System Transformation Grant Annual Progress Report Template for Projects

Status: Accepted

Country	Name of project this grant is contributing to	Grant ID	Project ID (if applicable)
Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan-MTL November 2023	GPE0014920	UZB1041

Grant Agent	Grant Type	Approval Date	Grant Effectiveness / Start Date
Islamic Development Bank	MLT	10/18/2023	03/07/2025

Expected Closing Date	Grant Amount	Timeframe Examined in this report		Date of Report Submission
		From Date	To Date	
06/30/2028	40,000,000 (USD)	03/06/2025	03/06/2026	06/19/2026

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall Progress this Reporting Period 1
Satisfactory (S)

Previous Rating
NA

Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating

This reporting period covered the first year of project implementation and focused on establishing the foundations required for successful delivery of project interventions and achievement of long-term reform objectives. Despite delays in project effectiveness, the inception and preparation period was significantly shorter than for comparable projects, enabling a rapid start to implementation. Strong collaboration between MOPSE, IsDB, UNICEF, UNESCO, and other stakeholders allowed the project to advance quickly, resulting in achievement of the majority of Year 1 targets and acceleration of several Year 2 activities. The following represent the key achievements of the reporting period.

Established the foundations for effective project implementation and sector reform delivery. The project successfully put in place the institutional, fiduciary, procurement, and implementation arrangements required to support large-scale education reform. Strong project management structures, effective coordination mechanisms, and timely engagement of implementing partners created the conditions necessary for efficient implementation and positioned the project for accelerated delivery in subsequent years.

Advanced the national transition toward competency-based education. The project supported MOPSE in advancing one of the most significant education reforms currently underway in Uzbekistan by strengthening the foundations for competency-based education. Through support to curriculum reform processes, institutional capacity development, and quality assurance mechanisms, the project contributed to establishing a coherent framework for improving learning outcomes and aligning the education system with international standards and future workforce needs.

Established a strategic framework for modernizing learning assessment. The project supported the development of a national vision for learning assessment reform, creating the policy foundations for a more coherent, competency-based, and evidence-driven assessment system. The reform agenda strengthens alignment between curriculum, teaching, and assessment while supporting improved use of learning data for decision-making and system improvement.

Created a system-wide foundation for inclusive education reform. The project supported development of a comprehensive framework for inclusive education that promotes a whole-system approach across policy, school, classroom, and learner levels. This work established a common vision, strengthened national capacity, and laid the groundwork for scaling inclusive practices across the education system to

ensure that all children can access and benefit from quality education.
Accelerated reforms to improve the quality of early childhood education. Building on Uzbekistan's achievements in expanding access to preschool education and ongoing IsDB-funded project on preschool education also implemented by UNICEF, the project contributed to strengthening the quality of early learning through reforms to learning standards, curriculum, teacher professional development, and inclusive practices. The project also promoted greater coherence between preschool and school education reforms, supporting a more integrated approach to learning and development throughout the education continuum.
Strengthened national capacity and institutional ownership of education reforms. Across all components, the project invested in strengthening the capacity of national institutions and technical experts to lead, implement, and sustain reforms. Through collaborative development processes, technical assistance, and cross-sector coordination, the project contributed to stronger institutional ownership and created foundations for long-term sustainability of reform efforts beyond the project lifecycle.
While overall implementation progress during the first year has been satisfactory, several challenges have affected the pace of implementation under specific components and may continue to influence achievement of planned outputs if not closely monitored and addressed.

Rapid pace of sector reforms and evolving policy directions. Uzbekistan is currently undertaking an ambitious education reform agenda, with multiple curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and early childhood education reforms progressing simultaneously and led by various implementing partners. While this has created strong momentum for change, it has also resulted in evolving priorities and policy decisions that occasionally affect the relevance, scope, and sequencing of project interventions. In particular, reforms in teacher education initiated outside the project have created uncertainty regarding the continued relevance of some originally planned outputs and indicators, requiring further clarification and adjustment of implementation plans.

Alignment and sequencing challenges across interdependent reform components. Several project interventions are closely interconnected, particularly across curriculum reform, teacher education, professional development, assessment, and school improvement. As implementation responsibilities for these areas are shared between UNICEF and UNESCO, maintaining alignment across reform processes requires continuous coordination and information sharing. During the reporting period, coordination efforts were primarily focused on delivery of individual outputs, which limited opportunities for more systematic joint planning and review of interdependencies across sub-components. While this did not significantly affect overall project implementation, strengthened coordination and regular joint technical reviews would further enhance coherence, maximize synergies, and ensure that reforms across different areas remain fully aligned and mutually reinforcing. Limited national experience in emerging reform areas, particularly in relation to universal design for learning (UDL) and competency-based education also required increase commitments in capacity building activities and co-creation approach.

Delays in implementation of selected technical assistance activities. The four-month delay in finalizing the Cooperation Agreement with UNESCO affected the implementation timelines for several outputs under the teacher education component. In the meantime, the government continued implementing its education sector reforms during the period in which the loan agreement was under negotiation (2023–2025), resulting in some specific activities being assigned to other partners. This, in turn, increased the need for extensive discussions with the government regarding certain project details.
These factors have affected the achievement of Year 1 indicators and, if not addressed, may also have implications for the achievement of Year 2 indicators. UNESCO is requested to submit a detailed work plan outlining the measures it will take to achieve the Year 1 and Year 2 indicators by the end of Year 2.

