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Quarterly Report -Year 1 Quarters 1-2

9 December 2019 - 31 March 2020

**Uzbekistan Education for Excellence Program
December 9, 2019 – December 8, 2023**



Uzbekistan Education Reform Program

Quarterly Report - Year 1 Quarters 1 + 2
Cooperative Agreement No. 72011519C00004

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April 29, 2020

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by RTI International. The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACR/Asia	USAID All Children Reading Asia
AMELP	Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ARO	RTI Asia Regional Office
AWP	Annual Work Plan
C	Component
CEA	capacity enhancement approach
CICT	Center for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies
CO	Communications Officer
COP	Chief of Party
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CWG	Collaboration Working Group
DFOHR	Director of Finance, Operations, and Human Resources
DMELC	Director of Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Communications
EFL	English as a foreign language
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FOHR	Finance, Operations, and Human Resources
FSU	Florida State University
GER	gross enrollment ratio
GESI	gender equality and social inclusion
GOU	Government of Uzbekistan
ICT	information and communication technology
ICT4E	Information and Communication Technology for Education
IT	information technology
MEL	monitoring, evaluation, and learning

MELC	monitoring, evaluation, learning, and communications
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MPE	Ministry of Public Education
MSU	Mississippi State University
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Q	quarter
SMELO	Senior Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Officer
SSN	secure service network
TA	technical assistance
TLM	teaching and learning materials
TOTS	Tashkent Office Technical Specialist
TPD	teacher professional development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE: SUMMARY TABLE AND MAP

Table 1. Uzbekistan Education Reform Program Overview

Program Name:	Uzbekistan Education Reform Program
Program Start Date and End Date:	December 9, 2019 to December 8, 2023
Program Budget:	██████████
Cooperative Agreement Number:	No. 72011519C00004
Cooperative Agreement Modifications:	None to date.
Prime Implementing Partner:	RTI International
Sub-Awardees:	Florida State University, Mississippi State University
Key Counterpart Organization:	Ministry of Public Education Office of the Minister, International Cooperation Department, Republican Center for Education, Center for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies (CICT), Abdulla Avaloni Center, Center for Innovation, Technology and Strategy (ITSM)
Coverage:	1,000 general secondary schools in 2-3 provinces (TBD)
Direct and Indirect Beneficiaries:	Ca. 150 product developers and teacher professional development specialists Ca. 12,000 grade 1–6 teachers of reading and mathematics and grades 1–11 teachers of information and communication technology and English as a foreign language Students in grades 1–11
Reporting Period:	December 9, 2019 – March 31, 2020
Program Office:	Tashkent City, Uzbekistan

Figure 1. Map of Region



SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This Quarterly Report is a contractual deliverable and provides the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with a discussion of Uzbekistan Education Reform Program (Program) implementation in Year 1 during Quarter (Q)1 and Q2 (December 9, 2019–March 31, 2020).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Government of Uzbekistan Ministry of Public Education (GOU MPE) is committed to an ambitious program of systematic and comprehensive reforms for the 5.8 million primary and secondary students in 9,651 public schools (including 350 specialized schools) and the 13,800 students in 86 non-governmental education institutions. Uzbekistan aims to create an education system that can produce graduates with the critical thinking, problem solving, and practical skills that will enable them to succeed.

Primary and secondary education is free and compulsory in Uzbekistan, and education statistics show impressive access to education: the overall gross enrollment ratio (GER) in grades 1–9 was around 97% in 2016–17. However, variations exist across regions and grades: the GER in Tashkent was approximately 108–111%, and that in Karakalpakstan was 86%. The GER for primary grades 1–4 was 100% and for secondary grades 5–9 was 94%. While the numbers of students accessing education are generally high across Uzbekistan, student learning outcomes are poor.¹ A 2018 report by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and MPE² showed that although a large proportion of students (around 62% in Language and 69% in Mathematics) know the content of what they are taught in classrooms, only 41–43% can apply that knowledge. Only 59% of students could locate/identify information presented in an Uzbek text, and only 47% could comprehend the content presented in a paragraph or story. On the mathematics test, 63% of students could do basic operations with numbers, but only 36% demonstrated the ability to use problem-solving strategies. Research suggests that in Uzbek schools focus too much on rote learning versus enhancing students’ ability to think critically and apply knowledge and skills.³ Furthermore, grade-level curricula are heavily loaded with up to 11 subjects in primary and 19 subjects in secondary grades, and the current prescribed annual instructional time in Uzbekistan’s schools is well below recommended averages (850–1000 hours).⁴

¹ World Bank. (2018). *Uzbekistan education sector analysis, final report, December 27, 2018*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: World Bank Group.

² UNICEF. (2018). *Generation 2030 Uzbekistan: Investing in children and young people to reap the demographic dividend*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: UNICEF.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Benavot, A. (2004). *Studies on instructional time. Background paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005*. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. See also World Bank. (2004). *Books, buildings, and learning outcomes: An impact evaluation of World Bank support to basic education in Ghana*. Washington, DC: World Bank Operation Evaluation Department. OECD. (1996). *Instructional time in the classroom*. Paris: OECD.

To accomplish the aims of the reform agenda and realize the anticipated results, the MPE will need to enact a paradigm shift from the current system, which is managed through a highly centralized, top-down structure (from the national level to the provincial to the district to the school level) to a decentralized system with greater decision-making and management autonomy at the regional, town/district, and school levels.⁵ The reform agenda also aims to transform the instructional practices of the teaching workforce, which currently consist predominantly of rote learning and over-reliance on textbooks as the only teaching and learning resources available. The GOU recently strengthened the strategic, policy, and legislative frameworks needed to support structural and system reforms in public education through the following:

- The 2019-2023 Education Sector Plan (ESP),⁶ which identifies three overarching policy goals related to access, quality, and equity and seven key strategic areas for improvement in all educational sub-sectors
- Presidential Decree UP-5538 (September 5, 2018) “On Additional Measures to Improve the Management System of the Public Education,” which introduced new management mechanisms and quality standards in the educational process, with the aim of increasing the prestige of the teaching profession in Uzbek society and improving the material and technical conditions of educational institutions
- Presidential Resolution 3907 (August 14, 2018), which put forward measures for raising the education system to a new level of quality for educating learners through increasing teacher salaries and benefits and increasing the status of the teaching profession, among other strategies.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

To support the MPE in achieving its reform agenda, USAID initiated the 4-year, ██████████ Uzbekistan Education Reform Program (the Program) to be implemented from December 9, 2019 to December 8, 2023. The Program is implemented by a consortium of partners including RTI International as the Consortium lead, Florida State University (FSU), and Mississippi State University (MSU). The Program aims to achieve three overarching results:

1. Improved Uzbek reading and mathematics outcomes in grades 1–6
2. Enhanced information and communication technology (ICT) instruction for grades 1–11
3. Improved English language instruction in grades 1–11.

Over the life of the Program, in close collaboration with the MPE, the Consortium will:

- develop relevant and appropriate standards for Uzbek reading, mathematics, ICT, and English as a foreign language (EFL);
- update and pilot revised teaching and learning materials (TLM);
- design and implement an in-service teacher professional development (TPD) and support approach; and
- conduct Program monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) activities, including impact evaluation research.

⁵ GOU Presidential Decree # 5712 On Approving Public Education System Development Concept by 2030, dated April 29, 2019. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: GOU.

⁶ GOU. (2019). *Uzbekistan Education Sector Plan 2019-2023*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: GOU.

The new approaches to curriculum development, curriculum products, and TPD and support will be conceptualized and utilized in Year 1 (see *Section 2: Year 1 Implementation Approach*) and used as the centerpieces for ongoing teacher support to enhance teachers' capacity to understand, apply, reflect on, and improve classroom practices in Years 2–4. The teacher support approach and digital platforms will be introduced, refined, and embedded in Years 1 and 2 and then rolled out more broadly across the general education system. It is expected that the improvements in curricula and teacher capacity will translate into improvements in student achievement over time. Activity implementation in Years 2–4 will also provide the Program and MPE with lessons that can be utilized to ensure a solid scale-up of the Program's specific interventions. In addition, the Consortium's approach to curriculum development can be utilized by the MPE to develop curricula in other subjects, and the in-service TPD approach can be introduced to other regions and districts outside of the Program's two to three target regions and up to 1,000 target schools. The Program also includes a targeted focus on implementation science and will look closely at what is working, how and why, and what effect the changes are having on strengthening the general education system.

SECTION II: PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

PROGRAM OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS

Summary of Program Achievements

Program achievements for the reporting period include a range of typical inception and start-up activities focused on finance, operations, and human resources and on essential contractual and implementation activities including relationship-building, establishing ways of working, producing contractual documents, and initiating work on technical tasks.

A viable site for the Tashkent Program Office was identified, a lease agreement was signed, and office fit-out was initiated. Recruitment of personnel for all Program positions was begun, and eight Program personnel were contracted during the reporting period. Staff included the Chief of Party (COP), a key personnel position, for which USAID provided candidate approval on February 5, 2020. It is anticipated that all remaining positions will be filled in Q3; however, RTI will monitor the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis and carefully consider staffing decisions. Computers were provided to all but one individual (currently based outside of Tashkent), and all personnel are receiving ongoing onboarding assistance, including taking required compliance courses through the RTI system. This induction process will continue into early Q3 to ensure all personnel have participated in a thorough onboarding process. The process will be repeated as new staff are contracted in Q3.

