



Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary

Appraisal Stage

(ESRS Appraisal Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 12/22/2023 | Report No: ESRSA03209



I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Operation Data

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P179656	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	Kosovo ECEC	2024
Operation Name	Early Childhood Education and Care for Kosovo's Human Capital Project		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Kosovo	Kosovo	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	Education
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Republic of Kosovo	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovations	19-Dec-2023	28-Feb-2024
Estimated Decision Review Date	Total Project Cost		
13-Dec-2023	22,000,000.00		

Proposed Development Objective

The project's development objective is to improve the quality of and equitable access to early childhood education and care services in Kosovo.

B. Is the operation being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project Activities

[Description imported from the PAD Data Sheet in the Portal providing information about the key aspects and components/sub-components of the project]

The proposed Project will be organized around four key components that relate to improving quality, cross-sectoral coordination of, and equitable access to ECEC services. Component 1: Improving the quality of ECEC services in Kosovo (IDA: US\$4.0 million) The objective of this component is to improve the regulatory framework and operational and implementation capacity of Kosovo to ensure the quality of ECEC services. This component will include three sub-components, focusing on (i) developing or advancing the appropriate sub-legal provisions under the National ECE Law



on National Quality Standards (NQS) for ECEC, and operationalization mechanisms and systems of implementation of the ECEC NQS, (ii) building teachers', caregivers', and ECEC professionals' capacity, and (iii) digitalization of the administrative data to support transparent and data-driven decision making. Component 2: Fostering multi-sectorial integration in ECEC service delivery (IDA: US\$4 million) The objective of Component 2 is to support the Government in addressing poor child development outcomes, particularly lowering infant mortality, stimulating development, and reducing stunting rates through prenatal to childcare range of services, by promoting healthy nutrition, enhancing child monitoring, and cross-sectoral integration of services. Component 3: Increasing equitable access to ECEC services (IDA: US\$10.4 million; ELP US\$2.0 million) The objective of Component 3 is to support the Government's priorities to increase access to ECEC services for families and increase enrollment rates. The interventions of this component will include (i) constructing, refurbishing, and repurposing facilities for the provision of ECEC services, (ii) innovative equipment of the kindergartens and provision of teaching and learning materials, (iii) supporting the alternative forms of ECEC provision, and (iv) providing the instruments for community engagement and stimulate families to join ECEC services. Component 4: Project management and monitoring & evaluation (IDA: US\$1.5 million) The objective of Component 4 is to support the day-to-day management of project implementation, the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation, and technical assistance and operational support for MESTI. In addition, this component will support the implementation of the package of the evaluation and assessment instruments (TEACH ECE, ECEC assessments), the design of the impact evaluation (IE) study, and its implementation throughout the project duration. The IE will combine the TEACH ECE and identified assessment instrument in the project preschools and control group of preschools to show the impact of the project and will also measure the impact of ECEC expansion that fulfills childcare function on child development and labor market outcomes. The component will finance TEACH ECE implementation in Kosovo at midline and end-line to inform the PDO indicator on ECEC quality.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

[Description of key features relevant to the operation's environmental and social risks and opportunities (e.g., whether the project is nationwide or regional in scope, urban/rural, in an FCV context, presence of Indigenous Peoples or other minorities, involves associated facilities, high-biodiversity settings, etc.) – Max. character limit 10,000]

Kosovo is situated in Southeastern Europe, within the western region of the Balkan Peninsula. It encompasses an area of roughly 10,908 square kilometers, consisting of 38 municipalities, and boasts a population of approximately 1.8 million people. Considering that the Project's objective is to enhance the capacities of both central governmental institutions (particularly the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MESTI)) and local governments in Kosovo to effectively implement improvements in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services, the Project's geographical scope will encompass the entire territory of Kosovo (covering both urban and rural areas). Components 1 and 2 will have a nationwide scale by reforming the approach to childcare and ECD services, building institutional and human capacity of the country. Component 3 will have interventions at the local/school level by building, renovating, and repurposing spaces to expand access to preschools across the country. Project beneficiaries include all children attending childcare services, staff, ECEC and health professionals of supported childcare centers and preschool institutions and ECEC facilities, family and community members. Indirect beneficiaries include employers as the women's participation in the labor market is expected to increase.

