

**Ministry of Education, Science, Culture  
and Sports of Georgia**

**Georgia Innovation, Inclusion  
and Quality Project (I2Q)**

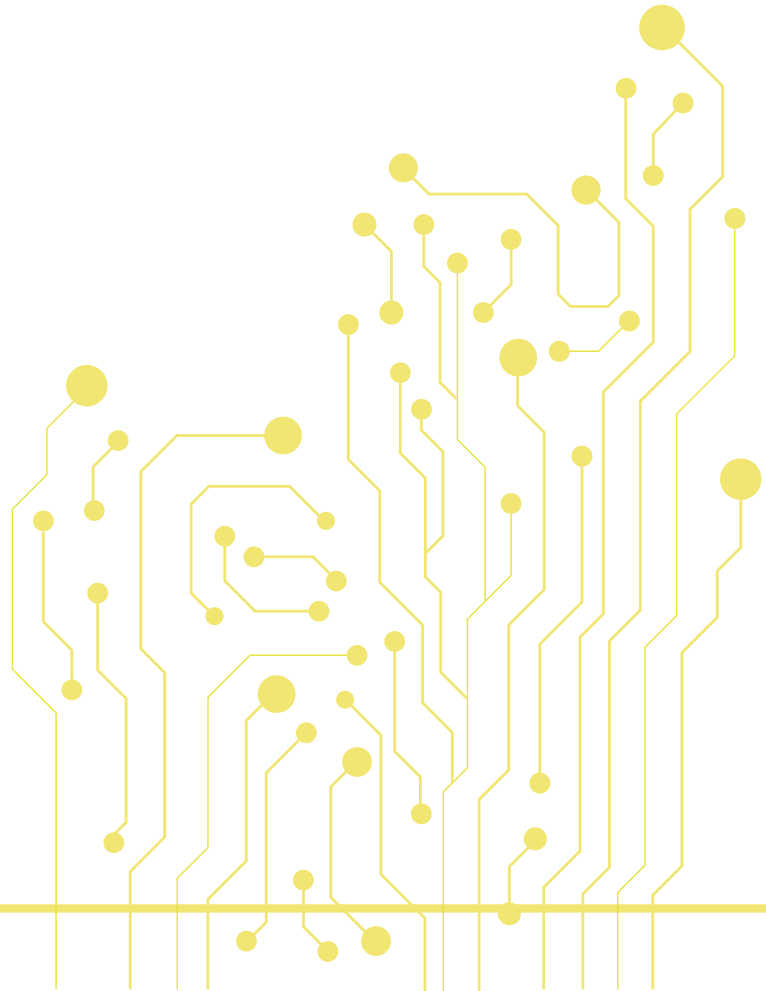
# **PROGRESS REPORT**

**For the period of July-December  
2020**

**Submitted by:  
Project Management Unit**

## PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE:	Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q)
PROJECT NUMBER:	Ministerial Decree #338
FOR:	The World Bank Group
PROJECT DURATION:	March 5, 2020-March 5, 2026



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASA	Analytical and Advisory Services	MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
CIF	Competitive Innovation Fund	MICs	Middle-Income Countries
CIS	Commonwealth Independent States	MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure
CPF	Country Partnership Framework	NAEC	National Assessment and Examination Center
DCFTA	The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement	NCEQE	National Center for Education Quality Enhancement
DFID	Department for International Development	NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
DPO	Development Policy Operation	OAT	Open Assessment Technologies
ECA	Europe and Central Asia	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care	PAD	Project Appraisal Document
EMIS	Education Management Information System (EMIS)	PDO	Project Development Objective
EOIs	Expressions of Interest	PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
ESIDA	Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency	PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
ESMF	Environment and Social Management Framework	PMU	Project Management Unit (under MESCS)
ESMP	Environment and Social Management Plan	PMT	Project Management Team (under MDF)
EU	European Union	PIE	Project Implementing Entity (MDF)
FM	Financial Management	PP	Procurement Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	PPAs	Power Purchase Agreements
GEL	Georgian Lari	PPSD	Project Procurement Strategy for Development
GITA	Georgia Information and Technology Agency	PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH	SCD	Systematic Country Diagnostic
GoG	Government of Georgia	SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism	SORT	Systematic Operations Risk-rating Tool
GRS	Grievance Redress System	SRP	School Readiness Program
HCP	Human Capital Project	STEP	Systemic Tracking
HES	Higher Education System	STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	TAO	Test Assisté par Ordinateur
IDA	International Development Association	TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
IMF	International Monetary Fund	TOR	Terms of Reference
IFR	International Financial Reporting	TPDC	Teacher Professional Development Center
IPF	Investment Project Financing	TTL	Task Team Leader
IRR	Internal Rate of Return	UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
LMIS	Labor Market Information System	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation	USD	United States Dollar
MDF	Municipal Development Fund of Georgia	VET	Vocational Education and Training
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	WB	World Bank
MELQO	Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes	WBG	World Bank Group

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## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The Government of Georgia has signed Loan Agreement for financing the implementation of **Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q Project)** with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The Project development objectives are to (i) expand access to preschool education and (ii) improve the quality of education and the learning environments and enhance relevance of higher education programs. The loan amount is 90 million Euros.

Original Loan agreement N8955, Section III, Withdrawal of Loan Proceeds

Category	Amount of the Loan Allocated (expressed in EUR)	Percentage of Expenditures to be financed (inclusive of Taxes)
(1) Works, Goods, non-consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training for the Project except for Parts 1(c), Part 2(a) and Part 5 (a) for the Project	29,775,000	80%
(2) Works, Goods, non- consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training under Part 1(c), Part 2(a) and Part 5(a) for the Project	60,000,000	80%
(3) Front-end Fee	225,000	Amount payable pursuant to Section 2.03 of this Agreement in accordance with Section 2.07 (b) of the General Conditions
(4) Interest Rate Cap or Interest Rate Collar premium		Amount due pursuant to Section 4.05 (c) of the General Conditions
TOTAL AMOUNT	90,000,000	

In January 2020, an epidemiological outbreak Covid-19 threatened the world. The first cases of infections were detected in Georgia in February 2020. To stop the massive spread of the virus, GoG had to announce the state emergency throughout the country with the strict lock down rules. In order to support the healthcare system, all governmental entities, including MoESCS had to make severe budgetary cuts and thus faced significant challenges in financing various ongoing or upcoming projects. MoESCS faced problem in finding budget for co-financing “Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality” project activities. Constraints in budgetary funds would have affected and hindered the smooth and timely implementation of the project. Pandemic situation had already caused delays in project implementation. Therefore, MoESCS sent an official letter to MOF and the WB requesting restructuring of part of the loan agreement managed by MoESC and instead of 80/20 disbursement scheme, asking for 100% disbursements from the IBRD.



The loan restructuring request was approved by the MoF as well as by the WB and the new scheme was ratified by the Parliament of Georgia on September 30, 2020 and therefore the counterpart financing has been removed from the loan agreement Category (1) amounting to EUR29,775,000 for Works, Goods, non-consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training for the Project except for Parts 1(c), Part 2(a) and Part 5 (a) for the Project.

