



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 31-May-2019 | Report No: PIDC26674



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Kyrgyz Republic	Project ID P170542	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Adaptable Human Capital Project (P170542)
Region EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date Oct 30, 2019	Estimated Board Date Mar 31, 2020	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Kyrgyz Republic	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education and Science	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To enhance child readiness and teacher effectiveness in pre-school through secondary education for building foundational skills

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	30.00
Total Financing	33.00
of which IBRD/IDA	25.00
Financing Gap	-3.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing

International Development Association (IDA)	25.00
IDA Credit	25.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Counterpart Funding	3.00
Borrower/Recipient	3.00
Trust Funds	5.00



EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund

5.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

The Kyrgyz Republic is a land-locked mountainous nation of 6 million people, with an income per capita of US\$ 1,179 (2016), and considerable economic potential based on its rich endowments. The annual population growth rate is 2.1 percent; one third of the population is under the age of 15 years; two thirds of the population live in rural areas. The country is distinguished within the region by its liberal political regime, a lower level of capture of the state by narrow vested interests, and a lighter state footprint in the economy. The country has rich, largely unexploited, natural endowments in the form of minerals, as well as large potential to expand agriculture, hydroelectricity and tourism. It sits at the crossroads of the Chinese, South Asian and Russian markets, with unfettered access to the Eurasian Economic Union (of which it is a member).

The economy grew at an average annual rate of 4.5 percent over the 2000-2016 period, largely driven by gold extraction and worker remittances from abroad. Growth in recent years resulted in only modest improvements in welfare among the bottom 40 percent coupled with falling incomes for the upper 60 percent. Nearly a quarter of the population live below the international poverty line of US\$ 3.2 per capita per day, with a still larger proportion of households clustered just above the poverty line and therefore vulnerable even to small shocks. Economic growth and poverty reduction are below the country's potential, due to a business environment uncondusive to private investment and job creation, weak public institutions and services, and constrained human capital that lacks essential skills required for a more productive and dynamic economy.

Given relatively high poverty and vulnerability, medium-term macro-sustainability risks and the weakening relationship between poverty reduction and growth, sustained progress on the twin goals will depend on the Kyrgyz Republic's ability to shift to a new, more dynamic growth model under which human capital improvements across all strata can make a significant contribution to inclusive growth and productivity.

The Human Capital Index ranked Kyrgyz Republic 58th out of 157 countries, meaning a Kyrgyz child born today will be 58 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and was fully healthy. Given a large bulge in its school and youth population aged under 30 years, the country has a challenge as well as a huge opportunity to boost its human capital.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

Basic Facts and Data



Kyrgyz’s education system has five levels. Pre-school education covers children aged zero to six years. Primary and lower secondary education, both of which are compulsory, cover grades 1 to 4 (usually ages 7-10 years) and 5 to 9 (11-15 years), respectively. Upper secondary school lasting two years is non-compulsory and can be completed in general education schools, vocational schools, or specialized technical schools. Post-secondary schooling is available through vocational schools and specialized technical schools, and universities. Education is overwhelmingly provided by the public sector, which enrolled approximately 98% of all preprimary (0-6 years) and general secondary (Grades 1-11) students in 2016. Table 1 presents some basic data on the size of the public education system.

Table 1: Students, Teachers and Institutions of the Public Pre-Primary and General Secondary Education System

Level of education system	Number of:		
	Students	Teachers	Institutions
Pre-primary (0-6 years)	166,738	6,045	1,296
General secondary (Grades 1-11)	1,155,157	79,472	2,236

The pre-school sector is covered by various options including: nurseries (for ages 6 months to 3 years); State Kindergartens (ages 3 to 7 years) that provide a range of care and developmental support services on a full-shift basis (many from the Soviet period); Shift-based Kindergartens (SbK)¹ that usually provide half-day early childhood education; and the 480 hours school-readiness (Nariste) program for children aged 6 years who otherwise would not attend any ECD program, and which is delivered in a dedicated classroom of a primary school.

The net enrollment rate (NER) in ECD institutions (other than Nariste) for children aged 3-6 years roughly doubled from 13 percent in 2007 to 25 percent in 2016, with no disparities between girls and boys; the enrollment rate for children below the age of 3 years is roughly 4 percent.² Enrollment rates in urban areas are roughly twice those of rural areas; Bishkek and Osh have substantially higher enrollment rates than other oblasts; and the wealthiest quintile of households have a 50 percent enrollment rate compared to 12 percent for the poorest quintile. Urban group sizes in 2016 averaged 42 children, compared to 29 in rural areas. In 2017-18, 79 percent of Grade 1 students had attended some form of pre-primary education institution, up from 56 percent in 2015-16. The Nariste program notwithstanding (which covers only children aged 6 years), the main constraint on ECE coverage is the lack of supply.

