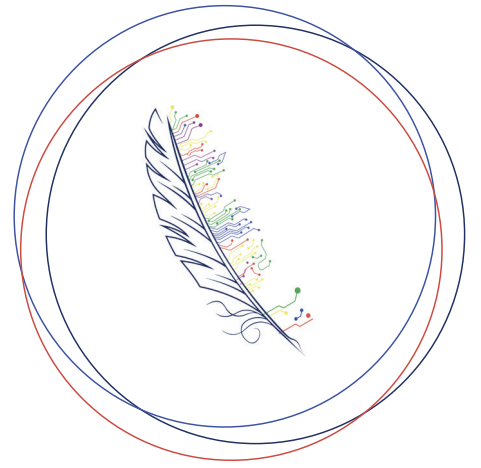


Ministry of
Education and Science of Georgia

Georgia Innovation, Inclusion
and Quality Project (I2Q)

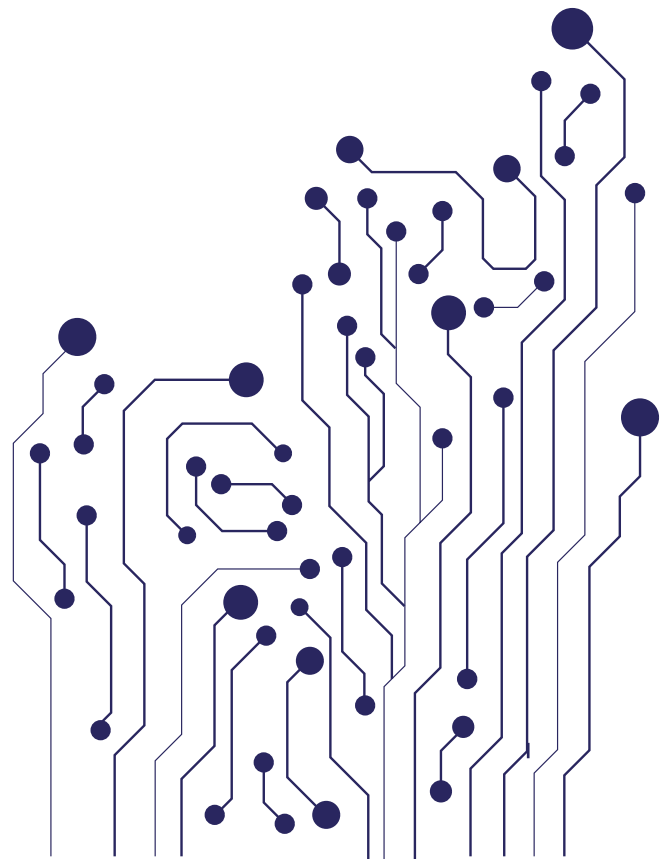


PROGRESS REPORT

For the period
of January-June
2022

Submitted by: Project Management Unit

www.iiq.gov.ge



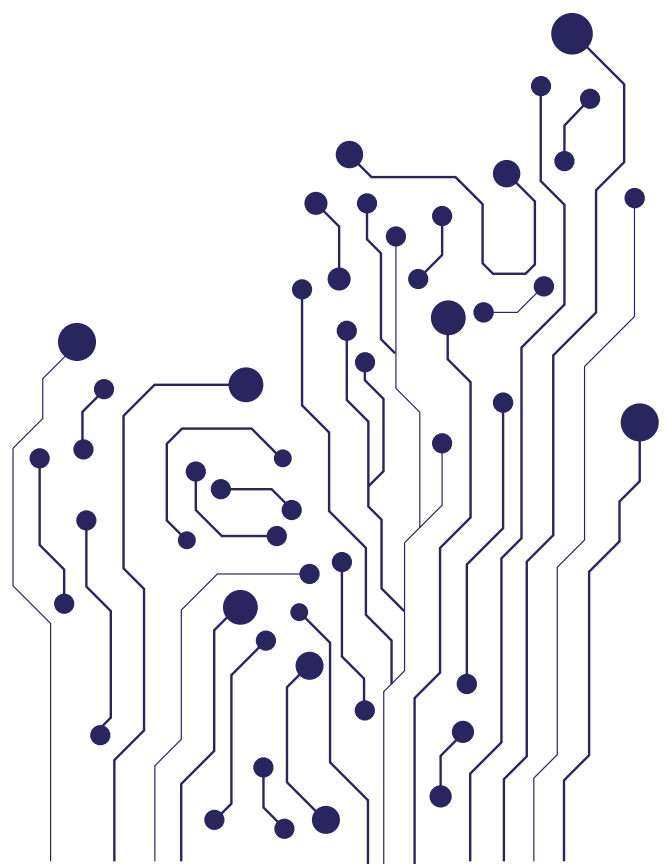


PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q)

PROJECT NUMBER: Ministerial Decree №338

FOR: The World Bank Group



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPF	Performance-based Funding	NAEC	National Assessment and Examination Center
BPMN	Business Process Modeling Notation	NCEQE	National Center for Education Quality Enhancement
CIF	Competitive Innovation Fund	OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care	OM	Operational Manual
ECE	Early Childhood Education	NSM	New School Model
EMIS	Education Management Information System (EMIS)	PAD	Project Appraisal Document
EOI	Expressions of Interest	PDO	Project Development Objective
ESIDA	Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency	PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
ERC	Educational Resource Centers	PMU	Project Management Unit (under MES)
EU	European Union	PMT	Project Management Team (under MDF)
GEL	Georgian Lari	PP	Procurement Plan
GITA	Georgia Information and Technology Agency	QCBS	Consultants Quality and Cost-Based Selection
GoG	Government of Georgia	REOI	Request for Expressions of Interest
HAEI	Higher Arts Education Institution	SRP	School Readiness Program
HEI	Higher Education Institution	SRNSFG	Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development	STEP	Systemic Tracking
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	TAO	Test Assisté par Ordinateur
IMDS	Information Management Database System	TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
JV	Joint Venture	TOR	Terms of Reference
MCYS	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Georgia	ToT	Training of Trainers
MDF	Municipal Development Fund of Georgia	TPDC	Teacher Professional Development Center
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	TTL	Task Team Leader
MES	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
MoHL-SA	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia	USD	United States Dollar
MoF	Ministry of Finance of Georgia	VET	Vocational Education and Training
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia	WB	World Bank



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GENERAL OVERVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Georgia has signed the Loan Agreement for financing the implementation of Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project – Georgia I2Q (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 2020, in order to respond to epidemiological outbreak Covid-19 all governmental entities, including MES had to make severe budgetary cuts and thus faced significant challenges in financing various ongoing or upcoming projects. MES faced problem in finding budget for co-financing I2Q 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, MES sent an official letter to MoF and the WB requesting restructuring of part of the loan agreement managed by MES 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. Therefore, the counterpart financing has been removed from the loan agreement Category (1) amounting to EUR 29,775,000 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.



The Table in Section III. A of Schedule 2 to the Loan Agreement is amended to read as follows:

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 the reallocation of the Project funds among components, as per approved POM:

Project Components	IBRD Financing (EUR)
1. Improving Quality of and Access to Early Childhood Education (ECE) (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)	4,325,000
2. Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education (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)	9,015,000
3. Strengthening Financing Options and Promoting Internationalization in Higher Education	8,860,000
4. System strengthening and Stakeholder Communication	3,585,000
5. Supporting Project Management, Monitoring, and Evaluations (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)	3,990,000

II. SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT PROJECT DATES

- The Loan Agreement was signed on June 18, 2019.
- Project was ratified by Parliament on October 16, 2019.
- Loan became effective on November 27, 2019.
- Official project launch event was held on March 5, 2020.
- Targeted program approval by the MES on March 9, 2020 (Ministerial Decree No. 338).
- Project implementation period: November 2019 - March 2026.
- The Loan Agreement has been restructured and became effective on October 15, 2020.

Note: Due to the budgetary cuts as a result of a pandemic, the loan restructuring was conducted to accommodate the Government request to eliminate requirement of 20 percent co-financing (the table in Section III (A) of Schedule 2 to the Loan Agreement).

- The first WB Implementation Support Mission held during July 6-17, 2020. Next steps/activities specified in the Aide Memoire have been completed. The second WB Implementation Support Mission held during February 15-19, 2021. The third WB Implementation Support Mission held during September 6-17, 2021. The fourth (last) WB Implementation Support Mission held during March 21-April 1, 2022.

Note: Implementation of activities defined in the Aide Memoire is provided below in respective parts of the report.

- The last revision and amendments to POM approved by the WB on May 30, 2022.

Note: The rationale for revising POM in May 2022 is described below in respective part of the report.

- In line with POM revision approved in May, 2022, the PMU initiated changes of the targeted program on June 28, 2022.
- I2Q project Steering Committee established on October 28, 2020 (Ministerial Decree No. 1046328).

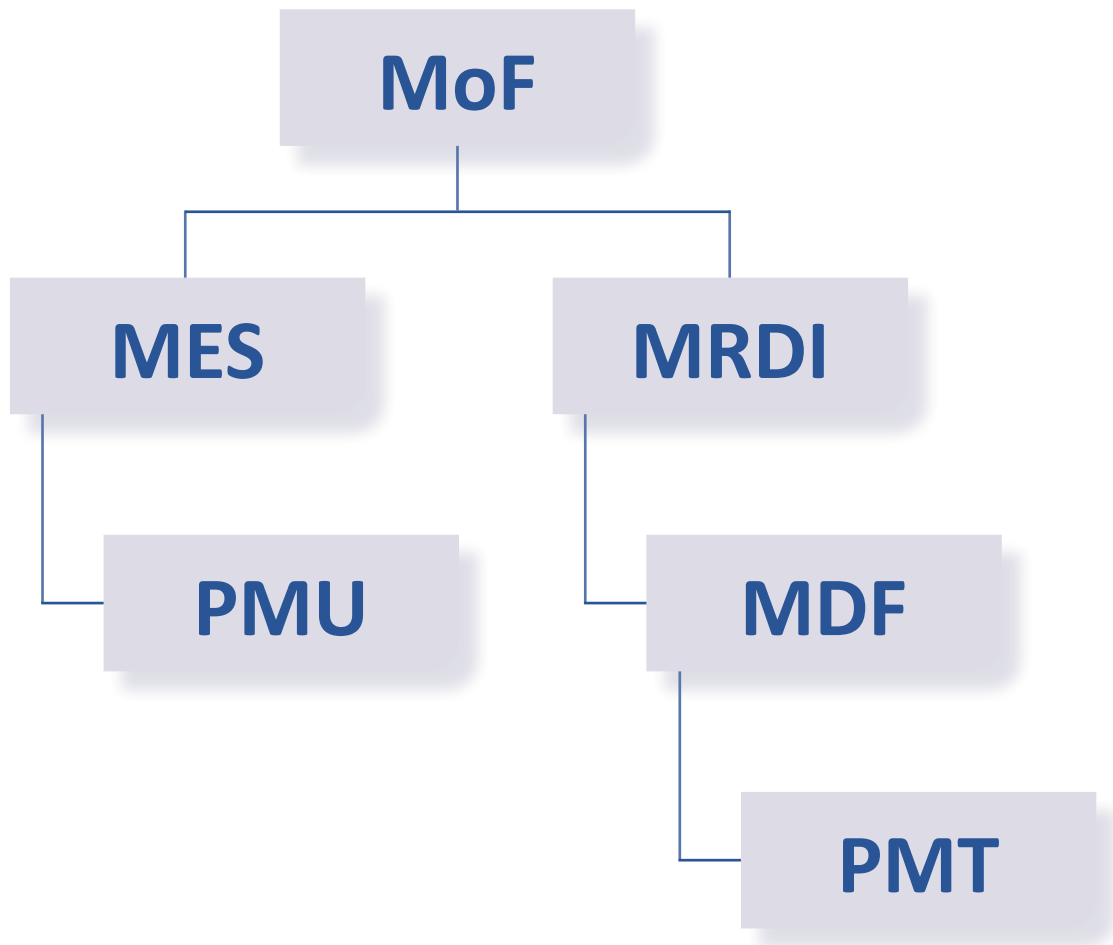
Note: The first official Steering Committee meeting held on December 15, 2020. The second official Steering Committee meeting held on November 26, 2021.

- The full package of Internal Regulations of the Project prepared in late 2020 was approved by the Executive Director of the Project on April 12, 2021.

The I2Q Project will be implemented over a six-year period by the following implementing partners – the MES and the MDF operating under the MRDI. The PMU created within the MES supports implementation of the designated project components, as specified in Legal Agreement. The PMT created within MDF supports implementation of relevant subcomponents under Component 1 and 2 aimed at improving the education infrastructure.



III. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE



SECTION I – OVERALL PROJECT PROGRESS AND KEY ISSUES

A. THE WORLD BANK IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT MISSION

The WB task team conducted the fourth (virtual) Implementation Support Mission (hereinafter – the Mission) for I2Q Project during March 21 – April 1, 2022. The key objectives of the mission were to: (i) discuss the ongoing project implementation progress, including fiduciary and safeguards aspects, in both implementing entities, the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), and the Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Municipal Development Fund (MDF); (ii) identify solutions to any pending issues and agree on next steps to expediate implementation; and (iii) take part in the education sector related donor coordination meetings.

Table below provides a summary of actions agreed during the fourth (the most recent) WB implementation support mission and status of their execution.

STATUS OF AGREED ACTIONS

No	Actions	Responsible	Due Date	Current Status
Component 1 – Improving Quality of and Access to Early Childhood Education and Care				
1	Creation of Working Group (including representatives of PMU, MES, NCEQE, TPDC, EMIS, Tbilisi Kindergarten Agency) to support kindergarten authorization process.	PMU/MES	May 2022	Completed. The National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) has created a working group. ECE Component Lead of the Project is a member of the group.
2	Conference to present findings of ECE diagnostic work to stakeholders	PMU/MES	June 2022	Completed. The workshop was held on May 18, 2022. Final report was received in mid-June 2022.
3	Selection of consulting company to implement activities under subcomponents 1.1/1.2/1.3 - 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	PMU	May 2022	In progress – contract negotiation is ongoing. <u>Note:</u> The tender was introduced in October 2021 instead of September 2021 as TOR negotiation with the client and the WB took longer than planned. There was extension of the deadline of proposal submission date as requested by the short-listed companies and agreed with the WB. Issues with financial proposals required extra time for evaluation. The procurement is now at the stage of contract negotiation. Estimated implementation period – August 2022 – February 2026.
4	Completion of the final draft of the rehabilitation and construction standards for schools	PMU	May 2022 Note: Given that discussions, review and revision of the final deliverable will involve broad range of stakeholders, the deadline may be extended by the end of June 2022.	In progress – draft standards under discussion. Draft standards are prepared, however are still under discussion by internal stakeholders (MES, ESIDA, PMU). The company will need extra time to finalize the document before submitting to the intersectoral commission for their review as required by the legislation. MES plans to facilitate the creation of the intersectoral commission consisting of representatives from MRDI, MDF, MES, MoHLSA and ESIDA. The contract end date is May 2023.



Component 2 – Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education

5	Identification of priority schools (from the list of 60 schools selected for rehabilitation) to allow launch of civil works in Fall 2022.	MDF	May 2022	Completed. The conceptual designs of 9 schools have been prepared by the Consulting company and have been agreed with MES. In order to start rehabilitation works, MDF will announce tenders in September 2022.
6	Launch of civil works in about 8 schools.	MDF	Fall 2022	Upcoming activity. At the first stage, the following 9 schools have been selected for rehabilitation by the Municipal Development Fund and the respective tenders will be announced in September 2022: Village Agaramunicipality of Kareli; Kareli N1; Khashuri N4; Tsikhisdziri – municipality of Mtskheta; Rustavi N2; Rustavi N3; Rustavi N21, Telavi N2, village Sadakhlo – municipality of Marneuli.
7	Finalization of Engineering & Technical Designs for the 1 st Batch of 31 Schools.	MDF	August 2022	In progress - works are expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
8	Finalization of Engineering & Technical Designs for the 2 nd Batch of 29 schools.	MDF	September/ October 2022	In progress - works are expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
9	Selection of consulting company to implement activities under subcomponent 2.2/2.3/2.4 - (Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System, Whole School Improvement Plan and Programs, Improved Assessment Policy, Practice and Methodology).	PMU	May 2022	In progress - contract negotiation is ongoing. Note: The tender was introduced in October 2021 instead of September 2021 as TOR negotiation with the client and the WB took longer than planned. Based on the instruction of the Bank, further clarifications were requested from the companies at the stage of shortlisting, which took an additional month. Per request of the short-listed companies and WB consent, the deadline for submitting the technical and financial proposals was extended. The technical evaluation report has been revised twice based on the WB comments. As instructed by the WB, instead of three days, the period of two weeks was set for the submission of complaints on technical scores. Besides, two tender committee members were replaced during the process based on the changes in the Ministry's management. The procurement is now at the stage of contract negotiation. The contract is expected to be signed in July, 2022.
10	Finalization of concept and policy framework for quality assurance system for general education in close collaboration with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and Ministry of Education and Science.	PMU/ NCEQE/MES	May 2022	Completed. Note: Given that discussions, review and revision of the deliverables involved broad range of stakeholders and required extra time, the term of the contract has been extended until the end of June, 2022.
11	Finalization of national student assessment framework for general education in close collaboration with NAEC and Ministry.	PMU/NAEC/ MES	April 2022	Completed. Note: Given that discussions, review and revision of the deliverable involved broad range of stakeholders and required extra time, the term of the contract has been extended until the end of June, 2022.