The Project impacts and risks are to be viewed in the light of contextual issues. The Project areas are characterized by: (i) geographical-district risks (as a result of climate-induced hazards); (ii) economic risks – high rate of unemployment among youth and women and significant dependency of household income on remittances (iii) social exclusion –



certain vulnerable groups can often get excluded from Project benefits either due to inherent structural deficiencies and/or due to elite capture; and (iv) institutional risks – the implementing agency may lack the capacity to effectively apply the ESSs. In this context, the Project design needs to take due note of the following to ensure: (i) accessibility – to poor and near-poor people, especially, in rural and peri-urban areas; (ii) equity – as a result of geographical, socio-economic, and inter-regional disparities; (iii) gender equity – prioritize reaching out to women, including female-headed households, to empower women economically and socially; (iv) adequate and appropriate facilities provision and service quality; and (v) regulation and governance, especially integrating health and education department activities.

In Kosovo, vulnerable groups (including the poor, minority groups, children with disabilities, etc.) and rural children face significant barriers to accessing quality early education. Vulnerable groups, rural areas, and unemployed parents face the most significant challenges, with rural areas having almost no ECEC services. While there is no presence of Indigenous Peoples in Kosovo, it does involve the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian minority populations, which are considered vulnerable communities. Only around 10% of children from these communities participate in early education programs, which is substantially lower than the national average of 19.5%. Additionally, the developmental outcomes for literacy and numeracy in these communities remain alarmingly low, with only 7.4 percent of children reaching expected levels. Health disparities also play a role, as children from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian households experience higher mortality rates and lower vaccination rates compared to the general population, which affect their overall well-being and readiness for early education. The Project has been designed to prioritize the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable communities and improve access to quality ECEC services throughout Kosovo while minimizing adverse environmental and social effects.

Furthermore, the socioeconomic context in Kosovo, marked by low employment rates for women (16% in 2021) and limited access to childcare services, particularly affects working mothers from these communities, making it challenging for them to access ECEC services and participate in the workforce. The proposed Project aims to reduce the gap in workforce participation between men and women in two ways. First, the increase in provision of childcare and preschool services is expected to free up time of the primary caregivers (predominantly women) to take up paid employment opportunities, which evidence from other EU countries supports. Second, the increase in childcare and preschool services will require an increase in staff in roles typically filled by women (both in Kosovo and according to global literature), which directly increases the workforce participation of women.

Kosovo is prone to several climate-induced hazards. The initial assessment of the climate risk is low to moderate. Flooding is a risk to buildings that will be constructed or rehabilitated under the Project. The potential risks to facilities covered by the Project due to flooding is greatly reduced by the design of these facilities, and the inclusion of soft components (e.g. regulations and standards updates for ECEC services facilities and EMIS development for ECEC), which take flood risk into account. The new ECEC regulations developed under Component 1 will incorporate climate-smart designs and technologies for constructions and renovations of early learning spaces and other ECEC services, that will mitigate the impacts of climate-induced hazards and support ECEC service providers and communities to adapt to the impacts of these hazards. This may include the capacity of new and refurbished buildings to serve as shelters for the community in case of extreme weather. New ECEC regulations developed in Component 1 incorporate climate-smart designs, enhancing resilience to climate hazards and potential use as community shelters. These standards will guide Component 3 activities and, upon national approval, influence construction and renovation Projects countrywide. Civil works are not expected to harm protected areas, forests, or ecosystems.

D.2 Overview of Borrower’s Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts



[Description of Borrower’s capacity (i.e., prior performance under the Safeguard Policies or ESF, experience applying E&S policies of IFIs, Environmental and social unit/staff already in place) and willingness to manage risks and impacts and of provisions planned or required to have capabilities in place, along with the needs for enhanced support to the Borrower – Max. character limit 10,000]

The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) serves as the primary implementing agency for this Project. Given the Project's multi-sectoral nature, MESTI plays a pivotal role in facilitating collaboration among various ministries and agencies to achieve Project outcomes. MESTI assumes responsibility for Project oversight, coordination, results monitoring, and communication with the World Bank regarding Project activities. To support these efforts, a central Project Implementation Unit (PIU) will be established within MESTI.

The PIU holds crucial responsibilities, offering technical and operational assistance to MESTI and the designated Project districts in executing Project activities, including procurement, financial management, and environmental and social risk management. While MESTI possesses the capacity to implement the Project and stands to benefit from capacity-building initiatives and hands-on Project experience, there is a gap in its ability to manage environmental and social (E&S) risks effectively. Consequently, MESTI will need to recruit environmental and social specialists to aid in overall Project implementation. The existing E&S capacity within MESTI is considered weak, particularly since the previous World Bank Project, the "Kosovo Education Improvement Project," did not include an infrastructure component. Strengthening the Ministry's, line ministries', as well as local governments' environmental and social capacities will be necessary for successful Project implementation.