The situation is quite different at the primary and secondary levels. Enrolment rates for Grades 1-9 are near universal (above 99% for Grades 1-4 and 98% for Grades 5-9), with no disparity between girls and boys. Enrollment drops off at upper secondary; net attendance rates for Grades 10-11 were estimated to be 79 and 86 percent respectively for boys and girls in 2014.³

General secondary enrolment rates fall somewhat short of 100% due in part due to the lack of inclusive education opportunities. This constraint begins at the pre-primary level, which has 14 special kindergartens for children with special education needs (SEN); of which two-thirds are in Bishkek city. These kindergartens are inaccessible to most children, and the mainstream pre-primary education programs have no provision for integrating children with SEN. The situation is similar at the primary level. There are specialized institutions which are geographically inaccessible for most children, while the mainstream schools have little or no experience or programs for including children with SEN. A recent Bank-supervised GPE-funded Project successfully piloted an integrated approach to children with SEN, in which children were assessed early by a multi-disciplinary team and referred as needed to specialized services; received

¹ Previously known as Community-based Kindergartens (CbKs).

² MoES 2018, National Education Plan 2021-26, First Draft.

³ MoES 2018, Kyrgyz Republic: Education Sector Analysis, Draft.



intensive education at school; and were gradually integrated into mainstream classrooms when possible. The project also supported the strengthening of local networks of parents, teachers and other stakeholders to create a more enabling environment for these children. The pilot was assessed favorably,⁴ and the model was included in the National Concept on Inclusive Education, which is currently under consideration by the Government.

Key challenges

There is a learning crisis causing low functional literacy among 15-year-old. The education system is improving its performance with incremental gains in student learning results since 2010 but significant gaps remain in learning achievements and the skills students acquire. This adversely impacts Kyrgyz children and youth, preventing them from realizing their full potential and thereby weakening the foundations of human capital. Evidence can be found from large-scale international and national assessments including: The Early Development Instrument (EDI), the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), the National Sample-Based Assessment (NSBA), the test for the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Survey of Adult Skills of the OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIACC). For example:

- The EDI 2015/16 found that children enrolled in SbKs demonstrated improved EDI scores over the program's timeframe, with the greatest gains in the Language and Cognitive Development domain. However, one quarter of children were still vulnerable on one or more domains even at the end of the program.
- The EGRA 2017 found that only 44 and 47 percent of sampled students in Grades 2 and 4 attained grade-level oral reading fluency (ORF). These represented gains of 10/13 percentage points over the EGRA 2014 results.
- The NSBA 2017 found that many Grade 4 students performed below basic level in Reading and Comprehension (60 percent) and Mathematics (53 percent). This was an improvement of 4.5 and 11.7 percentage points, respectively, compared to 2014. As one indication of disparate performance, the percentage of students scoring below basic level in 2014 ranged widely from 43 percent in Bishkek to 60 percent in regional centers and small towns to 70 percent in rural schools. The percentage of grade 8 students below basic level also improved (i.e. dropped from 67 percent in Reading and 71 percent Comprehension/Mathematics in 2009 to 52/65 percent in 2017).
- Kyrgyzstan's results in PISA 2009 indicated that students aged 15 years lag approximately 4.5 grade levels behind the OECD average; and that there are large geographic variations in performance, with southern and Talas oblasts scoring poorly.
- The EGRA, NSBA and PISA all found that, on average, girls performed better than boys in all subjects.
- A 2018 PIACC survey found that Kyrgyz adults scored approximately 20 points lower than the OECD average in terms of functional literacy and numeracy (247 and 243, versus 268 and 263, respectively); it also found the highest variability in performance across respondents it had recorded in any country to date.⁵

In 2018, the Human Capital Index used some of this data to calculate the reported learning gap of 4.2 years in the Kyrgyz Republic; indicating that 12.6 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school completed by age 18 years is equivalent to only 8.4 years when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning.⁶ Altogether, these results point to the school system's lack of effectiveness and efficiency and the need to better prepare young people to carry out the

⁴ World Bank, 2018. Implementation Completion and Results Report.

⁵ PIACC 2018 Results, Kyrgyz Republic Preliminary Findings.

⁶ Human Capital Project, 2018. Kyrgyz Republic, Human Capital Index.



tasks that enable them to participate effectively and proactively in economic and social life, and more generally to build the kind of human capital that is increasingly required by Kyrgyzstan's aspirations for a high-productivity economy. The key factors contributing to Kyrgyzstan's education performance and deficiency in learning outcomes can be analyzed using a framework⁷ that unpacks the breakdown.

Children not prepared for learning

Data indicate that the relatively low ECE coverage contributes to the education sector's poor performance.⁸ The PISA 2009 results showed that students who received more than one year of pre-primary education performed better than those who had not. Further, the EGRA 2011 found that Russian-speaking students with pre-primary experience performed better compared to those without (though there was no difference for Kyrgyz-speaking students). At the same time, the quality needs to be enhanced with standards for child development and effective teaching practice that interact, engage and stimulate children's physical and emotional growth and readiness for learning. For instance, a representative sample of standardized classroom observations of the *Nariste* program in 2016 found that 65 percent had no book area assigned for reading; and more than 80 percent of classrooms had fewer than 15 books and limited writing materials. Students spent roughly 60 percent of their classroom time in a whole-group setting, indicating that didactic rather than explorative or play-based lessons are the norm.