<i>The Table in Section III.A of Schedule 2 to the Loan Agreement is amended to read as follows:</i>		
Category	Amount of the Loan Allocated (expressed in EUR)	Percentage of Expenditures to be financed (inclusive of Taxes)
(1) Works, Goods, non-consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training for the Project except for Parts 1(c), Part 2(a) and Part 5 (a) for the Project	29,775,000	100%
(2) Works, Goods, non- consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training under Part 1(c), Part 2(a) and Part 5(a) for the Project	60,000,000	80%
(3) Front-end Fee	225,000	Amount payable pursuant to Section 2.03 of this Agreement in accordance with Section 2.07 (b) of the General Conditions
(4) Interest Rate Cap or Interest Rate Collar premium		Amount due pursuant to Section 4.05 (c) of the General Conditions
TOTAL AMOUNT	90,000,000	

The Project Development Objectives are to (i) expand access to preschool education and (ii) improve the quality of education and the learning environments. The loan will be dedicated to:

- 1) Improvement of the quality of and access to early childhood education;
- 2) Fostering quality teaching and learning in general education;
- 3) Strengthening financing options and promoting internationalization in higher education
- 4) System strengthening and stakeholder communication and
- 5) Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Table below represents revised proposed project financing (pg. 14-17 provides description and argumentation for the revision of component financing):

Project Components	IBRD Financing (EUR)
1. Improving Quality of and Access to Early Childhood Education	7,487,440
2. Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education	63,999,026
3. Strengthening Financing Options and Promoting Internationalization in Higher Education	9,902,629
4. System strengthening and Stakeholder Communication	3,697,035
5. Supporting Project Management, Monitoring, and Evaluations	4,688,870
Total Components	89,775,000
Front End Fees	225,000
Total Project Costs	90,000,000

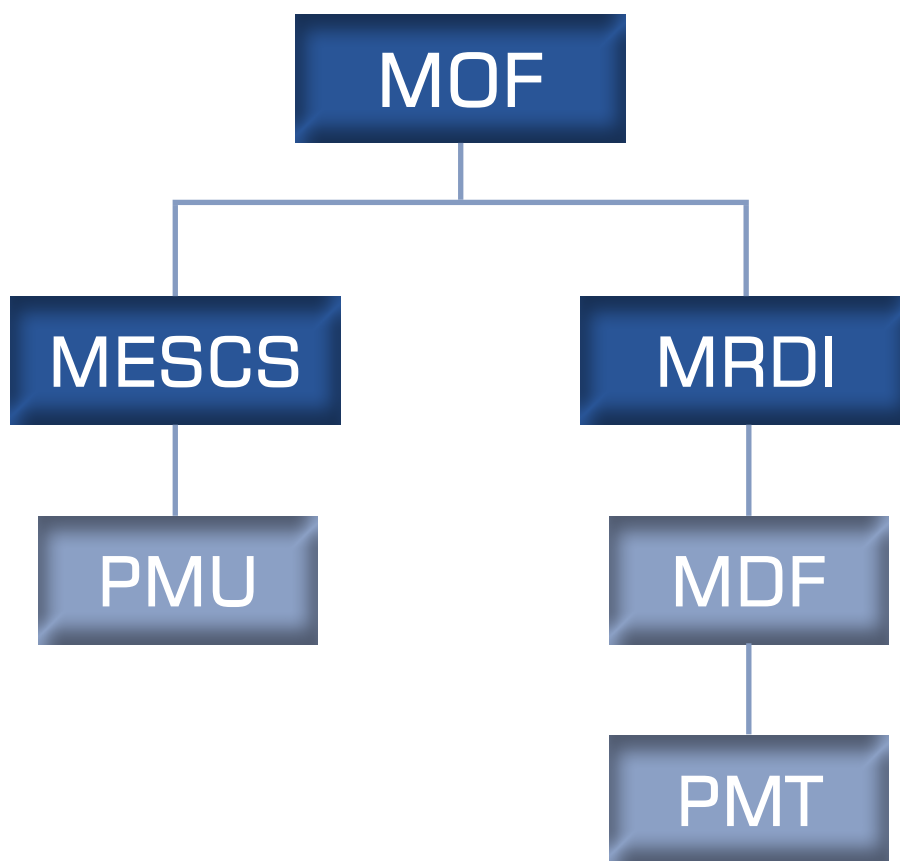
#### Important Project dates:

- The Loan agreement was signed in June 18, 2019
- Project was ratified by Parliament in October 16, 2019
- Loan became effective in November 27, 2019
- Official project launch event was held on March 5, 2020
- Project implementation period: 2020-2026
- Restructuring the loan agreement August 30, 2020 and became effective on October 15, 2020

The I2Q Project will be implemented over a six-year period by the following implementing partners - Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (MoESCS) and the Municipal Development Fund of Georgia (MDF) operating under the Ministry of Regional Development of Georgia (MRDI). The Project Management Unit (PMU) created within MoESCS supports implementation of the designated project components, as specified in Legal Agreement. The Project Management Team (PMT) created within MDF supports implementation of relevant subcomponents under component 1 and 2 aimed at improving the education infrastructure.



## Project Implementation structure:





## OVERALL PROJECT PROGRESS AND KEY ISSUES

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### ***The World Bank Implementation support mission***

WB task team conducted the first implementation support mission during July 6-17, 2020. The key objectives of the mission were to: i) define the current state of the project and map the most needed modifications to the scope of the project and PP in close collaboration with the MoESCS leadership; ii) discuss the progress and challenges within each component including staffing issues and estimate revised timeline and costs as necessary; iii) carry out comprehensive technical discussions with the key staff on key focus areas targeted under the project; iv) discuss and agree on accelerated plan to launch rehabilitation of the first batch of schools under the project; v) discuss and facilitate the COVID-19 related interventions including possible amendment of the LA and the procurement of the most needed IT equipment for schools supporting the online study process; Meetings were held with the PMU team, MoESCS respective counterparts and its agencies, MDF leadership, deputy ministers and donors.

During the mission, aide-mémoire was developed, next steps were agreed and concrete urgent action items determined.



Table below summarizes agreed urgent action items as a result of implementation support mission and status of their execution:

	Agreed Next Steps	Responsible	Due Date	Status
1	Finalizing staff recruitment	PMU	September 2020	Completed by the due date.  Note: there has been turnover in staff observed in December and PMU is in the process of hiring new staff (please, find more details on page 19 – PMU Staffing)
2	Formal Request for Project Restructuring submitted to the Bank	Ministry of Finance/ MoESCS	August 15, 2020	Completed
3	Bidding Documents, including technical specifications for the procurement of IT equipment for target schools in response to COVID-19	PMU/ MoESCS	August 20, 2020	Completed
4	List of 60 schools for rehabilitation submitted to the Bank for no objection	MoESCS/ PMU	End July, 2020	Completed
5	Component and Sub-component implementation plans including estimated timeline and costs submitted to the Bank (revised draft POM)	PMU/MDF	September 5, 2020	Revised draft POM developed by the PMU has been agreed with MoESCS and after series of discussions no objected by the WB. Action plan elaborated and PP prepared/ approved by MoESCS.  PP submission in progress.
6	Decision reached on the procurement of TAO capacity building trainings for NAEC	PMU/ MoESCS	End August, 2020	contract was not signed as revised POM lays out different goals for the assessment part (please find description on pg. 15).  Note: In the middle of December MoESCS addressed PMU to support capacity building of NAEC to develop electronic testing system in the framework of project. It was agreed to proceed with procurement of TAO capacity building trainings for NAEC.  PMU has started working on procuring consulting services from OAT which envisions capacity building of NAEC staff in administering TAO platform.
7	ToR for diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education/ ECE Sector (access, quality and needs) in Georgia	PMU	August 20, 2020	Completed
8	ToR for study and evaluation of trends in general education in Georgia.	PMU	August 20, 2020	Completed
9	Terms of Reference for the Development of the new HE Funding Model	PMU	August 20, 2020	Completed
10	Draft CIF Operational Manual	PMU	September 30, 2022	Timeline has been changed according to the new POM
11	Terms of Reference for diagnosis and development of EMIS	PMU	August 20, 2020	Completed

## ***Steering Committee***

PMU initiated the establishment of a project steering committee as stated in the approved program by Ministerial Decree (#338). For transparent and smooth operation of the project, PMU will regularly report to the steering committee about the project progress, key issues, risks and discuss jointly mitigation strategies. Consent from all steering committee members have been received and ministerial decree has been issued which approves the list of official members. The Composition of the Steering Committee is as follows:

- Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia, I2Q Project Coordinator - EKATERINE DGEBUADZE
- Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia- NUNU MITSKEVITCH
- Deputy Minister of Finance - NIKOLOZ GAGUA
- Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia - MZIA GIORGOBIANI
- Director of Municipal Development Fund of Georgia - GIORGI SHENGELIA
- Director of Education and Scientific Infrastructure Agency - DAVIT PARTSVANIA
- Executive Director of “Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project”- TAMAR SANIKIDZE
- The World Bank Senior Education Specialist - NINO KUTATELADZE

PMU held the first official steering committee meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Due to Covid-19 lockdown, the meeting was organized online. The members of the Board and five invited persons attended the meeting. The Project Executive Director briefed the Board on the activities carried out under the project in the second half of 2020 (July-December), including information on changes to the Project Operational Manual (POM) and updated content of the project sub-components. The Executive Director informed the members of the Board, in the form of a presentation, in detail about the planned activities and the results to be achieved by sub-components.

It was also noted that according to the updated POM, revised PP has already been and agreed with both the Ministry and the WB.