MESTI is actively engaged in implementing a government program focused on various reforms related to quality, educational assessments, innovations, preschool and school infrastructure. The ministry's organizational structure includes 18 divisions, covering all aspects of its agenda. In the context of the Early Childhood Education and Care Program operation and its proposed design, several departments will play critical roles:

1. Division of Early and Preschool Education
2. Division of General Education
3. Curriculum and Teacher Support Division
4. Quality assurance, standards, evaluation, and licensing division
5. Division for school infrastructure planning and standards
6. Division of Inclusive Education
7. Division for school infrastructure and VET programs and labor market analysis
8. Public procurement division
9. Public communication division

All these divisions are adequately staffed and equipped to support Project implementation. To enhance the Ministry's capabilities and accommodate an increased volume of activities, Component 3 of the Project will allow MESTI to hire additional consultants for critical implementation areas. The World Bank's implementation support will also help attract the necessary skills and expertise to ensure Project success.

II. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate



A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 4,000]

The environmental risk is proposed moderate. The anticipated environmental risks are expected to be moderate since the Project is financing medium-scale activities, the rehabilitation, and the repurposing of existing spaces as well as the possible construction of new kindergartens, most of which will not be identified until implementation begins. The physical works envisaged under Components 3 are of medium scale. Potential adverse environmental impacts may include water pollution from fuel and waste leakage, noise, vibration, and temporary air pollution from construction activities, waste generation including hazardous materials, road traffic limitations, and potential impacts on historical and cultural heritage sites. These risks are however expected to be temporary, predictable, and easily mitigable. The proposed Project activities are not expected to be in environmentally sensitive areas or near known cultural heritage sites; however, the final districts for Project activities are yet to be identified. The activities are not expected to generate serious adverse or long-term effects on human health or the environment. The environmental risks are expected to be easily avoided or minimized with the application of the WB Environmental and Social Standards, WB Group Environmental Health and Safety Guidelines (EHSGs), and Good International Industrial Practices (GIIPs). Since the details of the activities are not known at this stage, the client has prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which will serve as a resource for screening potential risks and managing any unavoidable environmental and social impacts.

A.2 Social Risk Rating

Moderate

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating, in accordance with the ES Directive and the Technical Note on Screening and Risk Classification under the ESF – Max. character limit 4,000]

The social risk of the Project is proposed moderate. The overall Project's activities are unlikely to result in social adverse impacts. The Project will contribute to greater public service efficiency and quality and specifically to increased access to public services by minority and marginalized groups and more formal private sector. Yet, the Project does finance, infrastructure works for the construction and rehabilitation of ECEC facilities. The physical works envisaged under Component 3 are of medium scale and the associated social impacts are expected to be temporary, predictable, and easily mitigable. The Project is designed to avoid physical/ economic displacement and/or loss of structures, primarily utilizing existing plans. In rare cases where land acquisition is necessary, an approved RFP is in place to address these situations. RFP lays bare the next steps in preparing and implementing resettlement action plans (RAP). Civil works activities pose moderate labor risks related to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) issues, including worker safety concerns like high-altitude work and electric shock injuries, as well as community health and safety risks such as pollution, dust, and noise. These OHS risks are addressed through Labor Management Procedures (LMP) mandated for all contractors to ensure a safe working environment, in alignment with ESS2 requirements. These labor concerns are further addressed through the ESMF and a dedicated GRM for Project workers. Civil works contracts will include measures to mitigate social and environmental impacts based on the WBG EHS Guidelines and the ESMF, as well as reference plans like the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF). Additionally, there will be a focus on prioritizing the hiring of local unskilled labor and adhering to industry-standard Codes of Conduct to prevent Gender-Based Violence/Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (GBV/SEA). While the Project is expected to significantly benefit target communities, a major social risk revolves around the possibility of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups being excluded from these benefits. Certain individuals or groups will have no or limited access to ECD services that will be improved in the target districts. For example, parents of children 0-6



ages might have limited access to ECD activities due to distant location of the KGs and ELC centers to be refurbished and/ established in the district centers. This inclusivity concern extends to children, preschool educators, primary healthcare providers, decision-makers, and eligible nannies requiring training and capacity enhancement. Component 3 of the Project is designed to promote inclusion through various means, including community engagement activities, information campaigns, community competitive grants, and the development of a voucher scheme. The WB team will leverage and coordinate with social protection and poverty teams to support the government in establishing a targeting mechanism for the scheme. To mitigate social risks effectively, representatives of these vulnerable groups will be integrated into Project designs and stakeholder engagement processes. A robust stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) has been prepared to ensure Project inclusivity, considering the Project's nature, scale, and associated risks and impacts. The World Bank team will also collaborate with social protection and poverty teams to establish a targeting mechanism for the voucher scheme, further addressing social inclusion concerns. Other social risks encompass limited capacity in applying ESS at national and local levels, and potential strain on current staff at PHC and ECEC facilities due to increased usage resulting from the promotion of ECEC and Primary Health Care (PHC) services. To mitigate such risks, adequate training and ongoing support will be provided.

