United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

Emergency Education Response for Afghanistan (EERA)

Afghanistan

Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

Preliminary Draft [04-08-2022]

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1   Introduction/Project Description

1.1   Introduction

This Preliminary Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) was prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the Afghanistan Emergency Education Response for Afghanistan (EERA) in accordance with the World Bank Environmental and Social Standard on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure (ESS10). It defines a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation, throughout the entire project cycle, outlines the ways in which the project team will communicate with stakeholders, and includes a mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about the project and any activities related to it.

The involvement of the local population particularly the affected communities is essential to the success of the project to ensure smooth collaboration between project staff and local communities and to minimize and mitigate environmental and social risks related to the proposed project activities. The project stakeholder engagement is key to communicating timely information of project services and scope to all stakeholders and reaching out to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Also, in the context of infectious diseases (COVID 19), broad, culturally appropriate, and adapted awareness raising activities are particularly important to properly sensitize the communities to the risks related to infectious diseases.

1.2   Project Description

EERA is a World Bank project to maintain basic education service delivery, learning continuity and safe spaces for girls and boys in primary and secondary education. This short-term, emergency project is essential to safeguard education achievements obtained over the past 20 years and contribute to future nation-building efforts. It will ensure that learning continues, in a safe and secure environment for all children in the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The Project has 3 components as follows:

- **Component 1: Support Access to Learning Opportunities:** This component will support access to learning opportunities in basic education. The project will support relevant institutions (NGOs, CSOs, etc.) to provide both formal and informal education programs to primary and secondary age students.
- **Component 2: Improving Learning Conditions at project-supported schools:** This component will improve learning conditions at project-supported schools. The project will provide WASH facilities, boundary wall and high-performance tents respond to the strong demands from public schools without school buildings. This component will also distribute Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) for basic education students and teachers at project-target public schools.
- **Component 3: Strengthening monitoring and ensuring accountability: t**his component of the project will ensure continued access to general education services for target children, especially among the most vulnerable and hard to reach; promote quality of education service delivery; prevent and identify fraud among relevant stakeholders so that the integrity of financing can be assured; identify bottlenecks to service delivery and quality and take action to address them; and cover project management and operating costs.

1.3   Methodology

The involvement of stakeholders throughout the Project's lifecycle is essential to its success. The project document is fully aligned with the **Afghanistan Education Sector Transitional framework** (AESTF)[1] that was finalized and endorsed early March 2022, by members of both the Development Partner Group (DPG) and the cluster. These same stakeholders will remain involved during project implementation and monitoring of results. Their engagement is key

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[1] The AESTF operationalizes the education component under Outcome 1 and 2 of the UN Transitional Engagement Framework (TEF) and is the guiding document for external aid contributions and coordination in support of education in Afghanistan.

to contribute to the Project accountability and sustainability and the provision of feedback loop to improve implementation and results. The SEP will also help increase buy-in of the Project by its stakeholders, ensure a smooth collaboration between Project staff and targeted stakeholders, and address environmental and social risks related to Project activities.

In accordance with good international practice approaches, UNICEF will apply the following principles to their stakeholder engagement activities:

- *Openness.* Public consultations throughout Project preparation and implementation Project lifecycle will be carried out in an open manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation. Venues will be easily reachable, and not require long commutes, entrance fees, or preliminary access authorization.

- *Cultural appropriateness.* The activities, format, timing, and venue will respect local customs and norms.

- *Conflict sensitivity.* Considering the complex country context and referring to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

- *Informed participation and feedback.* Information will be provided and widely distributed in advance to all stakeholders in an appropriate format, and provide opportunities to stakeholders to provide feedback, and will analyse and address stakeholder comments and concerns.

- *Inclusivity.* The participation process for the projects is inclusive. All stakeholders at all times are encouraged to be involved in the consultation process. Equal access to information is provided to all stakeholders. Sensitivity to stakeholders' needs is the key principle underlying the selection of engagement methods. Consultations will engage all segments of the local society, in particular, women, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, displaced persons and those with underlying health issues, and other vulnerable groups. If necessary, UNICEF and its implementing partners will provide logistical assistance to enable participants with limited physical abilities and those with insufficient financial or limited transportation means to attend public meetings organized by the Project.

- *Gender sensitivity.* Consultations will be organized to ensure that both females and males have equal access to them. As necessary, the implementing agencies will organize separate meetings and focus group discussions for males and females, engage facilitators of the same gender as the participants, and provide additional support to facilitate access of facilitators.

In addition, UNICEF will ensure that consultations are meaningful. As indicated in ESS10, meaningful consultations are a two-way process that:

- Begins early in the project planning process to gather initial views on the project proposal and inform project design;

- Encourages stakeholder feedback, particularly as a way of informing project design and engagement by stakeholders in the identification and mitigation of environmental and social risks and impacts;

- Continues on an ongoing basis, as risks and impacts arise;

- Is based on the prior disclosure and 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;

- Considers and responds to feedback;

- Supports active and inclusive engagement with project-affected parties;

- Is free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, and intimidation; and;

- Is documented and disclosed.