Procurement-related risks affecting infrastructure implementation. Although substantial progress has been achieved in preparation for school construction, delays in recruitment of the construction supervision consultant highlighted potential procurement and implementation risks associated with large-scale infrastructure investments. Interim mitigation measures have been adopted and civil works are expected to commence as planned; however, continued monitoring of procurement processes and contract management will remain important to avoid future implementation delays.

Project Implementation Progress, by Component / Objective

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2]	Previous Rating
Improving Access to Student Friendly Environment	Satisfactory (S)	

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

Component 1: Improving Access to Student Friendly Environment

Output 1.1. Schools are constructed and operationalized

During the reporting period, substantial preparatory progress was made toward the operationalization of school construction activities under the project through the completion of advanced technical and procurement activities. Following the finalization and approval of the feasibility study carried out before the effectiveness of the project, the number of schools to be constructed increased from 53 to 58. A local consultancy company was successfully recruited to develop detailed engineering designs (DEDs) for each school. In the process of refining standard school designs, MoPSE worked closely with UNICEF and other development partners to integrate international best practices related to accessibility, climate resilience, and modern learning environments. This resulted in substantial upgrade of the standard designs of schools traditionally built in Uzbekistan and the new project supported schools are expected to serve as models of new school infrastructure aligned with international best practice.

During the reporting period, detailed engineering designs for the first 14 schools were completed and successfully approved through state expertise review, providing the technical basis for the next phase of civil works procurement and construction. In parallel, MoPSE and IsDB advanced preparations for civil works procurement through the proposed use of the national electronic procurement platform Shaffof Qurilish. While the platform had previously been reviewed and approved for use in other IsDB-financed projects, IsDB conducted an additional project-specific review to confirm that the platform meets the procurement and implementation requirements of this project. The use of the platform is expected to improve procurement efficiency and shorten contracting timelines once final approvals are in place.

Major delays are only experienced in the recruitment of the Construction Supervision Consultant. Although the procurement process advanced, contract negotiations with the selected firm were not successfully concluded. To prevent the impact of this delay on the start of civil works and advancement of construction activities, MoPSE proposed interim arrangements for supervision and monitoring of construction activities through immediate recruitment of individual field engineers to supervise the civil works for 14 schools while a longer-term supervision solution is finalized. Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) has endorsed the solution. Therefore, no delays are expected in the start of civil work planned for this year.

There is no set indicator under this output for Year 1, however, all planned activities are on track.

Component / Objective	**Level of Progress this Reporting Period** [2]	**Previous Rating**
Improving Quality and Efficiency of General Education Services	Satisfactory (S)	

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

Sub-component 2.1. Curriculum and TLM reform

Output 2.1.1.1. National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is revised to be fully CBE aligned. During the reporting period, significant progress was made under Sub-component 2.1 to establish the legislative, technical, and institutional foundations for Competency-Based Education (CBE) reform and revision of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). Building on Cabinet Resolution No. 157 (March 2024), strategic consultations with MoPSE, REC, and UNICEF in October 2025 endorsed benchmarking upper-secondary attainment against A-Level standards, providing a clear direction for curriculum and assessment reform.

A functional review and capacity needs assessment identified institutional and human resource gaps, informing reform decisions and targeted technical assistance. Capacity development was central to the reform process, with inception workshops engaging 147 experts and over 250 capacity-building interventions delivered to 121 national specialists from MoPSE, academia, and schools, strengthening national capacity to lead and sustain curriculum reform.

To strengthen curriculum quality, the project established a systematic Quality Assurance mechanism and Curriculum Quality Assurance Checklist, enabling consistent review across subjects and strengthening rigor in spiral curriculum design, scaffolding, inclusive education, UDL, formative assessment, gender-transformative approaches, SEL, life skills, green competencies, and health education.

Main implementation challenges stemmed from MOPSE’s ambition to advance the NCF through multiple concurrent activities, requiring intensive technical support, coordination, and monitoring to meet timelines without compromising quality. UNICEF’s experience and rapid mobilization of technical assistance were critical in addressing these challenges and coordinating stakeholders.

Both Year 1 indicators were achieved: (i) completion of the functional review of the curriculum; and (ii) drafting of criteria for revision of the NCF.

Output 2.1.1.2. Roadmap with a digitizing approach for NCF implementation. Significant preparatory progress was made toward developing the roadmap for implementation of the revised National Curriculum Framework. Technical work focused on sequencing, mapping cross-cutting competencies and core values, and strengthening readiness for future rollout, informed by the functional review and capacity needs assessment. However, due to the complexity of the competency-based curriculum reform and the need to align the roadmap with related policy, curriculum, assessment, and teacher development documents, finalization has been deferred until key reform documents are available in draft form. The target under this output is therefore deferred, but as work is already well advanced, no delays are expected for Year 2 interventions.
Output 2.2.1.1. Revised model of teacher preparation programs. UNESCO initiated activities through engagement with the Uzbekistan National Pedagogical University and a desk review of teacher education reform documents, including regulatory frameworks, standards, qualification requirements. At the same time, national teacher preparation reforms were advancing outside the project, supported by different institutions and partners. It remains unclear whether these reforms follow a common framework and how project-supported interventions should align. Further clarification is therefore needed on the relevance of the Year 1 indicator for developing a teacher programme revision framework in the light of the undertaken reforms.
Continued coordination among MOPSE, UNESCO, UNICEF, and partner institutions is needed to clarify the project's comparative advantage and confirm expected outputs. The indicator under this output remains unachieved.

