



Project Information Document/ Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet (PID/ISDS)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 13-Mar-2018 | Report No: PIDISDSC24015



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Uzbekistan	Project ID P165737	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Uzbekistan Promoting Early Childhood Development Project (P165737)
Region EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date Aug 06, 2018	Estimated Board Date Dec 05, 2018	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance	Implementing Agency Ministry of Preschool Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project development objectives are to increase access to early childhood care and education services, and improve quality of preschool education in project-supported institutions.

Financing (in USD Million)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	60.00
Total Financing	60.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Total World Bank Group Financing	50.00
World Bank Lending	50.00

Environmental Assessment Category
B-Partial Assessment

Concept Review Decision
Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue



Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Uzbekistan is Central Asia’s most populous country, and its 32.1 million people account for over half of the region’s total population.¹ It is the only country to border the other four Central Asian states and is one of only two double-landlocked countries in the world. Uzbekistan is a lower-middle-income country that experienced rapid economic growth of 8.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) over the last decade—the highest economic growth rate in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region and one of the highest in the world. At the same time, per capita gross national income rose from US\$2,020 to US\$5,840.²

Uzbekistan aims to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030, which requires private enterprises to increasingly become the driver for jobs creation and growth, given the fact that the state-dominated growth model is no longer sustainable. In 2016, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) initiated ambitious economic reforms that include currency liberalization, enlargement of the private sector in the economy, expansion of exports, reforms of state-owned enterprises, as well as the support to initiatives to increase employment and income.

The GoU recently approved the National Development Strategy 2017-2021, which has direct implications for the preschool education sector. In February 2017, the President of Uzbekistan approved the “Strategy on Actions in Five Priority Areas for Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021”, which identifies key directions for the GoU to transform its economy. This Strategy explicitly highlights a need to expand the network of preschools, improve learning environment, ensure affordability and a significant increase in the coverage of children with preschool education, as well as the increase of the level of qualification of preschool teachers and specialists.

Widening access while mitigating spatial inequities in access to high-quality preschool education has high potential to reduce poverty and boost shared prosperity, helping Uzbekistan to reach upper middle-income status. International evidence shows that what children learn in the earliest days and years of life shapes and defines their futures; 90 percent of brain development takes place in the first five years of life. This fact means that early learning contributes directly to one’s ability to capture the benefits of formal schooling and contribute to the labor market and society as an adult. Investments that nurture early learning are foundational to a virtuous cycle of lifelong learning, skills development, healthy behaviors, and civic participation that contribute to poverty reduction and prosperity. Investments in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)³ are crucial to the achievement of almost every other development goal.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

International evidence clearly demonstrates that high-quality ECCE interventions have significant and

¹ National Statistics Committee (2017a).

² In purchasing power parity terms. In current US\$ (Atlas method), per capita GNI rose from US\$560 to US\$2,090, from 2001 to 2014.

³ The terms *early childhood care and education (ECCE)* and *early childhood development (ECD)* are used interchangeably throughout this document.



long-lasting social and economic benefits for children, their families, and society at large.⁴ A substantial body of evidence from around the world shows that early childhood (ages 0-6) is a critical period in a child's physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socioemotional development, and that what children experience in these early years shapes and defines their futures. Investments that nurture learning at these early stages are foundational to a virtuous cycle of lifelong learning, positive behavior, and good health outcomes. Holistic ECCE interventions have been shown to benefit children in three broad categories of interrelated outcomes: (i) enhancing school readiness and educational outcomes; (ii) improving physical and mental health outcomes; and (iii) reducing engagement in high-risk behavior. These types of interventions can have an especially powerful effect on children from disadvantaged households, helping to reduce inequalities.

ECCE has been linked as well with broader benefits for families and society, such as increased participation of women in the labor force, lower rates of participation in government assistance or welfare programs, reduced criminality, and greater civic participation. Greater access to ECCE services means that mothers can spend some of their time pursuing gainful activities in the local labor market. One study carried out in Brazil found that access to free publicly provided child care services led to a large parental take-up of child care services under the program (an increase from 51 to 94 percent), as well as an increase in mothers' overall employment (from 36 to 46 percent) and in the employment of mothers who were not working before free child care services were available (from 9 to 17 percent). These findings demonstrated that providing access to child care not only encourages parents to participate, but also gives mothers an opportunity to participate in the labor force.⁵

However, despite the high level of expenditure in preschool education in Uzbekistan, and the demonstrated positive impacts of Early Childhood Development (ECD), only approximately 29 percent of children aged 3-7 were enrolled in preschools in 2017, which is low. The total number of children aged 3-7 enrolled in preschools increased from nearly 554,000 to 908,000, from 2007 to 2017. However, the preschool population also increased during this time, and, in reality, the preschool enrollment rate increased only from 20 percent to approximately 29 percent, from 2006 to 2017. This low preschool enrollment rate in Uzbekistan is also in stark contrast with its nearly universal enrolment in general secondary education.