12	Targeted Conference/ workshops to present and discuss project outcomes with key education stakeholders including results from diagnostic assessment of general education, new policy frameworks for quality assurance and national assessment.	PMU/MES	June 2022	<p>Completed.</p> <p>Note: On April 29, 2022 the workshop was held with all the relevant internal stakeholders to present results of the diagnostic study and recommendations. The feedback of the conference attendees was received and elaborated in the final report.</p> <p>Workshops on QA and National Assessment frameworks were conducted in March and April 2022. The frameworks have been finalized and agreed with MES.</p> <p>Both frameworks are ready to be passed to the consulting companies that will be engaged in the capacity building project for further elaboration and implementation.</p>
13	Selection of consulting company to implement teacher in-service and pre-service activities.	PMU/MES	August 2022	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Note: The first stage of evaluation is ongoing. Short List Evaluation Report will be prepared by mid-July 2022.</p>
Component 3 – Strengthening Financing Options and Promoting Internationalization in Higher Education				
14	Consultations with public and private higher education institutions to discuss and solicit feedback on the new HED financing policy options	MES/PMU	April – December 2022	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Note: The consultations with HEIs have started in May, 2022 and currently four sessions have been completed with the top management (rectors and the heads of administrative units) of public HEIs.</p>
15	Call for Proposals for the first round of CIF Grants	PMU/MES	November 2022	<p>In progress.</p> <p>Note: CIF Operations Manual (OM) has been developed and approved by the MES.</p> <p>The head of the unit is recruited and the unit members recruitment is under progress (head + 3 members, FM, Ed Specialist, Lawyer).</p> <p>Based on the approved OM for CIF, the CIF will be implemented in 2 phases:</p> <p>Phase 1 - a pilot call will be announced in the fourth quarter of 2022, and the estimated date for the publication of the final results and the signing of grant contracts is the second quarter of 2023; the estimated number of Grants awarded – 10;</p> <p>Phase 2 - second call will be announced in the third quarter of 2023, the estimated date for the publication of the final results and the signing of grant contracts is the first quarter of 2024; the estimated number of Grants awarded – 30.</p>



16	Selection of consulting company to design HED management database	PMU/MES	June 2022	<p>In progress – delayed, now on track.</p> <p>Note: REOI was published on December 10, 2021, with the deadline of receiving expressions of interest on January 6, 2022, which was extended for additional 2 weeks due to the low competition and defined as January 21, 2022.</p> <p>Based on the results of the evaluation considering the low competition, it was decided to reject all proposals. The original TOR was also revised and re-announced.</p> <p>Under the re-announced tender 9 companies expressed their interest. The evaluation of the submitted applications was carried out, the companies were short-listed, the RFP was developed and agreed with the WB. Pre-Proposals Conference for the Assignment was held online on June 15, 2022.</p> <p>The selection process will be completed by August 2022.</p>
Component 4 – System Strengthening and Stakeholder Communication				
17	Finalization of Communication Strategy	PMU/MES	<p>May 2022</p> <p>Note: According to the contract, the assignment is expected to be completed by May 17, 2022. However, interviews took longer than expected due to a large number of stakeholders. Considering the aforementioned, it is planned to amend the contract and extend the term through end August 2022.</p>	<p>In progress.</p> <p>As planned, the contract has been extended until end August, 2022.</p> <p>Initial draft communication strategy is being developed by the Consulting Company.</p>
18	Launch procurement of consulting company for EMIS capacity building including development of EMS, Preschool Database and LMS	PMU/MES	August 2022	<p>Planned – on track</p> <p>The company is in the process of finalization of draft TORs. Their contract ends in August 2022.</p>

Note: As agreed with MES, the MES would allocate one million GEL from the 2022 budget to carry out minor rehabilitation work in about 40 target institutions in 2022. The WB requested continued support from the MES to ensure that required funds for the rehabilitation of the classrooms in the remaining institutions are reflected in next year’s state budget for ESIDA.

During the mission, the Aide Memoire was developed, and the implementation timelines were agreed. The detailed description of the progress made during the reporting period is provided under relevant parts of the report.

B. REVISION OF THE POM

As agreed during the last WB Implementation Support Mission, the PMU has revised POM in order to reflect all additional activities not originally considered under the Project. These activities include (i) development of Education and Science Strategy for 2022-2032 and Action Plan for 2022-2023; (ii) Procurement of Technology Equipment for Schools (Laptops and Projectors); (iii) Supply and installation of wi-fi to 121 public schools of Georgia; (iv) Development of the Unified Accounting Policy for MES and its' subordinated agencies; (v) Financing TIMSS 2023 Project Participation Fee; (vi) Strengthening of Decentralized Management System and Revision of School Principals' State Standard and (vii) development of a detailed draft TOR for the development of the student tracking system platform on the national level. Implementation timelines of existing activities have not been amended, since it is tentative and the revised expected dates are reflected in the PP, under relevant procurement activities.

Considering that there is no formal document that defines the reallocation of MES budget among the components 1, 2 and 5 of the Project, it was decided to use POM to reconcile this issue. The presented budget distribution among the different components of the Project is based on the most recent budget projection at that time (with the currency exchange rate between USD and EUR being 1.1). It should be highlighted that since the currency of the loan is Euro, and the Procurement Plan (PP) is performed through STEP in US Dollars, the exchange rate fluctuations generate material differences between planned and actual available funds. The PMU, as agreed with the WB will reflect these in the Project budget and the PP.

Since the outline of the performance evaluation survey to be conducted in addition to the original M&E activities was not reflected in any official document, the framework of performance evaluation (agreed with the WB) has been added as an Annex of the revised POM.

C. RESULTS FRAMEWORK REVIEW

The PMU on behalf of the MES management shared certain concerns with the WB during the Bank's Implementation Support Mission in September 2021 about the indicators at both PDO and Intermedium Results levels in terms of their applicability to provide accurate, adequate, effective, and efficient measurement of the Project implementation and impact. The concerns raised on the PDO level indicators were not related to project objectives but rather were of technical nature. These relate to methodology and measurement and the need to find appropriate instruments to measure the project success against existing Project Development Objectives. Based on consultations, the WB recommended keeping the Project Development Indicators and to avoid the second restructuring at this early stage of the Project implementation. As discussed in greater details with the WB, it was agreed to jointly identify the ways both to support achievement of these indicators and monitor progress with respect to the two concerned PDO indicators.

Decision has been made to employ NAEC on a direct contracting basis to assess Students' Learning Outcomes baseline data (no objection received from the WB on December 22, 2021). Such a decision



was based on both cost effectiveness and expertise rationale which proceeded from the analysis of the Georgian marketplace in the field of data collection and learning assessment.

In addition, NAEC is a partner institution under the Georgia I2Q Project and their involvement into the learning assessment activities shall provide further benefits from the Project's sustainability perspective. NAEC's involvement in collaboration with EMIS shall contribute to the creating overall database on Project's interventions specifically.

To measure Project's success against PDO indicator 2 (Learning outcomes of students in national formative assessments in project-supported general education schools), decision was made to contract NAEC to conduct assessments in schools which shall receive the highest level of treatment from the Project's Components. In addition, those schools had to accommodate specific criteria based on geographical location and vulnerable student groups (e.g., low-income families, ethnic minorities, children with special needs). The pool of 200 project target schools was created out of which 100 schools were selected on a stratified random basis for evaluation purposes. The assessment shall be carried out in two rounds starting in Spring 2022. The second round shall be completed in the final year of the Project in 2025. Contract with NAEC was signed on April 20th, 2022. The first round of baseline data collection and analysis is expected to be finalized on July 15th, 2022. The second round (endline) shall be complete in Summer 2025.

To explain the findings from the learning outcome assessments and to emphasize on Project's midterm outcomes and final impact the PMU and the Bank agree to conduct performance evaluation survey. The survey shall accommodate both quantitative and qualitative research techniques to measure implementation success as well as to evaluate results achieved. Performance evaluation shall be carried out in two rounds to assess baseline and endline data in 2022 and 2025 respectively.

In addition, the survey shall collect and analyze data against the following indicators given in PAD:

1. Survey of change in female attitudes towards STEAM conducted amongst girls participating in the Thematic Innovation clubs,
2. Representative groups who report that the national consultation (and feedback) process on Georgia's Education policy principles was responsive to their views through an appropriate CE mechanism,
3. Parents that report satisfaction with their engagement in the whole school improvement effort and demonstrate understanding of student-centered learning through beneficiary surveys in Year 1, 4 and 6.

The TOR for the Performance Evaluation Survey consultancy has been prepared by the PMU and approved by the WB during the reporting period, which was followed by issuing of the REOI on May 30, 2022 with a deadline of submitting EOIs by July 15, 2022, 17:00 (local time). Completion of the procurement procedures and signature of a contract with a successful bidder is expected in August, 2022. The first (baseline) data collection and analysis round shall be conducted in August – January 2022. The final round (endline) shall be conducted in 2025 respectively.

SECTION II: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS BY PROJECT COMPONENTS

A. COMPONENT 1 - IMPROVING QUALITY OF AND ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

During the previous reporting period, the Project has provided support to the MES in designing the new Education Sector Strategy for 2022 – 2032 through supporting strategic planning process as well as facilitating and leading the consultation process with relevant stakeholders. The draft strategy is currently in final revision phase and will be submitted to the GoG for approval by mid-July, 2022. The new draft strategy is in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the Decree of the GoG N629 of December 2019, “On the Approval of the Rules of Procedure for Development, Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Documents”.

Georgia has made significant progress in reforming its education system since 2007. Within the framework of the reform, the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education was adopted by the Parliament of Georgia on June 8, 2016. The Law establishes a legal basis for universal access to preschool education ensuring development and quality. Moreover, the Law defines the organizational structure of preschool education institutions and the rules for their establishment, operation, and accountability, as well as mandatory nature of authorization. The GoG approved the following state standards that are mandatory under the Law:

1. National Standards for Early and Preschool Education and Care;
2. Professional Standards for Caregivers and Pedagogues;
3. Technical Regulations – Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Standards for Preschool Care;
4. Catering and Diet Nutritional Value Standards at Early and Preschool Education and Care Institutions.

According to the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education, MES is responsible for the education component of ECE, which incorporates development, implementation, and monitoring of educational standards, resources, materials, as well as developing and implementing education programs and resources.

Paragraphs 6 and 7 of Article 28 of the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education provided that, from April 1, 2019 to December 31, 2021, each local municipality and the self-governing city had a responsibility to conduct gradual authorization of institutions that provide ECE and preschool education. However, notwithstanding the dates and responsibilities stipulated by the Law, the authorization process has not started. Tentative reason was the lack of readiness and institutional capacity of implementing parties.

Amendment of the current legislation addressing the authorization of the ECE Institution, allocating responsibilities during the transition period, and defining transition period requirements of the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education was approved by the Parliament of Georgia on February 12, 2022.



According to the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education, authorization is the procedure for obtaining the status of an Early Childhood Education Institution and the status of a Preschool Education Institution. According to the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education, transition period is defined until January 1, 2030. The authorization is the external quality assurance mechanism that applies to both, public and private kindergartens. It is important that the reform will help kindergartens to provide quality services in accordance with the state standards, which are focused on performing an educational process tailored to the needs and interests of the children.

In accordance with the new Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education, no later than December 1, 2022, upon the submission of the MES, by the resolution of the GoG, the temporary rules and procedures for authorization of ECE and Preschool Institutions, as well as suspension and termination of authorization status of institutions (hereafter - temporary rule) will be approved. According to the Law, during the transition period, authorization process will be conducted by NCEQE according to the temporary rule to be approved. During the transition period, the decision on the authorization of institutions will be made by the Authorization Council of ECE and Preschool Education Institutions (hereafter - the Authorization Council). Upon the recommendation of the MES, the Prime Minister of Georgia appoints and dismisses the members of the Authorization Council.

As provided by the Chapter VIII, Article 28, Clause 9 of the Law of Georgia on Early and Preschool Education, for the purpose of initial registration of ECE institutions no later than July 1, 2022 EMIS had the responsibility to build an appropriate electronic system (hereafter - the electronic registration system). EMIS team developed and introduced mock-up of the electronic registration system to ECE stakeholders. Currently EMIS with NCEQE are conducting visits to local municipalities in order to introduce instructions and procedures of registration in the electronic registration system, which shall be completed no later than January 1, 2023.

At this point the PMU is working closely with the ECE Development Division of the MES, NCEQE, EMIS, TPDC to streamline project activities towards the anticipated legislation changes as the I2Q Project accommodates important interventions to support MES improve the access and the quality of ECE. During February 2022, NCEQE developed a coordination team including representatives from different Ministries, ECE institutions (private and public), and organizations contributing to the development of the ECE sector concerning the action plan for ECE and Pre-school education institutions' authorization. The draft authorization standards have been developed and the initial feedback has been presented by the working group members regarding the document. The draft authorization standards consist of the following four standards: (i) The Mission and Strategic Development Institution; (ii) Educational Program (Curriculum); (iii) Family and Community Involvement; (iv) Administrative Support of the Care and Education Process.

As a member of the coordination team, ECE Component Lead of the Project is involved in the development process of the authorization standards, and revision of the Technical Regulations of the ECE. It is noteworthy that the Project will assist MES in developing and improving quality assurance mechanisms, as well as piloting and facilitating their implementation. One of the most important interventions considered under the ECE component of the Project is building the systematic and

robust ECE and preschool data reporting and consolidation mechanism, as well as incorporating it with the EMIS, which is the integral part of the authorization standards.

In June 2022, ECE Component Lead participated in the international conference on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) held in Batumi. The International Conference was organized and supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF Georgia) and Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University. Representatives of the GoG, Members of the Parliament, representatives of the MES, representatives of non-governmental organizations, representatives of international organizations reinforcing the field of ECE, local and international researchers and experts of the field of early and preschool education, practitioners of the field and other stakeholders participated in the conference. The conference aimed to facilitate academic discussion and knowledge sharing on quality, access, and inclusion in early childhood education and care considering local and international practices. Also, the practitioners of the field shared their best practices to raise the awareness of society and policymakers about the importance of early childhood education and continuous professional development of ECE professionals. Within the frames of the conference, ECE Component Lead of the Project spoke about the diagnostic study conducted under the Project, as well as upcoming capacity building activities and scale-up steps under the project for improving the quality and access to ECE in Georgia.

Sub- Component 1.1 - Improving the Quality of ECE Programs Across the Country

The Project diagnostic study of the ECE sector has been conducted, to analyze the current situation, determining the impact of recent reforms, identify development dynamics and trends and prepare set of recommendations for defining the needs for relevant interventions targeting at improving access and quality of ECE. Findings and recommendations driven from the study, will be the basis for the planning interventions within Component 1 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.

Consulting services for the assignment – “Diagnostic Study of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Georgia” has commenced on July 21, 2021 for the duration of 11 months including time needed for the approval of the submitted reports, continuing through June 21, 2022. All deliverables have been submitted by the consulting company and the work has been successfully completed within the timeframe provided in respective contract.

In the frames of the conducted Diagnostic Study, the Consultant analyzed relevant information related to the below-specified areas to support further development in the sector and facilitate an evidenced-based decision-making process:

- Supply-demand of the ECE - Information regarding supply-demand was obtained from multiple sources (data from Municipalities, MES, National Statistics Office of Georgia, “Study on Quality of Early childhood Education and care in Georgia” conducted by UNICEF Georgia, “School Readiness Program Monitoring Report” developed by UNICEF Georgia” etc.);



- Professional development system of ECE professionals, qualification of the ECE professionals, their needs and opportunities;
- Existing ECE quality monitoring system, the mechanisms applied by MES that ensure quality assurance of the curriculum implementation and program delivery nationwide;
- Utilization and coordination mechanisms for the 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). This envisaged review of the existing program with respect to new educational standards, the primary school curriculum, and the best international practice;
- Examined the existing ECE remuneration policy and its efficiency.

In order to introduce initial findings and preliminary recommendations to the ECE stakeholders, the Consultant with the support of the PMU conducted a workshop on May 18, 2022. A number of key ECE stakeholders, such as representatives of WB, MES, TPDC, NCEQE, ESIDA, EMIS were invited to the workshop. International experts of the consulting company conducted a presentation on findings and preliminary recommendations. Respective attendees were given the group-work tasks to brainstorm on the initial findings and preliminary recommendations, ask questions, suggest adjustments, and propose comments. International experts discussed and documented all the feedback received during the workshop and much-needed information for the development of the Final Report (study findings and final package of recommendations). The final report has been revised by the Consultant based on the feedback received from different stakeholders and submitted to the PMU within the timeframe defined by the contract (June 20, 2022). The report has been approved by the Client and PMU and contract completed on June 21, 2022.

On the phase of drawing conclusions, the study confronted the obstacles. The key challenge related to access to reliable, valid and systematic ECE data. The conclusions regarding the supply-demand of the ECE, professional development system of ECE professionals, existing ECE quality monitoring system, utilization and coordination mechanisms for the ECE sector, quality and content of the school-based preschool services and School Readiness Program (SRP), and existing ECE remuneration policy and its efficiency relate to the current ECE reform. The research findings will support the MES at the stage of implementing current ECE reform. The specific recommendations defined in the report will be critical during implementation for the upcoming capacity-building activities under the I2Q Project, such as:

1. Developing QAF for ECE institutions, defining appropriate mechanisms and ECE quality monitoring instruments at the national level. For this reason, the best international practice shall be implemented, shall be considered the results of already achieved progress, and requirements of national legislation. The project is intended to support design, pilot and implementation of QA monitoring instruments.

2. Developing the systematic and robust ECE and preschool data reporting and consolidation mechanism and incorporating it with EMIS.
3. Developing ECE teachers' certification and merit-based pay system.
4. Developing in-service teacher training modules in alignment with professional standards and on modern child-centered pedagogical approaches considering gender, diversity, inclusive education, ECE subject-matter knowledge and group management.
5. Revision of the existing SRP.
6. Introducing revised modern and child- centered SRPs in selected 150 schools.
7. Supporting the implementation of revised SRPs through professional development (PD) of SRP teachers and offering much needed equipment, furniture, and technology.

It should be noted that recommendations are developed with regard to most of the activities and concern the following issues:

1. Access to ECE;
2. Improved ECE quality;
3. Monitoring and Coordination system related to ECE;
4. Professional development of ECE staff;
5. School Readiness Program.

The design stage of the upcoming comprehensive assignment has been completed and REOI was announced in the previous reporting period. In total 10 EOIs were received. The composition of evaluation team members was adjusted due to an evident conflict of interest, upon approval from the MES and the WB. The renewed evaluation team with the amended composition was approved by the Tender Committee in April, 2022. The evaluation was conducted in two phases. The first phase of evaluation was completed in the previous reporting period, as a result of which five companies have been shortlisted. As for the second phase – evaluation of the technical proposals from the shortlisted companies has been completed on June 3, 2022. As the result of the second phase of evaluation, two companies have passed the minimal technical score. Respective Technical Evaluation Report has been formulated and submitted to the WB for review and approval, which was granted by the WB on June 6, 2022. Upon approval of the report, the shortlisted companies were invited to an opening of the financial proposals, which was held online on June 15, 2022. Financial Proposals were evaluated, in accordance with the evaluation criteria specified in the request for proposals document. Consequently, respective Combined Technical and Financial Evaluation Report has been developed, with clarifications on methodology for scoring, descriptions of adequacy for the assignment, strengths and weaknesses of the proposed key experts. Given that the contract is subject to the prior review of the WB, the Combined Technical and Financial Evaluation Report was submitted to the WB for prior review, which was approved by the WB on June 22, 2022.

