

TAJIKISTAN

2022-2025 Partnership Compact

Pursuing an Inclusive and Transformative Reform
Agenda for Competency-Based Education in Tajikistan

March 2022



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
CBE	Competency-based education
CPD	Continuous professional development
DCC WG	Development Coordination Council's Working Group
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GoRT	Government of the Republic of Tajikistan
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
ICT	Information and communication technology
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
ITAP	Independent Technical Advisory Panel
JSR	Joint Sector Review
LEG	Local Education Group
MG	Multiplier Grant
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan
MoF	Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Tajikistan
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MTEAP	Mid-Term Education Action Plan for 2021-2023
NSED	National Strategy for Education Development for the period until 2030
NLA	National learning assessment
NTC	National Testing Center under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
OSI-AF	Open Society Institute – Assistance Foundation
PFM	Public finance management
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RIITT	Republican Institute for In-Service Teacher Training
SCG	System Capacity Grant
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STG	System Transformation Grant
TCF	Teachers' Competencies Framework
TLMs	Teaching and learning materials
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

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Preamble

This Partnership Compact establishes the strong commitment and resolve of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for transformation of the national education system by implementing competency-based education (CBE) in Tajikistan that is intended to improve the quality of learning and ensure life-long benefits for all children.

1. Introduction

The Partnership Compact development process was underpinned by a participatory and sustained dialogue between the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Local Education Group (LEG) and the Development Coordination Council (DCC) and technical support was provided by the local technical working group, which was established via the Ministerial Order #509 on April 20, 2021. The LEG provided space for effective coordination and collaboration to facilitate engagement between stakeholders for establishing a common vision for system transformation of quality education for all children in Tajikistan. Through the task team, MoES led all stages of the Compact development process.

The identification of priority areas for education transformation has been firmly grounded on rigorous needs assessment and national policy priorities that are reflected in the National Strategy for Education Development for the period until 2030 (NSED-2030), the National Development Strategy for the period until 2030 (NDS-2030), and their corresponding medium-term operational frameworks. Evidence from donor-commissioned studies and government-owned information systems, such as Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), Education Management Information System (EMIS), and the National Learning Assessments (NLAs) was duly utilized to inform discussions within the LEG and guide the development of the Compact. The proposed intervention will be implemented in the context of achieving the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4), including targets 4.1 (free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education), 4.5 (elimination of gender disparities and ensuring equal access to all levels of education), and 4.c (increasing the supply of qualified teachers).

An initial review of the status of Tajikistan relative to enabling factors for system transformation was evidence-based and included consultations with partners through the LEG. The draft and final reports of the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) for GPE Board were reviewed and endorsed by the LEG members. In addition, the Compact incorporates feedback that was received from the GPE Secretariat based on the draft submission from the MoES on behalf of the LEG.

Following consultations with partners and the GPE Secretariat's mission to Dushanbe that took place between November 29 and December 3, 2021, the Partnership Compact was thoroughly reviewed in January-February 2022 and subsequently endorsed by the LEG members.

2. Overview of the priority reform

2.1. Theory of Change

Recent National Learning Assessments and the 2021 CBE Stocktaking Exercise demonstrate that *implementation of competency-based education for the benefit of all children and youth* remains one of the major reform challenges for education transformation facing Tajikistan. While the reform was initiated in 2012 and major achievements can be reported until now, the LEG agrees that more time, resources, and coordinated efforts are needed to ensure that CBE is fully embedded within the system and triggers down to the level of school and children.

Some of the *root causes* which have contributed to reform implementation challenges, as was identified by the CBE Stocktaking Exercise, included weak planning of the reform and lack of common (shared) vision of the CBE among partners and government institutions in the education sector. For instance, there are many competency-based frameworks¹ that are present in materials developed with partner support in Tajikistan, but it is often not easy to see where and how they might complement each other, or if other frameworks will be introduced. In addition, while there is an overall agreement about four components underlying any competency, proposed definitions of competencies do not appear to explicitly highlight them. There also appears to be fragmented prioritization of some components of the reform (such as curriculum revision) against others (e.g. content development, teacher support system, assessment practices, etc.), weak capacity building of key institutional players at central, subnational, and school levels (e.g. the Republican Institute for In-Service Teacher Training) and institutionalization process, and other gaps and challenges. At basic level, understanding of competence, vision of competencies to be developed, and vision of competence assessment are still something that many educational professionals in Tajikistan are struggling with and require significant capacity enhancement across the board.

Building on the lessons learnt, to address these gaps, MoES will adopt a more targeted approach which will be reflected in a detailed National Roadmap for Implementation of CBE. The document will serve as a reflection exercise on the achievements and gaps of the current implementation of the CBE and will allow all stakeholders to build a joint vision and establish strong coordination mechanisms for implementation and monitoring of the reform. Following agreement with country partners and feedback received from the GPE Secretariat, the MoES in coordination with the LEG will commence the development of the National Roadmap in mid-2022.

If the identified gaps are addressed and previously adopted structures are able to transition from a *system-centered* approach to a *student-centered* one in line with the CBE, the national schooling system will become more equitable and inclusive, and will greatly improve education quality and

¹ Examples of adopted frameworks include: (i) 5 key competencies for the Tajikistan curriculum proposed by the EU QESP project, (ii) 10 core competencies in the UNICEF-developed Adolescent Competency Framework, (iii) 8 personal qualities and competencies underlying the materials developed by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), (iv) 3 groups (25 competencies) listed in the primary school subject standards, (v) 5 groups of universal competencies for learning underlying the subject guides for Russian, as well as the materials developed for the Russian-language schools by the Read With Me (RWM) project, and (vi) others.

student performance, with potential ripple effects across higher levels of education. Furthermore, if the national education system has strengthened capacity to identify and respond to learning gaps of all students, and alignment with competency-based and technology enabled education reform is ensured at all levels (central, district, school and the classroom), then the national learning opportunities will become more equitable and inclusive, and will greatly improve education quality and student performance through implementation of CBE reform, with potential ripple effects across higher levels of education.

Accordingly, in line with the Theory of Change (see Figure 1), the outcome to be expected by the end of 2025 is one that envisages full, evidence-based, and targeted implementation of student-centered CBE reform with embedded changes in the current education system. In essence, this would imply that three priority measures² are mutually reinforcing and complemented by relevant institutional changes,³ which together have contributed towards the formulation and effective implementation of the shared vision (and understanding) of competence development, including quality learning and assessment as integral parts of any learning process, focusing on current and emerging student needs and capitalizing on modern technology-driven learning opportunities.

In close coordination with the LEG members, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (GoRT) is committed to addressing this challenge by stepping up the implementation of CBE and moving away from a 'business-as-usual' approach, i.e. undertaking transformational changes to embed CBE within the education system to ensure impact on student learning. This is one of the priorities identified in the NSED-2030, particularly priority reform measures 4.2.5-4.2.8 where CBE is mostly reflected. Based on the results of recent exercises assessment, teacher professional development, and preparation of competency-based and inclusive standards and teaching materials are all defined as priority areas in the NSED-2030 and its mid-term operational framework.

There is a clear sequence to the process that starts with the development of policy documents, followed by the design and piloting of tools and their further implementation, and analysis of results. However, it is clear that activities for some areas identified in the NSED-2030 are rather fragmented, such as teacher professional development (comprehensive needs assessment could be a good starting point), learning assessments, and development of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) in line with the CBE reform.

Here, transformation will be induced by shifting from a system-centered approach to a student-centered approach, which is underpinned by greater focus on needs and demands of children. In particular, competencies can only be manifested through professional activity, which will be enhanced through teacher preparation and establishing a needs-based continuous professional learning system. Knowledge and skills of students are best nurtured through competency-based curriculum with updated standards, teaching and learning materials (including blended/digital

² Namely: (i) creating an effective system of professional development of teachers, (ii) preparation of competency-based and inclusive standards and teaching materials, and (iii) implementation of an effective system and institutional mechanisms for assessing the quality of education based on a competency-based approach.

³ Such as partner and reform coordination, sustainable capacity building, teacher support system, effective data management, sound policy and financial planning, and other cross-cutting aspects.

learning opportunities) and adequately embedded formative assessment. Moreover, employing an evidence-based approach to assess progression in students' competence development is absolutely vital to understanding the implications of CBE reform and, in particular, its impact on the quality of learning. Therefore, undertaking government-led and internationally recognized learning assessments is an important element of the proposed transformative intervention.

