

**PROJECT INFORMATION DOCUMENT (PID)
APPRAISAL STAGE**

Report No.: PIDA10614

Project Name	Improving Pre-primary and General Secondary Education Project (P144856)
Region	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
Country	Uzbekistan
Sector(s)	General education sector (59%), Pre-primary education (41%)
Theme(s)	Education for all (100%)
Lending Instrument	Investment Project Financing
Project ID	P144856
Borrower(s)	Ministry of Finance
Implementing Agency	Ministry of Public Education
Environmental Category	C-Not Required
Date PID Prepared/Updated	14-Jul-2014
Date PID Approved/Disclosed	23-Oct-2013, 16-Jul-2014
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	20-Aug-2013
Estimated Date of First Grant Approval	28-Jun-2014
Decision	

I. Project Context

Country Context

Uzbekistan is a lower middle income country located in Central Asia with growth that has averaged 8 percent annually since the mid-2000s. Uzbekistan represents about a half of Central Asia's population, with 30.5 million inhabitants as of January 2014, and it is the third largest country by population and fifth largest by landmass in the former Soviet Union. Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, and since that time, authorities have chosen a gradual path to reform, with an emphasis on national independence, centralized government control and self-sufficiency.

Despite high growth rates, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was US\$1,878 in 2013, one of the lowest in the Europe and Central Asia Region, and an estimated 15 percent of the population was unable to meet basic consumption needs in 2013. According to the State Statistic Committee, 49 percent of the population lives in rural areas. The adoption of the government's new "Welfare Improvement Strategy" for 2013-2015 embraces all means-tested public social programs providing allowances and benefits to targeted groups of poor, vulnerable groups and to those lacking services through local neighborhood communities (mahallas). Every year, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) adopts additional social programs targeted to particular vulnerable groups in line with its thematic priorities, for example, "the Year of Harmony Generation" (2010), "the Year

of the Small Business” (2011), “the Year of the Family” (2012), “the Year of Prosperity” (2013), and “the Year of the Healthy Child” (2014). Additional pro-poor actions are taken every year, such as additional increases in wages, pensions, and benefits, access to micro-lending, especially for women, the provision of housing for orphan children and of social assistance to single citizens in need, as well as job creation in public works, construction and services sectors, provision of cattle to the poor, and outsourcing of some apparel production from large enterprises to households in rural areas. The Government of Uzbekistan is also increasing the provision of health care and basic education in rural areas by introducing per capita financing in rural primary health care, schools, and vocational colleges. Investments in education are central to the Government of Uzbekistan’s plans for economic and social development. Given the country’s young population – 28.8 percent was under the age of 15 in 2012 – the Government of Uzbekistan is keen to improve access to basic public services, including education, while also improving quality and increasing equity. This is part of a strategy to promote a smooth and gradual transition to a market-oriented economy across the entire country.

Sectoral and institutional Context

Uzbekistan’s economic strategy emphasizes the maintenance of basic public services, including heavy investments in education. The Law on Education N-464-I proclaims education as a priority of the state and guarantees equal rights to education for all. To achieve high levels of access, the GoU increased public expenditure on education from 5.6 percent of GDP in the mid-1990s to 10 percent of GDP in 2010, dedicating an estimated 35 percent of the total annual budget to education, in 2012. While this level of spending is considerably higher than the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average, there are questions as to the efficiency and labor market relevance of the current education sector at all levels.

It is important to clarify that in Uzbekistan, the term “general secondary education” covers two cycles, which are commonly known as basic education, as follows: grades 1-4 for children aged 7 to 10, and grades 5-9 for students aged 11 to 15. After general secondary education, there are three years of secondary specialized professional education, for students aged 16 to 18, who can choose to attend either an academic lyceum or a vocational college. Both alternatives can lead students to higher education (Bachelor and Master degrees) and subsequent postgraduate courses and doctoral degrees.

Uzbekistan’s education system comprises 15,774 educational institutions including 9,763 general educational secondary schools, with 4.5 million students and 410,614 teachers (for the entire system) . The student-teacher ratio is at 11:1. As of 2012, a total of 539,527 children aged 2 to 7 were enrolled in 4,962 Kindergartens (KGs) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) facilities . These children are served by 51,662 pedagogical staff. General secondary education is free and mandatory. In contrast, pre-primary education is neither free nor mandatory and is characterized by low enrollment.

