

РНПЦПЗ

Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity

Final Report

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Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity
Final Report

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Geographic coverage:	National, with a focus on: Almaty, Almaty region, Astana, Turkistan, Atyrau, Pavlodar
Type of evaluation:	Formative Evaluation

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List of abbreviations

- ABA** – Applied Behaviour Analysis
- BRI** – Belt and Road Initiative
- CEECIS** - Central Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States
- CFS** - Child-friendly schools
- CRC** – Convention on the Rights of the Child
- CRPD** – Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities
- CSO** – Civil society organisation
- EAEU** - Eurasian Economic Union
- ECEC** – Early childhood education and care
- EFA** – Education for All
- ERB** – Ethical Review Board
- ERG**- Evaluation Reference Group
- ET** – Evaluation Team
- FE** – Formative evaluation
- FGD** – Focus group discussion
- GDP** - Gross domestic product
- GEROS** - Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System
- GNI** - Gross National Income
- HCI** – Human Capital Index
- HCCI** – Human Capital Complementary Indicators
- HDI** – Human Development Index
- HRBA** – Human Rights-Based Approach
- IA** – Implementing agencies
- ICRC** - Institute of the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child
- IE** – Inclusive Education
- IR** – Inception Report
- ICT** - Information and communication technologies
- KII** – Key Informant Interview
- KZT** – Kazakhstani Tenge
- MH** – Ministry of health
- MoE** – Ministry of Enlightenment
- MoES** – Ministry of Education and Science
- MLSP** – Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population
- M&E** – Monitoring and evaluation
- NEETs** – Not engaged in education, employment or training
- NGO** – Non-governmental organisation
- NIS** - Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PMPC – Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Consultations

PPCR – Psychological and Pedagogical Correction Rooms

RC – Rehabilitation Centre

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SES – Socio-economic status

ToC – Theory of Change

TOR – Terms of reference

UN – United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF – United Nations International Children's Fund

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report is developed by the ET of Junction Bulgaria at the reporting phase of the "Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity", commissioned by UNICEF Kazakhstan. The aim of this report is to present the object, purpose, and scope of this FE, the methodology and data collection instruments, main findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

1.1. OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION OBJECT

The object of this FE is the composition of State Programmes for Development of Education with a Focus on Inclusivity: The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 with a budget of 509.7 billion KZT for the first phase of the programme (from 2011 to 2015)¹; The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019 with a budget of 1 423.4 billion KZT²; The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 with a budget of 11 578 billion KZT³; The national project "Educated Nation" 2021–2025 with a budget of 1 970.5 billion KZT⁴. The goals of the programmes are oriented towards quality of education, human capital development, socio-economic development of the country, equal access of all children to high quality and inclusive education (pre-school and secondary education). This evaluation examines the state education programmes implemented between 2011–2021 with the focus on inclusivity.

The programmes have been developed by the Ministry of Education, but also other ministries are engaged in their implementation, such as Ministry of Higher education and Science, Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Akimats of Astana and Almaty cities, regions etc. The state education programmes are at a different stage of implementation. The programmes have a **national scope**. The **population groups** that are covered are: national and local stakeholders; children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions.

1.2. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND INTENDED AUDIENCE

The purpose of this FE is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan implemented within the period of 2011–2021 have been contributing to inclusion of children of different levels of ability as well as to examine the enabling conditions and bottlenecks which will require further improvement. The evaluation aims to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system, to contribute to increased knowledge on the national inclusive education agenda, and to improve national capacity to advance attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets.

The evaluation has specific objectives: to examine relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the programmes with a focus on inclusivity; to document the evolution of government work on inclusion by analysing laws, policies, programmatic documents guiding the development of inclusive education and construct the theory of change; to examine the extent to which the education sector priorities on inclusion have been appropriately designed, efficiently, and effectively managed in relation to global priorities, including the incorporation of equity, gender equality, and human rights considerations; to assess some of the immediate results and good practices of what is working or not and for whom; to identify existing challenges, barriers and gaps in the education system and provide strategic recommendations aimed at creating an inclusive and resilient learning environment for every child; to develop recommendations for future strategies in sustaining results and good practices and addressing existing challenges and barriers.

The intended users of the evaluation are the UNICEF Country Office; Parliament, Government, Child Rights Ombudsperson; Ministry of Enlightenment, the Government representatives; Local akimats;

Civil Society Organisations. This FE is conducted in a period in which the next education policy framework will be developed, and the evaluation will inform and contribute to the orientation of the national policy towards inclusivity. The generated knowledge will be used by the Government to address existing gaps and adjust reforms if needed.

1.3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation define the methodology, which is based on a mixed-methods approach including desk review, secondary data analysis and qualitative data collection methods: key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The fieldwork was conducted in Almaty, Almaty region, Astana, Turkistan, Atyrau and Pavlodar selected according to specific criteria: economic development, geographic location, area, ethnic distribution, spoken language, urban/rural areas, level of child poverty, enrolment in early education and care. **32 key informant interviews** were conducted, some of which dual, with 38 participants, including representatives of national and local authorities, international partners, NGOs, PMPCs, RCs, UNICEF and school/kindergartens. **19 focus group discussions** were conducted with 89 participants, including decision makers at national/international level, teachers/specialists, parents and students. **5 observations** were conducted at schools chosen based on the criteria to have activities related to inclusiveness and work with different groups of children.

1.4. MOST IMPORTANT FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Relevance: Since 2011, the educational policy of Kazakhstan is oriented towards achievement of inclusiveness of all children in education. The policies follow the international conventions and key documents, which put an emphasis on the inclusion of all children and implementation of more inclusive approach to education to overcome barriers and exclusion from the system. Most of the priorities of the state educational programmes are in a medium to high level of alignment with the **global priorities - World Declaration on Education for All, UNESCO's Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, UNICEF's Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities**. In view of teacher education and changes in the legislation all the programmes have planned priorities. Some of the key global priorities such as encouraging the participation of parents, communities, and persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes, early identification and intervention strategies and vocational aspects of inclusive education are not particularly outlined in the state programmes and none of them directly address attitudinal changes and policy development. The relevance is at a lower level also for creation of an inclusive learning environment and respect for rights within education. There is evidence of a high level of alignment of the programmes with the objectives of the **National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025** in view of ensuring access and equity and improving the quality of education at all levels, demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting human rights, children's rights and inclusiveness. There are **priorities and activities** related to children with SEN, with disabilities and living in remote areas. Children migrants and in conflict with the law are only mentioned in one of the programs, while gender disparities are not addressed in any.

Coherence: The programmes have similar goals and priorities, oriented towards equity and access to quality education. They keep inclusiveness in their focus to a different extent. Every programme has its own logic, including planning at different levels, which is defined differently but related to the goals, tasks/priorities, SWOT analysis, and indicators. An analysis of the achievements, needs, bottlenecks, and causality has not been identified. It could be found in different reports, but the programmes do not refer to them. The topic of inclusiveness is a cross-cutting point in the different priority areas, but it is not subject to separate policy, rather a part of the planned tasks on the other issues. The planned activities for achieving the goals in all the programmes are realised in the educational sector in partnership with all other sectors, related to the rights of education for all children. The intersectoral integration is a challenge since a mechanism for its implementation has not been developed and each separate sector (education, social protection and health) has its own structures and resources. The

planning and implementation of educational policy with a focus on inclusivity is done through a top-down approach at the national level and realised at the local level. The local level administration is dependent on the centralised plans of the government in order to implement the national policy. At the different levels, there are different institutions and structures engaged with educational policy and, in particular, inclusivity, which have specific roles and functions. Key stakeholders in implementing the policy are local and international NGOs and organisations, as well as private entities. The role of global partners and international organisations is of key importance as an initial boost.

Effectiveness: The process of reform in education in Kazakhstan goes in parallel with the endeavours to make the school more inclusive and provide equal opportunities for all children to study in safe schools oriented towards their needs. The understanding of inclusiveness in education develops through setting clear goals in policy and with a transition from the medical approach to the bio-psychosocial approach to disabilities and it is gradually changing towards inclusion for all children, although there are still stakeholders who understand it through the lens of special needs children, children with physical and mental illness. The different programmes and project have different outcomes and indicators related to inclusiveness of education. The main outcome is **creation of favourable conditions for inclusiveness in secondary education**, which is understood differently and developed over the years, primarily with a focus on physical access and equipment and later including teacher qualification and pedagogical changes. The national data shows that the share of schools that have created such conditions has increased for the 10-year period and the target of 70% has been achieved. However, the stakeholders believe this is a long process that takes time, and it is unrealistic to achieve this, probably because of a different understanding of what these conditions mean. Additionally, the system addressing the needs of children with SEN is more integrated than inclusive (children study mostly in separate rooms, with separate specialists and according to an adapted program). The analysis regarding the main components of the operational culture changes: leadership, pedagogy, capacity building, technology and architecture, shows that still the achievement of conditions for inclusiveness of education is a process that is not finished and has started from physical access (architecture), going gradually into the inclusion of the rest of the elements. The data shows an increase in the coverage of attendance of **preschool** for children aged 1-6. The average share of kindergartens that created conditions for inclusive education is 67%. In spite of the enlarged scope and high share of enrolment of children 3-6, the most used forms of ECD services are private centres, special kindergartens, and home schooling and there is a steady number of special kindergartens. The educational system in the country is characterised with a number of possibilities to ensure equal access to education for all. This variety leads to different opportunities, but some of them are still segregating and children are outside of the community, which makes the system look rather heterogeneous. The different vulnerable groups do not have equal access to education. In the period of 10 years inclusiveness in education is developing in parallel with keeping the system for special education. The number of children with SEN in general secondary education is increasing over the years but there are still 14% of children in special schools in 2022, 10% are in special classes and 12% are in home-schooling. When it comes to preschool, still 11% of children are in special groups in general kindergartens and 13% are in special ones. The right to education of other groups of children at risk of exclusion is ensured in general and boarding schools. There is a significant difference between regions in terms of inclusion of parents varying from totally missing information to very active parents who create services and organisations to support their children.

Efficiency: The investments in education are increasing during the years, which shows an understanding of the importance and return of these investments. Inclusiveness in education is not a separate area of financing, but rather a part of the common financial standards at the level of primary and secondary education. The investments in physical access and buildings were prevalent until the middle of the period of evaluation, after which bigger resources are allocated for digitalization, **salaries and capacity development of teachers**, which is one of the biggest changes. Smaller resources are dedicated to preschool education. Another important change is the gradual introduction across the country of **per capita financing**, based on the number of students at each school. The allocated

resources for a child with SEN are the highest in home-schooling and similar for inclusive classes and special classes in general education. This funding seems rather oriented towards children with disabilities and learning difficulties, instead of towards all groups of children at risk.

Sustainability: There are **legal mechanisms** for sustainability described in the Law on education from 2007 and its amendments, related to defining special conditions for education, introducing the procedure for organizing early identification screening; defining children with SEN and services included in the special psychological and pedagogical support. The **institutional mechanisms** for implementation appear to be sustainable since they have been functioning for a long time, including transformation from correctional to inclusive approach. The **financial mechanism** ensures sustainable resources for inclusiveness in education but the standards for children with SEN studying at home are higher than for those in special or inclusive classes. There has been an increase in the salaries of teachers, but their motivation also depends on the prestige of the teacher profession, quality of higher education, **continuous professional development**. Steps have been made in this direction, but it is of key importance to provide a variety of opportunities to pass training courses and be able to upgrade teachers' skills.

Lessons learned

This FE concludes that the “road” to inclusivity goes through different phases and the first steps in the right direction have been taken. Although the system is still keeping special education, it manages to develop in a way that would create preconditions for change. The ET identifies the following specific lessons learned:

- Importance of **more focused strategic planning and communication in terms of inclusiveness in education** with different stakeholders at the different stages of implementation of activities towards achieving the common goals.
- The **common agreement around a path to change** at the planning phase of realisation of policy is a key factor for identifying clear expected outcomes and impact, activities, assumptions and risk mitigation and description of the road to these results, including planning at the local level.
- Importance of ensuring **participation of all stakeholders, at a multisectoral level**. The road to change is long and passes through a change in attitudes, motivations, and capacity development.
- Need to ensure that the **indicators for outcomes**, related to inclusiveness in education, are **clearly defined, reliable and measurable** and that **high quality data is collected and analysed in a proper way**.
- Importance of **development of early identification and early intervention integrated services** in order to implement the identification of developmental problems and support for parents.
- Development of **integrated services for children at risk of exclusion from the educational system and implementing a case management approach**, which involves assessment and planning according to the needs.
- There is a high level of importance of **empowering principals, teachers, parents, and children to develop their own “project of change” for each school**, which would guarantee a high level of commitment and ownership of all school level stakeholders.
- A systemic change could be ensured by **efficient investing of resources in inclusive education, taking into consideration the main components of educational reform, the right – based approach** and all components of the change like pedagogy, leadership, school environment, technology, and efficient investment.
- **The continuous professional development of all teachers and ensuring flexibility of their work** will provide opportunities for implementing of innovative approaches for working with children at risk of exclusion and create a supportive learning environment.

1.5. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are divided in the following groups: strategic, practical and operational.

Strategic recommendations (focused on policy challenges in terms of inclusivity)

- Enhance horizontal and vertical multisectoral coordination/partnership. Establish a robust coordination mechanism, which should facilitate effective collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, including government departments, educational institutions, civil society organizations.
- Develop a mechanism for partnership and planning in the education sector, including resource allocation and capacity building. This support would address the needs to include local authorities in the needs assessment and planning of implementation of inclusiveness in education, fostering collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and children to address specific challenges related to inclusivity.
- Policy oriented towards development of services on ECD, early intervention and prevention. Implement comprehensive and evidence-based programmes that support the holistic development of children, including their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being. The findings from the evaluation show that there is a lack of such services for children at an early age, so it is necessary to enhance partnerships and build capacity in the education and health sectors.
- Adopt a policy framework focused on the development of integrated services, employing a multisectoral approach for needs assessment and tailored support for children at risk of exclusion. The findings of the evaluation indicate the lack of services which effectively meet the needs of children, related to social, health and educational inequalities.

Practical recommendations (focused on development of services and quality of services)

- Creation of conditions for inclusiveness in education in kindergartens, in order to ensure the access and quality of work with all children at risk of exclusion. This will meet the need identified by the evaluation for increasing the access of children at an early age to preschool education.
- Secondary schools should continue their path to inclusiveness through rights-based planning on what is most appropriate with the participation of all stakeholders, including parents in particular. This will meet the need to address the differences in the regions and reduce the influence of the centralised methodological approach.
- Ensure a well-planned and realised professional development of teachers to become agents of change and flexibility to use pedagogical approaches and innovative techniques to guarantee quality of education for all children. This will meet the needs for capacity development of teachers identified in the evaluation.
- Ensure that the system is well-equipped, and beneficiaries are properly informed about methodological materials in Kazakh language, digital resources, and tools for working with children with different levels of abilities and needs. The evaluation has identified the need for methodological materials and low level of digitalisation in some of the schools, especially in rural areas.
- Conduct additional analysis focused on per capita financing on inclusive education, in order to determine the most efficient allocation and use of resources. The evaluation indicates that per capita standards are higher for children with SEN studying at home and similar for special and inclusive classes.
- Ensure methodological support for the implementation of a case management approach in the assessment and planning process to address the holistic needs of children at risk of exclusion. The evaluation has identified that the individual programmes used for students are only focused on learning tasks rather than development of soft skills.
- Plan an analysis and revision of the role of PMPCs in view of implementing a gatekeeping mechanism that ensures integrated support as the primary agency for providing recommendations to social, educational and health and other sectors. This will address the need for gatekeeping and reduce the workload by transferring a portion of the activities to other services.

Operational recommendations: coordination, M&E, guidance

- Define a clear and common goal and formulate measurable specific indicators for inclusive education. The findings show that the indicator on favourable conditions for inclusive education needs to be specified and clarified.
- Develop a mechanism for integrated planning of the implementation of the state education policy (in terms of programmes and strategies) with clear division of tasks, timeline, and responsibilities of the different line ministries and implementing agencies.
- Review the suggested ToC to be taken into account in the process of development of new educational policies. Since a ToC has not been developed for any of the programmes and now there is a suggestion, it should be validated and/or updated by stakeholders.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The object of this FE is the composition of State Programmes for Development of Education with a Focus on Inclusivity: The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020 (hereinafter State Programme 2011-2020); The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019 (hereinafter State Programme 2016-2019); The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 (hereinafter State Programme 2020-2025); The national project "Educated Nation" 2021-2025 (hereinafter National Project 2021-2025). The three programmes and one project have a national scope. In table 1 below could be seen their goals, specific aims and objectives related to inclusiveness, as well as the budgets.

Table 1 Goals, aims, objectives and budgets of the state programmes

State Education Program	Main goal	Specific aims and objectives related to inclusiveness	Budget (incl. national and local financing)
State Programme 2011-2020 ⁵	To increase competitiveness of education and development of human capital through ensuring access to quality education for sustainable economic growth.	<p>Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring equal access of all participants of the educational process to the best educational resources and technologies; Full coverage of children with preschool education and training; ensuring equal access of children to various programmes to prepare them for school; Ensuring life-long education <p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of the inclusive education system in schools; Creating conditions for life-long education, education for all. 	509.7 billion Kazakhstani Tenge (KZT) for the first phase of the programme (from 2011 to 2015)
State Programme 2016-2019 ⁶	To improve the competitiveness of education and science, developing human capital for sustainable economic growth	<p>Specific aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing equal access to quality pre-school education and training; Providing equal access to high-quality secondary education, educating intellectually, physically, spiritually developed, and successful citizens; Ensuring life-long education <p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the quality of the teaching staff of preschool organizations and increasing the prestige of the profession; Increasing the network of preschool organizations, taking into account the demographic status and future growth; Updating the content of preschool education and training, focused on the quality preparation of children for school; Improvement of management and monitoring of the development of preschool education and training. Increasing the prestige of the profession of teachers and improving their quality composition; Ensuring infrastructural development of secondary education; updating the content of secondary education; 	1 423.4 billion KZT

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of national identity among schoolchildren through the national programme "Rukhani Zhangyru" and National Patriotic Idea "Mangilik El"; Improvement of management and monitoring of the development of secondary education 	
State Programme 2020-2025 ⁷	To increase the global competitiveness of Kazakh education and science, to educate and train people based on universal values, as well as to increase the contribution of science to the socio-economic development of the country	<p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive education; Providing a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment 	11 578 billion KZT
National project 2021-2025 ⁸	To transform Kazakhstan into a knowledge-based society that is equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. It seeks to create a highly educated and skilled workforce, foster innovation, and ensure lifelong learning for all citizens	<p>Specific objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide access and to ensure equity in education; To create favourable conditions and environment for learning; To improve the quality of education. 	1 970.5 billion KZT

The state education programmes have been developed by the Ministry of Education (MoE), (Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) for the earlier programmes), but other ministries are also engaged in their implementation such as Ministry of Higher Education and Science, Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MH), Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Akimats of Astana and Almaty cities, regions, etc.

The programmes are at a different stage of implementation. Two of them have been completed, respectively their results and indicators should have been achieved. The National project 2021-2025 is being implemented. This FE will feed into the next education policy framework and will further contribute to its implementation. The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by the Government to address existing gaps and adjust reforms, if needed, so a key part is the need to recommend directions for further education reform and development.

In 2023, the Concept of development of pre-school, secondary and vocation education of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2023-2029 was developed, including 7 priority areas, related to creation of equal starting opportunities, provision of quality education, protection of children's rights, etc. Having in mind that this concept is not a part of the scope of the evaluation, it has not been analysed, but its main priority areas have been considered when developing the ToC.

The government of Kazakhstan included some specific results into the state programmes and action plans. However, a document setting out the ToC with respective indicators/targets has not been developed. The ToC is a critical step for prospectively defining the pathways of change, proposing a package of evidence-based strategies, and articulating a chain of results, while also addressing the gaps for inclusivity in education to achieve SDGs. It contains causal links, assumptions, and risks. Due to this reason, at the inception stage of this evaluation, a ToC was reconstructed based on the information from five key stakeholders. The reconstruction was based on preliminary desk review and a discussion around the vision of the educational reforms, the goals and expected results (outcomes) in relation to education reform in general and inclusive education in particular; the main bottlenecks in the educational programmes in the country for the period 2011-2021; the main stakeholders in the reform process.

The major bottlenecks are related to enabling environment, supply, demand, and quality. In terms of **enabling environment**, there is a need for development of legislation and policy in view of inclusive education. The social norms and beliefs regarding children with disabilities point to challenges in understanding and prevailing medical approach to disabilities and "correcting deficits". Furthermore, bottlenecks are related to the prestige of the teacher profession and school infrastructure. In view of the **demand side**, there is an increase in the number of children with disabilities and growth in the birth rate, while many children with special needs remain at home and do not receive education. The concept of disability in Kazakhstan, still heavily influenced by the traditional Soviet concept of "defectology", focuses on a person's particular disability and trains practitioners as specialists in that single disability's care and correction. When it comes to the **supply side**, the existing network of preschool organisations does not fully cover the needs of vulnerable children, there are ungraded schools and shortage of qualified specialists in preschool education, which is related to the fact that the number of children per teacher is big. This leads to systematic problems in early childhood development and care and early intervention and prevention, while at the same time there is a provision for gifted children and allocation of resources and overall governmental attention towards them, instead of for "less gifted children". Also, education for children with special needs and disabilities are provided in separate "correctional schools", in special groups and classes in general education schools, and in the children's homes. Furthermore, in terms of **quality**, there is an outdated methodology and guidelines for selection of educational content, professionals and specialists are often inadequately trained, therefore quality of services provided is still at an insufficient level and there is an impact of language of instruction and gender, as well as regional differences in learning outcomes (which could be seen through PISA results).

All these bottlenecks, identified in a number of analyses and studies, **are addressed over the years through** governmental programs aiming to increase the quality of human capital and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. This is continuously repeated across the different programmes, which means that the process of change is still ongoing. While the first two programs focus on preschool and secondary education coverage and equal access, the third and fourth programs (National project in the latter) are rather concentrated on inclusive learning environments and quality education. **The inputs** of different programs reviewed through domains of determinants seem to be spread out quite evenly, but mostly in terms of quantity, rather than quality and changing of approach and understanding, as well as development of a new concept of inclusive education.

The **assumptions** identified in the ToC are related to ensuring access and accessibility as one of the necessary conditions for inclusive education, which is connected with increasing state support and stimulating labour of teachers, as well as enlarging the network of preschool organisations, which could lead to higher quality in the education system. At the same time, the risks that are identified are in regard to the focus on children with disabilities, instead of inclusion of all children, not enough in changing the approach and not enough development of early intervention as a service. Furthermore, a **risk** is not focusing enough on communication and raising awareness in order to change public attitudes.

However, this ToC was based on preliminary findings, and it was empirically tested and updated into a final ToC (annex 8) as a result of the process of data collection.

2.2. CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

2.2.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The Republic of Kazakhstan, independent since 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the largest country in Central Asia and the ninth largest by land surface globally. The country is neighbouring Russia, China, and three other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. For its vast territory, the country is comparatively underpopulated, with a population of over 19 million (as of 1.10.2022)⁹, while the Human Capital Index (HCI) (scale 0-1) is 0.6 (2020)¹⁰.

The population of the country is diverse in terms of ethnic and religious composition, but discrimination or other violations of human rights based on ethnicity, language, and religion is prohibited by the criminal code. Nevertheless, the country struggles to outline a clear and cohesive strategy of inclusive identity politics.¹¹

The country occupies a strategic position in Central Asia. Given its location between China and the Russian Federation, it is at the heart of trade and investment opportunities linked to Eurasian connectivity. It has also forged extensive and growing links with the European Union (EU), which is its premier trading and investment partner. The country plays a lead role in regional cooperation, diplomacy, and security. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is part of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAU or EEU), which is an economic union of some post-Soviet states located in Eurasia. This union heavily influences Kazakhstan's economy and trade.

The country has been economically successful in Central Asia, transitioning from a lower to an upper-middle-income status in less than two decades. Since 2002, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has risen sixfold and Kazakhstan currently accounts for nearly two-thirds of regional GDP (for the region of Central Asia) while having only a quarter of the population. It is also important to mention that Kazakhstan plays an important role in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connecting China and the West. As of today, two out of six economic corridors of BRI pass through Kazakhstan connecting China with Europe, Iran, and Western Asia¹².

Additionally, the country is aspiring to join the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranks and be among the top 30 economies of the world by 2050¹³. The Development Strategy Kazakhstan 2050 "One nation, one destiny"¹⁴, adopted in 2012, provides a vision for the country for the years to come and supersedes the Strategy Kazakhstan 2030, adopted in 1997. *'The goal of this plan is to bring Kazakhstan into the ranks of the 30 most competitive countries around the world through a focus on eliminating corruption and ensuring a healthy, well-educated population. As part of this policy strategy, plans for improving the quality of the education system have been developed and are being implemented.'*¹⁵

When it comes to the political landscape, it is important to note that "*2019 was a year of political transition and conditions are in place for continuing stability in the country*"¹⁶. The new leadership is committed "*to the overarching goal of sustaining socio-political stability...it also acknowledged the need to comprehensively respond to the rising economic and social disparities among people in Kazakhstan, focusing more on raising living standards, overcoming inequalities, and strengthening civil society to complement the traditional prioritisation of growth and social expenditures*"¹⁷.

Later, Kazakhstan was shaken by a rapidly unfolding series of dramatic and tragic events since protests began in early January 2022¹⁸. *„The protests began in early January over a sharp increase in fuel prices and rapidly escalated in the face of a harsh crackdown by authorities. By mid-month, 225 people were dead and more than 12,000 were being detained, while the damage to businesses from fires, looting and sabotage was estimated in the billions of dollars. People see increasing inequality, no meritocracy, no way for educated people to prosper.”*¹⁹

As a result, the rhetoric of Jana Kazakhstan (New Kazakhstan) has emerged with the nationwide referendum on the proposed amendments to the Constitution held in June 2022. The President Tokayev declared the following: "*Together we will make New Kazakhstan a reality, in which social justice will be the main value and carrier of a new social contract. The referendum will be a test of our society's civic maturity and political awareness.*"²⁰ Later the same year Tokayev was re-elected.

In summary, in terms of human development for all socio-economic aspects, Kazakhstan has a Human Development Index (HDI) of 8.11, thus ranking in the position 56 (2021)²¹. *"Kazakhstan showed growth in all HDI indicators. In 2019, Kazakhstan increased life expectancy by 0.4 (73.6 years), the expected duration of schooling by 0.2 (15.6 years) and the average duration of education by 0.1 years (11.9 years). Also, the gross national income rose to 22 857 (2018 – 22 172). In the period from 1990 to 2019, Kazakhstan increased its HDI by 19.6%, increasing from 0.690 to 0.825"*²². Furthermore, according to the HCI and Human Capital Complementary Indicators (HCCI), learning-adjusted years of school,

meaning expected years of school, factoring in what children actually learn, are only 9.1, which is higher in comparison with the average for Upper Middle-Income Countries, but lower than the average for Europe and Central Asia. The pre-primary school gross enrolment ratio is 74% (2020), lower than the regional average and higher than the income group average. Primary school completion rate is 102% (2020), higher than both the regional (98%) and income group (97%) averages. The secondary school gross enrolment rate is 104 percent (2020), lower than the regional average (107%) and higher than the income group average (94%). What's more, in terms of learning poverty, 2% (2016) of 10-year-olds cannot read and understand a simple text by the end of primary school, compared to 11 percent at the regional level and 40 percent at the income group level.

2.2.2. DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

The number of children in Kazakhstan (0-17) is more than 6 million (6 295 590) with a slight prevalence of boys²³. Data on children living below the poverty line shows that the numbers of children living in poverty have fallen dramatically since 2000. Despite this, 15.6 % of children live in households in the lowest income decile and inequality among regions in Kazakhstan in terms of child poverty is significant²⁴. Furthermore, the number of children with disabilities has steadily increased in the past 10 years (probably in part since also the total number of children is increasing) and the data for 2021 shows that it is 98 254²⁵.

Kazakhstan has ratified the key international conventions on the rights of children, including children with disabilities (Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994; Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015)²⁶. The Law on the rights of the child (2002)²⁷ lays down the equal right to education, choice of profession and participation in creative and public activities, as well as to health care and social assistance with the support of the state. According to the "*Situational analysis of children in Kazakhstan*"²⁸ the country "*has created a solid enabling environment for realizing the rights of children. It has ratified multiple international conventions, introduced policies and programmes addressing children's rights and established the function of the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights. It has maintained consistent levels of investment in the health, education, and social sectors but they are lower than the averages for the OECD*".²⁹ Additionally, in the constitution of Republic of Kazakhstan, it is stated that no child should be discriminated against, "*and all children, including children with disabilities, have a fundamental right to education. Kazakhstan has achieved one of the millennium goals to have universal access to primary education*"³⁰.

Education is a very important topic in Kazakhstan and therefore is the focus of strategies, policies, and general development. "*The right to education for every child is ensured by the Constitution (1995) as Article 30 guarantees that all citizens will receive free compulsory secondary education and have access to higher education. The Law on Education (2007) also states that all citizens have the right to free preschool, elementary, general secondary, and vocational education, as well as free higher education on a competitive basis, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, social and economic status, language, religion, health status and other individual characteristics*"³¹. The importance of education in the national context could be confirmed by data showing that expenditures for education from the total government expenditure of the country is around 18% for 2020 (and about 4% of GDP for 2020) and has increased to around 20% in 2021.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995) and the National Law on Education (2007)³² lay down the foundations of the education system. The Law on Education (2007) outlines the main principles of the state policy in the field. It determines the national early childhood education and care (ECEC) policies, the objectives and principles of early education, the administrative structure, and the system of public and private provision. It ratifies the administrative and financial decentralisation of institutions providing educational services. The legal framework also encompasses specific provisions of other legislative acts, edicts of the president, decrees of the government, and orders of the Minister of Education and Science. "*The 2007 Law on Education defines inclusive education as the process that provides equal access for students with special individual abilities to relevant education training. The 2015 Conceptual Approaches to the Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan,*

a policy note adopted by the Ministry of Education, clarifies that inclusive education is a transformative process of the education system based on the equal right of quality education for all”³³. Access to education for children with special educational needs (SEN) is also outlined in the law in terms of the rights of parents to choose whether to send their child to a mainstream or a special school.³⁴

In June 2021, Kazakhstan adopted an amendment in terms of inclusive education in laws and regulations establishing a universal approach to children with disabilities by including them in the educational environment through the implementation of programmes of psychological, medical, and pedagogical assessment and consultation³⁵. The amendment aims at improving the regulatory framework for inclusive and special education, which will bring it into line with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.³⁶

In summary, the signed “UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2021-2025” sets the strategic key principles and priorities of cooperation between the UN and Kazakhstan.³⁷ One of the main strategic priorities of this framework is related to empowering people, human capital, and social services with an outcome. The aim is that, by 2025, all people in Kazakhstan, especially the most vulnerable are empowered with knowledge and skills to equally contribute to sustainable development of the country. It should be pointed out that according to the UNDP SDG global ranking, Kazakhstan was in 65th place (out of 163 countries) in 2020³⁸³⁹, while in 2021 “Kazakhstan ranked 59th out of 165 countries in the Global Ranking of Countries on the Achievement of SDGs in 2021, gaining 71.6 out of 100 possible points, improving its positions by 6 points compared to last year (65 place and 71.1 points)”⁴⁰.

Specifically, regarding SDG 4 on education, data for 2020 shows that significant challenges remain, in terms of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, since the score is stagnating or increasing at less than 50% of the required rate.

3. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The purpose of this FE is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan implemented within the period of 2011-2021 have been contributing to inclusion of children of different levels of ability as well as to examine the enabling conditions and bottlenecks which will require further improvement. The evaluation aims to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system, to contribute to increased knowledge on the national inclusive education agenda, and to improve national capacity to advance attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets.

The evaluation has the following specific objectives:

- To examine relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the state education programmes with a focus on inclusivity;
- To document the evolution of government work on inclusion by analysing previous and current laws, policies, programmatic documents that guide the development of the inclusive education and construct the theory of change;
- To examine the extent to which the education sector priorities on inclusion have been appropriately designed, efficiently, and effectively managed in relation to global priorities, including the incorporation of equity, gender equality, and human rights considerations;
- To assess some of the immediate results and good practices of what is working, for whom, and what is not working;
- To identify existing challenges, barriers and gaps in the education system and provide strategic recommendations aimed at creating an inclusive and resilient learning environment for every child;
- To develop recommendations for future strategies in sustaining results and good practices and addressing existing challenges and barriers.

The focus of the analysis is on inclusiveness. The intended uses and respective users of the FE are presented in table 2.