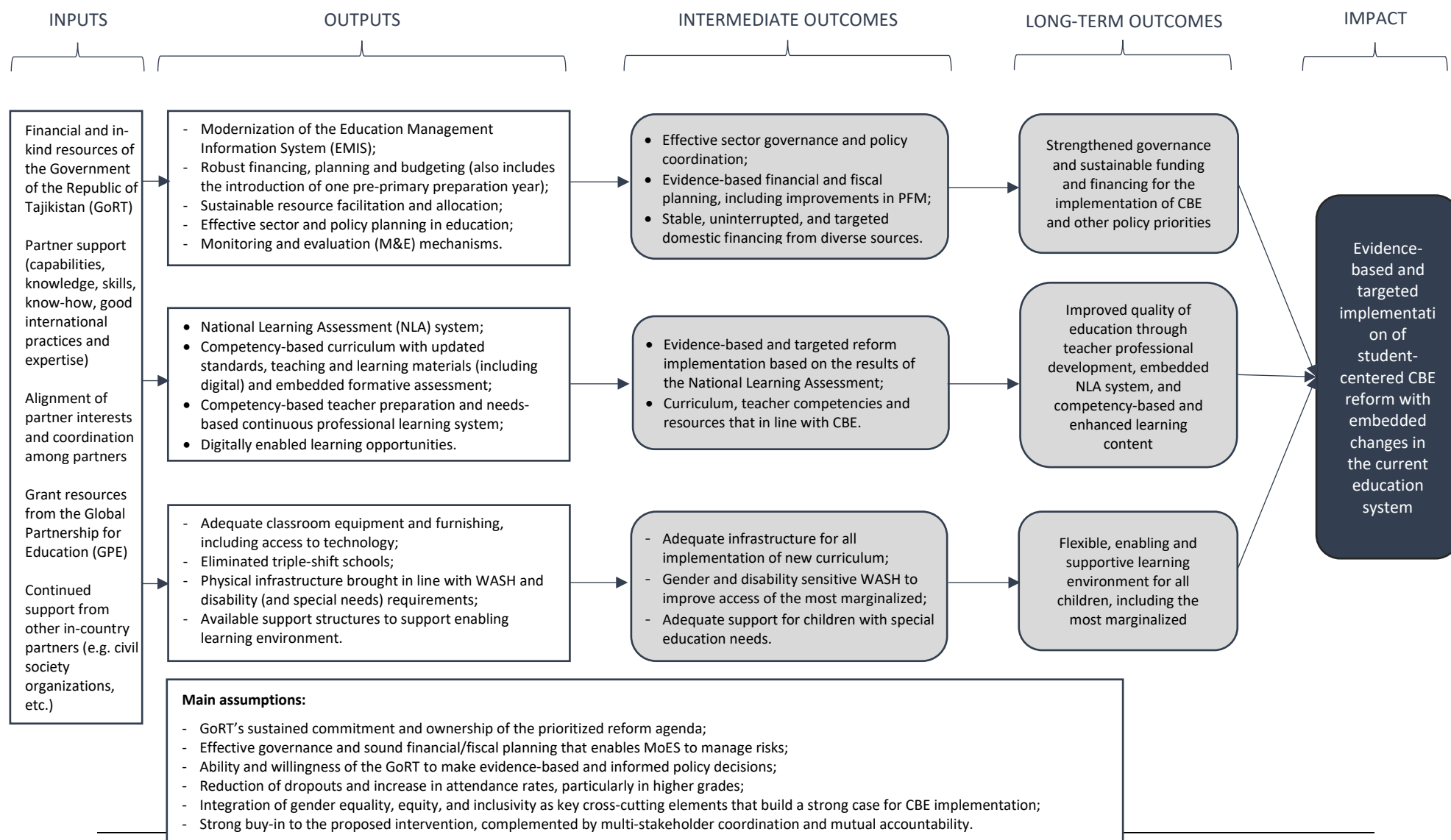
These interventions will be complemented by supportive activities aimed at improving the four enabling factors⁴ for system transformation as identified in the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan and an enabling and supportive learning environment for all children, including the most marginalized. This will be achieved through improving physical infrastructure for children, and especially girls and children with disabilities, and supported by improvements in data management, gender-responsive policy planning and reform coordination, robust financing and budgeting, and establishing credible monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Sustainable and uninterrupted progress in these areas will enable effective implementation of CBE, thus triggering improvements in students' academic performance and life-long benefits for boys and girls.

The implementation of CBE also hinges significantly and critically on having an enabling learning environment, which is in turn underpinned by the presence of adequate physical infrastructure in schools, equitable access to educational facilities for all children that builds and strengthens inclusivity, and support structures within and outside the school environment. According to EMIS data from 2020-21 academic year, 28.1% of all schools in Tajikistan were in need of capital repairs and 9.4% required emergency rehabilitation (including 28.1% of schools in GBAO). Besides, only 79.1% of all schools claim that they have had their water needs fully covered. A 2015 UNICEF study found that 18% of girls who had dropped out of school or were at risk of dropping out, stated poor water supply and sanitation (WASH) facilities as a reason for missing school; only 86% of all schools have separate toilets for boys and girls and only 55% of schools had access to safe water. EMIS data also shows the lack of subject labs and ICT equipment across the board. This evidence reinforces the need to complement CBE implementation with improvements in infrastructure, including access to technology, WASH- and disability-friendly facilities, and other support structures that together contribute to creating an enabling learning environment for all children.

Accordingly, the proposed Theory of Change is based on the assumption that reinforced and coordinated focus of partners on teacher professional development and training, national learning assessment system, and competency-based and enhanced learning content, complemented by improvements in the enabling factors and supportive learning environment, represents the key driver towards implementation of the student-centered CBE reform (see Figure 1). Henceforth, the anticipated system transformation will be triggered by a prioritized focus on CBE, with embedded measures to advance gender equality, and underpinned by securing adequate resources, skills, capabilities, knowledge, expertise, and pooling of partner efforts.

⁴ These four enabling factors include: (1) data and evidence; (2) sector planning, policy, and monitoring; (3) sector coordination; and (4) volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education.

Figure 1: Theory of Change for embedded CBE approach within the current education system, based on evidence.



2.2. Rationale for selection of the priority reform

Tajikistan has embarked on the transition path towards CBE pedagogy since 2015, and has been supported by most LEG members and the GPE. It is therefore an area that already pulls partners together under a common cause, while also representing an area where partners agree that further investments and efforts are crucial to ensure the education system has fully adopted and adapted to the CBE. On the basis of government-led effort and continued partner support, and as has been evidenced by the 2021 CBE stocktaking exercise, the proposed interventions: (i) will strategically complement the desired system transformation,⁵ and (ii) are viewed by the LEG to be feasible to address over a four-year period until 2025. Although this represents continuation of an earlier reform, the focus will be critically refined as explained in the Theory of Change, and further expertise and technical support are needed in a coordinated and targeted way to promote 21st century skills and competencies in light of national and global challenges.

Holistic implementation of CBE reform will also facilitate gender mainstreaming and the gender approach in pedagogy, which takes into account the influence of various factors on content, forms, and methods of training and learning, technologies of education process organization, pedagogical communication, and other aspects of the education process. More student-centered learning assessments and data management systems will enable policy makers to adjust CBE implementation to the needs and performance of boys and girls beyond basic education, whereas improving school infrastructure will support girls' transition to upper grades (particularly in areas where girls used to drop out of school) and ensure better and more inclusive learning for all.

Implementation of the proposed priority reform (i.e. CBE) will strongly advance gender equality in Tajikistan, such as through continuous adaptation of the curriculum and development of relevant teaching and learning materials (TLMs) that cater to the needs of girls and boys across all grades. The national schooling system had 130,465 teachers in the 2020-21 academic year, of which 77,407 were female teachers (comprising 59.3 percent of all teacher workforce). Through teacher professional development, CBE implementation will directly benefit male and female teachers, many of whom require training to implement the shared vision for competence development in the classroom. Outside the classroom, the favorable learning environment is an important enabler that accounts for the needs of boys and girls, such as through the presence of segregated toilets and school-level support structures (e.g. medical rooms and psychological consultation). Ongoing partner efforts, complemented by GPE Multiplier resources, will further advance gender equality.

Furthermore, strengthening capacity and institutional mechanisms to undertake assessments of the quality of learning would further identify bottlenecks with respect to learning achievements and gaps of girls and boys in different age groups, grades, languages of instruction, and other characteristics. Examples of such bottlenecks include school dropouts and attendance rates, which highlight gender-specific issues that particularly affect boys' completion of secondary education. These evidence-generating studies investigating the root causes of bottlenecks will help to agree and implement more targeted and effective measures that benefit boys and girls.

⁵ Also, in light of the anticipated transition to 12-year schooling system.

Pursuing further rollout of CBE reform is justified first and foremost by the importance of general secondary education to the country's development prospects. Based on the 2020-21 academic year, the national schooling system enrolls 2.1 million students, of which 48.2 percent are girls. This represents a sizeable 22.7 percent of Tajikistan's total population. Rapid population growth already poses a serious challenge to government efforts to improve access and equity in the schooling system that is already constrained by rising infrastructure needs, lack of qualified pedagogical personnel, rising dropouts as students progress to higher grades, triple-shift schools, outdated teaching and learning materials (TLMs), and other systemic challenges.⁶ At the same time, CBE reform implementation is hampered by constrained learning environment, which was evidenced in the 2017 World Bank funded Poverty Diagnostic of WASH conditions in Tajikistan, 2015 UNICEF funded study of WASH conditions in schools, and the Education Sector Assessment (ESA) that fed into the government's NSED-2030.