[Summary of key factors contributing to risk rating. This attribute is only for the internal version of the download document and not a part of the disclosable version – Max. character limit 8,000]

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESS) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS1 is relevant given an array of moderate environmental and social risks identified. Considering that the Project aims to improve access to and quality of early childhood development services in Kosovo, Project activities are unlikely to result in adverse environmental and social impacts. Yet, the Project does finance infrastructure works for the construction and rehabilitation of ECEC facilities. These interventions are expected to take place on the property of existing facilities; therefore, environmental and social issues (and impacts thereof) are not expected to be significant and will be mainly present just during the construction phase. The physical works envisaged under Component 3 are of medium scale and the associated social impacts are expected to be temporary, predictable, and easily mitigable. Towards addressing these risks, the following instruments have been prepared: (i) Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF); (ii) Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP); (iii) Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF); and (iv) Labor Management Procedures (LMP). The ESMF covers applicable ESF Standards and the World Bank Group’s Environmental Health and Safety Guidelines. The ESMF also contains generic ESMP checklists for each type of small-scale construction envisaged by the Project, namely refurbishment of ECEC and PHC centers, and other investments that improve local social infrastructure. The checklists will also help determine where and when site-specific Environment and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs)/Management Plans (ESMPs) and Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) will be necessary. The potential environmental impacts and risks related to rehabilitation and construction activities include the generation of non-hazardous waste such as building rubble, occupational health, and safety (OHS), isolated loss of vegetation, environmental pollution due to improper waste management, and generation of dust, noise, and vibration. The risks associated with the implementation of these civil works are expected to have

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moderate impacts which be easily avoided or minimized with the application of the prepared Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which covers applicable ESF Standards, as well as preparation of specific ESMPs and additional instruments, as required. Civil works activities are expected to have labor risks mostly concerning OHS issues which are expected to be mitigated through the Labor Management Procedures (LMP) in the ESMF, including a dedicated Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for Project workers. Social risks are related to land acquisition and/or temporary restrictions on land use, labor and working conditions (particularly OHS), community health and safety associated with rehabilitation and construction works, exclusion of vulnerable groups from Project benefits and citizen engagement processes, and governmental capacities to carry out Project activities as well as implement the ESSs. As the locations of the new constructions are not yet known, a Resettlement Framework (RF) was prepared and will guide the Project in dealing with land acquisition, restrictions to access, or any economic and/or physical displacement. The Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) has also prepared a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) to ensure the inclusion of all target groups and ensure inclusive consultations with all stakeholders. Specific attention will be given to promoting and providing means for effective and inclusive engagement with Project-affected parties (particularly the most vulnerable, such as those living in remote rural areas who might lack access to information). Other social risks encompass potential health and safety concerns within communities during construction, limited capacity in applying ESS at national and local levels, and potential strain on current staff at PHC and ECEC facilities due to increased usage resulting from the promotion of ECD and PHC services. An Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) is prepared to set out the material measures and actions that will be taken by MESTI to meet environmental and social requirements. MESTI will monitor the environmental and social performance in accordance with the ESCP. As MESTI is not familiar with the Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), a full-time Environmental and a full-time Social (E&S) specialist with adequate qualifications will be hired to ensure that the Project is prepared and implemented in line with ESF requirements.

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS10 is relevant to the Project. The Project recognizes the need for effective, inclusive, and ongoing engagement of key relevant stakeholders and the population at large. In fulfillment of ESS10 objectives and requirements, the client has prepared and will implement an inclusive SEP proportional to the nature and scale of the Project and associated risks and impacts. An extensive mapping of key stakeholders (including both affected parties and other interested parties) is included in the prepared SEP. Key Project stakeholders include line ministries, local and regional authorities (including municipalities, preschools, association of public preschools, etc.), preschool staff, education administrators, health care providers, parents, parent-teacher associations, CSOs, community members, etc. Vulnerable persons relevant to the Project would be women and families living in conditions of poverty and will directly benefit from this Project as well as the ethnic Roma population and families with children with disabilities. The major social Project risk in relation to ESS10 relates to the possibility of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups being excluded from Project consultation and citizen engagement efforts. This risk will be addressed through adequate mitigation measures, consequently integrating the representatives of these groups into Project designs and through the stakeholder engagement processes, in line with targeted measures foreseen in the SEP. In particular, the ECEC Project will actively seek input from parents and children from vulnerable communities, especially during the formulation of school improvement plans. Preschools with a higher enrollment of Roma children, children with disabilities, or those from poor families will receive more extensive and targeted activities, demonstrating Project's commitment to a proactive approach to inclusive education. Additionally, specific attention will be given to promoting and providing means for

