

Tajikistan: Fourth Global Partnership for Education Fund Grant, GPE-4 (TF015134)
Implementation Support Mission
May 18-28, 2015
Aide Memoire

I. Introduction

A World Bank team¹ conducted a mission to supervise and support implementation of the Fourth Global Partnership for Education Fund Grant (GPE-4) from May 18-28, 2015. On May 18-22, the Team was joined by the GPE Secretariat representatives Ms. Josephine Lutta Kiyenje (Sr. Country Operations Officer) and Mr. David Bridges (Donor Relations Officer).

The objectives of the mission were to: i) review overall progress of the GPE-4 and support the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in the project implementation; ii) discuss progress and plans for curriculum modernization activities (component 2); and (iii) follow up on the actions related to involuntary resettlement. The GPE Secretariat representatives have also discussed outstanding issues related to furniture and civil works under the closed FTI-3 project with the counterparts and preparations for the next Joint Sector Review with the Local Education Group.

The Team would like to express its appreciation to the Minister Mr. Nuriddin Said for the advice and leadership he provided; and to Deputy Ministers Mr. Fathiddin Ismonov and Ms. Tojinisso Mahmadova, as well as the MoES staff and consultants with the project implementation responsibilities, who were generous with their time and technical support.

The Team is grateful to the Development Partners (DPs) from UNICEF and EC for contribution to the discussions concerning project implementation and overall sector plans.

This Aide-Memoire presents findings and recommendations of the mission, and agreements reached between the MoES and the World Bank teams; it also reflects recent developments. A full list of agreed actions and deadlines can be found in Annex 1.

II. Key Findings, Recommendations, and Agreements

Overall project implementation progress

The Bank team appreciates the commitment of the senior MoES management and staff to achieving the project's objectives, their constructive discussions and advice, and their efforts to keep the project on track. The Team noted that implementation continues to improve since the previous mission. *Most components appear to be on track to complete their activities satisfactorily by project closure.*

¹ The members of the mission team were: Ms. Saodat Bazarova (Sr. Operations Officer, Team Leader), Mr. Gerard Peart (M&E Consultant), Ms. Helen Craig (Lead Education Specialist; May 18-22) and Ms. Ayshe Muratova (Program Assistant). Ms. Angela Khaminwa (Sr. Social Development Specialist) who visited the country in early May provided support from Vienna.

However, *the current schedule and quality of implementation for components 2.1 and 2.2* (Upgrading Primary and Secondary Education Curriculum and Pedagogy) *put at risk the achievement of two PDO-level relevant targets*². Therefore it was agreed that the MoES would revise and strengthen the implementation plans and arrangements. In particular, the following scenario was discussed: the revised curricula will be introduced on a limited basis during one academic year and strengthened based on systemic feedback, and then rolled-out nation-wide starting in the subsequent academic year. Further, more time is required to produce adequate supplementary teaching-learning materials (TLMs). Finally, the management of contracted technical assistance (TA) needs to be improved, and more TA is required to facilitate and monitor implementation, especially in the first phase to ensure that the materials and approach are adequately rolled out, and revisions made before further roll-out. To implement above mentioned activities and to achieve the project targets the *MoES is considering to request a one-year extension of the project*. The GPE Secretariat representatives advised the LEG that the GPE guidelines allow for the possibility of an extension and that the decision to request the extension should be made at country level between the Ministry, the WB (as a Supervising Entity) and the LEG.

Disbursement continues to be lower than planned (13%), but is expected to improve significantly over the next six months with the commencement of civil works (43% of the project cost) and the completion of several goods contracts. It is expected that disbursement rate will be 40% by end of 2015.

The mission discussed the ongoing screening of two sub-projects with the identified instances of *involuntary resettlement* to identify impacts on land use, assets, and livelihoods (details in Annex 2). The MOES has since submitted resettlement instruments for those two instances for Bank review. A field visit by the Bank team will be scheduled during the next mission to monitor the RAP measures. Overall, the mission highlighted the following: (a) thorough screening for impacts leading to involuntary resettlement must be undertaken as part of the identification of sites for civil works; (b) where involuntary resettlement impacts are expected a Resettlement Action Plan must be prepared, approved by the World Bank, and disclosed prior to any physical displacement, destruction of property, and/or impacts on livelihoods. These mentioned activities must be undertaken in compliance with the approved RAP. At a time of the AM finalization the MOES submitted Abbreviated RAP for one of the sites satisfactory to the Bank and ready for disclosure. Given progress to date, the implementation rating is upgraded from Moderately Unsatisfactory to Moderately Satisfactory.