In 2020, the GoRT allocated US\$250 million to general secondary education, which made it the third largest recipient of public resources in the country,⁷ and reaffirms the critical importance that the GoRT places on the national schooling network.

The selected reform area is grounded on most recent evidence from the 2019 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA),⁸ and a baseline study by UNICEF/IsDB/GPE, which demonstrated that despite the rollout of CBE, the learning outcomes of Tajik students across grades and subjects are low. This is especially evident among students from rural areas, particularly those whose language of instruction is not Tajik. According to the 2019 EGRA, Tajik students' comprehension of skills were not at the same high level as their fluency skills. Another key finding was that performance of Tajik-language students in grade 2 declined on several skill areas from 2018 to 2019. The declines may be the result of teachers for that language and grade struggling to adapt and implement current teaching strategies and practices. The latest EGRA and the Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) results will be published by the USAID in the Fall 2022. In addition, Tajikistan's first-ever National Learning Assessment (NLA) of students in grades 5 and 11 was conducted in mid-2021,⁹ but its findings will be released in 2022. No further learning assessments were undertaken, which hampers comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes and tracking of their progression over time.

In sum, these and other studies (e.g. 2021 CBE stocktaking exercise, commissioned by UNICEF) identified several factors that negatively influence learning outcomes, such as lack of teaching and learning materials, weak pedagogy and assessment practices, inadequate teacher professional

⁶ Based on the findings of the 2018 Joint Sector Review (JSR) and the 2020 Education Sector Assessment (ESA) that fed into the development of the NSED-2030.

⁷ Only behind energy and social protection sectors.

⁸ In April and May 2019, the midline EGRA assessment was carried out with data collected electronically from 207 schools (in 146 Tajik language schools and 61 Russian language schools) and assessed students from grade 2 (1,948 students) and grade 4 (1,912 students) and the endline 2021 EGRA assessment has been completed. EGRA assessments in Tajikistan were undertaken in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019, and have been funded by the USAID.

⁹ The NLA was conducted by the National Testing Center (NTC) with support from the European Union.

development and support systems, poor physical infrastructure, as well as the lack of additional support to students in need (e.g. language, disability, etc.). Thus, minor and relatively disjointed improvements linked to the CBE implementation have so far been insufficient to trigger system-wide changes that could have brought tangible impact on learning outcomes.

The CBE reform is also firmly based on the national policy documents, including the NSED-2030 and its operational framework, i.e. the Mid-Term Education Action Plan (MTEAP) for 2021-2023. Thus, the Compact fully aligns with national development priorities and education programming.

3. Enabling education system transformation

In line with the pilot of the GPE 2025 operating model, the GoRT and partners have analyzed Tajikistan's progress in the four enabling factors. Accordingly, the country analysis and supporting documentation were shared with the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) for review. The ITAP issued the draft report on July 22, which was reviewed by the GoRT and country partners. Having incorporated feedback and additional documentation provided by the GoRT in response to the ITAP's initial feedback, the ITAP subsequently released the final report for GPE Board on November 1, recommending actions and contributing to country policy dialogue in each of the four enabling factors (described below).

3.1. Overview of the enabling factors and their effect on the priority reform implementation

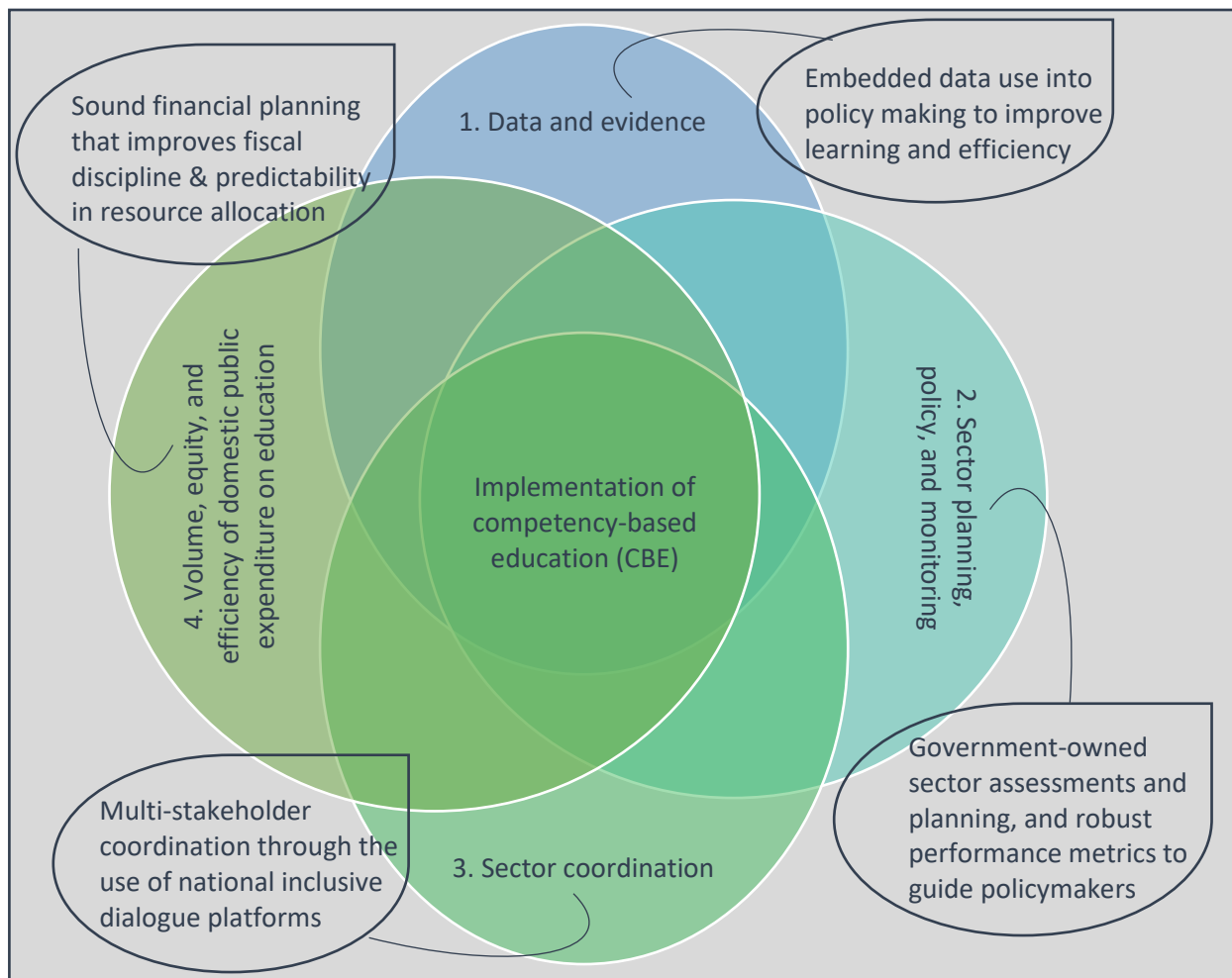
Data and evidence (high priority)

One of the main impediments to informed policy design arises from the lack of credible and high-frequency data on students' learning outcomes at school level. Significant shortcomings in data management are shown in the 2017 EMIS SABER¹⁰ Country Report, the Joint Sector Reviews (JSR), the EU Review of System Functioning, and the Public Expenditure Review (PER). Notwithstanding significant improvements in collecting and processing of administrative data, the current EMIS is based on outdated software that is no longer supported, and is largely paper-based. Its coverage is limited and crucial performance indicators linked to learning outcomes and internal/external efficiency are missing. In addition, data is not sufficiently utilized for decision making at the central government and subnational levels, particularly considering that education financing is mostly with local municipalities.

While the proposed interventions through the SCG will have broad-brush benefits, they will also support the collection and publication of critical performance data to inform implementation of CBE reform. This will be performed through the National Learning Assessments (NLAs) and other tools (e.g. EGRA, PISA, etc.) that will enable policy makers to: (i) better assess causal relationships that affect changes in learning outcomes, and (ii) measure these changes over time for girls and boys at each grade. The MoES is committed to leading the implementation of future NLAs with the much-needed technical support from development partners.

¹⁰ Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). Based upon the World Bank methodology.

Figure 2: Intersections for the GPE enabling factors with the selected priority reform in Tajikistan.*



/* Cross-cutting elements include: (i) gender equality, (ii) inclusive environment, (iii) infrastructure, (iv) human resources and staff capacities; and (v) others.