General secondary education - access to general secondary education is nearly universal. Learning outcomes and the quality of education, however, vary by region. Schools located in rural areas fare worse in most aspects, as compared to urban schools: the availability of teaching and learning materials, status of infrastructure and student outcomes all tend to be lower in more remote areas. Only 37 percent of remote rural schools have a sufficient number of teaching materials as compared with 64 percent in urban areas.

The following factors hinder learning improvement in general secondary education: insufficient and outdated equipment and learning resources; lack of teachers' professional competence to promote the active engagement of students in their own learning; lack of quality data for monitoring and evaluation; mobilization of sector employees (and, in the past, students) to pick cotton at the start of the academic year; and limited community and stakeholder participation to encourage accountability.

The Basic Education Project funded by the World Bank has financed activities to strengthen the students' assessment system of Uzbekistan. Two rounds of standardized students' assessments in Mathematics and native language for grade 4 were conducted. However, the results of these assessments have not been made available to the general public yet, which reflect the low level of accountability of the system. The Government of Uzbekistan does not participate in any international student assessment, but is considering this initiative. These weaknesses make planning and decision-making more difficult in Uzbekistan.

In 2012, Uzbekistan took a substantial step forward in the planning of its education sector, by preparing the Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2013-2017. This exercise is part of the process of becoming a member of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). In January 2012, the GPE released its indicative allocations for Program Implementation Grants for the period of 2012-2014. Indicatively, Uzbekistan has been allocated US\$49.9 million. The GoU has expressed its interest in this grant and its wish to submit its application for the second round of 2013. The World Bank has been appointed by the GoU and partners as Supervising Entity.

The ESP derives from the Welfare Improvement Strategy (WIS) of 2013-15, which is the GoU's second national poverty reduction strategy and is aimed at supporting sustainable growth, employment, health and education. The ESP identifies eight specific strategic areas, which have relevance for all subsectors of the education system. The outcome for preschool education is children's health and personalities developed in preparation for learning in school. For general secondary education, the ESP shows the outcome of learners' general knowledge, independent thinking and organizational skills developed in preparation for successful progression in the education system.

It is important to mention that the learning environment for children in general secondary education is improving, but it is still inadequate to increase their ability to think creatively and independently. The focus on improving independent thinking skills reflects the intention of the GoU to implement individual-centered approach in education.

While the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the education process has increased, there is scope for further expansion. The Center for Development of Multimedia Educational Programs (under the Ministry of Public Education - MoPE) has developed and introduced 119 e-materials, 40 virtual labs, 113 multimedia resources and 1,074 information and resource centers.

Concerning teachers training, as per existing regulation in Uzbekistan, every three years each teacher should take at least 144 hours of professional development course in a regional in-service education and training (INSET) institution. In addition, the INSET system offers short-term courses in different areas, depending on the schools' demand. The training courses are reported to take into

account the results of the student learning monitoring conducted by MoPE on a regular basis, as well as the INSET training programs assessment conducted by the State Testing Center. The average annual capacity of all INSET institutions is to train around 110,000 educational workers, including 4,000 educational staff from pre-primary schools. Between the formal courses, in their schools, teachers should be supported by the heads of the methodological units and more experienced teachers (ustozes), which, in turn, are supported by rayon methodologists.

In the medium to long term, the GoU intends to revise its INSET system and programs to make it more flexible in meeting the training needs of the educational personnel, including teachers, methodologists and heads of the education institutions. Short-term planned activities to improve INSET include revision of the state requirements, upgrading the programs based on the increasing needs and modern international trends and best practices in the teaching area, improving planning of the courses and capacity building of the institutional staff.

Pre-primary Education - Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) are increasingly priority areas for the GoU. While Uzbekistan has nearly universal coverage of essential health and nutrition interventions for young children, the national enrollment rate in ECCE for children aged 3 to 6 is low by international standards, at 23.3 percent nationally in 2012. If learning quality and outcomes are to be improved across the education system, access to high quality pre-primary school will need to increase to ensure children arrive to general educational secondary schools ready to learn and succeed.