Key operational documents, including a Program Standard Operating Procedures Manual, Safety and Security Manual, and Consortium Partners Handbook, were drafted and should be finalized early in Q3. In addition, RTI began delivering learning workshops on key operational tools, such as OpenProject, an open-source software application that can be used by MPE and Consortium personnel collectively and that can be left with the MPE post-program. RTI also began ensuring that all Consortium personnel can access and use Microsoft Teams, Microsoft's real-time collaborative software. Throughout Q3, RTI will provide additional learning sessions, including on Tangerine™, RTI's open-source data collection system that is optimized for Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)/Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) data collection and can be tailored to other tasks.

The Consortium team continued building relationships and establishing ways of working within and across the Consortium partners, with USAID, and with the MPE. Weekly formal meetings and a range of *ad hoc* meetings occurred between and among Consortium partners to produce the Annual Work Plan (AWP) and to begin substantive work on key technical activities including the Status of Instruction Study and the Anchor Workshop for Standards and Curriculum Development. RTI continued to engage with USAID through a once-weekly formal meeting and *ad hoc* communication. RTI also continued to do the same with the MPE, including some instances of joint formal meetings between USAID, the MPE, and RTI. In addition, the Consortium began to interact with MPE Component Focal Points, although this engagement eventually stalled because of the MPE's reluctance to engage

substantively on implementation before the differences in expectations for the Program scope and scale were resolved.

RTI also attempted to mitigate the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to the anticipated face-to-face Anchor Workshop for Curriculum Development and Standards and the subsequent subject-specific Standards Development workshops that were to occur late in Q2. RTI proposed options for a fully virtual approach or one that included virtual learning and support from Consortium technical assistance (TA) to MPE Focal Points and core teams and Program Technical Specialists. Following explicit guidance from the Minister, however, activities were instead delayed. Furthermore, school closures and mobility restrictions made it impossible to consider convening any groups of educators or using our Uzbek colleagues as the in-person facilitators (see *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities, and Lessons*).

RTI conducted a 2-day Co-Development Workshop in Tashkent with 63 (30 women/33 men) representatives from USAID, the MPE, and the Consortium to produce agreed-upon outlines of planned activities with associated implementation strategies, resource needs, and roles and responsibilities.

RTI also began to interact with other donors and projects, most notably UNICEF, which is assisting the MPE in its curriculum reform, USAID All Children Reading Asia (ACR/Asia) and the nationwide EGRA and EGMA team, and started initial outreach to the American Council and British Council, both of which are supporting or have supported English language development in Uzbekistan.

RTI produced and submitted the draft Year 1 AWP to USAID on March 4, 2020, and the MPE on March 5, 2020. The AWP covers an 18-month period from February 1, 2019 to September 30, 2021. During the reporting period, RTI also began work on the Activity MEL Plan (AMELP), a draft of which was submitted to USAID on April 7, 2020. It is anticipated that USAID will provide feedback and that the AMELP will be finalized before the end of Q3. RTI produced a draft Child Protection Strategy that will be reviewed by the RTI Ethics Department, began work on a briefing paper on instructional hours and a concept note on reinforcing English language proficiency through the ICT classroom, and started development of a Virtual Learning Platform PowerPoint presentation in response to the MPE's request for assistance. It is expected that all these documents will be finalized in Q3 and subsequently shared and discussed with the MPE.

Progress Against Targets

The Program draft AMELP suggests 15 indicators consisting of seven standard and eight custom indicators. Four indicators are outcome-level indicators, and 11 are output-level indicators. Six of the indicators are reported on each quarter, starting in Q2, and nine will be reported on annually. Of the nine indicators reported annually, two indicators (related to EGRA/EGMA baseline and midline assessments) will be reported in Years 1 and 3; the other seven will be reported starting in Year 2.

During this reporting period, there were no Program indicators against which to report. Once the AMELP is finalized, RTI will begin to report against the indicators on a quarterly and annual basis, depending on the requirements specific to the respective indicator, and will also provide a deviance (positive and negative deviance) narrative for each indicator. Upon further discussion with USAID, anticipated to occur early in Q3, it may be possible to reduce the number of indicators, particularly for the per-subject products. This would not mean that the Program will not collect per-subject data; instead, the aggregate performance against the

life of the program target will be given, accompanied by a brief discussion of which subject may have exceeded, met, or not met the respective subject-specific targets.

SECTION III: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

COMPONENT 1 (C1): IMPROVE READING AND MATHEMATICS OUTCOMES IN GRADES 1–6

Current Context During Reporting Period

According to MPE data, 100% of all primary school-aged children attend school.⁷ The GOU provides all grade 1 students with textbooks and a set of school stationary items free of charge.⁸ Grade 1 textbooks are published on an annual basis, and the textbooks used in grades 2–4 are reviewed, revised, and published every 4 years. The MPE has an established mechanism for soliciting primary grade teacher feedback on textbooks annually to inform revisions. Student assessments in all subjects are conducted every quarter. Primary school teachers earn 8–12% more than teachers in grades 5–11. However, despite these positive aspects, learning in the early years in Uzbekistan is constrained by several factors. As noted above, student performance in basic mathematics and reading is low overall and shows a lack of student capacity to comprehend texts and to fully understand and apply basic mathematics concepts to solve practical problems. The curriculum and, more importantly, classroom instruction are still predominately content-focused and driven by the contents of the student textbooks, which lack coherent scope and sequence. The Republican Center for Education has defined learning objectives for each subject in benchmark years, but well-defined standards for reading and mathematics for each grade are needed. The consensus among MPE technical staff is that teaching and learning materials should also be improved; indeed, moving to a standards-based approach will require the provision of materials that are aligned to standards.

To help the MPE expand on these opportunities for improvement, address the constraints mentioned above, and achieve improved student outcomes in reading and mathematics in grades 1–6, the Program will implement the following activities in its first 18 months:

- Conduct a Status of Instruction Study for reading and mathematics instruction
- Develop student learning standards for Uzbek reading and mathematics (grades 1–6)
- Develop the subject scope and sequence for Uzbek reading and mathematics (grades 1–6)
- Develop TLM for Uzbek reading and mathematics (grades 1–6)
- Design and implement an in-service TPD and support system
- Develop and deploy a platform for Uzbek standards and instruction materials.

⁷ World Bank. (2018). *Uzbekistan education sector analysis, final report, December 27, 2018*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: World Bank Group.

⁸ Students in grades 2–11 can rent textbooks for a small fee and then return the books in good condition at the end of the school year.

C1 products and interventions will be piloted in approximately 1,000 schools across two Uzbek regions to be selected.

Overview of Achievements During the Reporting Period

During the reporting period, the Consortium C1 team prepared for, participated in, and assisted with the Year 1 AWP Co-Development Workshop in Tashkent (described earlier) and used the opportunity to establish a good working relationship with the MPE C1 Focal Point. However, on March 3, 2020, the MPE informed RTI that the focal point for C1 had changed from the Director of Center for the Development of Information and Communication Technologies (CICT) to the Deputy Director of the Republican Center of Education; consequently, the C1 team began to establish rapport with this individual. The C1 team also assisted the MPE C1 workshop participants to identify a set of criteria for working group members and produced a draft set of notes. Following the workshop, the team supported the RTI Home Office in producing the draft Year 1 AWP; continued to conduct extensive searches for foundational reference materials and tools specific to reading, mathematics, and the Program more broadly; and began to compile an online library of documents and to share these materials across the Consortium. The team also began to assemble foundational documents and multi-media products to build the knowledge and understanding of the Program Technical Specialists for early grade reading and mathematics; targeted learning sessions for these specialists are scheduled to begin in Q3. Some of these materials will also be used during workshops with MPE core team members, Collaboration Working Group (CWG) members, teachers, and methodologists.

The development of specific products began during the reporting period, including the methodological plan and initial instruments for the Status of Instruction Study, a matrix of representative examples of reading (language/literature) and mathematics teacher and student standards, and a Guide to Student Learning Standards Development that will be used in the Anchor Workshop for Curriculum Development and Standards. The C1 team members participated regularly in Program virtual meetings and informal communications.

The Anchor Workshop and the Status of Instruction Study could not be undertaken as expected in Q2 (see *Program Overall Achievements* in *Section II* for further details). Consequently, these activities are expected to occur in Q3. To prepare, the C1 team will present its various products to Consortium colleagues and the MPE and then

- continue to refine these materials;
- develop foundational reference materials;
- contribute to the development of the Status of Instruction Study Methodology Plan and the Anchor Workshop;
- revise the tabular overall C1 Work Plan (in Excel);
- and develop and continue to update a set of mini-Work Plans for specific activities.

The C1 team will also be briefed on and contribute to the Q3 Quarterly Progress Report.

It is also anticipated that early in Q3, the internal structure of C1 will be broken out into three groups:

1. The C1/Reading group, led by the RTI TA/Reading who will take on the Focal Point role
2. The C1/Mathematics group, led by the RTI TA/Mathematics who will take on the Focal Point role

3. The C1/Digital Platform group, led by the FSU Digital Platform TA who will take on the Digital Platform Focal Point role.

