

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

Report No.: PIDC162

Project Name	Development of preschool education system of Sakha (Yakutia) (P127405)
Region	EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA
Country	Russian Federation
Sector(s)	Pre-primary education (100%)
Lending Instrument	Specific Investment Loan
Project ID	P127405
Borrower(s)	Ministry of Education of Sakha Republic (Yakutia)
Implementing Agency	TBC
Environmental Category	B-Partial Assessment
Date PID Prepared	03-Apr-2012
Estimated Date of Appraisal Completion	00000000
Estimated Date of Board Approval	14-Mar-2013
Concept Review Decision	Track II - The review did authorize the preparation to continue

I. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Major achievements in primary, secondary and tertiary education have been attained, but access to pre-school/early childhood education remains a challenge. The Russian Federation has since decades achieved full access to basic education and is thus increasingly turning its attention to increasing access to early childhood/pre-school education as well as improving the quality of outcomes across its 83 regions (Republics, krai, oblast) in order to meet the needs of a more diversified economy and the changing demands from households for education.

The preschool education system in Russia is currently experiencing a large shortage of spaces due to a growing number of births and smaller number of preschools. During the past decade the number of children of preschool age in Russia has increased significantly as a result of the increase in fertility rates (the growth of fertility rate since 2000 has averaged 2.3% annually (from 1.2 in 1999 to 1.5 in 2009)). At the same time the low demand for kindergarten spaces during the 1990s resulted in the transfer of a large number of facilities for other purposes or business. As a result from 1995 to 2009 the number of public preschools decreased from 68,600 to 43,500, equivalent to a 37% drop in capacity. Currently, the overall net enrollment rate in ECD programs of children aged 1-7 is 59% in Russia, whereas the enrollment rate for children aged 5-7 is 76%.

The Government of Yakutia has placed a high priority on increasing access to pre-school education given the very high unmet demand in the Yakutia region and is pursuing institutional and pedagogical innovations that will improve both the quality and cost-efficiency of pre-school provision. The proposed project – the first sub national loan with a sovereign guarantee - would support these objectives.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

Yakutia education system and on-going reforms. Yakutia has universal basic education; there are about 700 schools in Yakutia. Concurrently, Yakutia's government is pursuing a modernization plan which is currently being implemented at the secondary education level, and which has brought about such changes as a per capita financing and performance-based teacher salaries. Yakutia has also a strong university system (including the North-East Federal University in Yakutsk). The teacher training system is under the responsibility of a teacher training institute (higher education level) and two teacher training colleges (TVET level). The in-service teacher training institute supports skills development of current school teachers and preschool caregivers.

Current enrollment into pre-school education in Yakutia. There are currently 83,392 boys and girls between the ages of 1 and 7 in Yakutia. The enrollment rate in ECD in Yakutia is 63%, compared to Russia's average of 59%. There are 745 public kindergartens in Yakutia currently attended by 52,662 boys and girls, and another 30,730 children in waiting lists for pre-school spaces (13,495 in Yakutsk city alone). There are no private kindergartens in rural areas and a few in the cities (e.g. the largest Yakutsk city has 8 private kindergartens only). Moreover, many of the existing private kindergartens are "un-registered/unofficial" and provide unlicensed services due to inability to meet existing regulations.

Poor state of existing pre-school infrastructure. The types of existing facilities in Yakutia range from 75 years old dilapidated wooden infrastructure to newer state-of-art and costly constructions. Most of the older buildings are in constant need of repair driving up recurrent costs, and negatively affecting the quality of care and services. As of year 2010, 31% of preschool facilities required major repair and 3% were in emergency condition. Only 33% of all facilities had all required amenities (running water, sewage and heating).