Teacher quality, competency and practice impact learning

Sixty-five percent of pre-primary and 95 percent of primary-secondary teachers have university degrees. However, this does not necessarily imply that secondary teachers have a tertiary education in all the subjects they teach. Further, given the quality of their initial teacher education, teachers often do not have the competency and pedagogy to adapt to student learning of varied levels and abilities, blending digital technology and social emotional skills. While most pre-school teachers are regular primary and or secondary teachers who have been retrained with short courses, this has not been sufficient to ensure effective pre-school teaching, which requires specific pedagogy and competency to engage and interact with children to stimulate their curiosity and learning.

Although the primary and secondary levels made progress in recent years through in-service teacher training to introduce stronger practices, there is still significant room for improvement. In general, teaching practices are oriented toward the whole group; rely heavily upon chalk-and-talk and simple question and answers techniques. In the higher grades, they make inadequate use of formative assessments, and focus on teaching facts, simple operations and getting students to recite back what they have heard or read rather than fostering higher-order learning and life-useful skills. CLASS scores (based on observations of a representative sample of Grade 4 classrooms) in 2017 were 5.7 for emotional support, 5.2 for classroom organization and 2.8 for instructional support.

Continuous professional development (CPD) is not working effectively. The system for CPD is rigid, difficult to access and expensive. Norms stipulate that teachers should receive 72 hours of in-service training every five years. The trainings are of limited variety (depending on the teacher's formal qualifications and what they teach) and are generally delivered at one go over a period of days at either the Republican or Oblast Teacher Training Institute (TTI). While each year approximately 16,000 teachers should attend one of these in-service trainings, only 10,000 are actually trained (roughly 60% of target). Even these numbers overstate the system's capacity, in that there are substantial arrears of *per-diem* and transport allowances payable to teachers, i.e. the teachers attended the trainings at their own expense. The limited offerings make it difficult to meet teachers' individual professional development needs, which in any case

⁷ World Development Report to realize education's promise

⁸ As noted above, roughly 20% of children have no exposure to pre-school education, while the enrollment rate for children aged 3-6 years in ECD institutions (other than *Nariste*) is only 25 percent; indicating that a substantial proportion of children start primary grades unprepared for learning.



are not systematically assessed against competencies. Further, they do not address the use of IT; climate change; inclusive education; and fostering socio-emotional skills. The Bank-supported Sector Support for Education Reform project introduced a standardized classroom practices observation instrument (CLASS), which can be used to identify professional development needs; but much work remains to institutionalize and scale up its use. The Republican TTI has recently begun to experiment with the design and delivery of online/offline courses, but it requires significant capacity building. These digital initiatives are part of a broader reform that the Republican TTI is developing to make the CPD system more flexible, responsive, accessible and affordable.

The MoES (Ministry of Education and Science) has developed a draft teacher competency framework to align with the competency-based curriculum. It also developed CPD programs (and assessments of teacher practices) against clearly articulated teacher professional standards. The framework includes: fostering students' socio-emotional skills; including children with special education needs; and digital literacy.

Lack of essential inputs constrain learning

Teaching-learning practices are constrained in part by the predominant role played by the textbook, and the lack of other teaching-learning materials including IT equipment, science laboratories and books. The MoES focused its energies in recent years on aligning textbooks with the new curriculum and developing a textbook rental scheme to resolve issues of availability and sustainability. These efforts are paying off, as nearly all textbooks have been revised to be aligned with the curricular competencies (except for social studies). The NSBA surveys of school management indicate that the average textbook availability increased from 74 percent in 2014 to 80 percent in 2017. The government's Strategy 2040 and draft Education Sector Plan (ESP 2021-26) recognize the pressing need to strengthen digital literacy and teaching-learning practices through the widespread use of digital technologies and content. It supported limited initiatives to introduce digital technologies and content into schools, through *inter alia* the Bank-financed SSER project (benefiting 60 schools)⁹ and the 'Smart School' program (100 schools). But the work to adapt, develop and distribute digital content that can be accessed at schools has barely begun. In 2016, there was on average only one computer for every 25 students; while only 35 percent of schools had internet access. These technologies are imperative for preparing students to become adaptive learners.

Curriculum and assessment need to be aligned and enhanced

The MoES and Kyrgyz Academy of Education (KAE) made substantial progress over the past decade in reforming the curriculum, which is now broadly competency-based. The main challenge is to ensure that teachers understand the competency-based approach and teach accordingly. The curriculum includes such cross-cutting competencies as self-organization and problem-solving, as well as social and communication skills; but has gaps pertaining to socio-emotional skills.

The national assessment system in Kyrgyz Republic covers classroom assessments for improving teaching and learning; examinations for making high-stakes decisions about individual students; and large-scale assessments for determining system learning levels and related factors. The institutional capacity has been strengthened under the technical assistance financed by the Russian Education Aid for Development (READ). Classroom-based assessment is emerging as a key instrument for improving learning in classroom. Many teachers have been trained but need to be supported in practice. Summative assessments need to be strengthened, particularly at Grades 4, 9 and 11, to be better aligned with the competency-based curriculum. Grade 4 tests are designed and administered by teachers and schools, while Grade 9/11 tests are designed by the NTC and administered locally by schools and local education authorities. However, in both cases the items tend to be traditional in character, in that they test memorization of facts or simple operations and use multiple-choice and short answer formats. They do not assess competencies involving higher-order skills of

⁹ These schools received a set of computers, notebooks and projectors, as well as networking equipment and furniture. A further 540 schools received a small package including a projector, notebook and router.



understanding, analysis, argumentation, application of knowledge and skills to problem situations, and so forth. While the NTC has been making strides in recent years to re-orient summative exercises to broaden the competencies tested and the formats used, there is still much to be done; while at school level, teachers are accustomed to traditional methods of evaluation and have limited capacity in designing competency-based assessments. The lack of alignment between the summative exams and the competencies of the curriculum (including those needed for a more highly productive economy) works against the teaching of skills, as teachers tend to teach those capacities that are assessed at the end of a cycle. The NTC has limited technical capacity for item development, test construction and results analysis. Further, there is no in-country experience in assessing socio-emotional skills.

Teaching-learning practices are constrained in part by the traditional five-point system teachers use to report on students' progress. This rigid system is highly reductive and overly summative in character. It does not encourage teachers to think broadly about how well their students are learning. For instance, it does not emphasize how well students master and use the range of higher-order competencies that the revised curriculum targets and that are critical for building the foundations for skills valued later as human capital. It also does not include useful reflections or diagnoses as to what the student (with teacher and parental support) can do to better to master these competencies. Moving towards a more comprehensive, diagnostic system will require building teachers' capacities to assess their students and report on progress by established criteria.

Teaching-learning practices are also constrained by end-of-cycle summative tests at Grades 4, 9 and 11 as well as by the pre-university ORT.¹⁰ These instruments test factual knowledge and relatively simple competencies using multiple-choice and short-answer formats. Given the importance generally accorded to these tests, particularly the increasingly high stakes at Grades 9, 11 and the university application stage, they discourage teachers from developing higher-order competencies in their students.

The MoES has regularly supported large-scale assessments including the EDI (2015/16); EGRA (2017); and NSBA (2017), which evaluate learning in three subjects at Grades 4 and 8 and provides valuable system-diagnostic information. At an international level, the MoES participated in PISA (2009) and announced its intention to participate again in 2024.

Efficiency of financing and management must improve to maximize performance and results

Government expenditures on education as a share of GDP grew from 6.3% in 2014 to 7.7% in 2016; during the same period, government expenditures on education of total expenditures remained consistent (from 18.5 to 18.9 percent).¹¹ These levels are in line with spending from comparator countries including OECD members. However, if the spending is broken down by student, the per student expenditure falls short due to a large cohort of preschool and school children relative to the general population. While the increases went almost entirely to pre-school and general secondary education, this was driven mainly by the recovery of wage bill expenditures to the 2012 pre-fiscal consolidation levels; and a tripling (between 2011-16) of capital expenditures (measured as a percentage of GDP). The percentage of public education expenditures allocated to the preprimary level increased from 8.8% in 2011 to 13% in 2016. This was mainly due to a three-fold increase in wages and a two-fold increase in goods and services expenditures. The Bank's 2017 Public Expenditures Review (PER) found that the share of pre-school investments remains low (7.6%) despite the increases in capital expenditures for education. Further, the PER estimated that the government would need to increase its 2016 level of pre-primary expenditures by a factor of five to reach a net enrollment rate of 70% for children aged 3-6 years by 2021. The PER also suggested that areas where expenditures might be optimized for more efficient and

¹⁰ The ORT is a SAT-like test designed and administered by the Centre for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods (CEATM); it is a requirement for applying to university.

¹¹ Data in this paragraph are from the 2017 Public Expenditures Review for the education sector.



equitable service provision include school meals and wages. Thirty-eight percent of non-wage recurrent expenditures in 2016 were allocated to the provision of meals.

The MoES provides performance incentives for quality teaching but faces operational challenges. Each school has a committee to evaluate teachers but does not have clear standardized methods of evaluation. The MoES established a working group to reform the incentives system. The recent work to elaborate teacher professional standards will, once finalized and distributed, provide schools with an evaluative basis. The Bank-supported SSER project introduced the use of valid and reliable classroom observations (using CLASS), which could be used to help determine incentives allocations; but it has yet to be institutionalized and scaled up.

Data and management information systems are essential for planning and decision-making at school level to support learning. The MoES has made progress in recent years in strengthening its education management information system (EMIS). However, the system still struggles to generate timely, reliable, accessible and comprehensive information. There are several underlying challenges, such as overlapping data collection exercises; and the development, piloting and partial scaling up of various software packages, none of which are satisfactory in terms of architecture, informational range, licensing fees and security. However, the main constraint to date has been the lack of a dedicated EMIS functional unit at the MoES working from a technically sound Master Plan. In this regard, and partially in response to governmental IT programs, the MoES has recently established an Office responsible for digital management initiatives that is technically capable and has prioritized the elaboration and operationalization of an EMIS Master Plan. The Office has provisionally cleared the use of an adapted version of the UNESCO-supported open EMIS software, which is currently being piloted; after which, the MoES will finalize a Master Plan for its institutionalization and scale-up. As part of the Master Plan, the Office foresees establishing an EMIS function within the NTC. The plans for institutionalization are constrained by the NTC's limited technical capacities and resources.

Government strategy and program

In 2018, the President of the Republic approved the 'National Development Strategy for 2018-2040 (Strategy 2040)'. Its focus is to create opportunities for human capital development including through education and the creation of highly-productive quality jobs, particularly in strategic sectors. It is fully aligned with the SDGs. The first phase of the Strategy 2040, the 'Development Program of the KR 2018-22 (Program 22)' acknowledges that the education system is not yet effective in developing the higher order skills that are needed; and identifies several education sector priorities, including: (i) improving the quality of education; (ii) making the education system more effective in teaching skills required by the modern economy; (iii) supplying schools with a broader range of modern teaching-learning materials and innovative technology and (iv) strengthening the professional capacities of teachers. The MoES's preliminary draft of the National Education Plan 2021-2026 (NEP 2026) addresses Program 22's objectives focusing on: (i) expanding access to ECE and improving its quality; (ii) strengthening teacher professional capacities to effectively teach skills, including transversal competencies (such as digital literacy) and providing flexible, accessible and affordable continuous professional development ; (iii) improving the availability and use of digital teaching-learning materials at schools; and (iv) strengthening assessment systems to: ensure children are formatively assessed, summative assessments are aligned with curricular competencies, and sample-based learning outcome evaluations are carried out to identify and remedy system weaknesses.

The project seeks to contribute to achieving these objectives by expanding ECE and enhancing the quality of education i.e., by promoting socio-emotional skills to establish the foundation for adaptive learning to acquire the necessary skills for becoming a successful modern worker. In addition, it seeks to improving teaching practices more broadly in general education with the use of digital materials. Toward this end, the project also works to enhance the measurement of cognitive and non-cognitive skills and all three types of assessments outlined in the NEP 2026.



C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

To enhance child readiness and teacher effectiveness in pre-school through secondary education for building foundational skills.¹²

B. Key Results

- Increased school readiness among 45,000 preschool children aged 3-5 years in the bottom 40% of the population in key domains of physical, emotional and academic/linguistic development tracked by Early Development Instrument (EDI)
- Enhanced effectiveness in teaching practice for improved functional literacy and higher order skills measured by classroom observations in classroom management, social-emotional engagement and instructional effectiveness in approximately 1,000 schools in target communities of lowest income quintiles.

D. Concept Description

Acting on the cutting-edge research evidence and building on the incremental gains from prior trials, the project will contribute to building adaptable human capital through core interventions in raising child readiness for learning and improvement in educational attainment essential to building the foundational skills to succeed in the future work place.

The design adopted a human capital lens conceptualized by the Human Capital Project and informed by the WDR 2018, “The Changing Nature of the Workplace”. Specifically, the new demand for skills emphasizes the need for building foundational skills and adaptability to change. These skills refer to basic and advanced cognitive skills and social emotional skills that enable learning and adapt in a life cycle. The ongoing analytical work on adult skills in Kyrgyz Republic, indicates that basic cognitive-literacy & numeracy is essential for survival, and the growing role of technology in life and business requires even more advanced cognitive skills. Socio-behavioral skills established in one’s early years are shaped throughout a lifetime and are critical to developing skills for adaptability to change. These analytical underpinnings reshaped the concept of the project from a traditional quality enhancement approach.

Digital resources will be used at key intervention points as disruptive technologies to transform how teachers strengthen their capacities, students learn, and system information is generated. Teacher professional standards will be amplified to include IT-related competencies.

The Project will focus on incorporating the latest research on the science of learning to enhance teaching-learning practices and competencies for raising student functional literacy and skills development through adaptive and customized learning. PISA results in 2006 and 2009 led to system reforms including a competency-based curriculum and a teacher competency framework; these are gradually being integrated into textbooks and professional development programs. However, the competency framework and professional development resources have important gaps pertaining to the use of digital technologies, inclusive education and the development of socio-emotional skills. Further, the system for continuous professional development is not flexible enough to satisfy individual needs, and its delivery system is expensive with poor coverage.

¹² These skills are defined below in Section A of Project Context.



The Project will be financed through a US\$25 million credit/grant with the International Development Association (IDA) and a US\$5 million grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), using an Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument with Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs). The project will be implemented over a five-year period and has four transformative dimensions: evidence-informed design, results-based financing, disruptive technologies, and fostering skills for human capital needed in the emerging economy. Components 1 and 2 will use a mixture of a results-based financing modality and a traditional reimbursement mode based on statements of expenditures at the completion of activities.

Component 1: Enhancing early learning (USD 13.5 million)

The objective of this component is to increase access on an equitable basis to quality early childhood education, through expanding shift-based kindergartens (SbKs) in poor rural areas, enhancing the quality, and institutionalizing measurement of services quality and effectiveness; and financing reforms to enhance efficiency and coverage. There are three sub-components.

Subcomponent 1.1: Expand equitable access

The objective of this sub-component is to increase access to early childhood education in poor rural areas with no or low access, through establishing SbKs, mobilizing a partnership between communities and government. The Project will support an estimated 300 SbKs enrolling up to 45,000 children aged 3-5 years, following a model that was successfully operationalized in over 100 communities. Each SbK will receive an essential package of equipment and teaching-learning materials, and age-appropriate sanitation facilities including eco-friendly (for example, solar panels) and disabled-friendly designs (for inclusive access). Newly recruited teachers will be trained on effective ECE practices and receive follow-up pedagogical mentoring and support.

The project will target the poorest Aiyi Okmotus (AO), already receiving subsidies from the republican budget, where ECE either does not exist or cannot meet demand (and where other DPs are not providing ECE support). At the same time, the project seeks to ensure a broad, regionally and ethnically balanced distribution of funds. While the beneficiary selection criteria will be further refined during project preparation, preference will be given to communities with large numbers of persons living below the poverty line, low pre-school enrolment rates, and a high population of children aged 3-5 years. To promote sustainability, selected communities must own the premises and commit to maintaining them as a pre-school institution for at least five years and meet national pedagogical, safety, hygiene and sanitation standards. The AOs and local community will also ensure that a qualified teacher is hired for each new class group, and that all recurrent costs are covered to operate the institution. The project will also pilot the use of SbKs as a resource center for parents of children aged six months to three years.

There are many urban areas where the needs of internally migrated vulnerable populations have grossly outstripped the available spaces at state and affordable private kindergartens. The project will therefore provide technical assistance to municipal authorities to develop a PPP strategy that will incentivize private investment in affordable ECE services in these areas; and will support the piloting of strategic interventions that include public inputs such as guaranteed lease periods for public premises and loan guarantees.

Possible DLI: Shift-based kindergartens are established in poor and vulnerable rural communities with no or low access to ECE. The disbursement-linked results (DLRs) are: design and teacher training plans developed for sites that have been assessed and selected (Year 1); 100 SbKs are operational (in each of Years 3, 4 and 5).



Subcomponent 1.2 Enhance quality and measurement

The objective of this subcomponent is to assure quality by strengthening the systematic measurement of ECE quality and effectiveness through institutionalizing the use of valid and reliably administered instruments. Building on experience from a prior Bank-supported project, and the new standards adopted for early learning, this component will provide capacity building and technical assistance to support a more widespread adoption of CLASS and EDI instruments that respectively measure the character and quality of play-teaching-learning practices and children's development and school readiness in physical, socio-emotional and academic domains. This would also include developing procedures and capacities to ensure feedback mechanisms link the information generated by these instruments to school policies, playroom practices and the use of school resources. In other words, the results would inform program enhancements.

Subcomponent 1.3: Reform preschool financing

The objective of this sub-component is to increase ECE availability, through the development and trialing of reformed financing policies that incentivize efficiency and coverage gains. Local authorities will be supported with technical assistance to pilot the financing of more efficient uses of existing state kindergarten resources that have been successfully introduced elsewhere in the region, such as changing space usage practices, the introduction of multiple shifts, rebalancing teaching and non-teaching staff, and cost-sharing and/or cost-reductions for meals. The Project will also support local authorities with technical assistance to design and trial per-child funding schemes that incentivize both public and private providers to expand the availability of spaces and use resources efficiently. Additionally, a per child financing approach will be adapted for preschool education system wide.

Component 2: Strengthening foundations for improved learning (USD 15 million)

The objective of this component is to strengthen systems, practices and critical inputs required for effective teaching-learning. Key activities would focus on amplification of teacher professional standards and in-service training, provision of digital resources to support continuous professional development (CPD) and effective teaching, assessments of teaching-learning practices and improved measurement of skills. There are three sub-components.

Sub-component 2.1: Increase teacher effectiveness

The objective of this sub-component is to enhance competencies for teaching skills, through strengthening teacher professional standards and making CPD more accessible, flexible and affordable. The project will review the newly developed teacher competency framework; and identify and fill gaps to enable the acquisition of the foundational skills crucial for students to succeed in a fast-changing economy. A preliminary review suggests gaps exist in the use of digital technologies (working from UNESCO's IT Competency Framework for Teachers); managing an inclusive classroom; and socio-emotional skills (covering engaging/caring for others, managing emotions, goals orientation and openness). The project will support building capacity to develop in-service training materials in identified lacking areas including: digital literacy, basic IT skills, the use of digital materials to enhance teaching-learning practices in key subjects; how to integrate children with special education needs; climate change; and socio-emotional skills. The project will provide equipment and materials to in-service training institutions. Finally, the project will work to institutionalize classroom observations using the CLASS instrument that has already been successfully introduced on a limited scale under a prior Bank-supported project. The purpose is to enable teachers and pedagogical mentors to identify strengths and weaknesses over time and use the information to identify teachers' needs for professional development and improve teaching-learning practices. It will also generate information that can be used by school committees for performance evaluation and the related incentives. To these ends, the project will provide technical assistance and build capacities to



administer the instrument, analyze and use results, and develop policy and procedures enabling institutionalization.

Sub-component 2.2: Provide resources and support for teaching-learning

The objective of this sub-component is to strengthen teacher effectiveness, through digital resources that complement textbooks aligned to the new curricula. The project will provide digital technologies and content to an estimated 1,000 schools (approximately 45 percent of all schools) in the poorest and most vulnerable communities. The schools will receive a basic package of information technologies enabling teachers to access digital content in a classroom setting in ways that will enhance the quality of teaching-learning practices along with a package of digital content, including guidance on how it can be used effectively for *adaptive learning*. The project will support the Kyrgyz Academy of Education through technical assistance and capacity building to adapt existing content and develop new content such as socio-emotional skills as specified in the new teacher competency framework. The areas for content identification, development or adaptation and the relevant technologies to be provided will be determined during project preparation. Preliminary discussions with the MoES indicate strong interest in virtual laboratories to help alleviate the acute shortage of equipment and materials for teaching science including reading and reference materials. The technological platform will include computers, tablets, memory cards for smartphones, projectors and IT-adapted furniture. The package of technologies will be provided to schools in communities selected to ensure a broad, regionally and ethnically balanced distribution of funds; while digital content will be made available to all schools. The project will also support the MoES to implement its EMIS master plan, providing technical assistance, capacity building and information technologies to adapt open EMIS and enable schools to collect, analyze and use data.

Box 1. Harnessing Technology for Effective Teaching- Learning and Management

- Digital technologies and content to make continuous professional development (teacher training and support) more flexible, accessible and affordable
- IT equipment and open EMIS adapted to produce system information that is more timely, accurate, comprehensive and accessible
- Digital technologies and content to transform teaching-learning practices and enable teachers and students to access innovative learning materials beyond traditional textbooks.

Possible DLI: Teacher effectiveness is strengthened. The DLRs include: sampling and training for baseline classroom observations completed (Year 1); teacher competency framework and training programs updated; and baseline classroom observations conducted (Year 2); sampling and training for end-line classroom observations completed (Year 4); end-line classroom observations conducted (Year 5).

Sub-component 2.3: Improved measurement of cognitive and non-cognitive skills

The objective of this sub-component is to improve measurement of student skills, through strengthening the design and administration of various assessment and learning outcome instruments. First, the project will support the Kyrgyz Academy of Education and the National Testing Centre to develop a new instrument for classroom-based assessment for teachers to measure and report on student progress. This would replace the traditional five-point system and encourage focus on higher-level competencies and identifying areas on which the student should work with teacher and parental support. This will include technical assistance and consultations to design and pilot a criteria-based and grade-appropriate assessment instrument; drafting and distribution of regulations and operational guidelines; and capacity building for teachers and pedagogical support personnel. Second, in order to ensure that summative exercises and instruments serve to reinforce the teaching of higher-order learning skills targeted in the curriculum, the Project will support strengthening final assessments administered to grades 4, 9 and 11. This will entail technical assistance



and capacity building to support the development of items and instruments, as well as guidance on administration, scoring and interpretation of results to be distributed to all schools. Third, the Project will support Kyrgyzstan's participation in PISA 2024, one round of early grade reading assessment (EGRA), one round of the National School-Based Assessment, and two rounds of the Early Development Instrument (EDI). These will each constitute an important addition to a time series of information on system performance that collectively goes back fifteen years. The Project will work to ensure that the results are reported and discussed through open fora of stakeholders and used by decision-makers to strengthen education policy and programs. Finally, the project will support piloting an instrument to measure students' socio-emotional skills.

Possible DLI: National assessment systems enhanced for more efficient and effective measurement of cognitive and non-cognitive skills. There will be yearly targets pertaining to the following DLRs: plans for administration of EGRA, NSBA, and PISA are approved, and the EDI 2021 is administered (Year 1); the EDI 2021 report is published, and discussed by decision-makers (Year 2); the EGRA 2022 report is published, and discussed by decision-makers (Year 3); the EDI 2024 and PISA 2024 are administered, and the NSBA 2023 report is published, and discussed by decision-makers (Year 4); and the EDI 2024 report is published, and discussed by decision-makers (Year 5).

Component 3: Managing implementation for results (USD 1.5 million)

This component will support citizen engagement, coordinated implementation and result monitoring, verification and evaluations to ensure the project is implemented on a timely, effective and efficient basis, and achievements are properly measured and reported. It will finance activities to engage and inform stakeholders about education sector reforms relevant to the project including parental education and partnership for early learning and ensure that any grievances or issues emerging during implementation are addressed in a timely, effective and fair manner. It will also finance project operating costs, including: translation, interpretation, equipment supervision costs, staff salaries for project coordination and fiduciary functions, and MoES's incremental operating costs. Finally, the component will support monitoring and third-party verification of activities, outputs and results as laid out in the DLI verification protocols.

2. Overall Risk and Explanation

The overall risk is considered Substantial. The most significant areas of risk are related to governance and macroeconomics, fiduciary and institutional capacity.

Political and governance risk is rated substantial. Political risks arise from both external and internal factors. Against a backdrop of the geopolitical factors in the region, residual ethnic tensions, and a history of frequent changes of government, there are risks in the shift of power from the President towards a cabinet system of government, with accountability to a rigorous and assertive parliament. The first peaceful transition of presidential power and continuity in the government are initial signs of stabilization. Governance risks stem from political-business ties, still-weak (though slowly improving) institutions, and deficiencies in the investment climate. The World Bank Group's support in business climate reforms and capacity building for implementation will help address the risks.

Macroeconomic risk is rated as substantial. Economic growth has been volatile, and the economy is highly dependent on remittances from Kazakhstan and Russia. The Bank's engagement in the upcoming period as envisioned in the CPF entails the development of policy operations on fiscal adjustment. Together with IMF-supported programs, these operations are intended to deal with economic risks.



Sector strategies and policies. Risks related to sector strategy and policy are rated as moderate. As amplified above, the MoES is developing its National Education Plan 2021-26 in line with a broader government strategy, using a process that combines political guidance as to priorities, technical expertise inputs, and broad consultations with stakeholders. Further, it is based on a comprehensive Education Sector Analysis (ESA), which was prepared with support from donors and incorporated substantial stakeholder consultation and feedback. In the past, there has been some disconnect between policy targets and funding allocations, as well as implementation difficulties pertaining to capacities and entrenched interests. There is a risk that such disconnects, and difficulties will recur. However, there have been successes in making progress towards targets and introducing reforms over the past two sector plans, including for example the near-universal introduction of a one-year school preparation program, the reorientation of the curriculum (including syllabi, CPD programs and textbooks) towards being more competency-based, the introduction of per capita financing, and the re-introduction of a scheme for the sustainable financing of textbooks.

Technical design of the project and institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability. The design of the Project is rated as substantial, as is institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability. On the one hand, the Project introduces a results-based financing mechanism, the first of its kind in the education sector in Kyrgyzstan; this will require some capacity building in the short-term but should result in system strengthening in the medium-term and beyond. On the other hand, the Project focuses on areas and includes activities for which there is a track record of success. Technical assistance in key reform areas would be needed to ensure effective implementation.

Fiduciary. Fiduciary risks are currently assessed as substantial. There is a perception of low capacity and high probability of corruption. The MOES has resumed and strengthened the oversight for budget planning, execution and reporting of education spending since 2017 with increased staffing and skills for financial management. The MOES has successfully implemented 5 IDA and TF financed operations with a record of compliance with the Bank’s procurement guidelines and financial management requirements. However, the capacity to implement and sustain the project would push the limit of the MOES staffing and skills in procurement and financial management without assistance. The proposed fiduciary arrangements must minimize such risks by balancing the compliance with the Bank’s fiduciary requirements and strengthen the country’s system and institutions in a sustainable manner. The project does not anticipate complex procurement. Financial management and disbursement including partial application of Disbursement-linked Indicators are to be guided by the financial management standards for the IPF operations.

Environment and social. Environmental and social safeguards risks are assessed as moderate.

Stakeholders. Risks related to stakeholders is assessed as moderate. The project design has carefully weighted the sensitivity in selecting project supported interventions and build stakeholder support for them in implementation. While the interventions involve select reforms and behavior change, they will be supported through effective communications, advocacy and the feedback and a grievance system to be built under the project.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No



Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The project is designed to support enhancement of child readiness and teacher effectiveness in pre-school and secondary education through increasing access to early childhood education, measuring quality and effectiveness and reforms to preschool financing, and increasing teacher effectiveness, providing teaching-learning resources and improving measurement of cognitive and non-cognitive skills at a country wide scale. In about 300 community shift-based kindergartens (SbKs) in poor rural areas enrolling up to 45,000 children aged 3-5 years, the project will finance installation of indoor water toilet and sanitation facilities designed for children in the premise of existing school buildings under the Component 1.1, which will involve small-scale building renovations. However, no new building construction is expected. The project will also finance IT equipment (including computers, tablets, memory cards for smartphones, projectors, IT-adapted furniture and internet connectivity equipment) for teaching and learning under Component 2.2 in an estimated 1,000 schools (approximately 45% of all schools), targeting those that are in the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

The proposed project components are environmentally benign except that the subcomponent 1.1 will support installation of indoor water latrines and sanitation facilities designed for children in the premise of existing community SbKs buildings (same foot print), which will involve existing building renovations. Renovation activities will not generate adverse environmental impacts or substantial risks on human population, and the predictable impacts are expected to be temporary, reversible, low in magnitude and site specific. Due to the nature of proposed works and associated environmental risks, and limited capacity of MoES in the understanding and application of Bank's ESF and relevant Standards, the project is classified as Moderate risk from environmental perspective and as defined under the Bank's ESF. It is expected that social impacts associated with the project activities will be beneficial for the Kyrgyz society. Social risk is rated as Moderate based on the information available at the concept stage, project activities will be site-specific, without the likelihood of impacts beyond the project footprint, low in magnitude and easily mitigated in a predictable manner. Presently, no land acquisition and no new building construction is expected under the proposed project. However, this may change during project preparation if the external water supply and sanitation infrastructure will be necessary for above-mentioned renovations. Risk related to labor management including influx is not substantial given the nature of small-scale nature of school rehabilitation works. The distribution of project benefits across geographic areas within the country is a particularly sensitive given the complex inter-ethnic relationships which led to social upheavals in 2005 and 2010 and the eruption of violent inter-ethnic clashes in the South of the country. There is also a risk that children with disabilities or developmental delays may be excluded from project benefits. Beneficiary (school and kindergarten) selection criteria need to be carefully elaborated to ensure inclusive access to the poorest communities, children with disabilities, equitable regional and ethnically balanced distribution of funds.

Note To view the Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts, please refer to the Concept Stage ESRS Document.

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