Preschools are mostly located in urban areas. In Uzbekistan, 60 percent of all preschools were located in urban areas in 2016, and they were overall more overcrowded than rural preschools. In terms of seats occupation, 99 percent of places in urban preschools are occupied, compared with 88 percent in rural areas. Furthermore, the ratio of enrolled students to preschools (i.e. the average enrollment size per preschool) is 163 students per preschool in urban areas, compared with 100:1 in rural areas. There is also considerable variation in this ration between regions of Uzbekistan, ranging from 92:1, in Khorezm, to 262:1, in Tashkent city.⁶

At present, the supply of preschool education services in Uzbekistan is mostly financed by the state, and the large majority of preschools are public (96 percent), yet these services are not free. It is important to note that compulsory and free education covers grades 1 to 11, so it currently does not include preschool education. Families who wish to enroll their children in public preschools must pay fees which are mostly to cover the costs of meals.

Uzbekistan currently offers public ECD services through a half-day model as well as the traditional full-

⁴ Heckman (2012).

⁵ World Bank (2018); Attanasio et al. (2017).

⁶ National Statistics Committee (2017b).



day model, with more than 1,200 preschools offering both under financing from the GPE Project. The main outcomes and outputs of the successful implementation of this Project include: (i) a 57 percent increase in the enrollment rate in rural preschools, (ii) more than 275,000 out-of-preschool children aged 3-6 benefitting from an early reading program, (iii) more than 1,200 rural preschools equipped with high-quality furniture, indoor and outdoor recreation equipment, teaching and learning materials, and small libraries, (iv) more than 55,000 children aged 3-6 enrolled in half-day groups, (v) more than 71,000 children benefitting from better equipped preschools, and (vi) more than 2,000 preschool teachers trained in the half-day model. These results showed that targeted, efficient investments in preschool education can quickly help the GoU address the challenges in both the supply and demand side of service provision. These results informed the ongoing reforms in ECD in the country, including the massive expansive of service provision planned for 2018-2021.

The GoU recognizes the importance of investing in early childhood education, and it has announced an ambitious plan to expand ECD services provision with the aim of achieving 100 percent enrollment for children ages 6-7 by 2021. With this goal, the GoU established the Ministry of Preschool Education (MPSE) in September 2017 to play the lead role in the expansion of ECD in Uzbekistan. Before, preschool education was a responsibility of the Ministry of Public Education. Additionally, there is the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education, who is responsible for higher education, as well as secondary specialized, vocational education. The MPSE must engage with other decision makers and agencies that also have an early childhood mandate. Seamless program delivery depends on the three mentioned Ministries of Education, Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Health (MoH), and the State Inspection for Supervision of Education Quality working together to achieve a holistic agenda for children.

The GoU's plan for expanding ECD service provision is two-fold with state provision of services in rural areas and public-private partnerships in urban areas. The MPSE and the MoF are in the process of developing hybrid models, which are specific to Uzbekistan, and would allow for the establishment and operation of stand-alone private preschools, networks of private preschools, firm-sponsored preschools, and international and domestic private providers. This model may free State budget for public provision of no-fee or low-fee preschools to children living in rural areas, where fewer parents have the means to pay the fees for private preschool services.

The GoU and the World Bank are discussing an innovative performance-based approach to finance the expansion of early childhood development services in the country through a social impact bond pilot. Defined as a “financing mechanism for social outcomes where investors provide upfront capital for services and a government agency repays investors contingent on outcome achievement,” Social Impact Bonds (SIB) are a recent addition to the configuration of public private partnerships. SIB has grown in popularity as a mechanism for domestic and international development financing specifically to increase the volume and/or effectiveness of finance for social services. This model is attractive to governments because it is seen as a way of de-risking projects and saving taxpayer money by reducing wastage freeing up the fiscus for use on other issues of social concern. SIB provides a payment-by-results financing mechanism, tying outputs or outcomes to payments.

Relationship to CPF

The proposed Project is well aligned with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for 2016-2020. In particular, the proposed Project would contribute directly to Strategic Theme IV: Improving Access to Social Services by expanding access to early childhood education while also improving quality of service delivery and school readiness. This is articulated in CPF Objective 3.1 on an improved access to quality education and health



services. Because ECD has a direct impact on social inclusion, poverty alleviation, and income growth, the proposed Project is also aligned with: (i) the World Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity; (ii) the World Bank's recently launched corporate priority of Investing in Early Years for Growth and Productivity; and (iii) the Europe and Central Asia Regional Strategy.