Of those who attend ECCE, the vast majority of children are enrolled in full-day KGs and childcare facilities. Traditionally, these facilities have provided services with more of an emphasis on childcare, than the promotion of child development and early learning opportunities. In recent years though, the GoU has embarked on several reforms within the pre-primary sub-sector, including a national program for pre-school education known as Bolajon (which means “the child”). Starting in 2011-2012, Bolajon is mandatory and must be used in all pre-school institutions as the curriculum to teach children and train teachers. In addition, Uzbekistan is one of 50 countries worldwide that has participated in Going Global – Early Learning & Development Standards (ELDS). ELDS provide a systematic and integrated approach to ECD and can be used as the basis for what children are taught (curriculum), how learning is planned and assessed (assessments), and how teachers are taught and deemed competent to teach young children (teacher training curricula and teacher certification standards).

Demand for available ECCE services is low in Uzbekistan. As of 2010, for every 100 pre-school seats available, just 78 children are enrolled, indicating that the current number of available seats in pre-schools exceeds enrollment levels by 22 percent – and the trend has been consistent for the last decade. This means that there are extra classrooms in many existing pre-primary schools, especially in rural areas. Although children from rich urban households in certain regions are more likely to access ECCE than those from rural ones in other regions, high levels of parental support for early learning (measured by parenting activities in the home) exist across these groups. This contrast indicates that low enrollment is not related to a lack of parental support for early learning but rather to the difficulties involved in accessing available ECCE options.

In 2006, according to Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) data, only 5 percent of children from the Uzbekistan’s less advantaged families (lowest income quintile) were enrolled in pre-schools, compared to 46 percent of children from the country’s wealthiest families (highest income

quintile), indicating that greater efforts are needed to promote access for children from the lower income families. Many pre-schools are known to charge “fees” per child that are equal to 100 percent of the minimum wage, which means that, for many poor families, fees are a major constraint preventing them from enrolling children in pre-school. Existing regulations permit to exempt from fees up to 15 percent of students enrolled in each pre-school, but given that 19.5 percent of the population was poor (unable to meet basic consumption needs in 2010), this limit is not adequate to ensure access for children from the poorest families. The existing mechanism to identify households in need (for the fee exemption) has not been as effective as it was in the past. ECCE enrollment could be expanded more equitably and have a greater impact if funds allocated to this initiative were distributed progressively, by targeting low-enrollment regions and low income households.

The GoU commits significant resources to children’s early learning, but the current model for provision of pre-primary education may lead to reduced enrollments, due to high costs and limited flexibility in the type of ECCE available. In 2011, 10.2 percent of the recurrent education budget was dedicated to expenditure at the pre-primary level. Uzbekistan spends, as a share of GDP, more than the OECD average and other comparator countries at similar levels of development, but has less than half the enrollment rates in ECCE. Uzbekistan’s current model of full-time ECCE delivery may be prohibitively expensive, making it difficult to expand and sustain. An expansion in coverage of ECCE will involve taking measures to reduce delivery costs by exploring alternative forms of service delivery. In 2012, children enrolled in partial-day or home or community-based centers accounted for just 3.1 percent of all KG enrollment, with half-day school readiness programs comprising 90 percent of enrollment in alternative forms of delivery in 2010. The half-day programs are heavily concentrated in three regions, so Uzbekistan’s experiences with half-day programs in these limited areas could inform the design of a similar program on a national scale.

Comprehensive mechanisms to promote the quality of ECCE in Uzbekistan exist, but these mechanisms are not adequate to ensure quality or convince parents of the benefits of enrolling their children in ECCE. The most highly qualified teachers are more likely to be employed in urban areas and specific regions. Despite clearly established infrastructure standards for ECCE facilities, just 34 percent of facilities nationwide are rated as “fully equipped” and 39 percent of facilities are in need of repair. Both the physical status of facilities and teachers’ qualifications can be visible signals of quality to parents, which can in turn affect perceptions of the quality of ECCE. High positive correlations exist between enrollment rates and well-maintained physical facilities and schools with more highly trained teachers.

The ESP is aligned with this context and with the proposed project activities in ECCE. The ESP calls for development of “children’s health and personalities developed in preparation for learning in school” with priorities for the development and support of ECD services, expansion of the half-day model, and support to parents for early learning in the home.