Notification of Intention to Award has been issued upon consultations with WB and currently contract negotiations with successful consultant is ongoing. In parallel to the ongoing final stages of



procurement, ECE Component Lead has been conducting working meetings with ECE stakeholders, such as ECE Development Division of MES, the Head of Early and Preschool Education and Care Quality Assurance Department of NCEQE, the Head of ECE Development Program of TPDC and GE Division representatives of EMIS. Meetings served to develop a coordinated collaboration system, to allocate responsibilities during the upcoming long-term assignment and to build clear expectations, as well as to depict the Consultant's role during the quality assurance interventions on the ECE level.

Sub-Component 1.2 - Increasing Equitable Access to Pre-school Education for Successful Transition to School

In order to improve access to preschool education for a successful transition to school starting with 5-6-year-old children in SRPs, the Project envisages introduction of modern, child-centered SRPs in about 150 general education institutions/schools.

I2Q Project Coordinator of Infrastructural Projects – Engineer (hereinafter – the Project Engineer) and the designated representative of ESIDA's Construction/Project Designing Department commenced with conducting site visits to 150 selected target public schools in order to evaluate/verify technical conditions of the buildings during the previous reporting period. At the end of this reporting period, overall 68 out of the total pool of target and 5 reserve schools have been evaluated. Based on the physical/infrastructural assessment, 27 out of 68 inspected target public schools failed to meet the minor rehabilitation requirements due to the lack of necessary space, and structural damage to the load-bearing elements of the building. Such schools will be replaced from the reserve school list. The estimated date for completing site visits of a total pool of 150 schools is September 2022. However, the development of design projects will continue till the end of 2022.

As a result of the conducted infrastructural assessments, cost-estimations has been prepared and electronic tenders have been announced by ESIDA in order to procure minor rehabilitation works of the 41 public schools. Tentative completion of the rehabilitation works for the 41 schools is end 2022.

It should be noted that the MDF is conducting rehabilitation works in two out of the target 150 schools. Based on the negotiations, requirements agreed with ESIDA for ensuring arrangement of SRP physical environment will also be considered during the ongoing rehabilitation process of those two schools.

Sub-component 1.3 - Improving Infrastructure to Support Innovative Primary Education, Including Pre-school

The objective of the sub-component 1.3 is to introduce a new model of primary education (grades 1-6) accommodating preschool programs. Thus, among other envisaged activities, this sub-component also considers the development of general education infrastructure and physical environment standards (IPE Standards) for schools of primary education (grades 1-6) accommodating preschool classes in existing school infrastructure.

The procurement process has been finalized and the work towards developing IPE standards has

commenced during the previous reporting period (September 15, 2021). Expected implementation period of the task is September 2021 – May 2023. The detailed information regarding the activity is provided under sub-component 2.1 below (Section II, part B of the Report).

This sub-component also envisages construction of up to 10 model schools with the combined physical and educational environment for SRP and elementary education beneficiaries, according to the IPE Standards and architectural blueprints to be developed under the Project. The project designs will consider the modern learning environment, types of furniture materials, dimensions and layout, renewable energy and carbon-neutral materials, as well as accessibility standards to ensure accommodation for children with disabilities.

As reported in the previous Biannual Progress Report reflecting the progress made during June – December 2021, the selection criteria and the list of schools has been identified in close collaboration with the relevant structural units of MES, which has been approved by the former First Deputy Minister of Education and Science and was submitted to the WB for their review and approval on December 29, 2021.

In response to the submitted criteria and the list, WB (i) requested additional clarifications with regard to the proposed school capacities, (ii) highlighted the need to have adequate scale in schools to deliver the new competency based curriculum in upper secondary education, thus recommending to have at least 100 students in urban schools and at least 50 students in rural schools to be able to provide diverse course offerings and sufficient number of teachers and resources prompted by the new curricula; (iii) instructed the PMU that the Project would not support the construction of school annexes and requested respective amendments to the proposed list. During the reporting period, the PMU coordinated the revision of the list per request of the WB, as well as ensured provision of all of the needed additional information and clarifications by the ECE and GE Development Department of MES.

On March 22, 2022 the WB provided approval on the revised list and requested the Ministry/PMU to carry out consultations with target school management and communities to ensure they are informed about the upcoming construction process, Ministerial decisions on the size and organization of the new schools, particularly in the case of change of the original school status and size (i.e. conversion from full general to primary school, reduction or increase in school size) and are agreeable to the process. As instructed by the WB, MES conducted consultations regarding planned construction works with 10 existing schools selected in the frames of the Project. Additionally, the ECE and GE Development Department of MES has received official/written confirmation and consent from the schools regarding the planned capacity of schools and the level of education to be considered in case of construction works. Respective letters have been provided by MES to the PMU via the official document flow system.

Upon receiving final approval from the WB on the adjusted list of schools selected for construction, the PMU requested MES to define and provide the cadastral information for the construction land plots. On June 28, 2022 the Head of ECE and GE Development Department of MES submitted official



letter to the PMU providing cadastral information for the construction of new school buildings under the sub-components 1.3 and 2.1 of the Project. However, the letter did not contain cadastral information for reconstruction of three out of 18 schools due to the ongoing negotiations with various state organs.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Complete the procurement procedures and sign the agreement for the assignment: “Improving ECE Institution Management System and Enhancing the Quality of Programs Across the Country”. The implementation of envisaged activities by the Consultant will be supervised during the term of the contract. Assistance will be provided in creation of working group for support in fulfilling the assignment. The contract is expected to be signed by the end of August 2022.
- Monitoring the SRP enrollment rate across the country as determined by the PDO indicator:
 - Collection and analysis of the gender-based data on 5- 6-year-old children enrolled in SRPs including percentage of female and male children enrolled.
- Complete site-visits and infrastructural/environmental assessment of 150 target schools for introduction of modern, revised and child-centered SRP in order to expediate rehabilitation works.
 - Assist ESIDA representative in selection process during site visits of 150 target schools;
 - Completion of site visits for identifying remaining public schools for SRP Group development;
 - Rehabilitation works for the remaining 107 public schools will begin in early 2023 and are expected to be completed by July 2023.
- Finalize work with regard to identifying land plots to expediate the design and construction works of new model schools envisaged under the Project.
 - Collaboration with MDF in developing TOR for the upcoming design works of 10 new model schools;
 - Participating in planning and conducting site-visits of the selected land plots by the Project Engineer.

B. COMPONENT 2 – FOSTERING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION

In the scope of the project, diagnostic and analytical work was carried out. As a result, the existing GE system in Georgia, as well as the best international practices were analyzed in the frames of the comprehensive Diagnostic Consulting Study and Evaluation of Trends in General Education in Georgia. To achieve the country's robust educational capacity, as well as a high level of quality and accessibility, more work is needed be done in order to further increase the modest improvement in learning outcomes at all levels of Georgian schools.

In the process of implementing tasks planned under the Component 2, PMU actively worked with the MES. In particular, numerous meetings were conducted with the representatives of relevant structural units of MES, including but not limited to ECE and GE Development Department, TPDC, NCEQE and NAEC with regard to various issues linked with activities considered under the Component. The MES representatives actively participated in the procurement of various consultancies in the capacity of evaluation group members, as well as revised and observed preparation of various documents under the Component, including reports submitted by consultants, TORs, RFPs, development of school selection criteria for various interventions planned under the Project, as well as in preparation of the respective lists of target and/or reserve schools.

As suggested by the PMU and agreed with the WB during the last WB Implementation Support Review (mission) held in September 2021, the PMU will conduct performance evaluation survey to emphasize the Project's midterm outcomes and final impact, in addition to the original M&E plan. The survey shall accommodate both quantitative and qualitative research methods to measure implementation success as well as to evaluate achieved results.

Based on the approval of the WB, Project target schools have been identified, where activities potentially affecting students' learning outcomes shall be consolidated. Specifically, those activities include but are not limited to setting up innovation and STEAM Extracurricular programs in up to 200 schools, rehabilitation of up to 60 schools, piloting of new instruments and mechanisms of national assessment, training of teachers and school leaders. In addition, these activities comprise of developing and piloting of programs for long-term professional development in selected schools with the aim to promote effective use of formative assessment at all three levels of general education, etc.

The PMU has worked closely with the MES to identify the project target schools. Given the scale of the project and envisaged activities, it has been agreed with the Ministry to identify the pool of 200 public schools. A sample size(s) of schools for conducting learning assessment and performance evaluation survey will be selected from the aforementioned pool of project target schools.

In order to ensure equity considerations and the reasonable 'spread' of project interventions throughout the schools across the country, the PMU has agreed to apply the following approach for school selection:

1. Large sized schools of Tbilisi – 2 schools;



2. Medium sized schools of Tbilisi (including a school for talented students, specialized on STEM subjects) – 4 schools;
3. Small sized schools of Tbilisi – 2 schools;
4. Medium sized schools of municipal centers (all municipalities including self-governing cities, excluding Tbilisi) – 63 schools;
5. Medium sized village schools with all three levels of GE education (all municipalities excluding self-governing cities and Tbilisi) – total of 59 schools including non-Georgian speaking schools located in regions populated with ethnic minorities from Samtskhe-Javakheti (at least 5 schools); Kvemo Kartli (at least 5 schools); Kakheti (at least 2 schools); Abkhazeti (one school) and one school of refugees;
6. Schools from high mountainous settlements - 4 schools;
7. Schools located near the conflict zone, near the existing border line;
8. Schools selected for rehabilitation purposes in the framework of the I2Q Project – 60 schools.

Based on the approval of the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia – Mr. Valerian Gobronidze, ECE and GE Development Department of MES has identified the pool of 140 public schools based on the suggested approach. As already mentioned, 60 schools selected for rehabilitation will also be considered as project target schools.

[Sub-Component 2.1 – Improving the educational infrastructure to support learning](#)

This sub-component aims to foster high-quality learning environments and enhance school safety. To this end, this sub-component supports the review and modernization of school infrastructure standards and development of the new architectural design blueprints based on international best practices to support innovative, inclusive and accessible spaces, conducive to fostering collaboration and project-based learning opportunities, as well as to ensure energy efficiency and safety.

The standard development process has commenced in September 2021 and the first deliverable (detailed framework and outline of IPE standards, including justification for recommended approach and the review of legislation, as well review of recommendations and international standards related to schools) has been approved by the PMU in the previous reporting period.

The aim of the assignment is to develop diversified and modern General Education Infrastructure and Physical Environment Standards that shall also accommodate pre-school classes in close cooperation with ESIDA and MDF. The standard should specify minimum requirements for mandatory application and recommendation, that will be applicable considering different needs (geographic, climate, school size, number of students, education level etc.). Furthermore, the standards will employ the best practices for the construction of a new buildings for an appropriate level of general education, consider geographical diversity and, most importantly, meet requirements of the national curriculum.

The first deliverable was shared with the WB for the feedback. The PMU has shared the feedback received from the WB to the consulting company in order to consider the provided recommendations during the next phase, i.e. development of the first draft standard.

On April 15, 2022 the first draft of the Standards was submitted by the consulting company. The draft document was developed following the agreed framework. The approaches outlined in the document include the requirements of the new construction schools for each level of general education individually, which have been elaborated considering international best practice and include the following:

General provisions

- Scope of regulation;
- Definition of mandatory and recommended list of storerooms in the building;
- Definition of mandatory and recommended list of outdoor facilities;
- Requirements for site selection.

Architectural and interior planning

- Requirements for building storerooms (definition of minimum and best practice spaces), definition of space requirements for preschool education in primary schools;
- Requirements for doors and windows, including openings and windows orientations toward sunlight, considering Georgian climate;
- Requirements for definitions minimum and recommended square meters of all storerooms according to its purposes;
- Requirements for Laboratory Design;
- Requirements for sanitary facilities, according to the age of the customers, definition of minimum and best practice examples, for number of sanitary facilities, it's dimensions and specifications;
- Requirements for arranging spaces for children with special needs persons in accordance with the requirements of universal design;
- Requirements for school building equipment, furniture their specification and layout, determining furniture dimensions for primary and general schools according to students age (The consultant should provide several sketches of various layouts of furniture).

Structural design and construction

- Requirements for various structural design and construction solutions, including supplemental seismic design requirements for new school building construction;
- Requirements for various types of load-resisting (structural systems), identifying additional requirements depending on the soil type, site slope (in mountainous regions), etc.;
- Requirements for structural materials.

Territory improvement

- Requirements for site planning;
- Requirements for outdoor facilities planning;
- Requirements for planting on the school territory in accordance with the climatic conditions and regions of Georgia.



Safety and construction materials

- Requirements for construction, interior and exterior finishing materials selection and technologies for their use;
- Evacuation solutions and safety requirements;
- Recommendations for colors according to storerooms functional purpose;
- Requirements for fire protection.

Engineering systems

- Requirements for water supply;
- Requirements for central sewage systems and according to requirements for environment protection, wastewater treatment alternatives;
- Requirements for HVAC systems - Solutions for different types of fuels should be provided, e.g. natural gas; Electric and solid fuels;
- Energy efficiency requirements including renewable energy systems;
- Requirements for air exchange and temperature according to the functional purpose of the rooms;
- Requirements for weak current systems arrangement; The list of recommended and mandatory systems and their layout;
- Requirements for electrical systems arrangement; The list of recommended and mandatory systems and their layout;
- Requirements for natural and artificial lighting, determining the necessary lighting levels in accordance with the functional purpose of the storerooms;
- Acoustics requirements in accordance with the functional purpose of the storerooms.

The first draft of infrastructure and physical environment (IPE) standards submitted by the consulting company was shared by the Project Engineer with ESIDA, ECE and GE Development Department of the MES, the GE Component Lead and ECE Component Lead. Considering the feedback provided by above mentioned PMU representatives, the Consultant has revised the document several times. Based on the last recommendations of the PMU team, the consultant will provide a revised final version of the first draft of standards by the end of July, 2022. The estimated implementation period of the activity is September 2021 - May 2023.

According to the Law of Georgia on General Education, the MES has an authority to determine the construction standards of the school buildings together with the relevant sectoral ministries and agencies. Therefore, the PMU has addressed the MES with the initiative to establish the inter-institutional working group comprising of different stakeholders, including representatives of relevant governmental institutions, such as the Ministry of Economy, MRDI, etc. to discuss and agree the IPE Standards prepared under the I2Q Project. As agreed with the MES, the working group will be formed upon approval of the first draft of the IPE Standards.

This sub-component will also support the construction of up to 8 new model school buildings,

using the revised standards. The list of the school buildings to be constructed has been identified and approved, respective existing schools have been informed regarding the planned construction works, including planned capacities of schools and levels of education to be considered in case of construction works. The detailed overview of the progress made in this regard is provided in the Section II (A), under Sub-Component 1.2 of the report.

This sub-component also envisages the rehabilitation of up to 60 schools by MDF. Currently designs are being developed by the respective companies. In the course of the actions, during the reporting period, it was revealed that several schools located in different regions needed to be replaced due to the newly identified circumstances related to the structural damage of those schools. According to the technical condition studies conducted by consulting companies, the rehabilitation of the buildings was not feasible. Several meetings were held among the relevant departments of the MES and the Project Engineer in order to discuss the issue and identify alternative schools from the reserve school list. Based on the decision of MES, three public schools of a similar size, located in same regions of Georgia were proposed to MDF from the reserve schools' list agreed with the WB.

The similar challenge has been identified recently with regard to three target schools located in Batumi and Municipalities of Tskaltubo and Kaspi. Considering the aforementioned, the PMU is working closely with ECE and GE Development Department of MES to identify replacement schools from the reserve schools' list considering the geographic location and the similar size.

The involvement of the PMU in the activities related to the rehabilitation of 60 schools in the reporting period also envisaged (i) the review and evaluation of the reports submitted by the design companies by the Project Engineer, (ii) attendance of the workshops conducted with the aim of evaluating prepared designs, as well as (iii) participating in the meetings held with Economic Department of MES regarding the details of the lease agreements concluded on the part of the schools' buildings, in order for the MDF to respectively plan the process and implement activities linked with social issues.

As a result of conducted revisions and discussions, the MDF accepted designs prepared by the company (NKY). Therefore, design works have been completed for the following 9 schools: Village Agara School (Kareli Municipality), Kareli N1 Public School, Khashuri N4 Public School, Tsikhisdziri Public School (Mtskheta Municipality), Rustavi N21 Public School, Telavi N2 Public School, Village Sadakhlo Public School (Marneuli Municipality).

Sub-Component 2.2 – Supporting the Scaling up of the Whole-school Improvement Pilot

As mentioned above, complex, multifactorial diagnostic assessment of GE system of Georgia has been conducted in the frames of the Project. The implementation of the assignment - "Diagnostic consulting services for the general education system for the purpose of studying and evaluating general education trends in Georgia" – commenced during the previous reporting period and was completed in June 2022 by the selected consulting company. The aim of the study was to offer additional evidence-based support to enhance quality of teaching and learning in the general education system and improve school management, as well as to assess the progress and results of



the whole-school improvement pilot program and impact, dynamics and trends of recent reforms.

The diagnostic consultation service was carried out in accordance with the approved plan and within the established time frame. Within the assignment, a complex and multifaceted assessment of system management and efficiency at all levels was carried out, including the issues related to school principals/teachers/staff policies, school funding, quality of resources, impact of the new school model, and student outcomes. As part of the assignment, the consulting services were focused on reviewing and analyzing all relevant information to generate recommendations that would help improve the quality of schools and the general education system. The ECE and GE Development Department divisions were supporting the experts of the consulting company to access the school leaders, teachers, local resource centers, for piloting the research tools and interviewing the sample.

Throughout the reporting period, the PMU has been closely collaborating with the research team and provided daily support to the local researchers on developing the survey, as well as its' dissemination. The research protocols were discussed in detail with the PMU and the MES.

