 2023 and reach 100% by 2026 has already been achieved (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022). All schools are currently connected to the system.

Online information data collection and management systems are deployed in every school and preschool collecting basic statistical data in real time for each educational institution. They are integrated in key state bodies with unique identification numbers for each student. This facilitates the registration of students in Grade 1, and the Ministry is upgrading the system to collect all relevant data.

This system is an asset to save time, funding, and reduce observed discrepancies. This baseline will enable the Ministry to identify the gaps and challenges across different spheres of education reform, even though this reform is not yet linked to the Ministry's plans.

Another existing mechanism to monitor the quality is teacher attestation. The attestation is conducted once every five years. The process includes a two steps approach with the main focus on assessing the quality of teacher knowledge of the subject, conducted via electronic tests (this comprises 80% of total grade for attestation). Another step includes assessment of pedagogical skills and psychological preparation of teachers conducted within schools by using teacher observation tools and assessment of the certificates and other documents (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2021).

The digitalization of the economy also supports to collect data on different aspects. The following state services are provided in the school education system through the Unified interactive state services portal (my.gov.uz):

- recognition of documents on general secondary education in foreign countries (nostrification);
- issuing a duplicate of official state documents (certificate) on general secondary
- education;
- sending applications for admission of children of foreign citizens and stateless persons to general secondary educational institutions.
- accepting applications for taking exams in the external procedure.

Also, by the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, the following state services will be gradually introduced:

- admission of children to public secondary educational institutions;
- transferring students from one general secondary educational institution to another.

Public services are provided free of charge in the school education system.

5.1.2. NATIONAL DIALOGUE

With regards to the sector dialogue, a local education group has been in place since 2021, with terms of reference established and thematic groups set; the group has regular meetings. A first joint sector review was organized in December 2021, with the main objective of discussing the achievements of the implementation current ESP 2019/2023. An aide-mémoire of the JSR presents the progress towards outcome, outputs, and activities, but also challenges and key recommendations for 2022 for each sub-sector. The Government's and partners' commitments during the Transforming Education Summit to fund and support a common-led National Compact prioritizing the improvement of the Education Quality, to be developed by March 2023 is also a proof of common willingness to reinforce sector dialogue with all technical and funding actors in education.

At the preschool level, a mechanism of sub-sector dialogue exists, and the government of Uzbekistan hosted the second world conference on childhood care and education in November 2022, which enabled the national actors not only to set objectives for the sub-sector for the next 10 years, but also to share experience with all participant countries. The agency of preschool has put in place an internal scientific workshop to facilitate discussion on preschool achievements and challenges.

A national platform exists at the national level where new law, official documents and proposals are free to access, including a special teacher access portal to improve their engagement. All kindergartens benefit from advisory bodies to facilitate the exchange with the community around administrative, monitoring, and learning issues.

Finally, the Republican Centre is a powerful tool for sharing information to all actors, and it has developed new contents (in science for example); it regularly communicates with teachers. The co-creation of the advanced training of teachers with 8,000 professionals taking part in the diagnosis, the expression of needs, and the inclusion of the communities in the conversation is also a good dialogue practice to be mentioned.



5.2. CHALLENGES

5.2.1. EDUCATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION, INFORMATION DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, OPEN DATA

The Ministry of Education is lacking a transversal specific monitoring unit, capable not only to link students' assessment results to a results-based monitoring of the national reforms and strategy, but also to improve the coordination between ministries and different national and international agencies and other partners, through the local education group. Moreover, not enough time is dedicated to the development of quality strategic technical and financial monitoring tools.

There is a need for agreement on what type of data to be collected to identify gaps and inform performance according to the referent planning tools developed. The existing data are rarely used in an efficient manner, due to a multiplicity of data sources (Avlonyi, REC, etc.) not connected with each other and not comprehensively informing system improvement. This prevents experts from building and applying a clear data treatment and analysis logic, due to a lack of M&E specialists able to analyse and report on these data, but above all due to a lack of a systemic approach to student performance monitoring and how to present the results to the public and interested stakeholders. The information data collection and management system needs to be strengthened to ensure transparency and accessibility of data (MSPE, 2022).