2 Brief Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Both humanitarian and development education actors in Afghanistan now operate in a context where there is a vacuum, without a clear policy framework, financing mechanism to channel aid, or dialogue structure that is led by a government – all within a complex sanctions environment. Starting from September 2021, humanitarian and development partners through the cluster and DPG leads UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the Children and FCDO came together and led extensive sector wide consultation and created a platform for dialogue aimed at the identification of sector priorities for continued support to the education sector within the changed operation environment. This process consisted of two phases. The first phase, starting right after the change of government, led to the development of a **Call to Action**, co-signed by Save the Children, UNESCO, UNICEF, and WFP to galvanize the international community to come together to prevent the collapse of the education system and safeguard the gains made for children over the past two decades in Afghanistan - to support an immediate humanitarian response to the deteriorating education situation, with winter approaching and the economy on the brink of collapse.[2] The proposed immediate interventions under the Call to Action are aligned with the Humanitarian Response Plan (2022). To ensure children come back to learning and that schools and CBEs stay open for learning and teaching to take place, an estimated USD 593 million dollars is required to keep the existing public schools and CBEs open for one year and to enable children's participation, with special attention to primary and secondary school girls. The Call to Action reflected the commitment to deliver upon the immediate needs in the education sector in a coordinated manner, to amplify the urgency to respond and to optimize shared humanitarian imperatives, capacities and priorities. It is a respond to the call of local stakeholders[3], including teachers to continue supporting the education sector.

In December 2021, the Call to Action was shared globally with all Education partners, donors and other actors, including national and local non-government organizations for review and feedback. Extensive comments and feedback were received and informed the development of the **Afghanistan Education Sector Transitional Framework** (AESTF) which became Phase 2 of the consultative process. The AESTF further consolidated humanitarian and development actors or information sharing, joint advocacy, and strategic advisory. The Education Cluster was activated, and the DPG became the platform for decision-making under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).[4] To ensure a clear operational framework to guide programming and investment, the DPG and Education Cluster facilitated the development of this sector transitional framework through a rapid but consultative process for a transitional period of two years. The framework has three thematic areas: Access, Quality, and Sustaining Systems, as key areas to be addressed in the current educational landscape of Afghanistan. The AESTF was finalized and endorsed early March 2022 and is serving as the operational part of the UN Transitional Education Framework (TEF) and guides external investment into the sector, both in terms of bilateral contributions as well as priority setting under ECW and GPE. Since suspension of girl's education from grade 6 onwards in March 2022, UNICEF has been advocating through various platforms for girls to be allowed back in school.

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[2] This Call to Action covers the immediate and initial activities to ensure continuity of education and avoid a collapse of the education system while a more detailed Afghanistan Education Sector Transitional Framework (AESTF) is being finalized.

[3] Based on feedback from working on the ground, or even petitions brought to the UN compound (nothing officially documented)

[4] On 15 December 2021, the DPG agreed to invoke the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS) principles that will allow the DPG to fulfil the governance and oversight for GPE activities until any formal participation of authorities is re-established.

3   Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

Key stakeholders of the project will include both the beneficiaries: teachers, students, communities, school management shuras (SMS) as well as those involved in implementation and monitoring, the education coordination platforms and local authorities.

Teachers: To avoid a collapse of the public-school system and ensure that all public schools remain open and accessible for all girls and boys, support is required to teachers. While the payment of stipends to teachers is no longer part of this project, monitoring on whether teachers are being paid will continue under this project. The project will pay stipends to CBE teachers to ensure CBE classes will function efficiently and effectively. CBE teachers are active participants in this process. A clear communication will go out to ensure full awareness and understanding of the payment conditions. At the same time, a complaints and grievance mechanism is being set up that allows them to reach out in case when necessary.

School Management Shuras (SMS)[5] : SMSs will be directly engaged, offering key local insights and contributions to project implementation. A shura is an educational committee or a consultative council, that is locally established in a community to manage the school or CBE. Each SMS consists of five to eight community members comprised of parents/caregivers, community leaders/members, decision-makers and children to improve local management of public schools and CBEs. School shuras play a key role in community participation in the education of children at the local level. The shura's responsibilities and activities are diverse, including the planning and monitoring of education services to local communities, such as work on school improvement or development plans.[6] CBE Shuras will play an important role in monitoring results on the ground as part of local accountability under this project. At the same time, it is expected that public school Shuras play an important role in ensuring the distribution of teaching and learning materials, purchased under this project, will reach the intended target group. The distribution will be accompanied with key messages to communities.

Families and communities: The project will support efforts to encourage children's participation in education. This will include community engagement, through SMSs' outreach and engagement with the local community to mobilize families to prioritize education and to send their children back to school, especially girls. The families and communities will benefit from community engagement and advocacy around the right to education for all children, especially girls, through increased active engagement between children, parents/caregivers, schools, and the wider school-community through the SMSs to ensure all have the capacity and confidence to prioritize all children's learning and development. The project will support local Back to School (BTS) campaigns around the establishment of CBEs. The goal of conducting and localizing a BTS campaign is to ensure that no child is left behind and that children, not reached before, benefit from new opportunities to participate in education, prioritizing girls, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnee children and youth, children with disabilities, out-of-school children and other marginalized groups of children and young people at risk of drop-out.

Students, in particularly secondary education girls: The first beneficiaries of the project are school aged children. During project implementation their opinion will be sought using tools such as RapidPro and U-report to be considered in further implementation. In particularly, under this project, efforts will be made to consult with secondary education girls about the best way to support their continued learning in a way that it is safe and responsive to their specific needs.

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[5] Nearly 90 per cent of public schools in Afghanistan report having a school management committee or a SMS (SABER, 2017); therefore, an estimate of 13,553 SMS may exist in support of the 15,059 (EMIS, 2019) public primary and secondary schools.

[6] The mobilisation, engagement, strengthening and empowerment of SMSs is prioritised through specific training of SMSs to engage communities in school protection, support community-based education and support education in emergencies to ensure all children have access to education.

UNICEF's Implementing partners: Project activities such as the implementation of CBE, support monitoring of distribution of TLM, training of CBE teachers, support to School Management Shuras, will be implemented through UNICEF's implementing partners (IPs). IPs' selection will be done based on assessment of their capacity (proven record of delivery with quality on the proposed activities as well as their reach in the proposed areas of project interventions). The partners will be asked to prepare an operational plan on how to concretize the proposed activities and deliver on the project's objectives. UNICEF will tap into its existing pool of partners that are currently engaged in the provision of CBE, but also expand to others who have experience in the same area, in particularly those that support community-based education for secondary education students, in particularly girls. For WASH in School construction/ rehabilitation, IPs will also be tasked to supervise the implementation by the local construction contractors.