On April 29, 2022 a large-scale presentation and discussions were held to introduce the primary findings and conclusions of the diagnostic study. The event was attended by the Deputy Minister of MES (Project Coordinator), representatives of various relevant structural units of the MES and other stakeholders. Following discussions held during the workshop, considering the received feedback, the final report of the study was prepared and submitted to the MES for review and acceptance. In order to introduce final findings and recommendations, the Consultant held a final presentation for stakeholders in June 24, 2022.

As defined by the respective TOR, in the framework of the multi-component study conducted, the current situation and impact of recent reforms has been analyzed, development dynamics and trends were identified and a set of recommendations were prepared in order facilitate and support the scaling up of the whole-school improvement. The final report contains a number of recommendations for improvement with regard to various aspects, including but not limited to the following:

- To improve move towards school-based management and the whole school improvement approach, the MES needs to clearly define what decisions about education should be made at what level and empower the entities to implement the decisions;
- To improve the quality of pre-service teacher training, the MES needs to raise the status of teaching and rigor of entrants into the system; strengthen the teaching practicum; monitor and evaluate programs;
- Establish regular consultations and meetings with MES, TPDC, ERC, NAEC, education institutions, school leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure that in-service offerings are aligned to education reforms;
- Convene MES, university faculty and principals to conceptualize/plan a pre-service leadership program for practicing principals that is aligned with the current reforms/NSM and provide on-going support to current principals;

- Work across agencies and levels of education to refine the school authorization process where profile and capacity of the schools are well-conceptualized and considered during the authorization regulation; define the criteria for continuous progress and help schools and ERCs develop report cards that support formative feedback with a focus on improvement;
- Develop a clear and transparent process for engaging people across technical agencies and at different levels of the system. The process should allow relevant stakeholders to participate in the design of education interventions and help oversee the implementation process. Use data and evidence to drive discussions and decisions about policies and interventions;
- Use the new ten-year education strategy to maintain a stable and consistent vision, with a priority of moving towards a whole school improvement approach;
- The findings and recommendations of the study should give decision makers a complete picture of the current situation and enable effective intervention and transformation planning to improve the quality of general education, bring the learning process up to modern standards, and create an effective learning environment.

The final report submitted to the PMU by the consulting company on May 20, 2022 was reviewed by the relevant representatives of MES and PMU. Based on the feedback received, the Consultant technically revised the document and presented the final version. The assignment has been successfully completed within the timeframe provided in the contract (on June 30, 2022).

Various activities considered under sub-component 2.2, as well as sub-components 2.3 and 2.4 are envisaged under one procurement package – “Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System, Whole School Improvement Plan and Programs, Improved Assessment Policy, Practice and Methodology”. This project aims to promote high-quality teaching and learning in selected general education schools and support capacity-building among teachers and school leaders in all general education schools and includes the following 3 general pillars:

A. Whole School Improvement: develop a policy framework, mechanisms and instructions for whole school improvement and support the scaling up of the pilot to help the schools improve quality.

B. Continuous Formative Assessment of Students: support capacity-building of school leaders to adapt, develop, and implement school-based assessment practices. (Formative Assessment is Developmental assessment which helps the students to strengthen their weaknesses and overcome learning difficulties.)

C. National Assessment Policy Implementation: design the mechanisms and instructions to implement, pilot, roll out, and quality assure the new national assessment policy framework.

Design stage of the assignment has been finalized, REOI was announced and EOIs were submitted during the previous reporting period. Since the assignment is complex and multitask, evaluation team with composition of MES, TPDC and the I2Q Project representatives was approved by the Tender Committee. Companies were evaluated per short-list criteria defined under the REOI. As a result, based on the WB’s no objection, 6 companies were shortlisted and respective RFP was issued to the shortlisted companies requesting submission of the financial and technical proposals.



Out of six shortlisted companies, five have submitted the technical and financial proposals within the submission deadline (March 21, 2022). The Technical Evaluation Report has been developed by the respective evaluation group and was approved by the WB, according to which 4 out of 5 shortlisted companies passed the minimum technical score defined by the RFP. Therefore, financial proposals of the respective 4 companies were opened and the highest-ranking company was recommended for contract award. At this stage the PMU is finalizing the contract negotiation. Upon mutual agreement, the agreed draft contract along with Combined Technical Evaluation Report will be sent to the WB for NOB in July, 2022. The assignment is expected to commence in August, 2022 and will be implemented over the period of 42 months, including the time needed for the Client to review and approve the submitted deliverables.

The sub-component also supports development of the National Quality Assurance Policy Framework for General Education Level. As agreed with the WB, implementation of this activity was expedited, since it was important to have QA policy framework prepared before the commencement of the comprehensive capacity building activity envisaged under the Component. The respective Short-Term Consultant (International) has completed work on a package of policy framework documents, which includes an analysis of international best practices, the Quality Assurance concept, the Policy Framework and recommendations for policy implementation.

Discussions on the draft versions of the concept and policy document were held with the participation of the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia (Project Coordinator), as well as representatives of the relevant structural units of MES on March 25 and 29, 2022.

In order to clarify the main directions of education quality policy and related issues, the international consultant visited Georgia in April 2022 and held workshops and presentations for top management and management representatives of MES. The Consultant also held the meeting with the relevant representatives of the Parliament of Georgia, WB Georgia Office, with specialists of various institutions related to the quality assurance process, as well as public and private school principals and teachers. The information and recommendations received during the visit were processed by the Consultant and reflected in the content of the 4th report.

The short-term (international) consultant hired to support the development of the National Quality Policy Framework submitted the 4th (final) report stipulated by the contract in compliance with the deadlines. This document was shared with MES, as well as NCEQE and TPDC. The recommendations received upon feedback were considered by the expert in the final report, which was presented on 16.06.2022. The revised policy document was agreed with the MES. The contract was successfully completed within the timeframe indicated in the contract – on June 28, 2022.

Since various structural of the MES were involved in the policy discussion, the time needed for the Client to review submitted reports took longer than envisaged in the timeline given in the contract. Therefore, the contract has been extended during the reporting period. However, it shall be noted that the time extension does not cause any scope or price implications.

In the Policy paper, the expert presented recommendations to improve the quality of education by

proposing a new policy model focusing on learning processes based on student’s perceptions and on learning outcomes, also, on student’s motivational outcomes, teaching methods, learning resources and teacher’s qualification.

At the request of the MES and approval of the WB, the sub-component 2.2 also supports implementation of the activity – “Developing Concept for Strengthening Decentralized Management System via Reforming Educational Resource Centers as well as Strategy and Action Plan for Improving School Management”. The assignment considers (i) creating a concept for an effective governance model considering the school district system; (ii) outlining roles and responsibilities and scopes of action of schools, resource centers and school districts and (iii) mapping out criteria for establishing school governance, including districts options with new roles and responsibilities. The activity also envisages development of the strategy and action plan for improving school management with a special emphasis on revision and upgrade of school principals’ state standard, elaborating comprehensive evaluation system of school principals in line with the revised standard and defining concept and approaches for developing school principals’ licensing system and continuous professional development of school leaders. The strategy will be developed in line with Education and Science Strategy of Georgia 2022-2032.

The evaluation has been finalized, successful candidate has been selected and contract negotiations have started during the previous reporting period. The contract was concluded on January 10, 2022 with the successful local Individual Consultant. Even though the expert completed all stages of assignment within the defined timeframe, given the need of additional time for the revision and large-scale discussions of the submitted documents by all relevant representatives of the MES took more time than envisaged, the contract term has been extended during the reporting period through July 31, 2022, without scope or price implications. Currently the PMU is awaiting the feedback from structural units of MES regarding the report submitted, which includes draft strategy and action plan for improving school management.

Sub-Component 2.3 – Supporting the Capacity-building of Teachers and School Leaders (Principals) to Adapt, Develop, and Implement School-based Curriculum

The aim of this sub-component is to support capacity-building and improve continuous professional development framework for teachers and school leaders in general education institutions. School principals’ recruitment policy and framework will be revised, in order to attract the best and the brightest professionals to become school leaders, also to provide motivational scheme to school principals as to the teachers. The sub-component will also support review and improvement of the targeted programs for school leaders, and teachers to attain the goals of revised professional development scheme and develop necessary new skills for ensuring quality of teaching and management.

Most of the activities defined under sub-component 2.3 are included in under the scope of the upcoming comprehensive capacity building activity – “Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System, Whole School



Improvement Plan and Programs, Improved Assessment Policy, Practice and Methodology”. As for the development of continuous professional development framework of teachers, respective task is envisaged under the consultancy to be procured under Component 3: “Strengthening the Quality of Pre-service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options”. It should be mentioned, that based on the current PP (as agreed with the MES and the WB), one procurement package unites teacher professional development activities defined under Components 2 and 3 of the I2Q Project. Therefore, the scope of work covers the activities envisaged under the sub-component 2.3 (except the one concerning review and improvement of continuous professional development framework of teachers) and 3.4 of the Project. The detailed overview of the progress is provided in the Section II (C), under Sub-Component 3.4 of the report.

Sub-Component 2.4 – Assisting the Development of a National Assessment Framework

This sub-component will provide technical 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 strengths and challenges of the general education system functioning, assist in identifying different factors 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 purpose of this consultation was to provide targeted assistance to NAEC to evaluate the current national assessment system, to check its strengths and weaknesses, how well these processes are going at the classroom, school and national levels, as well as to analyze the best international practices of assessments on class and school level, classroom formative assessment and, based on the above, develop a new national assessment policy framework for general education level and develop recommendations for improving the examination system.

Procedures of procuring respective service has been finalized and the contract has been signed with the selected short-term international consultant during the previous reporting period - October 1, 2021. The assignment has been successfully completed in June, 2022.

The assignment has been successfully completed by the end of June, 2022. The policy framework document and recommendations were shared with the MES and NAEC by PMU. The Consultant revised report and reflected the feedback provided by stakeholders in the in the final version of the policy framework document (19.06.2022).

The National Assessment Policy Framework developed in the frames of the Project contains a number of recommendations for general education schools in Georgia, including but not limited to the need for:

- Establishing a legal basis for the assessment system in the education system of Georgia;
- Clearly assigning responsibilities and accountabilities in the development, implementation and delivery of different tests and final examinations in the Georgian education system;

- The development of a quality framework for Georgian schools;
- The introduction of report cards at the end of the school year and at the end of the school semester. The report cards are signed by the parents and collected at the school in a folder for each pupil. At the end of the school year, the pupils receive these documents;
- The introduction of final examinations, summative tests after grade 9 (end of compulsory education) and grade 12;
- The introduction of formative tests in different years (4, 6, 8 and 11) in order to have a diagnostic tool at hand;
- The introduction of education monitoring to review the performance of schools and student bodies in Georgia.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Complete the procurement process and sign the agreement for the upcoming capacity-building activity - “Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through introduction of effective quality management system, whole school improvement plan and programs, improved assessment policy, practice and methodology”. The estimated implementation period of the assignment is July 2022 – January 2026. The implementation of envisaged activities by the Consultant will be supervised during the term of the contract. Assistance will be provided in creation of working group for support in fulfilling the assignment.
- Providing supervision of the consulting company implementing the assignment – “Developing General Education Infrastructure and Physical Environment Standards for General Education Institutions (schools) of Georgia”. Estimated implementation period – September 15, 2021 – May 15, 2023. The implementation of envisaged activities by the Consultant will be supervised during the term of the contract. Coordinate activities of the inter-institutional committee to be established.
- Finalizing identification of alternative schools in the frames of the ongoing design works for the upcoming rehabilitation works under the Project;
- Upon decision of the MES regarding locations of the remaining schools, submit respective cadastral details to the MDF. Conduct site visits with ESIDA technical staff to study the areas and study communications.
- Complete the procurement process and sign the agreement for the assignment -- “Strengthening the Quality of Pre-service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options” (linked with sub-component 3.4). The estimated implementation period of the assignment is October 2022 – February 2026. The implementation of envisaged activities by the Consultant will be supervised during the term of the contract. Assistance will be provided in creation of working group for support in fulfilling the assignment.
- Supervise the successful completion of the assignment – „Developing Concept for Strengthening Decentralized Management System via Reforming Educational Resource Centers as well as Strategy and Action Plan for Improving School Management.“



C. COMPONENT 3 – STRENGTHENING FINANCING OPTIONS AND PROMOTING INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sub-Component 3.1 - Developing new options for higher education financing, including performance-based options to support the Government's strategic objectives

With respect to Component 3, higher education financing reform is considered as the priority for the MES. At the first stage, the diagnostic and analytical work was carried out, as a result of which the existing financing system in Georgia, as well as the international practice regarding the performance-based funding models, were analyzed, and the comprehensive Report - THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MODEL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING - was developed. The report includes several scenarios for creating a new financing model in Georgia, as well as a list of key strategic objectives, corresponding performance indicators and data descriptions. The following is an indicative timeline:

- During 2021-2022, MES will continue to develop the model of performance-based funding in consultation with the HEIs, other Government Ministers and external stakeholders. MES will also identify the national objectives on which the system will be based.
- During 2022 the MES will conduct a series of seminars/workshops to explain the system to the HEIs, their management, staff and students and external stakeholders, including other Ministries.
- By end 2022 the MES will issue to the universities a statement of the PBF process and what will be required by them, as well as a statement of national objectives and performance indicators. In addition, the MES will issue to the universities a sample format of the agreement that the universities are expected to prepare.
- The process will commence in 2023 leading to the conclusion of performance agreements between the MES and the universities by the end of that year. The agreements will cover the period 2024 - 2026.
- In each subsequent year, from 2025, performance in the previous year will be assessed and funding allocations made accordingly. In this first cycle the allocations will be notional only.

In the second phase of ongoing support, two key areas were identified that are important for the introduction and implementation of a new funding model. More specifically, (i) MES needs to determine a specific formula from the several proposed models elaborated during the first phase, (ii) the higher education funding reform should be supported with the development and implementation of the Information Management Database System (IMDS). This system should be a common tool for the statistical processing of the relevant information for a new performance-based funding formula and assessing HEI's performance and development results. Based on this data it would also be possible to measure the institutional effectiveness of HEIs, which is important for the following reasons: 1. Quality Assurance (internal and external evaluation), 2. University Rankings, 3. Strategic Planning, 4. Capacity Building, 5. Continuous Improvement.

Therefore, under the planned procurement, the Consultant is expected to provide technical assistance and support to the MES for determining a specific funding formula from the several

proposed models described in the Report - THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MODEL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING. The Consultant is expected to assist and support the Client (MES) in the areas of capacity building through the development of the relevant methodology and guidelines for the implementation of the new funding formula. In addition, the planning of the IMDS for the implementation of the new model of performance-based funding have to consider all key functionalities and infrastructure requirements relevant for the future system design, development, testing, implementation and maintenance. IMDS should serve as a multi-user functional database system for statistical processing of the relevant information (indicators, new formula elements) for a new performance-based financing model, allowing to continuously assess HEI's performance and development results against the defined indicators and targets.

At the current stage, the relevant procurement – “Consulting Services for Facilitating the Implementation of a New Model of Performance-based Funding by Creating Information Management Database System” is ongoing. During the reporting period REOI for the consultancy service “Consulting Services for Facilitating the Implementation of a New Model of Performance-based Funding by Creating Information Management Database System” was published on December 10, 2021, with the deadline of receiving expressions of interest on January 6, 2022, which was extended for additional 2 weeks due to the low competition and defined as January 21, 2022. Despite the efforts of the PMU to increase competition by disseminating the published REOIs to potential companies and the extension of the deadline, only 3 companies expressed their interest. Therefore, 3 EOIs were received and evaluated (January 24 – February 8, 2022). Based on the results of the evaluation considering the low competition, it was decided to reject all proposals without requesting the additional clarifications to the companies related to the unclear issues mentioned above. Based on the WB's recommendation, the original TOR was also revised (February 1-9, 2022) to simplify the qualification requirements for the company and encourage more competition under the planned re-announcement. Under the re-announced tender, the revised REOI was published on February 18, 2022, with the deadline of receiving expressions of interest on 18 March, 2022. Under the re-announced tender nine companies expressed their interest. The evaluation of the submitted applications was carried out, the companies were short-listed, the RFP was developed and agreed with the WB. Pre-Proposals Conference for the Assignment was held online on June 15, 2022.

Based on the request of the shortlisted company and approval of the WB, the deadline of submitting technical and financial proposals by the shortlisted companies has been extended from July 1, 2022 through July 11, 2022. The selection process will be completed by August. The Consultant is expected to be engaged for a period of 32 months and the assignment is expected to commence in August 2022.

The sub-component 3.1 also supports elaboration of a draft TOR for the development of the student tracking system platform on the national level. Implementation of the assignment commenced in the previous reporting period and was successfully completed in April, 2022. This activity was not initially envisaged under the Project. However, considering the needs of the system and based on the consent of the WB, development of the TOR was added to the Project scope and reflected in the revised POM approved in May, 2022.



The main goal of the Student Tracking System in Georgia (STS) is to serve as a central tool for data collection, statistical processing of the relevant information and assessing both students flow and success rates, as well as HEIs' performance and development results. STS should (i) enable collection and aggregation of data on studying progress, continuation of studying and transition to the labor market, (ii) offer an automated approach and provide sufficient empirical data for the new higher education policies, (iii) introduce a standard practice of data collection integrated EMIS. Therefore, it shall enable key national stakeholders and policymakers in Georgian higher education system, as well as individual HEIs to use reports obtained through STS to develop new policies and improve quality of their provisions. This way the new STS is expected to support evidence-based decision making deliberately assisted by analyzing uniform and comparable types of data, collected in the same time periods over years.

Since the I2Q Project could only support the development of the TOR for the STS, the PMU communicates with other projects for mobilizing funds for actual implementation. As a result of the communication, the need of such system has been identified in the frames of the TVET program that is implemented within the EU budgetary support.

Sub-Component 3.2 - Setting up Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) for public and private universities, in partnership with private sector

Tangible progress is observable also with regard to the establishment of a Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) (for public and private universities).