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effective and inclusive engagement with Project-affected parties (particularly the most vulnerable, such as those living in remote rural areas who might lack access to information) throughout the Project life cycle and to ensure that appropriate Project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed to them in a timely, understandable, accessible and appropriate manner and format. The SEP outlines targeted mechanisms for the dissemination of relevant, transparent, objective, meaningful and easily accessible information in a timeframe that enables meaningful consultations with stakeholders in a culturally appropriate format, in relevant local language(s) and is understandable to stakeholders. Additionally, the client will also develop and put in place a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to enable stakeholders to air their concerns, comments, and/or suggestions, if any. The SEP also details procedures for consulting and disclosing all ESF instruments prepared for the Project (ESMF, RPF, LMP, SEP, site-specific ESIA/ESMPs, etc.). The E&S specialist to be hired by the PIU will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, recording, and addressing Project-related complaints. The Client will thus maintain and disclose documentation of stakeholder engagement and the GRM in line with reporting requirements set out in the Project Operations Manual. The SEP is a living document and will be updated and refined as needed throughout the Project life cycle, to ensure that further consultations on specific impacts and risks are carried out and subsequently disclosed to the public.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS2 is relevant. Categories of labor involved in Project activities include direct workers (PIU staff and government employees, MOH, teachers, preschool educators, primary healthcare providers, decision-makers, as well as nannies), consultants and experts, suppliers, and contracted workers to be engaged in the rehabilitation and repurposing of existing spaces as well as the possible construction of new kindergartens. The estimated number of direct and contracted workers to be engaged throughout the life of the Project is yet to be determined. The Project will not engage any community workers. Labor risks, associated GBV, and child labor are considered low given the size and nature of subproject investments and the Kosovo’s adherence to the national labor code which also prohibits child and forced labor. Subprojects will be implemented by local contractors and the majority of contracted workers will be hired locally. All contractors will be required to have a written contract with their workers materially consistent with objective of ESS2. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risks are low to moderate and will depend on the type of subproject works to be implemented. Direct impact on safety and health of people in civil works can be caused by various factors, for example, high-altitude work, the work of cranes and bulldozers, welding, and sanitary conditions, electric shock, etc. The potential impact on the safety and health of workers is also associated with occupational injuries during construction (falling structures, etc.) or contaminated drinking water or food. When operating the electric installations, personal protective equipment will be used. In the course of works, the sites will be fenced and taped off. The access to the site of work for unauthorized persons will be prohibited. Only workers who completed trainings on working with electric equipment and safety techniques when operating electric installations will be allowed to the site of work. All contractors will be required to develop and implement individual labor management procedures, and if required, site-specific Occupational Health and Safety Management Plans (OHSPs), including procedures to establish and maintain a safe working environment as per requirements of ESS2. To mitigate these risks, the Borrower has prepared and will ensure the effective implementation of Labor Management Procedures (LMP) incorporating the relevant requirements of ESS2. The LMP includes provisions on working conditions, workers’ organizations, grievance arrangements for all workers, eligible criteria for selecting contracted workers, etc. The Project will proactively implement SEA/SH including a Code of Conduct for all workers, a mechanism to report SEA/SH cases, and training and awareness sessions for workers and affected communities as needed. Additionally, relevant