The monitoring of school access and attendance has also been discussed, as has the availability of software such as the electronic diary and the instructional time verification tool, the implementation of which in all GSE is part of the main objectives of the Concept 2030. However, no clear instructions on how to use them to improve school level habits, or how to monitor them at higher level (districts, regions, national) have been provided.

Teachers' attestation is used for upgrading the level of teachers' qualification and focused mostly on subject knowledge rather than aimed at assessing teacher competencies based on professional standards. It is not informing teachers professional development and lacking transparency and anti-corruption mechanisms. This has a negative impact on the overall M&E system of the sector.

There is a misalignment between teacher evaluation and teacher training as teachers are evaluated on criteria not linked to the quality of their performance in classroom, and learning outcomes are decreasing. Moreover, it is highly important to have clear understanding between the Ministry and parents on the evaluation system.

Quality assurance still requires a comprehensive approach/reform. Between 2017-2022, the key organization responsible for conducting regular quality assurance process attestation was the State Inspectorate on Supervision of Quality of Education (SISQE) that was abolished during the administrative reforms. The new department responsible for monitoring of education quality has been established at the Ministry of Preschool and School Education (MoPSE).

Every year, at least 2,000 schools go through attestation. However, due to the limited resources in MoPSE (2-4 employees work in its regional departments on QA) and the lack of capacity and attention of local authorities responsible for monitoring the quality of education, this process is not carried out properly. According to the current regulations, external experts can be involved in schools/preschools attestation processes. However, the budget for attraction of these experts is not allocated and not considered by any legislation. As such, university and school teachers are mainly involved as experts. This limits the possibilities of transparent and fair assessment of school activities. In 2022, 2,600 pedagogues were involved in the attestation process on a public basis.

Due to limited capacity of schools' management to conduct self-evaluation, the original goal to shift accountability for evaluation and ensuring quality at school level was not reached. The external evaluation is conducted only once every 5 years. As a result, in most cases, the

attention of the school team to the quality of education is weakened. More time and effort are needed to build the system of school self-evaluation including building capacity on monitoring and evaluation. A system of supportive supervision (methodological and for monitoring) is required to support schools.

Two mechanisms to improve the annual monitoring at the school level exist. The first one is a mapping of the attendance in preschool, but unfortunately this is not digitalized and cannot be used for global monitoring of sub-sector accessibility and access. The second one is a pilot project implemented in the 2,000 existing Modern Schools (around 20% of schools) and consists of the development of harmonized tools to evaluate school performance (school cards with colour codes per level of performance and criteria for the ranking of each domain evaluated).

The emergence of digital solutions enables improved efficiency through the education system. Multiple digitalized data sources exist at all levels of the education sector, but without a unique source that informs on the achievement of the education system in terms of access, quality, and governance.

5.2.2. NATIONAL DIALOGUE

The lack of coordination between sectors and agencies was one of the weaknesses identified, particularly the fact that the development of inter-sectoral contents and standards by the actual LEG does not always meet the national agencies agreement. On the other hand, there is a difficulty to raise education issues at the citizen level, in some cases due to connectivity limitations. There is a common awareness that horizontal dialogue is a big challenge and thus an area requiring improvement in order to open sector review to all groups of actors instead of organizing meetings on an ad-hoc basis. Moreover, gender-related challenges need to be included in reviews / social media in order to positively influence the reduction of stereotypes.