The mission had the opportunity to review *the Ministry's Report on the measures in response to the findings of the Third Party Verification (TPV) of works (CWs) goods and provided under FTI-3*. Based on information provided in the Report, the mission is pleased to note that the MOES has fully addressed the TPV's comments and undertakes measures to improve quality of works and goods in GPE-4. In particular, with regard to improving quality of the CWs the MOES has toughened selection of the engineers – monitors and strengthened a training for them; it also plans

² “Fifty percent of primary grade teachers who are training-certified follow the revised education program and apply improved teaching-learning practices in Mother-tongue Language and Mathematics”; and “100,000 primary students are enrolled at a school with improved learning conditions”.

hiring Third Party Quality Assurance TA for civil works. The MOES has received recommendations of the State Standards Agency on improving technical specifications for furniture and is also hiring international expert to elaborate the specifications. The MOES also plans toughening the furniture procurement and acceptance process.

Progress by components

Component One: Increasing access to quality early childhood education programmes

Implementation of this component continues to progress satisfactorily, and remains on track to provide support to beneficiary communities in time for the 2015/16 academic year, and to complete by project closure.

Analytical work. The final results of the census have been presented to, and discussed by, the MoES and its partners. The analysis of sectoral financing has been completed, and the findings and recommendations were presented to the MoES and its partners during the mission. The review of the legal-regulatory framework has been completed. For all three analytical exercises, the MoES agreed to develop a plan amplifying its follow-up to findings and accepted recommendations. The Team supported the MoES to clarify technical aspects of the services evaluation in its discussions with international experts; the MoES was subsequently able to agree on terms with an expert, and signature of the contract is expected shortly.

Community mobilization. Using results from the census, the MoES was able to identify more than 450 eligible communities that already have established an early learning centre (ELC), and to finalize a list of 450 selected project beneficiaries. Some of the selected ELCs have more than one group, and the MoES decided it would be more appropriate in such a case to supply enough furniture and materials for all the groups. As a result, it was agreed that furniture and materials would be supplied to the largest (by enrollment) ELCs on the list of 450 communities selected, until 450 groups have been supplied; for the remaining ELCs, the project would cover their teacher training only. And a total number of the trained teachers may be larger than initially planned. The MoES modified the terms of reference for community mobilization (to reinforce an existing service rather than create a new one), and announced the assignment. The MoES expects to sign a contract before the end of June. It was agreed that the firm/NGO would present its mobilization mechanism to the MoES and DPs, particularly AKF and UNICEF.

Training of Kindergarten (KG)/ELC teachers. 456 Kindergarten teachers were trained since the previous mission, and the follow-up mentoring is scheduled to complete by end-June. The MoES plans to present in July the findings of the monitoring of the training, as well as of the observations of classroom practices (in 40 KGs) before and after the training. The MoES will use the findings to improve the next round of training (scheduled in August for the ELC teachers), particularly through discussions with the trainers/mentors. The MoES plans to conduct a baseline observation of classroom practices in 40 ELCs prior to the start of the training of ELCs teachers.

Furniture and teaching-learning materials (TLMs). Toys for ELCs have been accepted by the MOES under an ICB contract and will be delivered to ELCs once the list of the beneficiary ELCs

is finalized. The World Bank received clarification regarding copyright of reading materials being procured; the materials (ICB) have been supplied by the contractors and are going through the acceptance process now. The MOES is revising an evaluation report for the furniture procurement (ICB) based on the Bank comments. The MOES is in the process of the contract signing under ICB for the TLMs. The items missing from the above mentioned ICBs (heater, carpet and wash-stand) are being procured using the shopping method. The Team advised the MoES to complete the procurement of goods efficiently, in order to ensure delivery as soon as possible after the school year 2015/2016 starts.