The Digital Platform group will also work closely with the RTI ICT for Education (ICT4E) Technical Advisor. FSU will continue to play a pivotal and substantive role in preparing for and conducting the Anchor Workshop on Curriculum Development and Standards.

Challenges, Limitations and Unexpected Opportunities

The C1 team experienced all the overarching challenges and limitations described in *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities and Lessons*; there were no unique situations specific to C1. No unexpected opportunities unique to C1 were identified.

COMPONENT 2 (C2): ENHANCED ICT INSTRUCTION FOR GRADES 1–11 ACHIEVEMENTS

Current Context During Reporting Period

Since 2007, ICT has been taught in secondary schools in Uzbekistan for 1 hour per week in grades 5–8 and 2 hours per week in grades 9–11. The MPE has plans to expand ICT instruction into grades 1-4. Most of Uzbekistan’s schools are equipped with computer classrooms, and almost half are connected to the Internet via a dedicated network (secure service network [SSN]). ICT is taught in accordance with the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers #187 (April 6, 2017) “On Approval of State Educational Standards of Secondary and Secondary Specialized, Vocational Education” and a number of other regulatory documents that are not directly related to education but pertain to the overall development of the ICT field.

Uzbekistan does not have a clear curriculum and standards for ICT. Consequently, ICT teachers lack guidance regarding the scope and sequence of ICT knowledge and skills. Furthermore, at present, the post-secondary options for Uzbek students are very limited. However, the MPE’s IT Nation initiative aims to produce grade 11 graduates who are able to work in cyber security, software development and testing, network administration, graphic design, animation, and game design.

To achieve these outcomes, the education system must overcome a series of critical constraints. ICT hardware and broadband access are very limited at the school level. The 1-2 hours per week⁹ (0.5 hour for 5-6 grades, 1 hour for 7-8 grades and 2 hours for 9-11 grades) that students spend in ICT classes are insufficient. Existing ICT education standards and curricula are outdated or not rigorous enough to define and assess the competencies students should be acquiring. Importantly, standards that better reflect current labor market and university demands are needed. Instructional resources for both teachers and students are lacking, and ICT teachers may be limited in both number and expertise. While the MPE’s leadership is committed to establishing performance indicators to demonstrate student-level outcomes, currently, assessments of and certification criteria for ICT skills need to be developed and tied to overarching informed standards.

C2 activities aim to develop students’ foundational ICT skills to allow them to develop their ICT proficiencies.

To help the MPE expand on the opportunities and constraints mentioned above and improve ICT education, the Program will complete the following activities in its first 18 months:

⁹ GOU. (2019). 2019-2020 Academic Year General Curriculum Plan for Secondary Schools as Annex 1 to the MPE Decree # 293 dated September 9, 2019. Uzbekistan: GOU.

- Conduct a Status of Instruction Study for ICT instruction
- Develop student learning standards for ICT (grades 1–11)
- Develop subject scope and sequence for ICT (grades 1–11)
- Develop TLM for ICT (grades 9–11)
- Develop and implement an in-service TPD and support system
- Develop and implement updated standards-based instruction in pilot schools
- Develop and conduct assessments in pilot schools.
- Summary of Achievements During Reporting Period

Overview of Achievements During the Reporting Period

During the reporting period, the Consortium C2 team prepared for, participated in, and assisted with the Year 1 AWP Co-Development Workshop in Tashkent (described earlier) and used the opportunity to establish a good working relationship with the MPE C2 Focal Point and other members of the MPE’s IT Nation initiative. The team also assisted the MPE C2 workshop participants in identifying a set of criteria for working group members and developing a work plan for Year 1 informed by participant feedback. Following the workshop, the C2 team supported the RTI Home Office in producing the draft Year 1 AWP, continued to conduct extensive searches for foundational reference materials and tools specific to ICT and the Program more broadly, and began to compile an online library of documents and to share these materials across the Consortium. The Consortium C2 Focal Point and TAs also provided input on the OpenProject User Manual and are working on implementing the Status of Instruction Study.

The development of specific products began during the reporting period, including a 10-page list of specific questions for the Status of Instruction Study and a matrix of representative examples of ICT teacher and student standards that will be part of the Anchor Workshop for Curriculum Development and Standards. The Consortium C2 team members participated regularly in Program virtual meetings and informal communications. The Anchor Workshop and the Status of Instruction Study could not be undertaken as expected in Q2. Consequently, these activities are expected to occur in Q3. To prepare, the C2 team will present its various products to Consortium colleagues and the MPE and then

- continue to refine these documents;
- develop foundational reference materials;
- contribute to the development of the Status of Instruction Study Methodology Plan and the Anchor Workshop;
- revise the tabular C2 Work Plan (in Excel); and
- develop and continue to update a set of mini-work plans for specific activities.

The C2 team will also be briefed on and contribute to the Q3 Quarterly Progress Report.

Challenges, Limitations and Unexpected Opportunities

The C2 team experienced all the overarching challenges and limitations described in *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities and Lessons*; there were no unique situations specific to C2. No unexpected opportunities unique to C2 were identified.

COMPONENT 3 (C3): IMPROVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Current Context Summary

English is taught as a foreign language in all grades (1–11) to all of Uzbekistan’s 5.8 million students by approximately 15,000 teachers. English is one of the subjects on the student entrance examination taken to enroll in most university courses. This requirement for entry into higher education serves as a motivating factor for students to learn this subject. All teachers, including EFL teachers, attend a professional development course once every 5 years in regional in-service teacher training institutes. The MPE’s English Speaking Nation initiative aims to enhance the teaching and learning of English in public schools by improving secondary school teachers’ English language proficiency and pedagogical skills and by cultivating a supportive ecosystem for teaching and training. Reforms in English language instruction should embrace the development of teaching and learning standards, curriculum, resources, assessment, and capacity building.

The MPE has made important progress in this area; most notably, the National English Assessment Team has developed standards for English for grades 1–11. The National English Assessment Team has also begun developing assessments aligned to those standards and conducted an initial pilot of an online examination administered to selected grades. Further refinement of the standards and development of instructional and supplementary TLM and assessments are still needed. To achieve the high level of English language proficiency among students envisioned by the GOU, the MPE recognizes the need to improve English teachers’ language proficiency and instructional methods, including the nature and content of their pre-service education. To this end, the MPE has negotiated a program of assistance with the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Office in Uzbekistan to fund in-service training for English teachers. This program will assess and provide a mechanism for improving teachers’ English proficiency. However, a focus on improving EFL instructional practices is also needed. The British Council has recently worked on pre-service teacher education and is currently preparing a program that could include additional investment to continue to improve this area; however, a gap remains in terms of the support provided to in-service teachers.

To help the MPE expand on these opportunities and address the constraints mentioned above, it is expected that the Consortium will

- conduct a Status of Instruction Study with a focus on English language instruction;
- develop student learning standards for EFL (grades 1–11);
- develop teacher professional standards for EFL;
- develop assessment guidelines that align EFL standards and assessment tools;
- develop the subject scope and sequence for EFL (grades 1–11);
- develop TLM for EFL; and
- develop and implement an in-service teacher support system for EFL teachers.

Overview of Achievements During the Reporting Period

During the reporting period, the Consortium C3 team prepared for, participated in, and assisted with the Year 1 AWP Co-Development Workshop in Tashkent (described earlier) and used the opportunity to establish a good working relationship with the MPE C3 Focal Point and other members of the MPE’s English Speaking Nation initiative. The C3 team assisted the MPE C3 workshop participants to identify a set of criteria for working group

members and also produced a draft set of notes. Following the workshop, the team supported the RTI Home Office in producing the draft Year 1 AWP, continued to conduct extensive searches for foundational reference materials and tools specific to EFL and the Program more broadly, and began to compile an online library of documents and to share these materials across the Consortium.

Specific products include a glossary of terms that will continue to be populated, a 10-page list of specific questions for the Status of Instruction Study, and a matrix of representative examples of world language teacher and student standards that will be part of the Anchor Workshop for Curriculum Development and Standards. The Consortium C3 team members participated regularly in Program virtual meetings and informal communications. The Anchor Workshop and the Status of Instruction Study could not be undertaken as expected in Q2. Consequently, these activities are expected to occur in Q3, assuming the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. To prepare, the C3 team will present its various products to Consortium colleagues and the MPE and then

- continue to refine these documents;
- develop foundational reference materials;
- contribute to the development of the Status of Instruction Study Methodology Plan and the Anchor Workshop;
- revise the tabular C3 Work Plan (in Excel); and
- develop and continue to update a set of mini-work plans for specific activities.

The C3 team will also be briefed on and contribute to the Q3 Quarterly Progress Report.

Challenges, Limitations and Unexpected Opportunities

The C3 team experienced all the overarching challenges and limitations described in *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities and Lessons*; there were no unique situations specific to C3. No unexpected opportunities unique to C3 were identified.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, AND COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

Overview of Achievements During the Reporting Period

During Q1/Q2, the Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Communications (MELC) team consisted of the Director of Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Communications (DMELC), who has been working out of Nukus City (Republic of Karakalpakstan), although it is expected that he will re-locate to Tashkent once the COVID-19 crisis abates. The DMELC interacts with and receives support from the RTI Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor on a regular basis. This engagement will continue in Q3, and the DMELC will also begin to work closely with the Tashkent Office Technical Specialists and Consortium Technical Advisors to set expectations *vis a vis* their MELC-related roles and responsibilities and to learn from them as well. The DMELC was also involved in recruiting a Communications Officer and began to revise the Scope of Work for a Senior MEL Officer. It is expected that both positions will be filled early in Q3. In collaboration with the RTI Home Office, the MELC team produced the draft AMELP and began to work on the Status of Instruction Study Methodology Plan and instruments and to investigate possibilities for survey administration under the auspices of the MPE, most likely through the CICT.