5.3. OPPORTUNITIES

The use of reference planning and M&E tools to monitor the strategy at all levels facilitate the supervision and inspection process according to the Education Quality Assurance Framework (EQAF) and School Monitoring System implemented. The different reports from the schools to the national level, if harmonized and analysed in terms of performance of the system, inform the level of achievement of the strategy with data collected from the field. Moreover, a regular dialogue through thematic meetings to discuss the main priorities of the sector based on evidence of achievement and results framework of the national strategy is complementary to data collection and results reports. Such a routine facilitates a common analysis of performances with actors from the different levels of implementation, monitoring, and decision-making, and leads to the prioritization of reforms for the next steps of implementation and the review of certain targets to be more realistic and efficient.

5.3.1. EDUCATION MONITORING AND EVALUATION, INFORMATION DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, OPEN DATA

There appears to be a misunderstanding of the role information data collection and management systems play in the M&E of the education system, and the differentiation between data which usually leads to the development of a statistical year book after the annual campaign to collect data in schools (equipment, materials, format, type, level of attendance, pupils, teachers and staff information, PTA and school projects, etc.), and M&E data attached to a M&E plan to collect information at all levels of the system on the implementation of the strategy is necessary. These data are used to develop the annual technical and financial report, in order to inform the LEG and decision makers on the level of achievement of the national strategy and reforms. The two sources can be complementary but are not similar.

On the first set of data, participants of the thematic discussion mentioned that a unique information data collection and management system should be developed, school level data should align with SDGs and efforts should be made to reduce the burden of data collection, reducing pressure on schools and other data providers, through the use of communication, coordination, and (crucially) technology.

When it comes to data for the monitoring of the strategy implemented, there is a need to dedicate sufficient time to develop a set of referent Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) tools for the monitoring of the performance of the system, including a Results Monitoring Framework, with Indicators carefully designed to ensure they are fit, a corresponding Performance Matrix and Annual Budgeted Action Plan Model, including a model for the regions. Experts in charge of the PM&E at national, regional and district level need capacity building to be able to analyse the data and interpret the level of achievement through recommended indicators.

There is also a need to provide a sufficient annual budget dedicated to the M&E of the strategy to make sure data will be collected and analysed on time every year. The government should also draw on data from private sector studies, and from other independent sources, as well as making use of external evaluations.

The idea of school cards to monitor the performance at school level seems to be a powerful tool to build the results-based monitoring capacity of principals and teachers through a learning-by-doing mechanism. Having regular data on learning assessment and being able to correlate them to other factors to analyse their influence on the quality of learning through this type of tools, can positively influence teachers and principals to improve the teaching-learning process in place in their schools, and to develop remedial plans adapted to the specificities of their pupils.

Improved technical coordination and dialogue between sectors and agencies is necessary, through a National Unit responsible for the overall PM&E of the national strategy and reforms across the education sector. The Open Budget, a Ministry of Finance initiative, is a potential model to build on.

The MoPSE has proposed a number of measures to improve the system of certification of general secondary education organizations and monitoring of the quality of education, including: extension of mandatory certification period from 5 to 11 years; remote monitoring of the quality of education in schools during the period of attestation based on risk analysis; paying wages to experts involved in certification processes from extra-budgetary and state budget funds of the MoPSE; implementation of the online platform of the MoPSE; and digitization of certification processes.

5.3.2. NATIONAL DIALOGUE

More systematic meetings on an annual basis are necessary to analyse and review results in the education sector, with stakeholders invited to discuss challenges and solutions. In this sense, an annual LEG meeting would be helpful (ex. joint sector review) and should be informed by annual reporting as well as by qualitative data from specific studies and research in direct link with reforms and national priorities. The national conference and MoPSE processes such as the national conference organized every year in August can serve as good practice. Finally, communication on education, through the national platform and Telegram groups should be monitored and reinforced, with a communication plan developed at national and regional level, with dedicated funding to ensure quality communication actions at all levels (especially to make learning data understandable to the general public and present adapted remedial plans developed according to findings).

In order to create a dialogue routine between all groups of actors in the system, a national forum can be organized on an annual basis (e.g., joint sector review organized in 2021). If planned at a strategic moment, such a review can be key to inform yearly budget and technical plans, through report on the level of achievement and the performance of the sector and recommendations for reviews and priorities (see performance matrix, JSR aide-mémoire).