Table 2 Intended users and uses of the evaluation

Users	Uses
UNICEF Country Office	Having in mind that the FE is in line with Outcome II of Country Programme Document ("All children and adolescents, especially the most marginalised, benefit from inclusive, quality education that responds to twenty-first century needs, and have the skills to be healthy, resilient and ready for adult life."), the UNICEF Country Office is provided with sound evidence and conclusions to inform planning of the future strategies and work in this area.
Parliament, Government, Child Rights Ombudsperson	Take decisions and develop strategic orientations on the project implementation, including the allocation of human, material, and financial resources based on the evidence generated by the evaluation. Use best practice lessons to accelerate reform implementation towards national SDG4 targets and ensure the right to education for all children is fulfilled.
Ministry of Enlightenment, the Government representative	Having in mind that this evaluation seeks to capture lessons learned and develop recommendations, these are expected to be used by the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Republic of Kazakhstan in further implementation of national policy and reforms in the education system to strengthen the inclusion agenda. The evaluation helps in understanding the focus, approaches, strategies, and effectiveness of current modalities of the inclusive education and identify barriers, bottlenecks, and challenges in implementing it.
Local akimats	Lessons learned and examples of good strategies/practices from the FE are expected to be used for further implementation of the education policy at the local level.
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	Build on the evidence generated by the evaluation to improve performance in the implementation of education projects/ interventions. Strengthen capacity where it is lacking.

Geographic Scope: The formative evaluation has a **national scope**. The data collection has been conducted in Astana and five regions of the country.

The **population groups** that are covered by the evaluation are: national and local stakeholders; children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions – such as those living in vulnerable families, in families with low income, in institutions, in remote areas, deprived of parental care (including orphans), with disabilities in development, with risk behaviour, in conflict with the law, from linguistic and ethnical minorities, in migration (including refugees); teachers of rural and urban schools, respective staff of local government authorities (akimats); inclusion support rooms, regional, urban and district Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Consultations (PMPCs), psychological and pedagogical correction rooms (PPCRs), rehabilitation centres (RCs), special schools, special kindergartens; parents/caregivers and children, including NEET, academia, business, NGOs, international partners.

Period: This evaluation examines the state education programmes implemented between 2011-2021 with the focus on inclusivity, covering pre-COVID-19 (2011-2019) and COVID-19 (March 2020-2021) contexts.

The evaluation focuses on equity, gender and human rights aspects and is appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues including child rights issues identified in the scope.

In terms of the **programmatic scope**, it is related to specific objectives (and indicators) of national programmes and project that are the object of the evaluation (table 6). These objectives relate to levels of pre-school and secondary education, as well as inclusive, life-long education, equity, and access to quality education. More information could be seen in [annex 4](#).

4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

4.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The conceptual framework of this evaluation in [annex 9.5.1.](#) includes the basic concepts and definitions, considered in the state education programmes, the course of the ET's development of the evaluation matrix, ToC, and conduction of the evaluation.

An FE is an evaluation which is intended to support programme actors, in order to help them improve their decisions and activities. It mainly applies to public interventions during their implementation (ongoing, mid-term or intermediate evaluation). It focuses essentially on implementation procedures and their effectiveness and relevance⁴¹. This evaluation is conducted after the end of two of the programmes in its focus and at the beginning of implementation of the national project and responds to the need to recommend directions for further education reform and development.

The evaluation criteria, which are used in this evaluation, are based on the updated OECD-DAC standards⁴². The goal is to understand the extent to which the programmes are relevant and coherent to the needs and policies, achieve the planned outcomes at a low cost and ensure sustainability. This FE responds to the following research questions in the following areas:

- **Relevance:** How well are the state education programmes aligned with global priorities (The World Declaration on Education for All, Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO), Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities (UNICEF), The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals) in terms of inclusivity? How are the state education programmes aligned to government priorities in Kazakhstan ("Kazakhstan-2050", Digital Kazakhstan, National Development Plan of Kazakhstan -2025, etc.) and commitments on human rights, including child rights, equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion? To what extent and how well have the state education programmes adapted to the changing context within the education sector? How relevant are the state education programmes in addressing inherent equity gaps, taking into consideration any disparities? To what extent the education system was able to adapt its strategies to changes in needs and priorities caused by COVID-19?
- **Coherence:** To what extent the state programmes as planned/implemented enabled coordinated interventions/measures? How did the Implementing Agencies' work fit with the work of external partners (global partners, regional partners, other government bodies, partner programmes /interventions)? Were the state education programmes priorities chosen based on comparative strengths, capacities, and stakeholders' expectations? To what extent did the Implementing Agencies leverage their comparative advantage vis-à-vis other partners, efficiently? To what extent were the Implementing Agencies able to effectively collaborate and coordinate with one another and externally with key stakeholders, and leverage existing partnerships, to be as efficient as possible for strengthening and improving service delivery? How did the state education programmes align with/fit with other interventions being carried out in the country? Were the state Programmes interventions coherent with the Implementing Agencies' approach that is likely to have positive results, or are there critical gaps?
- **Effectiveness:** To what extent were state education programmes activities delivered in a timely and organised manner for the benefit of children at risk of exclusion? To what extent were the state education programmes effective in achieving its intended results, both at national and regional levels, in terms of inclusivity? To what extent have the state education programmes achieved the overall expected outcomes or are likely to achieve? To what extent have the state education programmes contributed to broader education goals? How effective have the state education programmes been in addressing inherent equity gaps or taking into consideration the disparities? Did the state education programmes actively contribute to the fulfilment of the right to education, especially for the most vulnerable? In what ways and to what extent have the state education programmes been gender responsive or transformative?
- **Efficiency:** To what extent have the activities and measures planned/implemented through the State programmes enabled optimised use of resources? How efficiently did the State programmes respond to equity-based challenges? To what extent, and in what ways, did the Implementing Agencies proactively leverage key partners to ensure efficient use of existing platforms (service, community, and media delivery platforms) and resources for educational activities? Were there any

inefficiencies because Implementing Agencies did not work with certain partners (or if the Implementing Agencies only worked with the same set of partners)? How efficiently did the Implementing Agencies respond to equity-based challenges?

- **Sustainability:** To what extent the Implementing Agencies are committed to further support inclusion in education and able to sustain? Are legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms established to ensure sustainability of programme results? Are there conditions to ensure quality of the services (curriculum, teacher training, supervision mechanisms, etc.)? What are the key barriers and bottlenecks toward achieving sustainability in the education sector?

The key evaluation questions and sub-questions have been elaborated in an evaluation matrix (see [annex 7](#)). The key questions are stated as per the Terms of Reference (ToR) ([annex 1](#)), but the sub-questions have been elaborated by the ET in order to fine tune them and operationalise them in questions for respondents. In the process of development of the evaluation matrix, the evaluation team proposed some adjustments in the set of key questions and sub-questions.

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)⁴³ was explored by the ET and is focused on the conscious and systematic enhancement of human rights in all aspects of project and programme development and implementation. The HRBA principle is used as a cross-cutting approach to conduct the FE and understand the main features of the programmes. Key questions related to the evaluation objectives and scope address issues of gender and human rights. In addition, specific gender equality issues, child rights-based approach, holistic approach, participatory approach, and results-based management are central to this evaluation.

4.2. METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION, SAMPLING APPROACH AND ANALYSIS

In order to address the evaluation questions, having in mind the preliminary ToC, the ET of Junction Bulgaria has used both qualitative and quantitative data collection as per the TOR. Apart from quantitative secondary data analysis, which serves for an overview of the degree of achievement of the outcomes, the qualitative data allowed for an in-depth understanding of the barriers and factors and reasons why state programmes have a certain design. More information about mixed method approach and details about methodology could be seen in [annex 9.5.2](#)

4.2.1. DESK REVIEW AND SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

The ET has reviewed documents related to Law on Education, amendments of the different legislative acts related to inclusive education, as well National Annual Reports on Education from 2015 to 2021. A lot of additional sources were identified in the whole process of evaluation, such as reports and analysis, documents published in 2022, national and regional data on education. A detailed list of the reviewed and analysed sources, as well as documents included in the desk review is presented in [annex 3](#).

The secondary data analysis takes into account all the data at the level of disaggregation at which it is provided such as gender, age of children in the education system, geographical location, trends for the years, etc. It is based on publicly available or provided data from the Bureau of National statistics, World bank, Information Analytical Centre, MoE, etc. A detailed list could be seen in [annex 3](#).

4.2.2. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation team used three qualitative data collection methods: key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and observations. The data was collected on a national/international, regional, and local/school level. The regions for data collection were selected by the contractor in consultation with UNICEF and national stakeholders to reflect the diverse realities in the country, based on the specific criteria. ([annex 9.5.2](#)). **The geographic area(s)** – Almaty, Almaty region, Astana, Turkistan, Atyrau, Pavlodar

Key informant interviews: A total of **32 KIIs** ([annex 2](#)), were conducted, some of which dual, with 38 participants. The sampling method for qualitative data collection was based on the different *criteria at the international/national/local and school level.* ([annex 9.5.2](#))

Focus group discussions: A total of **19 FGDs** ([annex 2](#)) were conducted with 89 participants. The sampling method for qualitative data collection was based on the *different criteria* for recruiting respondents. ([annex 9.5.2](#))

Observations: 5 observations were conducted at the schools, which were chosen based on the *criteria* to be located in the five key regions, selected in the evaluation, to have activities related to inclusiveness and work with different groups of children including vulnerable categories. ([annex 9.5.2](#))

Methods for data analysis: The methods for data analysis include transcribing and coding the KIIs and FGDs in the NVivo software for processing qualitative information. Both an inductive and deductive approach were used, since primary codes were based on the main topics from the interview and FGD guides, while inductive codes were added based on what was discussed with respondents and any emerging additional topics from the data. The protocols from the observations were analysed qualitatively. The secondary data analysis was conducted via SPSS using statistical methods – one-sided and two-sided distributions and testing relationships between factors.

4.3. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

The nature and the design of this evaluation require a high level of involvement of stakeholders at different stages of implementation of the evaluation process, including planning, data collection and reporting phase. A key first step towards understanding the context for the evaluation team was the reconstruction of the ToC at the inception phase. KIIs were conducted in order to reconstruct the logic of the reform due to the 10-year period, the available policy documents, the socio-economic changes, and changes in the understanding and thinking making it necessary to make the process of evaluation participatory. These KIIs were conducted with participants in the planning process and with representatives of international and national organisations, helping to understand the context of educational reforms in the country. The reconstructed ToC at the end of the inception phase was presented at an online meeting with ERG (Evaluation Reference Group) where the logic of the theory and its reconstruction was validated, the methods and expected results were discussed.

At the data collection phase, key informants were included in interviews and FGDs in order to discuss the understanding, development of the concept and concrete measures that had to be realised to achieve the goals of the reform, as well as a debrief meeting with representatives of UNICEF and the MoE. It is expected that ToC and recommendations will be discussed at different levels after the submission of the report. The most important participants were children and parents and the lessons learned and recommendations would reflect the opinions of right holders.

4.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ET of Junction Bulgaria complies with ethical considerations, such as UNICEF's guidance on children in research, to avoid any form of stigma, discrimination or harm to children and all participants in research. We have a strong policy in this regard, following strictly the professional research standards and ethical aspects of the Code on Market and Social Research of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing research. We ensure that the research complies with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis as well as Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), integrating human rights, gender, and equity in accordance with the relevant UNEG guidelines (by including girls and boys/men and women equally in the research, as well as all vulnerable groups of children and their parents, following the UNEG norms in data collection and analysis, etc.). The ERB Research Ethics Approval letter is available in annex 9.11.

The ET members of Junction Bulgaria believe that the data collection process must be meaningful, not harmful to the respondent and potentially beneficial for him/her through the results (therefore

protocols to ensure subjects' safety, protect subjects' identity and data have been developed and could be seen in [annex 9.5.5](#)). Quality assurance is monitored at each phase of the research process by implementing the following activities:

Data-collection phase

- In order to ensure the quality of the data collection, information on the background/country context is collected.
- When making an appointment for an interview/FGD, the research team clearly explains the goal of the research and motivates informants to participate, explaining the value of their contribution.
- Before the start of the KIIs written consent and assent forms ([annex 9.5.4](#)) are provided to the participants to inform them about the Study Purpose, Material Benefits, Types of Questions, Skipping Questions or Ending Participation, Confidentiality. In case of online data collection, the respondents receive the consent forms before the KIIs/FGDs and are asked to send them signed. In case of face-to-face KIIs/FGDs the respondents are asked to sign the consent forms on site, prior to the KII/FGD. The school authorities sent and received parental consent forms for children signed prior to the data collection.
- The moderation of the FGDs with children is done by UNICEF certified moderators in "Ethics in evidence generation" with long experience working with children and vulnerable groups.

Reporting phase

Quality assurance in the reporting phase is achieved by triangulating the information collected via different instruments and sources. At each key question of the report, we are looking at the different points of view of the participants and orienting towards answering it in the most clear and detailed way. The report is purposeful, objective, appropriate, clear and follows the main goals.

The ET of Junction Bulgaria ensures that access to raw data is limited through password protection of electronic data, physical locks and restricting staff who can access the data. Hard copies such as interview notes and any other materials are kept securely locked away and are only be accessed by members of the team. It is also important to point out that no payment of compensation has been made to any participants in the research (see protocol for protection of data, [annex 9.5.5](#)).

In addition, when conducting **research with children**, we work according to the following principles:

- We always respect children's views and feelings;
- We are sensitive to local concerns about children;
- We explain the process of collection and sharing the information and how the data might be used;
- We explain anonymity and confidentiality;
- We take particular care not to raise expectations about the impact of the research. We learn from the children, but we cannot promise to improve their lives;
- We explain to children/caregivers that they may not respond to certain questions in an interview/FGD, only the ones they wish to;
- We emphasise that we are interested in children's descriptions in their own words and that there are no right or wrong answers;
- We are respectful that a child may be reluctant to share information about a sensitive topic;
- We always strive to be punctual, organised and take into consideration the opinions of our respondents

It is important to point out that the questions are formulated in a way that is compliant with children's age and level of understanding. In addition, no conflicts of interest have been identified in this FE.

Furthermore, the methodology was subject to independent Ethical Review Board approval (responsibility of UNICEF) according to certain criteria in a quality review checklist. All data generation processes, and evaluation deliverables underwent UNICEF Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies, and Evaluations (RSEs). For this purpose, a Reference Group/Technical Working Group (RG) was established in order

to ensure full participation of the Government partners in the validation of the evaluation results. Representatives of line ministries were engaged by the Evaluator in the data collection phase as key informants. The final draft of the report was discussed and validated with the RG and reviewed internally by the CO and externally by independent reviewers. The final report reflected to the extent possible all the comments of stakeholders and of peer review.

4.5. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS. RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Different issues and limitations were identified, which somewhat affected the implemented methodology and used instruments for data collection and analysis. Firstly, this is related to availability and reliability of data. Some limitations arose in terms of the fact that the indicators from state programmes and national projects, as indicated in the TOR, include notions such as favourable conditions for inclusive education. This means they require a clear understanding of the different concepts related to inclusive education (e.g. accessibility, participation, vulnerability). Having in mind that the FE is based on secondary data collection and analysis (in addition to the qualitative methods), the conclusions mostly depend on the level of reliability and validity of indicators, tools and data collection systems that are already created. Whenever data was not available on certain aspects, the ET of Junction Bulgaria looked for more possible sources for secondary data collection or consulted the different stakeholders during the fieldwork process. For some of the indicators, however, data is not collected at the national level and the reasons for this were sought after. The level of efficiency was the most challenging aspect in terms of availability of data, since until 2015, there isn't publicly available information on national budgets and financing, so the conclusions on efficiency were made based on the available information.

Another limitation is related to the ToC development. The complexity of the ToC and challenges related to its reconstruction are in terms of the fact that inclusive education needs to be extracted as a key topic from four different state programmes and project with their own goals and objectives in a longer time period. Therefore, the ET has conducted KIIs with key stakeholders, in order to understand the complexity of the educational reform and inclusiveness as one of the key components.

The ET has considered that the programmes are implemented at the national level in a big country such as Kazakhstan, which means they are very big in scope and related to a lot of children. This was considered when choosing regions, in order to achieve a variety in terms of geographic location, socio-economic development, vulnerable groups, particularities of the schools in the areas, etc. This allowed an in-depth analysis of the situation across the whole country.

In view of the potential bias of the proposed data collection methods, there are mainly qualitative methods that were used in this FE, which allowed for in-depth exploration of attitudes and opinions and understanding the process. However, when it comes to large-scale quantitative data on the country level, secondary data analysis and desk review were conducted, and all available sources were explored to achieve data triangulation and reliability of information. Additionally, the different data is at a different level of disaggregation. For some of the indicators, there is disaggregation by gender (for instance regarding children in early childhood education, children with disabilities), while for other indicators such as for children in special classes and special schools, data is not available or inconsistent.

5. WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE

The detailed work plan is presented in the table below, including phases of the evaluation, activities and deliverables, team members responsible and timeline. The evaluation was carried out in three phases. The detailed timeline of the fieldwork is in [annex 9](#).

The responsibilities of the team members depend on their preliminary determined roles in the evaluation. The *team leader* is the primary point of contact with the client, responsible for the organisation and coordination of the data collection, analysis, and reporting. The rest of the team members were included in all the phases of the evaluation process, according to their specific competence. The *team leader* was also responsible for ensuring coherence and continuity between

the elements of the evaluation like ToC, evaluation matrix and data collection process, as well as for ensuring inclusion and coverage of all the areas of evaluation (like relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, etc.).

The *national and international evaluators* were responsible for the data collection process and analysis of the data. The national evaluators facilitated the understanding of the national context, as well as were responsible for conducting KIIs and FGDs, depending on the language, in which interviews were held. Among the national evaluators there is a division of roles/competences: inclusive education specialist, early education and care specialist, secondary education specialist. All specialists were responsible for validity and reliability of data collection, analysis, and findings, as well as quality assurance and adherence to the ethical standards at all stages of this FE.

The Child Rights Monitoring Specialist of UNICEF Kazakhstan is the overall Evaluation Manager of the evaluation. The Manager ensured compliance with UNICEF norms and standards as well as compliance with quality standards and was the UNICEF focal point for the evaluation team, also responsible for document validation. The ET reported to Evaluation Manager and conducted the evaluation by fulfilling the contractual arrangements in line with the TOR, UNICEF standards for evaluation reports and the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) Quality Assessment System; including developing of an evaluation (implementation) plan as part of the IR, drafting and finalising the final report and other deliverables, and briefing the commissioner on the progress and key findings and recommendations, as needed.

The ERG includes UNICEF programme staff, implementing partners, government, and representatives of right holders. ERG contributed to the relevance, impartiality and credibility of the evaluation being carried out, providing a variety of points of view, and ensuring a transparent process. The participation of key stakeholders in the ERG also contributed to increased cooperation with the Government, state bodies, other institutions, and donors, as well as to increase the culture and capacity of the evaluation approach among national partners. The objectives of the ERG are to facilitate regular exchange of information and feedback during the evaluation process; ensure access to key informants during data collection; take part in interviews with the research team; review and comment on the draft and the final version of the report; develop an Evaluation Management Response (EMR) to the recommendations. UNICEF Education Section ensured that all documents needed for the evaluation are available and provided timely feedback to the evaluation manager. Evaluation Quality Control was conducted through a review of terms of reference, methodology and draft and final reports and was carried out by the Child Rights Monitoring Specialist in coordination with the Evaluation Reference Group and the UNICEF Regional Evaluation Specialist.

6. EVALUATION FINDINGS

6.1. RELEVANCE

The relevance of the State programmes is analysed in view of the alignment with the global and government priorities. The amendments, and changes in strategies for education in view of the changing social, economic and health context were analysed. The relevance is also influenced by the particularity of the object of the FE, including four state programmes with partially overlapping periods of implementation and a time scope of 10 years. Priorities and activities related to vulnerable groups of children are analysed in view of the extent to which state education programmes are relevant to addressing inherent equity gaps, taking into consideration any disparities.

6.1.1. ALIGNMENT OF THE STATE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WITH THE GLOBAL PRIORITIES

The government of the Republic of Kazakhstan continuously invests in the modernization of its educational sector in order to improve the country's position as one of the most developed countries in the world and to reach the OECD standards. Therefore, the MoE introduced state programmes with the aim to build and reform the educational system to ensure human capital development through

internationalization of educational policy, improving the quality of education and updating the school curriculum, among other factors. As an aspect of the efforts towards internationalization of education, the Convention of the Rights of the Child is signed and ratified in 1994 and the CRPD is signed in 2008 and ratified in 2015. In view of this process of modernization of education, it is of key importance to analyse the level of alignment of the state education programmes with the global priorities in terms of inclusivity (The World Declaration on Education for All, Policy, and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO), Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities (UNICEF), The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals).

The World Declaration on Education for All⁴⁴ puts an emphasis on the children excluded from the school system and the need for more inclusive approaches to education to overcome barriers faced by vulnerable groups whose needs in education are not satisfied. The main challenges and target issues pointed out in the declaration are related to limited access to primary schooling; literacy and functional literacy; limited access to printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of children's lives and help them shape, and adapt to, social and cultural change; failure of many children to complete basic education programmes; even when the attendance requirements are satisfied, many children do not acquire essential knowledge and skills. In view of these challenges, the vision in the World Declaration on Education for All is based on the following elements: **universalizing access and promoting equity; focusing on learning; broadening the means and scope of basic education; enhancing the environment for learning; strengthening partnerships.** In 1994, UNESCO's Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action⁴⁵ made a call for inclusive education based on the principle that ordinary schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, linguistic, or other requirements. In order to achieve this, the following action steps are required: give the highest priority to improve the education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties; adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise; establish decentralized and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring and evaluating educational provision for children and adults with SEN; encourage and facilitate the participation of parents, communities, and organization of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes concerning provision for SEN; invest greater effort in early identification and intervention strategies; ensure that, in the context of a systemic change, teacher education programmes, both preservice and in service, address the provision of special needs education in inclusive schools. In table 11 ([annex 9.10.1](#)), the analysis shows that most of the priorities of the programmes are in a high level of alignment with the principles of the World Declaration on Education for All. In the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, which is focused on action framework towards achieving the same priorities outlined in the World Declaration on Education for All, some of the aspects related towards encouraging and facilitating the participation of parents, communities and organization of persons with disabilities in the planning and decision-making processes concerning provision for SEN, are not particularly outlined in the state education programmes. Parents and communities share in KIIs and FGDs they do not feel involved and in some regions of the country they even don't have enough information on the available programmes and opportunities for inclusive education. Another key topic not indicated in the programme is early identification and intervention strategies, as well as vocational aspects of inclusive education. According to what stakeholders share, early identification and intervention is still not developed in practice and such services do not exist. Vocational aspects have started developing in recent years. Additionally, development of demonstration projects and encouraging exchange with countries, as well as establishment of decentralised and participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring, and evaluating educational provision are not indicated in the state programmes. However, in practice the stakeholders refer to exchanging experience and best practices across countries using different examples. In view of planning, monitoring and evaluation, a national database has been developed, which will be discussed in the efficiency part.

The Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO)⁴⁶ have the objectives to assist countries in strengthening the focus on inclusion in their strategies and plans for education, to introduce the broadened concept of inclusive education and to highlight the areas that need particular attention to promote inclusive education and strengthen policy development. In 2008, UNESCO argued that a broad concept of inclusive education “*can be viewed as a general guiding principle to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for all and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities so as to implement the principles of inclusive education*”⁴⁷. Education for All (EFA) represents an international commitment to ensure that every child and adult receives basic education of good quality. EFA is based both on a human rights perspective and on the generally held belief that education is central to individual well-being and national development⁴⁸. In table 12 in the annex 9.10.1 the analysis shows that in terms of attitudinal changes and policy development the level of alignment is low since none of the state programmes directly address this change. In terms of ensuring ECEC and inclusive curriculum, the level of alignment is medium, having in mind that only some of the programmes outline the systematic problems in ECD, but there is no action towards development of inclusive ECEC and the focus is on the coverage. Teachers and teacher education, resources and legislation are with a high level of alignment.

UNICEF has a number of initiatives for children with disabilities in inclusive education, since the topic is at the focus of the efforts and its importance is recognised. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first instrument in international law to deal comprehensively with the human rights of children and is notable for the inclusion of an article specifically concerned with the rights of children with disability. Article 2 of the CRC introduces, for the first time in an international human rights treaty, an explicit obligation on governments to assure the realisation of all rights to every child without discrimination, including on grounds of disability⁴⁹. The convention aims to protect the rights of people with disabilities, including the right to education.

There have, traditionally, been three broad approaches to the education of children with disabilities: **segregation**, in which children are classified according to their impairment and allocated a school designed to respond to that particular impairment; **integration**, where children with disabilities are placed in the mainstream system, often in special classes, as long as they can accommodate its demands and fit in with its environment; and **inclusion**, where there is recognition of a need to transform the cultures, policies and practices in schools to accommodate the differing needs of individual students, and an obligation to remove the barriers that impede that possibility. It has been argued that inclusive education is not only about addressing issues of input, such as access, and those related to processes, such as teacher training, but also involves a shift in underlying values and beliefs held across the system. It requires that all children, including children with disabilities, not only have access to schooling within their own communities, but that they are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to achieve their full potential. Its approach is underpinned by an understanding that all children should have equivalent and systematic learning opportunities in a wide range of school and additional educational settings, despite the differences that might exist. A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education proposes a conceptual framework on the very specific issues that affect the inclusion of children with disabilities in Central Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS). Rights-based tools for Inclusive Education for children with disabilities are provided, meant to serve as a reference for advocacy and policy making to UNICEF’s government counterparts and other partners in CEECIS. It provides clear strategy options for Inclusive Education for children with disabilities, while keeping in mind the need for system-wide approaches designed to address the needs of all children. The commitment to the right of every child with a disability to inclusive education should be realised through legal reform; policy and guidance; service delivery; attitudinal and cultural change; respect for human rights; training and support for teachers; participatory engagement with children and families⁵⁰.

To bridge the education divide for children with disabilities, UNICEF stands alongside governments in their endeavours to cultivate and supervise inclusive education systems, centring on four essential pillars: advocacy, raising awareness, building capacity, and providing implementation support.⁵¹. In

different policy reports, roundtables, and discussion there is an analysis and definitions of inclusive education in terms of the rights of children with disabilities.⁵²⁵³ Additionally, the concept of child-friendly schools (CFS), developed by UNICEF, was designed to get all children into school, while guaranteeing both the quality of learning opportunities and results, and the protection of children's rights within school. It thus provides an effective operational model for taking forward the rights-based approach to inclusive education for children with disabilities⁵⁴.

The Rights-Based Approach to Education, developed by UNICEF, as described above, includes the areas in table 13 in [annex 9.10.1](#), as well as universal and targeted measures. In terms of the right of access to education, the level of alignment is low to medium in the different aspects. In terms of removing barriers, the analysis shows that in most of the state programmes, the topic of physical access to education is in the focus, but informational access and work with attitudes have not been identified. Working to support parents, as well as early identification and assessment are not included sufficiently as priorities in the programmes, so the level of alignment is low. In terms of the right to quality education, the level of alignment is medium to high since topics like improvement of education systems in schools, investment, and support for teachers, as well as right-based learning and assessment are included in the priorities of the programs.

The **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**⁵⁵ in the area of education (SDG 4)⁵⁶ by 2030, related to inclusive education, are the following: to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education; to eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations; to ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy. The analysis of the visions and goals of the four state programmes, repeated throughout all the programmes, oriented towards ensuring equitable access for all children to the teaching and learning process, high-quality pre-school, and secondary education in a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment, shows that they are relevant to the main visions and targets of SDG4 in view of inclusive education.

6.1.2. ALIGNMENT OF THE STATE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WITH THE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Kazakhstan's government priorities are focused on modernising the country's economy and society, promoting innovation and digitalization, and enhancing the quality of education. These priorities are outlined in several key strategic documents, including "Kazakhstan-2050" which seeks to establish a knowledge-based economy and society, and "Digital Kazakhstan" which focuses on promoting the development of the country's digital economy. The National Development Plan of Kazakhstan-2025, among other priorities, also emphasises the importance of education in promoting social cohesion and inclusivity, and ensuring that education is accessible to all, regardless of their background. Overall, the government's priorities are aimed at promoting economic and social development, while also ensuring that the needs and rights of all citizens, including children, are protected, and promoted.

The **National Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050"** is considered one of the most important guiding policy documents of Kazakhstan. It was established in 2012 and stipulates national priorities for development until 2050. It focuses on creating opportunities for economic development and outlines priorities for Kazakhstan to become one of the thirty most developed countries. The following key ideas are mentioned: new economic policies focused on pragmatism, support of entrepreneurship as a key economic driver, new social policies and guarantees, skills development and patriotism. In table 14, [annex 9.10.2](#), there is an analysis of the alignment of the state programmes with this guiding state policy document. The majority of the state education programs' goals are coherent with the education goals and priorities stipulated in the National Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" and therefore are evaluated as of "high" alignment.

The **State Programme “Digital Kazakhstan” for 2018-2022** was adopted in 2017 and aims to develop information and communication technologies (ICT) throughout all economic sectors of the country and to improve the quality of lives of all citizens. It focuses on shifting Kazakhstan’s economy towards a new development level through creating a digital economy in the long term. It stipulates digitalization of such sectors of the economy as transport and logistics, agriculture, government services, increased ICT coverage, and citizens’ digital skills and competencies and development of startups and technological entrepreneurship. In table 15 in [annex 9.10.2](#) is presented the level of alignment of the state education programmes to the Digital Kazakhstan program. The majority of stipulated goals and priorities of the State Programme “Digital Kazakhstan” related to development of social field is in line with the goals in the state education programs, so the alignment is considered as high.

The **National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025** (previously referred to as the Strategic Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025) is a first-tier document in the system of state planning and is developed in accordance with the long-term Development Strategy of Kazakhstan until 2050. It forms the basis for the new economic course of the country in the medium term, aimed at mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis and promoting factors that accelerate economic growth for a more sustainable and inclusive economy. The Plan outlines 10 key national priorities, but for the purpose of the evaluation, particular attention has been given to the National Priority 3. Quality Education. Table 16 in [annex 9.10.2](#) summarises the relevance of state education programmes to the key priorities and objectives outlined in the National Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2025. It demonstrates that the priorities of the state education programmes are in a high level of alignment with the principles of the National Development Plan 2025 in their commitment to human-rights, DEI, and inclusiveness in education. Overall, the National Development Plan of Kazakhstan until 2025, along with the State Programmes for Education and Science Development, demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting human rights, children's rights, equality, inclusion, and inclusive education. The government's prioritisation of social policies, accessible healthcare, quality education, and a fair and efficient state system is aligned with its commitment to these principles. There is a high relevance of state education programmes to the National Plan's objectives of ensuring access and equity in education as well as improving the quality of education at all levels. Other key objectives and areas outlined in the National Plan find some reflection and coherence in the state education programs, yet no areas of deficit were identified.

6.1.3. PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CHILDREN

The planning of policies for different vulnerable groups of children means to know which are these groups, to firstly conduct a needs assessment to understand their needs and to plan policies in view of these needs. This means that it is necessary to have a definition of what is understood by vulnerable categories, children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions in terms of health, income, gender, or behaviour. It is necessary to conduct needs assessment, based on which could be set the activities related to different topics and groups such as gender disparities, children with disabilities, low-income families, children in institutionalised care, living in remote areas, with risk behaviour and in conflict with the law, from linguistic and ethnic minorities.

The analysis of the legislation in Kazakhstan⁵⁷ shows that in some laws there is a mention of different categories of vulnerable groups of the population on the whole, which include: families with or raising children with disabilities; orphans and children left without parental care, under the age of twenty-nine, who lost their parents before adulthood; candace; mothers of many children; incomplete families.

Additionally, in the Law on education⁵⁸ inclusive education is defined as “*a process that provides equal access to education for all students, taking into account SEN and individual opportunities.*” Different

groups of children are also indicated who are supported in view of their living expenses in the period of obtainment of education.

In the Law on the Rights of the child⁵⁹ is indicated that every child has the right to education. The legislative document indicates two vulnerable categories of children: children with disabilities and children in need of social protection. For those groups of children, the state budget allocates additional funds to guarantee their education. There is a special article in the law, dedicated to children with disabilities such as having equal rights with others, as well as the right to receive education, to choose the type of activity/profession. Children with mental or physical disabilities have the right to receive medical and social assistance in accordance with an individual child development plan under the guidance of parents/guardians/ social workers and other specialists.