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ESS2 risk management processes and procedures will be incorporated into the Project's Operational Manual (POM). Mitigation of any relevant OHS risks associated with the civil works are to be guided by the prepared ESMF. As per ESS2, where government civil servants are working in connection with the Project, whether full-time or part-time, they will remain subject to the terms and conditions of their existing public sector employment agreement or arrangement unless there has been an effective legal transfer of their employment or engagement to the Project. ESS2 will not apply to such government civil servants, except for the provisions of paragraphs 17 to 20 (Protecting the Work Force) and paragraphs 24 to 30 (Occupational Health and Safety). If the employment or engagement of a civil servant was transferred to the Project in accordance with all legal requirements, transferred workers will be subject to all requirements of the ESS2. The applicable national legal framework is aligned with ILO conventions and the principles of ESS2. Nevertheless, all consultancy firms hired for activities under the Project will be contracted by the Government and will be requested to provide documented evidence that their working conditions are in line with ESS2. This requirement will be reflected in the POM, LMP, bidding documents, and the actual contracts between the PIU/MESTI/ /GoK and its providers.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS3 is relevant as there are potential sources of pollution from civil works. The ESMF includes sections on resource efficiency and pollution prevention and management. Assessment of risks and impacts and proposed mitigation measures related to relevant requirements of ESS3, including raw materials, water use, air pollution, hazardous materials, and hazardous waste are included within the scope of the ESMF, and ESMPs as relevant. The civil works under the subprojects will generate construction debris, including asbestos plaster, slate, mineral wool and ruberoid, worn tires, filters, and oils from construction equipment and transformer substations. Asbestos-containing materials, if encountered, will be handled with specific caution, based on the national requirements. All site-specific E&S instruments will include mitigation measures with more specificity as applicable depending on the results of ESA, in light of specific works to be carried out and conditions at the site. Some of the identified risks resulting from civil works include the following: localized soil removal, damaging and/or clearance of vegetation, biodiversity loss, waste generation, air emissions (dust, odors, and vehicle emissions), and discharges of wastewater (e.g. runoff from waste handling facilities), etc. All construction materials needed for rehabilitation and construction activities (sand, stones, timber, etc.) will be obtained from licensed quarries and certified timber suppliers. Any waste generated by construction activities will be disposed of according to national regulations and international best practices. The process of upgrading or constructing new buildings presents a unique opportunity to incorporate resource-efficient design and construction practices. This includes the implementation of environmentally friendly strategies such as rainwater harvesting, which helps conserve water resources and reduce the strain on local water supplies. Additionally, the adoption of energy-efficient lighting and pumping systems not only reduces energy consumption but also contributes to lower operational costs and a reduced carbon footprint. These provisions will be included in the ESMF and project design.

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS4 is relevant as Project investments have the potential to expose neighboring communities to health and safety risks associated with construction activities. The exact presence of nearby communities will be confirmed during



Project implementation, once the precise locations of Project investments are determined. Some of the impacts stemming from rehabilitation and construction activities may result in inconveniences for local communities, encompassing aspects such as air emissions, odors, effluent water disposal, hazardous materials handling, road closures, and traffic disruptions. To mitigate these and other issues, following guidance within the ESMF through the site-specific Environmental and Social (E&S) instruments measures aimed at minimizing community risks will be identified and outlined. Contractors will be mandated to prepare site-specific E&S instruments during implementation, incorporating community risks and impacts to ensure adherence to this standard. It is imperative for the borrower to closely monitor awarded contractors' Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) activities, ensuring that their E&S instruments prioritize the prevention of such impacts. Additionally, these instruments will encompass traffic management plans in case scanning reveals impacts on neighboring travel routes. The risk of labor influx and potential interference with the local population is minimal, as local companies are likely to carry out most of the work with local workers. To facilitate community and stakeholder engagement, a grievance mechanism will be established for the Project, with clear communication and active dissemination of procedures and accessibility to all stakeholders.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS5 is relevant. While most civil works involve rehabilitating existing structures, there may be instances of constructing new kindergartens whose locations are currently uncertain, possibly on existing school land or public property. The Project is designed to avoid activities leading to physical or economic displacement and structural losses, benefiting from its small-scale and community-driven approach, which allows for flexibility in design and location, thereby eliminating the need for resettlement and making economic displacement or livelihood loss unlikely. However, in isolated cases where involuntary land acquisition may be necessary, MESTI/PIU has prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) that outlines the steps for developing and implementing Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) once subprojects or individual Project components are defined and relevant information is available. Project activities involving physical or economic displacement will not commence until site-specific RAPs or abbreviated RAPs (ARAPs) have been finalized and approved by the Bank.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Not Currently Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS6 is not relevant given that the civil works are not expected to involve risks of disturbing natural habitats. However, the ESMF integrates provisions of the ESS6 in the development of site-specific due diligence to address the possible risks to biodiversity, habitats, and species. Site restoration will also be very important. All construction zones and facilities and any other area used/affected due to the Project operations will be left clean and tidy, as per the E&S site-specific instruments

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

Not Currently Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

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Not relevant. There are no Indigenous Peoples in Kosovo.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage

Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

ESS8 is not relevant at this stage, however since the location of the activities are yet not known, the ESMF includes provisions regulating actions in case of accidental finds during civil works. The list of cultural and historical sites in the target districts is identified and included in the environmental baseline analysis.