5.4. SYNERGIES AND COMPLEMENTARITY

World Bank, Transforming Public Education for Economic Growth Project,

Sep 2023 – Jun 2028, 50 mln USD, Nationwide

Component 1: Improve the Teaching and Learning Environment:

- Support the gender-specific requirements for girls' menstrual health and accessibility of WASH facilities in targeted schools; and
- Support preparedness of students for future crises and 21st century jobs; component 1 will improve access to, and use of, information and communications technologies (ICT) in the education process.

Component 2: Teacher Professional Development

- Strengthening pre-service training, aligning the training with curriculum changes, and strengthening practicum experience for pre-service teachers;
- Supporting in-classroom coaching and mentoring through regular classroom observations by school headteachers/principals and dedicated teacher mentors who can provide feedback on pedagogic approach and improve teaching delivery; and
- Supporting the implementation of the improved mechanism, strengthening the CPD system to align with the requirements of the new post-COVID realities of the education system. In addition, the incentive system, such as career growth and remuneration which needs to be linked to the teacher professional performance will also be strengthened through strengthening of the CPD system.

Component 3: Build Capacity in Student Learning Assessments

- Continue to enhance the country's expert and institutional capabilities in carrying out national and international assessments
- Support the Ministry and the SISQE to further enhance the capacity in carrying out national and international learning assessment surveys as well as their data analysis and reporting.

Component 4: Project Management and Monitoring and Evaluation

- Build the government's capacity in project management and M&E.

6. FINANCIAL & TECHNICAL GOVERNANCE, INCLUDING DECENTRALISATION



6.1. OVERVIEW

In recent years, a number of measures have been taken aimed at reforming the public finance system, improving the efficiency of the budget planning system, ensuring the relationship between budgeting and the development of economic sectors, including the education system, and the transition to results-based budgeting. In particular, the Strategy for Reforming the Public Financial Management System for 2020-2024 was adopted (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2020). Within the framework of this strategy:

- 1 a partial transition from budget planning 'by sectors' to planning 'by ministries and agencies' has been started;
- 2 every year the Fiscal Strategy is approved, including the medium-term budgetary framework (forecast of revenues and expenditures of the state budget, off-budget funds and FRDU for the next financial year and targets calculated on the basis of this for the next 2 years) (IMV, 2023)
- 3 from 2021, performance indicators of budget expenditures and development programs began to be introduced in four ministries as a pilot experience, including the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Preschool Education. At the level of strategic planning, the Concepts for the development of (preschool, school and higher) education until 2030 were adopted (Republic of Uzbekistan, 2019; Republic of Uzbekistan, 2022), with certain targets and performance indicators. In addition, a number of documents were developed jointly with international development partners, defining the results and indicators of development (World Bank, 2021; ADB, 2022; UN Uzbekistan, 2019; GPE, 2019).

The digitalization of the system has improved. In particular, introduction of the Public Finance Management Information System (PFMIS) and UzASBO software (that was integrated to all schools and preschool) made it possible to automate business processes and improve the efficiency of budget planning and budget execution.

Funding has increased in real terms in recent years, including increases in the salaries of schoolteachers, construction, repairs, and equipment. Prioritization of the development of preschool education has made it possible to increase the budget funds allocated for preschool education by 10 times over the past 6 years.

The ministries have been granted the right to independently make decisions within the budget allocated to them (parliamentary appropriations) with an immediate effect of being more informed on financial matters.



6.2. CHALLENGES

Improving the efficiency of financing the education sector will require to pay attention to the following current challenges:

At the level of strategic (technical mid-term) planning

This section is based on the policy brief 'Analysis of the current strategic planning system' provided by the Agency for Strategic Reforms under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Agency for Strategic Reforms, 2022).