Education Partners: UNICEF and Save the Children, as global and country education cluster lead agencies, are committed to ensuring communication, effective information sharing and coordination to work towards a predictable, holistic, equitable and well-coordinated response. As part of the system-wide scale-up, the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiE WG) was activated as an Education Cluster (without a de facto authority chair). Furthermore, UNESCO is the co-lead of the Local Education Group (LEG) and the Education DPG, ensuring effective coordination and information sharing. Accordingly, members of the LEG have invoked the Fragile and Conflict Affected State (FCAS) protocols to continue operating through DPG. The DPG will be the platform to endorse the AESTF under development (see Annex D) and decision making on GPE funding and (re-) programming.

Local authorities: To ensure that interventions reach where they are needed most, coordination and collaboration with the local authorities of essence. In addition, this will guarantee safe access for UNICEF's implementing partners to sites that may otherwise be difficult to reach. Local authorities play particularly an important role in the communication to teachers about the payment of stipends under component 1 and take part of the responsibility to address complaints and grievance. It is fully understood that no financial transaction will go through the authorities.

3.1   Affected parties

Affected Parties include local communities, education institutions, education sector local authorities and other parties that may be subject to direct impacts from Project activities. They include the following groups or individuals:
- Education sector Institutions (namely primary schools and CBEs);
- Education services beneficiaries (teachers, students and their families, as well as local and community-based organizations, including IDPs, women, people living with disabilities, and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups
- Communities in the vicinity of planned Project activities
- Residents, business entities, and individual entrepreneurs in the area of the project that can benefit from the employment, training, and business opportunities
- Local Authorities in the provinces and districts where the Project will intervene
- Community-based groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that represent local residents and other local interest groups, and act on their behalf

3.2   Other interested parties

Other interested parties may not experience direct impacts from the Project. However, they may consider or perceive their interests as being affected by the Project, and thus may affect the Project's implementation. They include:
- Community members and decision-makers
- Residents of the other area local communities within the project area, who can benefit from employment and training opportunities stemming from the Project

- Business owners and providers of services, goods and materials within the project area that will be involved in the project's wider supply chain or may be considered for the role of project's suppliers in the future
- UNICEF's Implementing partners (international, national and local NGOS) that are/may be involved in implementation
- Other humanitarian and development agencies and partners that are engaged in Education sector activities in target area.
- Academia (Public and private universities)

3.3 Disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups

Vulnerable groups and persons may be disproportionately impacted or further disadvantaged by Project activities, and thus may require special engagement efforts to ensure their equal representation in the consultation and decision-making process associated with Project activities. Vulnerability may stem from a person's origin, gender, age, health condition, economic deficiency and financial insecurity, disadvantaged status in the community, such as marginalized groups or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), or dependence on other individuals. Engagement with the vulnerable groups and individuals will be carried out through a gender-sensitive citizen engagements to facilitate their participation in Project-related decision making, to ensure that their understanding of and input into the overall process are commensurate to those of the other stakeholders. Vulnerable groups include:

For direct concern and targeted through the project:

- Adolescent girls that are officially enrolled in secondary education, but currently out of school

- Primary school children and teachers

- Children that have been excluded from education before, living in marginalized communities with no access to education (living in remote and previously considered "Hard-to-Reach" locations, Kuchi nomadic population, IDPs, children out-of-school, in particularly girls, children with disabilities)

Broader group that may be affected by the project:

- Persons with disabilities

- The poor

- IDPs

- Marginalized groups

- Elderly people

- Women-headed households

- The unemployed

- Youth (Adolescents)

UNICEF will continue to seek the views of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups during consultations and take these views into account during Project implementation. Information sharing and consultation techniques will be tailored according to the nature and common types of stakeholders, for example through visuals and sign language interpreters will be used for people with hearing disabilities and illiterate persons, where applicable; and venues will be chosen to be easily accessible to people with physical disabilities. In particular, the following tailored measures will apply see table below.

Table 1: Tailored Stakeholder Engagement Measures (Disadvantaged/Vulnerable Individuals or Groups)

Stakeholder Group	Limitations to Engagement	Measures/Resources to Facilitate Engagement
Women and Girls	• May feel uncomfortable sharing opinions or raising concerns in the presence of men • Childcare / family responsibilities, social and gender norms, need for spousal permission may make it difficult to participate in events that are far from their homes/schools or that are scheduled at certain times.	• Female facilitators conduct workshops / KIIs / FGDs, and female data collectors conduct TPM / beneficiary interviews. • Locations of public consultation are close to the homes of those whose engagement is sought; If the community allows, consultations will be conducted at home to provide safer and inclusive environment • Timings of consultations do not interfere with household / family commitments / obligations • Hold small, gender-disaggregated meetings where female women/ girls / caregivers are more comfortable asking questions or raising concerns • Ensure dissemination of project information through multiple channels including radio, social media, banners, word of mouth / community and religious leaders, including audio-visual materials for illiterate people
Beneficiaries who live in remote areas	• Challenges associated with transportation to engagement events / Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) / face-to-face meetings	• Workshops / FGDs / Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted in local communities (district hubs or schools/CBE) when possible, through implementing partners • Call center that is functional 6 days per week
Beneficiaries living with disabilities	• Challenges related to accessibility of venues • Format of materials	• Ensure facilities for consultations / engagement events are accessible • Materials are produced in an accessible format for all audiences and using a variety of audio-visual approaches (print, radio, television, social media, word of mouth / community and religious leaders, etc.)
IDPs	• May feel unwelcome to attend events (fear of discrimination) • May not be informed about public events because they do not access host community communication channels	• Community and religious leaders usually have a good understanding of the people living in their community and can be engaged to facilitate participation in stakeholder engagement activities • Conduct targeted communications aimed at IDP communities to inform them of public consultations • Organize separate engagement events specifically for IDP communities to ensure their particular needs are taken into account