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries

Not Currently Relevant

[Explanation - Max. character limit 10,000]

Not relevant. This project does not involve Financial Intermediaries.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways

No

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas

No

B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework

No

[Explanation including areas where "Use of Borrower Framework" is being considered - Max. character limit 10,000]

Borrower Framework is not being considered

Use of Common Approach

No

[Explanation including list of possible financing partners – Max. character limit 4,000]

No other financing partners

B.4 Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

[Description provided will not be disclosed but will flow as a one time flow to the Appraisal Stage PID and PAD – Max. character limit 10,000]

The environmental risk is proposed moderate. The anticipated risks are expected to be moderate since the Project is financing medium-scale activities, the rehabilitation, and the repurposing of existing spaces as well as the construction of new kindergartens, most of which will not be identified until implementation begins. The environmental risks associated with the implementation of these civil works are expected to have moderate impacts which be easily avoided or minimized with the application of the WB Environmental and Social Standards, WB Group Environmental Health and

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Safety Guidelines (EHSs), and Good International Industrial Practices (GIIPs). Since the details of the activities are not known at this stage the client has prepared the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), that covers applicable ESF Standards, that has been disclosed in country and consulted upon. As a result of Project implementation, the following key adverse environmental impacts may occur:

- **Water pollution.** With the leakage of fuels and lubricants from construction machinery and stored waste, petroleum products and chemicals can pollute the soil, penetrate into groundwater or drain into surface water bodies. Maintenance and cleaning of construction machinery and mechanisms near natural streams can lead to water pollution.
- **Noise, vibration and temporary air pollution.** Dust will be generated as a result of construction work, transportation of construction materials/waste and traffic of freight vehicles. Strong increase of noise level is expected during construction, material transportation, construction equipment operation, in particular, during excavation, pneumatic drilling, and operation of construction cranes. Noise and vibration will cause concern to local residents if the work is carried out in the vicinity of residential areas.
- **Waste generation, Formation of recovered material and construction debris.** The following types of waste may be generated under the constructions activities of Component 2: (i) construction debris, transportation, handling, compressor works, jackhammers and other construction equipment, soil surpluses and stones, cut trees, bushes, household waste, obsolete equipment and materials, and; (ii) hazardous waste - construction debris containing asbestos plaster, asbestos slate, mineral wool and ruberoid, worn tires, filters and oils from construction equipment.
- **Road traffic limitations.** Project construction activities may result on increased road traffic. Any effort will be made to minimize the time spent on construction vehicles and trucks on the roads, in order to prevent any incidents or damage to property. Drivers will be warned that they should move with caution. Speed restriction in work areas and road traffic with heavy machinery will also be regulated. The proper organization of traffic will also prevent a negative impact on traffic, as far as possible.
- **Historical and cultural heritage sites.** Provisions regulating actions in case of accidental finds are included in this ESMF. The list of cultural and historical sites in the target districts is identified in the environmental baseline analysis. The site-specific impacts will be identified and mitigation measures proposed within the ESMPs will be prepared following the guidance and procedures outlined in the ESMF. The environmental protection consideration, and greening measures, will be included in the overall project as guided in the ESMF and project design.

The social risk of the Project is proposed moderate. The Project will finance civil works related to the rehabilitation and repurposing of existing spaces as well as the construction of new kindergartens. As the locations of these new constructions are unknown, ESS5 is pertinent, and the client has developed the ECD Project Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) to address land acquisition, access restrictions, and potential economic or physical displacement. Labor-related risks primarily pertain to OHS issues and will be mitigated through the ESMF and LMP, including a dedicated GRM for Project workers. Additionally, there is a risk of excluding vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from Project benefits, which will be mitigated by involving these groups in Project designs and implementing robust stakeholder engagement processes, including the creation of a tailored Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). Other social risks encompass potential health and safety concerns within communities during construction, limited capacity in applying ESS at national and local levels, and potential strain on current staff at PHC and ECD facilities due to increased usage resulting from the promotion of ECD and PHC services.

As a result of Project implementation, the following key adverse social impacts may occur:

- **Access restrictions.** There will be some construction induced social impacts during the implementation phase. The construction activities under some local infrastructure subprojects may cause access restrictions to homes, land plots or other private or public property. Construction and /or rehabilitation of public buildings such as schools might also



trigger some inconvenience to the public. The site specific ESMPs prepared under the Project will include, as necessary, a mitigation measures to reduce potential adverse impacts and risks.