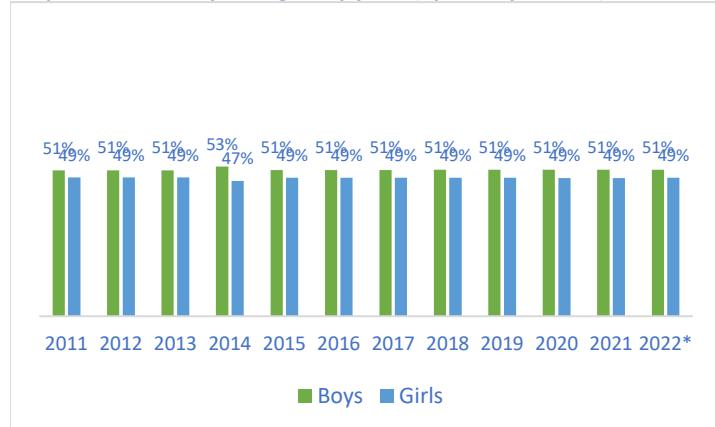
Another document, mentioning vulnerable groups of children is the 2015 Conceptual Approach, according to which inclusive education can be realized through the implementation of a personalized pedagogical approach intended to include persons with SEN, such as children with disabilities, migrants, and refugees, kandas/oralmans (ethnic Kazakh returnees), national minorities and children in vulnerable social situations⁶⁰.

In 2022, in the Order of the MoES of the Republic of Kazakhstan from the 12th of January 2022 № 6 are indicated children with SEN (лица (дети) с особыми образовательными потребностями) and this group includes persons (children) who have permanent or temporary needs in special conditions for receiving education of the appropriate level and additional education; children with disabilities (ребенок (дети) с ограниченными возможностями) - children under eighteen years of age with physical and (or) mental disabilities, having a disability due to congenital, hereditary, acquired diseases or the consequences of injuries, confirmed in the prescribed manner.⁶¹

A cross-cutting issue addressing equity gaps taking into consideration any disparities in view of implementation of the HRBA⁶² is focused on the conscious and systematic enhancement of human rights in all aspects of project and programme development and implementation. This is a conceptual framework for the process of human development, normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed towards promoting and protecting human rights. The HRBA has a two-fold objective: 1) to empower right-holders to claim and exercise their rights and 2) to strengthen the capacity of duty-bearers who have a particular obligation or responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil rights of the poorest, weakest, most marginalized, and vulnerable. In order to understand the implementation of the basic principles such as non-discrimination, equality, age, and gender-appropriateness. This evaluation makes an analysis of the degree to which the interests and rights of the right-holders, children at risk of exclusion from the educational system, are considered and reflected in the state programmes. Different factors lead to identifying different groups of children and their level of vulnerability, which allows to identify needs and the degree to which the programmes, plans, measures, and priorities address these needs. These factors are related to age, gender, health, physical, mental, emotional, and social development, place of living, ethnicity, economic status, being in out-of-home care. In view of different groups of children and the degree to which the programmes reflect their needs and address equity gaps, firstly it should be analysed how many these children are and the tendencies in the change in this number over the years.

- Gender disparities

*"To achieve universal basic education, children need equitable access to quality education. This must include...all boys and girls regardless of their age and socioeconomic or socio-cultural background"*⁶³. The data regarding the gender division among children in the country for the period 2011-2022 shows that the share of boys and girls is quite similar without significant changes over the years and there is a slight prevalence of boys in each year (graph 1). One of the indicators for the presence of challenges related to education in terms of gender disparities is early drop out of school for the different groups of children.

Graph 1 Share of boys and girls by years (up to 18 years old)


Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

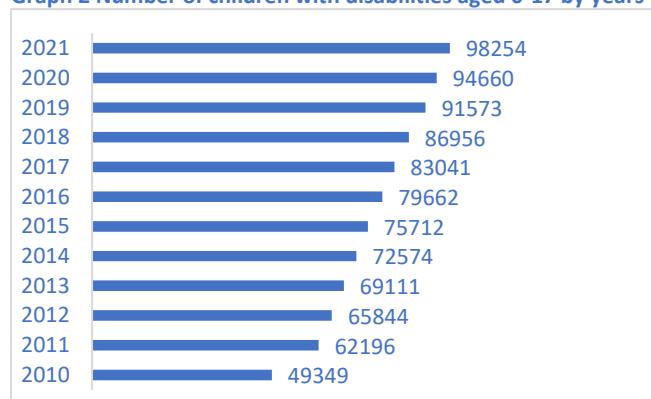
well as runaway boys and boys with behaviour issues⁶⁵.

Additionally, other problems were identified in the concept of family and gender policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan such as *“early marriages, teenage pregnancies, abortions at a young age, which is especially common in rural areas. More than two million teenage girls and girls under the age of 18 live in Kazakhstan; this is one fifth of the total female population of the republic. Over the past 5 years, 33,051 cases of teenage pregnancy have been registered, including 9,906 abortions among girls between 15 and 18 years of age. The number of abortions in the 15-18 age group remains quite high and amounts to about 2 thousand abortions per year, or 0.1% of the total number of teenage girls and girls under 18.”*⁶⁶

In none of the state education programmes there is analysis of the needs of the different groups of children regarding gender, neither there is special attention paid or measures targeted towards gender disparities in education.

- Children with disabilities

The number of children with disabilities is growing steadily over the last 10 years (graph 2). It should be pointed out that children with disabilities are likely to drop out of school due to health reasons. *“Children with disabilities are assessed by the PMPCs, which provide a certificate specifying whether the child can participate in education and, if so, the level of education s/he should receive. In 2010-2011 there were 5,649 children who were not attending school due to health issues - including severe or multiple disabilities.”*⁶⁷

Graph 2 Number of children with disabilities aged 0-17 by years


Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

*“No in-depth analysis of the database is available at oblast or national level and there is no indication as to whether boys or girls are more susceptible to missing school, their age, grade or the most common response interventions taken.”*⁶⁴ Due to lack of data, it is unclear whether there is an issue, what is the scope and how it could be addressed. At the same time, the typology of risk factors for children missing education includes girls who marry early or fall pregnant, as

According to the opinions of parents shared during the fieldwork, having a child with disabilities in the family leads to different challenges and emerging needs, related to a need for clear medical diagnosis, ensuring supporting educational and social services for the child and the parents. While the child is growing up, it is of key importance to support its development and support parents in understanding the steps to take and to have clear and realistic expectations towards their child's individual development.

"The teachers say she looks ok and she is not different from others, but I can still see she can't socialize with other kids, something should be fixed, she needs everything explained step by step and repeated and only then she understands. This week should be a focus on this and that, they explain and repeat to her again what the teacher says." (Dual interview with parents)

In the State Programme 2011–2020 there isn't an analysis of the needs of children, but rather of the degree to which the system creates conditions for accessible education for children with SEN, including children with disabilities. The conclusion that the system is underdeveloped is made and special activities for its development are planned, among which are special and inclusive classrooms and created favourable conditions for inclusive education, as well as improved access.

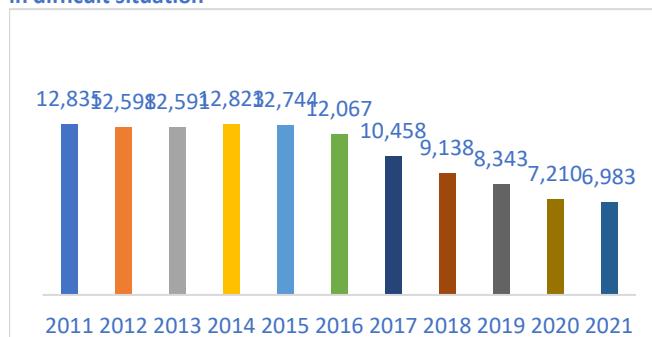
The State Programme 2016–2019 also doesn't analyse the needs, but rather the system that needs to respond to these needs and states that inclusion of children with SEN remains relevant (after the new Conceptual approach is adopted in 2015, as pointed out above, the concept of special needs is in the focus, not only children with disabilities), because the indicator for creating favourable conditions for their upbringing and education has not been achieved since there is a shortage of qualified specialists.

The State Programme 2020–2025 again covers the ability of the system to respond to the needs of children with SEN. The mentioned issues are similar to those in the previous programs, related to shortage of specialists and low share of coverage of pre-school and school children with SEN. This programme puts an emphasis on the transition from the medical to the pedagogical model of working with children with disabilities and strengthening the activities of the PMPCs and PPCRs. The preparation of teachers to work with these children is also commented.

In the National project 2021-2025 among the tasks are those related to coverage of children with disabilities, special psychological and pedagogical support.

- **Children living in families with low income**

Graph 3 The number of socially unprotected/poor families/families in difficult situation



Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

the children and 11% go to work, 22% don't have clothes and shoes to go to school, 24% don't have places where they could study in speak and 14% don't have full meals. These factors, although indirectly, influence the education of this group of students. The data for the period shows that there is a decrease in the share of socially unprotected, poor and families in difficult situation (graph 3). This decrease has become even faster in the last 5 years. The socio-economic development of the country should be considered, since it is a factor influencing the share of such families.

According to the data from a survey related to access to quality education for children from vulnerable groups⁶⁸, conducted in 2011, the main barriers which limit the access for these groups of children are related to the relationships of the participants in the educational process, the low level of interest towards studying, non-interest of teachers and parents towards success, language barriers for the children. Also, the material and financial situation is a serious issue for

"For the country in general, in terms of materials, there is no individual approach, the kids study with all the other kids, but with slow development it's difficult to be with the other peers, I had to apply early on for the food and for the school to get in." (FGD with parents)

is a big share (graph 4). In addition, it should be pointed out that children from low-income families are at a risk of dropping out of school due to family factors related to resources. *"At the end of the 2010-11 academic year, 214 children who had missed education for at least 10 days without a valid reason had not yet returned. Of these, 214 children (9%) were living in a low-income family and 74% in a dysfunctional family"*⁶⁹.

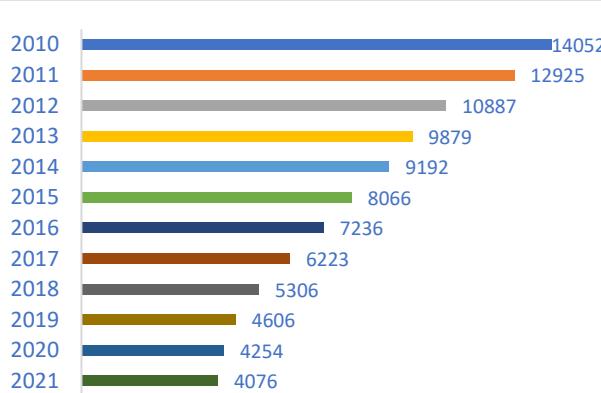
In the State Programme 2016–2019 is stated that there is a need to increase the coverage rate of preschool education, including for children from families with low income. In addition, the availability of sports facilities for mass sports as well as visits to cultural and sports organizations will be ensured through benefits (free subscriptions) for children from such families as well. Also, free hot meals are provided for children from low-income families.

In the State Programme 2020–2025 the analysis shows that children from low-income families do not have access to enough extracurricular activities and among the planned measures are indicated those related to additional services for the parents of these children and the children themselves such as short-stay groups for children 1–2 years old from low-income families, expand coverage of vocational education for children and summer camps.

- Children living in institutionalised care

According to an assessment of alternative care in Kazakhstan⁷⁰ from 2010 to 2012 there was a decrease in the number of orphan children and those deprived of parental care by more than 3000 cases. According to official data from the Children's Rights Protection Committee of the MoES, in 2012 there were 19,500 children at risk of losing parental care, an increase of 2.2% from 2010. The main reasons for children at risk include a growth in the number of children born out of wedlock, social disorganisation of families, financial and housing difficulties, and unhealthy relationships between parents and children due to issues such as alcohol and drug addiction and cases of child abuse and neglect.

Graph 5 Number of orphans and children without parental care, in residential institutions



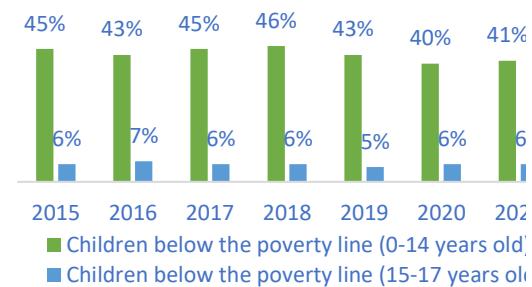
Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

For parents living in rural areas with many children, the access to education is related to the financial support they get.

The data shows that children 0-14 years old living below the poverty line

are steadily more than 40% of the total population in poverty, which

Graph 4 Share of children living below the poverty line out of the share of the total population living below the poverty line by years



Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

Between 2010 and 2021 the number of orphans and children without parental care in institutions has decreased with almost 10 000, with the sharpest decline in the first couple of years – between 2010 and 2014. From data, it could be seen that the number of orphans and children without parental care in institutions is steadily decreasing over the years (graph 5).

Children in the system of institutional care face a number of issues like low levels of education, therefore lack of prospects for employment and could end up in poverty.

Children with disabilities in care often have no access to education, rehabilitation, or other support. *"Children who leave the institutions at the age of 18 years are more likely to face stigmatization and low levels of education, unemployed, and poverty... In facilities for children with disabilities, disabled children often have no access to education, recreation, rehabilitation, or other programs."*⁷¹

In addition, it should be pointed out that children without parental care and orphans are at risk of dropping out of school, so the family situation is one of the reasons for missing out education. For this reason they are placed in institutions, but this is not related to a higher quality of education⁷².

Having in mind that the children placed in specialized institutions have specific needs of support to overcome their family situation, skills development and education, the state policy needs to address these issues.

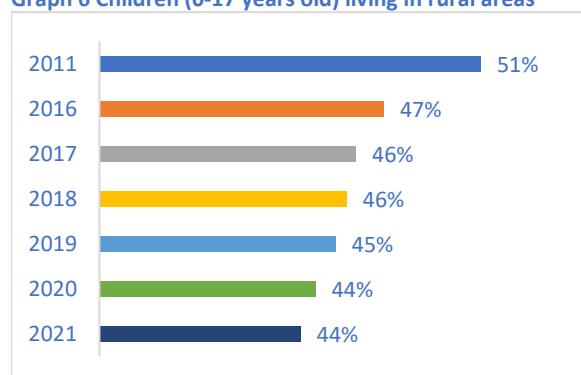
In the State Programme 2016–2019 is stated that the availability of sports facilities for mass sports as well as visits to cultural and sports organizations will be ensured through benefits (free subscriptions) for orphans and children without parental care. In addition, it is indicated that the proportion of orphans and children left without parental care in residential institutions will decrease due to a set of measures to transfer them in families (under guardianship, patronage, and adoption).

In the State Programme 2020–2025 it is stated that a network of centres and psychological services is developed (transformation of orphanages) and will continue to provide social, legal, and psychological and pedagogical support to families with children in difficult life situations. Furthermore, representatives of business and NGO sectors will be involved in supporting the employment of graduates of organizations for orphans and children left without parental care. As in the previous state programmes, there is still an emphasis on supporting and cooperation with non-profit organisations for the placement of orphans and children left without parental care in families. Also, work will continue on the development of schools for foster parents.

- Children living in remote areas

The data about poverty for the period 2014 to 2015 shows that poverty rose almost 6 percentage points overall—8 percentage points in rural areas and 4 percentage points in urban areas⁷³. Children living in remote areas face a number of challenges such as not having Internet access, transportation, buildings in bad conditions, lack of health specialists and resources and, notably, lack of access to education. Additionally, PISA results indicate that students from rural schools have lower results than those in urban schools⁷⁴. *"For some families, particularly those living in rural areas, sending a child to a special school means traveling long distances or leaving the child to live at school full time or during the school week. As a result, children are separated from their families and immediate communities."*⁷⁵. *"Kazakhstan faces the challenge of further improving ECEC coverage and quality and raising the performance of all students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those attending ungraded or rural schools and low performers"*⁷⁶.

Graph 6 Children (0-17 years old) living in rural areas



Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

The share of children living in rural areas is decreasing in the period from 2011 to 2021 from 51% to 44%, but it still remains quite big (graph 6). Additionally, it should be pointed out that living in a rural or remote area is a risk factor for not having access to education or becoming a dropout related to location, *"the MICS of 2010-2011 shows that only 78% of children in Grade 1 had attended preschool the previous year in rural areas, compared to 85.6% of children in urban areas... The discrepancy between urban and rural areas is likely to stem from children in rural areas being more likely to miss school*

*to attend to chores or help with harvesting... Another critical issue is transportation, particularly in rural areas where some villages lack schools and school transport fails to be organised."*⁷⁷ *"2.5 percent of children are out of upper secondary school, 1.7 percent of children aged 16-17 years attend primary or*

lower secondary school. In rural areas, the proportion of children who are out of school is 3.7 percent and in urban areas it is 1.4 percent.”⁷⁸

In the State Programme 2011–2020 it is pointed out that there is work being done on informatisation in terms of decreasing the number of students per one computer, especially in rural areas, and also providing access to Internet, which was already 97% for rural schools in 2011, raised from 70% in 2005. The need for more children to attend kindergartens in rural areas is also commented, since only 5 out of 100 children attend them, while in urban areas this is every third child. In rural areas 68,6% of schools are ungraded. Also, the number of profession-oriented schools with dormitories is rising, especially in rural areas. Some of the aims in the programme are to provide 100% of secondary schools in rural areas with canteens by 2020 and to ensure medical examinations for all school children, including those in rural areas, by 2015. The problem of ungraded schools will be solved with supporting schools, boarding schools, and transportation services.

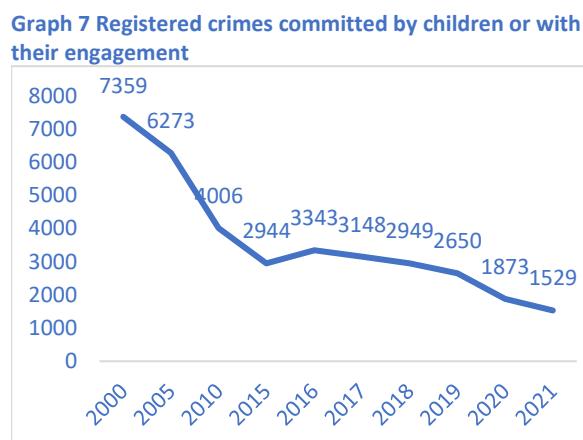
In the State Programme 2016–2019 the analysis mentions the issues with qualification of teachers in rural areas and ungraded schools.

In the State Programme 2020–2025, similarly to the previous program, key issues are: there are no effective mechanisms for attracting and retaining qualified teachers to schools, especially schools in rural areas; there is a huge gap in quality of school education, especially in rural areas, according to international studies like PISA; there is insufficient coverage of extracurricular activities for schools in remote areas. It is indicated that as a result of the implementation of measures to improve the quality of education and science, 100% of support schools in rural areas will be provided with boarding schools. Also, it is envisaged to equip rural general education and "vulnerable" schools with teaching materials, computer equipment and digital technology.

In the National project 2021-2025 one of the tasks is to improve the quality of secondary education: reducing the gap in the quality of education between regions, urban and rural schools in Kazakhstan.

- Children with risk behaviour and children in conflict with the law

Children who have committed a crime and children who commit so-called "status offences", which include acts that would be criminal in nature if committed by adults; child victims and child witnesses of crimes are one of the most vulnerable social groups. *"Minors can become at risk of coming into conflict with law as a result of poverty, parental use of alcohol and drugs; parental separation; lack of parental attention; and desire for independence, including financial independence"*⁷⁹. Children in conflict with the law are also indicated as one of the groups at risk of missing out education and becoming dropouts from school in view of past experiences⁸⁰.



Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

The number of registered crimes committed by children or with their engagement shows a positive trend of decrease between 2000 and 2021. This number has fallen the most drastically between 2000 and 2015 but is currently still decreasing (graph 7).

*"The only correctional facility for boys had 52 residents in 2017, with 4 convicted girls residing separately in the women's colony in Almaty region. Juveniles graduating from school while in detention are issued with regular school certificates that do not identify their location, and the boys learn professions such as mechanic or carpenter, work in the facility and receive salaries in their bank accounts"*⁸¹.

Only in the State Programme2020–2025, there is a mention that children committing crimes is an issue, there is an increase in child and adolescent crime and there is a need to strengthen educational work, but there are no specific measures related to children in conflict with the law.

- Children from linguistic and ethnic minorities

"They learned three languages in 1st grade, this was also very difficult, now they change it to two, but still. They were told they would choose 1 operational language for the kid, but there aren't enough materials in Kazakh, so we chose Russian. The programme itself has a lot of flaws, the general in language. What is good is that there is a topic that appears in all the subjects, but the problem remains that is too much in volume" (Dual interview with parents)

"She spoke Russian before 8 years old. Then we were living in Aktau, close to Atyrau, she went to 1st grade school, and they didn't have Russian class. So, she went to Kazakh class, and she was stressed, her speaking development stopped, she was 1st grade but with 2nd grade, that's why she was stressed, then she switched to 1st grade. There was no individual approach and had to switch languages and this caused the issues" (FGD with parents)

Kazakhstan is a country with a wide range of ethnicities. According to the statistical yearbook Children of Kazakhstan⁸², at the last census, conducted in 2009 the ethnic composition of children was

Kazakhs 72%, ethnic Russians 16% and ethnic Uzbeks 3.8%. Other groups of minorities include Uighurs (1.5%) Ukrainians (0.9%), and Germans (0.8%). Kazakhstan is predominantly Muslim (70%), roughly one-quarter of the population is Christian (26%), and 3.5% of the population is designated "other" or has no religious affiliation. Ethnicity and language are pointed out as risk factors for children missing education⁸³. For purpose of providing equal educational opportunities and access to educational services, there are schools in Kazakhstan with various languages of instruction for organisation of the learning process in these schools⁸⁴.

„Only Russian, we have just one Kazakh grade. The population is changing and there are not enough Kazakh schools, now a lot of schools are getting mixed and introducing Kazakh grades“ (Dual interview with parents)

However, learning several languages could be stressful and challenging for students, especially from vulnerable groups. Parents share that even if it's important that the child firstly learns the maternal language, they often don't have enough opportunities to choose it, especially children at an early age and with SEN.

In the State Programme 2011–2020 special attention is paid to teaching the Kazakh language, preparing teachers, and training materials, therefore ensuring access to ethnic minorities to understand the language of instruction. A new system of continuous learning of the Kazakh language "kindergarten – school, vocational lyceum, college – higher educational institution" will be created which will allow every Kazakhstani citizen to acquire the state language in full.

In the State Programme 2016–2019 it is stated that starting from 2017, elements of a multilingual education programme with the study of Kazakh, Russian and English languages will be gradually introduced in all organizations of preschool education and training. Domestic textbooks and teaching materials for language disciplines will be developed in accordance with the Unified Language Standard for Teaching Three Languages, which will ensure the achievement of a new quality of teaching technologies, the development of a modern educational, methodological, and scientific and pedagogical base.

In the State Programme 2020–2025, again, there is an emphasis on developing communication skills in three languages, but with a priority on the state language through methodological and scientific support for education, including in-depth study of the Kazakh language and literature.

- Migration

Children affected by migration in Kazakhstan may be exposed to multiple threats to their rights, such as forced labour, physical abuse, and even trafficking⁸⁵. *“Despite significant efforts in recent years, including widening access to early childhood education, extending compulsory education to Grade 12 and stipulating that all permanent and temporary migrants and stateless children are eligible to education while living in Kazakhstan, a small number of children are not enrolled in school, particularly pre-school education and upper-secondary”*⁸⁶.

Graph 8 Share of children and teenagers aged 0-17 years from the total number of international migrants



Source: Bureau of National Statistics, Kazakhstan

Migrant children are at risk of becoming dropouts and often get excluded from education due to risk factors such as language of instruction and administrative hurdles. Some of the measures against this include removing administrative barriers, developing clear regulations, ministries working jointly to address the issues, schools being made aware of their obligation to enrol seasonal migrant children, among others⁸⁷. The share of children aged 0-17 from the total number of international migrants has decreased between 2010 and 2016, but after that there is a slight increase, while now in 2020, it is still lower than 2010 (graph 8).

Only in the State Programme 2011–2020 it is pointed out among the challenges: increase in the number of children on the pre-school waiting list and shortage of school places caused by demographic processes (increasing birth-rate) and migration. There are no specific measures to address the needs of those group of children.

The analysis of the availability of priorities and activities related to different groups of children in the three state programmes and national project shows that two groups are included in all the programmes and the national project and these are children with SEN and children with disabilities, as well as children living in remote areas (table 17, [annex 9.10.3](#)). Children migrants and children in conflict with the law are only mentioned in one of the programs, while gender disparities are not addressed in any programs. It should be noted that this division of groups is rather tentative, in order to facilitate the analysis of the priorities, but in terms of needs, it is very significant that more often children can belong to several groups at the same time. For example, children from rural areas often also fall into the group from low-income families and when they also have a disability, it is more difficult to meet their needs due to limited access to services, so there is a bigger need for additional support in view of access to quality education and other aspects.

When it comes to presence of SEN, the 2007 Law on Education provides a definition of persons with special education needs, referring to those who experience constant or temporary difficulties in education due to health reasons.

As it was noted above, in the Conceptual Approach from 2015 a definition is introduced regarding inclusive education and the inclusion of persons with SEN, including different vulnerable categories of children, among which children with disabilities, ethnic minorities, children in vulnerable social situations, etc. This means that the group of children with special needs includes different subgroups.

"In the country, we excluded children with disabilities from general education and we created special schools for them. Until 2021, in the Law on education the understanding of SEN was incorrect. We didn't distinguish between children with SEN and children with disabilities. We now know there are many different categories of children with SEN." (KII with national representative)

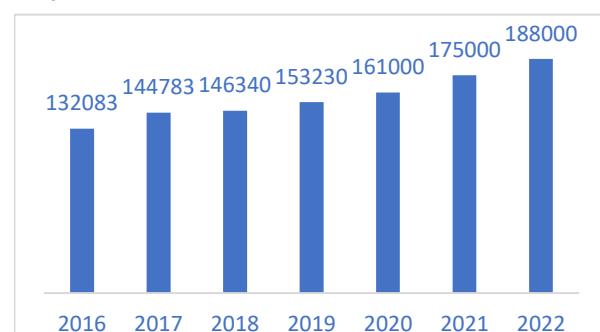
*education"*⁸⁸.

The new Law on amendments and additions to legislative acts on issues of inclusive education from 2021 amends the definition: "persons (children) with SEN - persons (children) who experience permanent or temporary needs in special conditions for receiving education of the appropriate level and additional

This shows that in the period from 2011 – 2021 there is a development in the definition of children with special needs and therefore the policy and programmes addressing these needs.

According to different sources of information, the number of children with SEN is steadily increasing in the period from 2016 to 2022. In 2017, the number of children with SEN up to 18 years old is 144 783⁸⁹, while in 2018 the respective number is 146 340 according to the National reports on the state and development of the education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan (from 2017 to 2020)⁹⁰ and until 2022 it has increased to 188000⁹¹ (graph 9).

Graph 9 Number of children with SEN



Source: Multiple sources, incl. calculation of the authors

6.1.4. AMENDMENTS AND CHANGES IN STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATION IN VIEW OF THE CHANGING CONTEXT

Education is a sector directly related to **socio-economic development**, so it has a significant contribution to developing the economy. The educational system needs to boost development through shaping children into citizens who are well-integrated into society and achieve social mobility, but at the same time it needs to adapt to the ever-changing context in terms of socio-economic development and other external factors (Covid-19, digitalisation).

Since 2000, Kazakhstan has made significant progress in reducing poverty and building a middle class due to the market-oriented reforms. *“Kazakhstan’s economy grew at an average annual rate of 6.8 percent between 2001 and 2016. Kazakhstan’s poverty rate dropped from 55 percent of the population in 2006 to 20 percent in 2015, as the middle class grew from 10 percent to 25 percent. Sustained economic growth has transformed the country into an upper middle-income economy, commensurately raising living standards and reducing poverty. This progress, however, masks vulnerabilities and unevenness in the country’s development model. Slowing economic growth, growing inequality and elite capture, and weak institutions reflect the flaws of the resource-based and state-led growth model and raise the risk that Kazakhstan could become stuck in the “middle-income trap.”*⁹² *“In 2015, the poverty rate was 8 percent in Almaty and Astana cities (average for the two cities), 15 percent in other urban areas, and 25 percent in rural areas. Similarly, close to half (45 percent) of the population in Almaty and Astana is estimated to have been in the middle class in 2015, compared with 28 percent in other urban areas and 18 percent in rural areas”*⁹³.

All the state education programmes reflect the differences, as indicated in the previous part, target children from rural areas, as well as the differences in the educational services across the areas, which means they reflect the unequal socio-economic development in the regions. At the same time, for the period of 10 years in the scope of the evaluation, this topic is still current and hasn't found a solution, although it appears in each programme.

2020 is a very challenging year for the whole world, including for Kazakhstan's economy. The fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the economy even more than the crises in 2008 and 2015. According to the report from 2020 „Kazakhstan economic update: Navigating the crisis“, it is estimated that *“Kazakhstan’s poverty rate will increase to 12-14 percent in 2020. The pandemic has hit severely retail, hospitality, wholesale, and transport sectors, which account for around 30 percent of employment, and are mostly concentrated in cities. However, the most significant increase in the number of the poor is expected to come from rural areas, which can increase inequality in Kazakhstan”*.⁹⁴ The negative effect over the children is also significant: *“According to the Ministry of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in 2020, 7 291 children with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 were registered in the Republic of Kazakhstan.”*⁹⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic impacts globally on the education concept revision. New educational trends have emerged in the world due to the distance education experience. Education is moving towards digital content. The special organisation "Education Week", recognising the cost and logistical problems of the blended learning, suggests that in general students could attend only certain core subjects in school; vulnerable student groups such as those with SEN or immigrants learning the language of a country may attend the school offline; distance learning and traditional learning could be combined using best practices and distance learning experiences during school closure.⁹⁶

In order to address the new situation, computers were purchased, and teaching staff was trained for working in the new conditions. However, the issue of education quality became significant. The analysis from the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 by UNICEF and UNDP demonstrated that the education system of Kazakhstan was not ready to transfer all learning online to distance learning in the context of the pandemic. The lack of necessary technical support was among the main problems. Educational organizations often used different apps to organize training instead of using educational platforms. Furthermore, some students did not have the necessary technical equipment such as computers, laptops or tablets and had to use smartphones for distance learning.⁹⁷ The issues related to distance learning are confirmed by parents, teachers, and students' participants in focus groups.

The period of the pandemic was challenging and despite the efforts of teachers, the studying process was not effective for children, and they were not motivated, there was a lack of control and parents of children with special needs had to take part and help them study at home or fully replace the teachers.

Digitalization of the education sector is a requirement of the modern world; this issue has acquired particular relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the transition to a distance learning format. the availability of modern computer technology is a basic condition for digitalization of the educational process. *"Over the past 13 years, there has been a positive growth in the number of computer equipment used in the educational process. In addition, there is a reduction in the difference in the availability of modern computer technology between urban and rural colleges"*⁹⁸.

According to the Law on education, the state provides conditions of creation of informational and communication infrastructure of electronic tutoring with use of ICT⁹⁹.

The topic of digitalisation appears in the State programme2011-2020 – *"work is underway to develop informatization of education. There are currently 18 students per computer. In 2005, this indicator was 41, including 36 in rural areas. 98% of schools are connected to the Internet, rural schools - 97% (in 2005 - 75% and 70% respectively). 34% of schools have access to broadband Internet"*.

According to the State Programme2016-2019, there will be an opportunity for students to access a wide range of digital educational resources from anywhere with Internet access. Thus, it is stated that each student could determine the pace of learning and not be tied to the lesson and the teacher. It is envisioned that at least two subjects, starting from the basic school, will be taught using online resources.

In the State Programme2020-2025 it is stated that *"as part of the implementation of the World Bank's project "Modernization of Secondary Education", it is envisaged to equip rural general education and "vulnerable" schools with teaching materials, computer equipment and digital technology"*.

"We had online lessons, we had notebooks with everything. The teachers did very good, but students were not motivated like this, I had low grades, but this is not the fault of the teachers, there is just lack of control like that, they conducted lessons even with 2 people on Zoom." (Interview with student)

"I had computer tasks, but mostly through phones, I wrote something in copybooks, then we took pictures and sent to teachers." (FGD with students)

"I had lessons during the pandemic for her at home, buses were not functioning, and taxis were expensive, it was difficult to go anywhere. But my daughter didn't accept me as a teacher, only a mother, and wanted someone else. She mostly rejects some tasks still now and she prefers specialists, although she is a bit more understanding to her mother as well." (FGD with students)

To address the challenges, "Kazakhstan developed and adopted the national project Educated Nation 2021-2025. This includes ensuring the availability and quality of preschool education and training, reducing gaps in the quality of education, and ensuring a safe and modern learning environment."¹⁰⁰

*"The number of computers used in the educational process has increased 3 times. The number of interactive whiteboards in full-time state schools has almost doubled. Over the past five years, 728,026 computers have been purchased for schools, including 343,449 units in rural schools. In order to update the computer equipment fleet, as of 2021, more than 70 thousand computers have been written off."*¹⁰¹

According to the data from the National Report 2021 on the State and Development of the Education System of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in recent years, there has been a development in terms of digitalisation in education in Kazakhstan in view of an increase in the provision of ICT tools in preschools. *"These include personal computers, multimedia projectors, touch screen interactive whiteboards, and developmental virtual games. The total number of computers used in preschools for educational purposes is 2,979, with 1,687 in urban areas and 1,292 in rural areas, or 27.4% of the total number of POs. Total ECEC centres, equipped with ICT equipment in 2021 increased by 216. The largest share of POs equipped with ICT equipment is in Atyrau region (59.2%) and Astana (53.8%), and the smallest share is in North Kazakhstan region (12.2%)..."* Additionally, the data shows that the number of computers used in the educational process in secondary schools has increased three times – over the past five years, 728 026 have been purchased for schools, including 343 449 units in rural schools".¹⁰²

The observations conducted in selected schools in the country show that digitalisation is an ongoing process that has begun, but a lot of development is still needed. There are differences between schools in rural and urban areas. In rural areas there aren't whiteboards or technologies apart from one classroom in the school and there is no adequate Internet connection. At the same time, in urban schools there is Internet and better equipment but still in a limited number of classrooms and not available for all students and all the schools.