3.4 Summary of Project Stakeholder Needs

The following specific needs were identified based on between UNICEF, prior experience:

Table 2: Project Stakeholder Needs (Summary)

Stakeholder Group	Consultation Methods	Specific Needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings)
Education institutions at provincial, district, and Ministry level	• Emails • Nontechnical summary documents	• Correspondence and nontechnical documents or progress reports to be shared in English, Dari and Pashto • Meetings during standard working hours

Stakeholder Group	Consultation Methods	Specific Needs (accessibility, large print, childcare, daytime meetings)
	• Progress reports • In person meetings	• Limited facilities for on-line meetings • Most meetings in Pashto
Local authorities at provincial, district level, who are engaged in the Education services	• Official letters • Emails • Nontechnical summary documents • Progress reports • In person meetings	• Correspondence and nontechnical documents or progress reports to be shared in English, Dari and Pashto • Meetings during standard working hours • Limited facilities for on-line meetings • Most meetings in Pashto
Education institution managers	• Official letters • Emails • Nontechnical summary documents • In person meetings • Flyers • Posters	• Communication to go through line Ministry of reporting procedures • If possible direct communication • Materials to be shared in English, Dari and Pashto
Community leaders and the communities living in the targeted areas, including beneficiaries and vulnerable groups	• In person meetings • Banners • Posters • Flyers • Radios • In-person meetings • GRM	• All materials to be shared in English, Dari and Pashto • Printed material to be in large font • Information to be shared in formats accessible to non-literate and low-literate audiences • Meetings during standard working hours • Meetings in local language • Time bound meetings to enable stakeholders to meet family/professional commitments • Ensure confidentiality and protection of personal information when discussing potentially sensitive topics • Use animation instead of words to communicate specific messages to illiterate groups of the targeted communities.
Education actors working in the targeted areas	• Cluster working group in-person meetings • Email • Phone • Flyers	• All materials to be shared in both English, Dari and Pashto • Meeting in local languages • Printed material to be in large font • Meetings during standard working hours
Humanitarian and Development Actors, including NGOs and CSOs	• Cluster working group in-person meetings • Email • Phone • Flyers	• All materials to be shared in both English, Dari and Pashto • Printed material to be in large font • Meetings during standard working hours • On-line meetings possible

4   Stakeholder Engagement Program

4.1   Purpose and Timing of Stakeholder Engagement Program

UNICEF will apply the following approach to engage stakeholders:

- Identify and liaise with the relevant local actors including authorities and inform them about the project and its specific implemented components, thereby gaining acceptance and support to ensure an enabling environment for project implementation within the selected target sites.

- Strengthen links with the local actors by initiating and sustaining dialogue to receive their support in gaining project acceptance and facilitation of access, communicating project goals and rules within their communities or relevant audiences including the targeted beneficiaries and any other stakeholders.

- Inform the relevant actors, including but not limited to beneficiaries and communities, about the Project

- Identify vulnerable groups of beneficiaries with physical impediments or socio-cultural barriers that prevent them from benefiting from the Project, and support them with differentiated measures, such as outreach home visits.

- Avoid public gatherings (taking into account national restrictions or advisories), including public hearings, workshops and community meetings.

- If smaller meetings are permitted/advised, conduct consultations in small-group sessions, such as focus group meetings. If not permitted or advised, make all reasonable efforts to conduct meetings through online channels.

- Diversify means of communication and rely more on social media and online channels. Where possible and appropriate, create dedicated online platforms and chat groups appropriate for the purpose, based on the type and category of stakeholders.

- Employ traditional channels of communications (TV, newspaper, radio, dedicated phone-lines, and mail) when stakeholders do not have access to online channels or do not use them frequently. Traditional channels can also be highly effective in conveying relevant information to stakeholders and allow them to provide their feedback and suggestions.

- Where direct engagement with project affected people or beneficiaries is necessary, identify channels for direct communication with each affected household via a context specific combination of email messages, mail, online platforms, dedicated phone lines with knowledgeable operators.

- Each of the proposed channels of engagement should clearly specify how feedback and suggestions can be provided by stakeholders.

- Identify trusted local civil society, ethnic organizations, community organizations and similar actors who can act as intermediaries for information dissemination and stakeholder engagement; engage with them on an ongoing basis.

4.2   Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

During Project implementation, UNICEF will keep disclosing information on the content of the project as well as related processes to targeted stakeholder audiences as described in the Table below.

Key dates for information disclosure are at the start of the project, at mid-term as well as at the end of the lifespan of the project; in addition, each year there will be a joint mid-year review organized between the Education Cluster and DPG and the relevant stakeholders. Such a review will serve to take stock, discuss opportunities and challenges, and to take corrective actions where needed. In areas where physical access is limited, alternative channels of information disclosure will be applied, with the possibility to engage a third- party to support the information disclosure process.

Formats of information disclosure are a combination of face-to-face meetings where applicable, accompanied by information shared via radio, television, newspapers, posters, brochures, and leaflets as well as via websites and social media. Information disclosure formats will be determined in discussion between UNICEF and the relevant ministries, following Project effectiveness.