The proposed Project would support the GoU's efforts to expand and improve ECD services provision, as embodied in multiple recent Government decrees and resolutions such as:

- Strategy on Actions in Five Priority Areas for Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, approved by the President in February 2017, including Section 4.4. Development of Education and Science.
- President's Decree #2707 on Improving Early Childhood Education and Care in 2017-2021, dated December 29, 2016.
- Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution #528 on Improving the Activities of Preschool Educational Institutions, dated July 19, 2017.
- President's Decree #5198 on Measures for Improving Management of Preschool Education, dated September 30, 2017.
- Cabinet of Ministers' Decision #991 on Strengthening the Material and Technical Base of the Ministry of Preschool Education and its Institutions, and Supporting Non-State Preschool Education Institutions, dated December 18, 2017.
- The National Nutrition Improvement Strategy for 2009-2011, and the law on the Prevention of Micronutrient Deficiencies Among the Population of Uzbekistan, from 2010.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project development objectives are to increase access to early childhood care and education services, and improve quality of preschool education in project-supported institutions.

Key Results (From PCN)

As a result of the implementation of activities supported by the Project, as described in the next section of this document, the following preliminary key results are expected:

- Increased enrollment of three to seven-year-old children in preschools.
- Increased share of zero to three-year-old children benefitting from integrated early childhood care and education services.⁷
- Enhanced school readiness of six and seven-year-old children enrolled in project-supported preschools.

D. Concept Description

The GoU has made an important and high-level commitment to expand access to quality ECD services, and the proposed Project aims to support this commitment. In this regard, the proposed Project would be

⁷ Integrated early childhood care and education services should be understood as services provided under holistic interventions aimed at benefiting children in three broad categories of interrelated outcomes: (i) enhancing school readiness and educational outcomes; (ii) improving physical and mental health outcomes; and (iii) reducing engagement in high-risk behavior.



implemented over a period of five years, from 2019 to 2024, and would be financed by an IDA credit of US\$ 50 million along with a grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Multiplier Fund of US\$ 10 million, for a total of US\$ 60 million. The financing from the GPE Multiplier Fund requires the proposed Project to have a results-based financing component in the amount of at least US\$ 3.33 million, as well as that outcomes in quality, efficiency and equity are regularly measured and monitored. The social impact bond component that is proposed under this Project may meet these requirements. The proposed Project would be organized around the following four components:

- Component 1 – Improving Quality in Preschool Education through Systemic Interventions
- Component 2 – Increasing Access to Quality Early Learning Environments
- Component 3 – Partnering with the Private Sector through a Social Impact Bond
- Component 4 – Enhancing System Monitoring Capacity and Supporting Project Management

Component 1 – Improving Quality in Preschool Education through Systemic Interventions

Sub-Component 1.1 – Interventions to Strengthen Governance, Regulations, and Coordination

This sub-component would provide support to strengthen the governance and regulatory framework for ECD service provision in Uzbekistan, and to improve coordination between key stakeholders. With the aim of facilitating the GoU's ongoing reforms in the preschool education sector, *this sub-component would support the development, review, or streamlining of the existing regulations that together comprise the GoU's legal framework for ECD service provision and quality assurance* (including but not limited to the State requirements for preschool education) in accordance with international good practices. This assistance would consider health and social protection regulations aimed at children ages 0-6, particularly pertaining to immunization, health screening, basic health services, and nutrition interventions, as well as early stimulation and education. It could also consider the revision of existing or development of new regulations aimed at improving climate and seismic resilience of pre-school buildings, particularly to address increasing risks of extreme weather events or natural hazards.

Additionally, *this sub-component would support the review or development of regulations to promote inclusive preschool education for children with disabilities or special educational needs, in accordance with international good practices. This sub-component would also support activities to build consensus among ECD stakeholders at national, regional, and local levels, generate awareness, enthusiasm, and trust around the GoU's ECD policy reforms and Project-supported interventions, and generate feedback about implementation to ensure operational smoothness.*

Sub-Component 1.2 – Interventions to Improve and Assess Quality in Preschool Education

The objective of this sub-component is to improve quality of preschool education in Uzbekistan to ultimately produce better child outcomes, including enhanced school readiness of 6 or 7-year-olds in Project-supported preschools. The proposed Project seeks to improve quality through support for two clusters of interventions, described in more detail below.