Output 2.2.1.2. Revised pre-service programmes and courses. Due to rapid sector reforms and project approval delays, major teacher education programme revisions, including for Uzbek Language and Literature and Mathematics, were completed or initiated outside the project. In response, MOPSE proposed that UNESCO support revision of the pre-service programme for Teachers of Upbringing and Psychology. The project began assessing the Teachers of Upbringing programme with Nizami University, reviewing programme structure, practicum integration, coherence with professional standards, coursework, assessment approaches, and integration of competency-based education principles.
The proposed shift to the Psychology programme requires further clarification, as some planned Year 2 disciplines and methodology courses may need adaptation or may no longer be relevant. IsDB recommended stronger coordination among MOPSE, UNICEF, and UNESCO to align project sub-components and clarify the revised scope, implementation plan, and implications for indicators under Outputs 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.

The target is partially achieved through review of one teacher preparation programme, but programme revision activities require further clarification of scope and direction.

Output 2.2.1.3. CBE-aligned pedagogical practicum for pre-service training. Work under this output began through stakeholder consultations and focus group discussions with students and graduates to identify strengths, gaps, and challenges in the existing practicum model. Findings will inform refinement of the practicum model and strengthen preparation of future teachers.
Due to the evolving reform context, additional time was needed to define the practicum model's scope and UNESCO expects to deliver the draft by end-June. MOPSE has been requested to provide updated timelines and clarify the implementation approach for subsequent activities.

Output 2.2.2.1. Onlinedu.uz LMS aligned to CPL system. The project assessed the Avloni Institute's LMS ecosystem, including onlinedu.uz, to determine its readiness to support the emerging CPD model and competency-based teacher learning. The review found that the LMS supports online courses, diagnostics, and basic monitoring, but remains fragmented and course-centred, limiting its use for continuous, competency-based professional learning. Key gaps include the absence of teacher e-portfolios, limited mentoring and CPD functions, insufficient reflective practice tools, and the need to improve accessibility, interoperability, personalization, and mobile responsiveness. Risks related to AI-generated content quality, fragmented data systems, and LMS model choices were also identified.
A shared vision was established to transform the LMS into a teacher-centred CPD hub supporting competency progression, mentoring, reflective practice, and data-driven monitoring. Preparatory work began for the technical IT assessment and future LMS enhancement.
Two Year 1 targets were planned: functional review of national MOOCs and an outcome-based framework for LMS-hosted MOOC descriptions. One target has been achieved, while the second is pending finalization.

Output 2.2.2.2. Mentorship system to support continuous professional learning of education professionals. Building on the Vision 2030 project's CPD system for general secondary teachers, the project initiated

development of two mentorship models. The school leaders' model focuses on organizational change, strategic financial planning, student-centred learning, safeguarding, and positive school culture. The teachers' model focuses on pedagogy and andragogy competencies. Both models are expected to be finalized in July 2026.
The target is delayed, with finalization of the models expected by July 2026.

Output 2.2.2.3. Modular in-service programs for teachers of Uzbek and another subject in blended format. This output supports the transition from separate in-service courses to an ongoing school-based learning model through programmes for teachers of two subjects, deputy principals, and principals.
Implementation was reported as delayed due to the ongoing LMS upgrade. However, development of the modular programme model, methodology, and piloting tools was not dependent on the LMS upgrade and could proceed in parallel. IsDB recommended that MOPSE advance these activities to avoid further delays and ensure readiness for blended content development and piloting once the LMS is operational.
The target under this output is delayed.
Output 2.3.1.1. Endorsed Policy Framework for Assessment reform is available. Under this output, MOPSE, with technical support from UNICEF, advanced the national learning assessment reform agenda in alignment with broader curriculum reforms. A key achievement was the development of the National Learning Assessment Concept and its implementation roadmap to 2030, introducing reforms such as competency-based assessment, clearer separation between classroom assessment and external examinations, automatic grade progression, revised end-of-school examinations aligned with international standards, and sample-based National Assessments in Grades 5 and 8. The Concept has been submitted for government endorsement.
The reform was informed by a situation analysis of the national learning assessment system and guided by a National Working Group of 22 experts representing key education and assessment institutions. Through workshops, technical consultations, and regular online sessions, the process strengthened national capacity, ownership, and consensus on curriculum-assessment alignment and integration of school-leaving and university entrance assessments.
Main challenges related to limited national experience with competency-based assessment and fragmented institutional responsibilities across different assessment functions. UNICEF supported targeted technical assistance and capacity-building activities to strengthen understanding of competency-based assessment, build consensus on reform priorities, and improve coordination among institutions.
Although no Year 1 targets were planned, progress was made toward Year 2 interventions on formative and summative assessment guidance. The Year 2 target related to the National Learning Assessment Framework was partially achieved through development of the National Learning Assessment Concept.
Output 2.3.2.1 Revised school self-evaluation and external quality review framework and guidelines. Preparatory work on school quality assurance reform was undertaken to support revision of school self-evaluation and external quality review frameworks. Coordination meetings with MOPSE and UNICEF helped define the scope, sequencing, and implementation approach, and Terms of Reference were prepared for international technical assistance.
Progress was delayed by structural changes within MOPSE, including the reorganization of departments responsible for quality assurance and accreditation. As a result, substantive technical work was postponed until the new Department for School and Preschool Accreditation was established in December 2025 and its leadership appointed.
Following the department's establishment, consultations commenced and international consultants were recruited. While the Year 1 target was not achieved, the necessary institutional and technical foundations are now in place, and no significant delays are anticipated for Years 2 and 3 activities.
Output 2.3.2.3. School teachers' and principals' performance appraisal system. Progress under this output was affected by the same factors described above. As the teachers' and principals' performance appraisal system is closely linked to the broader school quality assurance reform agenda, substantive work could only begin after the new Department for School and Preschool Accreditation became operational. With the department established and technical expertise mobilized, implementation is expected to proceed in parallel with Output 2.3.2.1.
Output 2.4.1.1. Inclusive Education Conceptual and Programmatic Frameworks. Under this output, MOPSE, in collaboration with the National Agency for Social Protection (NASP) and with UNICEF technical support, advanced inclusive education reform through the development and validation of the Inclusive Education Strategy and accompanying implementation action plan. Originally envisaged as a conceptual framework, the document was expanded into a comprehensive strategy following extensive consultations across the education, social protection, health, and civil society sectors. The Strategy establishes a shared national vision for inclusive education and provides a framework for implementation at system, school, classroom, and learner levels, including standards, operational procedures, tools, and implementation mechanisms. The Strategy has been submitted for review and endorsement, with launch planned at the Local Education Group meeting in fall 2026.
In parallel, the Inclusive Education Competency Framework for Teachers and the Competency Framework for Special Educators were developed, translated into Uzbek, and submitted for national review, providing a foundation for inclusive teaching practices and professional standards.
Implementation challenges related to the relative novelty of inclusive education and whole-school approaches in Uzbekistan, the need for shared understanding across institutions, and coordination across