The Minister of Education and Science of Georgia has approved the Operational Manual for CIF (Order N582615) on June 2, 2022. During the reporting period, extensive work has been implemented with regard to finalizing and agreeing the CIF Operational Manual (OM) and related Annexes with the WB. The process lasted from January, 2022 to March, 2022 and included the following:

- PMU received the first feedback from the WB on December 23, 2021;
- PMU discussed the WB's recommendations with the MES and shared the updated documentation with the WB (January 13, 2022);
- WB coordinated an online meeting to discuss the revised draft with the PMU and WB's expert Ms. Iwona Maria Borowik (January 28, 2022);
- In accordance with the discussion held at the meeting and the agreements reached, PMU received additional and updated recommendations from the WB (on February 3, 2022);
- PMU reviewed the comments, combined all of the presented recommendations in Operational Manual and submitted them to the MES for approval (February 7, 2022);
- The revised version of the OM for CIF was submitted for the WB's review on February 14, 2022;
- PMU received new comments on the revised OM for CIF from the WB (February 17th, 2022). In addition, WB team asked PMU to submit the full package of OM including all pertaining Annexes.
- The revised version of the OM for CIF with all corresponding Annexes was submitted for the WB's review on February 23, 2022;
- PMU received new recommendations on the OM for CIF from the WB on March 1, 2022;

- PMU shared relevant response to the recommendations on March 2nd, 2022;
- PMU received new comments on the revised OM for CIF, as well as, on the Annex 2 and Annex 3 from the WB on March 8, 2022. In order to discuss the new suggestions, WB coordinated an online meeting with the PMU and WB’s expert Ms. Iwona Maria Borowik (March 10, 2022);
- On March 10-18, 2022 Higher Education Component Lead worked with Ms. Iwona to improve and upgrade the OM for CIF and corresponding Annexes. The revised OM for CIF with all appropriate Annexes was submitted for the WB’s approval and No Objection (Mach 18, 2022);
- PMU received the WB’s approval on March 23, 2022;
- Higher Education Component Lead updated the Georgian language versions of the revised OM for CIF and its Annexes;
- On April 20, 2022, the documentation was officially submitted to the Deputy Minister (Mr. Valerian Gobronidze), and after his resolution, on April 29, 2022, the package was submitted for approval to the Minister;
- The documents were reviewed by all departments of the MES and legal entities operating under the MES (e.g. NCEQE, SRNSFG). The bureaucratic process lasted more than a month and ended in early June, 2022. The OM for CIF was approved on June 2, 2022.

The final set of documents includes the following Annexes:

A1	Guidelines for Applicants
A2	Assessment Criteria and Guidelines for Evaluators
A3	Draft Proposal Submission Form
A3a	Project Deliverables and Monitoring Plan
A3b	Citizen Engagement Plan
A4	Budget Template
A5	CV Template
A6	JV_Consortium agreement Template
A7a	Confidentiality Statement – CIF staff
A7b	Confidentiality Statement – Applicant
A8	CIF Grant Applicant’s Statement
A9	Draft Grants Financing Agreement
A10a	Financial Report Form
A10b	Progress Report Form
A11	Draft Terms of Reference For the selection of Audit Consultant

Based on the approved OM for CIF, the CIF will be implemented in 2 phases: 1) a pilot call will be announced in the fourth quarter of 2022, and the estimated date for the publication of the final results and the signing of grant contracts is the second quarter of 2023; the estimated number of Grants awarded – 10; 2) second call will be announced in the third quarter of 2023, the estimated date for the publication of the final results and the signing of grant contracts is the first quarter of 2024; the estimated number of Grants awarded – 30. The CIF grant projects will have maximum of 18 months from signing the contract to fully implement the project.

Both windows will adhere to the overall aims and objectives of the program, namely: *“to foster modernization of higher education programs and learning environment and strengthen the labor*



market linkages". Eligible applicants for the funding windows are (i) The public HEI (single applicant) targeting specific development and innovation issues identified in their Strategic Development Plans (SDPs). In this case, a single public HEI is the main beneficiary of the project, and (ii) consortia projects involve two or more eligible HEIs (in that at least one public HEI) who are the main beneficiaries of the project.

Proposals under both funding windows must demonstrate partnership arrangements. The CIF grants scheme is designed to respect university autonomy while encouraging institutions to think holistically about their planning and development. The types of CIF funded projects that are envisaged to be supported include improvement and upgrade of academic programs. This may include:

- developing program content (i.e. revision of existing programs or development of new programs) to reflect the latest trends in the field;
- introducing innovations in terms of teaching and learning including support for classroom teaching utilizing technology and modern pedagogical approach, such as problem-solving and project-based learning, and improvement of e-learning methods;
- modernizing educational programs with private sector participation, e.g.:
 - supporting innovative research by faculty members involving students and private sector;
 - upgrading processes and enhancing the quality of the labor market surveys and/or graduate tracer studies to improve relevance of academic programs and employment tracking;
 - enhancing the quality of laboratories and workshops with modern scientific instruments and equipment to improve student learning;
 - conducting joint university-industry development of innovative research designs;
 - facilitating private sector representative's participation in academic research projects (e.g., by receiving access to sophisticated analytical and other experimental facilities);
 - facilitating the expansion of networks and outreach events, that connect current students and graduates that are already employed in the sector, as well as familiarize students with various employment opportunities in relevant private companies, organizing networking events, seminars with private sector representatives, and boot-camps;
- engaging relevant employers with curriculum development to reinforce the linkages with the labor market;
- modernizing and upgrading labs and physical infrastructure to meet the program objectives;
- improvement of gender imbalances in the education system, especially in STEM subjects including supporting HEIs to attract female students to STEM programs and help narrow the gender gap in STEM fields.

During the reporting period, the progress was also made with regard to the staffing of the CIF structural unit. A tender was announced (on April 11, 2022) for the selection of a Head of CIF Administration Unit (AU). The selection process for the Head of CIF AU has been completed, the

contract has been signed, and the selected consultant commenced with services on May 16, 2022. Work was carried out with the Head of CIF AU to familiarize her with the relevant documentation, as well as to prepare TORs for the selection of 3 other employees of the CIF AU (Legal Specialists, Financial Specialist, Education Specialist). TORs were agreed with MES (June 8, 2022), and WB (June 21, 2022) and on June 22, 2022, two tenders were announced for the selection of the CIF Legal Specialists and CIF Educational Specialist. The EOIs must be submitted online by 17:00 Tbilisi time on 8th July 2022. In addition, the working meeting was held on June 15, 2022 with MES representatives to discuss the CIF implementation timeline and necessary first steps to announce a pilot call. The working meeting was attended by: Deputy Minister - Ms. Nunu Mitskevichi, Head of Higher Education Development Department, other employees of the same department, Executive Director of the PMU, HE Component Lead of the Project, and the Head of the CIF AU. As a result of this discussions, the main approaches and staffing strategy of the CIF structural units (Awards Committee, Appeals Committee) was agreed with MES. The relevant approach for the selection of the members of the Pool of Evaluators (field experts) will be discussed with MES and WB, and the appropriate TOR will be developed.

Moreover, during the reporting period working meetings were held with the NCEQE (May 27, 2022), the SRNSFG and GITA (May 30, 2022), to discuss the possible collaboration opportunities and issues related to the CIF implementation, e.g. the selection of the field experts, creation of the pool of evaluators, as well as CIF grants portal. Additional working meeting was held on June 21, 2022, with GITA (Mr. Giorgi Bagashvili) to discuss the technical capabilities of the existing grant portal - grants.gov.ge. During the meeting, the relevant regulations for the CIF, including the procedure for accepting grant applications and the business processes necessary to create a grants portal were discussed in detail. All necessary documentation has been sent to GITA and, at this stage, a test version for the administration of CIF grants applications is under preparation.

Sub-Component 3.3 - Internationalization of Higher Education

The content of the sub-component has been modified and reflected in the revised POM in November 2020, in line with the strategic vision of the MES regarding internationalization of higher education. The modified activities under the sub-component includes:

- (i) 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) support of 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) 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.



Concerning the content of the assignment – it is worth to mention that the Bologna Process and related reforms, international partnership programs, public-private partnerships, and the recent EU-Georgia Association Agreement served as the major driving forces and catalysts to boost the internationalization process in Georgia.

Despite significant achievements in recent years, the Georgian higher education system continues to face many challenges. In order to achieve a high degree of competitiveness in the international educational market, it is important to robust the educational and research capacity of the country, and a set of competitive advantages should be factored in this process as well.

The positive factor for advancement in the international educational market is that Georgia already has experience in the development and implementation of international partnership programs, as well as in attracting and managing foreign students for over 15 years. It is also worth noting that both, public and private institutions have worked jointly in this regard.

Georgia brings international standards and resources to the sector through several international partnership projects. The Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact for Georgia implemented a successful model of international collaboration of universities in which San Diego University partnered with three Georgian universities (Ilia State, Iv. Javakhishvili State, and Technical State Universities). This case represents an example of Georgia's ability to carry out high-end international projects.

EU-Georgia Association Agreement fully entered into force on July 1, 2016, implies cooperation in the sphere of education and research. Closer relations with the EU educational system and cooperation with different European institutions are taking place among others through the Bologna process, Erasmus Mundus/Erasmus+, and Tempus programs. The European research funding is also becoming more accessible and stimulating different types of partnerships and cooperation, just to mention Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Program for Research and Innovation. As of today, 35 of 287 projects from Georgia received funding of EUR 3,637,140 in total. In this regard, raising Georgian scientists' competitiveness remains a challenge.

It should be also noted, that due to high performance and participation Georgia holds 6th place among 141 Erasmus+ partner countries. 37 Georgian HEIs collaborate with the Universities of 33 European countries. More than 30 HEIs have been involved in CBHE projects; up to 10369 scholarships have been funded for student and staff exchange programs. For the present, 7 Georgian HEIs participate in 8 programs for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree (source – National Erasmus Plus Office).

An important step for the internalization of higher education and science is the recent establishment of Kutaisi International University (KIU) in cooperation with the Technical University of Munich (TUM), with its first enrolment in the academic year 2020-2021. Another recent example is the Georgian French University (UFG) project which aims to grant double or delocalized diplomas in the fields of tourism, agriculture and informatics and applied mathematics.

In order to promote the internationalization, mobility and attractiveness of Georgian HE to an

international audience, MES has launched a program - “Study in Georgia”. A special website www.studyingeorgia.ge has been created, containing information about the HE system, and educational institutions and provided educational programs, application procedures, as well as relevant practical information about Georgia (living conditions, tourism attractions, etc.).

Although these measures are aimed at getting international experience for students, and academic and administrative personnel, they are not sufficient to make significant impacts at the systemic level. Consequently, additional resources are needed for the internationalization of higher education, the attraction of foreign students, and the establishment of the country as a regional educational center.

Therefore, the internationalization of HE and Science remains a priority for GoG. It should be underlined, that internationalization of higher education is not an end in itself, but an instrument for quality enhancement, and has to be supported by the government and universities - this is the main idea and the integral part of the “Higher Education and Research Strategy 2030”.

More specifically, in 2017, within the Public Administration Reform initiative, the GoG took the responsibility and approved the Unified Strategy for Developing National Education and Science System 2017-2021 (governmental decree #533). Based on the strategy implementation results, achievements, and envisaging the upcoming system strengthening needs GoG will need to approve the sector development strategy for 2022 - 2032. The lead responsibility for developing and implementing the Education Sector Strategy as well as monitoring the strategy implementation results lies with MES.

The recommendations to strengthen the internationalization component is well addressed by the GoG in the sector development strategy for the next 10 year. The initial draft of the sectoral strategy document defines the strategic goals of quality and relevance in Higher Education and Science, and improvements are planned through a number of objectives linked with internationalization. One main sub-sectoral objective is to strengthen the internationalization of the higher education system by developing joint/double qualifications and introducing internationally accredited study programs.

The development of international joint-degree programs is considered a successful way of internationalization. It envisions cooperation on student, academic staff, administration, and institutional levels. All parties involved in the development and implementation of an international joint-degree program learn from each other and sharpen their intercultural and international competencies. Definition of internationalization entailed all missions of a university – teaching, research and service to society or third mission of a university. The doctoral program in education will serve all cover all these aspects – it will provide teaching and research and its graduates will serve the field and society.

At present, there are thirteen joint-degree programs offered by Georgian HEIs. Seven of them are implemented in cooperation with local HEIs, and six are implemented in partnership with international HEIs. Four of them are doctoral joint-degree programs. There is one joint doctoral program in educational sciences administered by four Georgian public HEIs – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Batumi State University, Telavi State University. The



program partners with several international academic staff as well. They are directly involved in teaching and research supervision. However, these partners are individual people and students do not receive a degree from the foreign institution(s). The joint degree program was launched in the academic year 2020-2021. The language of instruction is Georgian, but some components are taught in English.

It will be beneficial to build on an existing experience of developing and implementing joint-degree programs and create an international joint-degree program in education and science management in cooperation with international HEIs or research institutes/centers.

Georgian Law on Higher Education and Accreditation Standards lays the ground for developing joint-degree international programs. According to the Law on Higher Education “Joint program can be implemented by Georgian HEI in cooperation with other Georgian HEI(s) or foreign HEI or Georgian scientific-research institutes. A joint program should be implemented based on an agreement between the HEIs. At the end of the program, diploma(s) is issued according to the statutes of the HEI and the agreement.” The form of the agreement is created by the NCEQE and the latter approves the agreement as well.

Georgian legislation also allows teaching in foreign languages. Even though the official language of instruction in Georgian HEIs is Georgian, certain study programs can be taught in a foreign language if stipulated by an international agreement or agreed with the MES. Individual courses can be taught in other languages without getting official permission from the Ministry. Currently, Georgian HEIs offer 185 foreign language programs.

All doctoral programs need to be accredited. HEIs are free to decide to apply for national and/or international accreditation. Currently, there are eighteen internationally-accredited programs in Georgia.

To be admitted to HEIs in Georgia, students go through Unified National Exams. One of the required exams is an exam in a foreign language. Foreign language is also taught in every study program at the BA level in Georgia. However, in most universities, students do not study a discipline-specific foreign language.

The government will support the strengthening of doctoral programs, their adherence to international standards and Georgian socio-economic needs and possibilities. The government will also support the strengthening of teaching entrepreneurship. According to research findings, Georgian youth is interested in entrepreneurship, but few manage to put their wish into practice due to a lack of resources, training, and other supporting events. The government will support the internationalization of education, scientific research, and innovations at all levels. The government will foster the creation of joint, dual-degree, and double-degree programs with international HEIs. In this way, the government will support internationalization at home.

Therefore, it should be noted, that all three tasks of this assignment – development of a joint doctoral program, development or entrepreneurship and discipline specific English language modules, and

creation of an international excellence school are in line with the new strategy of education and science.

During the reporting period, the work of selected individual Consultants was successfully completed and a progress has been made towards the planned procurement on “Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education”. More specifically:

- One short-term international and one short-term local Consultants were selected and the Contracts for Consulting Services have been signed. The consulting service was provided from February 1, 2022, for a period of 4 months;
- Daily assistance was provided to the selected Consultants finding various materials/information, organizing working meetings, etc. (February 1, 2022 – May 27, 2022);
- The first Reports were received on February 15-16, 2022. Reports were approved on February 21, 2022 and the Acceptance Acts were signed on February 22, 2022 (local consultant) and on February 28, 2022 (international consultant);
- The R2 were received on March 23, 2022;
- A working meeting was held with the representatives of the MES in order to discuss the questions prepared by the Consultants and to identify the specific vision of the MES concerning the planned activities under the sub-component 3.3. The meeting was attended by a Local Consultant – Ms. Maia Gelashvili, the Deputy Minister – Ms. Nunu Mitskevich and staff of the HE Department;
- An updated R2 was submitted by the international Consultant on April 15, 2022 and by the local Consultant on May 2, 2022;
- The comments/recommendations on the revised R2 was shared with the Consultants on April 29, 2022;
- The R2 were approved and the Acceptance Acts were signed on May 4th, 2022;
- A working meeting was held with MES representatives on May 5, 2022, for further review and analysis of the updated R2 and its Annexes, on the basis of which additional comments were developed and shared with the Consultants;
- The final – R3 were submitted on May 17, 2022. The final acceptance acts were signed on May 26, 2022 (local consultant) and on May 27, 2022 (international consultant).

TOR was submitted for WB’s review and no objection. At the current stage, the procurement is ongoing. REOI for the consultancy service for “Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education” was published on June 3, 2022 with the deadline of receiving expressions of interest on July 5, 2022. A lump-sum contract will be signed with the successful Consultant company for an estimated duration of 33 months. The assignment is expected to commence in December 2022.

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 MES to bring an adequate supply of well-trained teachers into the classroom. The proposed activities under



this sub-component shall 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. The scope for this sub-component has been further clarified in the revised POM.

It should be mentioned, that based on the current PP, one procurement package unites teacher professional development activities defined under Components 2 and 3 of the I2Q Project. Therefore, the scope of work covers the activities envisaged under the sub-component 2.3 and 3.4 of the Project.

Concerning the content of the assignment - it is worth to mention, that:

a) Pre-Service Teacher Education

After becoming part of the Bologna Process, in 2007, Georgian HEIs introduced BA (240-credit) and MA level programs to prepare future teachers in subject content and pedagogy for teaching in primary (1-6) and upper (7-12) grades respectively. In addition to the full-scale BA and MA-level courses, HEIs offered minor programs in teacher education. In 2018, MES introduced major changes in teacher preparation programs. According to the legislation changes BA and MA-level programs were replaced by a 5-year/300-credit integrated program awarding Master level qualification and preparing students for teaching at a beginner level and subject/subject groups according to the national curriculum.¹ As an alternative path, candidates with a prior higher education degree who successfully passed the subject exam in one of the curriculum disciplines are invited to take a one-year 60-credit program, which is state-funded. These new initiatives were designed to respond to the twin objectives of: (a) increasing the rigor and quality of the programs, and (b) attracting more potential candidates to the teaching profession. Regarding the teacher education programs for early childhood teachers, according to the legislation it was assigned to be implemented on the BA level, accordingly the national benchmark has been developed and approved by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE). However, currently none of the HEIs offer early childhood teacher education academic programs.

Changes in the legislation were seen as one of the main strategies for improving the quality of pre-service teacher education programs. Teaching practice components under previous programs were poorly planned and of short duration, mainly concentrated on a single intensive experience towards the end of the program. A new 300-credit integrated program entails a more structured and extended practice component dispersed throughout the entire program. In a 60-credit program, practice component is embedded through two different mechanisms: (a) as part of the methodology courses, (b) as an independent practicum component.