First, *this sub-component would provide support for the expansion and improvement of the ECD workforce and working conditions.* This support would entail a review of the capacity of pedagogical universities and other mechanisms for pre-service and in-service training of preschool teachers and managers, as well as support to



develop and implement alternative models for expand the preschool teachers' workforce in line with growing demand. *Support would also be provided for in-service training of preschool teachers on child-centered approaches.* To ensure that the Project supports a holistic approach, training activities to be financed by this sub-component may include *content to raise awareness about child nutrition, hygiene, immunization, and child protection.* Training activities may also include *content to raise teachers' awareness on Uzbekistan's vulnerability to natural hazards, and the respective measures to mitigate the risks related to this vulnerability.* Additionally, *this sub-component would support the development of career pathways for preschool teachers to ensure coordination between pre-service education, in-service training, work experience, compensation, and teachers' grades.*

Second, *this sub-component would support the development and implementation of a system to assess the quality of preschools and child development outcomes* in accordance with international good practices. This sub-component would finance the development and/or adaptation of tools and measurement instruments, which could be any tool acceptable by the World Bank and the MPSE, for assessing structural and process quality in preschools, as well as children's physical, cognitive, and developmental outcomes, with a particular focus on school readiness. *Additional support would also be provided for capacity building and training on the use of such quality assessment tools.*

Component 2 – Increasing Access to Quality Early Learning Environments

Sub-Component 2.1 – Interventions to Improve Early Learning Environments

The objective of this sub-component is to increase access to high-quality preschool learning environments. As such, *this sub-component would support the provision of modern child-friendly and age-appropriate equipment and furniture, as well as teaching and learning materials to selected preschools.* Additionally, *selected preschools would benefit from the renovation or setting up of utilities,* such as the provision of running water, sewerage and heating (including auxiliary infrastructure) to create a safe, child-friendly, and accessible learning environment. Finally, *under this sub-component, selected preschools would be equipped with computers, internet connectivity, and related information and communication technology (ICT) equipment* to ensure that preschools are connected to electronic teaching and learning materials as well as the MPSE's preschool management information system (PMIS).

Sub-Component 2.2 – Interventions to Expand Access through Alternative Models

The objective of this sub-component is to expand access to early learning opportunities by developing or scaling up alternative models of service provision. In particular, *this sub-component would finance technical assistance for the implementation of one or more public-private partnership models in ECD,* which are currently under consideration by the GoU. *This sub-component would also support the development and implementation of flexible models to expand access to early stimulation and learning opportunities for children from disadvantaged households.* For example, the ongoing GPE-supported Project has supported early reading programs in rural areas of Uzbekistan, and that Project is now assessing the early reading program; based on the results of this assessment, the proposed Project could adjust the early reading program, as needed, and expand it with the involvement of parents in order to benefit children from disadvantaged households. *Activities to improve the engagement of citizens in the design and implementation of these flexible models of ECD service provision would be also financed under this sub-component.*



Component 3 – Partnering with the Private Sector through a Social Impact Bond

The objective of this component is to increase access to quality preschool education through the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of an innovative results-based financing approach. *It would finance a multi-year social impact bond in urban areas of Uzbekistan*, which would be an incentives-driven operation where performance outcomes would be connected to financial returns. As mentioned in the context section, the GoU will expand ECD services with private providers in urban areas, while the state will lead the expansion in rural areas of the country.

This SIB in ECD would *support activities such as: (i) training of preschool teachers, managers and non-teaching staff; (ii) building of a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system; (iii) provision of teaching and learning materials to private preschools; and (iv) administrative costs of project-supported private preschools.*

Component 4 – Enhancing System Monitoring Capacity and Supporting Project Management

Sub-Component 4.1 – Enhancing Capacity to Monitor the Preschool Education System

The objective of this sub-component is to improve the capacity of the preschool education system to collect, analyze, and disseminate data and information for monitoring and decision-making purposes. *This sub-component would support mechanisms and assistance to streamline existing data collection processes and to improve system-wide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities.* Additionally, *this sub-component would support the design and implementation of studies, evaluations, surveys, or other information-gathering efforts*—particularly related to the supply, demand, and quality of ECD service provision—in order to improve efficient decision-making. *This sub-component would support capacity building and training activities for stakeholders on data collection and analysis.* Additionally, *this sub-component would support the participation of beneficiaries in the monitoring of proposed project activities*, which could be done through the establishment of monitoring groups in project supported preschools, for instance.

Sub-Component 4.2 – Supporting Project Management

This sub-component would support the day-to-day management and monitoring of the proposed Project through the establishment and maintenance of a possible Project Management Team (PMT). The PMT would provide operational and management support for the proposed Project for its full duration. This sub-component would finance fees for possible PMT staff, training activities, and operating costs.