multiple sectors and beneficiary groups. Additional consultations and joint planning with MOPSE, NASP, and experts helped build consensus on methodologies, indicators, and tools. The indicator under this output is substantially achieved, pending formal endorsement and launch of the Strategy and related frameworks.

Output 2.4.2.2 Functional model schools for inclusive education. Although planned for Year 2, this output is reported in Year 1 due to substantial progress achieved. With UNICEF support, MOPSE conducted field visits and consultations in preselected schools to assess inclusive practices and validate school selection. Based on agreed criteria, 10 Inclusive Model Schools representing 10 regions were selected, considering geographic coverage, inclusion of learners with disabilities and vulnerable groups, functioning School Inclusion Teams, and leadership commitment.
The schools will serve as resource centres for piloting inclusive education approaches, strengthening teacher and special educator competencies, and generating models for national scale-up, with an expected reach of at least 12,000 students, including 120 children with disabilities. To support implementation, international and national consultants and five Regional Mentors were engaged, and mentor training on inclusive teaching strategies and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was conducted in December 2025.
In parallel, development of a training package for model schools was initiated. The first module on Participation-Based Classroom Screening and Instructional Problem-Solving was completed, while additional modules on differentiated instruction, adaptive curriculum, assistive technologies, formative assessment, and classroom management remain under development

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Component / Objective	**Level of Progress this Reporting Period** [2]	**Previous Rating**
Improving Quality of Preschool Education and Care	Satisfactory (S)	

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

Component 3. Improving Quality of Preschool Education and Care

Component 3 interventions were designed to complement ongoing reforms and initiatives led by MOPSE with support from various development partners. Following Uzbekistan's significant progress in expanding access to early childhood education services in recent years, improving the quality of service delivery has become a critical priority to ensure that these investments translate into better learning and development outcomes for children. In this context, the SmartED project has been implemented in close complementarity with the ongoing IsDB-funded Early Childhood Education project valued at US$30 million. UNICEF serves as the implementing partner for the soft components of both projects, creating strong synergies and enabling alignment of technical assistance, capacity-building activities, and system-strengthening interventions. This complementarity has allowed selected interventions to be scaled up, accelerated, and strengthened through the use of shared expertise, resources, and implementation platforms. As a result, the projects have mutually reinforced one another, contributing to a more coherent, efficient, and sustainable reform agenda for the early childhood education sector.
Alignment between Components 2 and 3 was also ensured at the design stage to promote a whole-system approach to education reform across both preschool and school education. The project was designed to support coherent approaches to teacher professional development, school improvement, and inclusive education across the education continuum, rather than addressing these areas in isolation. This is reflected in the development of mentoring models for both preschool and school teachers, the introduction of blended learning approaches for continuous professional development, strengthening of school evaluation and quality assurance systems, and promotion of inclusive education practices. By supporting similar reform directions across different levels of education, the project aims to strengthen system coherence, facilitate the transfer of effective practices, and create more consistent learning and teaching experiences for children throughout their educational journey.
Output 3.1.1.1. ELDS revised and field validated. MOPSE, with technical support from UNICEF, advanced the revision of the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and the "Ilk Qadam" early childhood education curriculum to strengthen alignment with child-centred and competency-based approaches. The ELDS for children aged 3–7 were comprehensively revised across five developmental areas, resulting in 404 indicators embedded within the curriculum as Learning and Development Requirements organized progressively across four age groups. The revised framework strengthened core competencies by introducing critical thinking alongside creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, while also reinforcing inclusivity, formative assessment, family and community engagement, and child-led learning approaches. To ensure continuity with primary education, collaborative working sessions involving preschool and primary education specialists successfully aligned 121 indicators related to the skills and competencies of children transitioning to Grade 1, supporting a smoother transition to primary education within the framework of the new curriculum reforms.
Building on the revised ELDS, the "Ilk Qadam" curriculum underwent a comprehensive revision process to enhance its quality, relevance, and alignment with international standards and evolving learner needs. The development of the revised curriculum was initiated by UNICEF under IsDB funded Preschool project prior to the formal signing of the SmartEd project agreement and carried out within the framework of SmartED project through a highly participatory and consultative process involving MOPSE technical teams, national specialists, and international experts. A Working Group comprising 11 specialists was established in February 2025 to guide the process. Key activities included a comprehensive review of the previous curriculum, benchmarking against internationally recognized early childhood education frameworks, consultative workshops with policymakers, practitioners, and academic specialists, and pilot implementation in selected preschools in Tashkent and Samarkand to validate the revised approach