New web-based EMIS modules and data collection routines will support collection and utilization of core performance and efficiency indicators (e.g. on attendance, dropouts, repetition, teacher professional development, enrollment, etc.). Some of these actions are already being supported by the IsDB/GPE 'Project for Support to Implementation of the NSED in the Republic of Tajikistan' and will be further complemented, and thereby strengthened, by proposed interventions under the GPE System Capacity Grant (SCG). Through the IsDB/GPE project, hardware and software will be procured in the MoES, as well as in schools and at regional/district level, and capacities will be built to use the upgraded data applications and dashboards as an advanced data analysis tool for policy and planning purposes at the ministry and subnational level. Through SCG, the MoES will create a dedicated policy coordination and analytical unit, which will systematically review/analyze

key performance¹¹ and efficiency¹² indicators, as well as population statistics,¹³ and ensure that they are shared with subnational authorities and educational institutions to inform their resource allocation decisions. Annual EMIS booklets will also be updated and routinely published in digital format for ease of access and use by policy makers and non-governmental stakeholders.

Data on inclusion and disability will be collected in line with ITAP recommendations, and the MoES is already firmly committed to modernizing its data management system (namely, EMIS), which also assumes sustained capacity enhancement of relevant staff on secondary data analysis and its presentation. This will also help identify factors affecting academic performance (and, ultimately, learning outcomes), disaggregated by gender, disability, ethnicity, language, and other factors of disadvantage, and help assess the efficiency and effectiveness of competency-based education (CBE) and other investments in education.

Gender-responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring (medium priority)

The MoES designs and implements government policy in the education sector. In doing so, it is guided by the NSED-2030 and its operational framework, which is supported by a rigorous M&E tool that includes a risk register and a list of key performance indicators (KPIs). The LEG concurs with ITAP observation that the MoES could play a more significant leadership role in the planning and execution of Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), which underpin M&E of the NSED-2030. This will be achieved through creating and capacitating a coordination and analytical unit in the MoES, which will lead relevant sector-wide assessments and reporting against the NSED-2030 implementation.

CBE implementation is particularly acutely affected by attendance and dropout rates. To that end, the LEG agrees with ITAP that MoES, jointly with partners, could create mechanisms at subnational level to monitor dropouts and low attendance and study their determinants, especially among girls in post-primary grades; to map out the barriers and inequalities that deter all children, and girls in particular, from schooling; and to expand the evidence base that will improve the gender sensitivity and inclusivity across the board. Based on the results of such analysis, interventions will be implemented to ensure improvement of enabling environments at school level and parental support, which are meant to address girls' limited attendance and transition to upper secondary level. Furthermore, the proposed approach will ensure that all teachers have access to learning opportunities on inclusion to all education personnel and structures to provide support to children in need, and that gaps in physical infrastructure (e.g. WASH) are adequately addressed over time.

The NSED's M&E framework will also be revised to ensure that relevant KPIs are embedded to adequately monitor gender disparity, disability access, and exclusion of vulnerable/marginalized groups. These measures will help tailor the competency-based curriculum and TLMs in general secondary education to the needs of various population groups, while also adapting the teaching materials and teacher training practices.

¹¹ Such as indicators linked to learning outcomes, and others.

¹² Such as attendance, repetition, and dropout rates, and others.

¹³ Such as gross and net enrollment, transition, and completion rates, and others.

Sector coordination (medium priority)

Country stakeholders agree that sector coordination has greatly improved over the years through facilitation of inclusive sector dialogue and greater presence of the MoES in the LEG platform. It is also reaffirmed by improvement in the quality of government-led (or government-owned) sector plans and assessments. Mutual accountability was previously highlighted as a weak area, which was partly addressed by donor activity mapping that is now closely aligned with the NSED-2030. This will enable the MoES to identify all donor investment aiming to support implementation of the selected reform priority. Coordinated monitoring of the NSED implementation will be facilitated via reducing the number of KPIs (that are intended to monitor progress over time) and establishing a robust M&E framework that maximizes engagement with the LEG members. This is expected to narrow the focus on a smaller subset of key indicators, which would help to measure progression towards full CBE implementation.

Volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education (high priority)

In 2022, the GoRT has committed to allocate public resources in the amount of 6 percent of GDP to support the education sector. This is equivalent to about US\$558 million. Although the Ministry of Finance plans its country budget on the basis of rigorous macro-fiscal assessment (e.g. currency volatility and inflation), at sector level financial and fiscal planning remains relatively weak. This also applies to costing of the NSED (or its corresponding operational framework), which heavily hinges on the availability of external financing. Economic uncertainties, such as the one caused by COVID-19, demonstrated the need for in-built flexibility in fiscal planning and risk management that responds to anticipated resource constraints.

To that end, in 2022 the MoES' Economy and Planning Department plans to develop a rigorous simulation and sensitivity model, which is based on the available fiscal space (reflected in macro-fiscal projections of the Ministry of Finance) and overall financing need (embedded in NSED-2030). The model will carefully cost the NSED-2030 and/or its mid-term operational frameworks. In this exercise, MoES will seek to build on initial support provided by UNICEF and UNESCO in 2021, and will produce a flexible and sound financing model on the basis of different development scenarios. In this way, the GoRT will safeguard itself against the risk of high exposure to financing and economic shocks, and will introduce caution in the treatment of medium-term expenditure targets in the education sector.

Affected by COVID-19, the GoRT also acknowledges that the NSED's operational framework, i.e. MTEAP for 2021-2023, is likely to be scaled down in ambition and scope. This is particularly crucial in the context of planned resource-intensive reforms, such as the transition to 12-year schooling and implementation of competency-based education (CBE). Through the GPE's System Capacity Grant (SCG), the MoES will embed multiple financing and reform implementation scenarios during the next planning phase of the NSED, i.e. when developing the MTEAP for 2024-2026. Through this measure, the GoRT will have greater opportunity to flexibly adapt to changing economic and financing circumstances, affecting resource allocation in education, and spread planned resources

for reform implementation (particularly those that require more than one operational cycle) more evenly over the medium term.

The new MTEAP preparation (for 2024-2026) will build on the lessons learned from the first three years of NSED implementation. The MoES is also committed to building its systems and capacities that will institutionalize the development of various financing scenarios along with the sensitivity analysis and simulation modeling. This will safeguard resources allocated to education, including investment towards CBE implementation, and will also significantly improve fiscal discipline and predictability of resource allocation in education.

The LEG members agreed that further efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, e.g. in general secondary education with respect to per-capita funding formula implementation, should be undertaken with a focus on ensuring greater equity across the most disadvantaged groups, across regions and districts, and with greater engagement of subnational municipalities. Besides, the GoRT acknowledges importance of subnational governments in financing education needs. The MoES seeks to establish uninterrupted and remote access to Tajikistan Financial Management Information System (TFMIS) of the Ministry of Finance, which would enable it to better monitor and analyze education spending by subnational governments, particularly through its new policy coordination and analytical unit that would be created and nurtured through the GPE's SCG.

4. Delivering education system transformation

4.1. Alignment of partner and GPE resources

Country partners already contribute to the priority reform implementation in a unique way, which will complement and reinforce their strengths and value addition through the Compact approach. The LEG members have contributed financial resources and knowledge (e.g. good international practices), local civil society and in-country experts have also invested heavily towards building strong capabilities and skills for implementation of the CBE. As described in Section 2.2, CBE is an area that already pulls country partners together, thus strengthening the shared-interest approach that transpires in the Compact.

One of the main goals of the LEG is to put *implementation of competency-based education (CBE)* at the heart of ongoing reform efforts aimed at improving quality of education. In line with the proposed Theory of Change (see Section 2.1), partners are already investing in different areas of CBE reform. Demonstrated track record of working together under a commonly agreed strategic direction of travel, as determined by the NSED-2030 and its operational framework, enables the proposed transformation to build on the strengths of partners who have a strong development footprint in the education sector.

In-country expertise could be reinforced by fostering stronger partnerships with civil society and private sector, such as through consultations, policy dialogue, and contracting to deliver analytical work that informs policy design or policy implementation. This could be done bilaterally with the MoES and through the LEG platform, building on the benefits of having an inclusive process where

the voices of marginalized and vulnerable groups (e.g. girls at risk of dropping out from school, children with disabilities, and others) are heard and influence the CBE implementation.

The Compact will feed into (and feature heavily in) the preparation of the NSED's next planning phase, i.e. development of Mid-Term Education Action Plan (MTEAP) for 2024-2026. Recognizing that inclusion and equity issues should be addressed through evidence lens, MoES in coordination with the LEG commits to engage a broad range of stakeholders and tools that will generate much-needed evidence and embed the needs of these groups and communities. For instance, attendance rates become low as students progress to higher grades, and this issue is especially prevalent among girls and in rural areas. This significantly hampers CBE implementation and, ultimately, lowers quality of education. To address its root causes, the Compact proposes to identify the barriers hindering student participation and increasing dropouts through a nationally representative study and a transparent, inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Most LEG members have supported competency-based education (CBE) reform in Tajikistan. The initial building blocks of CBE were put in place in the past seven years, including the revision of the curriculum, initial training of all teachers in CBE approaches, development of Teaching and Learning materials for some subjects and grades, development and approval of an initial Teachers' Competencies Framework (TCF) and other policy documents, guides and frameworks on curriculum development, and others. USAID supported the rollout of EGRA in 2014, 2016, 2018, and a midline assessment in 2019, whereas the EU supported Tajikistan's maiden national learning assessment of students in the 5th and 11th grades in 2021.