Student enrolment varies by programs, universities, and specialization subjects. Since 2018, 9 public and three private HEIs have enrolled 1,935 students in a 300-credit integrated program. Two regional

¹ According to the Law of Georgia on Higher Education, the official name of academic programs are: Integrated teacher Bachelor's and Master's education training program for a beginner level teacher of general education (hereinafter used in the TOR as "300-credit integrated program for a beginner level teacher") and Integrated teacher Bachelor's and Master's education training programs for subject/group of subjects (hereinafter used in the TOR as "300-credit integrated program for subject/subject groups").

universities in Kutaisi and Batumi have the highest enrolments (29.4 % and 15 %, respectively), along with the Sokhumi State University, currently based in Tbilisi (15.1 %). As current 300-credit programs mostly prepare teachers of primary schools, enrolment in 60-credit teacher preparation programs is much higher. During 2016-2020, 17 universities nationwide enrolled 3,198 students. Ilia State University, a Tbilisi-based institution, has the highest share of enrolments (21%), with Kutaisi State University (15%), one of the largest regional universities based in Western Georgia. There are differences in enrolments across public and private universities. Given the availability of public funding for teacher education programs in public institutions only, they enroll 94 % of students in 300-credit programs and 84 % of students in the 60-credit program. Finally, the most demanded subject specializations within 60-credit programs are English language and literature (29 % of total enrolment) and Georgian language (20 % of total enrolment). The enrolment share is very low for STEM subject specializations (1% of total enrolments in 2016-2020).

The admission rules for students vary by type of program. For enrolling in 300-credit integrated programs, students should pass NAEC-administered unified national exams in three subjects, including Georgian and English languages. Before 2019, they also had to take a general skills exam mandatory for all university applicants. Admission requirements are different for the applicants of the multilingual teacher education program. Georgian-language applicants take national exams. Other students, primarily representatives of ethnic minorities, enter the program through the specially designed quota system upon completing a one-year Georgian language program. Finally, the 60-credit teacher preparation program is designed for those applicants who have already completed BA or MA level program. In addition, before entering the program, they should successfully pass a subject exam.

Intending to attract more applicants to the teaching profession, in 2013, the MES decided to provide total public funding for the majority of teacher education programs. Annual tuition for teacher education programs at public universities equals 2,250 GEL. The rate is slightly higher at private universities (3,000 GEL). The government fully funds 300-credit integrated programs at all public universities, provided that they have PhD-level programs. There are some restrictions for private universities as well. Namely, only 60-credit programs are eligible for public financing at private universities.

Applicants of those universities and/or programs that are not eligible for public funding can participate in individual performance-based grants competition (as part of the Unified National Exams). Given the low-academic performance of applicants for teacher education programs, only a small share of the teacher education programs gets public funding through individual grant competitions. In 2019, Only 0.33% of the grant recipients were applicants of the teacher preparation programs.

To ensure the quality of teacher education programs, the GoG has external quality assurance mechanisms in place. The NCEQE evaluates teacher education programs based on accreditation standards and sectoral benchmarks every seven years (with the initial accreditation for four years). However, the standards are not very robust and leave HEIs with a lot of flexibility and freedom, often resulting in the low quality of programs (Li et al., 2019). Another primary quality assurance



mechanism, licensing, is missing from the current design of pre-service teacher education. Graduates do not need to pass a qualifying exam or undertake induction or probation period. Instead, HEIs determine whether individuals have met qualification standards for entering the profession.

Other quality assurance mechanisms concern recruitment and selection of students. Given the centralized nature of university entrance exams, teacher education programs have limited applicant selection power. They can (a) propose one or two exam subjects in addition to the two mandatory subjects defined by NAEC, (b) establish the weight for each subject, (c) define the minimum passing threshold requirement for selected subject exams. This centralized approach is also seen as an essential mechanism for ensuring the fairness of the admissions system and combating university-level corruption.

The performance of Georgian students and teachers through various assessments and instruments shows that HEI programs have not succeeded in modernizing the teacher workforce. Several factors impede them from providing quality pre-service teacher education.

First, teacher education programs have the lowest thresholds, and from the outset, they get the students who, on average, have low scores at Unified National Exams. According to the NAEC database, in 2019, teacher program applicants made up only 0.33 % of performance-based state grant recipients. This indicator further lowered in 2021 to 0.29 %. Also, data on the applicants' program choices for the 2021 national exams reveal that only 71 % of applicants enrolled in teacher programs had selected it as the first priority. 14 % of the applicants had chosen teacher programs in the second place. For the remaining 15 %, the teacher programs were positioned in place 3 through 16. Overall, applicants of the 60-credit programs are better prepared as they have more rigorous admission requirements – a prerequisite of successfully passing teacher certification exam and the university internal exam.

Second, despite the introduction of quite rigorous quality assurance mechanisms, the quality of the courses is strongly doubted. At best, they are believed to train teachers as technicians who can act as deliverers of heavily prescribed content and teacher-proof curricula, rather than professionals being in complete charge of teaching and capable of making individual judgments. Also, despite some improvements in practical training components, one of the major quality determinants of the teacher preparation programs, substantial improvements are yet to be made. HEIs can enhance the effectiveness of this component by a more comprehensive, well-structured, and sequenced implementation of diverse evidence-based strategies within course work, practice components, and student teaching experience.

The lack of highly qualified faculty creates risks for the overall quality of the programs and the modernization of the teacher workforce. One of the major indicators of their quality is their research productivity, which is relatively low. For example, between 1996-2020, Georgia published only 303 manuscripts in the field of education in SCOPUS-indexed journals. As this number includes studies in education policy and leadership, it can be assumed that the number of publications in pedagogy is even lower.

Limited partnership and shared responsibility between higher education institutions and schools for educating future teachers is another impeding factor. The introduction of the extended teaching practice components has intensified the collaboration between schools and HEIs. Nevertheless, teacher preparation is not yet seen as a common work for which they share responsibility, decision-making power, and accountability. There is even less experience of broader-based partnerships beyond a traditional understanding of a school-university collaboration. HEIs have little involvement from key stakeholders from local communities to create more comprehensive and responsive teacher education programs.

In addition, HEIs make insufficient emphasis on preparing teachers for diverse learners. Unfortunately, universities are not able to prepare teachers for non-Georgian schools. Due to the absence of teacher standards, they do not have a normative and legislative basis for creating programs that prepare teachers to teach Azerbaijani and Armenian as native languages. Universities are also reluctant to develop programs for teachers of other subjects in non-Georgian schools due to the lack of human and material resources (Tbilisi State University and Samtskhe-Javakheti State University are the only ones preparing primary school teachers for non-Georgian schools). Overall, HEIs need to strengthen their commitment to multicultural education for all programs and consistently enforce its principles through course work and practice components.

HEIs also need to advance their commitment to preparing teachers for inclusive education. Analysis of the existing programs showed that foundations to inclusive education are included as mandatory courses in almost all 300-credit and 60-credit programs. The next task is to ensure that students link their theoretical knowledge to classroom practice through practical experience. Most importantly, based on the newly adopted standards, HEIs need to design programs with a major in special education.

Finally, HEIs do not give sufficient emphasis to digitalization and remote teaching. A high percentage of teachers find it challenging to motivate and engage students in online lessons and to use various digital devices and tools. Also, there are discrepancies in the use of digital resources in the instructional process – private school teachers make the best use, while minority public schools use them minimally. To catch up with the technological innovations and respond to the changing needs of society, HEIs need to enrich programs with more rigorous courses on the use of technology and digital tools and the peculiarities of remote/online teaching methodologies.

b) In-service Teacher Professional Development

TPDC is a key organization that regulates and provides conditions for teacher professional development based on teacher standards and the national curriculum. The current version of teacher standards specifies three categories of teachers: senior, lead and mentor teachers (until recently, it also included the lowest category of teachers – practitioners). The most fundamental and complex reforms concerning the teaching profession were prepared and launched in 2015 as part of the Scheme for Entry into the profession, Professional Development, and Career Advancement (hereinafter - “Scheme”). It successfully replaced the previous version of the scheme (2011-2014),



which entailed certification exams as a primary instrument and did not provide conditions for proper in-service professional development. The primary goals of the new scheme were to recruit qualified new teachers in the system, raise the teachers' qualifications and motivation, and make teaching a more prestigious profession. The scheme introduced a more comprehensive approach to teacher professional development, appraisal, career advancement, and remuneration to achieve these goals.

According to the scheme introduced in 2015, to be promoted to a higher category or maintain the acquired category, teachers had to pass certification exams (at a minimum of 60% proficiency level) and collect credits through participating in training and various professional development activities. These activities implied teachers' engagement in model lessons, action research, facilitation, creation of resources, etc. Internal (school-based) and external teacher assessment teams were responsible for monitoring professional development activities and assigning a respective number of credits. It should be noted that in 2016 MES abolished the long-term training component with a final test/project. Given these changes, quite a high number of teachers found it challenging to engage in the scheme.

At the introduction of the scheme, the majority of the teachers (75%) were placed at the practitioner level, and only 0.3% of teachers qualified for a lead teacher category. Although the share of practitioner teachers has decreased throughout the years, it still amounted to 20.8% in 2019-2020. By the same year, senior teachers have made up the largest category of the teaching workforce. One of the main reasons behind the high share of practitioner teachers was the presence of certification exams as a significant barrier to overcome. Another factor is related to the limited engagement of teachers in professional development activities defined by the scheme. According to the State Audit report, overall, teachers could not implement 40% of the required and mandatory activities of the scheme. The final factor concerned older teachers, making up 15-25% of the workforce, making fewer efforts to pass exams and participate in professional development activities.

In 2019 the MES introduced revisions to the scheme that mainly focus on teacher appraisal and career advancement regulations rather than professional development activities. The new version of the scheme categorizes teachers into three categories: senior, lead and mentor teachers. Teachers have to pass subject exams and leveled exams in professional skills to advance to a higher category. In a subsequent stage, the external evaluation team conducts a 360-degree evaluation of teachers' performance: they analyze teacher portfolios, observe lessons, interview teachers and their school leaders and colleagues, and decide on teacher's promotion. Also, per recent changes, instead of accumulating credits through participation in various professional development activities, teachers must undertake the minimum mandatory hours of training annually.

Notwithstanding the continuous efforts of the MES and TPDC to create legislative framework and practices for continuous teacher professional development, they are not sufficient for modernizing the teacher workforce. Despite its comprehensiveness and good intentions, the scheme, over time, turned into a bureaucratic instrument for credit accumulation with decreasing potential for promoting proper professional development among teachers. Several reasons may explain these unintended consequences. First, the scheme did account for the different needs of teachers at various stages

of their careers and the suitability of the proposed model for schools with different contexts and characteristics. Second, quite a few activities from a comprehensive list of optional and mandatory activities were not meaningful and relevant for many teachers. Given existing burdensome reporting and accountability mechanisms, teachers were more encouraged to participate in activities that could do little for their improvement rather than pay attention to the quality of the teaching practice. Third, two important conditions for teacher learning, constructive feedback, and self-reflection, were missing from the scheme-coordinated processes. Teachers were not always able to receive helpful advice on how to improve their classroom instruction from internal or external observers. Neither took advantage of a self-assessment questionnaire as an instrument for reflection and improvement and instead turned it into required documentation for bureaucratic compliance. The scheme was also criticized for its inability to reward good teaching and motivate professional development. Instead of measuring the level of teachers' competence, it focused on calculating credits accrued by the teachers. Finally, the implementation of the scheme was criticized for the lack of integrity of the school evaluation teams evaluating teacher participation in the activities.

Overall, the effectiveness of in-service professional development has been hindered by shortcomings in the design and implementation of trainings and school-based professional development, two major types of professional learning. Trainings have been one of the most widespread formats for teacher professional development since the 1990s. With the brief exception of two years (2008-2010), TPDC has been providing centralized and fully funded trainings to teachers (although still leaving the room for the participation in trainings organized by various donor-funded programs, as well as in self-financed trainings delivered by other local providers). The effectiveness of TPDC training courses has been questioned since their introduction. Teachers are believed to engage as passive learners and get limited opportunities to transfer knowledge in their classrooms. This is mainly explained by the absence of model lessons or the follow-up support for training participants. In addition, the unified approach of the trainings, i.e., standardized content, has failed to align with the level of readiness and specific professional development needs of the teachers. It should be noted that compared to their fellows from Georgian-language schools, teachers at non-Georgian schools have limited access to any types of trainings at all.

Georgia's schools have had some experience of school-based professional development as part of the subject departments. However, for the most part, teacher collaboration and professional learning have been only formality rather than regular practice. Neither the introduction of the scheme in 2015 created sufficient conditions for establishing the practices of proper professional development. Instead of engaging in professional learning, teachers perceived some of those activities as accruing credits solely for career advancement. The formal nature of the collaboration and little emphasis on school-based professional learning can be explained by the shortcomings in the design of subject departments and support structures and regulations. For example, serving as a head of a subject department is an un-paid position, and teachers have no incentives to take it. Also, there is no established expectation that in addition to teaching classes, which make up half of the teachers' weekly workload, teachers regularly spend time in school for other non-teaching activities, including collaboration and school-based professional development. In addition, the scheme did not



propose opportunities for meaningful job-embedded activities and formats, such as data analysis teams, case study analysis teams, peer observation, etc. Finally, the absence of a culture that is oriented towards student success negatively affects teachers' intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for authentic professional learning.

Interestingly, developments during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the capacity of teachers to take leadership and collaborate for mutual learning when navigating remote teaching. Teachers have been fully aware of the new skills and knowledge they needed amid the Pandemic and have done their best to seek help and collaborate within their school and beyond. Peer-led teaching and learning, sharing experiences, tools and resources appeared to be very effective and instilled and maintained a shared sense of purpose among participants. This promising experience of less formalized, need-based, self-driven, and collaborative professional learning can be used for future policy planning in the area of in-service teacher professional development.

Under the planned procurement, the selected Consultant will be required to revise in-service teachers' continuous professional development framework and to accommodate different options of professional development, school- and university-based, as well as centralized options of the professional development, supporting and motivating teachers by providing career and status upgrade opportunities, with relevant transparency and fewer bureaucratic impositions on schools and teachers.

The selected Consultant will be required to upgrade teacher standards, based on a rigorous and comprehensive field study, that will allow students to achieve the National Goals for General Education in Georgia, as well as the general and subject standards defined by the National Curriculum of Georgia. Based on the revised teacher standards, the Consultant will also be responsible for reviewing existing benchmarks and bringing into compliance with the best international practice.

The capacity building activities are also envisaged (of the NCEQE, sector council and the external evaluators of the NCEQE) to ensure the relevance in evaluation of teacher's academic programs in compliance with the revised benchmarks and the comprehensive periodic review of the benchmarks. The selected Consultant will be required to implement a framework designed to enhance the skills sets and competencies of faculty members at selected higher education institutions in Georgia in terms of their capacity to develop, upgrade and deliver up-to-date pre-service teacher education programs. The Consultant shall work with the MES to select 3 public HEIs where the following tasks will be implemented, specifically:

- 1) With the first HEI – the consultant shall work to:
 - upgrade an existing 300-credit integrated program for a beginner level teacher and bring it into compliance with the revised benchmark;
 - select the key staff, including head of the academic program and relevant academic staff engaged in the program implementation considering the mandatory modules of the academic program and the quality assurance staff in charge of this program;
 - conduct capacity building for the selected key staff for effective delivery of the academic program;

- prepare a program for international accreditation, select the international quality assurance agency (foreign organization with the relevant competence recognized by the NCEQE), plan and support the implementation process of the international accreditation.

2) With the second HEI – the consultant shall work to:

- support the university in developing a new 300-credit integrated program for the following group of subjects: (i) Chemistry and Biology, (ii) Mathematics and Physics;
- select the key staff, including head of the academic program and relevant academic staff who should be engaged in the program implementation considering the mandatory modules of the academic program and the quality assurance staff in charge of this program;
- conduct capacity building for the selected key staff for effective delivery of the academic program;
- prepare a program for NCEQE’s accreditation, plan and support the implementation process of the accreditation.

3) With the third HEI - the consultant shall work to:

- support the university in developing a new 300-credit integrated multilingual program for a beginner level teacher and bring it into compliance with the revised benchmark;
- select the key staff, including head of the academic program and relevant academic staff engaged in the program implementation considering the mandatory modules of the academic program and the quality assurance staff in charge of this program;
- conduct capacity building for the selected key staff for effective delivery of the academic program;
- prepare a program for NCEQE’s accreditation, plan and support the implementation process of the accreditation.

During the reporting period, the work of selected individual Consultants was successfully completed and a progress has been made towards the planned procurement on “Strengthening the Quality of Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options”. More specifically:

- Daily assistance was provided to the selected Consultants finding various materials/ information, organizing working meetings, etc. (January 1, 2022 – April 15, 2022);
- The second Reports were submitted by an International and Local Consultant on January 7, 2022;
- The R2 was shared with MES and TPDC (January 10, 2022), analyzed by the PMU and the first feedback was sent to the Consultants (January 17, 2022);
- Based on the feedback, the revised R2 were submitted (January 24, 2022), analyzed and agreed (January 30, 2022);
- The revised TOR with the relevant comments and PMU’s recommendations was shared with MES and TPDC (February 4, 2022);
- The R3 were submitted by an International and Local Consultants on March 1, 2022;

- The R3 were analyzed by the PMU and the first feedback was sent to the Consultants (March 8, 2022);
- It should be noted, the PMU agreed to extend the contract duration (in both cases – international/local consultant) for additional 1 months, i.e. from March 15, 2022 through April 15, 2022 (the time extension does not cause any scope or price implications) due to the following reasons:
 - there was a need to have sufficient time for completing the revision of the TOR and other materials after receiving the feedback from the MES and the PMU;
 - there was an issue with the International Consultant’s provision of an updated Certificate of UK Fiscal Residence (for the final payment).
- Based on the feedback the revised R3 were submitted on March 28, 2022. The revised R3 were analyzed and agreed, and the final Acceptance Acts were signed on April 15, 2022.

TOR was submitted for WB’s review and no objection. At the current stage, the procurement is ongoing. REOI for the consultancy service - “Strengthening the Quality of Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options” was published on May 17, 2022 with the deadline of receiving EOIs by June 15, 2022, 17:00 local time.