Components 2.1 (Upgrading Primary Education Curriculum and Pedagogy) and 2.2 (Upgrading Secondary Education Curriculum and Pedagogy)

The Team was informed by the MoES and its international TA that the Working Groups (WGs) have improved the pace and quality of their work since the last mission. Thus, the development of the standards packages for primary and secondary grades Tajik Language and Maths has roughly caught up the revised schedule and seems to be on track to be completed by mid – and end- July accordingly. A more detailed quality review of the packages will be conducted by the Team once they are made available by early July. However, based on an initial review of available materials during the mission, their quality seems satisfactory.

For the primary grades, the WG plans finalizing a list of TLMs by early August, 2015, for procurement and distribution during the 2015 fall, and to develop additional TLMs to support the competency-based approach in early 2016 for distribution by the 2016/2017 academic year beginning.

The Bank's, the GPE Secretariat's and the DPs' teams and the MoES discussed extensively different options for rolling-out the revised primary curriculum. Eventually, the principal elements of the approach proposed by the last Bank mission were agreed on. In particular, it was agreed and concluded that it would not be advisable to roll out the revised primary curriculum nationwide during the 2015/16 year, for three principal reasons. First, it would put at significant risk the achievement of two PDO-level targets. Second, such a fundamental redesign of the initial plans would greatly benefit from teacher experience feedback prior to finalization of the standards packages. Third, given that existing textbooks can be linked to the competency-based approach on a limited basis only, the supplementary TLMs assume a critical importance and those that need to be developed (rather than purchased off the shelf) will only be fully available in time for the 2016/17 school year. It was therefore agreed that the package for Tajik Language and Mathematics should be introduced in 2015/16 on a limited basis to 500 teachers, during which they would be monitored and mentored by a Technical Support Group (TSG). The findings of the TSG would be used by the curriculum WG to finalize the package for the remaining subjects, which would then be rolled out nationwide starting in 2016/17. In accordance with the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) the project's support to national rollout in 2016/17 will include provision of the standards packages for all subjects to all schools, covering all schools with supplementary TLMs, and training 2,600 teachers (500 in 2015 and 2,100 in 2016). The project will also train a number of teaching staff of the teachers' PRESET and INSET institutions and the rayon level methodologists. In turn, trained INSET staff and rayon methodologists will train and support other

primary grades teachers in the country using the MoES regular resources and, if available, other funds.

For the secondary grades, the MOES intends to:

- extend the pilot for G5-6 Tajik Language and Math throughout the full academic year 2015/16 as initially planned to strengthen the revision of the subject standards packages;
- proceed the work on revising the subjects standards for Grades 7-11 in parallel with the pilot during the academic year 2015/16; and
- finalize the packages for Grades 5-11, including the identification/development of supplementary TLMs in time for a national introduction starting in the academic year 2016/17.

The mission expressed its concern about realism of the proposed timeline and stressed that more work needs to be done by the WG, with the international consultants (ICs) support, to ensure that adequate supplementary TLMs are identified and, where needed, developed, as the relevant textbooks are not designed for a competency-based approach. The Team also recommended considering a pilot for G7-11 too prior to a national introduction.

In light of all above, the Minister indicated that he was considering a one-year extension of the implementation period of the Grant. He plans to discuss the issue with the Government, and to advise the GPE about a request by end July 2015. The Team agreed that the request is justified.

In order to ensure that the phased roll-out is implemented effectively and on time, the Team and the MoES agreed on changes to the component's implementation arrangements. The MoES will appoint a Technical Support Group (explained above); and a full-time Technical Coordinator (TC) who will coordinate and guide the technical aspects of the 2015/16 phase. Further, it was agreed that two more visits are required of each of the ICs; their contracts need to be amended accordingly. The Team stressed that the management by the MoES of the contracted TA needs to be improved, and made recommendations to the MoES in that regard.

The Team supported the MoES to develop a revised implementation plan for both primary and secondary levels, and looks forward to reviewing the final draft. The MoES agreed to integrate a separate section on awareness-raising activities; indicate the timing of IC missions; and amplify monitoring and evaluation, indicating the baseline, mid-term and final observations activities. The Team stressed that the ICs hired by the MoES at primary and secondary level are responsible for providing the instruments and methods for classroom observations and other data collection related to trialling and rolling-out the revised subject standards packages.