The Executive Director provided information to the Board on the ongoing procurement dates.

In the context of project risks, the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications were noted at the Board meeting, which may affect the timelines of activities planned under the project.

### ***Internal Regulations of the Project***

Internal regulations for the project have been developed and accepted by PMU. Internal regulation sets policies for “Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality” Project. Particularly, it clarifies: code of ethics, record keeping procedures, means of communication, procedures for selection of consultants, PMU staff annual leave, financial management and control, procurement, incentives, disciplinary liabilities etc.

Internal regulations will become a part of the ministerial decree # 338.

The full package of internal regulations includes the Rules and 11 Annexes:  
The Rules

Annex N1 - Order Registration Journal

Annex N2 - Correspondence Registration Journal Annex N3 - Blank Form

Annex N4 - Program Seal

Annex N5 - List of documentation

Annex N6 - Probation Assessment Form

Annex N7 - Performance appraisal form

Annex N8 - Vacation Request Form

Annex N9 - Timesheet

Annex N10 - Travel card

Annex N11 - Fuel Write-Off Act

### ***PMU staffing***

PMU staffing requirements as defined by the POM was completed. PMU staff composition: Project Executive Director, Project Manager, Procurement Specialists (2), Finance Manager, Accountant/Disbursement Specialist, Early Childhood Component Lead, General Education Component Lead, Higher Education Component Lead, ICT/Data Integration Manager; Administrative Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Engineer, Communication and Outreach Coordinator. However, certain turnover in staff has been observed starting in December 2020. Namely, the General Education Component Lead became a Member of Parliament and left the project on December 11th. The Project Manager moved to another job from January 1<sup>st</sup>. Due to family and health conditions, the Early Childhood Education Component lead left the project on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The above-mentioned positions have become vacant and Requests for Expression of Interest were announced.

### ***PMU Office Space***

MoESCS provided PMU with the office space within the Ministry's premises; Sharing the space with the MoESCS colleagues will allow PMU to build stronger relationships with their counterparts, ensure their solid involvement in project activities to feel the ownership towards project. Working premises have been refurbished and equipped by PMU.

### ***Amendment to Project Operational Manual***

POM has been revised twice during the reporting period. Initially, in August 2020 and lately in November 2020.

#### **First revision and amendments to POM included following changes: (No objected from the World Bank on August 14, 2020)**

- Terminological changes - Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) was replaced by the term ECE- Early Childhood Education. The changes were derived from the Law of Georgia on Early and Pre-school Education. The official name of the legislation does not contain the word CARE. Moreover, according to the law MoESCS has responsibilities only towards education component. Since the implementation of the project is supervised by the MoESCS and all the relevant activities refer specifically to education, it is advisable to clarify the terminology and content accordingly.
- School selection criteria for rehabilitation works was replaced with the version which was no objected from the bank in March 27, 2020.



## Financial management

- The names of the positions in POM were replaced by an indication of the consultants' position title. PMU staff Position names were modified accordingly;
- Interim financial report preparation and submission dates were changed according to the DFIL;
- PMU Component Leads were made responsible for ensuring all delivered Works, Goods, Non-Consulting and Consulting Services are in accordance with Terms of Reference/ Technical Specifications/Contracts agreed and signed. Project Manager ensures that deliverables are in compliance with the contractual requirements such as timing and format. Project Manager reviewed deliverables are submitted to the Executive Director. The Component Lead will be assisted by Procurement, Monitoring or Financial Units when necessary.
- Reconciliation of PMU records with WB Withdrawal applications was modified and sending SOE to the WB was removed;
- Since the loan is issued in Euros, the WB requested that the financial reporting currency be the Euro. To avoid exchange rate differences, POM was updated accordingly, reporting currency was modified and changed from USD to EUR;
- MDF was made responsible for submitting consolidated bi-annual IFRs to the Bank, according to the WB request;
- The format of IFRs has been changed, removed SOE and updated according to the report templates received from WB;
- The MDF saw made responsible for selection and appointment of the project auditor, instead of MoESCS.

## Second revision and amendments to POM included following changes (No objected by the World Bank on November 4, 2020)

Revision process included multiple meetings and discussions with the Ministry leadership, representatives and their agencies, meeting with the WB representatives to agree on the content, timeline, deliverables and preliminary budget. The results of the meetings with external stakeholders were communicated, discussed and agreed with the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

- All activities are in line with the PAD and results framework. No changes were made to indicators or targets at this stage.
- In number of cases, POM defined activities and implementation mechanisms has been reviewed and modified to reflect the MoESCS priorities and needs, including urgent needs derived from pandemic situation.
- Budget has been modified and reallocated among components and

subcomponents, based on the revised activities; Modified budget and revised draft POM was discussed with the WB.

- No major changes have been made with **component 1**; Activities, timeline as well as approach to the whole assignment has been determined and agreed with the MoESCS relevant counterparts.
- In **component 2**, number of activities have been modified/clarified, timeframe was laid out and agreed with the relevant counterparts. More emphasis is made on the whole school improvement approach rather than solely on the support of scaling up the “new school model”. This approach will allow making need-based interventions in schools with the goal to enhance quality of teaching and learning process as well as improve management. Several diagnostic assessments have been combined, which prior to this review were scattered across multiple sub-components. This approach will give broader and holistic picture of the general education system. As for sub-component 2.4, support of the continuous formative assessment and national assessment system have been differentiated which has two different goals. This sub-component will provide assistance for developing and introducing the revised national assessment system for general education level. The aim of the assessment system is to inform education policy makers and other relevant stakeholders on challenges and strengths of the general education system functioning, assist in identifying different factors (socio-economic status of the students, geographic allocation, school general characteristics, education policy, employment conditions, access to education, attitudes towards education, parents’ engagement, access to internet and education resources etc.) affecting students learning outcomes and allowing for evidence-based policy decision making. The sub-component will also address the issue of quality and effective use of formative continuous assessments of students including students with disabilities and/or diverse education needs. The existing formative assessment system will be reviewed and updated in accordance to the requirements of national curricula and cover all grades of general education (1-12 grades).
- **Component 3** provides support for improving funding mechanisms for higher education. Along these lines, this component would review the available financing options and propose new ones, including performance-based funding. Under the proposed new model for funding, several basic indicators will be elaborated (academic, scientific, internalization) divided into sub-indicators (number of academic staff, science productivity, number of foreign students, etc.). It is the inevitable outcome of higher education funding reform to carry out HEIs information management database system, in which statistical processing of the relevant information for a new performance- based



funding formula is an important part of HEI's performance review.

This system will be accessible to different stakeholders with varying levels of access and designed as a common tool for reporting and assessing HEI's performance and development results.

Sub-component 3.2 would aid the establishment of a Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) for public and private universities, in partnership with the private sector. However, the description of the sub-component was clarified and underlined that the funding windows will be for the public universities targeting specific development and innovation issues, as well as for the consortia projects encouraging cooperation in joint projects uniting the public and private universities.

Georgian higher education consists of 19 public and 44 private higher education institutions (30 of them are LLCs), which cater, on average around, 30%-35% of the students.<sup>1</sup> Public funding takes place in the form of a voucher system (state grants) for students who meet the criteria for getting subsidized. The merit-based allocation of State Grants to the best scoring students in the unified entrance exam stimulates equal competition among public and private universities, and the grants are used to finance tuition fees at both public and private HEIs. However, most private universities charge substantially higher tuition fees, which implies that students use the grants to partially offset the tuition levies.

The primary goal of the government is to create, provide and improve conditions for the development of public universities, for the improvement of education quality and scientific research works in order to ensure development of the State and particularly the viability of the higher education system. Along these lines, under this sub-component, the Fund would be developed to award the CIF grants to foster modernization of higher education programs and strengthen labor market linkages in public universities. Besides, this component would encourage the partnership between the public and private universities, and in general, between the public and private sectors by allowing the private institution to participate in the grants competition as a consortium partner. This solution could be the most efficient use of CIF grants whereas there are very limited public resources available.