Tools and Processes

The MELC team anticipates using collaborative processes and real-time data trackers to better capture, analyze, and report on data on a range of Program aspects separate from

but, in some cases, related to indicators. The MELC team began to identify and produce a range of tracking, data collection, and analytical tools and templates (see **Annex D: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Tools and Processes**). These resources will reduce the variability in data and reporting quality across the Program components, ensure that data are used more frequently and consistently, and that the data/information quality improves. The MELC team will ramp up this foundational work during Q3 and introduce the various tools, templates, and processes across the Program, ensuring that all relevant personnel understand and start to use them effectively.

During Q3, it is anticipated that the MELC team will undertake the following tasks:

- Finalize the Program AMELP based on feedback from USAID.
- Finalize the Status of Instruction Study Methodology Plan, including tools; socialize the Plan with MPE colleagues; and implement both tracks of the Status of Instruction Study, if the context allows. If not, they will implement the survey track of the research.
- Participate in EGRA/EGMA workshops being implemented through USAID ACR/Asia as a learning and capacity building opportunity.
- Continue planning for a Program EGRA/EGMA with the MEL Advisor, in the event that the ACR/Asia assessments are restricted to a national rather than provincial view.
- Develop the Program database and begin to populate it.
- Build up the key documents library and review seminal GOU and MPE documents, including the Uzbekistan ESP and other legal acts and policy papers relevant to education sector, and refine the alignment of Program indicators and targets with national education sector indicators.
- Continue to identify and produce key monitoring and evaluation tools (especially those needed for collecting indicator data), software, and hardware and establish processes for their use.
- Identify and experiment with data visualizations needed for reports, workshops, and communications products.
- Investigate the GOU's data security requirements and any data use restrictions (such as videotaping in classrooms) and identify viable processes.
- Assist with developing the Institutional Review Board Guidelines and oversee their application.
- Expand engagement with the Program technical specialists and international technical advisors to increase understanding of MELC overall and uptake of MELC processes and tools.
- Build the relationship with key MPE stakeholders (particularly the Component Focal Points) and specifically with the CICT, Provincial Public Education Departments, and Republican Education Center to support the upcoming Status of Instruction Study and EGRA/EGMA.
- Help recruit the Senior MEL Officer and Communications Officer and onboard and coach these individuals.

Challenges, Limitations and Unexpected Opportunities

Challenge 1: The “business as usual” MEL requirements and the increasing need to address the innovative MELC initiatives that will help understand Program effects and inform programmatic decisions have put increasing pressure on the DMELC. This pressure has highlighted the need for additional MELC personnel, especially for a Senior MEL Officer with relevant experience and skills in education sector monitoring and evaluation. The MELC team also needs to recruit a Communications Officer to develop its Communication Strategy and Plan. The Communications Officer should have experience in communication marketing and be familiar with behavior change communication tools. RTI will prioritize filling these positions in Q3.

Unexpected Opportunity 1: There has been very little MEL work done on the use of self-reflection/self-assessment to support behavior change. The MELC team will develop an approach and tools for this area. As part of this work, the MELC team will also explore and contribute to implementation science in education, which is a nascent field.

FINANCE, OPERATIONS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES (FOHR) UNIT

Overview of FOHR Achievements

During Q1/Q2, the Finance, Operations, and Human Resources (FOHR) team staff consisted of the Director of Finance, Operations, and Human Resources (DFOHR), who is based in Tashkent and who began working out of the Tashkent Office. The DFOHR interacts with and receives support from the RTI Home Office team on a regular basis and, increasingly, the COP. In collaboration with the Home Office team, the DFOHR undertook a number of tasks critical to Program start-up throughout Q1/Q2. Additionally, from January 24 to February 7, 2020, the RTI Program Manager traveled to Tashkent and assisted with many of the tasks described below.

Human Resources

Recruitment was initiated for all Program positions; however, given the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on Program implementation, certain positions were prioritized over others. To date, nine of 10 critical positions have been filled and personnel onboarded, including the COP, the DFOHR, the DMELC, four Technical Specialists, the Communications Officer, and the Human Resources Officer. In consultation with USAID, the Deputy COP (Technical) position was modified to a Director of Implementation position with an emphasis on program management and oversight rather than technical leadership to complement the skill set of the COP, and viable candidates for this position were identified. Discussions with the preferred candidate were initiated, and it is anticipated that the position will be filled in Q3.

RTI will also continue with recruitment for the other nine positions to develop shortlists of viable candidates so that final selection and onboarding can happen quickly once the COVID-19 crisis resolves. RTI will periodically verify candidates' continued interest to maintain up-to-date lists. RTI anticipates selecting and onboarding a candidate for the Sr. MEL Officer position by mid-Q3, given the significant amount of work under the MELC team. RTI will evaluate whether to move forward with onboarding candidates for the Procurement and Logistics Officer and three Technical Officer positions. Personnel who will eventually be working out of the Tashkent Office have been contracted through consultancy agreements that will continue to be rolled over until RTI secures approval for company registration, at which point all consultants will be shifted to full-time employee contracts.

All personnel are based in Tashkent with the exception of the Program COP, DMELC, and Technical Specialist/EFL. These individuals will relocate to Tashkent as soon as the COVID-

19 global pandemic situation resolves and allows for safe travel. As of February 12, 2020, RTI's COP, [REDACTED], joined and has been leading the Program, supported by the DFOHR, DMELC, and RTI Home Office.

Finance

The RTI Home Office team contacted several Uzbek banks to select a bank to use for Program banking operations. Because of the lack of RTI company registration and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, banks have suspended operations. During the reporting period, all payments related to Program operations were paid through the RTI Asia Regional Office/Jakarta; this process will continue until banks re-open, and RTI's company registration has been approved.

Procurement and Logistics

The Program completed the following procurement and logistics activities in Q1/Q2:

- Located suitable office space and finalized and signed an office lease agreement on February 10, 2020.
- Undertook two in-country procurements:
 - Engaged a vendor for office outfitting and began the work. However, the final stage of the work was suspended because of restrictions on mobility associated with the COVID-19 crisis. The work will be completed once restrictions are lifted, and the procurement will be closed out.
 - Advertised for and received four bids for office furniture provision. Unfortunately, vendors closed down because of the COVID-19 crisis before a selection could be made. Once the crisis resolves and vendors open, RTI will re-validate the quotes received and complete the selection and procurement process.
- Computers were procured through the RTI Home Office and delivered by the DFOHR to four personnel. The ARO assisted with information technology set-up. It is anticipated that computers will be provided to the one remaining individual early in Q3, if the COVID-19 crisis resolves.

The Program office address is as follows:

| [REDACTED]

| [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Satellite image of the Program office. Photo credit by RTI International.

Location of the Program office. Photo credit by RTI International.



During Q3, it is anticipated that the FOHR Unit will

- finalize key FOHR documents—the Operations Manual, Safety and Security Manual, and Partners Handbook—and provide training for local personnel;
- continue taking required compliance-related courses, including induction by the RTI Security Advisor, and other relevant courses outside of RTI;
- continue recruiting local personnel to fill the remaining vacant positions;
- onboard any new personnel and deliver inductions overall and for the Senior Finance Officer, Procurement and Logistics Officer, and Administration Assistant/Receptionist specifically;

- procure office furniture and office IT equipment in consultation with the ARO team; and
- open a local bank account.

Challenges, Limitations, and Unexpected Opportunities

Challenge 1: Company registration. RTI has submitted its company registration application package to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) twice. Unfortunately, the MOJ rejected each application for reasons such as the lack of a clause on “modification” in the RTI charter. A third application package was prepared and arrived in Uzbekistan, but the MOJ had stopped accepting documents because of the COVID-19 crisis. RTI will monitor the situation in Q3 and move forward as soon as the MOJ resumes work.

Challenge 2: ICT. On March 16, 2020, the GOU closed all educational institutions, and the major of GOU personnel were instructed to work from home. As a result, Internet usage during the workday has increased significantly, and Internet connectivity and speed have been negatively affected. Skype and Telegram messenger call functions were also affected during the reporting period. RTI will help local staff to mitigate these issues and continue to monitor the situation during Q3.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Organizational Linkages

USAID

During the reporting period, RTI submitted a Program start-up plan to USAID on January 21, 2020. On March 4, 2020, RTI also submitted the Year 1 AWP to USAID and received approval on March 27, 2020, with the understanding that the scheduling of activities will likely change because of COVID-19. RTI submitted the draft AMELP on April 7, 2020, to USAID for review and approval. In addition, RTI produced an Options Brief for internal discussions between USAID and RTI, which will help explore possibilities for addressing the MPE’s concerns about the Program’s scope and scale and submitted a draft Program Steering Committee Terms of Reference to USAID (and the MPE) for review. USAID participated in the AWP Co-Development Workshop conducted by the Consortium in Tashkent (described earlier). The USAID/Central Asia contracts office and the RTI Home Office also held a virtual Program Kick-Off Meeting on March 20, 2020. Most matters raised during that meeting were resolved within the reporting period; any remaining matters are expected to be resolved early in Q3.