Since 2015, the GPE has invested in introducing CBE in Tajikistan. CBE reform implementation continued with support of other projects, such as the EU-funded Quality Education Support Programme (QESP), USAID-funded Read with Me (RWM) project and Quality Learning Project (QLP), UNICEF-funded Adolescent Competency Framework (ACF) and inclusive education projects, the WB-funded READ2 project on formative assessment in primary grades, and other interventions undertaken by AKF and OSI-AF. Most of these interventions are likely to continue beyond 2021. At the same time, while the Compact does not propose undertaking national learning assessments (this will be done by partners), the SCG will focus on creating a culture of analysis of NLA data to reflect on the current practices in education system and adopt targeted and evidence-based reforms. This would significantly improve the current steps in CBE implementation as they become more targeted.

The coronavirus pandemic has also triggered the development of numerous digital content and an overall change of attitude towards online learning. This led to various initiatives for developing new online and blended learning platforms both for learners/students and teachers, which have been supported by UNICEF, USAID and other partners with support of newly established digital platforms. Modeling of these initiatives also demonstrated that digital learning provides an enabling environment and better opportunities for improving quality education through improved access to teacher professional learning opportunities, wider resources and individualized digitally enabled learning.

Building on the achievements of the EU Quality Education Support Project (QESP), currently IsDB-GPE project is modeling new approaches to improving the teacher professional development and in-classroom support system. Scaling up of best practices will require coordinated efforts to enable the reform of the system to be in line with competency-based education (CBE). The World Bank and USAID are also envisaging new technical assistance interventions to support ongoing reforms in general secondary education and, in particular, in support of CBE reform.

The mapping of partners' funds and efforts in education is presented in Annex 1.

There are also potential gaps in CBE implementation where global expertise and best practice will be needed. In 2021, UNICEF completed a stocktaking study with the view to harmonize the vision of CBE reform in Tajikistan, which articulates gaps/shortcomings in CBE reform implementation and serves as a good reference point in the implementation of proposed interventions and the desired transformational changes under the Compact. As the first steps, it is important for MoES to articulate the competency-based curriculum framework and institutional structures that need to be put in place, such as the Quality Education Unit and the School of CBE Content Development. Besides, a large number of different instruments are being used in Tajikistan for assessing quality of learning. These instruments should be thoroughly reviewed, thus feeding into the subsequent revision of the teachers' competencies framework. Moreover, a clear vision should be articulated by MoES of stages in the process of competence development, which is essential for planning and organizing learning. These and other identified gaps would require concerted effort from country partners and regional/global capacity, which would be facilitated through GPE funding.

Partner support to strategies addressing the enabling factors areas is currently limited, but would complement the proposed interventions under the Compact. The IsDB/GPE Project for Support to NSED in the Republic of Tajikistan aims to strengthen EMIS and its piloting, particularly at the subnational level. The MoES would also seek support from UNESCO to guide the development of costing models for the NSED-2030 and its operational frameworks. UNICEF will continue the provision of technical assistance to improve the education sector's public finance management environment and policy coordination. The EU is also committed to provide technical support that builds capacity and capability of the MoES to undertake annual joint sector reviews (JSRs). In the presence of current and planned partner efforts to address weaknesses in the enabling factors (as identified in GPE 2025 Strategic Plan), greater alignment of partner and GPE resources is sought by MoES to employ a holistic approach through the Compact.

4.2. GPE grants and other assets to be mobilized in support of the priority reform

The Partnership Compact includes proposals in support of the priority reform implementation for three GPE grants, namely: (i) System Capacity Grant (SCG), (ii) System Transformation Grant (STG), and (iii) Multiplier Grant (MG).

4.2.1. Proposed reform measures for the System Capacity Grant (SCG)

Drawing on the ITAP recommendations and subsequent discussions within the LEG, the following systemic reforms are expected to be further supported by GPE’s **System Capacity Grant (SCG)** in 2022-2025. Building on the analysis in Section 3.1, their implementation will enable and support the desired transformation as per the Theory of Change (see Section 2.1):

1. Data and evidence	1.1. Modernizing the Education Management Information System (EMIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and operationalizing additional EMIS modules to ensure the consolidation of internal efficiency and performance indicators (including on learning outcomes and teacher professional development); • Reviewing gender-disaggregated data on disability and inclusion to ensure its more systematic collection (and, specifically with respect to disability data, in line with Washington Group Questions); • Modernizing the website of the MoES and integrating a web-based encrypted access to EMIS for relevant users.
	1.2. Enhancing the quality of statistical reporting and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the format and content of annual statistical publications (i.e. EMIS booklets published by the MoES); • Facilitating digital access to statistical publications for all upstream/downstream partners and subnational govts; • Enhancing alignment and congruence between indicators in the EMIS, NSED-2030 and its M&E framework (that also capture gender disparity, disability access, and exclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups); • Strengthening analytical capacity of staff at central govt and subnational levels in the area of data management.
	1.3. Generating evidence to support implementation of the selected priority reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the effectiveness of per-capita funding (PCF) mechanism in general secondary education; • Undertaking a study to identify the determinants of school dropouts and low attendance rates, especially among girls in higher grades, and barriers to inclusive education; • Mapping physical conditions and ICT infrastructure across the national school network to identify most at-risk and disadvantaged schools and regions/districts.
2. Sector planning, policy, and monitoring	2.1. Establishing a new coordination/analytical unit in the MoES ¹⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating and supporting the newly established Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit in the MoES during the initial two years of funding through GPE SCG; • Building planning and analytical capacities of counterparts at subnational and school levels.
	2.2. Supporting policy design that potentially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the development and implementation of a roadmap to transition to 12-year schooling over a six-year period, based on the identified/agreed transition scenario.

¹⁴ SCG funds will be used as initial investment intended to establish the new Unit within the current MoES structure and gradually build capacity of its newly recruited staff, preparing them for full transition to civil service in the MoES upon completion of the first two years of funding through the GPE SCG. Remuneration of staff will be similar to local market rates, which will ensure the Unit’s sustainability in the long term by avoiding staff turnover during the transition.

	impacts students' learning outcomes	
	2.3. Improving sector planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the development of the Mid-Term Education Action Plan for 2024-2026 and annual joint sector reviews.
3. Sector coordination	3.1. Strengthening coordinated financing and resource mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stocktaking of various sources of financing in the education sector and, on this basis, developing a feasible mid- to long-term resource mobilization plan.
4. Volume, equity and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education	4.1. Facilitating robust financial and fiscal planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating the cost of implementing the NSED-2030 and its mid-term operational framework (i.e. MTEAP 2021-2023); Developing several financing scenarios in the education sector, including sensitivity analysis and simulation modeling, based on the country's macro-fiscal framework; Reviewing and updating the cost of the transition to 12-year schooling, based on the agreed transition scenario.

The Compact proposes that the SCG is structured flexibly in order to be able to react to changes and emerging needs as they occur throughout the implementation period. This means that the list of activities under the SCG could be expanded or scaled down depending on complementary support from LEG members, pace and direction of reform implementation, and the government's policy decisions.

4.2.2. Proposed reform measures for the System Transformation Grant (STG)

The Compact proposes to build on the existing achievements towards full implementation of CBE, while specifically targeting the areas that are currently not satisfactorily covered by the LEG. Hence, the proposed focus areas under the **System Transformation Grant (STG)** include:

1. Creating an embedded capacity within existing government institutions to constantly revise CBE curriculum in line with the results of learning assessments and develop teaching and learning materials (TLMs), including digital content;
2. Establishing competency-based teacher continuous professional learning and growth system, including revising teacher-related policies, creating professional opportunities (including digital learning), and improving the teacher support system.

Both focus areas represent the building blocks of CBE and will be based on the results of NLAs to result in improved learning outcomes. Investing in teacher professional learning and growth will positively affect attractiveness of teacher profession, impact teacher motivation, improve quality of pedagogical skills and overall teacher performance. The importance of continued piloting of digital platforms and blended learning tools is particularly relevant in the context of COVID-19 and remote learning models that have been recently experimented with. Furthermore, creating an embedded capacity and institutions, such as School of Content Writers will ensure a better supply of quality textbooks and other quality TLMs that are duly adapted to CBE requirements will help enforce changes across the national school network.