Child and forced labor - The World Bank recognizes the concern over the use of child and forced labor in cotton production and the impact this can have on the education sector. The GoU is a signatory of several International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions(*) related to child and forced labor, but the enforcement of these conventions, as well as of existing national laws reflecting international agreements, has continued to be a challenge, specifically during the cotton harvest. Forced child labor in cotton harvesting used to be widespread, but has declined in recent years. A joint ILO-GoU mission took place during the cotton harvesting season in September-

October 2013 to monitor the use of forced child labor in cotton harvesting. The ILO's official public statement at the completion of their monitoring activities is as follows: "In general terms, the monitoring observed widespread awareness of national laws and instructions not to allow the use of children under 18 years of age in the cotton harvest. Moreover, it would appear from the monitoring that there was no systematic recourse to forced child labor." However, forced child labor has been reportedly substituted with forced adult labor organized by local authorities and mobilized from both public institutions, such as educational facilities from which teachers and other staff members have been recruited, and the private sector.

Gender - in Uzbekistan, gender differences in enrollment at all levels of the education system are small. Enrollments by gender are almost equal at the levels affected by the proposed project: 54 percent of pre-school children are female as of 2010, and 48 percent of all general educational secondary school students are female, according to official data from 2012. The gender parity index for enrollment rates (ratio of enrollment rate for females to enrollment rate for males) in ECCE was 100 percent, in 2011, and gender parity indexes for grades 1 to 4 and grades 5 to 9 are 97 percent and 98 percent, respectively, according to World Bank EdStats data. Graduation rates at the tertiary level are also similar for men and women, with a graduation rate of 10 percent for women and 13 percent for men, in 2011, according to World Bank EdStats data. Girls and boys have similar access to education at the pre-primary and general secondary education levels, but according to 2011 GIZ Labor Survey data, 26 percent of women are employed in Uzbekistan compared to an OECD average of 57 percent for women and an average of 67 percent for men in Uzbekistan. Women are under-represented in agriculture, construction, industry, and services.

ECCE activities have been shown to close gaps in achievement for disadvantaged groups, so over the long run, early learning opportunities provided to girls (as well as boys) may help them to get the right start they need to eventually pursue employment. In the short run, the implementation of flexible models and an expansion of ECCE are likely to boost women's employment as more female parents will have time to enter the labor force if they choose. In addition, older female siblings may have more time to devote to their education.

(*) Convention no. 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, Convention no. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labor, Convention no. 29 on Forced Labor, and Convention 105 on Abolition of Forced Labor. In addition, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), also subscribed by the government, prohibits forced labor (article 8).

II. Proposed Development Objectives

The Project Development Objectives (PDO) are to increase access of children aged 3-6 to quality early childhood care and education in rural pre-primary institutions and to improve conditions for better learning outcomes of students of rural general educational secondary schools.

III. Project Description

Component Name

Component 1 - Improving Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Opportunities.

Comments (optional)

Component Name

Component 2 - Improving Conditions for Better Learning Outcomes in General Educational
Comments (optional)

Component Name

Component 3 - Strengthening the Capacity to Monitor the Education System

Comments (optional)

IV. Financing (in USD Million)

Total Project Cost:	49.90	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
For Loans/Credits/Others			Amount
Borrower			0.00
Education for All Supervising Entity			49.90
Total			49.90

V. Implementation

The proposed Project would be aligned to the Education Sector Plan for the Republic of Uzbekistan 2013-2017. The Project is to be implemented over a period of three years, between 2014 and 2017, and would be financed by a GPE grant of USD 49.9 million plus USD 4.2 million from the Government of Uzbekistan, in the form of an investment financing. The GoU contribution would finance the distribution of goods (to be purchased using GPE grant funds) from Tashkent city to schools. The proposed Project is organized around three components, as described below, which relate to the following key dimensions of investments: access to quality early childhood education opportunities and learning conditions for students of general secondary education.

Component 1 - Improving Access to Quality Early Childhood Education Opportunities. The objective of this component is to improve access to early learning opportunities and quality pre-primary education in rural areas of Uzbekistan, by supporting the development and implementation of more flexible and efficient models of service provision. This component would finance technical assistance to support the development of flexible forms of ECCE service provision, which include a half-day year-round school readiness program for children aged 5 to 6, and early literacy promotion activities targeting families with children aged 3 to 6. To promote participation in the half-day model and early literacy activities, this component would finance the development and implementation of communication campaigns, which would focus on the critical role of parents, as children's first teachers, in providing stimulating early childhood environments and promoting learning in the home. These campaigns would also help ensure that project beneficiaries are fully aware of the legislation on child and forced labor in Uzbekistan and the associated third party monitoring and feedback mechanism, which will be implemented to help address child and forced labor issues in connection with the project activities or within the project areas. This component would also finance studies to assess the implementation and quality of flexible models supported by the Project. These studies should draw conclusions to the MoPE on the effectiveness of flexible ECCE provision, which is crucial for the purposes of sustainability of the Project.