The Team supported the MoES to review the component budget in light of the changed implementation arrangements and revised implementation schedule, and to elaborate different budget scenarios. The preliminary revised budget scenarios indicate that more resources would be required, but the amounts are such that they could be covered either by reallocations from within the component or from other components (likely C3.2). The MoES agreed to finalize the revised implementation plan and budget by June 30, 2015.

The Team noted the close involvement of the Minister and senior MoES management in ensuring the quality and comprehensiveness of the standards packages, and appreciated their leadership of, and commitment to, the reform.

Component 2.3: Inclusive Education

The works on physical adjustment of the schools premises to improve physical access to schools for disabled have been completed at 18 sites. Tenders for the remaining 2 schools in GBAO have been completed and works will start soon. The Bank advised the MoES that its architect and engineer will review the quality of works during the mid-term review which is tentatively planned for November 2015. Based on presentations during the mission, the Team asked the MoES to review and physically test the design of the latrines to ensure that persons in a wheelchair can access and use them. The Team provided the MOES with a design of latrines for disabled from other countries. It was also agreed that the MoES would review the costs of the works and compare them with similar works in the region.

The Team agreed with the MoES that the technical assistance (TA) to advise on TLMs is no longer required and can be removed from the procurement plan, as this task is now being covered by a UNICEF-funded TA as part of its support to the Inclusive Education Working Group (WG) at the MoES. UNICEF advised the MoES and the Team that it expects the TA to support the WG to identify the TLMs by August, 2015. This should enable the Project to procure and distribute the materials for disabled and teachers by the end of the calendar year. The MoES agreed to elaborate jointly with UNICEF a plan for the WG's activities related to this component (including identification/distribution of TLMs, social mobilization, teacher training and results assessment).

Component 3.1: Increasing Access to Child-Friendly Schools

The Team was advised that the works under NCB contracts would start on 23 sites from mid-July 2015.

The Team reviewed the initial findings of the baseline survey, and made recommendations to the MoES and contracted NGO about the final report, which is due by the end of June, 2015.

The Team also met with the TA contracted to carry out the Social Assessment and Child Labour surveys. The Team provided the TA with methodological recommendations as well as a list of questions to be included in the surveys which will explore, among other things, access to education for vulnerable groups (such as the disabled), perceptions on the quality of education, including for vulnerable groups, and labor practices and their impact on children's education. The TA agreed to the recommendations and questions, and subsequently initiated the first stage of data collection. A report on the first round of field visits is expected by mid-July 2015. The final stage of data collection will take place later in the year to coincide with the harvesting season.

The Team met twice with the Department for Capital Construction (DCC) of the MOES to review the supervision budget for civil works, and agreed on modifications particularly pertaining to communications costs and ensuring consistency with the supervision mechanism as detailed in the

Operations Manual. The Team also reviewed the training program for the site engineers, which has been modified since the previous mission following feedback from the Bank.

Component 3.2: Provision of Supplies to Develop Child-Friendly Schools

The MoES agreed to revise the delivery schedule to ensure that furniture arrives when the first, rather than the last, schools complete. Otherwise, several schools risk being empty for several months during the liability defects period, and this could be potentially very costly (as defects will not show up without normal usage of the building). The MoES is contracting a specifications expert to review the furniture specifications, as previously recommended by the Bank.

Component 4.1: Management Capacity Building

The Team reminded the MoES that the development of the NSED monitoring system is a targeted project result. The MoES is currently studying its options for offering English and Russian language training instruction to its staff under the project. The Team recommended that the MoES also considers the development of other administrative and management skills, including the use of spreadsheet technology, reports writing and the drafting of ToRs.

Component 4.2: Directors Training

The training of trainers is scheduled for July/August, 2015 using revised modules. The Directors' training itself will start in September. The MoES/RIITT agreed to revise its training schedule so as to ensure that the Directors Trainings are completed well before the project closure date. Further, in light of the numerous trainings that need to be managed and delivered by the MoES/RIITT over the next 14 months, the MoES/RIITT agreed to produce an integrated schedule of all trainings (including monitoring) supported by the project and forward it to the Bank for review.