The initial 60 percent of funding under the STG (i.e. guaranteed US\$6 million) will focus largely on the first focus area, including the following:

- Conducting a thorough analysis of the results of all recent NLAs and undertaking additional reflection exercises to further identify gaps in all relevant areas;
- Developing a National Roadmap on targeted implementation of CBE curriculum reflected in action plans of all affiliated agencies of the MoES to define capacity needs and structural changes required to ensure their activities are fully in line with CBE approaches;
- Undertaking targeted capacity building of each affiliated institution and across the board on areas relevant to their involvement in CBE;
- Developing a clear curriculum for each competency and a competency-based curriculum framework, which will become the main reference point for all the curriculum work and a legal basis for policy decisions as the CBE reform implementation progresses further;
- Facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue to agree on a common format for the description of subject competencies and integration pathway of key and subject competencies;
- Establishing the School of CBE Content Development, including development of relevant frameworks and policies, and the provision of technical assistance to the Center for the Development, Issuance and Distribution of Textbooks and Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) under the MoES, including:
 - Enhancing the technical capacity of textbook authors in line with CBE requirements;
 - Developing, publishing and disseminating new TLMs that are adapted to CBE (in the selected post-primary grades), with a particular emphasis on STEM subjects;
 - Revising extracurricular programs offered by schools to ensure alignment with CBE;
 - Improving the material and technical base of the Center;
- Updating the competency-based curriculum and TLMs in line with the rollout of technology-driven solutions to classroom learning and teacher training;
- Developing regulatory framework and TLMs for one-year pre-primary preprimary year (specifically focusing on school readiness) in line with the envisaged transition to 12-year education system.

Although the GoRT seeks to request the entire GPE allocation under the STG, the remaining 40 percent of funding (i.e. variable US\$4 million) is proposed to be allocated towards the following reform measures, which cover the second focus area:

- Establishing a teacher preparation and needs-based continuous professional learning system with embedded ongoing support;
- Scaling up blended learning opportunities at pre-service and in-service levels to enable teachers to have access to learning opportunities without leaving workspace;
- Equipping the Republican Institute for In-Service Teacher Training (RIITT), branches and resource schools at selected districts to provide teachers to blended learning courses provided by RIITT and other teacher professional development institutions;
- Facilitating the establishment of and nurturing the Education Quality Unit in the MoES that effectively sets up a framework for assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

The selected Grant Agent for the STG should include information related to activities with respect to CBE implementation, which are currently being supported by the MoES and in-country partners. This would build on, as well as further update and granulate, information provided in the Compact.

4.2.3. Proposed reform measures for the Multiplier Grant (MG)

The proposed intervention in the Partnership Compact is designed to represent good value for money through a multiplier effect. By influencing policy, systems and processes, and supporting capacity enhancement, the MoES seeks to leverage broader resources from the LEG members to support measures/activities at scale.

The Multiplier requires mobilization of new additional funds to education from other bilateral and/or multilateral funding sources or through private sector. The Compact would pool partner efforts and resources in the presence of the Multiplier and, in this way, enhance the government's ability to utilize these funds effectively in 2022-2025. Once the Partnership Compact is endorsed by the LEG and submitted to the GPE Board, the MoES and partners will discuss the proposed scope for the Multiplier in terms of the overall need for the CBE rollout, including best practices and evidence in use of education technology, and from sustainability perspective to ensure that there will be adequate resources available for maintenance of the technology-driven solutions.

Admittedly, the cornerstone building blocks of CBE implementation represent not only pedagogy, assessments, and learning materials, but also *implementation of modern, technology-driven solutions to classroom learning and teacher training*. According to the draft Roadmap¹⁵ for Digital Learning, nowadays the quality of education vastly depends on digital learning enablers, such as connectivity and ICT infrastructure, devices, digital platforms, access solutions, and digital capacity of education workers at all levels. Another major contributor to quality of education is adequately equipped learning labs and computer classrooms, with strong focus on STEM subjects. This is an area that is strongly supported by LEG members and the government. Coordinated and sustained investment in these areas has the potential to: (i) greatly improve the quality of teaching and learning, (ii) accelerate digital learning and hands-on use of technology that has become an important element of competency-based education (CBE) and 21st century skills.

Specifically, the Compact proposes that the Multiplier Grant invests in the following activities:

- Improving school connectivity (e.g. Internet, networks, remote access to EMIS, etc.);
- Equipping computer classrooms in the selected schools that enables the rollout of blended learning and teacher training;
- Equipping subject laboratories in the selected schools, with strong focus on STEM subjects.

¹⁵ The Roadmap is aligned with the State Programme for Digitalization in Education, which ends in 2022, and represents its natural continuation, building on recent gap assessment of ICT equipment and connectivity in general secondary education in Tajikistan. The Roadmap development process is supported by UNICEF and the European Union.

The main assumption, as supported by evidence, is that improvements in infrastructure lead to corresponding improvements in quality of education, which are critical in the context of CBE implementation. Hence, the LEG proposes that the Multiplier Grant (MG) primarily focuses on improving the national capacity to upgrade learning environments and infrastructure in schools that are most in need or located in the most disadvantaged regions and districts. Schools that will be supported through the Multiplier will be selected through rigorous needs/gap assessment and is provisioned through the System Capacity Grant (SCG). This will complement joint, ongoing efforts by the GoRT and partners that prioritize construction and/or rehabilitation of school facilities to keep up with demographics and improve access to education.

4.2.4. Mobilization of other resources in support of the priority reform

GPE, supported by the World Bank and UNICEF, is supporting the roll out of two-year Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Initiative, which is intended to: (i) foster demand-driven regional knowledge exchange and building capacity among key stakeholders to identify, use, share, and mobilize relevant evidence within priority policy challenges (namely, within the CBE reform implementation); (ii) produce and disseminate relevant regional and global solution-oriented knowledge and evidence syntheses for national and regional KIX hub stakeholders through pertinent channels, and (iii) advance effective regional knowledge mobilization resulting from scalable innovation processes in education. The nominated government partner for this initiative is the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).

In addition, GPE and UNICEF have partnered under the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative to pilot an innovative and consultative approach to strengthen national capacities to plan, cost and finance, and monitor ECE programmes and ensure that they are a crucial part of the processes for education sector planning and implementation. Linking up with BELDS will be important in supporting the transition to 12-year schooling, which will introduce one pre-primary preparation year in line with the NSED-2030.

4.3. Roles and responsibilities of partners

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (GoRT), represented by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), will take the lead in coordination and oversight of the proposed interventions. This will be done in partnership with and through the Local Education Group (LEG) as a recognized and well-established national inclusive dialogue and coordination platform in education sector. Importantly, the civil society and professional associations (such as teachers' professional union) are now members of the LEG and thus are expected to play a key role in the sector dialogue.

Through the LEG, partners will monitor implementation and commit to bringing their institutional capacity, in-house knowledge and know-how that contributes to achieving the main objective of the Compact. Upon endorsing the Compact, partners commit to ensure effective coordination, communication, and resource utilization in support of the priority reform implementation.

The LEG members are also committed to further strengthening sector coordination by addressing the findings of the group's last self-assessment, which was completed in March 2021. In particular, the following areas received the lowest scores by the LEG members (averaging a score of 2.8 out of 5.0):¹⁶ (i) monitoring of partnership dynamics, (ii) adjusting the group's strategic priorities and ways of working, (iii) monitoring of the stakeholders' financial commitments and spending effectiveness, and (iv) monitoring own performance on a regular basis.

Based on the results of the self-assessment, one of the next steps to address bottlenecks is for the LEG to agree the working modality that is best geared towards greater alignment of donor interventions with the NSED-2030 and its operational framework. The LEG members have also noted that there is room for improvement in terms of utilizing the group as a platform to discuss the costs and financing of the education sector plan (i.e. the NSED), including the financing of its performance targets. The LEG self-assessment further demonstrated that partners do not monitor the GoRT's financial commitments in the education sector on a regular basis, and that assessments of domestic spending effectiveness are not sufficiently frequent. Furthermore, partnership dynamics among the LEG members and the group's own performance (in line with its Terms of Reference and stated objectives) are not monitored. Since the assessment of the enabling factors demonstrated that coordination is a medium-priority area and financing is a high-priority area, the LEG agrees that further discussions should be held to reach consensus on the best modality and way forward to address the identified bottlenecks within the LEG, which would also reinforce the implementation of the priority reform area under the Partnership Compact.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Rather than create new structures or tools, the main mechanism for engaging partners under the Compact will build on existing structures and processes that the Ministry of Education and Science currently employs. In particular, the Compact's annual implementation progress assessments will merge and build on the MoES' current annual implementation reporting of the NSED-2030 and the MTEAP 2021-2023. In addition, the MoES is firmly committed to lead the preparation of Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) in close cooperation with in-country partners.

In addition to the Compact's mid-term review (described in greater detail below), annual JSRs will serve as additional points in time that enable the LEG members to embed course correction and agility to reform approach. Any unforeseen circumstances (e.g. significant economic shock or drastic change in political and/or security environment) could also serve as triggers for in-built course correction depending on the circumstances and agreement with the LEG members.