In summary, the educational policy and programmes are in accordance with international documents, orienting education towards equity for all, including children with different level of abilities and socio-economic background. Inclusive education is not in a separate program, but rather an integral part of current educational policy and reform. The early identification and early childhood development and care for children with SEN are still not addressed in the programs, so the level of relevance with this priority is lower. Not all state programmes and documents reflect the concept of disability in the country and the transition from a medical to a pedagogical model and this transition appears towards the end of the period at the scope of the evaluation. The work to support parents and ensure their participation is also insufficiently addressed in the programs.

National policy on inclusiveness in education is oriented toward providing opportunities for children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions to be equally included in the educational process together with the rest of the children in line with the Constitution and the Law "On Education". During the period in the scope of the evaluation the children with SEN are defined with permanent or temporary difficulties due to health reasons (2007 Law on education), in 2015 the concept includes additional groups such as children with disabilities, migrants, and refugees, kandas (ethnic Kazakh returnees), national minorities and children in vulnerable social situations, while in regulations in 2022, the concept outlines the needs of children in terms of support by the educational system, instead of listing the different groups in need of support. The State Education Programmes are developed and address the needs of the different groups of children following the way in which the concept of special education needs develops. In terms of different groups of children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, the most addressed in the programmes are the needs of children with disabilities and children in rural areas, while the needs of children migrants and in conflict with the law are the least addressed.

Different external factors influence the level of relevance of the policies and the possibility to adapt to the changing environment. In the period of assessment these are the pandemic and challenges due to

the changing context, which have a significant effect on the participation of children with SEN in the educational process, creating newly emerging obstacles and barriers towards their inclusion.

6.2. COHERENCE

The coherence is analysed in terms of internal coherence, horizontal and vertical integration, as well as partnership and collaboration between the different stakeholders. The level of internal coherence and logic of the state education programmes is influenced by the availability of needs analysis used as a basis of planning; strengths/weaknesses; priorities, tasks, and relationships between them. The horizontal and vertical integration are key points in the implementation process, relationships between different sectors and executive bodies and outline the approach of implementation.

6.2.1. INTERNAL COHERENCE AND LOGIC OF THE STATE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The State Programme 2011-2020 introduces a key indicator related to inclusive education for the first time, which has a serious significance in terms of boosting its development and is the first step of the government in the process of creating a focused policy on this issue. According to what was shared during interviews with key informants, until then, the topic of inclusiveness existed in the field but without clarity what is the goal, how it could be achieved and without understanding it fully.

"When it will become a responsibility of politicians that inclusion is a policy, not a formal type of studying at school" (KII with NGO representative)

"The government should take care for children, should have responsibilities for children, but sometimes it is not fulfilling its responsibilities". (KII with national representative)

Each of the next State education programmes and the National project keep inclusiveness in their focus, but to a different extent. Every programme has its own logic, including planning at different levels, which, although defined differently, are related to the overall goal, specific goals, tasks/priorities, SWOT analysis, and indicators which are quantitative and measurable. It is notable that the logic of planning of the State programme 2011-2020 follows the priority areas like teacher qualification, financing, management and, at the same time, the levels of education like pre-school and primary, secondary, vocational, higher. The State programme 2016-2019 and the National project follow solely the logic of the educational levels. The State programme 2020-2025 is rather focused on priority areas, including different components of the educational reform like modernization of pedagogical education, reducing the gaps between urban and rural schools, implementation of quality assessment system, safe and comfortable learning environment, etc.

Each of the State programmes has a short introductory part, indicating main issues and challenges, as well as data regarding issues that have been identified. An in-depth targeted analysis has not been identified in none of the State programmes or National project, although in different reports of organisations such analyses could be found, but the programmes do not refer to them. Available data shows that between 2015 and 2021 every year a National report on the State and Development of the Education System of the Republic of Kazakhstan is made and is published with a lot of data following the indicators from the State programs, but they are rather descriptive, without analysis identifying the main issues. This is also confirmed by some participants in the KIIs and they think this is an issue, since the capacity for evidence

"I tried to find an analysis of the situation the way I understand it. The Ministry should make an analysis and research to identify problems and then make a plan...I didn't find such an analysis...." (KII with national representative)

"I think in Kazakhstan they just don't quite understand how to do this. Because this was a top-down initiative, first the goal was we're going to be 90% inclusive or 80% by 2019. Then when that didn't happen, it's now 2022. Like baby steps, principals are accepting more children, but still a lot of kids are home schooled or turned down by the principals if he/she can get away with it." (KII with academia representative)

generation and lack of analysis leads to a number of challenges in the planning process such as overlapping of the period of implementation and the main topics and priorities, as well as a lack of upgrading and continuing based on the previous program.

Only in the State programme 2020-2025 there is analysis based on the results from the previous period with the level of achievement of indicators so far, while the programme for 2016 mainly focused on what has happened in educational development during the period 2011-2015, without mentioning the previous State programme and its indicators. The National project also doesn't contain such analysis.

Due to the way priorities are identified and the main tasks are planned, the topic of inclusive education could be seen as a cross-cutting point and in the different priority areas. Although the topic appears in all of the programmes in certain parts, it is not subject to separate policy and planning but rather a part of the planned tasks on the other issues. When it comes to the internal structure and logic of different programmes and the place of inclusive education in them, the analysis shows that the topic could be found in different levels, but not in the overall goal and it could be measured through different indicators in the three programmes and the project.

In the State programme 2011-2020 it is stated that inclusive education has not been developed yet referring to children with disabilities and the coverage of

Figure 1 State Programme 2011–2020

The program goal is to increase competitiveness of education and development of human capital through ensuring access to quality education for sustainable economic growth.

The specific program aims include: ensuring equal access of all participants of the educational process to the best educational resources and technologies; full coverage of children with preschool education and training; ensuring equal access of children to various programs to prepare them for school; ensuring life-long education.

The specific program objectives include: improvement of the inclusive education system in schools; creating conditions for life-long education, education for all.

"We criticised this indicator, what it means for a school to be inclusive...but now I understand that this was important...in our country when we have a clear indicator everybody should report on it, this is important in Kazakhstan. That's why we say it is important to have this policy and we shouldn't ask where this indicator come from, but rather we should also support this policy." (KII with representative of an international organisation)

pre-school education. The analysis of the programme (figure 1) shows that the specific aims include components like access to quality education, full coverage of preschool education and life-long education for all, but these conditions are not enough to fulfil the overall goal of the programme in terms of inclusiveness. The improvement of the inclusive education system in schools, which is included in the

programme objectives, seems like a different topic and if a connection is sought between the aims and the objectives, it could be seen through access and coverage. As it is indicated above, the State programme introduced an indicator related to creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education and set a target of 70%, which had to be achieved until 2020. Most of the stakeholders share that in the process of identification of the analysis, it was unclear what are the favourable conditions for inclusive education, but they still believe that setting an indicator was a good starting point. The State programme for 2016-2019 states that the issues with access of children with SEN to the education system is still current in view of creation of appropriate conditions, as well as highlights the need for teachers with special education.

The analysis of the programme (figure 2) shows that the issues haven't changed, neither the programmes significantly. In the overall goal, there is an addition of science to the priority areas. Inclusion is ensured

through access mostly, but also through quality in terms of educating citizens. The tasks in the programme are related to the quality of teaching staff, school infrastructure, updating the content and management and monitoring. It should be noted that there seem to be clearer connections between the elements of the program.

The analysis of the State programme for 2020-2025 (figure 3) shows that there is a low share of pre-school and secondary school institutions, which have created conditions for

inclusive education and a shortage of specialists to support children in an inclusive environment. The goal of the programme is similar to the other programs, with more emphasis on the development of science. The specific objectives include a specific mention of inclusive education and its components and are in additional directions in comparison with the other programmes— addressing the gap between urban and rural areas and the need for a safe and comfortable learning environment. The connection between the programme goal and specific objectives could be seen more clearly in view of universal values and targeting inequalities.

The analysis of the National Project for 2021-2025 shows that, again, the goal is oriented towards improvement of the quality of education at all levels, while the specific programme aims are also focused on access and equity and creation of favourable conditions. As in the previous program, the objectives are related to reducing inequalities, safe environment and reducing the gap between rural and urban schools. There is also an emphasis on modernization and amendments to state standards for preschool education, as well as expansion of the PMPC network. In terms of inclusiveness and equity in education, different activities are planned, directly oriented towards the achievement of the aims.

6.2.2. HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

Inclusive education is a complex and multifaceted concept and the needs of children in vulnerable situations require integrated type of work between the different sectors in order to achieve quality education and inclusion of all groups at school. The integrated approach is related to the coordination and delivery of services across multiple sectors and agencies. The aim is to provide a more holistic and effective response to the needs, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations. Integrated

Figure 2 State Programme 2016-2019

The **programme goal** is to improve the competitiveness of education and science, developing human capital for sustainable economic growth.

The **specific programme aims** include: providing equal access to quality pre-school education and training; providing equal access to high-quality secondary education to educate intellectually, physically, spiritually developed, and successful citizens.

Figure 3 State Programme 2020-2025

The **programme goal** is to increase the global competitiveness of Kazakh education and science, to educate and train people based on universal values, as well as to increase the contribution of science to the socio-economic development of the country.

The **specific programme objectives** include: addressing the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive education; providing a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment.

systems are of particular significance for the most disadvantaged groups, who often face complex issues, requiring coordinated efforts and solutions across different sectors and systems.

The key institution that is focused on inclusive education is the MoE. The issues of children with SEN are also in the scope of activities of the MH and the MLSP. In the country there is no single authorized institution or structure, which should follow the development of the quality of inclusive education, rather it is in the scope of work of the different ministries, sectors, NGO, and parent community, which determines the need for them to work together.

The competence of each authorised body in the field of education, health, and social protection, as well as local government bodies, is prescribed in the Law on Social and Medical-Pedagogical Correctional Support for Children with Disabilities to organise education, healthcare, and social protection of the population. The law requires concerted action on the part of authorised bodies of education, health care, social protection¹⁰³.

The MH is responsible for offering quality health care to all children. Health care institutions are also responsible for identification and categorisation of health and developmental issues from early stages of life. For this, the MH has developed early development screening, involving checks from the first days. Health care centres that depend on the MH are also responsible for defining and determining the disabilities (mental/physical) in adults and children older than 16 years. All the primary health centres that are regulated by MH provide services and information to children with disabilities and can be involved in the early development of the child. All these primary health centres have a separate room to counsel parents of children with disabilities and persons with disabilities. Other institutions involved directly in delivering care and rehabilitation programmes for children with disabilities are RCs for children 0-18 years old¹⁰⁴. In addition, home visiting programmes are also implemented in the country in order to support families with newborns.

The MLSP is one of the main governmental bodies involved directly in social protection of persons with disabilities, social assistance and social services, migration, labour, and employment. Some of the functions related to children are identification of disabilities and the system of benefits. Considering the social and economic conditions of a family (e.g. dependent on whether the parents are employed or unemployed), the MLSP decides on the allowances and the type of help they need¹⁰⁵.

The MoE is the governmental body responsible for providing all children with the proper education in accordance with their needs¹⁰⁶. Within the educational system of Kazakhstan there are different types of schools: comprehensive school, ungraded school, gymnasium, lyceum, boarding schools, specialized school (specialized - by profile: music school, sports school, etc.), special school (differentiated by category - for children with hearing, vision, speech, musculoskeletal and intellectual impairment)¹⁰⁷.

The Committee for the Protection of Children's Rights under the MoE is a department that implements state policy of protecting the rights and legitimate interests of children.¹⁰⁸ It performs regulatory, implementation and control functions, and also participates in the performance of strategic functions of the central executive body within the competence of the Committee.¹⁰⁹ To guarantee the rights and legitimate interests of children and to restore their violated rights and freedoms, the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan established the Institute of the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child (ICRC), which operates on a voluntary basis and in cooperation with state and public institutions.¹¹⁰

According to some reports and analysis, there are rules for the coordination between the sectors. For example, the certification rules for social workers are developed and approved by the authorised body in social protection of the population (MLSPP) in agreement with the authorised body in education (MES). The standards for the provision of special social services in healthcare are being developed by MH in coordination with the authorised bodies in social protection of the population (MLSP) and education (MES)¹¹¹. The integration between the three sectors is manifested in the way in which the identification of needs and referral of services is done.

The Law on the introduction of amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of inclusive education (2021)¹¹² determines the procedure for organizing

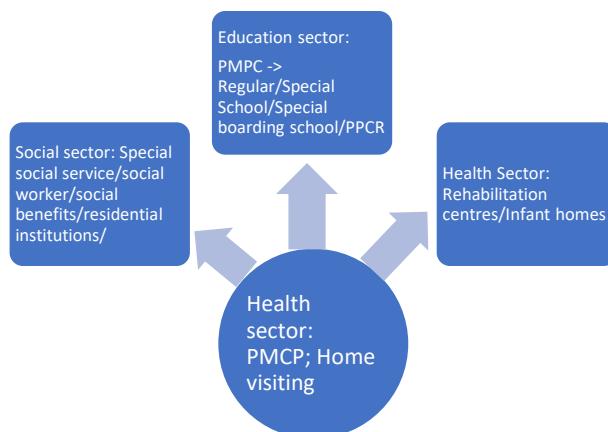
screening for the earliest possible identification of children in risk groups, which needs to happen through collaboration between the different sectors.

In spite of the mentioned rules for coordination between the sectors, the data from the research shows that according to stakeholders such a mechanism is not implemented in practice. This leads to challenges, especially when working with children from vulnerable groups with different vulnerabilities. The lack of clear coordination between the sectors is seen through the stories shared by parents of children with SEN. Their "road" to receiving services appropriate for their children starts from diagnosis of the needs and referral to

"Another issue is horizontal integration between systems like social, education and health, they work in parallel, not together, even the bosses of these institutions don't talk to each other. In the same time, the children with SEN need sport and education, integrated services." (KII with NGO representative)

"How do you work together with the other sectors? - It's a difficult question. - There is no institutionalised mechanism for coordination between the three sectors? - No, but we meet and discuss cases and barriers. The process is actually happening. This is a process." (KII with national representative)

Figure 4 Identification and referral



the respective structures. At the beginning, parents are supported by the health system and a screening is made, based on which a diagnosis and possible treatment is prescribed. From there, children are referred to different services in the three sectors where the diverse needs in view of their vulnerability are satisfied (social, health, educational) (figure 4).

The entry point from the health system could sometimes cause additional challenges. *"There is some anecdotal evidence that health professionals even sometimes encourage or advise parents to abandon their children with disabilities,*

*especially to place them in institutions"*¹¹³.

In addition, one of the main problems, shared by parents and other stakeholders, is screening and early intervention.

For the purpose of understanding horizontal integration, it is important to analyse the degree to which the state programmes address the issues in terms of the integration between the three sectors in view of inclusivity of education. The State Programme 2011-2020 refers to the engagement of the social sector in terms of achievement of certain indicators by MLSP. The State Programme states 2016-2019 as a key issue in ECD the lack of focus on the age 0 to 3, where foundations are laid for the cognitive and intellectual child development. *"A comprehensive solution to the problems of early childhood development will require coordination and concerted action in the areas of education, health and social protection, as well as the broad inclusion of the parent community."*

The State Programme 2020-2025 sets goals for optimizing public services the provision of public services in the field of special and inclusive education, *"within which Health and social protection*

"There is stigma, I do love 'sunny people', but some women going pregnant to gynaecologist, when they see that the child has Down syndrome and they advise to terminate the pregnancy. There is a cultural stigma, people try to avoid it and hide it from the family. If there are a few cases, it's ok, if they are more, we fear. People said I should terminate it, my husband would leave me, etc. We have discrimination against complex needs and disabilities, intellectual disabilities." (Dual interview with parents)

information systems will be integrated, which will allow PMPCs to switch from a "medical" to a "pedagogical" model".

All of this means that there are no identified cross-sectoral policies and integration is still not a topic in the focus of the programs. The three sectors work separately with their own budgets and structures. *"The system is fragmented, sectorial and tend to work in silos, with Ministries of health, education, and social protection each developing their own standards for the provision of special social services and requirements and qualifications of social workers/social teachers in it. Equally, there is no unified and single authority responsible for protection of the children, regardless of their status, or responsible for social work at the local level"*¹¹⁴. Additionally, governmental integrated services have not been identified, apart from a few NGOs and private centres using an integrated approach in service provision.

"For 30 years, the health system has degraded in the area of prevention of disabilities, there is no early intervention, it is only written in legislation, but does not happen in practice. There isn't enough equipment or specialists to do hearing or vision screening. Also, the quality of screening is an issue and the subsequent treatment. Such services are provided in some NGOs, but we don't even have a concept, early intervention is only mentioned once in health legislation, and this causes big issues. In this way the system generates children with disabilities. The International classification of functioning (ICF) is not used, the system of home visiting is not working. The integrated approach means that children receive medico-social support based on individual needs. Each system has its own budget, institutions, and structures at a local level, and they are not cooperating." (KII with NGO representative)

6.2.3. VERTICAL INTEGRATION

The planning and implementation of educational policy with a focus on inclusivity is done through a top-down approach, meaning that policy is planned at the national level and realised at the local level. Central authorities have the responsibility to develop an inclusion policy in education, considering the proposals and opinions of local authorities and other stakeholders such as parent community and NGOs. According to the Law on Education, the local government implements the state policy in the field, providing education for children in special curricula; material and technical support for state educational organisations; it directs funds to provide financial and material assistance to children from socially vulnerable groups, organises advanced professional training for employees, etc¹¹⁵.

At the national level, the research identified two institutions, related to implementation of policy and development of inclusive education in the country. The first one is the National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education¹¹⁶. It deals with issues of methodological, legal, and informational support for special education and carries out modelling of the system of early correctional and pedagogical assistance. Based on this, models of new services were organized, developed, and implemented, which later began to exist as PMPC, and RCs, PPCRs. All these types of organizations were included in the Law "On social and medical and pedagogical correctional support for children with disabilities", adopted in 2002.

"This is a national centre, we deal with children with disabilities and National Academy of education deals with other vulnerable groups. It was functioning since 1992, previously we were in charge with special education, later inclusive education was integrated, there were specialists within the school system, children withing groups 2 (children with learning difficulties) and 3 (children at risk of social exclusion) always had access to help...". (KII with national representative)

The second national institution is the National Academy of Education named after Y. Altynsarin¹¹⁷. One of the centres in its structure is the Inclusive Education centre with the goal to effectively manage the scientific-methodological and methodical provision of the content of inclusive education at all levels of education, scientific and methodical provision of the content of inclusive education in educational organizations of the country, etc.

"The Law on education we put there the responsibility of the principal of the school and local authorities to include children with SEN and to create conditions for these children...I think we should put responsibility for local authorities to have a responsibility and plan in advance. The major problem is that they are not planning, and schools are not planning that these children will come and how much money they will need." (KII with NGO representative)

When it comes to the role of the local level, as it was mentioned, it is related to implementation of the national policy. Some stakeholders express the opinion that local authorities do not have a responsibility to plan actions on the inclusion of

children with SEN.

The main local structure engaged with inclusive education is PMPC. PMPCs have different specialists with the task to assess the development level of children and provide recommendations to parents on which is the best type of education for their children (special kindergartens, general schools, special schools, correctional rooms). They also recommend the type of programme—general, adapted, or individual. The PMPCs could advise on working with assistant teachers at general schools or consult for using other services (psychological centres, RCs). The recommendations they give are for a certain period of time and after that they could be changed. It should be noted, however, that according to the last amendments of the legislation the final choice of school and educational service is of the parents. During the years the number of PMPCs has been increasing and the standards for opening them are changing (currently there should be 1 PMPC per 50 000 children, while before it was 1 PMPC per 60 000 children). In 2019, there were 75 PMPCs across the different regions in the country and currently there are 92.¹¹⁸¹¹⁹

The role and tasks of PMPCs are quite central to inclusive education in the country and discussed differently by the different stakeholders. The national level stakeholders believe PMPCs have a key role as entry to the system and their recommendations are important and necessary. Some professionals and parents express doubts that staff working in PMPCs might not have the necessary level of competence to assess the needs of the child, as well as empathy towards children. According to the parents, one of the serious issues is the long period they should wait for the meeting at the PMPC (two or more months in some cases). They often do not agree that they need to send their child to a special school, as well as with the decisions regarding using assistant teachers. They believe the staff should be changed and younger and more competent people should enter the system. It is also shared that the PMPCs are overcrowded and still not enough in number.

It should also be pointed out that national stakeholders share PMPCs should make recommendation only for children with learning needs and disabilities, instead of the other groups of vulnerable children. However, schools still recommend consultation from PMPC for different groups of children, since they don't

"PMPC is an establishment with old ladies doing assessments like in a factory, 20 people wait there and then they call you, look at you with angry face. A couple of times I've seen parents leave there with tears in their eyes. In the school they ask for conclusion from PMPC to admit you, for pre-school you don't need the assessment in some places, here they told me I need it. For kindergarten you need it. After scandals with PMPC I got it" (Dual interview with parents)

"PMPC decide only for the first two groups, they shouldn't decide for other vulnerable groups. There should be such a service at schools, but it doesn't function well, so maybe that's why they go to PMPC, it's more convenient." (KII with national representative)

have a structure to fulfil such a function effectively.

According to the conclusion of the PMPC, a child can be referred to a correction room (PPCRs) or RC, where examination and correctional and pedagogical activities are carried out. At the local level, PPCRs are another structure providing psychological and pedagogical support to children with special educational needs, but the stakeholders share that they work predominantly with children with disabilities at an early age. Correctional and pedagogical support for children with SEN is provided by 209 PPCRs¹²⁰ and their number has been increasing over the years. It is shared by professionals that

PPCRs work directly with children, they have speech therapist, psychologist, defectologist, music teacher, massage. Children go there 3 to 5 times a week for a period of 3-4 months. Correctional rooms are mostly for children in pre-school age, but children who are home schooled could also go to correctional rooms, if it is recommended by PMPC. At the same time, RCs are 13 in the country in the education sector¹²¹. Additionally, in all the country resource centres were established at the school level and their work is connected with support for professionals. These were established in the pilot schools, which started implementing inclusive education in the period 2015-2016.

In terms of the participation of the different sectors in the process of planning and implementation it should be noted that the state programmes do not contain information on the steps in the process of implementation of the tasks, only some of the ministries or local authorities are mentioned as responsible for the achievement of certain indicators, which means that the achievement of all goals and activities are the task of all institutions at the different levels of the educational system.

6.2.4. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The achievement of the goals of the national policy implies a serious level of collaboration between executive bodies, NGOs, and international organisations. The work of the national institutions on inclusive education in Kazakhstan involves a range of activities that aim to promote inclusive education practices and support the full participation of all learners in education. This work involves developing policies and strategies for inclusive education, providing training and support to teachers and other education professionals, developing, and implementing assessment tools and frameworks, and promoting community engagement and awareness-raising activities. To achieve these goals, the implementing agencies for inclusive education in Kazakhstan need to work closely with a range of external partners, including global partners, regional partners, other government bodies implementing partner programmes and interventions. These external partners can provide important support and resources that can help to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education policies and practices in Kazakhstan.

The role of global partners and international organisations is of key importance in the beginning to start developing inclusive education and give a boost in the right direction at the start, especially after the ratification of the Convention on the rights of the child. International organisations such as Open Society, Soros Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD provide guidance and technical support on best practices in inclusive education and help to facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing across different countries and regions through conducting research and making reports, as well as raising awareness through organising conferences and events, etc.

Partner programmes and interventions, such as those ran by local NGOs also provide important resources and expertise to support the implementation of inclusive education practices in Kazakhstan. Local NGOs create pilot models of interventions, but they are mostly related to disabilities. *"At the legislative level, NGOs, associations and other public organizations cannot participate in governance processes, but they make proposals to improve legislation in the field of protecting the rights of children, including children with special educational needs, participate in joint meetings, round tables, become members of national/regional working groups on issues of children with SEN. Associations, parent organizations and NGOs also can participate in the processes of implementing of state policy, different social, educational projects."*¹²² Some of the most important NGOs working in the field are Bolashak Corporate Fund¹²³, the Kenes Public Association of people with disabilities¹²⁴ and Private Fund Dara¹²⁵. These organisations create models, which are after that scaled in the whole country and become models of educational policy.

In addition, a number of private organisations and service providers such as private schools and centres (some of which created by parents) exist, which work in the private sector in parallel with governmental services. These are paid services, which are not affordable for all parents. They introduce new models of working with children either in the field of education or integrated support.

In summary, the analysis of internal coherence and logic of planning of the programmes shows that over the years, the overall goal in the different state programmes seems to remain the same and sustainable. It is unclear what is the degree to which each State programme is based on the previous one, complements and upgrades it. It seems that each programme has its own internal logic and is planned differently. Although they have similar priorities, the success of the programmes is also measured differently with different indicators.

The horizontal integration between the three sectors in the country in terms of inclusivity is not yet developed and not a focus of the education programmes and efforts at the country level and there is no integrated policy regarding inclusive education. Each sector has its own budget, structures, and referral mechanisms. Although at different levels there are attempts towards coordination and working together, there are no clear mechanisms for cooperation.

The national education policy with a focus on inclusivity is realised through all the national and local educational bodies and agencies. It is centralised with a top-down approach. Different institutions and services provide support for parents and children, but there is an issue with their professional capacity. Private organisations and NGOs also take part in work groups and provide information, but the decisions are made at the centralised level and implemented at the local level.

The work of national institutions, local NGOs, and private entities in terms of inclusive education is aligned with the work of external global partners, which give an initial boost to its development, provide guidance, conduct research, and raise awareness on the issues. NGOs participate in roundtables and meetings and provide proposals for changing legislation. In this sense, their role is related to advocacy activities in view of development of the regulatory framework. They also develop pilot practices which could be implemented at the national level. Private centres exist in parallel to the government system, filling the gaps in service provision that exist and the country doesn't provide.

6.3. EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness is analysed in view of the achievement of the goals, set by the different programmes and the indicators with a focus on inclusivity. In order to analyse this, a review is made of the understanding of inclusive education that changed over time. The planning, as well as the period in which the indicators should be achieved is considered. The outcomes are analysed in terms of their contribution towards the right of all children to be included in the education system. On the other hand, it is key which vulnerable groups have been reached by the intervention, how they have been reached and how this contributed to the fulfilment of their rights.

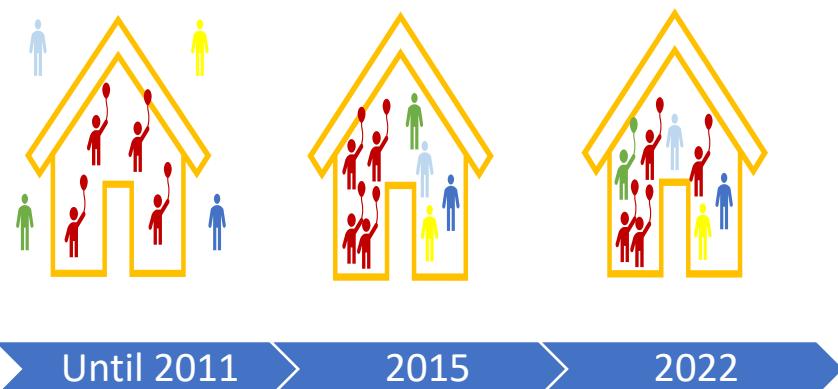
6.3.1. GOALS AND UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As it was indicated in the relevance part, the State Education programme 2011-2020 sets out the first indicator for creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education at schools. Before then, the children with SEN were rather subjects of special education and they were mainly taught in special schools. It should be noted that, although the topic of inclusive education is set out in it, the State programme 2011-2020 focuses more on integration than on inclusiveness. In other words, in the programme it is pointed out that the national policy, in terms of improvement of the inclusive education system in school plans to develop until 2015 “*modular programmes of integrated education for children with disabilities will be developed; rules of integrated education for children with disabilities in general education environment will be elaborated, and forms of integration for disabled children will be defined; rules of organization of distance learning for disabled children will be elaborated.*”

After that, on the road to inclusiveness in the next periods and state programs, respectively, a change in the understanding at the conceptual level could be seen, as well as efforts to integrate children in special classes or in general classes. It was defined who these children are, what is needed and how change should be achieved. While until 2011 children with SEN studied in separate special schools. Later, around 2015 there was evidence of change in view of integrating some children at the general school, but up to some degree still separated from the others in special classes. After that, a process of including children more in general classes was happening (figure 5).

The road to inclusiveness is also related to a transition from the medical approach to the bio-psycho-social approach to disabilities¹²⁶. The understanding of inclusive education develops in parallel with setting clear goals in policy towards inclusiveness. While for some stakeholders these goals are clear, others are still doubtful what they are.

Figure 5 Road to inclusiveness



"It is not entirely clear what is the goal of inclusive education, for example to place more children in general schools or to provide knowledge and education to children with SEN, because if the goal is for children to be at school, then this law has achieved this goal, but if it is how these children will learn in these school, then we have an issue...I think that until now they just wanted children to be at school" (KII with national representative)

When participants define their understanding of inclusive education, they don't talk about the goal, but rather of the vulnerable groups of children and confirm that it was and still is mostly associated with children with disabilities more than with the other vulnerable groups. However, there is a difference between the participants from the bigger cities

where now an understanding is appearing that inclusion is much broader and for children in different vulnerable situations, while in smaller towns and villages the focus is mostly still on children with disabilities.

"Previously there were different terms like disability and limits and now the concept is understood by not dividing people with special needs from others." (FGD with teachers)

"I am against inclusive education, it's difficult for kids with special needs to be mixed with regular kids because they don't learn as much, there is 0 result when they study in regular public schools." (FGD with teachers)

"Students with different financial possibilities or physical difficulties and limitations could be given equal opportunities like others, equal rights for all children." (FGD with teachers)

Still in some regions most teachers understand inclusive education through the lens of special needs children, children with physical and mental illness or needs, showing a narrowed understanding. Teachers don't speak much about other vulnerable groups (from socio-economically disadvantaged families, from institutional care, children from ethnic minorities, victims of violence). What's more, some teachers still

doubt the effectiveness of the process of inclusiveness, mostly in terms of the knowledge the children could receive. In view of understanding, the opinions of students are also important. Unlike adults, they rather understand inclusive education through the rights of children instead of through vulnerable groups.

6.3.2. ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OUTCOMES

The different programmes and project that are the object of evaluation have different outcomes and indicators related to inclusiveness of education. The State Education programme 2011 – 2020 sets out the main indicator, related to the creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education at schools, while in the next programmes the outcomes are related to the scope of attendance of pre-school, well-being index, receiving special support, etc.

- Percentage of schools that created favourable conditions for inclusive education - 70% (out of their total number)

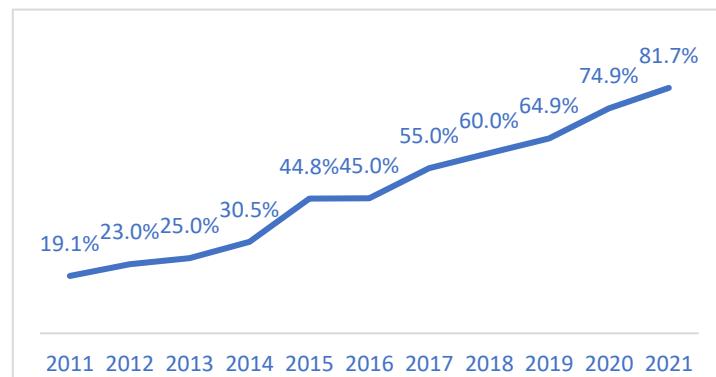
The first indicator related to creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education is introduced in the State Programme 2011-2020. The creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education is understood differently and developed across the years, primarily with a focus on physical access and equipment and later including teacher qualification and pedagogical changes. In 2011, the Law on education introduces the definition of the term “*special conditions for education*” – “*conditions that include educational, as well as special, individually developing and correctional-developing programmes and teaching methods, technical, educational and other means, living environment, psychological and pedagogical support, medical, social and other services without which it is impossible to master educational programmes by persons (children) with SEN, as well as children with disabilities*”¹²⁷.