Improvements of quality outcomes, cost-efficiency of construction and compliance with federal standard and safeguards. The visits to Yakutia have clearly identified opportunities to improve the quality and cost-efficiency from investment in preschool education. While the average construction cost per pre-school child in a Yakutia's kindergarten exceeds US\$ 33,000, the same type of construction in Alaska averages US\$ 25,000 or less. This is particularly striking as the requirements to the buildings are similar but labor costs are much higher in the United States. While there are significant differences in the cost of materials and transport it clearly points to the fact that savings could be generated. Furthermore, field visit to facilities in existing kindergartens showed that cost can be further optimized.

In this context, the aim of the World Bank – beyond the funding- as a development and knowledge institution is to help the Government of Yakutia develop alternative models, designs and options from across the world which would maximize cost and pedagogy and thus allow the Government to expand access further. The World Bank is working closely with the OECD Center for Effective Learning Environments (CELE) to share with the Government of Yakutia global experiences and kindergarten models inter alia from Greenland and the Scandinavian countries with similar climate conditions which could potentially be used for the project. With a careful review of the designs more kindergartens could be built for the same amount of money within existing regulations and thus more children would have access to quality preschool services. Furthermore, newer and modern kindergarten designs incorporate the use of local materials and consider cultural (and environmental) aspects as an integral of the design.

Alternative provision. The potential of alternative forms of provision is not used in full. Furthermore, a preliminary assessment of the existing preschool centers indicates that there is existing capacity which could be utilized thus increasing access outside of the traditional public kindergartens. For example child minders (family kindergartens) for the youngest children (as practiced in some European countries), short stay groups, private providers as well as information campaigns for parents may be used to increase the coverage and provide children with care. The number of new places may be increased from 300 to 5,000 within five years. When combined with the infrastructure update these alternative forms may significantly contribute to the development of a more balanced or flexible ECD system in the Yakutia region.

International evidence of investing in early childhood development: Neuroscience and longitudinal studies of ECD have found that prenatal care and experiences from birth to the first six years (0-6), affect physical and brain development of children, and, thereby, their cognitive and socio-emotional development in subsequent stages of their lives. Lack of access to nutrition and health care, insufficient stimulating human interaction, and non-enrollment in pre-primary education are associated with lower educational attainment and achievement, which, in turn, reduce life-time earnings. Investing in ECD yields the highest economic returns of any educational investment because early learning and formation of good habits and social skills are far more productive than later, remedial education and training. The internal rates of return of rigorously evaluated ECD programs range from 7 percent to 18 percent, higher than the rates of return to financial capital. Moreover the recent success of Russian students in PIRLS study being further analyzed revealed strong correlation between access to preschool services and results in reading literacy. Research of results of national "matura" examination also shows strong dependence of school results from access to preschool services.

Yakutia Government' strategy and priorities: The Ministry of Education of Yakutia recognizes that investment in ECD is a highly cost-effective strategy to break the inter-generational transmission of poverty and to improve productivity in the long run. Furthermore, it recognizes the importance of a good pre-school education system as a way to support families and particularly women's access to the labor market. The Republic of Sakha Yakutia recently adopted the conceptual program of ECD system development which stipulates that the region will further develop the preschool education system via improving the infrastructure and increasing the role of alternative forms of preschool education provision. Specifically the concept stresses the importance of provision at early years (0-3) and the need to reach vulnerable groups of children.

Implementation readiness and ownership: The development of the proposed project is being led by the President and Prime Minister of the Yakutia government exemplifying the strong level of commitment and ownership. The Government of Yakutia has already passed its internal Resolution of the proposed project concept and it is currently being processed by the federal authorities. Activities have already been initiated to set up the project implementation structure and implementation unit.

Relationship to CAS

The World Bank Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for the Russian Federation for 2012-2016 is built around four strategic themes: Theme 1. Increase Growth and Diversification; Theme 2. Expand Human Potential, Theme 3. Deepening Russia's Regional and Global Role; and Theme 4. Improve Governance and Transparency. The Project would contribute directly to the proposed strategic theme2 (Expand Human Potential), which aims to enhance: (i) education, health, and social protection, (ii) skills for economic development, and (iii) socially inclusive development. The proposed Project would increase the quality and capacity of the Early Childhood Education system of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) by enrolling children, particularly those from nomadic/ herd and poor families into kindergarten. This proposed project also lays a foundation for other Russian regions in the development of cost-efficient construction and child centered ECD models.