The content of the sub-component 3.3 has been modified, in line with the strategic vision of the Ministry regarding internationalization of higher education. The suggested activities under the sub-component includes:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://emis.ge/Saganmanatleblo\\_dacesebulebebi\\_da\\_programebi/umaghlesi/](https://emis.ge/Saganmanatleblo_dacesebulebebi_da_programebi/umaghlesi/)



- (i) the development of a joint doctoral (PhD) program that will provide comprehensive knowledge to identify and research complex issues within the field of education and science management, in partnership with international institutions/universities;
  - (ii) Another priority of this sub-component would be to support the development of entrepreneurship module for higher education studies (Bachelor's and Master's degree programs) as well as module for enhancing English language skills for students considering discipline requirements;
  - (iii) In addition, this sub-component aims to support the establishment of an International Excellence School, which provides a focused academic environment with short-term courses. The International Excellence School will foster international academic and scientific collaboration across selected disciplines and accelerate development of the most promising emerging areas that are in line with national strategic priorities. The content of the sub-component 3.4 has also been clarified, in line with the strategic vision of the Ministry to bring an adequate supply of well- trained teachers into the classroom. The proposed activities under this sub-component are highlighted that the work should be focused on the interrelated issues: (i) capacity assessment, (ii) capacity building through high-quality professional training, (iii) strengthening programs, and standards for teacher education and (iv) professional development. This kind of professional development benefits both teachers and students.
- **Under Component 4**, all activities have been clarified and enhanced. Enhancement of data driven policy decision making needs to be strengthened which will guarantee future success of education system in general. Therefore, all suggested activities were amended. Revised tasks are comprehensive and systemic in nature and as a result, the following will be achieved: EMIS will be strengthened; updated software solutions will be purchased; EMIS technical infrastructure will be expended; state level dataintegration policy will be elaborated, strategy and action plan from preschool to higher education system will be developed; links with Interdepartmental (EMIS, NAEC, TPDC, NCEQE) and external organizations will be established; Collaborative LMS e-platform will be developed.
  - **Under Component 5**, the costs for the short-term consultants were consolidated and fixed as well as included some costs from the component 4.2 (particularly concerning communication with the beneficiaries and stakeholders);
- As a result of all above listed changes, budget has been amended. The total budget for component 1 and 3 was decreased and reallocated in components 4 and 5. The changes were reflected in POM and approved.



## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXT

### ***Influence of COVID-19 on Education reform***

COVID-19 pandemic situation prevented the normal operation of all state institutions across the country causing delays in implementation of their reform agendas. For health and safety purposes, Government of Georgia closed schools, TVET and higher education institutions for the Spring and Autumn semesters and offered distance learning as an alternative. Distance education requires specific readiness in terms of technical equipment as well as ICT skills, resources, environmental conditions for both learner and the teacher (such as working conditions at home, work station, etc). MoESCS moved to online learning by offering Microsoft Teams and other resources for schools. Considering existed challenges such as limited access to internet, computers, poor ICT skills of teachers as well as students, limited online resources, MoESCS started special education project on public media named “Teleschool” which offers all subjects to all graders envisaged by national curriculum. Although this format allows for increased access for learners, it does not allow for teacher-student interaction involvement in the teaching and learning process, provision of feedback, monitoring student progress which is essential for knowledge construction and student assessment as well.

Given additional challenges posed by COVID-19 for the education sector, the project was able to support several emerging priorities of the government, as outlined below:

### ***Distance Education***

Per MoESCS request, PMU hired distance education consultant, who developed comprehensive report on: “Importance of Distance / Online and Blended Teaching-Learning, Modern Perspectives and Challenges”. In the spring of 2020, under the COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgian government, similar to other countries, was forced to close educational institutions to suspend the spread of the disease. Instead, the teaching-learning process was carried out remotely at all levels of education - with the help of teleschool, students and teachers across the country were involved in unprecedented online teaching experiment. At the global level, researchers are already referring to this forced experiment with the new term “emergency distance education / learning”.

Deliverable on distance education developed by the Consultant was presented to the MoESCS. Presentation was attended by the Deputy Minister, Ekaterine Dgebuadze, Director of Teacher professional development center, Director of Education Management Information Systems, head of Early childhood and general

education development department. During the meeting, main findings from the study together with the recommendations were discussed and next steps defined. Ministry of Education, Science, culture and Sports intend to use the findings and recommendations in planning capacity building of schools to better employ e-platforms.

The section of the main findings summarizes the findings of the report which are conventionally divided into two parts. The first part deals with the design of distance and mixed learning and the requirements for process participants, modern pedagogy and teaching means; The second part is dedicated to determine the readiness to learn with these new forms: in terms of resources (access to the Internet and digital media) of the participants and their competencies. The findings in the second part are based on the secondary statistical analysis of (quantitative) secondary data collected during the last two years as part of the national (Assessment in Mathematics 2018; Distance Learning Research 2020) and international surveys (PISA 2018 and TALIS 2018). Please find annex 1: English version of the full deliverable on the “Importance of Distance / Online and Blended Teaching -Learning, Modern Perspectives and Challenges”.



## SECTION II: PROJECT PROGRESS BY COMPONENTS

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### Component 1

#### Improving Quality of and Access to Early Childhood Education

##### *Progress*

During the reporting period, multiple working meetings were conducted with the MoESCS representatives, the Deputy Minister, and the staff of the Preschool and General education development department to discuss the project details, scope and implementation arrangements.

##### Sub-Component 1.1

#### Improving the quality of ECE programs across the country

As a result, implementation deadlines and achievable results were specified in accordance with the strategic vision of the Ministry and later was agreed with the WB. As an initial stage of the component, a comprehensive diagnostic assessment of the field was determined.

The Terms of Reference for selection of the Consultancy Company for the Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Georgia was developed in collaboration with the MoESCS relevant counterparts. The goal of this assignment is to conduct comprehensive diagnostic assessment of ECE sector and provide recommendations for improvement. Findings and recommendations driven from the study, will be the basis for the planning interventions within the relevant component of the project and particularly for improving quality of and access to early childhood education and facilitating expanded access to quality pre-school education in selected pre-schools. Study should analyze the relevant information related to below specified areas to support further development in the sector and facilitate evidenced based decision-making process:

- Supply – demand of the ECE. Information regarding supply demand should be obtained from multiple sources (data from Municipalities MoESCS, National Statistics Office of Georgia, Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Georgia” by UNICEF Georgia, School Readiness Program Monitoring Report” by UNICEF Georgia” and etc.). The goal of this assignment is to inform the project/MoESCS about existed gaps between supply -demand and plan development of the relevant services and infrastructure based on the findings.
- Professional development system of ECE professionals, qualification of the ECD professionals, their needs and opportunities;

- ECE quality monitoring system, the mechanisms applied by MoESCS that ensures quality assurance of the curriculum implementation and program delivery;
- utilization and coordination mechanisms for ECE sector. How functions are distributed among different agencies (Local Government, Ministries); What are the challenges in the coordination process;
- Quality and content of the school-based preschool services and School Readiness Program (SRP). School Readiness Play was developed by MoESCS and UNICE; The main challenge of this program is that it is not built on revised modern pre-school education standards and does not follow the new educational trends; The goal of this task is to review the existing program, with respect to new educational standards, the primary school curriculum and the best international practice;
- Review existed ECE teacher remuneration policy and its efficiency and propose ways of improvement.

Procurement will be completed in early 2021 and it is expected that company will finish the task after 11 months of the contract signature.

One of the objectives of this sub-component is the upgrade and development of an ECE quality monitoring framework and instruments; Based on this task, various already existing tools and instruments were analyzed, including a benchmarking tool developed by “Save the Children” with the support of the WB’s Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA); As a result of the meeting, it was agreed that PMU will map out all existing resources and build on the best practices to ensure that all donors efforts are well aligned.

Another important activity of this sub-component is to strengthen the professional development system for ECE professionals. Namely, this component would aid in the establishment of a certification and remuneration system for existing and novice ECE professionals; It should be noted, that there are 1646 state kindergartens and alternative preschool institutions (school-based school readiness groups and etc.) in Georgia, were 8949 caregiver-pedagogues are employed; their qualification are as following: 29,9%-University level education in ECE; 9%-Professional/vocational level education in ECE; 44,2%-No education related to ECE. Data shows urgency of developing certification mechanisms for ECE professionals with the supporting professional development package. Within the same sub-component appropriate training modules will be prepared and conducted to promote professional development of ECE professionals; Several working meetings have already been held



in this direction, including meetings with UNICEF Georgia and TPDC representatives; The purpose of the meetings was to identify supply-demand changes regarding ECE professional development / trainings.