Table 3: Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

Project Stage	List of information to be disclosed	Timetable: Locations, Dates	Methods Proposed	Target Stakeholders	Targeted reach	Responsible
Project Start, Mid-Term and at End of Project Reviews	Overall Project: Activities, Timeline, Targeting	Within 3 months of effectiveness	**Meeting/**workshop at national level: Participative workshops where participants will be informed about the project scope, parameters and asked to support the conduct of the project components and communication to relevant beneficiaries **Letter:** Correspondence to request support and access to location sites	Line ministry, cluster members potential implementing agencies/partners	1 meeting with the Cluster and DPGs 1 meeting with potential implementing agencies/partners 1 meeting with the national authorities	UNICEF
			Community Meetings: In person and over the phone involving local actors, influencers and beneficiaries representing different communities	Beneficiaries, individuals and groups (including vulnerable groups) community leaders, NGOs and CSOs – where relevant (mainly component 1 and 2)	At least 1 community meetings within each province	UNICEF through its implementing partners
			Community influencers and leaders: Collaboration with community leaders in targeted locations to inform about project components and gain support of community members.	Community leaders, and Community members, including households and vulnerable groups – as part of the above referred community meeting	At least 1 community meetings within each province90	UNICEF through its implementing partners
			Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp): Visual/written and audio-visual content sent to a network of local actors, female only networks, and all stakeholders	Different social media platforms can be leveraged to access various stakeholder groups. Facebook may be more appropriate for communities whereas WhatsApp groups are effective in communicating with provincial, district, and facility / site-level staff and community groups (such as community volunteer networks).	Facebook post announcing start of project (signing, launch) Additional Facebook posts informing the public of key project moments (start, revision, end, etc.), and results (quantity /	

					frequency to be determined based on project communications plan) Targeted WhatsApp communications ad hoc as needed	
			Print outs including banners, cards, posters, leaflets which includes animated illustration of the intended messages.	Education institution managers and staff	One time at beginning of project; updated ad hoc as needed if any changes made to the project	UNICEF
			Monthly Progress updates	Education Cluster and DPG	At least one update to each relevant cluster at project start, mid-term, and end	UNICEF
Implementation	Assessments, Monitoring, including TPM, Verification	Throughout lifespan of project	**Letters:** Request for facilitation of access to project areas	Relevant line ministries	Submitted at national level to national MoE; MoE to inform each DEO (once at beginning of project), MoE to inform Provincial Governors	UNICEF
	E&S Instruments (ESMF, LMP, SEP,)	Within 3 months of the date of effectiveness and throughout the project whenever the instruments are updated	**Posters, Flyers, Banners**	Communities in the project targeted areas Community education services providers Project labour	All communities	UNICEF in close collaboration with its implementing partners

| | Information on specific project components, incl. parameters for each sub-project | Throughout the lifespan of the project | **Methods vary** depending on the component and are dependent on final approval of proposed project design and targeting strategy; they may include a range of: Official Meetings, Official Letters, Print/Audio/social media, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key informant Interview (KIIs) etc. | Relevant Line Ministries, officials at Provincial and district levels, Community leaders and decision makers, local authorities, education institution managers, Contractors, Education and Wash Clusters. | All relevant stakeholders | UNICEF |

4.3   Proposed Strategy for Consultation

UNICEF will use a range of channels to communicate with Project stakeholders. The exact strategy for engagement, and details on the timing and location of public meetings, will be decided once the design of the different Project components is finalized, and will be included in the updated SEP.

Table 4: Proposed Strategy for Information Disclosure

With Whom	Channels of Engagement	Venue	Frequency	Purpose	Responsible
Ministry of Education Local authorities	• Progress reporting • Meetings, virtual or in-person • Emails	Ministry of *Education*	Regularly	• Sharing of information, reviews, clearance and seeking support	UNICEF
Provincial Education Offices	• Progress reporting • Meetings, virtual or in-person • Emails	Provincial premises	Regularly	• Coordination and support to implementation of project activities	UNICEF
District Education offices	• Operational Meetings • Trainings • Monitoring, progress,	District *Education* offices	Regularly	• Support to implementation of project activities	UNICEF and its implementing partners

		premises				
	• In-person meetings • Emails					
Education actors working in targeted areas	• Local partner meetings • Emails	Virtual meetings, meetings at agency premises	Regularly	• Coordination or awareness raising to avoid duplications of efforts among actors or cluster members • Consultations to have inputs form technical specialists	UNICEF through implementing partners
Humanitarian and Development actors working in the targeted areas (e.g. NGOs, CSOs and others)	• Cluster and DPG meetings • Emails	Virtual meetings, meetings at agency premises	Regularly	• Coordination or awareness raising to avoid duplications of efforts among actors or cluster members • Consultations to have inputs form technical specialists	UNICEF
Community leaders/members and decision-makers, Education services receivers in the targeted areas	• Community meetings in person or over the phone • Workshops	Project offices Community premises	Regularly	• Sharing information • Increasing community support for Project activities	UNICEF through implementing partners
Vulnerable groups Households	In-person consultations and outreach campaigns Social medica, leaflets, posters, brochures, and hand-outs GRM hotlines, where and whenever required	Community premises	Regularly	• To ensure their participation in consultations • To increase awareness, provide consultations and collect feedbacks • To assess their needs and priorities • Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse	UNICEF through implementing partners

4.4   Proposed strategy to incorporate the view of vulnerable groups

As indicated in Section 3.3 above, UNICEF will ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, groups or communities are purposefully consulted and adequately represented.

UNICEF will disclose information and receive feedback on the content of the project as well as the related processes to targeted stakeholder audiences, including vulnerable groups, as defined throughout this document.

Information disclosure could use combination of different channels as found suitable for each specific project component and stakeholder. These can include face-to-face meetings where applicable, and accompanied by information shared via, posters, brochures, and leaflets as well as the social media.