and gather feedback for complementary materials.

The revised curriculum reflects a child-centred philosophy enriched with internationally recognized practices, including experiential, inquiry-based, and play-based learning inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, strengthened mentoring frameworks, and modern observation and documentation techniques for continuous quality improvement. A draft of the revised curriculum and ELDS was further reviewed by international early childhood education experts, resulting in refinements to developmental areas, learning indicators, and the overall balance and coherence of the framework. Additional methodological materials inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach were developed to support implementation of the revised curriculum, including guidance enriched with photographic documentation and practical examples for preschool teachers. In parallel, a comprehensive Training of Trainers (TOT) package was finalized, including a five-day programme focused on practical workshops and child-centred pedagogy. A national TOT for 30 Master Trainers is planned for April 2026, followed by regional trainings expected to reach approximately 400 trainers nationwide.

To further strengthen preschool reform and promote innovative pedagogical approaches, MOPSE, UNICEF, and Fondazione Reggio Children signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2025 to establish the Regional Research and Innovation Center in Early Learning — the first centre of its kind in Central Asia. This initiative reflects Uzbekistan’s growing commitment to advancing quality, innovation, and inclusion in early childhood education through strengthened national and international partnerships.

There were no targets planned under this output for Year 1. However, by the end of the reporting period, the Year 2 target related to validation of the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) had been successfully achieved ahead of schedule.

Output 3.1.1.2. Program for children under 3. Implementation of this sub-component was planned to begin in the second year of project implementation. However, UNICEF initiated the development of a comprehensive National Early Childhood Development Strategy to guide the design and scale-up of effective, multisectoral ECD policies and programmes. Prioritization will help ensure that limited resources are directed toward interventions with the greatest and most sustainable impact. The findings of this process—including a mapping and analysis of existing services and delivery modalities is expected to inform the development of the 0–3 programme and serve as essential preparatory work for this activity in Year 2.

Output 3.1.1.3. Capacity-building module on revised preschool curriculum. To support national rollout of the revised Ilk Qadam preschool curriculum, UNICEF and MOPSE advanced the development of a comprehensive capacity-building programme for preschool educators. A National Working Group reviewed the existing Training of Trainers (ToT) manual and developed recommendations, which were formally endorsed by MOPSE. Based on these recommendations, a complete ToT package was developed in Uzbek and Russian, including training materials that emphasize practical application, classroom practice, and reflective learning to strengthen teachers' capacity to implement the revised curriculum.

To promote sustainability and scale, the revised curriculum has already been integrated into the programmes of ISTTI and the Methodic Mahorat Kuni initiative for regional and district methodologists. Plans for Year 2 include training National Master Trainers across all 14 regions and launching a certified online course on the revised curriculum and Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) through ISTTI’s digital platform.

The Year 1 target—development, testing, endorsement, and integration of the module into the blended CPL programme—has been substantially achieved.

Output 3.2.1.1. Mentorship system to support continuous professional learning of preschool education professionals. Building on Presidential Decree No. 152 (2024) and MOPSE Order No. 362 (2024), which institutionalized mentoring as a mechanism for continuous professional learning, MOPSE, with UNICEF support, developed a comprehensive Mentorship Model for Preschool Teachers. The model includes a mentor competency framework and training package designed to strengthen the role of preschool methodologists (deputy directors) as school-based mentors. It provides a structured approach to teacher support through classroom observation, reflective dialogue, constructive feedback, and collaborative goal setting, creating a sustainable mechanism for continuous professional learning within preschool settings.

During the reporting period, efforts focused on operationalizing the model through development of a Training of Trainers (ToT) package and preparation of the training cascade mechanism required for nationwide rollout, with the first trainings planned for early Year 2. To strengthen coherence across the broader professional development system, a Supportive Supervision Model for Preschool Management was also developed to enhance the capacity of preschool leaders to support teacher development and institutional improvement.

The Year 1 target of developing mentorship models for teachers and leaders has been substantially achieved.

Output 3.2.1.2. Modular in-service programs for preschool teachers, methodologists and principals in blended format. The transition from a fully offline in-service teacher training system to a blended Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) model was formalized through Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 867 and Presidential Decree No. PP-231 in 2024. These reforms introduced a differentiated, modular approach to professional development combining face-to-face and online learning, thereby achieving the policy objective originally envisaged under the project. As a result, project support shifted from developing a transition model to operationalizing the new system through digital learning content and blended learning programmes.