Component 2 - Improving Conditions for Better Learning Outcomes in General Educational Secondary Schools. The objective of this component is to improve conditions for better learning outcomes in rural general educational secondary schools, by improving the training system for teachers and school managers and increasing the availability of adequate equipment and teaching and learning material. This component would support the professional development of education personnel through improvements of training conditions at all 16 in-service training and retraining institutions, upgrade of training modules, revision of the regulatory framework of the promotion mechanism, and development of information systems in support to the training system. Training module on the legislation on child and forced labor in Uzbekistan and the associated third party monitoring and feedback mechanism will be developed. This component will finance the implementation of minimum school standards in rural general educational secondary schools. The concept of minimum school standards in Uzbekistan includes requirements for teaching and learning materials, ICT equipment, furniture, and school infrastructure. This component would support the implementation of minimum school standards in terms of ICT equipment for computer labs and teaching and learning materials.

Component 3 - Strengthening the Capacity to Monitor the Education System. Project funds would be used to build capacity on education quality monitoring as well as to improve existing management information systems. This component would finance another round of standardized students' assessments in Mathematics and native language for grade 4. Students of grade 9 would also participate in the third round of the national standardized assessment. These assessments would enable decision makers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the education system, based on results of sample-based national standardized tests. Technical assistance would be provided by the proposed Project to strengthen the existing capacity to develop and conduct these tests as well as to analyze and disseminate their results. Thus, the proposed Project would contribute in increase the level of accountability observed in the education system. Additionally, this component would finance the purchase of ICT equipment for all 14 province education departments, 194 district education departments and MoPE. Project funds would finance the training of 832 users of existing or improved management information systems. This component would support day-to-day project management and implementation activities, such as: technical assistance to strengthen MoPE's capacity to implement the proposed Project; project audits; and operational and staffing costs of the Project Management Team.

Implementation - the Ministry of Public Education would be the project implementing agency. Project implementation would rely primarily on the existing structure of MoPE, as the proposed activities to be financed by the Project are part of the everyday work of its staff. Thus, the proposed Project would not require the establishment of a parallel structure or a full scale Project Implementation Unit. Instead, a small team of local consultants (a Project Management Team - PMT) would be supported using project funds to assist MoPE with day-to-day project management, and make sure it is implemented in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Grant Agreement and the Project Operations Manual.

The PMT would manage the project activities under strategic guidance of the Deputy Minister of Public Education and in line with the implementation lead given by the department heads. A small team of five local consultants would be hired using project funds. The PMT would include a Project Coordinator, a Procurement Specialist, a Financial Management Specialist, a translator and a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. The Project Component 3 would finance the operational costs of the PMT and project audits.

Under implementation of the proposed Project, the World Bank, as the Supervising Entity, would receive grant funds and would transfer these funds to the Government of Uzbekistan to implement activities required to meet the goals and objectives of its Education Sector Plan. The World Bank would manage the funds and would supervise the project implementation.

VI. Safeguard Policies (including public consultation)

Safeguard Policies Triggered by the Project	Yes	No
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01		x
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04		x
Forests OP/BP 4.36		x
Pest Management OP 4.09		x
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11		x
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10		x
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12		x
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37		x
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50		x
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60		x

Comments (optional)

VII. Contact point

World Bank

Contact: Janssen Edelweiss Nunes T
 Title: Senior Education Specialist
 Tel: 473-0365
 Email: jteixeira@worldbank.org

Borrower/Client/Recipient

Name: Ministry of Finance
 Contact: Mr Djamshid Kuchkarov
 Title: Deputy Minister of Finance
 Tel: (998 71) 239-4646
 Email: JKuchkarov@mf.uz

Implementing Agencies

Name: Ministry of Public Education
 Contact: Mr Ulug'bek I. Inoyatov
 Title: Minister of Public Education
 Tel: (998-71) 239-1310
 Email: info@uzedu.uz

VIII. For more information contact:

The InfoShop
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 458-4500
Fax: (202) 522-1500
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/infoshop>