The MoES shall prepare annual progress reports, which will be submitted to the GPE and the LEG members for review at least two weeks in advance of its meetings. Progress reports will be prepared by the MoES' newly created unit in close coordination with partners and grant agents, and presented during the LEG's annual review meetings. All meetings will be duly minuted, and

¹⁶ On the scale from 1 ('lowest') to 5 ('highest').

implementation of recommended actions will be monitored by the MoES' Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit and reported back to the MoES on a quarterly basis.

The Local Education Group (LEG) will provide strategic guidance for a coherent and coordinated implementation of the proposed reform priority (competency-based education). The LEG will ensure oversight of the Compact implementation through joint monitoring visits (e.g. to selected schools and/or central government institutions) in agreement between the MoES and the LEG members.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and reporting on the Compact implementation will be results-oriented and evidence-based. Specifically, annual progress reporting will be complemented and informed by annual Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). The newly created Unit in the MoES will oversee annual Compact reporting, based upon communication with grant agents, and also lead the development of annual JSRs. In other words, MoES will lead the implementation of JSRs, which conforms with feedback from the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP). In doing so, MoES will also seek to engage broader stakeholder groups, particularly represented by civil society, women's activist groups, parents, and others. This will enable MoES and partners to undertake rigorous analysis of inclusive education, touching upon issues of gender disparity, disability access, exclusion of vulnerable and minority groups from education, and other matters with adequate coverage and representation from relevant stakeholder groups.

The MoES' abovementioned Unit will be required to monitor implementation of each GPE grant and report back to the MoES/LEG and the GPE. The Compact will also allocate resources through its SCG budget for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), i.e. for independent, third-party verification of the operations undertaken by the grant agents.

The Compact's proposed M&E plan incorporates a mid-term review, which will be undertaken at a mid-point during its implementation (i.e. in the first half of 2024) and at programme completion (i.e. at the end of 2025). These reviews will be informed by JSRs, government's data management systems, external studies, and stakeholder consultations.

In particular, the mid-term review in the first half of 2024 could be used to revise this Partnership Compact in line with new evidence and/or emerging needs, in agreement with the LEG members. This embeds the LEG members' commitment to flex their resources and effort to country context and sector-specific circumstances.

Based on ITAP recommendations, the monitoring approach will include a relatively modest subset of quantitative and qualitative indicators, which will measure CBE implementation progress. These indicators will be aligned with the NSED monitoring and evaluation framework, which will in turn be revised and updated. To that end, the SCG will invest in data management with the objective of embedding performance and efficiency indicators (e.g. on attendance, enrollment, dropouts, repetition, survival, transition, etc.) into policy-making to improve understanding of changes in learning outcomes and how they are affected by other influencing factors.

The proposed high-level (i.e. outcome-level) performance indicators include the following:

- Proportion of boys and girls who have reached achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics (in %), of which: (i) students in grade 5 (boys and girls), and (ii) students in grade 11 (boys and girls);
- The presence of a modern curriculum and TLMs that are based on the CBE approach;
- Gender parity index (GPI) in general secondary education (by age groups and grades);
- Establishment of a competency-based teacher continuous professional learning and growth system;
- Share of schools using digital learning platforms and solutions, i.e. technology-enabled learning (in % of all schools).

Once the NSED's results framework is revised in the first half of 2022, the newly created unit will further refine and agree with the LEG members the list of high-level (outcome-level) performance indicators, which will measure the success of the Partnership Compact. The list will include both quantitative and qualitative indicators, and will indicate baselines, milestones, and final targets.

Learning

The LEG self-assessment was carried out in March 2021 and highlighted gaps and lessons learned in several areas including monitoring partnership dynamics, adjusting the LEG group's strategic priorities and ways of working, monitoring the stakeholders' financial commitments and spending effectiveness, and monitoring own performance on a regular basis. These areas were the lowest-scoring categories (averaging a score of 2.8 out of 5.0), which was also confirmed by the 2020 GPE Country-Level Evaluation. These observations and conclusions will be further discussed in the next LEG meetings, chaired by the MoES, and the outcomes (i.e. recommended actions/measures) will be implemented during 2022-2023. The next self-assessment exercise could also be undertaken at the time of mid-term review of the Partnership Compact, i.e. in 2024, which would take stock of improvements and implementation of recommendations from the previous assessment.

The impact of proposed interventions on CBE implementation will require institutionalizing several key evaluations at the national level. In particular, the government in coordination with partners needs to undertake international learning assessments (e.g. EGRA, PISA, TIMSS, ICILS, and PIRLS), and the National Learning Assessment (NLA) at regular intervals. Other possible studies that would help learning from the priority reform implementation include: (i) an assessment of the quality of education at school or region/district level, (ii) cluster study intended to evaluate how education work for a group of students (e.g. girls or most disadvantaged students of a specific age group) or how schools work in a particular geographic location, and (iii) thematically oriented studies, such as an assessment of digital skills among schoolchildren or an assessment of teachers' professional development and practices with respect to CBE implementation.

Annex 1: Mapping of partners' funds and efforts in the education sector in Tajikistan.¹⁷

#	Organization	Project name	Start	End	Budget	Key project components
1.	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	Apr 2016	Mar 2022	\$32.0 million	(i) Modernizing the TVET system methodology; (ii) Upgrading of physical learning environment; (iii) Improving access to quality TVET programmes; and (iv) Strengthening governance and management of the national TVET system.
		Skills and Employability Enhancement Project	Jan 2021	Mar 2027	\$31.5 million	(i) Providing a more inclusive and targeted migration support; (ii) Enhancing access to and relevance of public employment services; and (iii) Strengthening planning and management of migration and employment services.
2.	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Improving skills and competencies of adolescent girls and boys for school-to-work transition and national support to continuity of learning within the NEPR for COVID-19	Jan 2020	Dec 2024	\$17.5 million	(i) Ensuring access to quality distant inclusive resources for all subjects and grades (TV lessons and resources); (ii) Developing the distance learning platform; (iii) Developing career guidance framework for skills development of secondary school students; and (iv) Developing digital modules and resources on competency-based education for student council's activities. (The project is implemented jointly with the Delegation of the European Union.)
		Sector-wide policy support	Jan 2019	Dec 2024	\$1.0 million	Strengthening policy, financing and advocacy to national education sector, including focus on pre-primary education.
		Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in schools	Jan 2018	Dec 2021	\$1.7 million	(i) Improving/Rehabilitating WASH infrastructure and implementing the 3-star approach in 85 schools to improve basic access to safe water, adequate sanitation and practice suitable hygiene; (ii) Co-coordinating the development of WASH in school learning activities and Healthy Life Style school-based toolkit; and

¹⁷ As of November 1, 2021. Based on information provided by the LEG members to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). At the time of developing this Compact, the EU programmatic activities were being designed and have not yet been agreed upon with the GoRT/MoES. Hence, they were not included here. Based on further consultations, one of the components of the new EU programme envisages developing and piloting a modern, viable and competence-based teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) system. Rooted in a situational analysis and functional review, the component will develop a methodology to assess the capacity of teachers and pedagogical staff, and will target the MoES, RIITT staff, and district education department (DED) methodologists. In addition, UNESCO is implementing the new EU-funded project from January 2021 until December 2025, which will have many cross-cutting areas related to CBE implementation, such as textbook development for students in grades 7-11 (focusing on STEM subjects), development of ICT standards for teachers, and other areas.

						(iii) Providing technical support to the MoES on development of Strategic Plan for WASH in Schools (WinS).
		Quality and inclusive education with focus on education technology	Jan 2018	Dec 2021	\$1.6 million	Strengthening teacher professional development system through incorporation of inclusive education course, assistive devices, and policy work.
3.	Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	Support to Implementation of the National Education Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan (co-funded by the GPE)	Jan 2019	Dec 2023	\$40.0 million	(i) Enhancing access to quality education facilities; (ii) Learning assessment, curriculum rollout, stocktaking of competency-based education (CBE) activities, baseline studies for in-classroom teacher support system, textbook revision and printing, inclusive education, and pedagogical module of distance learning; (iii) Strengthening of EMIS; and (iv) Support to the Project Management Unit (PMU).
		Vocational literacy Program for Poverty Reduction for the Mountainous Regions of Tajikistan (VOLIP) - Phase II	Jan 2022	Jan 2026	\$20.0 million	Reconstructing and equipping 4 vocational education centers and constructing and equipping 16 new vocational training centers, including a hostel equipped with furniture and educational equipment/tools/materials. Providing vocational training and skills development for 20,000 people, including 12,000 youth and 8,000 unskilled women and providing micro-financial support under the Islamic financing principles to 30% of the total number of trained people. Supporting the implementation of a Learning Assessment Concept in pilot schools through developing/updating assessment protocols/guidelines, teacher training, preparing and printing of teaching aids and other necessary materials.
4.	World Bank	Early Childhood Development Project (ECDP)	July 2021	June 2026	\$40.0 million	(i) Reviewing ECEC regulatory framework; (ii) Developing regulatory documents for different ECEC models; (iii) Reviewing ECEC financing; (iv) Developing a financing mechanism for key ECEC models; (v) Training; (vi) Reviewing existing ECEC programs, TLMs, equipment specs, guides etc. for children and teachers under different ECEC models; and (vii) Developing INSET courses for teachers and mentors on new program.
		Early Childhood Development to Build Tajikistan's Human Capital Project	June 2021	Nov 2026	\$73.0 million	Increasing the utilization of a basic package of health/preschool education services for 0 to 6-year-old children. Developing and supporting a Basic Package (BP) of integrated services to tackle the most pressing needs, while building sustainable foundations for