A lump-sum contract will be signed with the successful consulting company for an estimated duration of 40 months. The assignment is expected to commence in October 2022.

Immediate Next Steps:

Complete the evaluation process concerning ongoing procurements:

- Consulting Services for Facilitating the Implementation of a New Model of Performance-based Funding by Creating Information Management Database System (linked with sub-component 3.1) - assignment is expected to commence in August 2022. The outcome of the Product Discovery Phase of the project implementation should be the definition of the new funding formula, with all relevant methodology and guidelines. This phase ends with a clear overview of the requirements analysis of new IMDS with identified purpose of the database, organization of the data and analysis of the relations between key sets of data;
- Strengthening the Quality of Pre-service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options ((linked with sub-component 3.4) – assignment is expected to commence in October 2022. The outcome of the First Phase of the project implementation should be the revised teacher professional standard (there is one general standard with applicable annexes for approximately 18 subject teacher standards) and benchmarks for pre-service teacher education programs (there are two versions of benchmark for the integrated program for a beginner level teacher of general education, one for standard and second - for multilingual tracks; and benchmarks for the integrated programs for 8 subject/ for subject groups);
- Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education ((linked with sub-component 3.3) - assignment is expected to commence in December 2022. As an outcome of the First Phase of the project implementation relevant surveys will be conducted to identify: a) the relevant international

partner (HEI/research center) and a Georgian HEI where a joint doctoral program in the field of education and science management will be developed; b) the state of teaching entrepreneurship and disciplinary English; c) which summer and winter schools are usually held and also which subtopics within the main focus of the International Excellence School, namely innovation is most salient for them; d) a Georgian HEI that will host the International Excellence School, as well as to specify topics, number of students, number of professors and researchers, and format of the International Excellence School in close consultation with the Client.

- Providing support to the MES in the implementation of the CIF related activities (*linked with sub-component 3.2*):
 - selection of the relevant staff for CIF AU;
 - assistance in the creation of structural units for CIF (Awards Committee, Appeals Committee and Pool of Evaluators);
 - supporting the planning process and preparatory work for the first pilot call (to be announced in the fourth quarter of 2022).





D. COMPONENT 4 – SYSTEM STRENGTHENING AND STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION

Sub-Component 4.1 - Supporting data-driven decision-making accessible to the entire education system

The objective of this sub-component is to improve the capacity of the entire education system to collect, analyze and disseminate data and information for monitoring and decision-making purposes and activities, including among others, gender disaggregated information. Going forward, EMIS should collect an expanded range of actionable data to both improve teaching and learning and provide insights into how education can be linked with different sectors to advance a wider range of development objectives. This will include aspects related to data collection, governance, links to other internal and external organization's data systems, security and maintenance, and a focus on strengthening the capacity of the NAEC and the NCEQE in these areas.

This sub-component will support a diagnostic assessment of the EMIS and identify data needs in Georgia, as well as provide recommendations and propose several options for capacity building of the EMIS, to enable further development and upgrades of the system, to strengthen and reorient the EMIS as a set of operational processes increasingly supported by digital technologies, which allows the collection, aggregation, analysis, and use of data and information in education, including for management and administration, planning, policy formulation, monitoring and assessment at all levels from early childhood to higher education. The sub-component will also support EMIS in developing a Learning Management System (LMS) software for a collaborative e-platform for sharing teaching and learning practices. It will target not only teachers and school leaders, but also parents and students, including children with disabilities and diverse learning needs. The e-platform will support and strengthen the development of peer-to-peer school networks using resources such as lesson plans, videos, images, weblinks, and developing eLearning. Collected data will allow evaluating eLearning and school-based program design and overall eLearning strategy so that schools can pinpoint areas for improvement.

The PMU has finalized procurement and concluded a contract with a Consultant for implementing the assignment “Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems” during the previous reporting period (on June 8, 2021). The Inception Report (first deliverable) was submitted to the PMU, which was approved on August 11, 2021. After the approval, preparatory works have started to initiate development and collection of the essential documents which will be required for the selected company to perform works under the assignment – “Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems”. Based on the respective TOR requirements, the Consultant should provide Research and Review of the Educational System and EMIS which, includes: (i) Educational System Assessment, (ii) Technical Review of the EMIS within Technical Review of the EMIS, Technical Performance of the System, Organizational and Human Resource Capacity, Infrastructure and Information Technology, Data Provision for Emergency Preparedness.

Based on the requested Inception Report, to ensure unbiased input from the selected business stakeholders, the business and stakeholder analysis were conducted before the technical analysis.

The technical analysis began in August 2021 and continued throughout September-October 2021 to support the completion of the recommendations by the end of December 2021. However, due to the complexity and volume of the tasks and the COVID-19 pandemic-related circumstances, the technical analysis took longer than expected, and the third report consisting of discussions on assessment findings and recommendations, was submitted to the PMU in January 2022.

As agreed with the WB, in order to expediate performance and ensure efficient implementation of tasks under the sub-component 4.1, on April 27, 2022 the PMU has amended the contract - “Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems” and added tasks considered under two separate procurements envisaged under PP. These tasks include preparation of TORs for the upcoming comprehensive activities considered under the Component 4.1. i.e. capacity building of EMIS, developing Early Childhood and General Education EMS software solutions and development of General Education LMS software solutions. As agreed with the WB, duration of contract has been amended for additional two months (from April 30, 2022, through June 30, 2022) and the total contract amount has been respectively increased.

As defined by the TOR, a series of online workshops were carried out with the EMIS management team and other key stakeholders throughout March-May 2022. These covered:

- Workshop on Reporting Q&A - During this workshop, EMIS requested and the consulting company provided clarifications regarding the draft findings and recommendations presented. There was a detailed discussion on the key skills required by EMIS for future projects. The EMIS staff requested clarifications on several issues.
- Workshop on Development Strategy & Architecture for EMIS Systems - In the frames of this workshop, a complete plan of the Development Strategy and Enterprise Architecture was outlined and discussed in detail with the EMIS staff.
- Workshop on Organizational Planning of EMIS - Holistic view and leadership of digital education transformation was discussed in the frames of this workshop.
- Workshop on Interim updates - The workshop was focused on resource gap analysis. The experts of the Consultant provided the outline of technical resources and the skill set required by the critical resources identified.
- Technical workshop on Camunda and Business Process Modeling Notation (BPMN) details and case-studies - The following was presented to the EMIS technical team:
 - One of the essential elements of every Business Analyst’s toolkit;
 - Why, when, and how a business analyst would use BPMN. It is a clear modeling language for very complex business processes. It is valuable in helping to contextualize and visualize a process so stakeholders – both business and technical – can refine and understand it together;
 - The open-source version of Camunda, BPMN Modeler and Workflow Engine;
 - Review of low code /No code applications and frameworks (such are: nuBuilder, Appsmith) for building internal applications;
 - Strengthen the EMIS capacity using Agility, SAFe5 framework, and how to increase visibility and Efficiency.

- Workshop on Terms of Reference for eSchool (Education Management System for General Education) - The consultant presented a phased development plan and detailed the eSchool system requirements.

Face-to-Face Workshops took place in Tbilisi between May 20, 2022 and May 25, 2022. Topics included the eSchool update and integration of a new module for Preschool, Capacity Building and Organization Development of EMIS, and Cloud Systems and Data Security. A senior architect of the consulting company also conducted a detailed system and cybersecurity review meeting with EMIS technical team members.

A final presentation took place at MES on May 25, 2022, with senior representatives of various structural units of MES, relevant agencies and the PMU. The presentation aimed to provide an overview of the findings and recommendations of the diagnostic study. Some of the keys presented issues included (i) the TOR development for eSchool and module for Preschool. Learning Management Platform (LMS) for General Education and Enterprise Architecture upgrade; (ii) EMIS Organization analysis showing critical skills which need upskilling and retained; (iii) support for flexibility in pay rates and approval for critical technical hires at EMIS to compete with the private sector and retain key staff; (iv) importance of the National Digital Education Leadership from cross-MES program management group; (v) the need to establish the Independent Expert Steering Group to drive EMIS Strategic Roadmap and Priorities.

Based on the findings of the diagnostic study, for strengthening the system, the Consultant provided the following key recommendations:

- i. Establish and empower a cross-MES body chartered with National Digital Education Leadership to plan and lead Georgia's strategy for Learning and Teaching with digital technologies.
- ii. Establishment of an Independent Expert Steering Group to drive EMIS Strategic Roadmap and priorities with a balance of external experts, MES representatives and EMIS senior management.
- iii. Strengthen the senior technical leadership capacity at EMIS, including the appointment of a senior technical director to oversee all aspects of the technical platform development and operation.
- iv. Hiring and upskilling in key technical roles including software architecture, business analysis, data analytics, data science and project and program management.
- v. Significant strengthening of technical project management skills at EMIS.
- vi. Support for PayScale flexibility for senior technical personnel to allow EMIS retain and develop the key personnel essential to fulfill its charter.
- vii. A review of practices where employees work for multiple employers to address potential conflict of interest or conflict for time and focus.
- viii. Put in place a senior outsourcing program manager at EMIS with experience in the outsourcing of large-scale technical development.
- ix. A separation of the roles in procurement and outsourcing with the contracting and financial

responsibilities for procurement remaining at the PMU while the tactical and strategic management of outsourcing performance is the responsibility of EMIS.

- x. Very close collaboration between the EMIS outsourcing manager/director and the PMU procurement team is essential as effective management of the outsourcing process will become the most significant success factor or potential for serious failure at EMIS.
- xi. Invest in SAFE Agile training throughout the organization.
- xii. Implementation of improved technical management disciplines including documentation, DevSecOps processes and software testing capacity.
- xiii. Put in place HR system improvements to support career progression, employee recognition and a positive working environment.
- xiv. Apply greater flexibility in the understanding and interpretation of legal requirements and constraints applied to EMIS processes.

On 6 June 2022, the consultant provided the R3 Progress Report, which contains (i) a Report on conducted online workshops – discussions on assessment findings and recommendations. (ii) final recommendations on EMIS capacity building and data collection and analysis improvement for different types of levels, including policy-making on the operational level. (iii) draft TORs for the Design and Development of EMS (Education Information Management system) for Early Childhood and General Education, as well as Capacity Building of EMIS to Effectively Implement the Revised Charter, Structure, Scope, and Strategy Ensuring Relevant Data Collection, Generation, Analyses and Reporting for Entire Education System and Facilitating Evidence-Based Policy Decision-making. On June 22, 2022, the consultant provided the R4 Progress Report, which contains - Draft TOR for the Design and Development of Learning Management System (LMS) for General Education.

According to the draft TOR developed by the Consultant, the scope of services for the assignment – “Design and Development of EMS (Education Information Management system) for Early Childhood and General Education” covers (i) the upgrade of the eSchool software system supporting General Education; (ii) the Enterprise Architecture, Data and Domain Models for the EMIS education systems and subsystems; (iii) the design and implementation of new Preschool elements, database streamlining & containerization of software modules and (iv) additional new modules and capabilities as outlined for the eSchool system.

Pursuant to the draft TOR, “*Design and Development of Learning Management System (LMS) for General Education*” - covers Design and Support Services for the implementation of Learning Systems for General Education in Georgia in support of the national public-school system. As for the “*Design and development of Capacity Building of EMIS to Effectively Implement the Revised Charter, Structure, Scope, and Strategy Ensuring Relevant Data Collection, Generation, Analyses, and Reporting for Entire Education System and Facilitating Evidence-Based Policy Decision-making*”, per draft TOR presented by the Consultant, the task shall envisage technical and leadership capacity building of the EMIS organization to effectively implement the revised charter, structure, scope, and strategy ensuring relevant data collection, generation, analyses and reporting for entire education system and facilitating evidence-based policy decision-making. It will address training in: (i) modern computer



architecture methods and practices including enterprise architecture management, application portfolio management, domain-driven design, DevSecOps and containerized modular development methodologies; (ii) modern data management, data analysis and data science skills; (iii) managing information security, user privacy and hybrid-cloud hosting should be addressed in the proposals; (iv) BPMN and Low-Code methodologies for greater development efficiency; (v) implementing the SAFE Framework for Lean Enterprises for more efficient and higher quality outcomes in development and project management. This should include training of the organization in mindset and culture to apply to the development and management of modern modular and flexible software systems.

Draft TORs from the R3 and R4 reports are currently under review. The WB, EMIS, and PMU comments on the final recommendations have been sent to the Consultant, and approval of the reports is on hold until an updated version of the final recommendations is received and agreed with the MES. Due to the complexity and volume of the work implemented by the Consultant, additional time is needed for internal discussions with the involvement of relevant structural units of MES. In addition, the Consultant should revise reports considering the feedback received, and submit the final version to the PMU. Therefore, contract duration was extended for additional two months, i.e., from June 30, 2022, through August 31, 2022 (without price or scope implications).

Through sub-component 4.1, the Project also supports supply and installation of Wi-Fi networks in 121 public schools of Georgia. Then tender was successfully finished and the contracts were signed with the winner companies:

- October, 2021 for wi-fi Lot-2 West Georgia (58 Schools) with awarded Green Systems LLC, USD 858,400.00 Contract No. GE-MESCS-210068-GO-RFB-2 October 6, 2021;
- November, 2021 for wi-fi Lot-1 East Georgia (63 Schools) with awarded UGT LLC, USD 840,420.00 Contract No. GE-MESCS-210068-GO-RFB-2 (Lot-1) November 30, 2021.

On March 10, 2022 the Supplier Green Systems LLC addressed the PMU with a letter requesting amendment of the contract. In particular, the Supplier justified and requested to extend contract for additional 5 months due to the shipment delay of manufactured goods. The reason for the delay was justified by the circumstances related to COVID-19 pandemic impact on logistics and global semiconductor shortage that affect the industry. Considering the aforementioned, respective contract was extended from April 6, 2022 to September 6, 2022. According to the information provided, the wiring works at schools are completed, and the installation of the arrived equipment is in progress. By the end of September, 2022 the works will be fully completed and delivered to the EMIS.

On February 10, 2022 the Supplier - UGT LLC addressed the PMU with a letter requesting amendment of the contract. In particular, the Supplier requested to replace Aruba 2530 series switches to the Aruba 6000 series switches. The request was supported by a letter from Manufacturer - Aruba Hewlett-Packard Enterprise, dated February 8, 2022, stating that production of the switches specified in the original contract were discontinued by the manufacturer due to the end of their service life and requested that they be replaced with new models. In the same letter, the manufacturer

proposed new and better generation models for the contract, which have better performance and will increase the project's efficiency without additional cost.

Based on the letter of EMIS dated February 18, 2022, confirming the full acceptance of the proposed new generation models for the project, the PMU agreed to the proposed replacement and amended the contract without any cost implication. The respective amendment of Contract No. GE-MESCS-210068-GO-RFB-2 (Lot-1) (DEP21000020) was concluded on March 7, 2022. In addition, based on the request of the Purchaser, the contract term was extended with additional six months due to the shipment delay of manufactured goods. The reason for the delay was justified by the circumstances related to COVID-19 pandemic impact on logistics and global semiconductor shortage that affect the industry. Considering the aforementioned, the respective contract was extended from May 30, 2022, to November 30, 2022.

UGT had conducted wireless network arrangement works in 39 schools from 63 target schools and submitted an Expertise confirmation report, as defined by the contract. EMIS also confirmed acceptance of conducted works and the Delivery Acceptance Act was signed with the Supplier, followed by partial payment made in favor of the Supplier.

The sub-component also supports development of training resources and guides for schools on selected distance learning platform(s) and teaching methodology application, as well as conducting ToTs. As reported in the previous Biannual Progress Report, the TOR has been developed, agreed with the WB and REOI was announced in December 2021, with the deadline of submitting EOIs on December 24, 2021. Three companies have participated in tender. Procurement procedures have been completed by April 29, 2022 and contract was concluded with the selected consulting company - Mindworks LLC on May 2, 2022. According to the contract, the Consultant shall perform the Services during the period commencing May 2, 2022 and continuing through December 2, 2022.

The overall objective of the assignment is to develop an e-guide and e-course for teachers on distance and blended learning methodology to increase teacher capacity for distance and blended pedagogy across all public schools and grades, as well as to conduct online ToT for the relevant MES and TPDC representatives and teachers from the project of targeted 200 schools.

Following the scope of work determined by the contract, the consultant presented the R1 Report - on the implementation of Phase I, including the distance/blended learning methodology, which includes a review of the preparatory work carried out, analysis of local research, best international practices, and interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders. Offered and agreed distance teaching methodology considers issues, such as different ages/age groups/grades, various needs (including the needs of children with disabilities, special educational needs), subject-specific teaching methods, assessment methods, providing feedback to students, etc.

Based on the request of MES and consent provided by the WB, the Project supports NAEC with regard to arranging e-assessment server infrastructure and developing relevant technical documentation for ensuring proper functioning and sustainable operation of the system to be able to conduct national assessments in the framework of the Project. During the reporting period, respective TOR



has been developed for the assignment (“Short-term Consultant (National) to Support the National Assessment and Examination Center with the System Administration for the National e-Assessment Project”) and REOI was announced on April 12, 2022.

Based on the scope of the work defined in the TOR, consultant shall (i) set-up a server infrastructure (in local EMIS server infrastructure) to provide simultaneous access for 10,000 students using TAO e-assessment platform; (ii) test the system on the server side, its’ database and application to determine needed number of servers; (iii) conduct user simulations; (iv) undertake monitoring and analysis of services and servers; (v) develop backup strategy, (vi) Physical and logical topology of server infrastructure describing documents. The evaluation has been completed and currently contract negotiations are underway.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Supervise implementation of envisaged activities by the Consulting company implementing the activity - “Consulting Services for Diagnostic Assessment of Education Management Information System (EMIS), Data Integration and Analytic Systems”. Agreement with MES on the report, business analysis, and recommendations presented by the company;
- Upon completion and approval of the TORs, start procurement procedures planned for the following upcoming activities: (i) Design and Development of EMS (Education Information Management system) for Early Childhood and General Education; (ii) Design and Development of Learning Management System (LMS) for General Education; (iii) Design and development of Capacity Building of EMIS to Effectively Implement the Revised Charter, Structure, Scope, and Strategy Ensuring Relevant Data Collection, Generation, Analyzes, and Reporting for Entire Education System and Facilitating Evidence-Based Policy Decision-making, which is under review;
- Supervise implementation of the ongoing contracts for the activity - “Supply and Installation of Wi-Fi Networks in 121 Schools”;
- Supervise implementation of the ongoing assignment - “*Developing Training Resources and Guides for Schools on Selected Distance Learning Platform(s) and Teaching Methodology Application, Conducting ToT*” project”.
- Complete contract negotiation and sign the contract for the assignment - “Short-term Consultant (National) to Support the National Assessment and Examination Center with the System Administration for the National e-Assessment Project”.