The World Bank has been engaged actively with the Yakutia Government. In 2010 the Government of Yakutia requested the Bank's support, through a Fee-based Services agreement, to develop and pilot a coherent quality assurance system in ECD in the Republic based on self evaluation and external inspections. Since then the World Bank team has undertaken several visits to assess and discuss ECD system development.

II. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The proposed Project Development Objective is to improve the access and quality of the early childhood care and education services in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

Key Results

The proposed Project would pilot and test innovative approaches to developing and supporting modern, cost efficient, and affordable preschool construction and service delivery models at the municipal level. Proposed preliminary key project monitoring indicators are (i) increase the enrollment in preschools in the Republic from 63percent in 2010 to 75percent by 2016; (ii) decrease the number of preschool education facilities in emergency condition by 50percent (from 146 buildings to 70 buildings); and (iii) increase the number of children receiving services provided via alternative ways of ECD provision from 300 to 5,000 by year 2016.

Furthermore, child development outcomes would be measured by an impact evaluation that compares the treatment group with a control group through collection of baseline data and end-of-project data. These outcomes will preliminarily include: improvement in child development (measured by the primary caregivers and primary school teachers); and improvement in cognitive skills (as measured by a test of children visiting newly constructed kindergartens).

III. Preliminary Description

Concept Description

The proposed Project would be financed through a Specific Investment Loan (SIL) in the amount of US\$197.5 million (6 billion rubles) with World Bank financing of about US\$118 million (3.6 billion rubles).

The Project would consist of the following three components:

Component 1: Increasing Kindergarten Capacity in Urban and Rural Areas

The purpose of this component is to support the expansion in access to ECD centers in urban areas and municipal centers by financing the construction, rehabilitation, furnishing and equipping benefiting approximately 9,000 children.

Sub-component 1.1. This sub-component would finance the construction of new kindergartens in urban areas and municipal centers): Construction of 36 new kindergartens, of which 26 will be built in settlement centers and 10 in Yakutsk city, increasing access to 6,435 children.

The sub-component would also finance furniture, equipments, indoor and outdoor playgrounds, toys, teaching materials for the 36 new kindergartens.

Sub-component 1.2. This sub-component would support initiatives of local communities in the construction and furnishing of 44 kindergartens with capacity of up to 75 spaces each in rural areas of Yakutia. This component would be completed with co-financing (in-kind) support by local communities. The sub-component would also finance indoor and outdoor playgrounds, toys, teaching materials for the 44 new kindergartens.

Sub-component 1.3. This sub-component would finance the reconstruction of 13 buildings to accommodate early childhood education institutions, as well as the furniture, equipments, indoor and outdoor playgrounds, toys, teaching materials for them. Approximately 740 spaces for children in remote rural areas would be created under this sub-component.

Component 2: Innovations for early childhood care and education system

This component would support the overall educational, pedagogical and system development of early childhood development. The following areas have been identified for support under this component:

Development of the new curricula for teachers training and managers training Training of all KG directors in Yakutia and 550 teachers and their assistants in newly created KGs

Study tours for teachers and managers to familiarize with best international practices in ECD provision

Support the competition on development of the innovative flexible environments for kindergartens and financing of its implementation Support the piloting of different alternative forms of ECD services provision Studies of the efficient ways for ECD services delivery.

Component 3: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluations

To support the operation of the proposed Project a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) would be established to help execute the Project and ensure its smooth implementation. This component would fund the overall administration of the Project.

In addition the component would fund the monitoring and evaluation of project objectives and activities, as well as impact evaluation studies.

IV. Safeguard Policies that might apply

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

V. Tentative financing

Financing Source	Amount
Borrower	79.49
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	118.00
Total	197.49

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