In the preschool sector, MOPSE, with UNICEF technical support, advanced implementation of the blended CPL approach through development of online training modules aligned with the revised Ilk Qadam

curriculum. The National Group of Experts at ISTTI developed and launched two online courses on the national digital learning platform: an 18-hour programme for preschool teachers (six modules) and a 36-hour programme for methodologists (twelve modules). The courses incorporate AI-enhanced interactive presentations developed through the Jalinga Multimedia Studio established under the IsDB-funded Early Childhood Education Project.

The training modules cover competency-based child development, supportive learning environments, child psychology, family engagement, teacher documentation, digital technologies, and inclusive education practices. Future plans include development of additional modules aligned with professional standards for teachers, methodologists, and preschool leaders, alongside continued strengthening of the online learning platform and national capacity to develop multimedia learning content.

The indicator under this output requires Development of a Draft model for transition to blended to blended learning has been pre-achieved.

Output 3.3.1.1 Revised preschool self-evaluation and external quality review framework and guidelines. This work is aligned with the output 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.2. The description of activities and justifications for delayed achievement of the target provided under those outputs are relevant for this output.

Output 3.4.1.1 Inclusive Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework, standards/ requirements and mechanisms for inclusive preschools.

This work is undertaken under Output 2.4.1.1.

Output 3.4.3.1 Targeted communication/ social behavior change strategy. MOPSE, in partnership with the National Agency for Social Protection and with technical support from UNICEF, completed a formative study on behavioural drivers influencing parental decisions related to enrolment in inclusive education settings. The study included a desk review of existing literature and formative research applying the COM-B behavioural model, resulting in the identification of more than 100 behavioural drivers affecting perceptions and decisions related to inclusive education.

To validate and prioritize the identified behavioural drivers, multi-stakeholder consultations were conducted with participation from key national partner organizations, non-governmental organizations, and parents of children with and without disabilities. The consultations contributed to the development of an evidence-based Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) Strategy and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Plan aimed at promoting inclusive education and strengthening positive attitudes and practices related to inclusion. During the reporting period, drafts of the SBC Strategy, communication plan, and related data collection tools were prepared, and development of communication materials was initiated.

The targets under this output are partially achieved with SBC Strategy finalized and completed formative study and desk review which have established an important evidence base for future implementation of awareness-raising and behaviour change interventions supporting inclusive education reforms. The development of Communication materials has been initiated and is planned to be completed and rolled out in Year 2

Component / Objective	**Level of Progress this Reporting Period** [2]	**Previous Rating**
Project Management Support	Satisfactory (S)	

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

Component 4: Project implementation Support

Sub-component 4.1. Consultancy Services for Project Supervision

The procurement of consultancy services under this sub-component was initiated in a timely manner. A comprehensive Terms of Reference (ToR) was developed by MOPSE and approved by IsDB, covering a wide range of civil works supervision services to be provided by the consulting firm. The verification of the Variable Part was also included in the ToR.

An international consulting company was shortlisted for the final stage of the procurement process; however, contract negotiations were unsuccessful due to the company's inability to provide realistic and sufficiently detailed cost estimates.

Consequently, MOPSE requested IsDB’s no-objection to revise the ToR and launch a new procurement process. The request is currently under review by IsDB.

To mitigate the potential negative impact of this delay on the commencement of civil works, IsDB has provided its no-objection for the recruitment of individual field engineers to supervise construction activities on an interim basis until a consulting firm is contracted.

Sub-component 4.2. Project Management Unit

MOPSE initiated the recruitment of key PMU personnel in advance, enabling the timely commencement of all critical project start-up activities. Within two months of project effectiveness, the PMU was fully established, with all key specialists recruited and onboarded.

Office space was allocated, and all necessary equipment and furniture were procured to ensure the PMU's full operational capacity. During the reporting period, the PMU staff demonstrated strong capacity in managing complex challenges and proposing appropriate and timely solutions.

Sub-component 4.3. Project Start-up, Mid-term, and Annual Workshops

The project start-up workshop was successfully conducted under the leadership of IsDB. The workshop was facilitated by IsDB's regional procurement specialist, disbursement specialist, and technical team, including project management specialists.

In addition, a communications workshop was organized for MOPSE and the relevant implementing agencies, focusing on project advocacy, visibility, and communication strategies.

Sub-component 4.4. Detailed Design Consultant

The detailed design consultancy firm was procured by November 2025 and subsequently commenced the preparation of detailed designs for 14 schools. The designs were successfully completed and duly reviewed and approved by the State Expertise authority.

Component / Objective	Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2]	Previous Rating
Contingency Budget	No Rating Available	

Brief description of the major activities undertaken and the relative level of success in fulfilling the project outputs and outcomes planned for this reporting period:

The contingency budget was not invoked during the reporting period

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

Advance implementation actions can significantly reduce start-up delays in complex education projects. The SmartED Project demonstrated the value of undertaking key preparatory activities before project effectiveness. The early recruitment of PMU staff, advance preparation of procurement documents, and pre-effectiveness negotiations between UNICEF and MOPSE on the Cooperation Agreement enabled several project components to commence shortly after effectiveness despite a lengthy approval process. This experience suggests that advance implementation readiness measures can help mitigate delays commonly associated with project start-up and accelerate the achievement of first-year targets.

Utilization of national procurement systems can accelerate implementation when reforms are supported by strong transparency measures. The introduction of digital procurement platforms and reforms to Uzbekistan's public procurement framework created opportunities for development partners to rely on national systems for civil works procurement. The SmartED Project's use of the Shaffof Qurilish platform is expected to significantly reduce procurement timelines compared to traditional international procurement approaches. This experience suggests that investments in strengthening national systems can generate substantial implementation efficiencies while reinforcing country ownership and reducing transaction costs.