The State Programmes introduce the indicator on favourable conditions for inclusive education, but there are differences in the explanation what it means, the second being more comprehensive than the first program. In the State Programme 2011-2020 there is a focus on “*the availability of teachers, defectologists, psychological-pedagogical accompaniment of children, and special individual technical and compensatory facilities*”, meaning on specialists and accessibility, while in the State Programme 2020-2025 the scope is enlarged, including technical materials and equipment, but specialists are only mentioned as personnel – “*equipping with special equipment, furniture, personnel, textbooks and educational and methodological complexes, ramps, lifts, elevators, etc.*”

The National Report on the State and Development of education 2016¹²⁸ indicates lifting devices, ramps, adapted hygiene rooms and special furniture as conditions for inclusive education, all related to physical access. The following year the national report reflects a change – “*due to the uncertainty of the concept of ‘conditions for inclusive education’, the indicators of the regions for their creation do not reflect an objective picture. When calculating the indicator of the share of schools that created the conditions for inclusive education, one school considers physical barrier-free access, another considers educational and methodological resources, the third considers the comprehensive provision of inclusive education, etc.*”¹²⁹

The changes in the understanding of this indicator continue and are reflected in the National Report from 2019 stating that the methodology for calculating the indicator has changed and is now more comprehensive, including elements of physical access like ramps and handrails, personnel, and methodological materials, but also special training programs¹³⁰. In the National report from 2021¹³¹, the availability of special equipment, teaching materials and special teachers are indicated.

Graph 10 Trends in the share of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education



Source: National Report on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021

In spite of the lack of clarity on how the indicator is calculated, the national data shows that the share of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education has increased for the 10-year period since 2011 and the target of 70% has been achieved (graph 10). When it comes to the regions, although the indicator is achieved at the national level, there are differences between the regions, (from 97% to 70% between the highest and lowest (graph 19, annex 9.10.4)). This could be due to different factors like understanding of the concept, readiness of the stakeholders, pedagogical resources and additional services, lack of information for parents, etc., which were identified during the field visit.

Although the national data states that the indicator of 70% has been achieved, the stakeholders don't see it and believe this is a long process that takes time and it is unrealistic to achieve this, probably because of a different understanding of what favourable conditions to create an inclusive school mean.

In comparison with the indicator in the state programmes focusing mostly on physical access, the understanding of the different stakeholders

"At the same time the big issue has to do with teacher training, which requires a lot of money, by 2030 is the closest date maybe to have 70%, the situation is even worse in villages." (KII with regional representative)

"This started in 2011 in the programme of education, to provide conditions to 70% of children at school. Is this realistic and what happens now? -It is not realistic now as well. There are many barriers, many schools, this takes a long time. It is long since 2011, this was not and is still not realistic, because the implementation is long. Even abroad there are barriers to this implementation, we constantly make changes in the documents." (KII with national representative)

"What do these conditions mean? - Specialists, cabinets, technical base, accessibility, methodological materials." (KII principal)

"In terms of the goal of the program, it was to create conditions for kids with unique needs. In 2011 nobody knew what inclusive education is about, but there were kids in need and conditions were awful, like equipment, teacher training, materials, so there was a political will to change this." (Dual interview principal, teacher)

regarding the favourable conditions of inclusive education also stresses on qualification of specialists and teaching materials.

To analyse the actual achievement of the indicator in view of the discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative data, a concept is implemented including the different criteria, specifying the indicator, having in mind the national definition in the law, what is outlined in the programmes and the opinions of specialists. Different articles and research confirm the five key elements that are aspects of operational

culture change necessary to create the schools of the future: leadership, pedagogy, capacity building, technology, and architecture¹³². The analysis of implementation of policy in terms of creating favourable conditions for inclusive education in school shows that the focus in the beginning was on architecture and physical access and it gradually included technology, pedagogy, and capacity building, while there is scarce indication of leadership.

In terms of **leadership**, there isn't data on the investment in development of this aspect in the state programmes, but it is of importance for the motivation and boost that schools need towards changing the environment. The path towards this change starts from leadership, which here is related to the understanding of inclusiveness, motivation for change at the school level, as well as personal motivation of the principals due to their life stories. Qualitative data shows that when the principal is motivated, the change could happen since there is activeness in terms of looking for solutions. Parents shared they were thankful to the leadership of schools, especially the principals (who have children or relatives with disabilities), who are open minded and welcoming.

When it comes to **pedagogy**, it is the most discussed topic by all stakeholders, which is due to the fact that in recent years, especially after 2016, a big number of children with SEN enter general schools and the issue how to work with them, with what approaches and materials, is very significant, particularly for teachers. According to the opinions of respondents there are three programs, on which children with SEN work – general, adapted, and individual. The type of the programme is recommended by PMPC, but specialists at the school could also make changes and recommendations

regarding this programme or change it if necessary. The general programme for all students is always followed as a starting point if it is necessary to make another type of program. As a result, in the individual programmes there are mainly tasks related to cognitive development and acquiring skills regarding study results, rather than adaptation, motivation, social skills, etc. Additionally, the adapted/individual programme includes difficulties, strengths and weaknesses, observation results, and surveys. Training methods are described in the programme and planned together with the teacher. The analysis does not give clear information about the difficulties for the child and the way to continue forward on how to work with the parents, should they receive additional support, etc. This is in itself not an individual program, related to the individual abilities of the child, but is rather educational, subject to the educational development of children and learning oriented.

The main role in educating all children is of general schoolteachers. Teachers have to implement the general curriculum for all children and at the same time apply an individual approach to children with SEN in the common classroom (according to the legislation, there can be up to 3 children with SEN in one class, one of which with autism, while usually there are around 30 children in total). At the same time, one of the characteristics of the

"Teachers are teaching the exact same curriculum to all children in the classroom and those who are learning disabled are forced to take lessons after school as a punishment instead of socialising, etc." (KII academia representative)

"The system is challenging enough for us, while for people with disabilities it might be even more challenging. Always wants to have very good grades. In Europe the students can choose which subject they prefer. Maybe you don't need all these subjects. But it is difficult to transfer this from somewhere else. Syndrome excellent student -To compare yourself to others and focus on the grades, that's what matters to the person..." (FGD with children)

educational systems in the country shared by stakeholders is the orientation towards learning and students share they have many tests and exams. The teaching process is oriented towards achievement of higher results, which could be challenging, as well as towards knowledge, rather than skills.

Assistant teachers have a supporting function in the adaptation of children with disabilities who also have behavioural needs in general classes, rather than in the pedagogical teaching and learning process. Parents shared not all children could have this additional support of assistant teachers, since they only work with children with difficult behaviour and are not enough on the whole. In spite of the key role of assistant teachers, there is still discussion on what they do exactly and how their effectiveness could be improved.

"There is another obligatory programme for him, supplementary education, this is why he doesn't attend certain classes, there is no room for him during these times. This is not due to the school, but gap in the system, I had to get an assistant at the school to help with certain subjects. The assistant helps with the studies, he also went to additional education to learn more about teaching approaches, that's why I also had to help him myself." (FGD with parents)

"They help the adaptation of children to the environment, they only work with children with behavioural problems, they accompany children, just like in US they are tutors. With time assistants might not be needed in some cases." (Dual interview with specialists)

"Tutors are like babysitters working with children separately." (KII with academia representative)

Apart from teachers and assistant teachers, children with disabilities and learning difficulties work with specialists in inclusive rooms at school. These specialists are speech therapists, defectologists, psychologists, working individually with the children outside of the regular school classes for between 20 to 40 min. lessons several times a week, depending on their needs. This amount of time is considered insufficient by parents. In terms of the used methodology, specialists share they use different methodology such as ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis) therapy, Numicon, Macathon, etc. Additionally, the specialists also have an educational function for children who need specific additional work on the general subjects. It should be noted that the development of capacity of specialists for

implementation of all these therapies requires a lot of different resources and is strictly related to the individual needs of students. Although specialists declare they use an individual approach towards students with SEN, a process of in-depth study of the individual needs has not been identified.

According to information provided by stakeholders, in the Kazakh education system, the role of ensuring the protection of the interests and rights of children from socially vulnerable segments of the population is performed by social pedagogues. According to legislation¹³³, the main function of a social pedagogue is the implementation of a set of measures for the upbringing, education, development of students, pupils in educational organizations, ensuring the adaptation of the individual to life in society. A social pedagogue works with difficult, problematic children from dysfunctional families, with disabled people who are lagging behind in their studies. He/she represents and protects the interests of children, controls their education in educational institutions, conducts educational work, helps to understand, and accept the laws of a civilized society, identifies the problems, personality and character traits, deviations in behaviour.

In general, the number and types of specialists working with children with disabilities and learning difficulties is far bigger than that of specialists working with other vulnerable groups of children. Specialists such as speech therapists and psychologists, as well as teachers and assistant teachers (for some children with behavioural problems) work with children with disabilities or learning difficulties. At the same time, only teachers and social pedagogues work with children at risk from other vulnerable groups.

"For Kazakh language there are not enough methodological materials. The materials are mainly developed in Russian and it takes time to translate them in Kazakh, this is slowly changing, but it is an issue for all the country. But the change takes time."

(Dual interview with parents)

All of these specialists and teachers need materials to work with all children, particularly those with special needs. Specialists from certain regions share that they don't have enough materials (especially in the respective language of instruction,

since materials in Russian language are more prevalent than those in Kazakh), while teachers in resource centres in the schools should provide resources to the rest of the schools in the region.

The implementation of all the programs, work with different groups of children and materials require special attention to teacher qualification and **capacity building**. The topic of training is included for all specialists with pedagogical education, including a small number of study hours and credits for inclusive education. It is also of big importance how the general teachers increase their qualification. They share it is difficult for them, since they take part in trainings, but feel this is not enough and are unprepared to work with children with special needs.

In terms of the aspect of **technology**,

national data shows that the schools are more equipped with technological resources in view of computers (graph 20 in annex 9.10.4 shows a sharp increase in the number of computer equipment used in the educational process since 2020, perhaps due to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic), interactive boards, connection to the Internet, etc.

"There are many workshops provided, but also a lot of paperwork. Not all teachers are prepared to work with special kids, they are now in general school. I have a student with delayed psychological development, and I am scared to work with them too, they don't like it when it's difficult or black colours are used. A teacher needs an assistant or a complex course, not 2 days workshops, I am an ordinary teacher who graduates, and many programmes have been reformed, I have to cope not only with special kids, but with 25 other eager and also talented students, one teacher is not enough." (FGD with teachers)

"Teacher's qualification doesn't work if they just go in many hours Zoom meetings to get a certificate from professional development day and they are bored. It should be spread over in 2 h for instance with tasks for the teacher during the whole school year." (KII with Academia representative)

At the same time, however, in the data collection process it was evident that computers are mostly in the computer rooms for the respective subject, while in the rest of the classrooms there are only computers for teachers. Observation data showed that there are still chalkboards and some whiteboards in the rooms and Internet connection is not always available in the whole school. Having in mind that using technology in the process of education could facilitate the learning process for different groups of children through different ways and improve the inclusiveness of education, the system in the country is still not equipped with sufficient resources, but the process has started.

The aspect of **architecture** in terms of physical access is discussed in the State Education programme 2011-2020, while the informational access is not commented on. Until 2019, when the indicator becomes more comprehensive, the favourable conditions for inclusive education are mostly related to physical access in terms of lifting devices, ramps, special fixtures in sanitary rooms, equipment with handrails, special desks, tables. Although the physical environment is improving, access was indicated as important by parents and other stakeholders in the qualitative study since some schools do not have elevators, so if the children with physical needs were to come to school, they had to arrange all the learning on the first floor only. Also, the data from observations confirms that efforts in terms of physical access have mostly been made for the entrances and access to the first floors of the buildings. It should be noted that school buildings are big, but in some schools more students study than the capacity of the building and have to go in three shifts. The classrooms are equipped with desks in the traditional way, which could make the physical access to them more difficult. It is also important that there is no informational access at schools in terms of enough and easy to understand information about the building, how to get where, different facilities and rooms, sanitary rooms, canteens, etc. Additionally, inclusive classrooms are separated from the rest of the building and certain children only go there for additional work with specialists. It could be stated that the environment in these rooms seems more child-friendly with more materials and adapted to the needs of children with disabilities and learning difficulties.

- Percentage of schools that transitioned to the new curriculum, in 2016 - 100%, in 2019 - 100%

The indicator related to quality school education and training is introduced in the State Programme 2016-2019. The description of the indicator includes some of the following specifics: approved state education standards of basic secondary and general secondary education focused on the best international experience in developing a wide range of skills, the totality of which ensures functional literacy; STEM elements (science) included in the curriculum, aimed at the development of new technologies, scientific innovations, and mathematical modelling; expected results as a basis for education allowing to assess the work of the student and his achievements, in order to determine the individual development trajectory of each student, as well as increase their motivation to develop skills in learning; transition to a criteria-based assessment system for students, teachers and educational organizations; reducing regional disparities; trilingual education; textbooks and teaching materials for teaching children with special educational needs.

The constitutional right to general secondary education in Kazakhstan in 2017 was provided by 7,047 public day schools, 13 125 private schools, 75 night schools, 100 special education establishments, 7 schools for children with deviant behaviour, 1 special treatment school, 8 international schools, 4 republican schools, 34 schools subordinated to other state authorities, 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), and 1 international branch school of NIS. In total, the schools enrolled over 3 million children.¹³⁴ Over four years, the number of students increased by 14% (from 2 930 583 in 2016 to 3 337 783 in 2019)¹³⁵.

In relation to the indicator, data is followed up regarding ensuring quality of secondary education and *transition* to new educational standards, STEM elements, trilingual education, etc. In 2017, the first year of the implementation of this program, the National report states that measures are being taken to ensure the regulatory and methodological transition to the updated content. New State Compulsory Education Standards (for primary, basic, and general secondary education), standardized

syllabi and curricula, textbooks. “In September 2017, 42% out of school students switched to the updated educational content - grades 1, 2, 5 and 7 (grade 1 in 2016)”¹³⁶. Additionally, educational resources were developed, and a criteria-based assessment system was introduced. There are coordinators of criteria-based assessment in each school. When assessing according to the new system, teachers use a set of teaching materials that are designed not only to help them, but also to assist parents and students¹³⁷.

An additional area of improvement of the quality of education, apart from transition to a new curriculum is also the update of the *content* of school education, in order to include functional literacy of schoolchildren, skills of independent search, critical analysis, and evaluation. The updated content is based on expected results, which are determined by educational areas¹³⁸. In the National Report of 2019 it is stated that the transition to updated content aimed at developing functional literacy is being completed and 96% of students (grades 1-10) moved to the new programmes. In the 2019-2020 school year, 100% of grades 4, 9, and 10 moved to the updated programmes¹³⁹.

The indicator also includes aspects of *modernization* of education such as the creation of modern classrooms on the scientific subjects. In 2017, the share of the public day secondary schools with the new-modification classrooms (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Multimedia Language Laboratories) in the country amounted to 71.7% (70% in 2016)¹⁴⁰. “As of the 2019-2020 school year, 3 252 schools teach such subjects as “Biology”, “Chemistry”, “Physics”, and “Computer science” in the upper school in English. Of these, 251 schools with full immersion and 3 001 with partial immersion. They employ 7 728 subject teachers who teach four subjects in English, and 213 319 students study science and math subjects in English from grades 8 to 11”¹⁴¹.

As it is evident, the data from national reports shows that for the period 2016-2019 a lot of activities were implemented to update the content, modernize secondary education, and gradually transition to the new curriculum. The results that would be achieved should have an impact on the whole system in time. It is of key importance to understand the change through the point of view of students themselves. As it was noted regarding the previous indicator, schools are located in buildings with a lot of students and most of them study in triple shifts. Despite the measures taken, the share of triple shift schools continues to persist. Totally in the country, every eighth school is a triple shift school (in

2018 – 128, 127 in 2016; 130 in 2017). Only 29.4% of public day secondary schools are single shift schools, 68.7% are double shift schools. There are 197 417 children enrolled in three-shift schools (6.3% of the total). Such schools exist in all regions except Almaty city, Kyzylorda, Pavlodar, and East Kazakhstan regions¹⁴². Children share that this makes it necessary for them to get up very early in order to get to

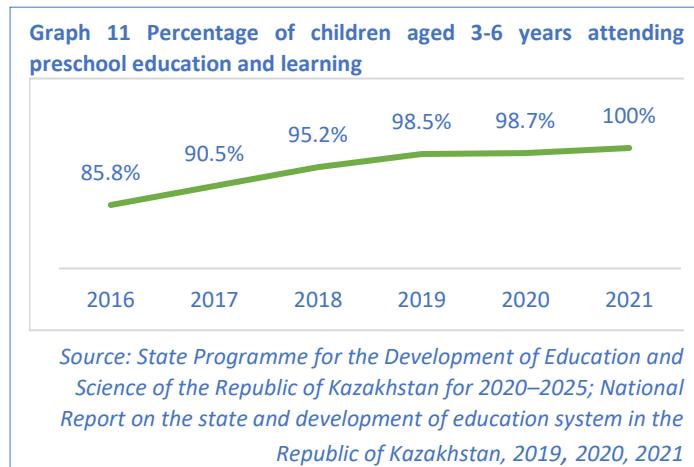
Figure 6 School in children’s views



school, especially those that live further away in bigger cities. They describe their schools as a place where they feel calm and safe, there is no bullying, and they accept the different children and have friends. However, they are critical towards the degree to which the school prepares them for the future, is practically oriented or allows them the freedom to pick out their own subjects. “The school doesn’t prepare us for the future like math and history, we don’t know how to ask police, clinics and hospitals, we would like to have such a subject to teach us about roles in society and to have opportunity to pick the languages to study.” (FGD with students) They have to get up early and carry heavy textbooks, since everything is paper based. The many tests mean they constantly have to worry about their grades and results (figure 6).

- **Percentage of children aged 3-6 years attending preschool education and learning according to the new curriculum, in 2017 - 87.5%, in 2019 - 100%;**

The indicator related to quality pre-school education and training is introduced in the State Programme 2016-2019. The description of the indicator includes the following specifics: introduction of state educational standards of preschool education and training; elements of a multilingual education programme with the study of Kazakh, Russian and English; system of indicators for tracking children's development; implementation of educational and methodological materials for children with SEN.



According to the data from National Reports on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the indicator is overachieved in 2017 (it is 90.5% with a target of 87.5%, graph 11). In terms of early childhood development and care, it is also important to note what is the number of children in ECED organisations by type and it could be seen it is increasing over the years while it is decreasing in the mini centres (graph 21 in annex 9.10.4).

The period 2016-2019 is characterised by

activities related to increasing the scope of children in pre-school, focus on decreasing the number of mini centres and increasing the number of kindergartens in rural areas – “Over the past four years, the number of kindergartens located in the cities has increased by almost 1 000 units, and by 752 units in rural areas”¹⁴³.

Another topic is related to the content of pre-school education. In 2017, it was updated including cross-cutting issues and introduction of a system for monitoring the development level of children's abilities and skills. The Preschool Childhood Republican Centre of the MoES developed guidelines for the monitoring system. The development is assessed at 3 levels: “reproduces certain actions,” “understands what he/she does,” “applies what he/she can.”¹⁴⁴ In 2018, this monitoring was conducted for a second consecutive year.

A key component is also an introduction of Standard rules for the activities of preschool organisations in 2018. The focus is on the first five years of a child's life as being crucial for individual development, learning at a faster rate, developing basic cognitive and emotional skills, central to future achievements in adulthood. The Standard rules include requirements for ECD, development of social and self-learning skills. “The content of education and training of young children will be implemented through the integration of education areas “Health”, “Communication”, “Knowledge”, “Creativity”, “Society” and through various types of children's activities (play, motor, creative, cognitive, etc.). Also, amendments and additions were made to the Standard curriculum in terms of adding special educational programmes for children with SEN”¹⁴⁵. Later on, in 2019, these education areas are supplemented with content of education and care of early age children and the tasks of educating children with SEN were expanded. “Concepts of “early development”, “socialisation”, “social skills”, “parenting skills”, “care”, “independent learning skills” were determined..Educational areas are supplemented with the tasks of “Rukhani zhangyru” programme, 4C model (creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration.”¹⁴⁶

- Percentage of 1-6 y.o. children attending preschool education – 85.3% (2025, 81.7% for 2021), 3-6 y.o. children - 100%;**

Graph 12 Percentage of 1-6 y.o. children attending preschool education



Source: National Report on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021

achieved as well (it is 84.6% in 2021 with a target of 81.7%, graph 12). The data for the whole period of evaluation from 2011 to 2021 show an increase in the coverage of attendance of preschool.

In the National Report for 2019 it is stated that in spite of this development there are still waiting lists to get into kindergartens, although shorter than before and some regions have achieved the indicator sooner than others.

These indicators are not related to specific outcomes in terms of creation of inclusive environment and addressing gaps between rural and urban regions. However, since the programmes are analysed in terms of inclusiveness, it should be reviewed what is the coverage of kindergartens having conditions to respond to the needs of children with SEN.

The share of state kindergartens that have created conditions for inclusive education for children with special educational needs of the total number of state kindergartens in 2021 varies across the regions significantly between 27 and 100% (graph 22 in [annex 9.9.4](#)) while in schools it varies significantly less (between 70% and 97%, see graph 19 in [annex 9.9.4](#)). The average share of schools is 84%, while in kindergartens it is 67%.

It should also be noted that, in order to meet the needs of children with SEN (with disabilities and learning difficulties) there are special kindergartens in the country with a steady number across the years,

which is slightly increasing (in 2021 there are 4414 children in the special kindergartens, graph 13).

In view of usage of the services for children at an early age according to the information from PMPC there are specialised and regular (inclusive) kindergartens, so kids with SEN can also go to those, but there are not so many of them. For example, in one of the regions, there are only 3 kindergartens for children with speech issues in the city, which could be far away, so parents can go to a regular kindergarten, if there are available places. There is a website where parents can track available spots in regular kindergartens from April to June, while previously it was on paper. As for PMPCs, they appoint children to specialised kindergartens and determine the period of recommendation depending on the condition of the child, otherwise parents choose regular kindergartens themselves from the website.

"My daughter with Down syndrome and breathing difficulties, until 3 years old she wasn't accepted to any kindergarten, because she had to sit in one place. Then they made her surgery on the nose, but then she had heart issues. She spoke Russian before 8 years old. Then we were living in Aktau, close to Atyrau, she went to 1st grade school, and we didn't have Russian class. So, she went to Kazakh class and she was stressed, her speaking development stopped, she was 1st grade but with 2nd grade, that's why she was stressed, then she switched to 1st grade." (FGD with parents)

environment for development of their children in special kindergartens was not always good enough and that could influence their own child's development.

Also, due to lack of early intervention, parents could learn very late about children'

"She also learned about diagnosis very late, but 3 and half years old she only knew simple words like mama and papa, but mostly pointed at objects. She decided to go to PMPC because she was worried about development, but they told her to wait for another PMPC to open. She lost time, tried to help her daughter study, she went to another PMPC and then worked with specialists, they didn't recommend PMPC, she found a kindergarten and took her there. There were challenges with language there, she learned Kazakh words like hope and give me..." (FGD with parents)

additional stress for parents. On the whole, parents looked for ways to satisfy the needs of their children in the system and had many difficulties in the process. More often than not, they could not get into regular kindergartens and were recommended only specialised. This means that a smaller share use kindergartens at all.

Private centres, special kindergartens or home schooling are the most visible and often used options for supporting early childhood development and learning of children with SEN.

- **Child wellbeing index in Kazakhstan - 0.73**

The indicator on child wellbeing is part of the State programme 2020-2025 and the reasoning for including it is related to it being a comprehensive measurement of child well-being including objective and subjective quality indicators. Although the data from the first measurement of the index is outside of the scope of the evaluation, since the indicator is key and measured in 2022, it should be noted here due to its importance in terms of child well-being and right of all children to learning and development. *"In 2018, considering the international and Kazakhstani experience, a system of indicators and an index of children's well-being were developed for systematic monitoring of children's safety, comfortable conditions and well-being, timely identification of problems and prompt decision-making. This index covers material well-being, health, education, security and risks, socialization. A scale of "0" to "1" is used to compare countries. According to the results of the 2018 pilot project in Kazakhstan, the index of children's well-being was 0.68 points. At the same time, in the 10th month of 2019, positive dynamics and a tendency to improve the quality of life due to the measures taken by the state are observed and it is assumed that the initial calculation of the index will be 0.70 points in 2022, and 0.73 points by 2025."* There is no data available on the index for 2022 according to the pilot study mentioned in the state programme. However, in 2021, UNICEF introduced a child wellbeing index and the data, based on a study from the Economic Research Institute JSC¹⁴⁷, could be seen in [annex 9.10.4 \(graph 23\)](#).

Parents confirm they mostly get recommendations for specialised kindergartens, and they have to go through the system, facing different challenges. Others were stressed due to a need to change languages, which could make it difficult to develop speech and literacy or they weren't accepted to regular kindergartens.

Some of them share that the

"We went to PMPC and searched for speech therapist. I went to see a special kindergarten, and I saw children couldn't speak. I disagreed and wanted my son to be in a regular school." (Dual interview with parents)

intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. Another issue is that PMPCs transfer cases between departments due to work overload, which causes

- **Percentage of children with disabilities receiving special psychological and pedagogical support and early intervention: 2022 – 50%; 2023 – 65%; 2024 – 80%; 2025 – 100%.**

The indicator is introduced in the National Project 2020-2025. The planned activities in order to achieve the indicator are: expansion of the PMPC network, taking into account the needs of the region and in accordance with modern requirements and standards (1 PMPC per 50 000 children); placement of a state educational order for special psychological and pedagogical support for children with developmental disabilities. In the National Report 2021, it is indicated that over the past 5 years, the share of children with SEN studying in comprehensive classes has increased by 20.3%. In 2021, 43.6% of children with SEN had the opportunity to study in secondary schools.

The norms of functioning of psychological, medical, and pedagogical consultations will be revised to reduce the rate to 1 PMPC per 50 000 children (from previously 60 000 children), as it is set out in the National Project. Rules will be developed for the activities of psychological services in general secondary education organisations. It is planned to improve the system of early detection and correction of children with disabilities and in all programs, teachers' professional development will include a module on working with children with SEN¹⁴⁸. There is still no data for the level of achievement of the indicator. The state educational order for assisting children with developmental disabilities has been placed in 2022.¹⁴⁹

All the analysed indicators are from the state education programmes with some of the goals addressing inclusiveness and indicators reflecting the expected results. The programmes are at different stages of realisation and the first two are finished, while the last one is in the final phase, while the national project was replaced by a new Concept for development of education 2023-2029 'Концепции развития дошкольного, среднего, технического и профессионального образования Республики Казахстан на 2023 – 2029 годы'.

All the indicators in regard to inclusive education and coverage are achieved, but there are uncertainties about their way of defining, of collection of data and measurement. At the same time, the data about implementation of policies of inclusive education pose a number of questions related to the understanding of conditions of inclusive education, pedagogical methods, and work with these children, used materials, access and quality.

In terms of unexpected results, it should be noted that since the period of evaluation is rather long and the changes have been planned in several strategic documents, specific results (apart from those planned) could not be identified. It should be taken into account that the COVID-19 pandemic was an unexpected global event, which brought about changes and boosted the process of digitalisation and distance education due to newly emerging challenges, instead of solely due to inclusive education development. This was commented regarding the part dedicated to created conditions for inclusive education.

6.3.3. CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMMES TO THE FULFILMENT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

Equity in access to education for all children, particularly different vulnerable groups

The state educational programmes which set goals for development of education, among which ensuring access to quality education for all children, outline the development of the educational system towards the fulfilment of the rights of all children. The key components of all programmes are related to access and equity, learning environment and facilities, quality, and effectiveness of education. The educational needs of children are satisfied by different types of institutions in Kazakhstan, some of which are segregated and children from different vulnerable groups are still outside of the community and others that are developing towards including vulnerable groups together with the rest of the children. In table 18 in annex 9.10.5 is made an analysis of the degree of access of learners from different groups to inclusive education, up to the degree to which data is available. Since there isn't an accessible comprehensive database, the data is compiled from different sources.

Children with SEN in preschool education, in special kindergartens and special groups in general kindergartens are decreasing in share from the total number of children with SEN up to 6 years old since 2016 in parallel with the increase in the number in inclusive kindergartens (reaching 41% in 2022). At the same time, even taking into account the share of children in inclusive kindergartens, the rest of the children with SEN using other organisations of education, healthcare and social services (private and public centres, which is 35% in 2022), in general outside of the preschool educational system is quite big, which creates a barrier towards the access to education. They are supported in PPCR, but this is for a short period a couple of times per week. Also, according to the information from stakeholders, there are 50 daycare centres for children with SEN functioning in the country and children from these centres don't go to school.

Children at school age with SEN remain an almost equal share yearly in special schools since 2016 (around 14%)¹⁵⁰. The share of children in inclusive schools is increasing, but there are also still children in home-schooling, for whom the support is provided by PPCR. Among the group of children who are home-schooled, there are children with severe disabilities, who also receive correctional support. There are also children included in regular schools, who don't visit them frequently. Their education happens in the home and regular teachers visit them several times a week (specialists could also go). They could also go to school for the holidays. In addition, there are special boarding schools for children with SEN where it is only possible to ensure children's education, because of the big territory of the country.

"We have a big territory, with many children across the country with special needs in distant cities and villages without access to special schools, kids can stay at the school and parents can get them after classes or they can live in the special school, depending on the situation." (FGD with specialists)

In Kazakhstan, for children and adolescents who are in **conflict with the law** and do not want to go to school, there are special educational organizations where social and pedagogical work is carried out with them, aimed at preventing delinquency and an asocial lifestyle. The special organizations for children with deviant behaviour are an educational institution, in which are placed children who systematically commit administrative offenses, maliciously evade education, systematically leave their families, and commit other antisocial actions for a period of a month to a year¹⁵¹.

The language policy in the country is the observance of child rights of all **ethnic groups** and free choice of language. According to the data from 'Единая рамка мониторинга инклюзивного образования в Республике Казахстан', *"all migrant students are enrolled at schools, psychological support and additional classes are provided, work with their parents is done. Ensuring constitutional rights to education and satisfaction of the educational needs of this category of children is under the constant control of educational authorities"*¹⁵². In order to meet the needs of these children, schools with different languages are functioning in the country¹⁵³.

The **children from villages** with no schools are provided with free-of-charge delivery or places in a boarding school. As measures to support these children, local authorities arrange delivery to the nearest schools. As pointed out in the table above, the number of rural schools has decreased since 2016, while the number of urban schools has increased.

The out-of-school problem has not been analysed in detail, but there is information on the "Vseobuch Program". Efforts are taken to find children who do not attend school, and measures are taken to return them to schools. In 2017, there were 277 children who did not attend school for ten or more days with no good excuse (274 in 2016) with 98 children returned to school¹⁵⁴. At the same time, the data from the World Bank shows that for the period from 2011 to 2019 the total number of out-of-school children in primary school has increased very significantly from 3 127 to 12 924¹⁵⁵.

Equity in the process and level of contribution of the programmes to the fulfilment of the right to education for all children

“...14 kids have behavioural issues, including autism, deficit of attention, behavioural and intellectual issues there are 9, we have 10 assistants. They do not go to regular classes, they study with us math, Russian and reading, then they continue regular classes with other teachers.” (Dual interview with specialists)

“These children go to other cabinets, and some have special teachers. Some 4 years ago those children were with special needs in special schools, now they study together with us”(FGD with children)

specifics of the educational process and number of children in a class. In view of their competences, they are similar to those of all other students, but since they work with special programs, they get specific diplomas for finished education. Some of them study key subjects with specialists, instead of in regular classes. The impression that children with SEN go to separate cabinets and have special teachers is also shared by students.

It is also shared by teachers that it is difficult for parents to initially accept and understand the diagnosis of their child and therefore children sometimes don't get treatment.

“The Concilium (first this word was taken as too medical, but I explained what I meant) I organized, meetings for parents after 2019 they started, experience was shared, we did talks with parents, specialists and methodologists, they discussed dynamics of children's cases and explained all this to parents, giving objective points and solutions so that parents understand and after that there were no more conflicts. After that there were meeting around talks organized with parents and teachers, they discussed info on work done on each child case. The third point is the parents club organized by me” (KII with principal)

meeting occasionally.