C4.3.1: Per capita financing – pre-school level

Pre-school. The MoES continues to implement a limited PCF reform in 17 districts covering 221 state kindergartens (KGs). During a meeting with the TA supporting the MoES to implement this component, the Team noted shortcomings in the budgets/expenditures database, and requested the MoES to finalize the database and forward it to the Bank for review. The Team recommended to the MoES that the technical management of the component be strengthened.

The MoES considers scaling up the PCF reform to all state KGs in 2016. The MoES continues to work with its IC (funded by UNICEF) on the finalization of the model including the formula, the oblast-level standardization of norms, and the elaboration of coefficients. The model would cover all budget line items except food. The MoES expects to finalize a workable model by July, 2015. The MoES will decide on the new PCF model introduction (with or without pilot from January 2016) in consultation with the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and partners. The Team noted that it would be more prudent to pilot the model prior to a full national roll-out, particularly as the proposed approach is to cover the entire budget (including wage bill but except food). Irrespectively of a decision on the pilot, the MoES and the Team agreed on the importance of

properly preparing district-level authorities and KG accountants and Directors, prior to the finalization of budget preparations for 2016. To that end, the MoES agreed to work to ensure that the oblast-level TA are hired prior to budget preparations, and that the trainings for accountants, district authorities and KG Directors are delivered in a coordinated way during the 4th quarter, 2015.

Given past delays in finalizing the model, the MoES will review progress of the PCF pilot or roll-out (depending on a decision about the pilot) in the first half of 2016, and decide at a later date if the completion date for this component should be extended (alongside Component 2.1/2.2).

General secondary education. The PCF indicators for 2014 and 2015 presented to the Team showed that the efficient use of system resources continued to improve during the period 2013-15. Further, the proportion of the budget allocated to non-salary expenditures increased. These gains may be compromised by the recently announced, significant salary increases for 2015-16. If these are not matched by a similar increase in formula coefficients, then schools and districts will, as in the past, have incentives to decrease relative budgetary allocations to non-salary items as well as their expenditure rates; and to reverse efficiency gains. The MoES is cognizant of these risks, and is negotiating with the MoF to ensure a balanced increase of salaries and overall coefficients. The monitoring of PCF implementation continues to be satisfactory, with 60 districts having thus far been visited once or twice by the MOES.

Component 4.4: Education Management Information System (EMIS)

The Team reviewed the revised Implementation Plan, and was pleased to note that all modules are now scheduled to complete prior to project closure. The implementation of the revised IP is on schedule, and all TA required for the next several months of software development, technical writing and training have been identified and/or hired.

The first phase of training (on the pre-school modules) will take place in the 4th quarter of 2015. The MoES/EMIS Department agreed to involve in the training rayon-level staff of the National Center for Information and Communications Technology (NCICT), so as to promote sustainability. The EMIS Department also agreed that the User Manuals for all new modules (at Pre-School, VET and HE levels) will be field-tested and revised prior to use for training and publication.

This component foresees an evaluation of EMIS, which will be financed using funds from Component 4.5. The MoES plans holding a regional conference on EMIS in April/May, 2016 and considers hiring TA to support conference preparations.

Annex One: Follow-up Actions Agreed During the Mission (updated)

Action	Deadline 2015
Component 1	
MoES to forward final reports of TAs who reviewed sectoral financing and legal-regulatory framework	July 31
MoES to finalize contract negotiations with IC on services evaluation	July 31
MoES to formally appoint members to WG for services evaluation	July 31
MoES/RIITT to organize roundtable and feedback to trainers on results of monitoring of training of KG teacher	by July 31
MoES to develop plan outlining follow-up to findings and accepted recommendations of analytical exercises (census, sectoral financing, and legal-regulatory framework).	Mid-August
MoES to finalize detailed schedule for IC first mission	August 15 th
MoES to organize meeting between social mobilization NGO and AKF/UNICEF	Within one week of signing contract
Components 2.1 and 2.2	
MoES to prepare detailed schedule of next IC visits	July 31
MoES to forward revised implementation plans and budget	June 30
MoES to forward to WB for review methodology for baseline, mid-term and final primary classroom observations; as well as methodology for monitoring of secondary pilot	Mid- August
Component 2.3	
MoES (jointly with UNICEF) to produce Special Education Needs WG action plan including selection/delivery of TLMs, teacher training, social mobilization, and assessment of component results)	August 10, 2015
MoES/DCC to report on suitability of works for disabled access, and on costs of works in comparison to regional or other norms	July 31
Component 3.1	
MOES and WB to agree on a revised supervision budget	June 10 th
MoES to forward to the WB the final report on civil works baseline survey	July 31
MoES to revise contract with design firm to analyze cost-effectiveness of new insulation techniques	July 31 st
Component 4.1	
MoES to forward to WB for review ToRs for TA to develop NSED monitoring system	July 31
Component 4.3	
MoES to forward revised implementation plan including detailed integrated training plan for accountants, RED/RFD authorities, and KG Directors (including KG Directors training under C4.3.1 and C4.2)	July 31
Component 4.4	
WB to review Data Analyst and EMIS Evaluation ToRs	July 31
User Manual for Pre-school modules to be field-tested and revised prior to use for training and publication	October 1 st