Sub-Component 4.2 - Communication and Stakeholder Consultations for Education Reform

This sub-component considers the development of an effective communication strategy on the current education reforms and proposed project activities, as well as an action plan to engage various stakeholders and their representative groups. The absence of a communication strategy and action plan led MES to ineffective communication, which resulted in misunderstandings about reforms’ outcomes that negatively impacted the reform implementation process and MES’s public image. An effective communication strategy will assist MES in achieving long-term goals. It shall be in-line with the Education and Science Strategy 2022-2032. The communication strategy will support MES

to work efficiently toward goals. The dynamic communication will facilitate delivering the messages to and receiving feedback from stakeholders. As a result, effective communication of education reforms shall be provided.

For the assignment – “Developing Five-Year Communication Strategy for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia”, procurement of services has been completed as a result of which Publicity Group LLC was selected as a Consultant, and a lumpsum contract was signed on November 18, 2021, for the duration of six months.

The Consultant carried out all necessary activities for developing the first report (Assessment Report). As defined by the TOR, at the first stage the Consultant conducted preparatory work and developed Assessment Report with the support of the Capacity Development, Outreach and Communications Specialist of the Project, the Consultant performed all the necessary actions - organized and conducted desk research, conducted analysis of the relevant documents and data, and held numerous consultations and discussion meetings with the relevant staff of MES (Deputy Ministers of Education and Science of Georgia, Heads of structural units of MES, etc.) and other relevant stakeholders (Donor Organizations, Mass Media, Government Bodies, Students, Parents, etc.).

The Assessment Report included the following: stakeholder analysis and mapping (identification of priority audiences, their characteristics, segmentation and influencing audiences, power interest matrix); statement of purpose; Summary of situation analysis (SWOT and PEST); long-term vision and clear and measurable communications objectives with evaluation and approaches for achieving objectives.

Considering the large number of stakeholders’ representatives to be interviewed and the tightness of their schedule at the end of the year, interviews took much longer than scheduled. Thus, the submission of the report has been delayed. The report was submitted in the mid-May 2022. Also, the time needed for the Client to review and approve the submitted report took more time than was envisaged under the contract. The document went through the detailed revisions from the PMU and MES. The Strategic Department of the MES paid special attention to the stakeholder mapping, their power interest matrix, and situation analysis provided in the report. The report has been revised by the company considering the feedback received and the revised Inception Report has been approved on June 17, 2022. Considering the abovementioned circumstances, parties agreed to extend the duration of the contract for additional 2 months and 28 days, i.e. through August 14, 2022. The amendment to the contract for consulting services was signed on May 10, 2022. The extension does not cause any scope or price implications.

The second report comprises the draft of the Five-Year Communication Strategy and 24-month Action Plan.

The document includes the following:

- Build a coalition of external stakeholders – NGOs, trusted public figures, private sector representatives, etc. - to support education reform and ensure its continuity over the long



term;

- Strengthen or establish working groups of school principals, teachers, and students that would accompany policy-makers in the design of specific measures and channel user feedback;
- Help articulate a clear vision for the transformation of the education sector and rally behind it all key internal stakeholders, who in turn, will become instrumental in bringing the Georgian public on board;
- Facilitate the establishment of a mechanism of social accountability to enable the monitoring of the delivery of high-quality education services;
- Raise awareness of the shortcomings of the current education system and how it is preventing Georgian youth from thriving;
- Promote the overall reform agenda and rally support for its specific policies: develop messages, advise on channels and suitable activities;
- Provide recommendations for rebranding, advise on the website and social media channels;
- Showcase 21st-century skills and explain their importance;
- Identify early adopters and champions amongst education professionals and parents and role model desired mindsets, skills, and behaviors at a scale;
- Sensitize parents about the importance of early childhood development;
- Foster the full participation of ethnic minorities in the education system;
- Document results of the reform and amplify their reach;
- Elevate the prestige of the teaching profession and increase trust in the public-school system;
- Help manage reputational risks associated with the reform and the introduction of specific measures;
- Provide a preliminary budget for activities and advise on necessary human resources.

During the reporting period, the Consultant made progress towards the second deliverable under the contract – Initial Draft Report on Five-Year Communication Strategy and 24-month Action Plan. Several working meetings were held with the representatives of the MES Strategic Communication Department and the relevant recommendations were given immediately. The recommendations concerned the precisely diagnosed problems to be solved by setting a clear guiding policy, proposing a set of coherent actions for delivering the policy and proposing new ideas that would support MES in achieving its objectives.

The Consultant company is currently working intensely on revising the initial draft strategy and action plan per received recommendations and at the same time keeping strong communication with the MES Strategic Communication Department. The document is scheduled to be submitted by the end of July 2022. The MES Strategic Communication Department shall provide overall supervision, feedback, and guidance to achieve the overarching goal and specific objectives of the consultancy.

As the sub-component supports the set-up of an effective mechanism of donor coordination will be set up to facilitate ongoing reform implementation and follow-up, the Donor Coordination Meeting is scheduled to be held in July 2022 with the MES initiation and Project coordination. The purpose of the Donor Coordination meeting shall be to discuss ongoing activities and upcoming interventions

at the General Education level. All the donors acting in the General Education sector shall be invited and provided updates on relevant implemented/ongoing/upcoming activities within the scope of the Project.

In addition, the following tasks have been undertaken/completed during the reporting period:

- Regular updates of the Project website and social media pages have been conducted;
- Newsletter (January-June 2022) was drafted;
- Workshops for stakeholders organized (Component 1, Component 2, Component 4);
- Participation in drafting the TOR for Performance Evaluation. Among other components of the study, this large-scale survey envisages baseline and endline assessment of the two indicators considered under subcomponent 4.2 (i) Parents that report satisfaction with their engagement in the whole school improvement effort and demonstrate understanding of student-centered learning through beneficiary surveys in community engagement activities and (ii) Representative groups who report that the national consultation (and feedback) process on Georgian education policy principles.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Supervise the implementation of the assigned tasks by the consultant selected for the assignment: Developing Five-Year Communication Strategy and Action Plan for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia;
- Organize donor coordination meeting with a focus on General Education;
- Organize launching events of the two comprehensive capacity-building activities to be implemented under Components 1 and 2 of the Project – Improving Early Childhood Education (ECE) Institution Management System and Enhancing the Quality of Programs Across the Country and Consulting Services for Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System, Whole School Improvement Plan, and Programs, Improved Assessment Policy, Practice, and Methodology.
- Ensure the I2Q Project awareness raising using relevant tools.



E. COMPONENT 5 - SUPPORTING PROJECT MANAGEMENT, MONITORING, AND EVALUATIONS

This sub-component supports the development of the unified accounting policy for MES and sub-organizations under its' control including (i) structural units of the MES; (ii) Territorial bodies – educational resource centers; (iii) legal entities of public law operating in the field of governance of MES, non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entities; (iv) HEIs established by the GoG (upon the proposal of the MES), scientific-research institutions established by the GoG, vocational education and general education institutions established by / with the participation of MES. The activity was not originally considered under the Project. However, based on the request of MES supported by the respective justification, the WB consented to add the activity to the Project scope.

Based on “Instruction for Financial Accounts Plan of Budgetary Organizations and its Use” approved by the Minister of Finance of Georgia on January 15, 2020, MES is obligated to develop and approve:

- Financial Accounts Plan of an organization and the rule for its use;
- Initial accounting document forms for financial accounting and international standards (IPSAS) of financial accounting of public sector, which will be used by MES and its agencies – including the content, financial records, when, in which case, how, based on what, etc.
- Unified funding rule and the list of initial documents and forms of financial accounts proving completed work of general schools and higher education institutions, as well as other budget or private organizations under the MES's targeted programs.

Based on the approval of the WB, MES has prepared the TOR with the support of the PMU, which has been respectively submitted to the WB for review and approval via STEP during the reporting period (on December 21, 2021). Following no objection provided by the WB, REOI has been issued on January 17, 2022 with a deadline of submitting EOIs by February 2, 2022, 17:00 (local time). The procurement procedures have been completed and the contract has been concluded with the selected consultant on May 2, 2022 continuing through July 2, 2023.

Introductory meeting was held with the Consultant on May 6, 2022 which was attended by the Head and Deputy Heads of the Economic Department of MES, as well as the Executive Director and the Project Manager of the PMU. The aim of the meeting was to provide the Consultant with the necessary information regarding implementation phases of the assignment, communication issues, expectation of the Client and discuss other necessary issues around the task.

During the reporting period, the Consultant has conducted the preparatory works and submitted Report 1 (Inception Report) on June 3, 2022. As defined by the respective TOR, the report included detailed implementation plan with clearly defined deadlines,

According to the respective contract, all reports/deliverables shall be agreed with the Deputy Head of Economic Department of MES in cooperation with the subordinated Accounting Division. Since the Consultant held intensive consultations with the Economic Department of MES during the inception phase, the Inception Report submitted to the PMU already considered all remarks and comments received from MES. Nonetheless, the PMU submitted the report to the relevant department of MES

to officially receive their feedback on the document. The report has been accepted by the PMU on June 14, 2022, based on the agreement with the Deputy Head of Economic Department of MES and the Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia – Mr. Valerian Gobronidze.

Due to the volume and complexity of work to be implemented, as well as the need of involvement of various budgetary organizations in the process, in order to support execution of the assignment and ensure coordinated work, two working groups have been established within MES. The first working group includes persons responsible for financial accounting and reporting in budgetary institutions, who will be involved in the process of developing the draft accounting policy document. As for the second working group, it includes heads of budgetary institutions who will review drafts and propose recommendations for further revisions of the draft document.

During the reporting period, the consulting company (i) conducted online meetings with the members of the working groups and (ii) prepared and submitted online questionnaires to the selected budget organizations to study and analyze current situation and identify challenges. The Consultant has received responses from all organizations by July 4, 2022 and commenced with analysis. Currently, the company is developing the second deliverable under the contract, i.e. analytical report on the regulatory framework and current practice of accounting and reporting in MES and recommendations on improvements, considering local regulatory framework and IPSAS provisions.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Coordinate implementation of the activity – “Development of Accounting Policy for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and its Subordinated Organizations”, revise Report 2 to be submitted by the Consultant. Ensure review and approval of the report by the Deputy Head of the Economic Department of MES and provide the needed support to the Consultant.





PROCUREMENTS

Progress

Following Contracts were signed:

- **As a result of ROIs:**
 1. Short Term Consultant (National) for supporting the planning process for Implementation of “Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education;
 2. Short Term Consultant (International) for supporting the planning process for Implementation of “Promotion of the Internationalization of Higher Education;
 3. Development of accounting policy and related forms for the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the sub-organizations under its control in accordance with the instruction approved by the Minister of Finance of Georgia and Training of key personnel of the Ministry of Education and Science”;
 4. Developing Training Resources and Guides for Schools on Selected Distance Learning Platform(s) and Teaching Methodology Application Conducting ToT;
 5. Head of Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) Administration Unit – National Consultant.
- **As a result of Direct Contracting:**
 1. Baseline Learning Assessment Data Collection and Analysis for the Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q).
- **Short List Technical and Combined Evaluation Reports were prepared for the following consulting services:**
 1. Consulting Services for Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System Whole School Improvement Plan and Programs Improved Assessment Policy Practice and Methodology;
 2. Improving ECE Institution Management System and Enhancing the Quality of Programs Across the Country.
- **REOs were announced for the following consulting services:**
 1. Short-term Consultant (National) to Support the National Assessment and Examination Center with the System Administration for the National e-Assessment Project;
 2. CIF Education Specialist;
 3. CIF Legal Specialist;
 4. Consulting Services for Strengthening the Quality of Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options;
 5. General Education Component Lead;
 6. Consulting Services for Promoting Internationalization of Higher Education;
 7. Performance Evaluation (Data Collection and Analysis) for the Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q).
- Short list evaluation report was prepared and the RFP was issued to the following consulting services:

1. Consulting Services for Facilitating the Implementation of a New Model of Performance-based Funding by Creating Information Management Database System.

Immediate Next Steps:

- **The following contracts will be signed:**

1. Short-term Consultant (National) to Support the National Assessment and Examination Center with the System Administration for the National e-Assessment Project;
2. CIF Education Specialist;
3. CIF Legal Specialist;
4. CIF Financial Specialist;
5. Consulting Services for Strengthening the Quality of Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs and Continuous Professional Development Options;
6. General Education Component Lead;
7. Consulting Services for Promoting Internationalization of Higher Education;
8. Performance Evaluation (Data Collection and Analysis) for the Georgia Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q);
9. Consulting Services for Facilitating the Implementation of a New Model of Performance-based Funding by Creating Information Management Database System;
10. Consulting Services for Fostering Quality Teaching and Learning in General Education through Introduction of Effective Quality Management System Whole School Improvement Plan and Programs Improved Assessment Policy Practice and Methodology;
11. Improving ECE Institution Management System and Enhancing the Quality of Programs Across the Country.

- **Following REOIs will be announced:**

1. CIF Financial Specialist – July 2022;
2. Consulting Services for the Development of the CIF Grants Application Portal, Providing Assistance in the Implementation of CIF Grant Project and in the Evaluation of CIF Grants' Proposals – September 2022. It should be noted, that the name of the assignment will be changed based on the approval from the WB on the selection process of the evaluators;
3. Capacity Building of EMIS to Effectively Implement the Revised Charter, Structure, Scope and Strategy Ensuring Relevant Data Collection, Generation, Analyses and Reporting for Entire Education System and Facilitating Evidence Based Policy Decision-making - September 2022;
4. Design and Development of Learning Management System (LMS) and Education Management System (EMS) for the National Education System and its Beneficiaries – August 2022;
5. Short Term Consultant (National) for supporting effective Implementation of the “Design and Development of LMS and EMS for the National Education System and its Beneficiaries – July 2022;
6. Short Term Consultant (National) for Support and Implementation of the Capacity Building of EMIS – November – 2022.

SECTION III. PROJECT FINANCES

The financial and administrative support for the I2Q Project, as well as procurement management under the Project, as defined with the Loan Agreement and the World Bank (IBRD) rules and procedures, is performed by the PMU under MES. The PMU maintains the Project financial management system in line with the World Bank requirements and performs disbursement of the loan proceeds accordingly.

During the reporting period (January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022), the total amount of expenditures under the I2Q Project amounted to EUR 1.04 million, which is 35.2% of the planned disbursements and paid from Designated Account. As of 30 June 2022, cumulative payments for the project implementation are equal of EUR 6.6 million which is 22.2% of allocated IBRD funds (MES part - EUR 29,775,000).

Commitments and Disbursement Projections

(from the approved Procurement Plan)

(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	9,641,435	6,599,718	30,001	3,011,716	11,780,827

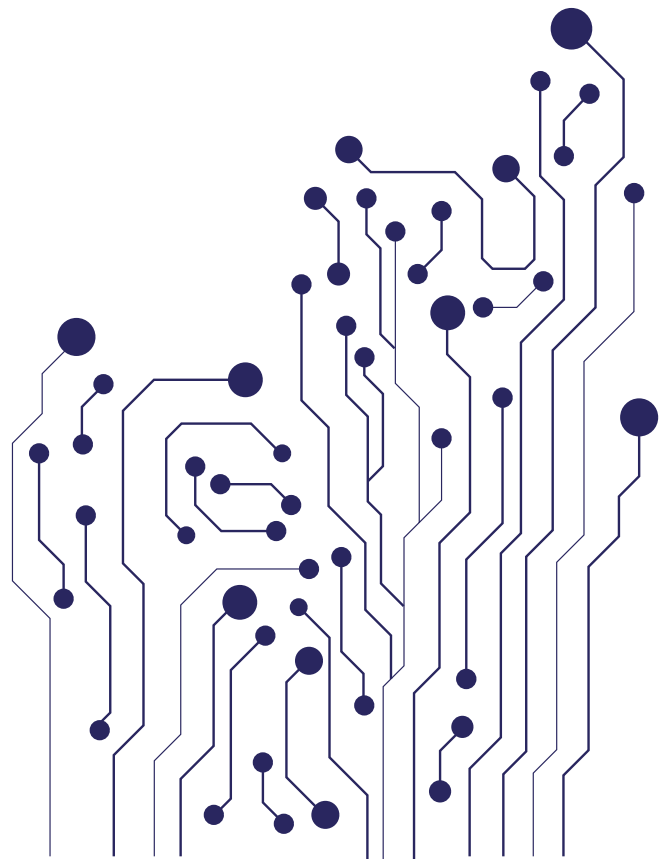
Components	Actual Payments 2022 1st Half
Component 1 – 1.1 Improving the quality of ECEC programs across the country	92,379.63 EUR
Component 2 – 2.2 Supporting the scaling up of the whole-school improvement pilot	522,804.02 EUR
Component 2 – 2.3 Supporting capacity-building of teachers and school leaders to adapt, develop, and implement school-based curriculum	4,171.60 EUR
Component 2 – 2.4 Assisting the development of a national assessment framework	13,629.00 EUR
Component 3 – CIF salaries	1,182.17 EUR
Component 4 – 4.1 Supporting data-driven decision-making accessible the entire education system	93,499.35 EUR
Component 4 – 4.2 Communication and stakeholder consultations for education reform	2,023.20 EUR
Component 5 - Short Term Consultants (National/International)	75,783.99 EUR
Component 5 – Other Consulting Services	19,924.23 EUR
Component 5 - PMU Salaries	206,272.53 EUR
Component 5 - Operating Costs / Miscellaneous	6,925.26 EUR
Total	1,038,594.98 EUR

SECTION IV: ANNEXES TO THE REPORT

Annex I – Indicator Performance Tracking Table

Annex II – Information on Procurement Activities

Annex III – Expenditure Statement and Disbursement Projection



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AND SCIENCE OF GEORGIA



საგანმანათლებლო და სამეცნიერო
საქართველოს მინისტრო
Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project



THE WORLD BANK
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