***Next Steps:***

- Conduct a comprehensive Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Georgia
- Finalize selection criteria of schools where revised School Readiness Program will be implemented; Based on the agreed selection criteria the list of schools will be completed
- Conduct preparatory works to develop Terms of Reference, evaluation criteria and other relevant bidding documents for upcoming procurement as specified in the revised PP (“Improving ECE institution management system and enhancing the quality of programs across the country, increasing equitable access to preschool education for successful transition to school”)

## Component 2

### Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education

#### *Progress*

During the project implementation process PMU had series of discussion and working meetings with the Deputy Minister, Ekaterine Dgebuadze and the relevant structural units and agencies of MoESCS, which are involved in the project implementation, as well as MDF of MRDI which is working on infrastructural improvement component of the project. PMU was closely cooperating with all relevant stakeholders and partners of the project to ensure that project is well aligned with the ongoing general education reform agenda aiming at improving the quality and access to general education. All relevant agencies and departments within the MoESCS were contributing to design the project activities.

#### Sub-Component 2.1

##### Improving the educational infrastructure to support learning

Based on the school selection criteria of rehab schools, the list of schools was finalized and submitted to the Bank for no objection. No objection from the Bank was issued on 07.07.2020. PMU prioritized 60 schools for rehab works as well as prepared the list of reserve schools.

No objected list of schools was shared with MDF. Based on the mutual agreement, MDF developed ToRs for the school designs for the first 26 schools and plus 5 schools in Mestia Municipality. ToRs have been reviewed by PMU engineer, the WB and procurement have been announced which will be finalized by the end of February 2021.

PMU developed the ToR for developing physical environment standards for new school buildings. This scope envisions development of the new, diversified and modern infrastructure standards in Georgia for General education institutions which will support 21st century teaching and learning, student centered pedagogy with creation of learning spaces which facilitates students' development. Overall goal of the assignment is to support MoESCS in developing national Infrastructure and Physical Environment Standards (IPE) for general education institutions.

The standard should specify minimum requirements for mandatory application as well as recommendation part that will be applicable considering different needs (geographic, climate, school size, number of students, education level etc.). The standards developed shall employ the best practices for the construction of a new buildings for an appropriate level of general education (primary, basic, secondary), considering geographical diversity as well as country's economy and resources. Primary school



standards should include space and arrangements for accommodating the preschool education classes.

Standards must consider characteristics of the small schools and submit best solutions for mandatory and recommended spaces/facilities, including preschool education.

All standards (primary including pre-school classes, basic and secondary) for education infrastructure should take into account geophysical and climatic conditions of Georgia. Therefore, it is expected that minimum requirements and recommendations will be diversified and will reflect needs of small contingent, high mountainous and urban type schools.

School infrastructure standards must be aligned with the EU standards for specification such as the number of square meters per child, ceiling heights, natural light per square meter, noise level, etc. The standards and designs must support the creation of innovative spaces in schools as the “Third learning environment”. In addition, proposed standard should be in line with the all applicable regulations of the Georgian government.

The draft ToR has been shared with MDF and MoESCS for their feedback and suggestions. The final version has been approved by the Bank.

### ***Sub-Component 2.2***

#### ***Supporting the scaling up of the whole-school improvement pilot***

This sub-component is focusing on the GoG’s new, ongoing whole-school improvement pilot program in general education that aims to strengthen and modernize teaching and learning practices as well as support efforts to develop positive school culture. The aim of this sub-component is to assess schools and offer additional support to enhance quality of teaching and learning and improve school management.

PMU has developed the ToR to conduct “diagnostic study and evaluation of trends in General education in Georgia”. The ToR has been developed and agreed with the relevant counterparts from the MoESCS. ToR development process was conducted that included number of working meetings with the deputy Minister Ekaterine Dgebuadze, Head of TPDC, staff from early childhood and general education department to define and agree on the important details of the ToR.

The general objective of this assignment is to conduct an education system diagnostic which will include elements of governance, alignment and efficiency, quality and delivery of education, teacher/staff policies, financing, resources, and student outcomes. Multi-component study and comprehensive evaluation of secondary education institutions (schools) will be designed and implemented to



analyze the current situation, determining the impact of recent reforms, identify development dynamics and trends and prepare set of recommendations for developing a comprehensive and whole school improving programs.

The study's results will support the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MoESCS) to learn the progress of recent reform initiatives, including whole school improvement program (so called "new school model") implementation, analyze the achievements and challenges, make further decisions and plan interventions based on the evidences and reliable data.

The focus of the study should be on the impact of macro and micro factors influencing the outcome of the ongoing whole school improvement process. All components that determine the dynamics and outcomes of school development, quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of the learning environment should be evaluated. The current system of teacher professional development and incentive policies will also be evaluated.

In addition, the study will evaluate the ongoing whole school improvement initiatives of the Ministry to identify the best practices for scaling up the program. Based on the pilot analyses and international best practices diversified approach to school curriculum development and implementation including necessary support to teachers and principals, as well as for the enhancement of the school quality management will be suggested.

ToR for "Diagnostic Study and Evaluation of Trends in General Education in Georgia" has been no objected from the bank and announced. Expression of Interest has been received and reviewed by the evaluation committee. The overview and evaluation process is underway to assess and evaluate the proposals that were submitted by shortlisted companies. The tentative contract signing date is March 21.

### ***Sub-Component 2.4***

#### ***Assisting the development of a national assessment framework***

After having multiple discussions with the MoESCS and Bank representatives, this sub component has been amended and revised in the following manner:

This sub-component will provide the support for developing and introducing the revised national assessment system for general education level. The aim of the assessment system is to inform education policy makers and other relevant stakeholders on challenges and strengths of the general education system functioning, assist in identifying different factors (socio-economic status of the students, geographic allocation, school general characteristics, education policy, employment conditions, access to education, attitudes towards education, parents' engagement, access to internet and education resources etc.) affecting students learning outcomes and allowing for evidence-based policy decision making.



Initially the project will support the development of the national assessment framework defining the purpose, format, target grades and subjects, utilization of results, as well as the mechanisms for the implementation. Project will support development and implementation of national assessments in target grades and subjects as well as build capacity within the system to ensure their adaptation with the best quality standards.

The sub-component will also address the issue of quality and effective use of formative continuous assessments of students including students with disabilities and/or diverse education needs. The existing formative assessment system will be reviewed and updated in accordance to the requirements of national curricula and cover all grades of general education (1-12 grades). Teachers' capacity to implement effective formative assessments will be built. Further, it will include support for the capacity building of the relevant state agencies and MoESCS for developing and offering school-based trainings in the design, conduct, analysis and research on formative assessments.

This sub-component would also support the conduct of a functional review and make recommendations to establish a National Institute for Education Research to use research and analysis and to inform policy actions for the improvement of teaching and learning at all levels of education. Such an institute is envisioned

to ensure that best practices for effectiveness, equity and efficiency are researched, highlighted and infused in the education practices paying special attention to teaching and learning for all students.

### ***Next Steps:***

- Continue working on procuring consulting services from OAT which envisions capacity building of NAEC staff in administering TAO platform
- Complete on going procurement (diagnostics study)
- Processed with activities envisaged by POM and panning the implementation revised PP including but not limited to hiring the ICs to work with PMU in developing ToRs for upcoming procurements, continue working with different stakeholders at Ministry level as well as coordinate with international donor organizations
- Procurement of consulting services for the assignment titled Infrastructure and Physical Environmental Standards for General Educational Institutions will be published by the end of January of 2021 and the estimated completion date is the end of March 2021. By the consultant the first deliverable will be submitted (standard layout and framework) within two months after signing the contract. The final standard will be presented within eight months after the contract is signed

### Component 3

#### Strengthening Financing Options and Promoting Internationalization in Higher Education

Under the current higher education financing system in Georgia higher education institutions are funded primarily through tuition fees. The input-based lump sum financing model of education has been transformed into per capita financing in 2005. Consequently, state grants for eligible students have been introduced. Public funding takes place in the form of a voucher system (state grants) for students who meet the criteria for getting subsidized. The voucher scheme takes the form of a state grant to students based on a “money follows student” principle. Merit

based grants are awarded based on the scores in the unified entrance examination.