UNICEF will maintain a grievance redressal mechanism (GRM) to allow beneficiaries to raise any feedback on the project to the implementers. This will also provide a channel for vulnerable groups to raise any concerns in a confidential manner and ensure they are addressed.

4.5   Timelines

Key dates for information disclosure are at the start of the project, at mid-term as well as at the end of the lifespan of the project. Specific timelines for different types of information disclosure and stakeholder consultation are as defined throughout this document. In the event of changes to project start, implementation, and closure timelines, relevant stakeholders will be informed, and this SEP will be updated accordingly.

4.6   Review of Comments

UNICEF will consider the feedback gathered from the different platforms or channels (e.g., official meetings, consultation workshops, assessments, TPM and Grievance Mechanism) during Project planning and implementation. UNICEF will also share with the concerned stakeholders the final decisions regarding program design, delivery of activities, realignments on information sharing or GM channels following stakeholder feedback.

4.7   Future Phases of Project

UNICEF will report back to the concerned stakeholders at least once annually, and more frequently during periods of high activity.

5 Resources and Responsibilities for Implementing Stakeholder Engagement Activities

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

UNICEF will implement activities assigned in the Project Document either directly or through partnership agreements with implementing partners, as per the Financing Agreement. UNICEF will define its own management structure to implement the Project prior to appraisal and reflect it in the SEP and the Project Operational Manual (POM). This management structure will oversee the Project activities.

UNICEF will prepare and submit to the World Bank quarterly progress reports as specified in the financing agreement, which will contain updates on the SEP as relevant.

UNICEF will be responsible for carrying out stakeholder engagement activities for the project, and for ensuring its implementing partners carry out stakeholder engagement activities at relevant levels (provincial and community). The stakeholder engagement activities will be documented as part of the project progress reporting requirements, and as indicated in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). The costs are covered under different budget lines. The main one will be under CBE that includes localized Back to School campaigns and engagement/capacity building of School-based-Shuras as well as under the PSEA (training of stakeholders, handling GBV complaints and grievance and staff) budget line.

5.2 Resources Required

An indicative budget is indicated below

Table 5: Budget Required for Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Activity	Cost
Official coordination meeting Implementing partners	$ 30,000.00
Official Meetings and workshops at national, zonal, provincial levels	$ 90,000.00
Community Meetings: In person and over the phone involving local actors, influencers and beneficiaries representing different communities	$ 100,000.00
Collaboration with community leaders and School Management Shuras in targeted locations to inform about project components and gain support of community members	$ 150,000.00
Social Media (Facebook, WhatsApp): Visual/written and audio-visual content sent to a network of local actors, female only networks, and other stakeholder groups, including those representing vulnerable groups, and collating feedback	$ 30,000.00
Print outs including banners, cards, posters, leaflets	$ 50,000.00
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.): Posting project ESF documents, videos introducing the project, and other promotional materials, and monitoring comments	$ 15,000.00
Printing project brief, GRM posters, and GRM fliers for community distribution	$ 50,000.00
Total	**$ 515,000.00**

6   Grievance Mechanism

6.1 **Objective**

The objective of a GRM is to assist in resolving complaints in a timely, effective and efficient manner. Project-level GRMs can provide the most effective way for stakeholders to raise issues and concerns about the project that affect them. The GRM provides a transparent and credible process for fair, effective and lasting outcomes. It also builds trust and cooperation as an integral component of broader stakeholder engagement, that facilitates corrective actions and helps the community to have ownership of the project. The GRM for this project will be designed in accordance with World Bank's ESS10 for the benefit of all project affected persons, including workers and other stakeholders. The GRM would also provide for handling of grievances related to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) or Sexual Harassment (SH).

Principles

- The project-level GRM would be designed in a culturally appropriate way so as to effectively respond to the needs and concerns of all affected parties.
- The GRM would be well-publicized and known to all affected population. The UNICEF will ensure that the GRM is widely publicized and will also conduct awareness campaigns in this regard among the affected communities. Implementing agencies will brief target stakeholders about the scope of the mechanisms, the safety of the complainant, time of response, the referral and appeal processes.
- Accessibility - The GRM will be clear, accessible to all segments of affected communities, living within the vicinity of the project and subprojects sites or location.
- The Mechanism would allow for multiple avenues of uptake of grievances.
- The system would be sensitive to women, men, boys and girls, as well as vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities, elderly, displaced persons and other marginalized groups.
- Confidentiality and prevention against retaliation.
- The GRM would be designed to protect beneficiaries and stakeholder's rights to comment and complain, and even raise their complaints to higher management if they are not satisfied with services or receive insufficient solutions. The mechanism would facilitate their sharing of concerns freely with understanding that no retribution will be exacted for their participation. To create a safe space, anonymous complaints will also be allowed.
- The GRM shall provide for relaying regular information and feedback regarding the redressal of the grievance to the aggrieved.
- The Mechanism shall be responsive in redressal of grievances by facilitating resolution with the concerned actor in the implementing chain.
- The GRM would be based on transparency and accountability. All complainants will be heard, taken seriously, and treated fairly. The community and stakeholders will be aware of the expectation from the project; the GRM procedures; understand its purpose, have sufficient information on how to access it.
- The GRM will have provisions to appeal if the grievances are not resolved satisfactorily
- The GRM would not prevent access to judicial and administrative remedies.
- The mechanism would provide for prompt time-bound redressal of grievances.
- For SEA/SH cases, three guiding principles of confidentiality, survivor centricity and survivor safety are to be applied to specific cases of SEA/SH cases as per the World Bank's guidance. Reporting mechanisms will enable complainant to report SEA/SH cases without being publicly identified given the risk of stigma, reprisals, and rejection associated with sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