Formal coordination mechanisms become increasingly important when multiple development partners support the same reform agenda. Implementation of the SmartED Project highlighted the challenges associated with a crowded development landscape, where multiple partners support related interventions using different approaches, timelines, and implementation modalities. During the first year of implementation, coordination between UNICEF and UNESCO was largely focused on their respective project components, with limited opportunities for systematic technical engagement to ensure alignment and complementarities across sub-components. In addition, the absence of a formal coordination mechanism involving implementing partners and relevant MOPSE departments constrained joint planning and information sharing. As a result, opportunities to identify synergies, harmonize approaches, and address potential overlaps were not fully realized during the initial stages of implementation. The experience demonstrated that effective coordination cannot rely solely on informal exchanges and ad hoc consultations. Government-led coordination platforms, regular technical review meetings, shared planning processes, and common technical frameworks are essential to strengthen coherence across project components, maximize collective impact, and ensure that different interventions contribute to a common reform agenda. The establishment of the Steering Committee is expected to address these challenges and provide a structured mechanism for strategic alignment and coordination among key stakeholders.

Building on previous reform investments accelerates implementation and strengthens sustainability. The SmartED Project benefited from earlier investments in the education sector, including IsDB-supported preschool education reforms and UNICEF-supported initiatives in curriculum, assessment, and teacher development, as well UNESCOs interventions within Vision 2030 project, Existing technical products, institutional partnerships, and implementation experience provided a strong foundation for the design and rollout of project interventions. The experience demonstrated that building on established reform achievements and capacities can reduce duplication of effort, accelerate implementation, and allow resources to focus on addressing remaining gaps and scaling successful approaches. It also highlighted the

importance of ensuring continuity across successive programmes to support sustained sector transformation and strengthen institutional ownership of reforms.

Co-creation approaches can simultaneously improve reform quality and strengthen institutional capacity. The development of the competency-based National Curriculum Framework and National Assessment Concept demonstrated that reform processes can serve as powerful capacity-building mechanisms when national stakeholders are actively engaged as contributors rather than recipients of technical assistance. Through structured collaboration between ministry officials, academic experts, practicing teachers, and international specialists, curriculum development became a process of institutional learning and knowledge transfer. The experience demonstrated that co-creation approaches strengthen national ownership, improve contextual relevance, and build the technical expertise required to sustain reforms beyond external support. At the same time, engagement with international experts and benchmarking against international standards helped ensure that reform outputs met global quality expectations while remaining responsive to national priorities.

Integrating cross-cutting priorities into core reform processes is more effective than addressing them through standalone initiatives. The curriculum reform process demonstrated the value of embedding themes such as inclusion, gender responsiveness, climate education, and social-emotional learning directly within subject curricula rather than treating them as separate programmes. This approach increased the likelihood that these priorities would become an integral part of teaching and learning practices and highlighted the importance of mainstreaming cross-cutting issues within system-wide reforms to achieve sustainable impact.

Long-term sustainability requires investment in institutions, not only project activities. The project highlighted the importance of establishing institutional structures capable of sustaining reforms beyond project completion. Discussions surrounding the establishment of the Centre of Pedagogical Excellence reinforced the importance of creating institutional mechanisms that can support research, innovation, quality assurance, professional standards development, and teacher professional development over the long term. The experience demonstrated that lasting improvements in education systems depend not only on the delivery of project outputs but also on the existence of strong national institutions capable of maintaining, adapting, and scaling reforms over time.

Impact stories

Impact stories will be provided separately.

Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
1	Results framework_Year 1_Annex 1 (1).xlsx	Results Framework	
2	Functional Review_Updated_TLM_Assessment.docx	Knowledge Product	

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Financial Reporting & Grant Management

Financial Reporting on GPE Grant

Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

Approved Budget to Date	Cumulative Expenditure	Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate	Level of Financial Absorption
40,000,000	6,018,173.32	15.05	Off Track

Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.

Financial absorption is as per the approved budget in the PAD. In line with the PAD annual tranches, the disbursement is on track

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period

6,018,172.95

Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period

6,018,173.32

Management Performance

Level of Management Performance

Highly Satisfactory (HS)

Previous Rating

NA

Detailed Description

As noted above, overall grant management has been highly satisfactory. Supported by a strong Project Management Unit (PMU), regular engagement of MOPSE senior leadership, and close oversight from IsDB's Regional Hub Administration (RHA), the project has been implemented with a high degree of diligence, quality assurance, and attention to results.

To support effective project implementation and oversight, a detailed implementation plan was developed, outlining key activities, milestones, responsibilities, and timelines across all project components. Progress against the plan has been systematically monitored through bi-weekly coordination meetings between IsDB and the PMU, enabling timely identification of implementation challenges and the development of corrective actions where necessary.

IsDB headquarters and regional procurement teams maintained regular engagement with MOPSE and the PMU to provide technical support and facilitate the resolution of procurement-related issues. Multiple monitoring missions, technical meetings, and virtual consultations were conducted throughout the reporting period to support the efficient, transparent, and timely procurement of consultancy services and civil works contracts. In addition to its engagement with MOPSE, IsDB maintained regular dialogue with the Ministry of Investment, Industry and Trade and the Office of the IsDB Governor to ensure continued strategic oversight and facilitate the timely resolution of implementation issues.