There is lack of legal framework that will inform development of strategic planning for all sectors, including education. Theoretical aspects and methodology for development of strategic (technical mid-term) plans, as well as the procedure for their formation, organization of experts, coordination of work and further monitoring of implementation of plans have not been developed.

As a result of the lack of a clear methodology, the current strategic documents may include not clear formulated activities, a large number of performance indicators that overlap and often contradict each other, as well as not being linked to activities 41. For example, the Concept for the Development of Public Education until 2030 includes 48 performance indicators with target values for 2019-2021, 2025 and 2030, on the other hand, 14 targets for 2021 and 19 indicators for 2022. The matrices are a combination of outcome and output indicators that are not necessarily interrelated. The structure and principle of development for the current strategic technical level regulatory documents at the country, regional and sectoral levels vary and often do not have consistency and a common development vector.

An imperfect system of data collection, analysis, and forecasting (including lack of methodology) complicates the process of ensuring the consistency of all data during the preparation of high-quality multi-year budgeted action planning. In addition, there is a lack of research/analysis that can serve as a basis for formulating specific policies and activities.

The risk assessment is not sufficiently implemented, there is no relationship between technical, investment and financial planning between the national, sectoral, and local levels.

All these lead to difficulties at the stage of alignment of strategic technical planning with budgeting, as well as its implementation. Technical plans turn out to be ineffective in terms of their potential contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. In addition, key research/analysis is missing to formulate specific policies and activities.

At the level of budget planning

The actual annual budget process is relying on instructions to the different sub-sectors, which are not linked to sector technical planning but on the expression of local and regional needs not necessarily linked to a results-based analysis of the performance of the system from one year to another.

Even though a medium-term expenditure framework has been introduced in the preparation of the budget, this tool is still not used as a referent document to develop the technical education system planning.

Difficulties in ensuring the coherence of state policy and budget financing are depending not only on the frequent shifts in policy focus, but also on too numerous and conflicting new priorities without consideration of budget, without clear aims, objectives, and target indicators.

Budgeting is poorly coordinated at all levels, and district khokims often reallocate funds to expenditures that bring little benefit to the quality of education. The low capacity of the staff in charge of education in planning and monitoring explains inefficient practices especially at the district/grass-root level.

The planning of the State Budget is not yet flexible enough to be evidence-based, and the main activities financed from the budget are infrastructure, textbooks, sports, materials, music development, salaries, and maintenance. As a result, areas such as digitalization and high-speed Internet provision, school safety, community school initiatives, and environmental road safety for student access to school premises are underfunded.

The level of digitalization of budget planning is still insufficient to facilitate the merger of different databases from different ministries (i.e., data from population census, school data, and national budget database). As a result, there appears to be a weak alignment of sectoral strategies with the national strategy, and confusion between the terms 'development program' and 'budget program.'

In addition, non-financial indicators that are important for budget planning are not fully digitalized (for example, land plot and school buildings, that is required for forecasting of the number of schools support and technical staff etc.)

Budget execution and monitoring

No clear mechanism and methodology exist for monitoring and evaluation of the strategy. The actual sector development concept presents various indicators of different levels which make an efficient monitoring of the performance of the system impossible, compounded by the questionable reliability of the baseline level of some indicators, and the lack of regular evaluation of certain measures.

The process of budget execution is not fully digitalized, which can facilitate many violations at all levels. There is lack of public control over spending at the school level.

Internal audit services perform mostly punitive function instead of focusing on analysis, identification, and risk management to prevent and prevent financial violations before they occur.

At last, no external risk analysis of the institution has been produced so far, which would inform on the gaps and ways of improvement of internal mechanisms in place (policy, legal frameworks, regulation, planning, financial management, procurement process, human resources, student admission, scholarship, school administration and supervision, curricula and TLMS, Teacher professional development, evaluation / assessments / exams) (ADB, 2010).

Lack of private sector engagement in strengthening schooling and pre-schooling was also identified by stakeholders as a challenge.