In some regions, the parents were thankful and appreciative of the school in view of the teachers, support staff and their efforts to make the education experience of their children enjoyable. However, they also shared a concern that they did not have sufficient information (and they still don't) about the rights they and their children have in terms of education services and what their child is eligible for. Most of them started looking for information on their own and found out about the opportunity to send their child with special needs to “regular” school from either WhatsApp chat or someone random, so they believe there is no systematic way of communicating the policy changes and rights these families have. The parents had to find that information on their own and with extra effort. Some parents also share that it is important to get involved in a process step by step and raise

The children in the inclusive system receive additional support and materials, in order to be supported to perform activities like their peers. A lot of them, however, work with different programs. This means their individual needs are met, but mostly outside the classroom. The implementation of an individual approach is challenging due to the

“Many kids don't get treatment because parents don't understand they need treatment. We had another boy in our class who needed special attention and help, he was very violent, but parents didn't know” (FGD with parents)

In terms of equity in the process of inclusion, a key indicator is parents' participation. The data shows that there is a significant difference between regions in terms of inclusion of parents. It varies from totally missing information to very active parents who create services and organisations to support their children. At the school level, parents are in close communication with principals, specialists, and teachers in view of the development of their children and talk about their participation in the educational process. However, special services which should support them in parenthood at the school level are not prevalent, only in some instances parent clubs are mentioned,

“Previously before coming to the school from early childhood I was concerned, it was difficult to join additional activities, people around were not accepting, I started going with him anyway and he got involved in the process, this helps, we went swimming, Montessori, all the fears are in our heads that kids would not be accepted, I never imagined he would be able to join a regular school, but he is here now” (Dual interview with parents)

awareness among the society and schools. It is apparent that this process has started since their kids are accepted by their peers (which is also shared by students).

The perception of fulfilment of children's rights to education is related to studying in an accepting environment, ensuring equal access to education and real inclusion in the teaching and learning process.

In summary, in the last 10 years secondary schools in Kazakhstan have started a process of modernization, transition to a new curriculum, digitalisation, and updated content. This process goes in parallel with the endeavours to make the school more inclusive and provide equal opportunities for all children to study in safe schools oriented towards their needs and providing possibilities for them to study and develop depending on their level of abilities. The concept of inclusive education is now understood more broadly, there is a shift in the focus solely from children with SEN. Only in some smaller towns it is still perceived in a narrow way. Some stakeholders discuss whether the goal was correctly set in the beginning and there was too much focus on access, instead of actually educating children in the general system.

National data shows that different planned outcomes in the different programmes are achieved in terms of creating favourable conditions for inclusive education, as well as modernization, digitalisation, and update of the curriculum. At the same time, the system addressing the needs of children with SEN is more integrated than inclusive (in separated rooms, with separated teams and program).

One of the main gaps in the system is the lack of early intervention and identification, as well as services for early childhood development and care for children with SEN. In spite of the enlarged scope and high share of enrolment of children between 3 and 6 years old, the most used forms of ECD services for children are private centres, specialised kindergartens, and home schooling.

The educational system in the country is characterised with a number of possibilities to ensure equal access to education for children with SEN. It is specific that the system keeps the special schools and kindergartens in parallel with the creation of inclusive system in general education. This variety leads to different opportunities, but some of them are still segregating and children are outside of the community, which makes the system look rather heterogenous and creates a system within the system. The process of inclusion has started, but is still at the level of integration, instead of inclusion in the actual sense, so there is room for development.

6.4. EFFICIENCY

The efficiency is analysed in view of the level of optimized use of invested financial and time resources for achievement of the outcomes. In addition, the management and coordination is analysed in terms of its level of efficiency for addressing equity-based challenges. Also, the availability and proactive usage of existing platforms for dissemination of resources for educational activities have been reviewed.

6.4.1. EFFICIENT USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OUTCOMES

The educational policy is realised at different levels through investments of financial, human and time resources. The financial investments and all kinds of resources in the educational system have a key significance for the development of society since they are returned back into the economy of the country.

The share of government expenditure on education out of the total expenditure has changed over the years (graph 24 in annex 9.10.6). Between 2011 and 2014 it was around 17-18% and then between 2015 and 2019 there was a significant decrease to 11-14%, while more recently, in 2020 – 2021 it increased again to 18-20, which is probably influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of the budgets of the programmes and project part of the object of the evaluation include national and local financing and are shown on graph 25 in [annex 9.9.6](#). There isn't a separate part of the budget dedicated to inclusive education.

"I have a question for the government however... I know that a lot of money is invested in education and when there is a reform, you have to tell us what you are giving this money for...and what results you are expecting..." (KII with NGO representative)

Some of the stakeholders shared an opinion that a lot of money are invested for education, but it is unclear what they are invested for exactly in terms of reforming.

As it was mentioned, inclusive education is not a separate goal in the programs, but rather a cross-cutting topic, although there are expected results

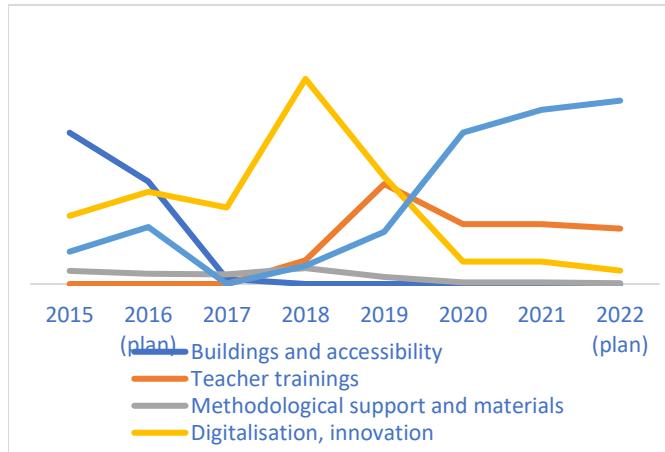
related to achievement of goals in the area. This means that there isn't a separate budget item dedicated to inclusive education. This gives reason to analyse the general structure of the budget and separate budget items to understand the ratio between investment and the different areas of quality of primary and secondary education. The budget for education is divided across the following list of groups of expenditures, which the ET does not claim to be comprehensive, since it is based on accessible online data, not for the whole period (since 2015) and maybe not for all areas of financing: buildings and accessibility; teacher trainings; methodological support and materials; digitalisation, innovation; additional activities (rehabilitation etc.). It should also be noted that the budgets of the subprogrammes have a different structure.

There are different results in the different programs, related to primary and secondary education in terms of inclusiveness. The level of their achievement is commented under the part Effectiveness of this report. It should be reminded that the key indicator, related to inclusivity is related to the creation of favourable conditions for inclusive education. Having in mind that there is a lack of clear criteria of favourable conditions for inclusive education and the components included in it, the analysis could be made in terms of creation of accessible buildings regarding architecture, support for persons who

should perform the work, the materials they will use and the digitalisation process as a very important component, especially after 2020. It could be seen that until 2017, the resources used for buildings and accessibility, and they are a big share, which is in accordance with the task of the State programme 2011-2020, respectively the State programme 2016-2019, oriented towards accessibility and renovating school infrastructure in secondary education. (graph 14).

When it comes to teacher training, after 2019-2020 more money are

Graph 14 Types of expenditure in the state education programmes



Source: Budget Program, E-government

dedicated to the area, which is related to the goals and the tasks of the program, in view of motivation, modernisation of education and capacity building of teachers. From what was shared during FGDs and KIIs, it is also evident that the dedicated money for methodological materials is of a far smaller share throughout the years. The process of digitalisation has boosted in the last year, a lot of investments are done for it (Digital Kazakhstan), which remains stable during the years. It is key to combine digitalisation and presence of enough educational materials.

In terms of preschool education, data shows that smaller resources are dedicated to it. In some years it is twice as smaller than secondary education investments and otherwise it is similar over the years with the limitation that there isn't clear information for the whole period (2011-2021). However, data

shows that there isn't an increasing investment in the area of preschool education, in spite of the planned results in all programmes, mostly after 2016, oriented towards increase in the scope and modernisation of early childhood education and care.

The analysis of data in terms of efficiency shows that one of the biggest changes in investment related

"The government states that there are supposed to be 12 kids for all specialists, but in reality, they are more. The payment is low for us, not like for teachers, it is like 340 dollar per month, 20 dollars are the only additional amount we can get" (Dual Interview Specialists)

to the period in the scope of the evaluation is the increase in the salaries of the teachers. This corresponds to the set goals in the programmes in view of increasing quality of education. *"The average monthly nominal salary of teachers varies considerably depending on the level of education they teach and the region they work in. In 2021,*

*teachers in secondary and primary education on average earned 269,1 thousand tenge, teachers in higher education - 251,8 thousand tenge, and teachers in special education - 187,3 thousand tenge"*¹⁵⁶. In relation to inclusive education, it should be noted that the salaries of teachers working with children with special needs are higher, while for specialists they are rather lower in comparison with those of teachers on the whole, which does not satisfy their needs. Teachers also share that they are not happy with the additional payment they get for working with children with special needs, since the time they dedicate is a lot more. They raise a concern about the financial limitations of the reform and though the policies were designed to help the vulnerable children, schools did not receive adequate funding to support these reforms. There had to be sufficient funding attached to the changes and recommendations the schools have to address to make their environment more inclusive. Many international studies confirm the need for investment in teachers and their capacity, but at the same time, it is necessary not only to increase their salary, but to empower them to work flexibly¹⁵⁷.

Schools are financed in accordance with the procedure established in the Budget Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Republican Budget". According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Education", public spending on education is composed of the expenses of the Republican and Local budgets.¹⁵⁸ The funding of the government in the country is allocated to general education of gifted children, surcharge for the qualification category to teachers. Funding for akimats comes through local budgets for maintenance of school, textbooks and teaching materials and technical support. There is also funding from the cities of republican significance and the capital budget for the same components. Additionally, there is funding from the district budget for district primary, basic secondary and general secondary educational organizations, including evening (shift) form of education, and boarding schools, which are also for the same components.

"It's a centralized financing system. It allocates money, we don't get separate funding in advance, but we apply based on the number of children with special needs. The funding doesn't depend on the number of children. It depends on the number, the teachers, those who teach math and biology. This is the new idea" (KII with local authority)

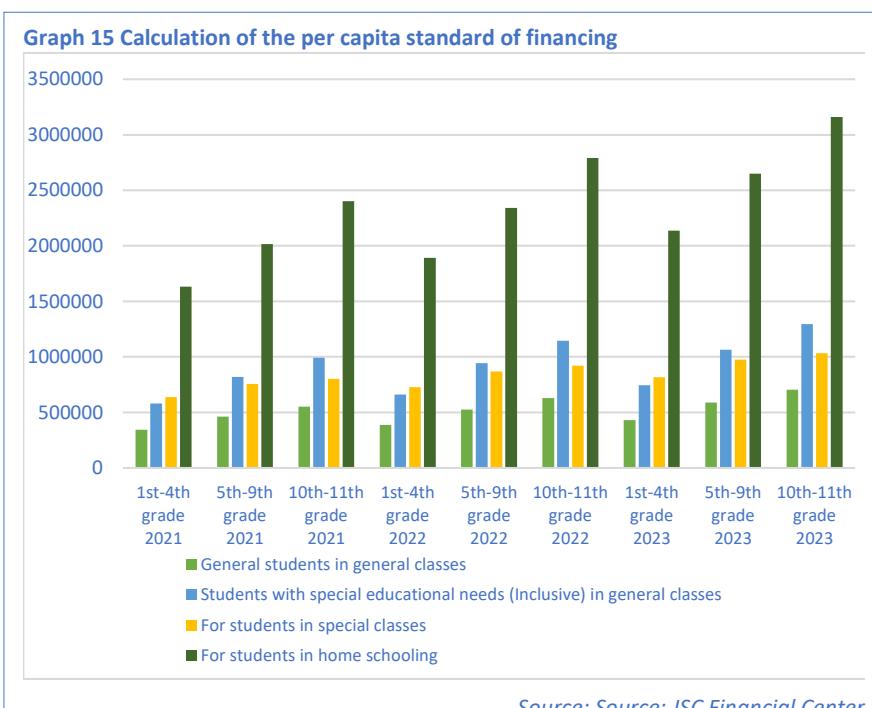
Another important change in legislation in terms of financing of the educational system is the gradual introduction across the country of per capita financing, based on the number of students at each school. This per capita financing started to be introduced in the country since 2013 and the schools in the cities (7 in the first year) gradually got the new form of funding, while some schools in

the smaller towns and regions still have not fully passed to the new form of financing. However, some of the stakeholders discuss that the type of funding should depend on the needs of the school and for some schools per capita financing might not be the best option, since they have a smaller number of students.

The Law 'On amendments to the order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 27, 2017 No. 596 "On approval of the Rules for per capita regulatory financing of preschool education and training, secondary, technical and vocational, post-secondary, higher and postgraduate education" determines the procedure for per capita regulatory financing of preschool education and training, secondary, technical and vocational, post-secondary education, as well as higher and postgraduate education, taking into account the credit technology of education. Per capita normative financing of secondary education is carried out by the local executive body in the following order: organizations of secondary education monthly according to individual financing plans; organizations of secondary education monthly within the limits of the concluded agreement for the placement of a state educational order for secondary education in the following volumes: from January to August - in proportion to the planned annual contingent; from September to December - in proportion to the actual average annual contingent. In case of insufficient funds from the local budget in the amount of per capita normative financing of secondary education, in the event of a change in the per capita norm, compensation for losses that entail an increase in local budget expenditures is compensated by targeted current transfers from the republican budget.¹⁵⁹

"In some cases, it is trickier when it comes to funding, for some schools it is better to have funding per capita and for others it's not beneficial, if they don't have enough children in small villages. But creating conditions for inclusive education is not simple it is very difficult" (KII Principal)

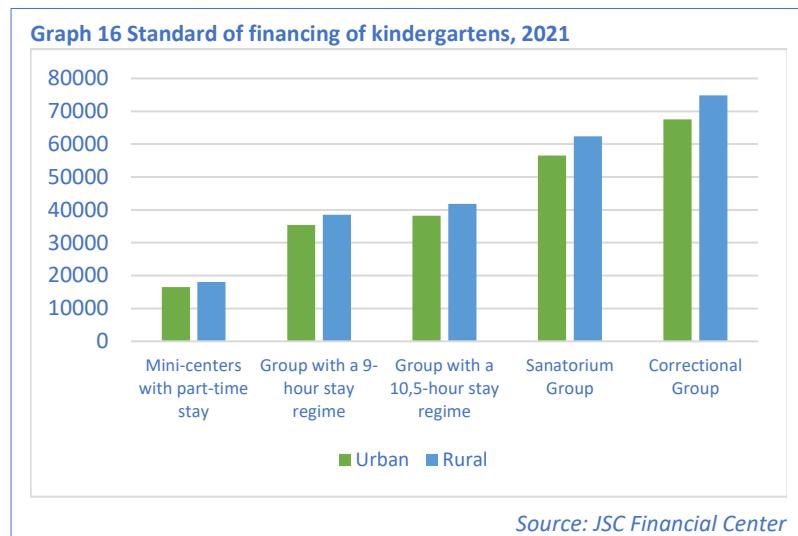
The data for 2021, 2022 and 2023 show that there is a trend in the increase in educational resources



over the years and also a slight trend of difference between the classes, since 10th-11th grade older students receive higher funding than younger children (graph 15). Therefore, the least amount of funding is for students in general classes in 1st-4th grade in 2021 and increasing for students with SEN in general classes and in special classes. The biggest amount of money goes for children with special needs and for those who are in special education (special

classes in general schools). The per capita funding for a child studying at home is the highest share and this is the most significant difference, since there is much more financing for it than for the other groups and it's increasing a lot over the years.

All of this means that per capita funding ensures more financing for children with SEN. However, the per capita financial standards are higher for those studying at home than in general schools.



In terms of preschool education, the correctional groups in the general country regions get the bigger amount of funding with small difference between urban and rural settings, followed by sanatorium group (where children can stay overnight). The groups with 9/10,5 – hour stay get slightly smaller funding and for the mini-centres is smallest. There are no significant differences in urban/rural area in none of the type of group (graph 16).

"Children left correctional schools with profession, in the class there were 8-9 students with 1 teacher and here are 30 students with 1 teacher and 1 assistant rarely. There is also 1 school with swimming pool and individual approach, sports lessons, etc" (KII Principal)

resources for them or there are better conditions).

It also causes a risk of over-identifying children with SEN due to the financial incentive and actually hinder the process of inclusion. *"However, this system presents some disadvantages: it focuses on disabilities instead of educational needs, hinders inclusion, can lead to inflated costs because of the necessity to identify needs and learners who can access funds, and creates the risk of over-identification of learners with SEN, as the allocation of funds depends on the demand."*¹⁶⁰

"Initially there were experimental special schools, according to the law each child has the right to get education, if they don't have psychiatric diagnosis, since then 8 pilot experimental schools for inclusion were established in Almaty in 2016...This all started in 2011 and slowly developed by 2016 there were more specialists trained and there were conditions for these specialists." (Dual interview with specialists)

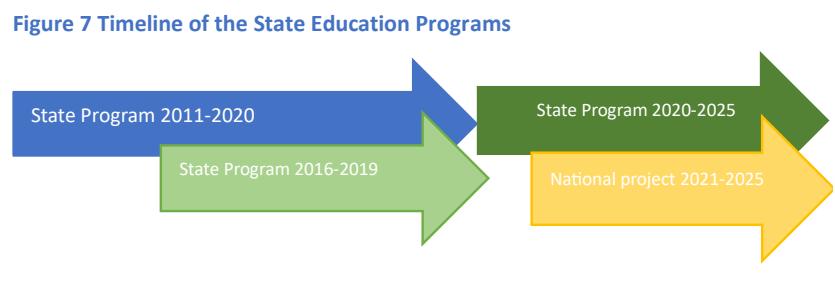
"In terms of the goal of the program, it was to create conditions for kids with unique needs, in 2011 nobody knew what inclusive education is about, but there were kids in need and conditions were awful, like equipment, teacher training, materials, all of that, for teachers to undergo certain training, so there was a political will to change this. In 2016, they started to change this." (Dual interview specialist and principal)

The system of per capita financing in terms of inclusive education creates a possibility to allocate more resources for children with SEN to meet their needs. At the same time, the higher share of financing of children in special classes or home-schooling could lead to a higher interest in these forms of education, instead of inclusion (such as to keep special schools because there are enough

The resources allocated for financing education (incl. for inclusive education) correspond to the logic of planning of the main activities and expected in the state programmes. In the first years, the investment was oriented towards buildings and infrastructure to ensure physical accessibility and after that, for capacity development, digitalisation, teacher trainings and materials. The small investments in educational materials lead to their shortage. The most efficient appears to be the

physical accessibility, since all schools created physical conditions, while the investment in digitalisation seems to be less efficient, since it is quite big, but the results are still not proportional to the share of invested resources.

6.4.2. EFFICIENT USE OF TIME RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OUTCOMES AND ADDRESSING EQUITY-BASED CHALLENGES



Time resources

In the time period 2011-2021 (scope of this evaluation), as it was mentioned in the report, three state programmes were planned and realised, as well as a national

project, which replaced the third state programme (figure 7). Now the project is replaced with a Concept for development of education 2023-2025. From the point of view of time it is necessary to point out that the time periods of realisation overlap. In view of the goals of the national policy, this poses challenges towards its implementation, since several times new goals and indicators are set, without previous analysis of what has been achieved so far. Also, the concept of inclusive education changed and developed over this period of time and towards the end it became clearer.

It should also be noted that during the period in the scope of the evaluation the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant influence on the process of reform towards inclusive education. It slowed down the implementation of activities and impacted inclusivity since it could not be realised during the closure of the schools and from a distance.

The acceptance of the concept of inclusion in education systems requires time, since it involves a change of perspective and priorities in society, as well as the adjustment of financing mechanisms. It is important that education systems, and governments develop and use accountability processes that promote the goals they seek to attain since these processes can be powerful drivers influencing the allocation of time, financial, professional and all types of resources.

Since any type of changes and reforms to the educational system require a lot of time and results could be seen in a matter of years after the actual intervention, such a change and overlap of the programmes could hinder the level of efficiency, due to the mentioned setting of new goals and expected results and not following one clear plan from the beginning.

It should also be mentioned that, despite the declared beginning of the process towards inclusive education in 2011, actually stakeholders perceived that the beginning happened in 2016. They share that there were different stages in the implementation and pilot schools, which created the model, were chosen.

Management and coordination

In table 18 in annex 9.9.7 are presented the areas and processes of management and coordination and how these were realised. The education policy is planned at the national level with main responsibility of MoE. In terms of referral mechanism towards services, the main entrance in the educational system for children with developmental difficulties and disabilities is realised through PMPC. The work with different groups is realised at general schools, special schools and special kindergartens, special groups in kindergarten, special classes in schools or in home-schooling. The individual programme for children is oriented towards the educational and learning goals instead of towards child development. The process of monitoring and data collection is realised through the National Education Database without integration of the data between different ministries. All this information is summarised in the national reports but it is often presented in a different way, related to the changing concepts and priorities over the years, so they are not consistent enough to monitor all changes like for number of children for specialised groups in regular schools, number of home-schooled children, etc.

6.4.3. EXISTING PLATFORMS FOR DISSEMINATION OF RESOURCES FOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

One of the key factors for developing any system is the capacity of the professional working in it. Apart from trainings and qualification, databases with resources, which could help specialists increase their knowledge, are an alternative way for capacity development.

In the country there are two main platforms for resources for inclusive education. These are the state databases with resources and apart from them, there are many NGOs and private centre platforms (most of them are with interactive learning materials for children such as www.opiq.kz, www.BilimLand.kz, www.imektep.kz, www.twig-bilim.kz, while others contain analytical information on the educational system in the country - https://iac.kz/?page_id=6135&lang=en), but there is no information that the state education programmes put a focus on such existing platforms or support their development.

The criteria according to which the existing platforms are selected for analysis, are the following: groups of users; type of information; how user-friendly is the platform; is a feedback system available.

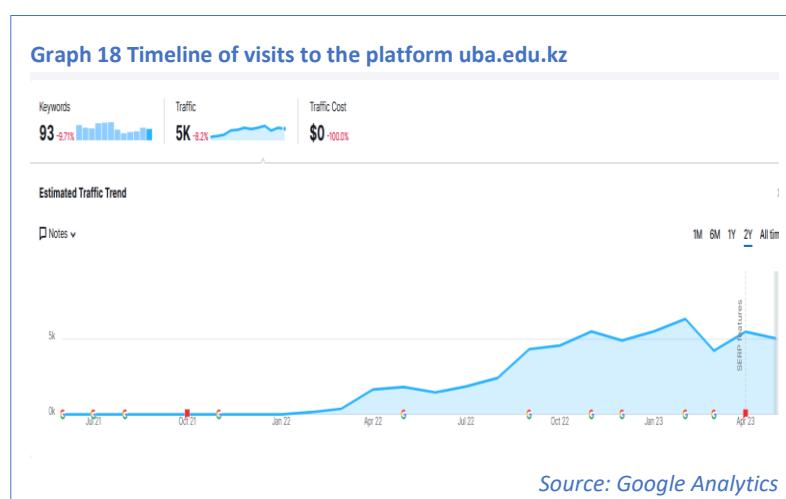


The platform special-edu.kz is most often mentioned by stakeholders in terms of educational materials provided for teachers, as well as information for parents of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. It has training materials and courses, diagnostic and consultation materials, curriculums for students, news and events, list of special organisations, legal framework, studies, and reports.

In general, the platform has

information on different topics for different stakeholders. Professionals (teachers and specialists), as well as parents indicate the website as a place where they can find information, but it was less known by teachers. Some of the menus in the platform are easier to access, while others are not immediately available when entering the site, which could be confusing for the users. The platform doesn't have a feedback form and the way to obtain additional information or ask a question is through the published email and also through the website itself. The publications are accessible in Kazakh and Russian language. In addition, the platform has a Facebook page, which has 949 followers, which is one point of dissemination of the resources. It also has an Instagram page, a Youtube channel and Google + profile. The platform has existed since 2013 (the old page can still be accessed) and by estimations, it has around 12800 visitors monthly (graph 17).

The platform <https://uba.edu.kz/en> has a digital library, which contains resources both in Kazakh and Russian language. Inclusive education is not a separate section in itself but is contained in different other resources and sections. Not everything is accessible through the initial menus in the site. There is an English, Kazakh and Russian version, but the English version is not fully translated. The content of the platform is related to experience in education, there is a link to the website for continuous development. It is rather related to content on the whole on education, not so much to certain groups and is mostly oriented towards supporting specialists, instead of the other stakeholders. There is also a Q&A section and the possibility to contact the organisation to ask a question through the website. The platform is newer than the other one and has existed since 2021. The National Academy also has a Facebook and Instagram page. By estimations, there are around 5000 visits per month (graph 18).



In summary, the investments in education in the country are increasing during the last year, which shows an understanding of the importance and return of these investments. When it comes to inclusive education, it should be noted that it's not a separate area of financing, but rather a part of the common financial standards at the level of primary and secondary education. It seems that investments in education in the last 10 years were related to different components of investment in the education system. In terms of inclusivity this means that the investments in physical access and buildings were prevalent until the middle of the period, after which bigger resources are allocated for digitalization, salaries of teachers and their capacity development. An important step towards the individualizing of expenses at the student level is the introduction of per capita financing. The analysis of per capita funding mechanism shows that for the period of evaluation and until now, the allocated resources for inclusive education in general schools are similar to those in special classes in general school but significantly less than home-schooling. On one hand, this input-oriented funding seems rather oriented towards children with disabilities and learning difficulties, instead of towards all groups of children at risk. On the other hand, it creates a risk of over-identification of learners with SEN, which should be analysed additionally.

6.5. SUSTAINABILITY

The level of sustainability is analysed through the degree up to which there is a national policy in place to support inclusive education, as well as at the level of schools. Additionally, it is important to understand what the legal/ financial and institutional mechanisms in place are to ensure this level of sustainability. Also, the conditions for capacity building of teachers, school curriculum are preconditions for quality education.

6.5.1. MECHANISMS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Commitment to support inclusive education at the different levels

Inclusive education is a central topic in the development of education going from special education to inclusive education as a concept and practice of implementation. In 2021, the amendments of legislation in view of inclusive education outline the professional understanding of the concept, while in 2022 the methodological orders are related to the groups of children included. This process means that there is a transition from the medical approach to disability to the socio-pedagogical one, on one

hand. On the other hand, a broader understanding is developing that inclusive education should include all groups of vulnerable children.

In view of sustainability, it should be noted that the topic of inclusive education remains included in the new Concept 2023-2029 through one of the seven fields, related to creation of equal starting opportunities. The topic over the years is mostly in the area of secondary education, rather than primary, and it seems this tendency has stayed the same. The new concept reconfirms the key indicator for secondary schools with the main goal to create conditions for inclusive education, which should be 100% in 2027. Meanwhile in 2021, this indicator was 81,7%, which leads to the assumption that it can be achieved until 2027. Also, preschool, and vocational education are added, out of which 100% should create conditions for inclusive education until 2026. The inclusion of the indicator in the new concept shows that policy is sustainably oriented towards inclusive education.

Several levels of understanding could be distinguished in terms of commitment to inclusive education. At the **national level**, the stakeholders share that the national policy will continue to be oriented and developed in terms of inclusive education. This is confirmed by the fact that the indicators have been included in the new Concept and their scope has been enlarged.

At the **school level** and level of professionals, there are stakeholders dedicated to continuing working in the direction of inclusive education and others who face challenges in the implementation and believe some of the children with disabilities should study in special classes and this will be more effective for them. They believe that the rest of the vulnerable groups of children have always been included in the educational system of the country and a special effort is not required.

Parents and children are also rather satisfied and believe that the process of inclusiveness should be continued. Parents in smaller villages are rather inclined towards boarding schools as a preferable place for their children to study, due to

"Today the stigma toward SEN kids has changed, more and more parents are not ashamed of the diagnosis (it was considered a taboo before)." (FGD with teachers)

the big territory of the country and challenges they face such as financial limitation for parents in terms of bringing their children to the school in the region every day. One of the key factors for sustainability is the attitude towards the children with SEN and the level of acceptance of the differences in the community. There is a change in the level of stigmatization and discrimination both in the perceptions of students and those of parents. Although these results can't be generalized, the data shows that the environment is changing gradually, and this is a step towards sustainability of inclusiveness of education in general schools.

It is important that some teachers point out they do not need to explain to the other students that their classmate has SEN, since they are tolerant and understanding. However, there are certain discrepancies, because other teachers in elementary schools explain the diagnosis to the class (but avoid telling the specific child with SEN), while some prefer to keep diagnoses secret out of fear of bullying or discrimination, especially in terms of children 1st to 4th grade.

The representatives of **NGOs** are critical towards national policy and share the medical approach is still prevalent, which means that correction is still used as a term, instead of rights, equality, and support. Some of these NGOs have created their own models, some of which were disseminated at the national level and others are still implemented only locally. The representatives of private centres together with NGOs are innovative and would like to look for new models, which they desire to include in practice and policy, so they are committed to this process.

Availability of legal/institutional/financial mechanisms to ensure sustainability

The main **legal mechanisms** ensuring sustainability of inclusive education are described in the Law on education from 2007, the update from 2015, but mostly through the Amendments from 2021, when a number of legislative acts are changed and developed in view of inclusive education.

"In 10 years, a lot has been done, the main result is that the country is going in the right direction ... 2015 (Updated Law on education) the concept is broadened...this is important for the whole society, for the people, for the professionals, a connection is made between inclusion and quality"(KII with NGO representative)

It should also be noted that in 2022 the Orders of the MoES of the Republic of Kazakhstan from 2022 № 4 and 6 gave a description of the methodological approaches to working with the groups of children

with SEN. In addition, there are other national legislative acts regulating inclusiveness of education in some form¹⁶¹: Law on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Law “On special social services”; About approval of the state obligatory standards education at all levels of education; Order On the approval of the Model Rules for activities of educational organizations, “System of criteria-based assessment of educational achievements of students with special educational needs in conditions of inclusive education”. Therefore, a big number of legislative and regulations define the concept, details on provision, standards, etc. of inclusive education. In terms of legislative mechanisms, this means that the preconditions for sustainability are ensured.

In terms of **institutional mechanisms**, there are institutions at the national level and education departments at the local level in each region, as well as the MoE at the national level. They function in a top-down way, through a centralized approach, from the national towards the local level. A key role in the implementation of the activities are PMPCs, whose role is to provide recommendations to parents regarding the educational trajectory of children with SEN. The available mechanisms appear to be sustainable, and they have been implemented for a long period of time and some of them have gone through transformation (from correctional to special to inclusive education). However, there is a potential risk that this centralized approach does not consider the differences between regions, which are present at different levels of the system. Also, the local authorities might not be involved sufficiently, which could lead to discrepancies in the form of implementation of the policy. The lack of intersectoral (rather vertical) coordination leads to a low level of sustainability in view of the mechanisms for creation of a supporting environment for the children and meeting their complex needs which need to be addressed by the different systems working collaboratively.

When it comes to **financial mechanisms** ensuring sustainability of inclusive policy, as it was noted in the Efficiency part, the most important change that is happening is the per capita funding. This mechanism ensures financing according to the number of children studying at the schools and additional for those with SEN. This type of funding has been introduced in stages since 2013. Currently (since 2020) all urban schools have transferred to the new type of financing (table 20 in annex 9.10.8).

In terms of sustainability, this model of financing ensures sustainable resources for inclusiveness in education. However, per capita standards for children with SEN studying at home are higher than for those in special and inclusive classes. This could cause certain challenges in the level of sustainability of inclusiveness, since the system could focus more on children studying in special classes or at home, rather than for those who study in inclusive classes.

Another aspect of financial mechanisms for sustainability is the increase in teacher salaries, which could possibly decrease the turnover rate and help ensure sustainability in this way. At the same time, the data shows differences between teacher salaries in the different educational levels and in the separate regions. The differences in salaries between the regions might have reasoning related to distinctions in the living standards across the country. *"The average monthly nominal salary of teachers varies considerably depending on the level of education they teach and the region they work in. In 2021, teachers in secondary and primary education on average earned 269,1 thousand tenge, teachers in higher education - 251,8 thousand tenge, and teachers in special education - 187,3 thousand tenge. As per minimal salaries, schoolteachers in comprehensive schools earn 245,2 thousand tenge, which is at least 142,6 thousand tenge and 145,5 thousand tenge more than teachers at special and higher education levels."*¹⁶²

It is also important to compare the budgets for personnel in preschool and secondary education (graph 26 in annex 9.10.8). The analysis of the financing of the programmes related to expenditures for the

two levels of education shows that the funding for secondary education is much higher, which means that financial mechanisms for sustainability are ensured up to a higher degree.

The developed legislative framework, the available institutional and financial mechanisms ensure a medium level of sustainability of educational policies with a focus on inclusivity. Per capita funding guarantees higher level of financing for children with SEN. However, this financing is higher for those studying at home. There is also a different level of commitment on behalf of all stakeholders in relation to continuing the process of inclusive education. It should be kept into account, however, they have a different type of understanding of inclusiveness, on one hand. On the other hand, some stakeholders think that for the most severe cases of children with disabilities, (especially for rural areas) it is better that they receive special education.