Description of GRM

The United Nations in Afghanistan has a well-established Grievance Mechanism in place, Awaaz Afghanistan (Awaaz), which is implemented by UNOPS on behalf of various UN and humanitarian response agencies. Awaaz is a collective accountability and community engagement initiative that functions as a toll-free, countrywide hotline number (410) that affected populations can dial to access information and register feedback on humanitarian assistance programmes. As a two-way communication channel, needs and priorities as reported on the ground are circulated to partners to help improve the quality of programming in Afghanistan. Awaaz is based on common principles, has processes and policies for receiving and handling complaints and feedback, as well as for data protection; and includes inter-agency referral mechanisms. It is designed to be accessible, collaborative, expeditious, and effective in resolving concerns. Awaaz has ten multilingual operators (50% of which are women) and has handled more than 201,412 calls since Awaaz took its first call in May 2018. Awaaz agents speak Dari, Pashto, Urdu, English and more. Establishing referral pathways with clusters and partners, cases requiring attention are shared (in agreement with the affected person) in a timely manner, helping the humanitarian response to swiftly align its delivery to actual needs. The Awaaz call center also utilizes a short code (specifically, 7575), which anyone can use to send a free SMS with feedback, a question, or a complaint. More information about Awaaz can be found at Awaaz Afghanistan (https://awaazaf.org).

UNICEF is currently in discussions with Awaaz regarding expanding its human and technological resources to accommodate a range of UNICEF projects, including the HER Project, in order to leverage this existing mechanism to address AAP needs in the near-term. Given the rapidly expanding scope and scale of its response, UNICEF is also exploring the possibility of establishing a dedicated call center to handle all grievance mechanisms across UNICEF projects in various sectors (health, education, social policy, etc.), through its corporate Management Information System (MIS) Humanitarian cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) module for grievances redressal. HOPE has a dedicated feedback and grievance module to record all types of program related complaints and feedback, including sensitive grievances. All feedback and grievances will be recorded in HOPE and assigned for follow up, closing the feedback loop from the perspective of the beneficiary. Any sensitive grievances, including those related to SEA/SH, are automatically reported to UNICEF senior management for immediate follow up. UNICEF will use multiple reporting channels for communities to raise their concerns or share feedback, which will all be recorded, managed and closed by UNICEF and partners in HOPE. UNICEF's Social and Behaviour Change (SBC), Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) teams could also leverage HOPE to support safe and confidential reporting and follow up for allegations of sexual exploitation, abuse or fraud, complementing it by community outreach to raise awareness about where and how to report. UNICEF is using existing grievances redressal mechanism currently existing in UNICEF (PSEA hotline and the PSEA confidential email address). In addition, UNICEF will take the advantage of its existing SMS text messaging- based grievance redress mechanism, Rapid Pro together with in-person spot-checks and independent post distribution monitoring surveys to verify, monitor and address grievances as part of the project's GRM.

Based on the consultations which would be conducted, two-tiered Grievance Redressal Committees would be established. The local level GRC would operate in the field with Implementing partners. There would also be a national level GRC which would operate through UNOPS' mechanisms. There would be a provision for appeals and any aggrieved party would be able to directly approach the national level GRC as well. The formation of the GRCs would be done prior to the commencement of project activities based on consultations.

While the Awaz and other existing mechanisms would be leveraged for this project, in order to address other requirements of ESS10, the system would be augmented for the purposes of this project in accordance with the principles given above and the following steps:

- **Step 1**: **Uptake** – Project stakeholders will be able to provide feedback and report complaints through several channels. The aggrieved party must be able to select the most efficient institution, the most accessible means of filing a grievance, and must be able to circumvent partial stakeholders in the Project, which may be implicated in the complaint. He or she must further be able to bypass some grievance channels that are perceived as potentially not responsive or biased. The means to file a grievance would include a toll-free hotline, SMS, email, filling up grievance forms, verbally, sending a letter, to implementing agencies, via the implementing institutions' websites, helpdesks and collection boxes stipulated for walk-ins at the sites of

project activities. Anonymous grievances can also be raised. All uptake channels should permit for grievances in Dari and Pashto as well.

A help desk will also be set up by the respective implementing partners during the implementation of sub-project activities in an area manned proportionate to the nature of the activity. At the help desk, aggrieved parties can inquire about project activities, or they can file a grievance directly with the person manning the desk. Grievances can be filed in writing or verbally at the Help Desk.

The staff manning help desks, and those operating the toll-free hotline number would be trained by UNICEF GRM focal person (a) the registration of a grievance; (b) the interaction with complainants; (c) appropriate responses to SEA/SH issues; (d) grievances of workers; and (e) Project components and Implementing Partners.

- **Step 2: Sorting and processing** – All grievances received will be transferred to the GRM Focal Point at the respective implementation partner at local or national level and UNICEF. The GRM focal point will categorize the complaint and forward it to the responsible unit. The GRM focal point will also record the grievance in the same format as would be used at UNICEF.

- **Step 3: Acknowledgement and follow-up** – Within three (3) days of receipt of grievance, the GRM focal point will communicate with the aggrieved and provide information on the likely course of action and the anticipated timeframe for resolution of the grievance. The information provided to aggrieved would also include, if required, the likely procedure if the grievance had to be escalated outside the unit and the estimated timeline for each stage.

- **Step 4: Verification, investigation, action and documentation** – This step involves gathering information about the grievance to determine the facts surrounding the issue and verifying the validity of the grievance, and then developing a proposed resolution. It is expected that many or most grievances would be resolved at this stage. All activities taken during this and the other steps will be fully documented, and any resolution logged in the register To verify, monitor and address grievances, the RapidPro and U-Report tools will be used and complemented with in-person spot-checks and surveys by a dedicated TPM firm.