- Land acquisitions. While the Project is designed to avoid activities leading to physical or economic displacement or structural losses, potential isolated instances of involuntary land acquisition may arise. To address such situations, the MESTI/PIU has prepared a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) for Bank approval. The RPF outlines the subsequent steps for developing and implementing resettlement action plans (RAPs), emphasizing resettlement principles, organizational arrangements, and design criteria for subprojects or Project components during implementation. The expansion of this framework into specific resettlement actions will occur once subproject details and essential information become available. Project activities causing physical or economic displacement will not proceed until site-specific Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) or abbreviated RAPs (ARAPs) receive final approval from the Bank.
- Social exclusion. Certain individuals or groups will have no or limited access to ECD services that will be improved in the target districts. For example, parents of children 0-6 ages might have limited access to ECD activities due to distant location of the KGs and ELC centers to be refurbished and/ established in the district centers.
- Inadequate capacity in ESS application at the national and local levels (participatory planning, Project management and oversight). Given that the Implementing agency and line ministries have inadequate capacity in ESS application, as well as the local government actors and local civil works providers may not have experience in ESS implementation, training workshops will be provided on the Project-related safeguards procedures (mitigating environmental risks, environmental and social screening and Environmental and Social Management Plans).
- Unacceptable increase in PHC staff and ECD teacher workloads. The program will promote new content on parenting awareness and skills, with a focus on ECD and early child stimulation; screening and pathways for referrals to secondary care; and promotion of family planning and ECD attitude. The Project will support pregnant women to use PHC services. Promoting greater use of ECD and PHC services may put pressure on current staff, and facility capacity at PHC and ECD facilities in in target districts. To mitigate this risk, a training program will be provided.
- Limited access of targeted children to ECD benefits. To avoid this risk appropriate Social Behavior Change Campaigns will be developed and implemented in the target districts to enhance family and community support for early childhood stimulation and development, improve parental practices, and empower health workers and educators to support parents and provide quality ECD services at the local level. At the same time increased demand for ECD services in target sites in years 0-6 may cause overcrowded classrooms, and some children will not be able to enrol. The MESTI local departments will ensure adequate ECD options are planned for the next years to meet anticipated increased demand.
- Labor risks, associated GBV, and child labor are considered low given the small size of subproject investments and the Kosovo's adherence to the national labor code which also prohibits child and forced labor. In order to mitigate the risk, under the ESF package of the Project a LMP has been drafted.
- Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risks are low to moderate and will depend on the type of subproject works to be implemented. The risks are considered low to moderate because the local contract workers are likely to be unskilled. All contractors will be required to develop and implement written labor management procedures, including procedures to establish and maintain a safe working environment as per requirements of ESS2. During subproject preparation, these impacts should be carefully analyzed and identified while preparing ESIA's and ESMPs and adequate mitigation measures should be proposed. Additionally, the selection, design, contracting and monitoring and evaluation of sub-Projects will be consistent with the guidelines set out in the annexes.
- Grievance Redress Mechanism. Given the multi-sectoral nature of the interventions and that a number of agencies and sub-agencies of the government will be involved in performing various functions, social assessment



recognizes the need for a Project specific platform for the stakeholders to present their grievances. Hence, the Project has developed an appropriate GRM for this purpose (described in the next section).

C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by implementation?

[Description of expectations in terms of documents to be prepared to assess and manage the project’s environmental and social risks and by when (i.e., prior to Effectiveness, or during implementation), highlighted features of ESA documents, other project documents where environmental and social measures are to be included, and the related due diligence process planned to be carried out by the World Bank, including sources of information for the due diligence - Max. character limit 10,000]

Towards addressing Project’s environmental and social risks, the following instruments have been prepared: (i) Environment and Social Management Framework (ESMF); (ii) Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP); (iii) Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF); (iv) Labor Management Procedures (LMP), and (v) Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) and are expected to be disclosed and consulted prior to appraisal. The ESMF covers applicable ESF Standards and the World Bank Group’s Environmental Health and Safety Guidelines. The ESMF also contains generic ESMP checklists for each type of small-scale construction envisaged by the Project, namely refurbishment of ECD and PHC centers, and other investments that improve local social infrastructure. The checklists will also help determine where and when site-specific Environment and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs)/Management Plans (ESMPs) and Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) will be necessary. MESTI will monitor the environmental and social performance in accordance with the ESCP. Additionally, environmental and social risk management processes and procedures will be incorporated into the Project’s Operational Manual (POM).

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