Next to these merit-based grants, there are limited numbers of need-based grants for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, the government has identified numerous priority programs in which all students (up to a certain maximum number) get fully subsidized. In these priority fields, public research universities agree with the government on their enrolment quota. If students enroll in the programs financed by the state under the priority field quota, the government will pay their full tuition fees to the universities.

However, the current funding mechanism does not include performance incentives that stimulate universities to contribute to national strategic objectives, such as high quality and labor market-relevant education. In addition, the tuition cap as well as the state grants do not account for differences in the costs associated with delivering study programs across disciplines, types of institutions or regions.

In 2018 the WB Technical Assistance project was implemented under which recommendations for elaboration of new model of higher education financing were developed. According to the recommendations it was decided that reform of financing model will be carried out in several directions:

1. Development of performance-based model
2. Diversified grants system that envisages defining different amounts of grants for each field of study

MoESCS has started working on performance-based funding model. Model aims to define amount of lump sum funding for state higher education institutions based on “qualitative criteria”. Under the model several basic indicators will be elaborated (academic, scientific, internationalization) divided into sub-indicators (number of academic staff, science productivity, number of foreign students, etc.). For regional universities additional indicators are envisaged - Smart Specialization for Higher



Education - aimed at funding priorities identified for each region (winemaking, veterinary, etc.). Besides, financing model for arts higher education institutions should be developed separately, considering specifics of the field.

### ***Progress***

In the past 6 months, about 30 working meetings were held with MoESCS Representatives, the Deputy Minister, and the staff of the Department of Higher Education to have a clear understanding of the content of the project, to discuss the scope of the sub-components as well as the ongoing project implementation plan and the necessary changes in the content of the sub-components based on the strategic vision of the Ministry.

#### **Sub-Component 3.1**

##### **Developing new options for higher education financing, including performance-based options to support the Government's strategic objectives**

As a result of the multiple working meetings held with MoESCS Representatives the Deputy Minister and the staff of the Department of Higher Education, the activities under the sub-component were discussed and the implementation deadlines and achievable results were specified in accordance with the strategic vision of the Ministry.

The Higher Education Financing Report issued by the Bank in 2018 was analyzed, and the ToR for Selection of Consulting Services for the Development of New Model for Higher Education Financing was prepared. The procurement process is ongoing during this reporting period.

The evaluation group is already established, and the evaluation of the companies' experience is conducted. Based on these activities, two documents - the Short-List Evaluation Report and the Request for Proposals, were prepared. Due to the travel limitations and public health restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the proposal submission deadline was extended for additional 2 weeks until December 18, 2020. This decision was made at the request of the Short-Listed company and in close coordination with the Ministry.

It is expected that with the new financing options, several basic indicators will be elaborated (academic, scientific, internalization) divided into sub-indicators (number of academic staff, science productivity, number of foreign students, etc.). Therefore, it is the inevitable outcome of higher education funding reform to carry out HEIs information management database system, in which statistical processing of the relevant information for a new performance-based funding formula is an important part of HEI's performance review.

Consequently, another result of our discussion with the Ministry representatives was the need to consider the additional activity. More specifically, the new activity was added under the sub-component 3.1, under which the HEIs information management database system will be developed to support the implementation of a new model of performance-based funding. This system will be accessible to different stakeholders with varying levels of access and designed as a common tool for reporting and assessing HEI's performance and development results.

### **Sub-Component 3.2**

#### **Setting up Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) for public and private universities, in partnership with private sector**

This sub-component would aid the establishment of a Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) for public and private universities, in partnership with the private sector. However, the description of the sub-component was clarified, and was underlined that the funding windows will be for the public universities targeting specific

development and innovation issues, as well as for the consortia projects encouraging cooperation in joint projects uniting the public and private universities.

Georgian higher education consists of 19 public and 44 private higher education institutions (30 of them are LLCs), which cater, on average around, 30%-35% of the students. Public funding takes place in the form of a voucher system (state grants) for students who meet the criteria for getting subsidized. The merit-based allocation of State Grants to the best scoring students in the unified entrance exam stimulates equal competition among public and private universities, and the grants are used to finance tuition fees at both public or private HEIs. However, most private universities charge substantially higher tuition fees, which implies that students use the grants to partially offset the tuition levies.

The primary goal of the government is to create, provide and improve conditions for the development of public universities, for the improvement of education quality and scientific research works in order to ensure development of the State and particularly the viability of the higher education system. Along these lines, under this sub-component, the Fund would be developed to award the CIF grants to foster modernization of higher education programs and strengthen labor market linkages in public universities. Besides, this component would encourage the partnership between the public and private universities, and in general, between the public and private sectors by allowing the private institution to participate in the grants competition as a consortium partner. This solution could be the most efficient use of CIF grants whereas there are very limited public resources available.



In addition, the CIF Operational Manual from Armenia was analyzed, and the online meeting was held with Armenian colleague to share experience and to point out the challenges, which were identified during the CIF grant implementation process in Armenia. Based on this assistance and multiple consultations with the Ministry, to develop the results-oriented management approach for CIF grants, it was decided the CIF be established as a Grant Project coordinated by the MoESCS. The organizational structure of CIF will be approved by the Minister. This allows the CIF to be consistent with the national development plans, public policies, and their implementation.

The implementation of the sub-component 3.2. is scheduled for the period from December 2021 to December 2024.

### **Sub-Component 3.3**

#### **Internationalization of higher education**

The content of the sub-component has been modified, in line with the strategic vision of the Ministry regarding internationalization of higher education. The modified activities under the sub-component includes:

- (i) the development of a joint doctoral (PhD) program that will provide comprehensive knowledge to identify and research complex issues within the field of education and science management, in partnership with international institutions/universities;
- (ii) Another priority of this sub-component would be to support the development of entrepreneurship module for higher education studies (Bachelor's and Master's degree programs) as well as module for enhancing English language skills for students considering discipline requirements;
- (iii) In addition, this sub-component aims to support the establishment of an International Excellence School, which provides a focused academic environment with short-term courses. The International Excellence School will foster international academic and scientific collaboration across selected disciplines and accelerate development of the most promising emerging areas that are in line with national strategic priorities.

Besides, at the official request of the first deputy Minister, regarding the initiative to create the platform for the digital register of qualifications within the framework of the project, several working meetings were held with the NCEQE representatives. As a result of our discussions, the NCEQE continues to work with the issue to provide clear reasoning for our possible interaction. The report with a detailed description of the ongoing working process was already prepared, and we will continue working with the agencies of MoESCS to identify the strategic linkages for further

collaboration and to ensure that project is well aligned with the ongoing higher education reform agenda.

### Sub-Component 3.4

#### Strengthening the quality of pre-service teacher education programs for all levels of education

The content of the sub-component has been modified, in line with the strategic vision of the Ministry to bring an adequate supply of well-trained teachers into the classroom. The proposed activities under this sub-component are highlighted that the work should be focused on the interrelated issues:

- (i) capacity assessment
- (ii) capacity building through high-quality professional training, (iii) strengthening programs, and standards for teacher education and (iv) university-based teacher's professional development with particular emphasis on improving teaching and learning methodologies. This kind of professional development benefits both teachers and students.

#### Next Steps:

- Proceed with the procurements related to the project planned activities in accordance with the new PP:
- Complete the evaluation process (by February 2021) for the assignment: *The Development of A New Model for Higher Education Financing*; Work closely with MoESCS and the selected consultancy company for effective project implementation (February 2021 - June 2021);
- Define requirements and develop the ToR (by April 2021) for the selection of short-term international consultant for conducting preparatory works and develop comprehensive ToR/evaluation criteria (by September 2021) for selection of successful bid under procurement related to the assignment: *Facilitate the implementation of a new model of performance-based funding by creating HEIs information management database system*;
- Define requirements and develop two ToRs (by May 2021) for the selection of short-term international and national consultants for conducting preparatory works and develop comprehensive ToR/evaluation criteria (by October 2021) for selection of successful bid under procurement related to the assignment: *Strengthening the quality of pre-service teacher education programs and continuous professional development options, supporting the capacity-building of faculty personnel, teachers, and other school professionals to adapt, develop, and implement school-based curriculum*;





- Define requirements and develop two ToRs (by October 2021) for the selection of short-term international and national consultants for conducting preparatory works and develop comprehensive ToR/evaluation criteria (by March 2022) for selection of successful bid under procurement related to the assignment: *Promoting the internationalization of higher education through designing and implementing a joint doctoral program, the establishment of an International Excellence School, enhancing entrepreneurship and English language skills for students considering discipline requirements;*
- Define requirements and develop the ToR (by November 2021) for the selection of consultancy company for the assignment: *Preparation of the full package of regulatory documents for CIF* (including the Operational Manual for CIF);
- Define requirements and develop the ToR (by September 2022) for consulting services for *the development of the CIF grants application portal, providing assistance in the implementation of CIF grant project and the evaluation of CIF grant proposals.*



## Component 4

### System Strengthening and Stakeholder Communication

#### Sub-Component 4.1

#### Supporting data-driven decision-making accessible to the entire education system

##### *Progress*

The objective of this sub-component is to improve the capacity of the overall education system to collect, analyze, and disseminate data and information for monitoring and decision-making purposes and interventions, including among others, gender disaggregated information. This component will support a diagnostic of the current EMIS system and data needs in Georgia to identify areas of further system development and upgrading. Based on the diagnostic assessment of the existing EMIS database, this sub-component would support the development of a data integration policy, strategy and action plan from preschool to higher education.