RTI and the USAID Agreement Officer’s Representative (AOR) and Alternate AOR engaged in regular formal weekly meetings and ongoing ad hoc communications by telephone and email. A range of political, strategic, contractual, and operational matters were addressed, several of which are discussed elsewhere in this report. It is anticipated that the weekly meetings will continue during Q3 and will continue to include the RTI COP, Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Senior Policy and Governance Advisor (as needed), until the COP relocates to Tashkent. At that point, the COP and USAID will hold face-to-face meetings.

Partner Government

The Consortium was heavily involved with the MPE throughout the reporting period, particularly to plan for and conduct the AWP Co-Development Workshop (described earlier in the report); more than 50 MPE personnel from the national, district, and school levels participated. In addition, throughout the period, RTI held regular formal weekly meetings with

the MPE's Overall Focal Point, as well as ongoing *ad hoc* communications by Telegram, telephone, and email. A range of political, strategic, and operational matters were addressed, many of which are discussed elsewhere in this report. It is anticipated that the weekly meetings will continue as needed during Q3 and will continue to include the COP, Program Manager, and Senior Policy and Governance Advisor (as needed), until the COP relocates to Tashkent; at that point, the COP and MPE will hold face-to-face meetings. Matters that remain unresolved as of March 31, 2020, include the Program name, participant remuneration, Program governance structures (including the Steering Committee and the Terms of Reference), and the expanded group of core technical personnel with whom the Consortium TA can begin to engage.

At least five virtual meetings were held with the MPE Component Focal Points and Consortium technical team members; however, as discussed under *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities, and Lessons*, the MPE suspended these meetings on April 7, 2020, until the Program scope and scale matter is resolved. It is anticipated that in Q3, the Consortium will be able to engage more substantively with the MPE Component Focal Points and core technical personnel, assuming the MPE is able to move forward with identifying and onboarding these individuals and the broader set of CWG members.

Other Donors and Development Partners

RTI initiated discussions with UNICEF, which is supporting the MPE's curriculum reform initiative; the American Councils and British Council, both of which are or have been involved in EFL TPD; and the RTI-implemented, USAID-funded ACR/Asia project, which is conducting the national EGRA/EGMA baseline in collaboration with the MPE. It is anticipated that during Q3, the Consortium will have further discussions with each of these organizations and identify others of relevance to Program implementation.

Capacity Enhancement

There is little yet to report regarding the Program's proposed capacity enhancement approach (CEA). Given the risks that manifested late in Q2, (see *Section IV: Risks, Opportunities, and Lessons*), particularly the COVID-19 crisis and the impasse regarding the Program scope and scale, the Consortium was unable to make any meaningful progress in introducing and beginning to implement the CEA. Depending on how these two risks resolve, RTI hopes to be able to move forward with the CEA in Q3. In the meantime, in collaboration with the RTI MEL Advisor, the MELC team will continue to refine the CEA parameters and operational processes and tools and will provide an introductory session for Consortium team members in early Q3.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

RTI is committed to inclusive development, and during the reporting period, the Program continued to refine a set of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) principles and practices for the Program. Although the cooperative agreement only requires disaggregation of data by sex, the Consortium aims to incorporate a more sophisticated treatment of GESI that will address GESI in curriculum products, instruction, the school and classroom environment, and the selection of participants, and workshops. For example, it is clear from analyses by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of textbooks from many countries that gender biases are present in all textbooks from grade 1 onwards. UNESCO and RTI have both developed tools to detect and mitigate gender bias in curriculum materials, and other Consortium experts have developed tools that incorporate a social inclusion lens to ensure that marginalized and/or excluded groups are represented in a sensitive and balanced manner. The United Nations is currently assisting the MPE to

conduct a gender bias analysis, similar to work undertaken with other countries. The Program can build on this work and incorporate a social inclusion lens as well.

In addition, the Program will aim for gender balance and diversity among its participants by using an intersectional lens. Given the lack of women in positions of authority at different levels within the MPE, the Program will identify the barriers and boosters for movement into decision-making positions and identify strategies for creating opportunity pathways. The Program will also endeavor to ensure that there is gender balance and diversity among Program personnel and that women and other marginalized groups are included in our staff. A set of bio-data that looks beyond sex alone is being developed and will be used across the Program. It is expected that the GESI Strategy will be finalized early in Q3 and then socialized across the Consortium and with the MPE.

During the reporting period, there were limited opportunities to apply a GESI lens and track GESI data. The findings from the one key event held during the period—the AWP Co-Development Workshop—show that while there was gender balance *vis a vis* the number of participants (31 female, 34 male), the bulk of the female participants were not in positions of uppermost levels of authority but were found in the technical and teaching staff ranks. Males hold leadership positions within the MPE. For example, only two out of 17 participants at the ministerial and senior management levels were female (**Figure 2**), and of the nine MPE participants at the ministerial and senior management levels, none were female (**Figure 3**). In fact, the bulk of MPE participants at the technical and teaching levels were female (16 female, 9 male). The Consortium will try to identify sex-disaggregated personnel data early in Q3.

Figure 2. Workshop Participants by Position and Sex

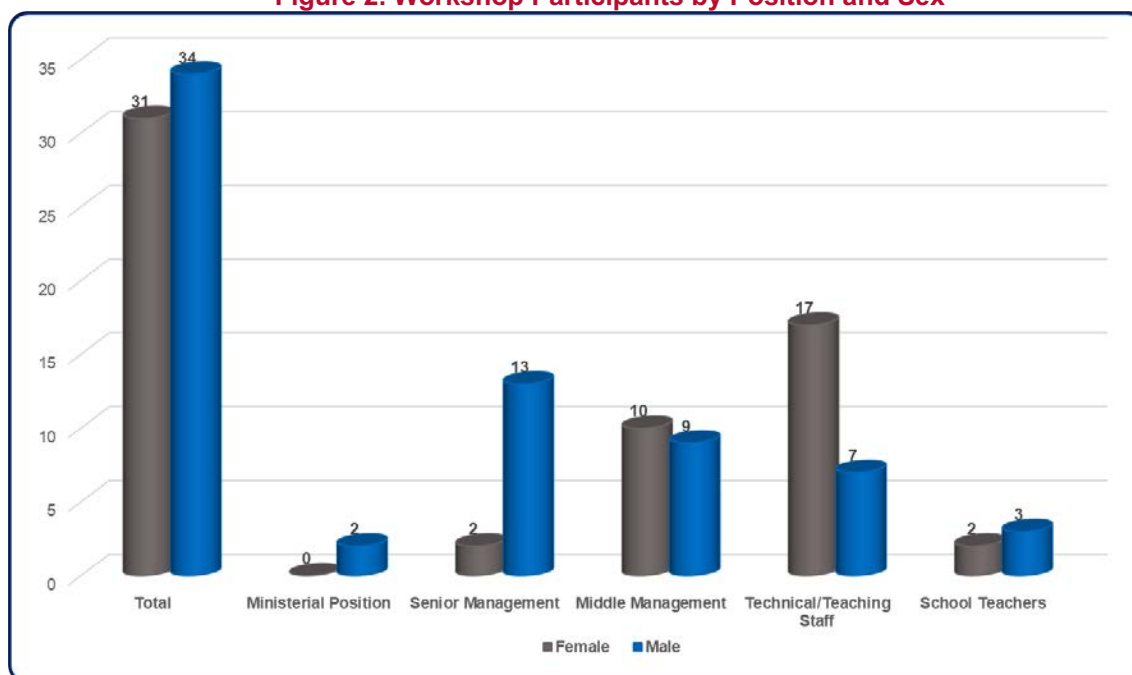
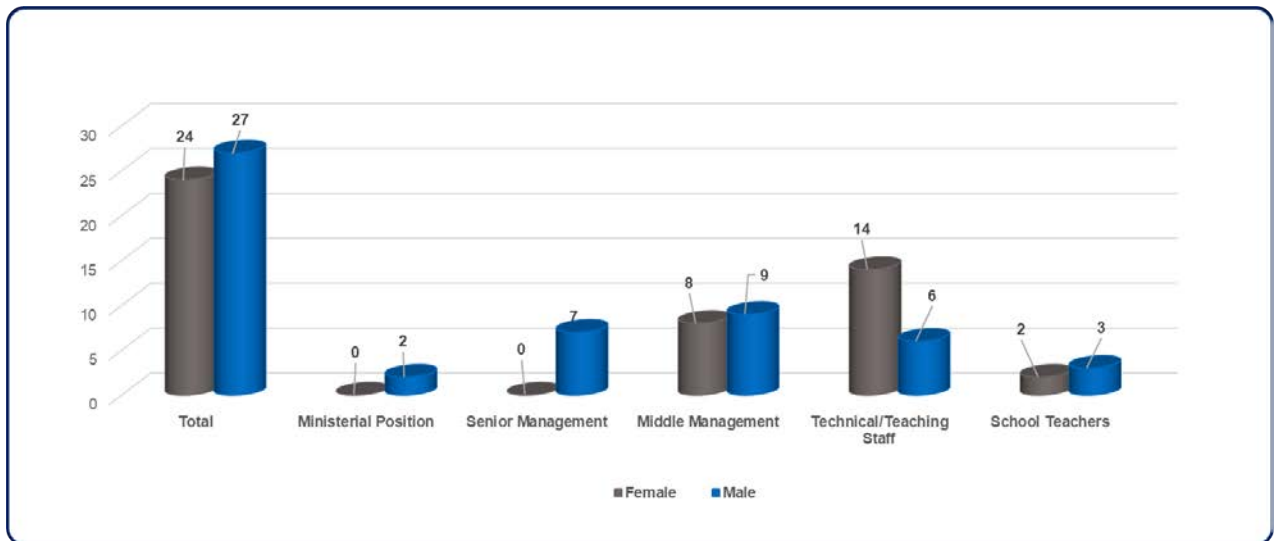


Figure 3. Workshop Participants from MPE by Position and Sex '



SECTION IV: RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND LESSONS

CHALLENGES AND RISKS

Several risks identified in the Risk Management Matrix (see **Annex B**) manifested during the reporting period.