6.3. OPPORTUNITIES

The Compact is intending to coordinate the DPs support to the Uzbek government through common funding which could take the form of budget support, if specific budgeted technical planning, high level results monitoring frameworks and other monitoring and evaluation plans are developed against a common-led strategy to tackle quality issues identified in the education sector. A better link between budget and technical planning is thus necessary, as it is known to be efficient for the monitoring of the sector and the improvement of its performance at all levels of implementation and M&E of the national strategy. This will require the implementation of a number of measures in the following areas:

Strengthening the system of strategic (technical multi-year) planning:

- Develop a legal and regulatory framework (common principles and standards, formation procedure) for developing sector wide technical strategies, concepts, and targeted programs, including the methodology for goal setting and developing short and medium-term performance indicators, etc.;
- Conduct an inventory and adjustment of existing strategic education development plans with their further optimization and integration of existing state programs and development strategies. It is important to optimize and adjust strategic goals;
- Increase the capacity of responsible government officials and researchers to develop
- strategic development plans and link them to the budget; and
- Strengthen EMIS/ERP system to ensure that all necessary data needed for comprehensive planning is available and consistent and build capacity of the relevant staff to conduct analysis and forecasting based on these data.

Alignment of strategic technical planning with budgeting

- There is an urgent need to shift to a program budgeting based on evidence, with a clear vision for the sector, and main priorities;
- Develop and approve a public funding methodology that will be based on program budgeting or performance-based budgeting approaches;
- Further development of the medium-term budgetary framework (MTBF), Phased transition to a long-term budget by sectors with linkage to the education sector development strategy;
- Introduce a system where an additional development budget or additional funds are allocated only if the set indicators are met;
- Revise the methodology for calculating the salaries of teachers, abandoning the hourly system, rates, etc.; and
- Develop transparent mechanisms for determining the budget in the implementation of public procurement of goods, works and services, which will improve the efficiency of public spending.

Improving the system of monitoring, evaluation and audit, as well as increasing accountability and openness to improve the efficiency of budget execution

- Develop and implement a methodology, tools and mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and controlling the implementation of the education development strategy and the achievement of target indicators of budget execution, with the formulation of impact indicators, results, outcomes, intermediate results, input indicators, a performance matrix and an M&E plan for effective implementation coordination and control over the execution of goal-setting documents;
- Establish a sector-wide coordination unit to manage the complex process of planning, implementing and monitoring the entire education strategy and providing monitoring tools with information on a regular basis;
- Further digitalization of the process of collecting, accumulating, and analyzing financial and non-financial indicators that reflect the process of planning, budgeting and budget execution. Important measures will be: a) Inventory of existing business processes, building the architecture of digitalization of the education system; b) Regulation of new business processes; and c) Based on the architecture of digitalization of the education system, the development and refinement of integrated information systems and databases. At the same time, it is important to digitize the databases of other ministries and to fully integrate them with databases and tools for planning and budget execution in the field of education;
- Strengthen external and internal audit in order to avoid discrepancies between budget planning and execution and corruption: definition of the legal framework and methodological framework, specification of powers, as well as the effective organization of internal audit services at all levels in the education system;

- Increasing the capacity of civil society (including the media, consumers of education services) in carrying out public control and participation in decision-making in the field of education at all levels;
- Ensuring the competitiveness of public procurement, through the regulation of internal pre-purchase and elimination of gaps in the regulation of procurement procedures and advanced training of buyers and accountants; and
- Expanding the list of published data and improving the convenience of their use.

Stakeholders also identified an opportunity to better harness the private sector to play a key role in strengthening outcomes in schooling and pre-schooling, and to foster effective partnerships with the private sector to support outcomes in schools and pre-schools, as well as an environment in which such partnerships can flourish, with the involvement of both local entrepreneurs and international investors.



6.4. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS INTERVENTIONS

UNODC ROCA 'Education for Justice' Initiative May 2018 - Dec 2021, US\$500,000 for Uzbekistan (Global Programme budget is US\$50,000,000 – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, El-Salvador, Qatar, West Africa, etc.).