6.5.2. CONDITIONS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

School curriculums

The Law "On education"¹⁶³ reinforces teaching within the State Compulsory Educational Standard on individual curriculum, special educational programme according to the decision of the Board of Educational Organization. According to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the approval of the Model Rules for activities of educational organizations"¹⁶⁴ educational institutions provide for the training of students with special educational needs, taking into account the interests of parents (legal representatives): in a general class (no more than two children) according to a standard curriculum, including a shortened or individual curriculum; and (or) in special classes by the types of developmental disorders according to special educational plans and curricula. Children with educational needs who are in inclusive education classroom on the basis of the recommendations of the PMPC are taught in accordance with the standard, individual or adapted curriculum. *"An adapted curriculum is drawn up on the basis of the State Compulsory Education Standard, considering the individual capabilities of the student. The same way an Individual curriculum is tailored to the certain abilities of a student with impaired intelligence. The text of the shortened/individual curriculum should contain the educational goals for all sections of the Typical curriculum, formulated in the form of expected results (skills and abilities of the student) as well as an indication of the teaching methods and techniques that are most effective for this particular learner."*¹⁶⁵

When it comes to the guidance/procedures for schools to ensure that the curriculum content takes account of all learners it has to be noted the instructional and methodical letter "On peculiarities of organising the educational process in secondary schools of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the 2018-2019 academic year," developed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the RK and NAE S. Altynsarin. The guide provides recommendations for inclusive schools and teachers in building a learning strategy for children with SEN, children from national minority families, migrants, etc., considering their psychophysical characteristics and special educational needs.¹⁶⁶

The data shows that there is guidance and procedures available which could provide a clear way for schools to make a curriculum for children with SEN in an adapted way and what to include in it. However, as it is pointed out in other parts of the report, methodological materials are not always enough, accessible or in the appropriate language to be used by teachers and specialists, which is an additional challenge.

Many international studies confirm the need for investment in teachers and their capacity, but at the same time, it is necessary to empower them to work flexibly.

Teachers' motivation and understanding

When it comes to understanding of inclusive education and motivation of the teachers, it is important to acknowledge that they share their difficulties and lack of clarity how to work with children with SEN, what methods and techniques need to be used, even how to communicate with them when they have intellectual disabilities. They understand what the concept of inclusive education means in theory, but the practice turns out to be something different and more challenging. They did not have

the opportunity to get to know the concept in detail, since in their higher education the module had been introduced only recently at universities and wasn't part of the curriculum before that. Some teachers share that having children with autism in their class is a challenge, since they had no prior training or education in terms of working with children with SEN. In some cases, they sought out solutions in view of looking for resources to learn something new (resources are mostly in Russian language).

"Some teachers are not prepared to work with SEN, they get scared of working with SEN kids, these teachers need a lot of training and preparation." (FGD with teachers)

skills to feel confident and secure in teaching classes with all students.

Continuous professional development

The sustainability of any educational reform mostly depends on the capacity of people who implement it and the range of methodological materials and approaches with which they could apply it. The support for teachers in the country in terms of increasing their salaries has been done, which is a good starting point for decreasing turnover, but their motivation depends on many other factors, among which is the prestige of the teacher profession, quality of higher education, continuous professional development. When it comes to inclusive education, it is of key importance for all off these components and areas of motivation to be combined with an understanding what the concept and equality actually entails. This is even more valid for educational systems in transition, in which the orientation towards receiving knowledge and learning is more prevalent instead of towards acquiring skills.

According to the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 28, 2016 No. 95 "Rules for organizing and conducting advanced training courses for teachers, as well as post-course support for the activities of a teacher", definitions of the concepts and procedure for conducting post-course support and monitoring the activities of a teacher are given.¹⁶⁷ The advanced training department is a structural subdivision of National Scientific and Practical Center for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education¹⁶⁸, which carries out activities to improve the skills of psychological and pedagogical staff of special and inclusive education. The purpose of the training department is to organize and provide educational and methodological support for advanced training courses for psychological and pedagogical personnel of special and inclusive education in accordance with modern requirements and the need to master new methods of correctional and pedagogical work with children with special educational needs based on the best modern psychological and pedagogical approaches and educational and correctional practice. The activities of the department to improve the skills of psychological and pedagogical staff of special and inclusive education provide for the training of students on a paid and free (budgetary) basis. Education on a free basis is carried out in accordance with the Budget program. Every year, the programme provides for 13-14 advanced training courses in Kazakh and Russian on various topics according to general areas, the topics of the courses are in demand and cover a wide range of topical problems of the theory and practice of special and inclusive education.

Continuous professional development is related to university education, introduction training at the workplace, upgrading professional trainings, and professional support in terms of supervision and intervision. Also, the development of a professional society is important to exchange experience, discuss best practices and solutions to issues, create innovative models, etc. As mentioned above, in the country a module on inclusive education was introduced at the level of higher education in all the specialists getting pedagogical qualifications. Stakeholders share this is not enough, but it serves as a basis for subsequent development of their qualifications. However, a big share of teachers in the system have not passed this module course, since it was still not introduced at the time of their studies. This means that for them (and everyone), it is of key importance to provide a variety of

In terms of sustainability, teachers understand the need to work with students with SEN, but they face different challenges and do not always feel they have the necessary

opportunities to pass training courses and be able to upgrade their skills in regard to inclusive education.

"When I came here, the administration supported me a lot, provided different courses and I have certificates. Now it's my 5th year here and I am still challenged to work with these kids, I have autistic students, during pedagogical meetings I teach them an individualized programme and it takes time to design it, so it's not easy. But I also enrich my experience this way." (FGD with teachers)

Many participants in FGDs share there are available trainings, but they are short and not enough for them to feel prepared in their work. There is no information on additional support provided. Resource centres at the school (the pilot schools from 2016, which

turned into such centres) play a supporting role for development of inclusive education, created in the last years, by providing methodological support and materials to schools from one region.

In the table 3 below are presented the key barriers and mitigation strategies towards sustainability of the educational policy.

Table 3 Key barriers and mitigation strategies towards achieving sustainability of the educational policy

Key barriers	Mitigation strategies
Not clear understanding of the goals and process of inclusive education At the school level there are still different opinions related to the understanding of parents and children	Legislative mechanisms and institutions at different levels, which are engaged with inclusive education. Informational activities at the school level Involvement of students in supporting activities, Child Council, etc.
Not enough professional development and motivation of teachers	Introduction of a subject related to inclusive education in universities Development of courses for inclusive education and opportunities for training
Lack of enough materials in the respective languages	Development of materials in Kazakh language by National centres and resource centres at schools

In summary, towards the end of the period in the scope of the evaluation in terms of sustainability, activities have been implemented to ensure the changes happening will continue in the future having in mind the long period of implementation. At the national and local level, there is commitment to continue developing the process of inclusivity in education. Furthermore, the concept is clarified through including new vulnerable groups of children among those who need support to ensure education for all. In view of these efforts, the policy is supported by the professional community, parents and children, although the process needs to be qualified further. National and international NGOs have a serious role and are boosters for continuing the process in the right direction. The created mechanisms (legal, institutional, and financial) support inclusive process and create a framework for implementation, but at the same time the financial mechanism requires in-depth analysis in view of the degree to which it ensures financing for special education as well. Teachers need additional opportunities to upgrade their skills and knowledge on how to work with children with SEN in terms of updating university education further and continuous professional education at the workplace such as trainings and professional courses, supervision mechanisms, etc.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

7.1. CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1. RELEVANCE

In conclusion, since 2011, the educational policy of Kazakhstan is oriented towards achievement of inclusiveness of all children in education. Three programmes and one national project describe the strategic national priorities in view of achieving equal access to quality education for all children. The

educational policies follow the international conventions and key documents on the topic, which put an emphasis on the inclusion of all children and implementation of more inclusive approaches to education to overcome barriers faced by those who are at risk to be excluded from the system. The country hasn't created a special policy for inclusive education. Rather, it is implemented in its whole idea for development of education.

The analysis of the relevance of the different areas of change planned in the programmes with the international policy shows that despite the main principles, goals and national priorities have a high level of relevance, early identification, early interventions and ECD services are not the central focus of national programmes. Additionally, work with parents and ensuring their participation is also not addressed sufficiently in the programmes.

In the period of development of inclusive education and transition from the medical to the biopsychosocial model of disability there is a need to create a learning environment and remove the barriers towards the inclusion of the different groups of children. In spite of enlarging the scope of the understanding of the groups of children at risk of exclusion, children with disabilities, learning difficulties and in rural areas are mostly addressed by the programmes.

7.1.2. COHERENCE

In conclusion, the state education programmes have similar goals and priorities, oriented towards equity and access to quality education. Each of them has its own internal logic of planning, but none of them has an analysis of achievements so that the next programme can upgrade the results from the previous one.

The planned activities for achieving the goals in all the programmes are realised in the educational sector in partnership with all other sectors, related to the rights of education of all children. The intersectoral integration is a challenge since a mechanism for its implementation has not been developed and each separate sector has its own structures and resources through which to implement policy. There is an effort for collaboration between the social, health and educational sectors, but still such mechanisms have not been developed.

The approach of planning and implementing policy is centralised. It is planned at the central level and realised at the local level (top-down approach). At the different levels, there are different institutions and structures engaged with educational policy and, in particular, inclusivity, which have specific roles and functions. Key stakeholders in implementing the policy are local and international NGOs and organisations, as well as private entities. Their role is related to an initial boost to the development of inclusive policy, of pilot practices and raising awareness on the issues.

7.1.3. EFFECTIVENESS

In conclusion, although the indicator from the State programme for 2011-2020 seems to be achieved according to the national data (81.7% of schools in 2021 have created conditions for inclusive education), there is indication that it is unclear what is understood by favourable conditions, or this has changed over the years. The analysis regarding the main components shows that still, the achievement of conditions for inclusiveness of education is a process that is not finished, and this is also confirmed by stakeholders. The cycle of change from traditional to inclusive education goes through different phases but should start with common understanding and clear management and leadership of the process. The analysis of these programmes shows that the cycle has started from physical access (architecture) and went gradually into the inclusion of the rest of the elements of change.

In terms of preschool education and care, the data for the period of evaluation shows an increase in the scope in terms of the number of kindergartens, a decrease in the number of mini-centres and development of the content of curriculum. In 2019, 98.7% of children aged 3-6 attended preschool education (and 100% in 2021). In 2021, 84.6% of children aged 1-6 attended preschool education, while 67% of kindergartens created conditions for inclusive education. At the same time, the number of special kindergartens remains similar between 2014 and 2020 (slightly increasing) with a bigger

increase in 2021 with 4414 children in them. On the other hand, the qualitative data shows that according to parents the issues with early childhood education, early identification and intervention are serious. The choices they have to meet the needs of their children at an early age are limited to special kindergartens, private centres, or home- schooling.

In the period of 10 years the system of inclusiveness in education is developing in parallel with keeping the system for special education. The number of children with SEN in secondary inclusive education is increasing over the years (from 33% in 2018 to 52% in 2022). At the same time, it should be noted that there are still 14% of children in special schools in 2022, 10% are in special classes and 12% are in home-schooling. This shows that still, the system is in a process of development, although there is a clear trend towards increasing the number of children with SEN in general schools. When it comes to children with SEN in preschool, 41% are in inclusive kindergartens in 2022, but still 11% are in special groups in general kindergartens and 13% are in special kindergartens. When it comes to other groups of children at risk of exclusion, their right to education is ensured in general and boarding schools. Although boarding schools satisfy needs regarding education, especially for children in rural and remote areas, there is no data on their quality, and this should be analysed additionally.

7.1.4. EFFICIENCY

In conclusion, the investments in education are increasing for the period of evaluation and are related to the different necessary resources and educational stages. There isn't a separate financing dedicated to inclusive education, so the investments in it are a part of all the investments in the system. In the first years of the period of evaluation, the investments in physical access and buildings are prevalent, while in 2015-2016 more resources are allocated for digitalisation and capacity development. The least investments are in methodological materials.

There is an overlapping in the periods of realisation of the programmes, which means that sometimes different goals and indicators for implementation are set for the educational system for the same period. Since the cycle of change in the educational system requires a lot of time and the results are seen in the more distant future, such an overlap could decrease the level of efficiency of their implementation.

Two are the main changes in financing, influencing the efficiency of investments in terms of inclusivity: the increase in the salaries of teachers, related to their motivation, which could affect the quality of their work and the per capita financing introduced gradually across the country, after 2013. It provides opportunities for individualising the resources for each child and that more money is allocated for children with SEN. At the same time, these children receive similar financing when they study in the special classes or in the inclusive classes.

7.1.5. SUSTAINABILITY

In conclusion, the sustainability of the policy for inclusiveness in education is ensured through making the topic a priority not only in the educational programmes, but also in the new Concept for development of education 2023 – 2029. This shows a sustainable national commitment to continue in the direction of ensuring quality education for all children. This, together with changes in regulations, creates sustainable preconditions for not only continuing policy, but also for making it more focused and it is demonstrated by all stakeholders, although with a different level of influence on the changes and different interest. Maybe most significant is the understanding of the children of inclusiveness as the right for each child to study with others, which is a good precondition for raising awareness. In addition, there are rather legal mechanisms for sustainability, but in view of financial ones, it is good to analyse them further (regarding per capita funding, special education, and home-schooling).

It is necessary for the people implementing a policy to be motivated and to have capacity to implement it. In all these years, different bottlenecks in view of the capacity of the system have been identified, among which are the salaries and continuous professional development of teachers. Steps have been

taken towards ensuring sustainability, but they are still not enough, and more is needed to continue in this direction.

7.2. LESSONS LEARNED

In summary, this formative evaluation concludes that the “road” to inclusivity goes through different phases and the first steps in the right direction have been taken. Although the system is still keeping special education, it manages to develop in a way that would create preconditions for change. The outcomes in the scope of this evaluation, which are defined in the TOR as related to inclusivity from three state programmes and one national project, have been achieved with the limitation of the way they are understood, how data is collected and how they are reported on. At this stage of the policy implementation, the evaluation has identified different challenges and some limitations, mostly in the planning and implementation of interventions.

The main lesson learned is that, in order to create an inclusive system, it is of key importance to clearly define the goal in view of equity for all children, right to quality education and focus on learning. This goal needs to be decomposed to concrete tasks and activities, which would lead to its achievement. This is done in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and, in particular, the parent community. The ET identifies the following specific lessons learned:

- **Importance of more focused strategic planning and communication in terms of inclusive education** with different stakeholders at the different stages of implementation of activities towards achieving the common goals. Ensuring a high level of relevance and total achievement of the goals depends on focused planning with specific tasks, expected outcomes and indicators, agreed between all involved actors and sectors.
- **The common understanding and agreement around a path to change at the planning phase of realisation of policy** is a key factor for identifying clear expected outcomes and impact, key activities, assumptions and risk mitigation and description of the road to these results, including planning at the local level.
- **It is important to ensure participation of all stakeholders, at a multisectoral level.** The road is long and passes through a change in attitudes, motivations, and capacity development in all sectors engaged with ensuring the rights of the children.
- **It is necessary to ensure that the indicators for outcomes, related to inclusive education, are clearly defined, reliable and measurable and that high quality data is collected and analysed in a proper way.** This is essential in order to set priorities, monitor and measure the achievement of the outcome, as well as to identify the needs.
- **Importance of development of early identification and early intervention** integrated services in order to implement the identification of developmental problems and support for parents at the earliest stages.
- **Development of integrated services for children at risk of exclusion from the educational system** and implementing a case management approach, which involves assessment and planning according to the needs. The individual approach to the needs of each child is crucial to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.
- **There is a high level of importance of empowering principals, teachers, parents, and children to develop their own ‘project of change’ for each school.** The planning how to develop inclusiveness in every school, having in mind the differences in the regions would guarantee a high level of commitment and ownership on behalf of the schools, including parents, students, and teachers.
- **A systemic change could be ensured by efficient investing of resources in inclusive education, taking into consideration the main components of educational reform,** the right – based approach and all components of the change like pedagogy, leadership, school environment, technology, and efficient investment.
- **The continuous professional development of all teachers and ensuring flexibility of their work** will provide opportunities for implementing of innovative approaches for working with children at risk of exclusion and create a supportive learning environment.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

All the analysis and conclusions in terms of policy development give reason to the ET to suggest and formulate an updated ToC for the next period of implementation, which contains the main bottlenecks, as well as suggestions for fields of intervention, expected changes in view of inclusive education and the path to these changes.

The major bottlenecks are grouped into four domains: enabling environment, demand, supply, and quality. In terms of **enabling environment**, it is indicated that the concept on inclusive education is developed but is still in the beginning of implementation; public attitudes are changing, but still discrimination and stigma exist, especially in certain regions; lack mechanism for coordination/partnership in the education sector and at the multisectoral level; centralized and no participatory mechanisms for planning, monitoring, and evaluating educational provision for children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions. In terms of the **demand side** the ToC stipulates that: many children with SEN at an early age do not have access to inclusive preschool education; school/ECEC infrastructure does not fully meet the existing needs; the scope of basic secondary education is oriented towards receiving knowledge rather than skills; many families of children with SEN use private educational services while those services are not affordable for all; systematic problems in early identification and early intervention and prevention; no transition to ensure continuation of the curriculum between early childhood, primary and secondary education. In terms of the **supply side**, it is indicated in the ToC that: the existing network of preschool education organizations does not respond to the needs of inclusive education; there is high work overload of PMPCs and lack of capacity for needs assessment of children with SEN; teacher education programmes, both preservice and in service, do not fully address the provision of inclusive education in schools/preschool; the school environment for learning, material and technical base and digital infrastructure of educational organizations is not fully developed to meet the needs of all learners. In terms of the **quality side**, the ToC states that: the individual programmes for students with SEN are oriented towards knowledge development rather than skills building; there are no tailor-made approaches for working with the other groups of vulnerable children at risk of exclusion, apart from children with SEN; there are not enough materials and methodological materials in Kazakh language; professionals and specialists are often inadequately trained; there are strict methodological requirements for teachers on how to work with children with SEN; low quality of screening, ICF is not implemented; there are regional differences in quality of working with children with SEN.

Three key outcome areas could lead to overcoming the identified bottlenecks and barriers towards inclusive education development in Kazakhstan. The first one is oriented towards **strengthening partnerships and multisectoral coordination**. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to develop a mechanism for coordination/partnership/planning at the horizontal and vertical level, as well as policy in the direction of integration between services at the local level. In order to achieve inclusive education, it is necessary to conduct the planning not only at the national, but also at the local level to reflect regional specifics, on one hand, and on the other, to involve local authorities, as well as parent communities and achieve a high level of participation. On the other hand, the integration between the sectors could contribute to having common goals and meeting the needs of all children. It is necessary to have a unified gatekeeping mechanism in order to ensure integrated needs assessment and referral to different services appropriate for each case.

The second is oriented towards **universalizing access and promoting equity and continuation of the services for children at different ages**. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to develop early identification and early intervention services, pedagogy, leadership, and school environment for learning, accessible for all children, as well as focus on ECD services in terms of pedagogy, capacity development and leadership. All international studies confirm that investment in early learning and development has the biggest social return and impact on the whole development of the individual and of the system as well. This means that the focus on early intervention and prevention for children with

SEN, as well as ECD services for all children would ensure support for development and learning at an early age. The promotion of equity in education and the rights-based approach is related to the school environment for learning, in which the pedagogical approaches and techniques and the type of leadership guarantee quality of education for all children.

This leads to the third area, related to **broadening the means and scope of basic education to support children holistically**. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to empower teachers to work flexibly, ensure a system for continuous professional development at all levels of education, develop methodological materials accessible in different languages for children at a different age with different needs, implement integrated and multisectoral approach in assessment and planning of the school programmes on the individual level. The rights-based approach to education means that all children should have equivalent and systematic learning opportunities. To ensure this, it is necessary to have teachers who would be flexible in using different approaches, materials which would help them to implement the approaches and to plan their implementation according to the individual needs of every child, regardless of their ability and background.

The path to change is made with the following **assumptions**: capacity development of teachers and flexibility of their work will ensure implementation of the individual approach; if early intervention and identification is developed, support for the children will start earlier and they will more easily be included in educational activities and there will be a bigger return of investment; an integrated effort of work between the three systems would ensure inclusion of all groups of children. The following **risks** should be considered: rushing into preparation of teachers could make it difficult to know what the next steps are to follow; too much focus on early intervention, instead of the other system components (like secondary and vocational education); per capita financing could lead to an increase in the number of children studying in “special classes”.

The recommendations derived from the ToC and are listed in the table below. Each recommendation is assigned a responsibility, priority, and timeframe. General areas of recommendations are discussed with UNICEF and MoE and will be validated at a final ERG workshop. It should be noted that all the right holders (parents and children) have been asked specifically to provide their own recommendations during the data collection process for future implementation of education policy in terms of inclusivity. All relevant opinions were taken into account when developing the set of evaluation recommendations below, especially those related to development and quality of education services.

The recommendations presented in table 15 below were constructed from the evaluative evidence and findings of the evaluation:

- Strategic recommendations (focused on the sectoral and intersectoral policy changes in terms of inclusivity);
- Practical recommendations (focused on development of services and quality of services);
- Operational recommendations (focused on coordination, M&E, guidance).

In order to identify the responsibility, the ET has considered information on the key responsible institutions for the planning and realisation of educational policy. Having in mind that this evaluation does not have a specific focus on the contribution of UNICEF, the ET has made recommendations on interventions and policies that UNICEF could support in view of their innovative type and the need to pilot and model new services and policies. How these recommendations will be related to the planning of the Country Programme Development is the decision of UNICEF.

Table 4 Recommendations

Recommendation	Priority (High/Medium)	Timeframe (Strategic - long-term; Practical – mid-term; Operational – short-term;)	Responsibility

Strategic recommendations (focused on policy challenges in terms of inclusivity)				
Focused strategic planning to improve the education systems to enable inclusion of all children regardless of individual background and abilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance multisectoral coordination/partnership at both horizontal and vertical levels. Establish a robust mechanism for coordination which should facilitate effective collaboration and information sharing among relevant stakeholders, including government departments, educational institutions, civil society organizations. 	High	In the frame of the new strategic planning	Line ministries in the educational, health and social sector	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a mechanism for partnership and planning in the education sector, including resource allocation and capacity building. This support would address the needs to include local authorities in the needs assessment and planning of implementation of inclusive education, fostering collaboration between schools, teachers, parents and children to address specific challenges related to inclusivity. 	Medium	In the frame of the new strategic planning	MoE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy oriented towards development of services on ECD, early intervention and prevention. Implement comprehensive and evidence-based programmes that support the holistic development of children, including their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being. The findings from the evaluation show that there is a lack of such services for children at an early age, so it is necessary to enhance partnerships and build capacity in the education and health sectors. 	High	In the frame of the new strategic planning	Line ministries in the educational, health and social sector with the support of UNICEF	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a policy framework focused on the development of integrated services, employing a multisectoral approach for needs assessment and tailored support for children at risk of exclusion. The findings of the evaluation indicate the lack of services which effectively meet the needs of children, related to social, health and educational inequalities. 	Medium	In the frame of the new strategic planning	Line ministries in the educational, health and social sector with the support of UNICEF	
Practical recommendations (focused on development of services and quality of services)				
Focused systematic planning aimed at strengthening the national and local institutional capacity in providing educational quality services				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of conditions for inclusive education in kindergartens in order to ensure the access and quality of work with all children at risk of exclusion (in view of architecture, teacher capacity, pedagogical methods and materials). This will meet the need identified by the evaluation for increasing the access of children at an early age to preschool education. 	High	In the frame of the mid-term planning	MoE and local level institutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary schools should continue their path to inclusiveness through rights-based planning on what is most appropriate with the participation of all stakeholders, including parents in particular. This will meet the need to address the differences in the regions and reduce the influence of the centralised methodological approach. 	Medium	In the frame of mid-term planning	Local educational institutions and schools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a well-planned and realised professional development of teachers to become agents of change and flexibility to use pedagogical approaches and innovative techniques to guarantee quality of education for all children. This will meet the needs for capacity development of teachers identified in the evaluation. 	High	In the frame of mid-term planning	MoE	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the system is well-equipped, and beneficiaries are properly informed about methodological materials in Kazakh language, digital resources, and tools for working with children with different levels of abilities and needs. The evaluation has identified the need for methodological materials and low level of digitalisation in some of the schools, especially in rural areas 	Medium	In the frame of mid-term planning	National and local educational institutions and schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct additional analysis focused on per capita financing on inclusive education in order to decide what is the most efficient way for spending the resources. The evaluation identifies that per capita standards are bigger per child with SEN studying at home and similar for special and inclusive classes. 	High	In the frame of mid-term per capita financing implementation	MoE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure methodological support for implementation of case management approach in assessment and planning in addressing the needs of children at risk of exclusion holistically. The evaluation has identified that the individual programmes used for students are related only to the learning tasks instead of development of soft skills. 	High	In the frame of mid-term implementation	MoE with the support of UNICEF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan an analysis and revision of the role of PMPCs in view of a gatekeeping mechanism ensuring integrated support as a main agency for giving recommendations to different social, educational and health services. This means that the planning of the concrete programme and support for children will be conducted at the service level. This will meet the need for gatekeeping and reduce the workload since a part of the activities will be transferred to other services. 	Medium	In the frame of mid-term implementation	MoE and line ministries, local educational departments

Operational recommendations:

Coordination, M&E, guidance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a clear and common goal and formulate measurable specific indicators for inclusive education, as well as data collection mechanism with disaggregation (as much as it is possible by gender, age of children in the education system, geographical location, trends for the years, etc.). The findings from the formative evaluation show that the indicator on favourable conditions for inclusive education need to be specified and clarified. 	High	In the frame of operational planning	MoE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a mechanism for integrated planning of the implementation of the state education policy (in terms of programmes and strategies) with clear division of tasks, timeline, and responsibilities of the different line ministries and implementing agencies 	High	In the frame of operational planning	MoE and the other line ministries and agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the suggested ToC to be considered in the process of development of new educational policies. Since a ToC has not been developed for any of the programmes and now there is a suggestion, it should be validated and/or updated by stakeholders. 	High	In the frame of operational planning	UNICEF

9. ANNEXES

9.1. ANNEX 1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND in KAZAKHSTAN

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL CONSULTANCIES

Evaluation Title: Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity

Region: Europe and Central Asia

Commissioning Office: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Kazakhstan

Evaluation Object: State Programmes for Development of Education implemented between 2011 and 2021

Type of evaluation: Formative

Anticipated start date of the assignment: September 2022

End date: March 2023

Funding information: Inclusive Education sector evaluation - 2390/A0/06/882/002/008 - RR (GC); Evaluation - 2390/A0/06/880/006 - RR (BMO)

1. Introduction

UNICEF in Kazakhstan in collaboration with the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Republic of Kazakhstan (former Ministry of Education and Science) is commissioning a formative evaluation to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan implemented within the period of 2011-2021 have been contributing to inclusion of children of different levels of ability.

The evaluation aims to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system, to contribute to increased knowledge on the national inclusive education agenda, and to improve national capacity to advance attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets.

This document outlines the scope of the evaluation including research questions, the envisaged methodology, and implementation framework for the selected institutional contractor.

The evaluation will start in September 2022 and is expected to be completed in 2023. UNICEF is looking for an institution with deep commitment and strong background in evaluation and relevant subject matter to undertake this exercise.

2. Background and Context of evaluation

One of the top priorities of the long-term "Kazakhstan-2050" Strategy is education. The general aim of educational reforms in the country is the adaptation of the system of education to new social and economic environment and create modern and efficient education. The Government set the objective of joining the top 30 most competitive countries of the world. Although Kazakhstan's economy displayed impressive performance since gaining independence in 1991, it still has weaknesses and uneven development. Slow productivity growth, wealth disparity, sharp growth of living costs, a lack of job prospects, and weak institutions are some of the major issues. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these issues. The January events, which were marred by violence and attempts at destabilization, clearly pointed to the need for faster progress on reforms to achieve sustainable growth and shared national prosperity.

In this context, the authorities intend to promote the rule of law, take a tougher stance against corruption, and announce initiatives to boost private sector growth and competitiveness as well as solve government inefficiency. Reforms are also required to improve human capital quality and

living standards, reverse productivity stagnation, and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The improvement of the system of education plays an important role in achieving these objectives and responding to new realities the country is facing.

Over the past decade four state educational programmes have been implemented in Kazakhstan:

<i>State Educational Projects</i>		<i>Objectives aimed at promoting inclusion in education</i>	<i>Target indicators aimed at inclusion in education</i>
1.	The State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve inclusive education system in schools; • to create conditions for life-long education, education for all; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of schools that created favorable conditions for inclusive education - 70% (out of their total number);
2.	The State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide equal access to quality pre-school education and training; • to provide equal access to high-quality secondary education, to educate intellectually, physically, spiritually developed, and successful citizens; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of children aged 3-6 years attending preschool education and learning according to the new curriculum, in 2017 - 87.5%, in 2019 - 100%; • percentage of schools that transitioned to the new curriculum, in 2016 - 100%, in 2019 - 100%;
3.	The State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 (in 2021 transitioned to The national project "Educated Nation").	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to address the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive education; • to provide a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of 1-6 y.o. children attending preschool education - 85.3%, 3-6 y.o. children - 100%; • child wellbeing index in Kazakhstan - 0.73;
4.	The national project "Educated Nation" 2021–2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide access and to ensure equity in education; • to create favorable conditions and environment for learning; • to improve the quality of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of children with disabilities receiving special psychological and pedagogical support and early intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2022 – 50 - 2023 – 65 - 2024 – 80 - 2025 – 100

In June 2021, Kazakhstan adopted a new Law on Inclusive Education that establishes a universal approach to children with disabilities by including them in the educational environment through the implementation of programs of psychological, medical, and pedagogical assessment and consultation. In 2015, Kazakhstan, among other UN Member States, committed itself to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) until 2030, including SDG 4 - ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

However, as of today, there is no single or integrated approach or procedure for implementation of inclusivity at all levels of education (starting from pre-school to post university). There are no clear

ways to monitor inclusive education or the methods of calculation¹. Furthermore, in the country context children with disabilities are over-represented among the population who are not in education.

Understanding of inclusive education in Kazakhstan is rather limited focusing mainly on inclusion of children with disabilities, while in an international context the concept is interpreted more broadly. It refers to a quality, flexible, individual, and non-discriminatory approach in education. According to UNESCO it is defined as “a process of reinforcing the capacity of education systems to welcome and reach out to all learners²”.

A situational analysis about access to quality education by children from socially vulnerable groups, carried out in 2011, defined 10 groups which have difficulties accessing secondary education³:

- children from vulnerable families;
- children from incomplete families;
- children from families with low income;
- children with risk behavior;
- children from remote rural areas;
- children with disabilities in development (including disabled children);
- children from language and ethnical minorities;
- children from migrant families (expats);
- children from refugee families;
- orphans and children deprived of parental care;

One of the main aims of conducting this evaluation is to broaden the government’s perspective on inclusion, widening the perception of inclusive education beyond disability. In terms of inclusive education, access to education should be available to all students, regardless of individual capabilities. Kazakhstan ratified the International Convention for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the Convention on Combating Education Discrimination in 2016.

In Kazakhstan there are more than 160 000 children with special needs and each year this number is growing. Every year the network of special educational organizations increases in the country, providing educational services and correctional support for children with special educational needs, including children with disabilities. As of the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, 403 special educational organizations were operational.

According to the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in 2020 there were 42 special kindergartens in the country with a total of 4,229 children, 335 groups. 534 special groups have been created in 217 preschool organizations covering 8,229 children. At the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year, the share of schools that claims to have created conditions for inclusive education was 74.9% (2016-2017 academic year - 44.7). The number of school-age children with disabilities was 107,348, of which 41,581 (38.7%) are attending mainstream schools or studying online (25.95% in the 2016-2017 academic year)⁴. A significant change in 2020 was the introduction of teachers-assistants at all levels of education to provide pedagogical support for a child with disability.

In addition, in 2020, there were 2,214 children from migrant families, 625,000 children in low-income families, 5,714 children in residential care, 23 410 orphans and children deprived of parental care, and 114 children in detention⁵.

¹ Prevention of School Drop Outs: School Support Plans (2021)

² <https://www.unicef.org/education/inclusive-education>

³ Prevention of School Drop Outs: School Support Plans (2021)

⁴ The 2020 annual report of the Child Protection Committee on the situation of children in Kazakhstan

⁵ Bureau of National Statistics, TransMonEE 2020, National report on Education - 2020

The knowledge generated by the evaluation will be used by the Government to address existing gaps and adjust reforms if needed so. The evaluation of the Programme will feed into the next education policy framework and will further contribute to the implementation of the national project "Educated Nation" 2021-2025.