Risk 1: Conflict and/or crisis arises and negatively affects Program implementation. The COVID-19 pandemic was unanticipated and has resulted in the inability of the Consortium to undertake fundamental tasks with a wide group of MPE personnel to build capacity and develop products. A foundational workshop scheduled for late March 2020 and intended to be delivered in-person was *de facto* cancelled because of the GOU and Consortium partners' travel restrictions, which meant that the COP and Consortium TA were unable to be in Tashkent. Recruitment of CWG members per subject was put on hold, and to date, the MPE has not yet identified members of a per-subject core technical team to work directly with and support the MPE Component Focal Points.

RTI attempted to mitigate the risk effects through the following propositions:

1. Preparing and providing virtual workshops with CWG members. The MPE rejected this option due to concerns about connectivity and the view that face-to-face engagement is important, especially in the Program's initial work.
2. Working closely with MPE Component Focal Points and their core technical teams to enhance their capacity and potentially to use these individuals to undertake the face-to-face work, supported virtually by Consortium TA. The MPE was not interested in this option because of the provision of virtual support, the lack of core team members, and the demands placed on Component Focal Points by the COVID-19 crisis.
3. Working closely with the MPE Component Focal Points to prepare all foundation materials that will be needed once the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, and the team can work in-country, provide face-to-face sessions, and undertake field research. The MPE indicated its interest in this strategy, but to date, there has been limited engagement and little effect. The need to respond to United States education needs in Florida and Mississippi and for RTI to respond as an organization to support education projects globally has put a strain on many Consortium personnel. These demands are expected to ease over time. Also see Risk 2.

Risk 2: Differences in perspective between the donor, the MPE, and RTI. This risk materialized during the reporting period. The MPE had different expectations of the Program scope and scale than those articulated in the Program Description. The situation has not been resolved to date, despite ongoing discussions between RTI and the MPE and between USAID and the MPE. The situation has resulted in a request from the MPE to put work on specific tasks in the AWP on hold until the matter has been resolved. RTI produced an Options Paper for USAID that includes resource implications for four options presented. It is anticipated that the scope and scale matter will be resolved in early Q3 so that the

Consortium can begin to engage more substantively with MPE Component Focal Points. In the meantime, the Consortium will continue to work internally; however, there are concerns about using up short-term TA person days without achieving any felt impact on MPE personnel capacity.

Risk 3: An operational risk materialized during the reporting period, specifically concerning the company registration process. RTI's application was rejected twice, and a third submission was to be made just as the COVID-19 crisis resulted in shutdowns of GOU offices, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MOJ. Because of this situation, the Program's local staff have been put on consultancy contracts that will continue to be renewed until RTI is a registered company, at which point the consultants will be rolled over to full-time employee contracts. Although not ideal, this mitigation strategy seems to be working. Finances continue to be handled through the ARO until a bank account can be opened.

Challenges specific to different work streams within the Program have been discussed in other sections. Aside from the risks detailed above, there were no additional challenges.

Emerging Opportunities

Uzbek Readability Formula: The MPE has expressed interest in exploring the potential for developing an Uzbek readability formula on the part of the MPE. RTI has internal expertise in readability formulae and has access to an internationally recognized expert in curriculum development and readability formula development. An informational conference call will be held early in Q3; depending on the outcome of that discussion, a concept note may be developed.

Tangerine for Participants' Self-Reflection/Self-Assessment: There is potential to explore whether the Tangerine system could be used for tracking individuals' self-reflections on and self-assessment of changes in their knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, skills, and behaviors. This possibility will be investigated further during Q3.

Lessons Learned

Several important lessons were learned during the reporting period. RTI will continue to produce its own lessons, conduct searches to compile relevant lessons generated externally, and establish and maintain a library of lessons specific to the program. We will ensure that lessons are re-visited and taken into account as a part of the Program's risk mitigation strategy.

Lesson 1: A clear set of principles and practices can help ensure the functionality and productivity of a Consortium and safeguard against inefficiencies and ineffectiveness. In the case of this Program, three partner organizations are housed in different geographical locations, and nearly all contact is virtual. Having good communications protocols, clear organizational structures, designated leads for specific tasks, and clear and coherent directions from the lead organization headquarters and COP, among others, all contribute to functionality.

Lesson 2: Acknowledging and using strategies to support movement through the stages of group creation, maturation, and closing (pre-stage, forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning) are essential for helping people to feel they are part of something and that their voice matters and for carrying out tasks successfully. This is especially true in a situation where all individuals and organizations are dispersed and where, in the era of the COVID-19 crisis, all work is being done virtually. Once the MPE is satisfied with the Program scope, RTI hopes to incorporate our counterparts into the established groups and to use its

understanding of group development to build strong CWGs. Also see Lesson 1, which is important in applying this lesson as well.

Lesson 3: Growing pains are to be expected when USAID, the implementing partner (RTI), and the host country government counterpart organization (MPE) have not worked together previously or for many years. Strategies must be identified and utilized to manage the risks associated with the lack of familiarity. For example, engagement with MPE colleagues and application of the program's embedded CEA have not been possible in any substantive manner since early February 2020 because of the impasse regarding the Program scope. This impasse is affecting the Consortium's ability to build rapport and move ahead on critical foundational tasks, in anticipation of eventual in-country implementation.

Lesson 4: Scenario planning and strategy development to respond to conflict, crises, and crime are important to consider in program design and early in implementation to respond effectively and efficiently to large-scale disruptions that are outside of the Program's control. While such scenario planning/strategizing is a common requirement for programs implemented in conflict-, crisis-, and crime-affected countries/contexts, these activities are not common in developing countries, such as Uzbekistan, that are relatively stable (aside from risks that may emerge due to political upheavals). None of the key stakeholders—USAID, RTI, or the MPE—were prepared for the scope of the impact of COVID-19 as currently experienced.



ANNEXES

ANNEX A. OVERVIEW OF POSITIONS FILLED IN QUARTERS 1 AND 2 AND UNDER RECRUITMENT FOR QUARTER 3

Table A-1. Positions Filled in Quarters 1 and 2 (Q1/2) of Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020)

Position	Position Location	Date Filled
Director of Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Communication	Local National (LN)—Tashkent	January 15, 2020
Director of Finance, Operations, and Human Resources	LN—Tashkent (Delaying re-location to Tashkent)	January 15, 2020
Chief of Party	United States National (USN)—Tashkent (Delaying re-location to Tashkent)	February 12, 2020
Human Resources Officer	LN—Tashkent	March 23, 2020
Technical Specialist/Mathematics	LN—Tashkent	March 23, 2020
Technical Specialist/English Language	LN—Tashkent (Delaying re-location to Tashkent)	March 23, 2020
Technical Specialist/Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	LN—Tashkent	March 23, 2020
Technical Specialist/Reading Specialist	LN—Tashkent	March 30, 2020

Table A-2. Status of Positions Not Filled at End of Q2 FY2020

Position	Date advertised	Current status
Director of Implementation (Deputy Chief of Party)	January 2020	Recruitment ongoing. In negotiation with preferred candidate.
Senior Finance Officer	January 2020	Updated job description will be finalized. Intend to re-advertise in early Q3 and identify shortlist.
Senior Procurement & Logistics Officer	January 2020	Recruitment ongoing. Intend to re-advertise in early Q3 and identify shortlist.
Senior Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Officer	Not yet advertised	Updated job description will be finalized. Intend to advertise and hire in early Q3.
Technical Officer/Reading	Not yet advertised	Updated job description will be finalized. Intend to re-advertise in early Q3 and identify shortlist.
Technical Officer/Mathematics	Not yet advertised	Updated job description will be finalized. Intend to re-advertise in early Q3 and identify shortlist.
Technical Officer/English as a Foreign Language	Not yet advertised	Updated job description will be finalized. Intend to re-advertise in early Q3 and identify shortlist.
Information Technology (IT) Officer	Not yet advertised	IT needs are being addressed through the RTI Asia Regional Office, Technical Specialist/ICT and ICT for Education (ICT4E) Technical Advisor. Once the Program office is functional, a decision about IT support will be made.
Communications Officer	Advertised	Once Program needs become clearer, a Communications Officer may be hired.

ANNEX B. RISK MANAGEMENT MATRIX

Impact: Minor, Moderate, Major, Severe

Likelihood: Rare, Unlikely, Possible, Likely, Almost Certain

RISK CATEGORIES:

Context: Safety/security considerations, political developments, economic situation and other environmental factors

Delivery: Partner and its supply chain, Program performance, risk relating to technical design of the Program and its beneficiaries

Operational: Capacity and capability to manage the Program

Fiduciary: Funds not used for the intended purpose, not properly accounted for, fraud and corruption, not demonstrated value for money

Reputational: Any risk that could threaten RTI's or the Client's reputation

Table B-1. Program Risk Matrix

Risk Category	Risk Analysis per Category	Mitigating Actions	Impact* (Severe, Major, Moderate, Minor)	Likelihood* (Almost Certain, Likely, Possible, Unlikely, Rare)	Overall* (After Mitigating Action) (Severe, Major, Moderate, Minor)	Program & Client Response (Treat, Tolerate, Transfer, Terminate)	Priority? (High, Medium, Low)	Risk Owner	Current Status (Updated Regularly)
Context	Limited political will and/or capacity to provide leadership for and collaborate with the Program, promote accountability, create an enabling environment, including supporting anti-corruption	Seek out champions of change and reform at national and sub-national levels. Establish open and transparent communications between the Program and all stakeholders. Establish agreed governance structures, including a high-level Program Steering Committee and hold quarterly meetings. Share concerns with USAID. Maintain control and oversight of Program budget.	Major	Possible	Moderate	No response needed as yet	High	Program, USAID	Program continually monitors the context and discusses context developments with USAID. No progress has been made on governance structures.
Context	Conflict, crisis, natural disaster occurs that affects all or parts of the country. Most likely event is political unrest/upheaval. One risk –	Engage in scenario planning for most likely risks and carry out contingency planning.	Severe	Possible	Severe	Treat	High	Program, USAID, MPE	Business Contingency Plan for COVID-19 is in place and

	health crisis – was realized as of March 2020 when Uzbekistan and US partners shut down due to COVID-19 crisis.	Monitor effects of COVID-19 on the economy – changes may affect Program budget. Identify aspects of Program that can continue, despite impact of COVID-19, with minimal budget implications.							updated weekly.
Context	Over- or under-saturation of assistance and/or limitations in the enabling environment <i>vis a vis</i> key Program intervention areas. The English language space is over-saturated, whereas the ICT space is under-saturated. In the case of EL, risks include: the potential inability of MPE to harmonize efforts across donors/projects to avoid duplication of effort, redundancy and to provide/manage access to small pool of key stakeholders/decision-makers; in the case of ICT, risks include high expectations of the Program to fill all gaps and broader enabling environment issues of ICT as an under-valued subject in the eyes of parents/students.	Become familiar with the overall landscape re Program’s main interventions (4 subjects, In-Service Teacher Education system, digital platforms). Maintain a presence in working groups and other fora, interact with individual organizations, and seek and share information. Make efforts to adhere to Paris Declaration principles, particularly regarding coordination/ harmonization and reducing transaction costs on counterparts.	Major	Almost Certain	Moderate	Tolerate	High	Program	Described mitigating actions ongoing. Began to participate in fora such as English Reform Working Group bi-monthly meetings. Began outreach to individuals organizations incl. UNICEF, British Council, American Councils, ACR/Asia, etc.
Delivery	Mode of Delivery is predominantly through off-shore technical assistance with periodic short visits in-country, an in-country technical team, collaborating with national	Utilize a service delivery framework and hold ongoing weekly meetings and formal quarterly meetings to review technical assistance targets. Establish and use regular communication with counterparts to	Major	Possible	Minor	No response needed as yet	High	Program, MPE	Described mitigating actions ongoing.

	<p>level MPE organizations to create linkages with individuals to undertake work and with sub-national levels of Government to implement Program and to enhance accountability. Risks lie in: 1) the effectiveness of off-shore TA modality incl. amount of TA time available and capacity of in-country technical personnel to plan for and deliver full range of Program intervention areas within a capacity enhancement frame; 2) ability of MPE to identify collaborators and for collaborators to rapidly absorb and apply new knowledge and skills; 3) willingness of collaborators to invest time/effort without financial remuneration.</p>	<p>assess the effectiveness of the service delivery model. Potentially hold an end-of-Phase 1 (curriculum development phase) review to assess progress, re-evaluate the Program parameters and re-align as needed.</p>							
Operational	<p>Program is delivered through one in-country office with travel to Program sites. Program home office and regional office in Jakarta provide back-up, support, and oversight of key functions (delivery, finance, procurement, human resources, etc.). Risks include: home office or regional office inability to provide operational or technical support to Program and/or Program in-country leadership team fails to provide technical</p>	<p>Hold weekly call between Program field office team and Consortium partner organizations' focal points. Utilize adaptive management principles and practices. Undertake joint annual review and work plan development. Identify and apply best practices in consortia as an implementation modality.</p>	Major	Possible	Minor	No response needed as yet	High	Program	Described mitigating actions ongoing.

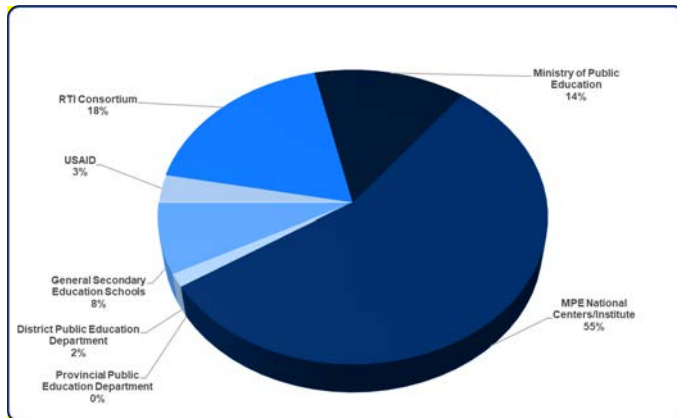
and operational
implementation and
oversight.

Fiduciary	Program fraud	<p>Conduct spot checks with vendors to confirm that receipts are not falsified. Financial management will be the focus of capacity building interventions for grantees.</p> <p>Explore a mobile money solution for payments/reimbursements to participants as well as bank transfers to suppliers and service providers limiting cash disbursements to and by employees.</p> <p>Hotels: Develop a list of pre-approved hotels with standardized rates. Hotel charges are direct paid by the Program, minimizing cash disbursed to employees and consultants.</p> <p>Fuel: Issue fuel cards to drivers. Drivers are responsible for reporting fuel purchases, and fuel provider also gives a report of fuel purchases on each card. The two reports are reconciled weekly.</p> <p>Install a vehicle tracking technology which tracks vehicle's physical location and fuel usage.</p>	Moderate	Possible	Minor	No response needed as yet	High	Program	Described mitigating actions ongoing.
Reputational	Follow-through on commitments to partners	<p>Thoroughly vet staff, particularly those interacting directly with key Govt. counterparts and other stakeholders, and utilize a probationary period where performance and engagement are assessed.</p> <p>Undertake regular monitoring and implement Dynamic Development approach by those in supervisory positions – this will help identify any performance issues before these impact Program activities.</p> <p>Exchange visits and learning networks will enable Establish ethic</p>	Major	Possible	Minor	No response needed as yet	Medium	Program	Described mitigating actions ongoing. Annual appraisal process ongoing, including 360 feedback.

of ongoing learning and professional development and networking to exchange lessons learned, best practices, opportunities and challenges to ensure high-quality interventions.

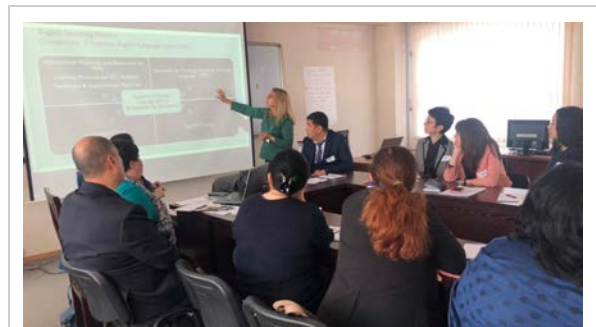
ANNEX C. PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

Figure C-1. Workshop Participants by Organization



From February 6 to 7, 2020, RTI held a collaborative, interactive Co-Development Workshop in Tashkent to 1) affirm the shared vision for the Uzbekistan Education Reform Program (the Program), 2) clarify the Program’s overall mandate and scope, and 3) produce outlines of planned activities with associated implementation strategies, resource needs, and roles and responsibilities. The products from the workshop ultimately formed the

basis of the Program’s Year 1 Annual Work Plan (AWP) that was submitted to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Ministry of Public Education (MPE) in early March 2020. In total, 65 people (including 31 women) from the national Ministry and four affiliated centers/institutes (i.e., the Republican Center for Education, Abdulla Avloni Institute, Center for Information and Communications Technology, and Center for Innovation, Technology and Strategy), USAID, and the RTI Consortium engaged in panel discussions and worked in small groups to produce four sets of subject-specific activities and a set of activities for the digital platform to be implemented between February 2020 and the end of September 2021. The workshop culminated with a recap of the outcomes of the workshop by His Excellence Minister of Public Education Sherzod Shermatov.



MPE and RTI Consortium personnel listen to a presentation by one of the Consortium’s technical advisors on improving English language instruction during a working group session at the Year 1 AWP Co-Development Workshop held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, February 6–7, 2020.



MPE and RTI Consortium personnel discuss early grade reading and mathematics during a working group session at the Year 1 AWP Co-Development Workshop held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, February 6–7, 2020.

ANNEX D. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING TOOLS AND PROCESSES INITIATED IN QUARTERS 1 AND 2

Research Products

- Research Methodology Plan template
- Survey instruments for teachers, school directors, and methodologists
- Key Informant Interview protocols for teachers, school directors, and methodologists
- Direct Observation Checklist

Monitoring and Evaluation Tracking Tools

- Participant Bio-Data Form template
- Meeting Agenda/Notes template
- Workshop Report template
- Knowledge, Attitudes/Beliefs, Skills, and Behavior Self-Reflection/Self-Assessment Tool
- Organizational Change Reflection/Assessment Tool

Thought Products

- Concept Note template
- Briefing Note template

Software and Hardware

- OpenProject
- Tangerine
- Kobo Toolbox
- Qualtrics

ANNEX E. OPENPROJECT COLLABORATION PLATFORM BRIEF

A. Program Overview

The Ministry of Public Education (MPE) in Uzbekistan is committed to an ambitious program of systematic and comprehensive reforms. The country aims to create an education system that can produce graduates with the critical thinking, problem solving, and practical skills that will enable them to succeed. Launched in December 2019, the Uzbekistan Education Reform Program is a four-year initiative, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to support the goal of sustainably improving the reading, mathematics, technology, and English skills of students in the country's public schools.

The Program is implemented by RTI International (RTI) in partnership with Florida State University (FSU) and Mississippi State University (MSU) to provide the expertise and experience needed to help MPE achieve and sustain the anticipated outcomes of the Program. The Program focuses on three main results: (1) improving reading and math outcomes in grades 1–6; (2) supporting information technology instruction for grades 1–11; and (3) improving English language instruction.

To achieve these results, Program activities will be jointly implemented by the RTI team and MPE and entail:

- Reviewing current teaching practice, standards, and materials
- Developing and refining standards for Uzbek reading, mathematics, information technology, and English
- Updating and piloting revised curricula and instructional resources, shifting to standards-, and competency-based instruction
- Designing and implementing professional development and support activities for teachers and school leaders
- Conducting program and impact evaluation research

The Uzbekistan Education Reform Program also is committed to gender equity, inclusion, and transparency as well as local ownership and sustainability.

B. Benefits of the OpenProject Collaboration Platform

The OpenProject collaboration platform will enable the Uzbekistan Education Reform Program to facilitate knowledge management, information sharing, and activity planning between the Program implementation team members from RTI International, RTI International (RTI), Florida State University (FSU), and Mississippi State University (MSU) and with the Ministry of Public Education (MPE) personnel including focal points, core teams supporting the focal points and members of collaboration working groups. In addition, since OpenProject is an open source product, the MPE will be able to retain the software at no cost after the Program closes and will be able to use it for other projects as well as MPE personnel become familiar with the platform and see its utility.

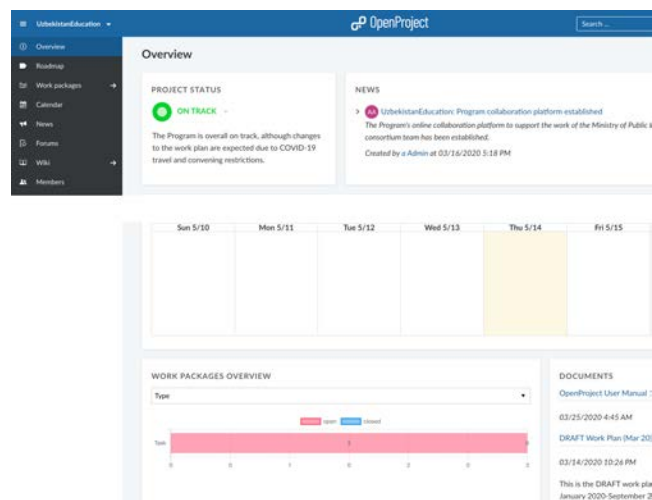
C. Approach Summary

Once MPE and Program staff voiced the need for a knowledge management tool, RTI confirmed with MPE that there was no applicable technology already available at MPE for the purpose. Following that, RTI reviewed existing tools and platforms. Giving priority to sustainability and open source platforms over proprietary, fee-based solutions, RTI selected OpenProject for introduction to and testing with the wider Program team and subsequently also with MPE counterparts.

RTI installed and configured the platform on RTI-managed servers where the software will be hosted until the platform has been fully evaluated and until the MPE is comfortable with the platform and convinced of its utility. Once this comfort level is established, and once the MPE has the ICT infrastructure and management capacity to take on platform management and support, RTI will work with MPE to add the software to MPE servers and take over the day-to-day management. RTI will remain involved for troubleshooting.

The OpenProject platform has a diversity of features available that can be flexibly turned on to expand platform functionality as needed. For the initial version of the platform, RTI set up a site for the Program at large, as well as sub-sites for each component. For the main Program site, the platform provides the following initial functionality:

- **Overview page:** Gives a quick snapshot on program status, news, and upcoming events.
- **Work packages:** Provides access to view imminent Program tasks and milestones as well as allows members to create new ones.
- **Calendar:** Displays any tasks or milestones created via the work packages functionality.
- **News:** Provides access to view news as well as for members to add new news.
- **Forums:** Provides access to discussion forums and for members to post comments.
- **Members:** Provides access to the list of platform users and their email addresses.
- **Documents:** Provides access to Program documents uploaded and for members to post new ones.
- **Meetings:** Provides access to meeting notes and agendas and for members to post new meeting resources.



To date, RTI has helped Program staff and key MPE colleagues set up OpenProject accounts and has held several informal testing sessions with a small number of Program staff. The Program team also held a formal webinar using a PowerPoint presentation and a hands-on introduction to OpenProject with all Program personnel and with six key MPE personnel.

The RTI ICT4Education Advisor will continue to provide ongoing support. In addition, the local Program ICT Technical Specialist and an MSU colleague will become increasingly involved in helping to support the use of OpenProject. It is anticipated that in early Quarter 3, the platform will start to be used systematically and on a day-to-day basis as appropriate. See Challenges and Limitations.

D. Products

During Quarter 2, RTI developed a zero draft of the User Manual and will continue to refine it and produce a final version in early Quarter 3. The Manual will continue to be updated as new features and processes for OpenProject are taken up.

E. Reporting

RTI will continue to engage with MPE on OpenProject and will report to USAID and in quarterly and annual reports on the uptake of the platform.

E. Challenges and Limitations

While OpenProject seems to be a generally useful and viable platform, it does present some limitations. From a technological lens, some of the functionality is not fit for purpose and this has required Program staff to find work-around solutions. In addition, while the platform can be effective as a shared document repository and discussion space, a significant limitation is the fact that OpenProject does not offer real-time document co-authoring features. If this becomes a Program need, other technology options will have to be identified for this specific purpose. From a user and user adoption lens, which would apply to any technology product chosen, it will be necessary to put in place clear hierarchies of users and to ensure that workspaces are used appropriately; yet monitoring the appropriate use of the platform may become a time-consuming proposition. Furthermore, MPE and Program personnel will need ongoing encouragement to become familiar with and to consistently use the platform.

F. Ministry of Public Education Assistance Needed

The Program will need MPE leadership to utilize the platform and to promote its use more broadly by MPE members of working groups and Program activities. MPE should also consider to eventually host and manage the platform and explore the potential for its use beyond the Uzbekistan Education Reform Program.

ANNEX F. UZBEKISTAN EDUCATION SECTOR PLAN 2019-2023 KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

The Uzbekistan 2019-2023 Education Sector Plan (ESP)¹⁰ identifies three overarching policy goals and seven key strategic areas for improvement for all educational sub-sectors. (**Table E-1**).

Table E-1. 2019-2023 ESP Overall Policy Priorities and Strategic Programs

Policy Priorities/ Goals	P1. Ensuring equitable access to and participation in education at all levels	P2. Enhancing the quality and relevance of education at all levels to improve learning outcomes and competencies/skills	P3. Enhancing service delivery for efficient, effective, and equitable distribution of results on access and quality
Strategic Areas (Programs)	Area 1. Equitable access to and participation in education are achieved by demand-side and supply-side (expansion of educational infrastructure) interventions.	Area 3. Competencies and learning levels of students are enhanced by providing relevant and appropriate competency-based curriculum, enriching teaching-learning experiences, and assessing their learning by robust assessment systems.	Area 6. Education service delivery is enhanced by systemic reforms and effective management of education system, enabled by better capacity at all levels.
	Area 2. Equitable access to and participation in education are ensured by providing physically and socially safe, inclusive, and conducive learning environments for children/youth.	Area 4. The quality of teaching and learning is boosted by providing and effectively using appropriate teaching and learning materials (TLM) and information and communication technology (ICT) integration as a value-added pedagogical and management tool.	Area 7. Education service delivery is supported by evidence-based policies, programming, and monitoring, facilitated by an education management information system and targeted research.
		Area 5. The quality of education is improved by teacher workforce development, especially by building their capacity and enhancing the prestige/status of the profession.	

¹⁰ GOU. (2019). *Uzbekistan Education Sector Plan 2019-2023*. Tashkent, Uzbekistan: GOU.