A series of project monitoring missions, including a joint GPE–IsDB implementation support mission, were undertaken during the reporting period to review implementation progress, identify bottlenecks, and agree on corrective actions where necessary. Furthermore, IsDB conducted a Project Implementation Assessment and Support Review (PIASR), which provided a comprehensive assessment of implementation progress, fiduciary compliance, risk management, and achievement of project objectives. The PIASR process facilitated the identification of key implementation challenges and the formulation of recommendations to further strengthen project delivery and performance.

A comprehensive communication, advocacy, and visibility strategy was developed to guide stakeholder engagement and ensure consistent communication of project achievements and objectives. Standardized communication templates and visibility materials were also developed to support coordinated communication efforts across all implementing partners and project components. To facilitate the effective implementation of the strategy, a communication and visibility workshop was organized for MOPSE and implementing partners, focusing on project advocacy, stakeholder engagement, branding requirements, and the communication and visibility obligations associated with GPE and ACG financing. The workshop helped establish a common understanding of communication objectives, roles, and responsibilities among project stakeholders.

Project reporting arrangements have been established and are functioning effectively. The PMU submits monthly progress reports covering overall project implementation, procurement, financial management, and key risks. In addition, UNICEF and UNESCO submit quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the soft components under their respective areas of responsibility. These reporting mechanisms provide regular updates on implementation progress and support evidence-based decision-making by project stakeholders.

To strengthen environmental and social risk management, an Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist was recruited, and an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) was developed to guide the implementation and monitoring of environmental and social requirements throughout the project lifecycle.

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the GPE Board or Secretariat for their approval?

No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the GPE Board or Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?

Unlikely

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description

Annex 2: Global Numbers Reporting Template

Provide the data related to GPE's three global numbers for this reporting period below

- Textbooks purchased and distributed through GPE grants
- Teachers trained through GPE grants
- Classrooms built or rehabilitated through GPE grants

Note: For cofinanced grants, please provide the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 50 percent of a teacher training activity, the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant for the number of teachers trained through that activity would be 50%. If the unit of analysis in the indicator is the number of schools and not classrooms, please enter an estimated number of classrooms and provide an explanation in the comments box.

GPE Indicators

Textbooks purchased and distributed

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	This system transformation grant annual progress report is learning oriented and seeks to:	Comments
1		0	0	

GPE Indicators

Teachers trained

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	This system transformation grant annual progress report is learning oriented and seeks to:	Comments
1		0	0	

GPE Indicators

Classrooms built or rehabilitated

#	Indicator	Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period)	This system transformation grant annual progress report is learning oriented and seeks to:	Comments
1		0	0	

Annex 3: Cumulative Beneficiary Children Reporting Template

Provide the **cumulative** number of children of pre-primary, primary and secondary school age (both in school and out of school) and other students (adolescents beyond secondary school age and adult learners participating in basic education programs), who **directly participated in project activities, received project-supported incentives or services, or benefited from project interventions so far. Also provide relevant disaggregated values by sex (applicable to all grants)**. If appropriate and available, provide disaggregated values by varied subgroups and by education level. Reporting beneficiary data cumulatively means counting all beneficiaries as a running total, adding up all beneficiaries since the start of the grant. Data on beneficiaries are to be collected using the methods and tools proper to each project. It is understood that some disaggregated data will only be collected if a project expressly targets specific subgroups through their interventions and uses their own methods for counting beneficiary children/other students.[i] Please provide the number or proportion of girls of varied subgroups in the comment section below, if available.

NOTE: For cofinanced grants, please provide the numbers for the entire program and indicate the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 40 percent of the program that is cofinanced by GPE and oher donors, enter 40% in "% atributed to this grant".

	Pre-primary (optional)	Primary (optional)	Secondary (optional)	Others (optional)	Total	% attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants)
Number of children who directly benefited from the project						
Of which, girls						

Of which, children with a disability (optional)						
Of which, refugee children (optional)						
Of which, internally displaced children (optional)						
Of which, out-of-school children, in school-age (optional)						
Of which, children from marginalized ethno-cultural/ linguistic minorities: specify which ones (optional)						

Provide any comments on beneficiary children, if needed. This could include, for example, the definition employed by the grant for a particular subgroup (including a more granular description of these subgroups), the approach/tool used to calculate the number of beneficiaries overall or by subgroup, any limitation of the approach/tool employed for this calculation and reasons why data on beneficiary children are unavailable. Please provide the number or proportion of girls for varied subgroups in the comment section below, if available.

At this stage, the project has not yet reached its direct beneficiaries.

Annex 4: GEA Indicators Reporting Template

GEA Core indicators	Baseline	Results for this reporting period		GPE contribution (optional for cofinanced grants)	Comments
		Target	Actual		
Indicator name					
Date					

1 Highly Unsatisfactory - The project has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The project has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The project has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs, but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The project is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderaten shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory - The project is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory -The project is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

2 Highly Unsatisfactory - The component/objective has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory -The component/objective has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory -The component/objective has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs, but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory- The component/objective is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory- The component/objective is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory-The component/objective is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

3 Highly Unsatisfactory – The GEA has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory – The GEA has significant

shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory – The GEA has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs, but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory – The GEA is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory – The GEA is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory – The GEA is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.