EMIS Department to include rayon-level staff of NCICT in training	October 1 st
Component 4.5	
Monitoring and evaluation	
WB to review ToRs for 2 nd post M&E (project implementation team)	July 31
MoES to ensure baseline of 40 ELCs (using mentoring data instruments) before first phase of training	by July 30 th
MoES to finalize monitoring methodology and reporting requirements of social mobilization NGO (C1)	Within one week of contract signature
MoES to finalize monitoring arrangements for KG Directors Training	Upon completion of training module

Annex Two: Involuntary Resettlement issues

Involuntary Resettlement

A Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) has been prepared for the project, approved by the Bank and disclosed in-country and in the World Bank's InfoShop.

The mission noted the following:

1. **Identification of involuntary resettlement – Rudaki.** During the September 2014 mission, the Bank team noted an instance of involuntary resettlement at Rudaki (Secondary School No 56, *jamoat* Sarikishti). Following the mission, the team advised the project to undertake a retroactive review of compensation and entitlements provided to the affected people and identify mitigation measures up to OP 4.12 standards.

The retroactive review determined that while the process of acquiring the *dekhan* farm had started,³ specifically a *hukumat* decree to acquire the land and the identification of alternative land, the affected people had not been impacted and they continued to have access to, and to use the land. The land in question is 1.5 ha in size and a piece of a 21 ha *dekhan* farm. The farm is used to plant wheat and other crops. There are no structures on the farm and economic crops will not be impacted as harvesting will be allowed prior to land acquisition. Four individuals (shareholders of the farm) will be impacted by the acquisition.

The mission advised the project team to prepare an Abbreviated Resettlement Action Plan (ARAP) and follow the necessary processes in the preparation of that ARAP, including consultations with affected people and collection of baseline livelihood data.

A draft ARAP has been prepared and the Bank has provided comments. It has been agreed that a revised ARAP will be submitted to the Bank for approval by July 10, 2015. The mission reiterated that no displacement will be undertaken until the RAP is approved by the Bank and disclosed in-country and in the InfoShop.

The mission also noted that the affected person had lodged a complaint and that this complaint was reported as resolved with the allocation of replacement land.

At a time of the AM finalization the MOES submitted Abbreviated RAP for one of the sites satisfactory to the Bank and ready for disclosure.

2. **Identification of involuntary resettlement – Penjikent.** The mission noted that a construction site at Penjikent (School No 56 in Sufien, *jamoat* Halifa Hasan) will result in the involuntary acquisition of land. The land in question is one *dekhan* farm of 1.5 ha in size with no structures or assets. The mission advised the project team to halt any acquisition activities and to prepare an ARAP (four people will be impacted). A draft ARAP has been submitted to the Bank and comments provided by the Bank. It has been

³ The decree was prepared in the absence of a Resettlement Action Plan.

agreed that a revised ARAP will be submitted to the Bank by July 10, 2015. The mission reiterated that no displacement will be undertaken until the RAP is approved by the Bank and disclosed in-country and in the InfoShop.

3. ***Review of impacts resulting in involuntary resettlement.*** The mission noted that the comprehensive review of the construction sites to identify activities which may have impacts on involuntary resettlement continues. The mission urged the project team to undertake the review for all civil works sites under the project.