In the past 6 months, more than 20 working meetings were held with MoESCS Representatives, the Deputy Minister, and with the staff of LEPL ESIDA and EMIS. Topics for discussion were the scope of the sub-component, as well as the current project implementation plan and the necessary changes in the content of the sub-component in accordance with the requirements and needs of the Ministry. The original tasks included in the POM were already outdated and did not reflect the current needs of MoESCS. Considering rapid changes in technologies as well as the ongoing pandemic, revision and modification of the activities were essential to the original project documents to look for alternative solutions.

Based on the above, the existing POM was revised and adapted, and based on the revised POM the relevant amendments to the PP for sub-components implementation have been developed, were discussed and the implementation deadlines and achievable results were specified in accordance with the strategic vision of the Ministry.

Working Group for Data Integration and Analytic Systems is established. Working Group already started to collect all necessary information for identifying the insights needed by decision-makers to generate effective policies and programs, to make decisions at the operational level in different directions;

Several meetings had been organized among UNESCO, Microsoft and EMIS Team, to find a common ground for long-term cooperation through technical assistance in needs assessment, design of EMIS, and capacity development, also in the integration of big data analytics and AI technologies in the education system.

In addition to the diagnostic assessment of EMIS, project is supporting MES in



equipping schools with the technology and internet connectivity. MoESCS is actively working on the integration of the technology in the teaching and learning process. As a result, new e-resources have been developed, new computer equipment has been introduced in number of schools and Wi-Fi networks maintained. During Covid-19 lockdown, most of the schools were able to switch the teaching and learning process into a remote format. Moreover, the use of technology in the teaching-learning process has significantly increased in the current situation.

**Provision of schools with computer technology has two main goals:**

1. Integration of digital technologies as a working tool for information exchange, for sharing and disseminating information and setting up own information channels. Development of the technology infrastructure to support remote or hybrid teaching.
2. Provide students with online interactive lessons, both remotely and in the physical environment, produce electronic records of students' performance and attendance.

Increasing the number of schools with full Wi-Fi network coverage will enable teachers to use cloud infrastructure provided by MoESCS, connect to internet from any classroom and use multiple electronic resources. On the other hand, schools should be equipped with computers and projectors to ensure smooth online teaching process. MoESCS introduced the cloud infrastructure for teachers (electronic teacher ID, Microsoft Office 365 A1 package included in the unified system, etc.), which enables them to use digital technologies as a working tool. Equipping teachers with computers is also part of the whole school improvement package implemented by the MoESCS, which is in line with the "Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality project goals and activities".

Considering all above as well as analyzing individual school needs and requirements, MoESCS has prioritized 320 schools where all classrooms in grades 1-9 will be equipped with computers, and one projector will be distributed for every 5 classes. In addition, 121 schools require a Wi-Fi network installation.

**School selection process involved several criteria:**

Equal coverage of all regions of Georgia, and prioritizing those schools, which can be supported by the IT Trainers from the MoESCS.

- Level of readiness of teachers and school administration to integrate new technologies into teaching and learning process
- School access to fiber-optic internet connection
- School infrastructure condition

PMU with close collaboration with the MoESCS and its relevant agencies developed ToRs for procuring equipment (Notebooks, projectors) and Wi-Fi infrastructure for schools. ToR was not objected by the WB and has been published.

Through sub-component 4.1, the project supports EMIS for the implementation of cybersecurity software. In the digital world, the protection of personal information and the security of the entire system and databases are vital.

During Covid-19 lockdown, most schools were able to switch the teaching and learning process into a remote format. Moreover, the use of technology in the teaching-learning process has significantly increased in the current situation. It is very important to ensure that online teaching and learning process during pandemic situation happens in a secure space. Therefore, Cyber Security systems should be ensured and upgraded gradually along with the technological infrastructure.

Several years ago, EMIS had implemented Check Point security system which has following main features:

1. Blocks unsanctioned websites.
2. Filters content.
3. Controls network traffic.
4. Defends from spam and malware

Existing software licenses will soon expire, putting the education system and whole educational network at risk of cyberattacks, leaving the process unmanageable and vulnerable employees, students and all users using EMIS services.

To support and extend the maintenance of the Checkpoint cybersecurity system, the request was sent to the Bank for no objection.

- Requirements were defined and the ToR was developed for the renewal of licensing of the control point security system. After obtaining the Bank's no objection a relevant procurement was started.



### **Next Steps:**

- Complete the evaluation process (by February 2021) for the assignment: Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems; Work closely with MoESCS, EMIS working group, and the selected consultancy company for effective project implementation;
- Conduct preparatory works and develop comprehensive ToR/evaluation criteria for the Design and development of a Learning Management System (LMS) and an education management system (EMS) for the national education system and its beneficiaries.
- Recruiting short term national consultant for conducting preparatory works and develop comprehensive ToR/evaluation criteria for selection of successful design and development of Learning Management System (LMS) and education management system (EMS) for the national education system and its beneficiaries.
- Select a company/expert to develop learning resources and guidelines for schools on selected distance learning platforms and teaching methodologies. Conducting ToT.

### **Sub-Component 4.2**

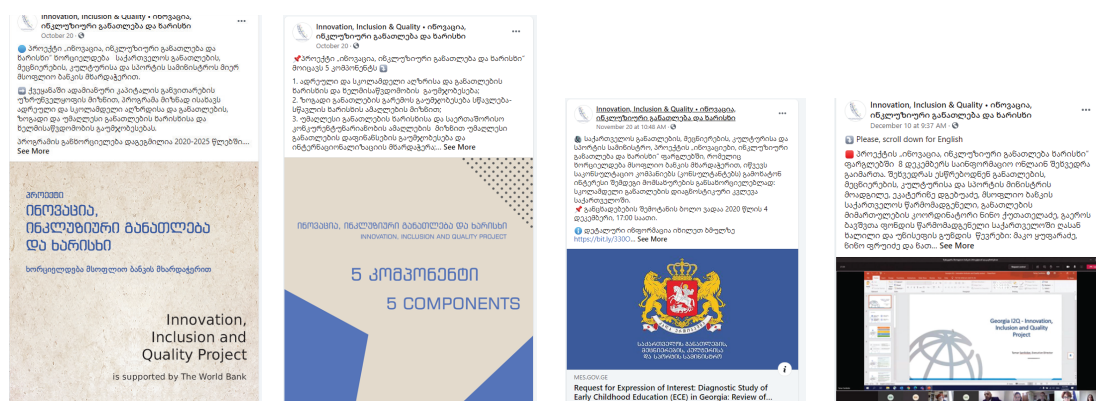
#### **Communication and stakeholder consultations for education reform**

#### **Progress**

Communication is essential tool for Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project in achieving public perception and building and maintaining strong relationships with all its stakeholders. Several meetings were held with the Strategic Communication Department of MoESCS to draft the ToR for developing an effective communication strategy.

Following tasks have been achieved during this reporting period:

- For project identity and visibility, logo and brand book have been designed. Consultations held with graphic designers led to creating effective brand elements for the project (logo, color palette, typography);
- To increase the project visibility, to present and share the information related to project activities, website is developed. Content is created. Website traffic statistics will serve to reach the right target audience and build connections.
- Facebook [Page](#) of the I2Q project is created. It will serve as one of the fastest ways to spread project news, activities or upcoming events in internet.