The Education for Justice (E4J) initiative seeks to prevent crime and promote a culture of lawfulness through education activities designed for primary, secondary and tertiary levels. These activities help educators teach the next generation to better understand and address problems that can undermine the rule of law and encourage students to actively engage in their communities and future professions in this regard. A set of products and activities for the primary and secondary levels have been developed in partnership with UNESCO and aimed to prevent corruption, violence, trafficking in persons, cybercrime, etc; as well as to develop integrity, ethics, and critical thinking skills. In Uzbekistan, the E4J initiative covered all geographic areas, more than 1,000 secondary schools and 70,000 students. At the primary level, the E4J educational tools (the Zorbs cartoon series) were included into the primary curricula, covering more than 500,000 children every school year.

UNDP 'Preventing Corruption through Effective, Accountable and Transparent governance Institutions in Uzbekistan' May - Dec 2022 - \$8,000,000 – Nationwide

The project introduced anti-corruption education in the entire system of national education, including:

- 1 Together with the Ministry of Public Education, educational disciplines were introduced on 'Honesty and Integrity' for schoolchildren in grades 4-8, 'Fundamentals of Anti-Corruption'

for schoolchildren in grades 9-10', teaching educational methodological discipline 'Anti-Corruption' for teachers and lecturers on the basis of the Center for Retraining Teachers;

- 2 Together with the Ministry of Higher Education, educational and methodological courses were introduced for students of higher educational institutions on 'Anti-Corruption - the Basis of Integrity'; and
- 3 Capacity building of the Anti-Corruption Compliance Units in the Ministries of People's and Higher Education was provided, in the regional Departments of Public Education, secondary schools, Tashkent State Economic University, Tashkent Law University as pilot projects.

UNICEF UN Joint Programme 'Supporting the Establishment of an Integrated National Financing Framework in Uzbekistan' *January 2021 - October 2022 - Technical and financial contribution - Nationwide*

This project aimed to support the establishment of an Integrated National Financing Framework in Uzbekistan through improvement of child-sensitive public spending on social sectors (health, education, and social protection). The following activities were undertaken:

- 1 Conducted a capacity building programme for the staff members of the MoF and Social Sector Ministries on child-sensitive, evidence-based budget planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the relevant public expenditures in social protection, education, and healthcare.
- 2 Building on a training course, provided coaching/mentoring and quality assurance to participants in undertaking the budgetary analysis of public spending on child-sensitive social sectors, and using various analytical tools to come up with the recommendations on how to improve sufficiency, efficiency, effectiveness, and equitability of these spending.

These two activities are expected to encourage participants to apply the theoretical knowledge in their respective sectors allowing them to brainstorm and identify key PFM bottlenecks and responses that hinder evidence-based decision making on the best alignment of budget allocations and effective spending with the key social sector strategies.

UNICEF 'Strengthening SDG financing through enhanced government capacities in programme-based budgeting' *September 2022 - ongoing*

Under the Global Flagship Finance Initiative, UNICEF and UNDP Country Offices in Uzbekistan are seeking to provide further support in advancing the management and financing for results practices by focusing more on results delivered within the development programmes, including those that will contribute to achieving the key national SDGs. This includes work to support introduction of PBB for better and expanded financing of the SDGs in poverty reduction, education, health, social protection, gender equality and green growth. To achieve this, following activities are planned:

- 1 Undertaking assessment of the extent to which the ongoing work on implementation of programme-based budgeting in Uzbekistan is on track, what best international practices are there that can be adapted for local context and to develop recommendations on closing

the missing gaps as well as the best course to continue the work to achieve set goals and objectives to implement programme-based budgeting;

- 2 Developing a training program on PBB, in line with the methodologies developed and endorsed by the Ministry; and
- 3 Conducting training of trainers to ensure that the training is available on rolling basis through the training centre under the Ministry of Finance.



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