SAFEGUARDS

A. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

All regions of Uzbekistan



B. Borrower’s Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The Ministry of Preschool Education has little experience in implementing World Bank projects, so the safeguards capacity is expected to be low. Additional formal and on-the-job training is needed to build the capacity of implementing agency specialists. It might be necessary to involve third-party consultants, or hire a part-time environmental specialist for certain stages of project preparation and implementation.

C. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Aimonchok Tashieva, Social Safeguards Specialist
Rustam Arstanov, Environmental Safeguards Specialist

D. Policies that might apply

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	Yes	Sub-component 2.1 will include the renovation or setting up of utilities, such as the provision of running water, sewerage and heating (including auxiliary infrastructure) to create a safe, child-friendly, and accessible learning environment. Sub-component 2.2. will support technical assistance for the implementation of one or more public-private partnership models in ECD. Thus, environmental and health and safety risks associated with the anticipated civil works may include dust, noise, vibration, generation of construction waste, disruption of traffic, safety in construction (works at height, welding, limited access and regress, handling heavy loads and other). All risks have low to moderate severity and probability of harm. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will be prepared to cover Sub-components 2.1 and 2.2. It will include step by step procedures to screen renovation and refurbishment activities. The screening process described in the ESMF will ensure that no activities that may be assigned safeguards Category A are financed under the Project. If exact activities and locations under Components 2.1 are defined prior to the project appraisal, site-specific ESMPs will be developed before the start of appraisal, by the World Bank. Component 3, Partnering with the Private Sector through a Social Impact Bond, will not finance any activities that would include any civil works, but only training, monitoring and evaluation system and administrative costs.



		Given the history of labor issues in Uzbekistan, a social assessment will have to be conducted to verify whether project activities may contribute to forced labor/child labor situation in Uzbekistan. The World Bank will further assess on how to reflect potential labor risks through safeguards instrument. The decision on the appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring of social issues and grievance redress under the implementation of the proposed Project will be made prior to appraisal.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	All works to be conducted in urban setting and no natural habitats will be involved
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	All works to be conducted in urban setting and no forest areas will be involved. No significant purchase of timber is anticipated.
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	No purchase or use of pesticides is anticipated under the project.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	No	No PCR sites are to be impacted by the Project
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	N/A for Central Asia
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	TBD	During next missions, impact of construction works of preschools has to be assessed further to determine if project activities may cause any physical or economic displacement. In case it is determined that they do pose potential risks, OP 4.12 will need to be triggered and appropriate instrument prepared by the Borrower (Resettlement Policy Framework, Resettlement Action Plans, etc.)
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	No project sites will impact the dams or will depend on the performance of the dams
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	No waterways, internal or international, will be involved in the project
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	N/A for this project

E. Safeguard Preparation Plan

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage PID/ISDS

Jul 02, 2018

Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing should be specified in the Appraisal Stage PID/ISDS

An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will be prepared to cover Sub-components 2.1 and 2.2. It will include step by step procedures to screen renovation and refurbishment activities. The screening process described in the ESMF will ensure that no activities that may be assigned safeguards Category A are financed under the Project. The



Social Impact Bond Component (Component 3) is not expected to finance any civil works, but only activities such as training, capacity building, administrative costs etc. The ESMF will confirm this condition. If exact activities and locations under Components 2.1 are defined prior to the project appraisal, site-specific ESMPs will be developed before the start of appraisal, by the World Bank. The ESMPs will follow similar disclosure and consultation requirements described below. Given the history of labor issues in Uzbekistan, a social assessment will have to be conducted to verify whether project activities may contribute to forced labor/child labor situation in Uzbekistan. The decision on the appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring of these issues and grievance redress under the implementation of the Project should be made before project appraisal.

All safeguards instruments would need to be prepared one month ahead of project appraisal, which is scheduled to start on August 6, 2018, and translated, finalized, cleared with the World Bank and disclosed in-country, and on the World Bank external website, before the start of project appraisal. Safeguards instruments will be disclosed at the website of the Ministry of Preschool Education of Uzbekistan, in Uzbek and/ or Russian language, and also provided in hard copy to those stakeholders who do not have an access to Internet, specifically outside of Tashkent. This disclosure will be followed by a consultation meeting, to which stakeholders will be invited. Importantly, interest groups and organizations who represent children and adults with disabilities will be also invited to participate in the discussions and comment on the safeguards instruments.

CONTACT POINT

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APPROVAL

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Approved By

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