						cross sectoral service delivery for improved ECD outcomes for all children, including: (i) Strengthening capacity to deliver the Basic Package of ECD services; (ii) Implementing nationwide selected elements of the Basic Package; (iii) Improving access to the Basic Package in targeted districts; and (iv) Project management.
		Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP)	July 2019	June 2025	\$58.0 million	(i) Improving access to basic water supply services for 400,000 people in the project area; (ii) Upgrading WASH facilities in 50 rural health centers (primary care points); (iii) Upgrading WASH facilities in 150 rural schools; (iv) Developing school-level plans for O&M of WASH facilities in schools; (v) Undertaking BCC campaigns; and (v) undertaking monitoring and evaluation (M&E) surveys.
5.	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Youth Empowerment Project	Jan 2021	Dec 2021	\$0.1 million	(i) Promoting CSE; and (ii) Rendering support to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in STEM and inclusive education.
6.	United Nations Agency for International Development (USAID)	Read with Me (RWM) Project	Oct 2016	Sept 2021	\$19.5 million	Providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) to improve the literacy outcomes of the primary students (grades 1-4) in 75% of Tajik and Russian language schools nationwide, including: (i) Increasing availability of reading materials to support learning standards; improving capacity building for authors, illustrators and designers to create new titles of age relevant books in the Tajik language; (ii) Improving reading instructions through innovative in-service and pre-service training of teachers, mentors, school administrators, and librarians; Facilitating the usage of formative assessment pedagogy practices; Administering the national standardized reading assessment (EGRA Baseline, Midline and Endline); and reinforcing in-class and out-of-school reading activities; and (iii) Increasing innovations and PPPs to support reading instructions and pedagogy techniques; Institutionalizing in-service and pre-service curriculum; Developing a mentoring program and scaling up successful interventions to ensure ownership and sustainability.
		Learn Together Activity	Oct 2020	Sept 2025	\$24.9 million	Improving primary students' literacy and mathematics outcomes in 80% of Tajik and Russian language schools nationwide. Updating

						the competency-based standards; modernizing in-service and pre-service curricula to align content with the updated standards; delivering innovative pedagogy training and mentoring to promote evidence-based and inclusive instructions; providing training to targeted school communities; developing supplementary materials for primary students (grades1-4) to complement instruction and building their analytical/critical thinking skills, academic and content-specific vocabulary to improve reading with mathematics and comprehension outcomes, and other activities.
7.	Mercy Corps	Making Youth Future Ready: Introducing New Vocational Educational Skills Training (INVEST) in Tajikistan	June 2019	June 2022	\$1.5 million	Improving access to economic opportunities; equipping older adolescents with life and work readiness skills; equipping youth with vocational and business development skills and improving skills through the provision of sustained training and replicating this model nationwide.
8.	Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation	School Feeding Program	Sept 2020	Dec 2023	\$11.2 million	(i) Supporting the transition to a nationally owned school feeding programme; (ii) Using school as a platform for advocating healthy diets and improved nutrition for the vulnerable groups; and (iii) Promoting sustainable local food systems.
9.	United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)	School Feeding Program	Apr 2020	Dec 2021	\$10.0 million	Providing hot meals to school children in primary grades.
10.	Open Society Institute – Assistance Foundation (OSI-AF)	Inclusive Education/ Support to Parent-Teacher Associations in Schools	June 2021	Dec 2023	\$0.06 million	(i) Supporting the development of partnerships between different actors in education; (ii) Reducing the level of isolation of students from general school activities; (iii) Building the capacity of advocates for children who face systemic discrimination; and (iv) Implementing projects on social inclusion and developing approaches to support SENs in the learning process.
		Implementing advocacy and information campaigns to highlight children’ rights to quality/inclusive education.	July 2021	July 2022	\$0.03 million	Supporting nationwide public awareness campaigns. Funding the development of compelling materials, films, documentaries, (e.g. a TV program on Child’s Rights). Supporting the development and dissemination of materials and cases of best practices.

		Capacity building of TTI staff on inclusive education and critical thinking.	July 2021	Dec 2022	\$0.03 million	Supporting the use of best social inclusion practices and critical thinking in teacher training institutes (TTIs). Delivering professional development trainings on IE/Critical thinking for TTIs. Supporting working groups on the development of IE and critical thinking courses and their further incorporation in the curriculum.
		Achieving equal access to education for children with SEN via distance learning.	Jan 2021	Dec 2021	\$0.06 million	Increasing the capabilities of PTAs & teachers on the development of distance learning approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic. Facilitating access of children with special educational needs (SEN) to online educational and developmental programs.
		Access of national minorities to quality education and inclusive programs in schools and VET institutions.	May 2021	May 2022	\$0.15 million	Conducting a situation analysis on access to quality and inclusive education, vocational education institutions for children of national minorities. Developing the report and recommendations based on research results and develop advocacy initiatives.

ВАЗОРАТИ МАОРИФ ВА
ИЛМИ ҶУМҲУРИИ
ТОҶИКИСТОН



МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ
И НАУКИ РЕСПУБЛИКИ
ТАДЖИКИСТАН

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

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№ 09/58/01-137 от «15» 03 2022 г.

Dear Honorable GPE
Board of Directors,

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the successful collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Science and the Global Partnership for Education in supporting solutions to build strong and resilient education systems, so that more children in Tajikistan have access to quality education to thrive and contribute to building a more prosperous and sustainable society.

With this letter, I would like to confirm the endorsement and submission of the partnership document “COMPACT” to the GPE Board of Directors, which was developed in close coordination and collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Science and the members of Local Education Group (LEG), based on recommendations provided by ITAP team (November 1st, 2021) and quality assessment review of GPE Secretariat (March 9th, 2022).

The partnership document “COMPACT” for Tajikistan has been developed in line with the national education policy priorities and GPE 2025 Strategic Plan to reflect on major education needs in pursuing an inclusive and transformative reform agenda for Competency-Based Education in Tajikistan.

We look forward to working with GPE closely to achieve change by leveraging global and national relationships in support of national priority reforms and activities.

Please accept, Honorable member of the Board of Directors, the assurance of my highest consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

The Minister of Education and Science
of the Republic of Tajikistan

Saidzoda Rahim Khamro

**Partners' Endorsement of the Tajikistan 2022-2025 Partnership Compact
Pursuing an Inclusive and Transformative Reform Agenda for Improved Learning
Outcomes and Quality Education in Tajikistan**

The development of the Partnership Compact was underpinned by a participatory and sustained dialogue between the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), Local Education Group (LEG) and Development Partners members of the Development Coordination Council (DCC) education working group.

The identification of priority areas for education transformation has been firmly grounded on rigorous needs assessment and national policy priorities that are reflected in the National Strategy for Education Development for the period until 2030 (NSED-2030), the National Development Strategy for the period until 2030 (NDS-2030), and their corresponding medium-term operational frameworks.

The LEG members are committed to the implementation of the Partnership Compact and its transformational changes to embed Competency Based Education Reform within the education system to ensure evidence-based and targeted implementation of student-centered competency-based education.

The Development Partners hereby endorse the Tajikistan 2022-2025 Partnership Compact and are strongly committed to support the Government of Tajikistan in its implementation.

Asian Development Bank



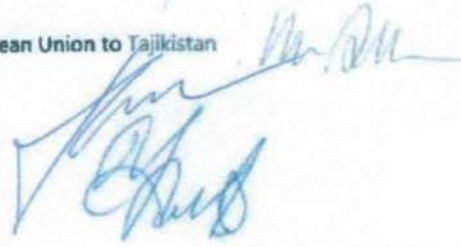
Agha Khan Foundation Tajikistan



Delegation of the European Union to Tajikistan



GIZ Tajikistan



Good Neighbors



Islamic Development Bank



Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation



Alliance of CSOs in Tajikistan for Education



CSO Economics and Education



Oxfam in Tajikistan 
Equidev - Oxfam spin-off organisation 

UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty and UNESCO Representative in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan 

UNFPA Tajikistan Country Office 

UNHCR Tajikistan Country Office 

UNICEF Tajikistan Country Office 

USAID Tajikistan **Peter Riley** Digitally signed by Peter Riley
Date: 2022.03.07 13:21:16
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World Food Programme  Adham Musallam
14.03.22

WHO Country Office in Tajikistan 

World Bank Group 