- Brochure covering the information about the project and its components is created to be printed out and uploaded on the website.
- Content is being collected for the first volume of project newsletter.

### Next Steps:

- With an aim of crafting an effective communication strategy on the current education reforms and action plan, after some meeting with Strategic Communication Department of MoESCS ToR for procuring consulting services is finally drafted
- Discussions with team on content of newsletter, layout and dissemination via e-mails to the key stakeholders (Initially newsletters will be sent out to project partners, relevant LEPL heads, later - to school principals, educational institutions, website subscribers, media)
- Coordination with journalists for interviews/articles to give the project high relevance and visibility in order to create awareness
- Preparation of advertisement materials, creating content for the website, website development; Collecting content for the first volume of project newsletter
- Develop Project key communication messages and materials
- Start awareness raising activities related to the project using various platforms



## Component 5

### Supporting Project Management, Monitoring, and Evaluations

#### Procurements

##### *Progress*

- **The Contracts for the following positions were signed:**
  1. Procurement Specialist
  2. Disbursement Specialist/Accountant
- **The following Requests for Quotation were prepared and announced via E-Procurement System:**
  1. Procurement of Computers for Project Team
  2. Procurement of Vehicle for Project Team
- **Requests for Expression of Interest were announced and respective contracts were signed for the following positions:**
  1. Capacity Development, Outreach and Communications Specialist
  2. Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
  3. Project Coordinator for Infrastructure Projects – Engineer
- **Direct Contract was prepared and signed for position of Document Flow Specialist**
- **Requests for Expression of Interest were announced and Evaluation Reports were prepared for the following Consulting Services:**
  1. Development of New Model for Higher Education Financing
  2. Consulting Services for Study and Evaluation of Trends in General Education in Georgia
  3. Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems
  4. Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education/ECE Sector (access, quality and needs) in Georgia
- **Request for Proposals was sent to the shortlisted companies for the following consulting services:**
  1. Development of New Model for Higher Education Financing
  2. Consulting Services for Study and Evaluation of Trends in General

#### Education in Georgia

### 3. Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems

- **Request for Bids was announced and Evaluation Report was prepared and send to the WB for NOB for Procurement of Technology Equipment for Schools (Laptops and Projectors)**
- **The Draft Request for Bids was prepared and sent to the Bank for NOB for Supply and Installation of Wi-Fi Networks in 121 Schools Located in East and West Parts of Georgia. As a result of NOB received, the RFB was announced using E-Procurement System**
- **Request for Bids was announced using E-Procurement System for procurement of the License update for the Checkpoint System**
- **REOIs were announced for the following positions:**
  - 1. General Education Component Lead
  - 2. Early Childhood Education Component Lead
  - 3. Project Manager
- The following contracts were prepared under the project operating costs:
  - 1. Procurement of Office Furniture
  - 2. Procurement of Logo and Branding Services
  - 3. Procurement of Web Design Services
- Contract was Terminated for Procurement of Vehicle and respective documents were prepared and sent to the Bank and purchaser
- Draft ToR with Estimated Budget was prepared for Developing General Education Infrastructure and Physical Environment Standards in Schools of Georgia and sent to the Bank via STEP for NOB
- Project budget for 2021-year was prepared for the MoESCS
- Respective modifications were reflected in the Project PP via STEP
- Modifications of the POM were conducted and cleared by the Bank



- The new PP has been developed in accordance with the revised POM in close collaboration with Ministry and project component leads

**Next Steps:**

- The following contracts will be signed:
  1. Consulting Services for Study and Evaluation of Trends in General Education in Georgia – March 2021
  2. Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems – March 2021
  3. Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education/ECE Sector (access, quality and needs) in Georgia – March 2021
  4. Procurement of Technology Equipment for Schools (Laptops and Projectors) – February 2021
  5. Supply and Installation of Wi-Fi Networks in 121 Schools Located in East and West Parts of Georgia – March 2021
  6. Development of New Model for Higher Education Financing – February 2021
  7. License update for the Checkpoint System – February 2021
  8. General Education Component Lead – February 2021
  9. Early Childhood Education Component Lead – February 2021
  10. Project Manager – February 2021
- REOI will be announced for Developing General Education Infrastructure and Physical Environment Standards in Schools of Georgia
- According to the PMU internal regulations PP was submitted to the Project Coordinator and approved. Revised PP is ready for submission to the WB via STEP for NOB.



## COORDINATION WITH KEY DONORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

With the aim of better communication and coordination with different stakeholders, key partners and decision-makers, the Executive director of the project held several meetings during the reporting period. Meeting were initiated by the Executive or other interested parties.

I2Q Project team, MoESCS and WB representatives met with USAID, KFW, UNICEF and ADB representatives with the aim to encourage coordination and avoid overlapping and duplications on an operational level. At the meetings, the status of implementation of current projects of donor organizations and future perspectives discussed and goals for further strong partnership and cooperation were set.

At the initiative of the Project Executive, working meetings were held with USAID representatives and in details were discussed LMS and Formative Assessment. It was agreed with USAID that the working groups would be set up for close cooperation during the project implementation phase.

Within the initiative of top management of San Diego University, meeting was held with I2Q project Executive, Tamar Sanikidze and MoESCS Deputy Ministers Ekaterine Dgebuadze and Nunu Mltskevich. The Project Executive shared the information about the project and planned key activities. The university representatives expressed their deep interest in future cooperation and involvement in the I2Q project activities.

Several working meetings were conducted with the initiative of different external stakeholders including Pearson, Save the Children and Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC).

I2Q project Executive director participated in several meetings covering the issue of New Education Sector Strategy since, MoESCS addressed the I2Q project to assist in drafting new education strategy and WB expressed its willingness to support MoESCS. The team with I2Q project Executive, foreign experts (within the scope of EU PAR project, UN Resident Coordinator Office, WB) and MoESCS representatives started working on the road map on drafting of education strategy.

### Next Steps

- At the end of the first quarter I2Q project is planning to organize high-level meeting for donor coordination
- Continue organizing meetings with different interested stakeholders
- Proceed with recruiting international and local consultants for working with MoESCS's relevant counterparts in developing new Education and Science strategic plan



## PROJECT FINANCES

The financial and administrative support for the Project as well as procurement management under the Project in accordance with the Loan Agreement and the WB (IBRD) rules and procedures is performed by the Project Management Unit under MoESCS. The PMU maintains the Project financial management system in line with the WB requirements, performs disbursement of the loan proceeds and counterpart funds.

During this period, new employees were selected within the project. Therefore, the letter to the Ministry of Finance of Georgia was sent requesting the registration of new authorized signatories. Authorized persons registered in the Client Connection system; Also, relevant rights for the signatories in the Treasury System were issued to the Executive Director and the Disbursement Specialist/Accountant; IFRs for the 1st semester of 2020 has been prepared and sent to the WB and Budget for the 2020 year has been prepared accordingly. In addition, the project team worked on the 2021-year budget and sent an updated version to the Ministry.

### *Commitments and Disbursement Projections*

*(from the approved PP)*

(EUR)

Category	Allocated amount	Signed contracts	Disbursed amount (IBRD)	Disbursed amount (Co-Financing)	Committed signed balance	Uncommitted contracts to be signed
Works, Goods, Non-Consulting Services, Consulting Services, Operating Costs and Training except 1c,2a,5a for the Project	29,775,000	445,101	256,838	30,003	158,560	5,490,000

### *Monitoring and evaluation and Gender and Inclusion*

PMU developed Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework which was shared and no objected by the WB.

The main goal of this M&E Plan is to define: i) how progress toward the Georgia I2Q Project Development Objectives, and the intermediate results of each Project Component will be monitored; ii) a methodology, process and timeline for the evaluation of planned, ongoing, or completed activities to determine their efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability; and iii) other components of the M&E Plan described below.

The M&E Plan serves the following functions:

- Explains in detail how PMU and GoG will monitor the Project Components (described in the following sections) to determine whether they are achieving their intended results and measure their performance over time through evaluations.
- Serves as a guide for program implementation and management, so that the PMU and GoG, Project stakeholders and beneficiaries understand the objectives and targets they are responsible for achieving and are aware of their progress towards those objectives and targets during implementation.
- Provides an empirical evidence for sustainable decision-making and adjustments to be made during the Project implementation period.

Please, find Annex 2 - Monitoring and evaluation framework and Annex 3 Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT)



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