- **Step 5: Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting** – Monitoring refers to the process of tracking grievances and assessing the progression toward resolution. Each implementing agency would develop and maintain a grievance register and record of all steps taken to resolve grievances or otherwise respond to feedback and questions. GRM data would be collated and reported monthly at all levels.

A third-party monitor (TPM) will be engaged by UNICEF on a competitive basis to provide independent operational review of overall project implementation and project results, including the implementation of the SEP and GRM. UNICEF will synthesize all reporting by TPMs and IPs, as well as its own findings, and produce an overall environment and social progress report with a distinct section on stakeholder engagement in line with a template to be provided in the ESMF. Project reports would be quarterly.

- **Step 6: Providing Feedback** – This step involves informing those who have raised complaints, concerns or grievances the resolutions to the issues they have raised. Whenever possible, complainants should be informed of the proposed resolution in person, which gives them the opportunity ask follow-up questions. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she will be informed of further options. The GRM would not prevent access to judicial and administrative remedies. UNICEF will target to close complaints within thirty (30) days of receipt - either resolved, withdrawn or escalated. UNICEF will monitor complaint closure times and trends; identify any outliers; and analyze these to improve systems.

GRM for SEA/SH grievances

SEA/SH related grievances are handled through a survivor-centered approach. All grievance uptake channels can be used to report on SEA/SH issues. No grievance uptake mechanism can reject such grievances, and all personnel directly receiving grievances will be trained in the handling and processing of SEA/SH-related grievances. The Awaaz call center also includes support for safe and confidential reporting for incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by humanitarian workers. Any recipients of the grievance should, with the survivor's informed consent, report the case to one of the Project's formal grievance recipients. A survivor can ask someone else to act as a survivor advocate and report on her/his behalf.

Absolute confidentiality would be maintained for all grievances related to SEA/SH issues. This means that no information shall be disclosed at any time to any party without the informed consent of the person concerned. The survivor's consent would also be sought for undertaking any action on the grievance. Under no circumstances should the survivor be pressured to consent to any conversation, assessment, investigation or other intervention with which they do not feel comfortable. A survivor can withdraw such consent at any time as well. If a survivor does not consent to sharing information, then only non-identifying information can be released or reported on. In the case of children, informed consent is normally requested from a parent or legal guardian and the children.

Data on GBV cases recorded will only include the nature of the complaint (what the complainant says in her/his own words), whether the complainant believes the perpetrator was related to the project and additional demographic data, such as age and gender, will be collected and reported, with informed consent from the survivor. The GRM provides for offering the survivor referral to pre-identified GBV Service Providers in the area. Services can include health, psycho-social, security and protection, legal/justice, and economic reintegration support. This would be offered even if the survivor does not wish to file a formal complaint or if the complaint is not related to the project before closing the case. The SEA/SH Action Plan will list referral services in the different Project areas.

Where SEA/SH grievances have been allegedly committed by a Project worker, the grievance will also be reported to the respective employing agency. The UNICEF SEA/SH Specialist will follow up and determine jointly with the GRM Focal Point of the respective partner the likelihood that the allegation is related to the Project. The SEA/SH Specialist will follow up and ensure that the violation of the Code of Conduct is handled appropriately. The responsibility to implement any disciplinary action lies with the employer of the perpetrator, in accordance with local labor legislation, the employment contract, and the code of conduct. The UNICEF SEA/SH Specialist will report back to the survivor on any steps undertaken and the results.

To verify, monitor and address grievances – the RapidPro[7] and U-Report tools will be used and complemented with in-person spot-checks and surveys by a dedicated TPM firm to support PDM. In order to ensure a continually updated picture of the status of both teacher and student attendance, an ongoing mechanism will be established whereby a statistically relevant sample of schools will be regularly checked to verify reported attendance information gathered through the community and local structures, such as the school shuras.

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[7] RapidPro allows you to easily design, pilot, and scale services that connect directly with a mobile phone user. RapidPro has become UNICEF's common platform for developing and sharing mobile services that can be adapted for different contexts and sectors

7 Monitoring and Reporting

7.1 UNICEF

7.1.1 Involvement of stakeholders in monitoring activities

The project will rely on regular implementing agency reports, Third-Party Monitoring (TPM), Direct Field Monitoring, Media Monitoring, and Remote Monitoring, where applicable, and verification processes of Project implementation. At decentralized Provincial and District levels, will be included in regular follow-up and monitoring to ensure that activities are carried out according to the objectives and indicators defined in the project document.
UNICEF's responsibilities include:

- Monitoring progress against planned activities, and indicating on the delays and challenges of planned implementation;
- Determining and addressing the causes for the delay or non-implementation of activities in the annual plan; and,
- Information sharing and reporting on implementation progress, delays and challenges in implementation.

7.1.1 Reporting back to stakeholder groups

The SEP will be revised and updated as necessary throughout project implementation to ensure that the information presented herein is consistent, up to date, and that the identified methods of engagement remain appropriate and effective in relation to the project context and specific phases of the development. Any major changes to the project related activities or to its schedule will be duly reflected in the SEP. [Regular] summaries and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions will be collated by responsible staff and referred to UNICEF senior management of the project. The regular summaries will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and the nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner.

Information on public engagement activities undertaken by the Project during the year may be conveyed to the stakeholders in two possible ways:

- Reporting on stakeholder engagement will be integrated into the agreed quarterly ESMF reporting.
- A number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be monitored by the project on a regular basis, including the following parameters:
  - Number of public hearings, consultation meetings and other public discussions/forums conducted within a reporting period (e.g. monthly, quarterly, or annually)
  - Frequency of public engagement activities.
  - Number of public grievances received within a reporting period (e.g. quarterly, or annually); and,
  - Number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline.