

## USAID is Making Durable Contributions to Improved Education in Tajikistan

Community-based methodological support, more accessible information on teacher professional development, and an app that builds students' reading skills are helping improve learning outcomes in Tajikistan.

### Introduction

Over the last 10 years, USAID has supported the Government of Tajikistan to improve the teaching of reading and math in the early grades of primary school. USAID has helped reinforce key features of how the education system supports classroom instruction. Three initiatives described below are particularly notable as lasting contributions to Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) capacity to continue to improve how teachers teach and how students learn to read.

### Revitalizing Community-Based Methodological Units (CBMU)

CBMUs are housed within schools that serve as both anchors in their municipality (jamoat) and as hubs for methodological support to other schools. They provide a crucial link between the District Education Departments and schools in the district. USAID is providing training and support to 1,200 trainers assigned to 512 methodological units and 88 sub-units. CBMUs and their sub-units are the parts of the system that are most able to reach schools as frequently as a few times a month. They are a key piece of institutional infrastructure for assuring continuous development and follow-up coaching for teachers.



CBMU level training at school No. 35, Dushanbe, December 2022

### Teacher In-Service Professional Development Information System

The teacher in-service information system is a digital platform that collects and analyzes data and prepares reports on each teacher's in-service development. The Republican In-Service Teacher Training Institute uses the platform to identify training that would benefit teachers. USAID supported the development of the platform and recently updated it to create a single system for tracking all forms of teacher professional development. MoES and its development partners can now know which teachers have received which kinds of training and coaching, and can therefore design initiatives that carry teachers forward on their professional development journeys.

A variety of teacher resources are housed on the platform which is available on-line, 24/7. Teachers who have internet connection can therefore access professional development resources at times and in places that best suit them. The system is also collaborative — bringing together teachers and mentors through observing lessons, sharing documents, or prepping teachers for their classrooms. Teachers can record their lessons or upload materials they develop and share them with other teachers through the platform.

The variety of teacher resources on the platform include materials teachers can read to learn subject matter content or to better understand the theory behind different instructional approaches. Succinct summaries in the form of infographics introduce topics to teachers. And the system contains videos that demonstrate different teaching methods as well as supplementary learning materials teachers can incorporate into their lessons.

Teachers can track their own progress working through the variety of professional development sessions and courses and document when they have completed any required trainings. Mentors can use the platform to track teachers closely as well through exam results, individual assessments, and attendance records.

## Kitobdust Mobile Application

A mobile application designed for third and fourth grade students, Kitobdust (roughly translated as book lover) contains 50 books and games that develop reading comprehension skills. Each grade has three reading levels, with three books per level. After the user reads all books within a level, they then can play phonics, fluency, and vocabulary games providing extra practice to further develop their reading skills.

The government-owned station, TV Bahoriston, broadcasts "Time to Read." USAID negotiated with the MoES and TV Bahoriston to include a video promoting Kitobdust after each episode of Time to Read. USAID also worked with Radio Vatan to promote Kitobdust during each "Let's Read Together" program and on their Facebook page. USAID support is continuing to add books and games to the Kitobdust mobile application. USAID is also developing a similar mobile application dedicated to math. MoES has agreed to market Kitobdust through schools to increase use of the app. USAID can target additional efforts to expand and improve the resources offered through the app if USAID evaluates the impact of Kitobdust on learning outcomes. Kitobdust could significantly increase comprehension skills among third and fourth grade students, an area of weakness highlighted by recent reading assessments.



## Conclusion

The success of the initiatives highlighted here is in part due to USAID programs collaborating with students, teachers, librarians, school directors, parents, Tajik businesses, and other donor projects. Revitalized methodological units, a more robust teacher professional development system, and greater use of digital resources for teachers and students represent improvements that could have durable impact on the quality of teaching and learning in Tajik schools.