The evaluation is part of the Costed Evaluation Plan, approved by UNICEF Executive Board, in September 2020 and in line with Outcome II of Country Programme Document "All children and adolescents, especially the most marginalized, benefit from inclusive, quality education that responds to twenty-first century needs, and have the skills to be healthy, resilient and ready for adult life.

3. Purpose and objectives of evaluation

The purpose of this formative evaluation is to examine to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan implemented within the period of 2011-2021 have been contributing to inclusion of children of different levels of ability in the education system in the country as well as to examine the enabling conditions and bottlenecks which will require further improvement. The evaluation is to provide the Government of Kazakhstan and UNICEF with sound evidence and conclusions to inform planning the future strategies and work in this area.

Within this framework, the evaluation will have the following specific objectives:

- examine relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the state education programmes with a focus on inclusivity;
- document the evolution of government work on inclusion by analyzing previous and current laws, policies, programmatic documents that guide the development of the inclusive education and construct the theory of change;
- examine the extent to which the education sector priorities on inclusion have been appropriately designed, efficiently, and effectively managed in relation to global priorities, including the incorporation of equity, gender equality, and human rights considerations;
- assess some of the immediate results and good practices of what is working, for whom, and what is not working;
- identify existing challenges, barriers and gaps in the education system and provide strategic recommendations aimed at creating an inclusive and resilient learning environment for every child;
- develop recommendations for future strategies in sustaining results and good practices and addressing existing challenges and barriers.

The evaluation aims to promote evidence-based policy recommendations on inclusive education policies, and to contribute to increased knowledge on inclusive education issues in the country.

This is highly relevant at this time as the country had undergone COVID-19 crisis and January events that highlighted the need for more improvements in the education system targeting at the full inclusion of vulnerable groups.

Stakeholders:

This evaluation will consider different stakeholders, including:

- a. UNICEF Country Office (CO), by whom the evaluation is commissioned. UNICEF CO will regularly communicate with the contractor and provide feedback on performance and other necessary support to achieve objectives of the evaluation.

- b. The Ministry of Enlightenment, the Government representative, as well as the counterpart of the joint evaluation. The Ministry will participate in the evaluation through facilitation of data collection, consultations, provision of comments on draft documents, address the recommendations made by the evaluation in collaboration with UNICEF.
- c. Local stakeholders – teachers of rural and urban schools, respective staff of local government authorities (akimats); inclusion support rooms, regional, urban and district Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Commissions (PMPCs), psychological and pedagogical correction rooms, rehabilitation centers, special schools, special kindergartens will be involved in the evaluation process through participation in discussions, provision of information for analysis.
- d. Beneficiaries and other stakeholders – parents/caregivers and children, including NEET, academia, business, NGOs, international partners are planned to be engaged in interviews and focus groups during the data collection process.

Intended audience of the evaluation are Parliament, Government, Child Rights Ombudsperson, Ministry of Enlightenment, local akimats, and CSOs.

Use of findings: This evaluation seeks to capture lessons learned and develop recommendations for the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Republic of Kazakhstan in further implementation of the national project "Educated Nation" and other reforms in the education system to strengthen the inclusion agenda. The evaluation will help in understanding the focus, approaches, strategies, and effectiveness of current modalities of the inclusive education and identify barriers, bottlenecks and challenges in implementing it. The findings will also point to examples of good strategies/practices that can be further replicated or scaled up in the next national education project, policy or reforms.

It is planned to widely disseminate the findings and recommendations of the evaluation by sharing the policy brief, infographics and other communication materials with a wide range of stakeholders, including central and local government and other partners, NGOs, academia, mass media through bilateral technical meetings, official channels, and UNICEF social media, including the website, Instagram, facebook and other ways.

4. Scope of evaluation

Programmatic Scope: The object of this evaluation will be four state education programmes:

- 1) The State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020;
- 2) The State Programme for Education and Science Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016-2019;
- 3) The State Program for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025 (in 2021 transitioned to The national project "Educated Nation");
- 4) The national project "Educated Nation" for 2020–2025 which have the following general objectives to promote inclusive education in the country (see details in Table 1):
 - to improve inclusive education system in schools (pre-school, primary and secondary);
 - to address the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive quality of education;
 - to provide a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment.

Further, it will examine the challenges and barriers encountered during the implementation of these programmes' activities and understand the partnerships and collaborations/actors employed in achieving the targets related to inclusion in education.

Geographic Scope: As part of the assignment, travel from Nur-Sultan to five regions of the country is planned to conduct the field work. The regions will be selected by the contractor in consultation with UNICEF and national stakeholders to reflect the diverse realities in the country. In the meanwhile, COVID-19 restrictions shall be considered prior to planning the routes.

Period: This evaluation will examine state education programmes implemented between 2011-2021 with the focus on inclusivity, covering pre-COVID-19 (2011-2019) and COVID-19 (March 2020-2021) contexts.

Contractors may take into consideration children at risk of exclusion from quality and adapted education, due to family, social, economic, and/or individual conditions – such as those living in vulnerable families, in families with low income, in institutions, in remote areas, deprived of parental care (including orphans), with disabilities in development, with risk behaviors, in conflict with the law, from linguistic and ethnical minorities, in migration (including refugees).

What is not within the scope of this evaluation: The evaluation will not assess the ‘impact’ of the state educational programmes and is not expected to make causal attribution claims as (a) the state programs support is only one of the contributors to achieving the intended education outcomes and (b) the national project "Educated Nation" is under way and will be completed in 2025.

5. Limitation of evaluation

Programmatic risks, challenges, and limitations: Internal programmatic understanding anticipates that the following risks and limitations may affect the evaluation or its outcomes:

- Due to the dynamic nature of the pandemic, it is difficult for UNICEF to predict at this point if face-to-face interactions will be feasible during data collection.
- The evaluation object is quite complex, it includes four different state education programmes through which the inclusive education development in the country shall be examined. Therefore, the applicants need to identify intended goals, aims, objectives and desired results to be achieved from each intervention.
- Access to quality data with higher level of disaggregation (including gender dimension) on children with special educational needs is another potential limitation.

6. Evaluation questions and criteria

Evaluation criteria and key evaluation questions: This evaluation will be assessed using criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. These criteria are prioritized because they capture the key evaluation questions presented below. In addition, the evaluation will incorporate equity and gender equality considerations as cross-cutting issues. Key evaluation questions (and sub-questions) are clustered according to the evaluation criteria provided. This initial list of questions will be further refined and unfolded by the evaluators and included in the Inception Report following desk review of key documents and interview of evaluation users. Below is what should be under each criterion as per OECD/DAC.

1. Relevance.

- How well are the state education programmes aligned with global priorities (The World Declaration on Education for All, Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO), Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities (UNICEF), The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals) in terms of inclusivity?
- How are the state education programmes aligned to government priorities in Kazakhstan ("Kazakhstan-2050", Digital Kazakhstan, National Development Plan of Kazakhstan - 2025, etc.) and commitments on human rights, including child rights, equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion?

- To what extent and how well have the state education programmes adapted to the changing context within the education sector?
- How relevant are the state education programmes in addressing inherent equity gaps, taking into consideration any disparities?
- To what extent the education system was able to adapt its strategies to changes in needs and priorities caused by COVID-19?

2. Effectiveness.

- To what extent were state education programmes activities delivered in a timely and organized manner for the benefit of children at risk of exclusion?
- To what extent were the state education programmes effective in achieving its intended results, both at national and regional levels, in terms of inclusivity?
- To what extent have the state education programmes achieved the overall expected outcomes or are likely to achieve?
- To what extent have the state education programmes contributed to broader education goals?
- How effective have the state education programmes been in addressing inherent equity gaps or taking into consideration the disparities?
- Did the state education programmes actively contribute to the fulfillment of the right to education, especially for the most vulnerable?
- In what ways and to what extent have the state education programmes been gender responsive or transformative?

3. Efficiency.

- To what extent have the activities and measures planned/implemented through the State programmes enabled optimized use of resources?
- How efficiently did the State programs respond to equity-based challenges?
- To what extent, and in what ways, did the Implementing Agencies proactively leverage key partners to ensure efficient use of existing platforms (service, community, and media delivery platforms) and resources for educational activities?
- Were there any inefficiencies because Implementing Agencies did not work with certain partners (or if the Implementing Agencies only worked with the same set of partners)?
- How efficiently did the Implementing Agencies respond to equity-based challenges?

4. Coherence.

- To what extent the state programmes as planned/implemented enabled coordinated interventions/measures?
- How did the Implementing Agencies' work fit with the work of external partners (global partners, regional partners, other government bodies, partner programmes /interventions)?
- Were the state education programmes priorities chosen based on comparative strengths, capacities, and stakeholders' expectations?
- To what extent did the Implementing Agencies leverage their comparative advantage vis-à-vis, other partners, efficiently?
- To what extent were the Implementing Agencies able to effectively collaborate and coordinate with one another and externally with key stakeholders, and leverage existing partnerships, to be as efficient as possible for strengthening and improving service delivery?
- How did the state education programmes align with/fit with other interventions being carried out in the country?
- Were the state Programmes interventions coherent with the Implementing Agencies' approach that is likely to have positive results, or are there critical gaps?

5. Sustainability.

- To what extent the Implementing Agencies are committed to further support inclusion in education and able to sustain?
- Are legal, institutional and financial mechanisms established to ensure sustainability of programmes results?
- Are there conditions to ensure quality of the services (curriculum, teacher training, supervision mechanisms, etc.)?
- What are the key barriers and bottlenecks toward achieving sustainability in the education sector?

Issues related to Gender Equality, Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming and Results-Based Management will be addressed across the evaluation questions or, if required, developed as specific points as per United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [Guidance on Integrating human-rights and gender equality in evaluation](#).

7. Evaluation process and methods

Design: Overall study design for the evaluation will be theory-based contribution analysis. A theory-based equity focused evaluation using contribution analysis will assess (i) inputs leading to outputs and outcomes, and (ii) analysis to focus on whether the state programmes' approach is appropriate to ensure inclusion in education and effectively reaching the most marginalized. The evaluation team will elaborate on the design or propose a more appropriate design and methodology to conduct the evaluation during the inception phase. The evaluation design will be primarily based on a review of the existing documents, monitoring data, field work and reconstruction of the programme theory with appropriate indicators, borrowing from the programme documents.

The programme theory will be empirically tested through the collection and review of quantitative and qualitative data. The programme theory will establish a logical model of cause-effect linkages by exploring the delivery of results. Reconstructing the programme theory will be a critical first part of the evaluation prior to conducting review of data and fieldwork and will be done through a combination of documentary review and interviews with relevant right holders (parents/caregivers and children including NEET), stakeholders (HR Ombudsperson, CR Ombudsperson, Implementing Agencies, schools, academia, business, NGOs, international partners, etc.) and professionals (schoolteachers, staff of the Psychological, Medical and Pedagogical Commissions (PMPC), Psychological and Pedagogical Correction Rooms (PPCR), Rehabilitation Centers (RC), teachers, health professionals etc.) at national and local levels, Implementing Agencies', beneficiaries (parents/caregivers and school children and adolescents (14-17 y.o.) including NEET).

Methodology The evaluation will employ a mixed-methodological approach to ensure that data can be sufficiently triangulated to deliver aggregate quantitative and qualitative judgments. The methodology should apply a human right based approach, with the use of child rights and a gender-response evaluation lenses.

Quantitative

Secondary data analysis: using administrative data from the National Educational Database (NEDB), and available raw datasets from studies, reports, and evaluations to be disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, etc, where possible. UNICEF country office in collaboration with the Ministry will facilitate access to these datasets.

Qualitative

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with representatives from the Enlightenment Ministry and its technical agencies, municipal level officials and other relevant government institutions, NGOs and representatives from key partners;

- Interview/discussions with UNICEF programme specialists/offices, and implementing partners;
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) with programme partners and beneficiaries;
- Observations during field visits.

Desk review

- Desk review of background documents related to the government programmes;
- Review of good practices or case studies of inclusion in education;
- Review and analysis of documentation on key lesson learning or areas /strategies not working well in terms of inclusion in education.

Theory of Change

In Kazakhstan, the government included some specific results into the state programmes and action plans, however, a document setting out the Theory of Change (hereinafter ToC) with respective indicators/targets has not been developed. The evaluation team jointly with UNICEF and national stakeholders is expected to retrospectively construct a ToC for the evaluation and further for strengthening the national education system's inclusivity for the period following the evaluation (2022-2030 given the SDG targets and duration of the key national policy documents).

UNEG evaluation principles

The Evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) (UNEG) and standards using the [Evaluation criteria](#) (OECD).

UNICEF brings a human rights perspective and strives to mainstream gender issues in all its work for children, with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a principal reference, and recognizes the mutually supportive relationship between the CRC, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

The evaluation is a part of an organizational focus on equity and a process of strengthening reforms that target inequities affecting the most disadvantaged children in Kazakhstan. According to UNICEF, equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias, or favoritism. This interpretation is consistent with the CRC, which guarantees the fundamental rights of every child, regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location, or other status.

An equity-based approach to UNICEF's evaluation seeks to understand whether the undertaken interventions managed to address the needs and uphold the rights of the specific groups of the most vulnerable children in Kazakhstan. Equity-based evaluations should also generate knowledge and recommendations for UNICEF's further focus in protecting the rights of poor and vulnerable children. To ensure comprehensiveness of the evaluation and taking into account the multi-dimensional essence of equity the evaluation should use a mixed-methods approach.

The contractor will work closely with UNICEF staff at key phases of the evaluation process to ensure that equity focus, and ethical requirements are fully met in the final Evaluation Report.

Ethical considerations

The contractor should follow UNEG ethical guidance to evaluation as guiding principle to ensure quality of evaluation process and clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in their proposal.

UNICEF will be responsible for arranging a review of the agreed with UNICEF methodology by an independent Ethical Review Board based on the "Criteria for Ethical Review Checklist", specified in the *Annex 3* of the TOR. The selected contractor will be responsible for addressing the comments by Ethical Review Board.

The approval letter from the Ethical review board should be included in the annex of the final report.

8. Deliverables

The evaluation team must provide the following products electronically in English (details and duration will be specified at the inception meeting):

1. Inception report which will describe the detailed evaluation methodology, that includes an evaluation design, an evaluation matrix and the theory of change. It should follow outline in *Annex 1*. The evaluation report must comply with the [UNICEF standards for evaluation reports](#) and to the [GEROS Quality Assessment System](#) according to the quality assurance checklist.
2. PPT presentation of the main preliminary findings and conclusions to the Evaluation Reference Group; this presentation will be discussed during the mini workshop to report the results of the evaluation and the theory of change towards the end of the field mission. The PPT presentation will also be updated and submitted at the same time as the final report.
3. Draft report presenting all the findings of the evaluation and the theory of change. This report will be the subject of several iterations between the evaluation team and UNICEF until the content of the interim report is in line with UNICEF evaluation report standards and GROS. Each finding, conclusion and recommendation should be numbered and the link between them should be clearly explicit in the conclusions and recommendations section.
4. Completed comment matrix for the draft report.
5. Presentation at a Workshop or extended meeting that will include reference group, programme staff and external stakeholders. This will include validation or rebuttal of the recommendations by the stakeholders.
6. Final report, integrating all the comments and final version of the theory of change, including Executive summary. The evaluation report shall be in line with the UNICEF standards for evaluation reports indicated in *Annex 2* and to the GROS Quality Assessment System according to the quality assurance checklist. The report will be subject to a detailed and in-depth quality review by the UNICEF country office and the regional office.
7. Raw data, including data collection instruments, electronic transcripts, complete data sets, etc.
8. Dissemination materials for external audience (for those who are not experts and do not possess deep-level knowledge in this field), that include an infographic poster (requirements to format to be provided by UNICEF CO), a policy brief (when applicable) or any other tool for disseminating main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

9. Project Management/Contract Supervisor and other stakeholders

To ensure independence of the evaluation, the Child Rights Monitoring Specialist of UNICEF Kazakhstan will be the overall manager of the evaluation. The manager will ensure compliance with UNICEF norms and standards as well as compliance with quality standards. He/she will be the UNICEF focal point for the evaluation team and will be responsible for document validation. He/she will also ensure that the evaluation reference group is informed of the status of the evaluation.

Evaluation Quality Control will be conducted through a review of terms of reference, methodology and draft and final reports and will be carried out by the Child Rights Monitoring Specialist in coordination with the Evaluation Reference Group and the UNICEF Regional Evaluation Specialist.

The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) has been established, and includes UNICEF programme staff, implementing partners, government, and representatives of right holders. ERG contributes to the relevance, impartiality and credibility of the evaluation being carried out, providing a variety of points of view, and ensuring a transparent process.

The participation of key stakeholders in the ERG also contributes to increased cooperation with the Government, state bodies, other institutions, and donors, as well as to increase the culture and capacity of the evaluation approach among national partners.

Objectives of the ERG:

- Facilitate regular exchange of information and feedback during the evaluation process
- Ensure access to key informants during data collection
- Take part in interviews with the research team
- Review and comment on the draft and the final version of the report
- Develop an Evaluation Management Response (EMR) to the recommendations

UNICEF Education Section will ensure that all documents needed for the evaluation are available and provide timely feedback to the evaluation manager.

10. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required

The evaluation will be carried out by a team of external consultants with solid expertise and experience in the field. The team should have a good knowledge of the Kazakhstan context and the education system. Team members will work closely together to coproduce and implement an appropriate methodology and approach for answering evaluation questions and achieving results expected. To carry out this evaluation, the evaluation firm will be contracted to provide required expertise.

Required qualifications and areas of expertise. The evaluation will have to be conducted by a gender-balanced, diverse team comprising sufficient number of qualified international and national evaluators covering the below requirements (expertise could be combined):

- Team-leader with documented extensive experience (at least eight years) in designing and implementing theory-based evaluations, especially in Central Asia. Master's degree in a related field required, higher degree preferred.
- Team member with specialized experience (at least five years) and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, including early learning, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. Master's degree in a related field required, higher degree preferred.
- Other evaluator(s) with documented experience (at least 5 years) in conducting development evaluations in education sector. Bachelor's degree in a related field required, higher degree preferred.
- At least one team member with proven experience (at least five years) in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Bachelor's degree in a related field required, higher degree preferred.
- Team members with solid knowledge of human rights-based approaches to programming, including child-rights, gender, equity, results-based management (RBM) principles, participatory approaches. Master's degree in a related field required, higher degree preferred.
- At least one member with solid knowledge of inclusive education. Master's degree in Education or other related field required, higher degree preferred.
- Team members with experience of working in Central Asia and CISs (previous work in Kazakhstan is an asset).

11. Assignments and Payment Schedule

Activity	Deliverables	Duration	Payment terms
Inception phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft inception report • Ethical review • Presentation to reference group • Theory of change • Final inception report and completed comments matrix. 	20 days	30%
Data collection Phase	Post data collection debrief.	32 days	
Analysis, triangulation, and report writing	<p>Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft evaluation report and theory of change • Facilitating a recommendations co-creation meeting/workshop • ERG review and UNICEF quality assurance facility. • Final report meeting UNICEF quality standards and management response plan 	40 days	40% 30%

Important note: Fees shall be calculated based on the days offered to complete the assignment and shall be considered the maximum compensation as part of a lump sum contract. No additional fees shall be paid to complete the assignment. Payment will be made upon submission and approval of deliverables and full and satisfactory completion of the assignment

12. Administrative Issues

All the travel-related costs should be included in the total project budget. The Contract holder is responsible for travel arrangements. Travel cost shall be calculated based on economy class travel, regardless of the length of travel and costs for accommodation, meals and incidentals shall not exceed applicable subsistence allowance (DSA) rates, as promulgated by the UN office in Kazakhstan.

13. Format of Technical and Financial Proposals

As part of the application package, complete and submit the technical and financial proposals as they are described below:

a. Technical proposals should be written in English and submitted in the following format:

1. Cover Page
2. Table of Contents
3. Abbreviations Used (if any)
4. UNICEF Application Form (signed by the institution)
5. The copy of Certificate on the state registration of the Legal Entity to be attached
6. Reference on the account availability in the servicing bank of the Legal Entity to be attached
7. Introduction Profile of the Institution (not more than 15 pages)
8. Technical Proposal (see details in Section 14)
9. Appendices (if any)

b. Financial proposal should include all possible costs related to implementation of the tasks under the present TOR. UNICEF does not provide or arrange health insurance coverage.

Financial proposal must be submitted in a **separate file** of non-editable format (e.g. PDF). In case the bidder is a resident of Kazakhstan, please indicate VAT amount separately in your Financial Offer or clearly state if you are non-VAT payer.

14. Technical evaluation criteria

Proposals submitted in response to this call will be evaluated in terms of technical quality and financial cost.

The Technical Proposal should include but not limited to the following:

- 1) Corporate Profile highlighting the bidder's qualifications and experience in implementing the assignment, please include details of specific experience with similar assignments in the past five years (the list shall contain the name of the assignment, client name, country and contact details; the cost of the assignment – if possible);
- 2) Confirmation of the experience in the form of references from previous clients (at least 3 references on the client's letterhead with data indication, properly signed);
- 3) Samples of similar previous works, e.g. final reports from similar evaluations (minimum 2);
- 4) Details of the Proposed Team for the assignment including the following information:
 - Separate table with the Name, Title and the Role assigned to each team member within the implementation of the assignment;
 - CVs of the proposed team, containing details on the relevant education and professional experience, including copies of diplomas, certificates obtained in the relevant field;
 - Past experience of proposed experts in working on similar projects: List all similar projects they worked on and their roles on those projects.
- 5) Project implementation timeline and work plan showing the detailed sequence and timeline for each activity and days necessary for each proposed team member.
- 6) Methodology;
- 7) Description of approach to ensure quality of services, absence of conflict of interest and respect of ethical standards;
- 8) Quality assurance mechanism and risk mitigation measures put in place.

Cumulative Analysis

The evaluation and award criteria that will be used for this RFP is composed of a Cumulative Analysis evaluation (point system with weight attribution). The weighting ratio between the technical and financial proposals will be 70:30. The respective importance between technical and financial scores will be weighted as 70% and 30%.

An offer is considered technically acceptable (and therefore eligible for opening of financial offers) when it obtains a minimum of 70 Points out of 120 during the course of the technical evaluation. The final selection of the contractor will be based on a combination of the technical and financial proposals with a weighting of 70% for the technical proposal and 30% for the financial proposal. In the case of cumulative analysis, the proposals scoring below 70% of the available technical points will be considered as non-compliant and will be rejected and not further considered.

Technical quality will be evaluated using the criteria outlined below.

Item	Technical Evaluation Criteria	Max. Points Obtainable
1	Overall Response	30

1.1.	Completeness of response and relevance of the technical proposal with terms of reference	10
1.2	Understanding of objectives and how they propose to perform the tasks in order to meet the objectives and requirements of the ToR	20
2	Institution & Key Personnel	50
2.1	Range and depth of contractor's experience with similar projects	15
2.2	Previous experience of work	10
2.3	Samples of previous work	10
2.4	Key personnel: relevant experience and qualifications for the assignment	15
3	Proposed Methodology and Approach	40
3.1	Proposal approach and methodology/timeline	25
3.2	Description of approach to ensure quality of services, absence of conflict of interest and respect of ethical standards	15
TOTAL TECHNICAL SCORES		120

15. Any other information

The UNICEF General Terms and Conditions will apply to the contract entered into with the selected contractor. Please note that when evaluating the technical requirements of each proposal, UNICEF will take into account any proposed amendments to the UNICEF General Terms and Conditions. The proposed amendments to the UNICEF General Terms and Conditions may negatively affect the assessment of the technical merits of the proposal.

UNICEF reserves the right to withdraw all or part of the payment if the results are unsatisfactory, if the work / results are incomplete and not delivered in a timely manner, as indicated in the individual work plan of the contractor. This Terms of Reference is an integral part of the contract to be signed with the national company.

UNICEF reserves the right to patent any intellectual property rights, as well as copyright and other similar intellectual property rights in any discoveries, inventions, products or works arising from the implementation of a project in cooperation with UNICEF. The right to reproduce or use the materials is transferred with the written consent of UNICEF on a case-by-case basis. The contractor selected should always refer to UNICEF Kazakhstan support when distributing products on social media and websites.

Annex 1. Inception Report Outline

- i. Introduction presenting the purpose of the evaluation, the purpose, the scope, and the objectives of the evaluation, conceptual framework
- ii. Context of the evaluation including preliminary results of the literature review
- iii. Evaluation criteria and questions refined from the literature review and preliminary interviews
- iv. Methods of data collection, including sampling and consideration of ethical considerations
- v. Data analysis methods
- vi. Evaluation matrix showing for each evaluation criterion and question, the collection methods and corresponding data sources
- vii. Theory of change
- viii. Limitations of the evaluation and mitigation measures
- ix. Indicative work plan
- x. Proposed structure for the final report in line with UNEG and UNICEF standards
- xi. Appendices: list of key documents reviewed, set of proposed tools for data collection, list of key informants and sites to visit

Annex 2. UNICEF Adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standard

The title page and opening pages provide key basic information

1. Name of the evaluation object
2. Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report
3. Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object
4. Names and/or organizations of evaluators
5. Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation
6. Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes
7. List of acronyms

Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 5-6 pages that includes:

1. Overview of the evaluation object
2. Evaluation objectives and intended audience
3. Evaluation methodology
4. Theory of change
5. Most important findings and conclusions
6. Main recommendations

Annexes increase the credibility of the evaluation report. They may include, inter alia:

1. ToRs
2. List of persons interviewed and sites visited
3. List of documents consulted
4. More details on methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity
5. Evaluators biodata and/or justification of team composition
6. Evaluation matrix
7. Results framework

1. Object of Evaluation

The report presents a clear and full description of the ‘object’ of the evaluation

- 1 The **logical model and/or the expected results chain** (inputs, outputs, and outcomes) of the object is clearly described
- 2 The **context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors** that have a direct bearing on the object is described. For example, the partner government’s strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals, strategies and frameworks, the concerned agency’s corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate.

Scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described, for example:

- 3 The **number of components**, if more than one, and the size of the population each component is intended to serve, either directly or indirectly
- **The geographic context and boundaries** (such as the region, country, and/or landscape and challenges where relevant).
- **The purpose and goal, and organization/management of the object**
- The **total resources** from all sources, including human resources and budget (s) (e.g. concerned agency, partner).
- 4 The **key stakeholders involved** in the object implementation, including the implementing agency (s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles

- 5 The report identifies **the implementation status of the object**, including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation

2. Evaluation Purpose, Objective(s) and Scope

The evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained

- 1 The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who needed the information, what information is needed, how the information will be used by different intended audiences.
- 2 The report should provide a clear explanation of the evaluation objectives and scope including main evaluation questions and describes and justifies what the evaluation did and did not cover
- 3 The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators
- 4 Theory of change
- 5 As appropriate, evaluation objectives and scope include questions that address issues of gender and human rights

3. Evaluation Methodology

The report presents transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes.

- 1 The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant.
- 2 The report describes the data sources, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. The report includes discussion of how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits.
- 3 The report describes the sampling frame – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample
- 4 The evaluation report gives me complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities of consultation 5 The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions.
- 6 The methods employed are appropriate for analysing gender and human rights issues including child rights issues identified in the evaluation scope.
- 7 The theory of change prospectively defining the pathways of change, propose a package of evidence-based strategies and articulate a chain of results to sustaining of results and addressing the gaps for inclusivity in education to achieve SDGs.
- 8 The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools etc.) 8 The evaluation design was ethical and included ethical safeguards where appropriate, including protection of confidentiality, dignity, rights and welfare of human subjects particularly children, and respect of the values of the beneficiary community.

4. Findings

4.0 Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report

- 1 Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data.
- 2 Reported findings address the evaluation criteria (such as efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and relevance) and questions defined in the evaluation scope.
- 3 Findings are objectively reported on the evidence.

- 4 Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed.
- 5 Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible.
- 6 Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic and coherence.

5. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Conclusions present reasonable judgements based on findings and substantiated by evidence and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation

- 1 The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgements relating to key evaluation questions.
- 2 Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.
- 3 Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users.
- 4 Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, projects or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented in taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.
- 5 Lessons learned, when presented, were generalized beyond the immediate intervention being evaluated to indicate what wider relevance there might be.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations are relevant to the object and purpose of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with involvement of relevant stakeholders

- 1 The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendation including consultation with stakeholders
- 2 Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions
- 3 Recommendations are relevant to the object and purpose of the evaluation

Annex 3. Ethics Review Checklist

	Ethics Review Board Criteria of Interest	Additional Information Needed → Investigators: Please respond to ERB info requests in another color directly below the request	X or NA equal PASS (for ERB use)
Section 1	ERB Submission: Are all requested project information, materials, and final documents provided separately or incorporated in text? This includes:		
1.1	Inception Report or Research Protocol, containing, e.g.,: specific aims or objectives, research questions, study design, analysis & dissemination plans		
1.2	Informed Consent documents		
1.3	Surveys and data collection instruments		
1.4	Written protocols to ensure subjects' safety		
1.5	Written protocols for protection of subjects' identities		
1.6	Written protocols for protection of data		
1.7	Other relevant documents		
1.8	Do protocols include a section identifying ethical issues and measures to mitigate ethical problems as required by UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards?		
1.9	Have informed consent and data collection instruments been pre-tested?		
1.10	Are all submitted documents final versions?		
1.11	May the final protocol and instruments be included in an internal UNICEF searchable database for colleagues to learn from your work?		
1.12	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 2	Research Design: Do submitted materials describe the proposed research? This includes:		
2.1	Is the study's background, rationale, and study design scientifically sound?		
2.2	Does study involve intervention, treatment, comparison, or control groups?		
2.3	Type of data collection: survey questionnaire..... subject interview..... key informant interview (KII)..... focus group discussion (FGD)..... document (desk) review..... on-site observation..... case study..... analysis of secondary data..... physical measurements biological specimen other.....		

2.4	Number of Data Collections: one-time (no follow-up) two or more (follow-up)		
2.5	Sample size: Approximate total n =		
2.6	Are any subjects children (<18 years old)?		
2.7	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 3	Subject Risks: Are risks reasonable in relation to any benefits to subjects and to the importance of knowledge that may be expected to result from the research?		
3.1	Is the research Minimal Risk Only?: This means the probability and magnitude of anticipated harm or discomfort is no greater than ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological exams or tests.		
3.2	Does the research involve greater than minimal risk, but where risks are justified by anticipated benefits; where the relation of the anticipated benefits to risks is at least as favorable as available alternative approaches; and where the intervention or procedure is likely to yield generalizable knowledge? If so, are mitigating procedures described?		
3.3	Do study objectives show that risks are reasonable in relationship to expected gains and benefits are clearly articulated?		
3.4	By their participation, are subjects vulnerable to any of the following?: physical risk psychological risk social risk economic risk legal risk political risk employment risk..... academic risk..... religious risk..... other.....		
3.5	In event of any of the above risks, do protocols describe clear strategies to mitigate risks?		
3.6	Does the study request information or opinions where public disclosure may result in danger, limitations to future freedoms, or access to services?		
3.7	Do gender, ethnicity, or other demographic characteristics -- or grouping of subjects by any of these characteristics, especially in FGDs -- increase subject risk?		
3.8	If a subject discloses or is suspected to be at risk outside the study, are procedures in place to address or report risk and refer subject for relevant support?		

3.9	Is reporting abuse of minors mandatory? If yes, has consideration been given to the impacts and consequences of mandatory reporting?		
3.10	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 4	High Risk: When subjects are vulnerable to heightened risk have additional safeguards been included to protect their rights and welfare?		
4.1	Can subjects be perceived as vulnerable, including: children, especially unaccompanied or separated (UASC); lacking WASH, food, shelter, or medical care; refugees in conflict or post conflict; those in natural, ecological, or disaster settings; mothers & pregnant women; forced migrants and illegal or undocumented immigrants; prisoners or persons in institutions including orphanages or juvenile justice systems; gang members; those with mental or physical illness or disability; those with HIV/AIDS; those at economic or educational disadvantage; persecuted minority groups, or under high familial, peer, or social pressure? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided?		
4.2	Does the sampling strategy target people at risk for issues such as: violence, torture, abuse, kidnapping, sexual exploitation, harassment, violence or abuse; prostitution or pornography, female genital mutilation, reproductive or sexual issues; sexual orientation; child, early or forced marriage; suicide? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided?		
4.3	Are subjects involved in any of the following: slavery, including the sale and trafficking of children; forced labour, servitude, forced recruitment to armed groups; war or armed conflict; illegal activities, production or trafficking of drugs; economic exploitation; work that could damage health or safety; removal of organs for exploitation? If yes, are study-specific protection protocols provided?		
4.4	Does the study request information relating to illegal activities? If yes, is an MOU in place with government to ensure that no participant is prosecuted? Have participants been notified of this agreement?		
4.5	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 5	Recruitment: Do submitted materials describe subjects and the recruitment process?		
5.1	To what extent are subjects identified: names are recorded with responses..... names recorded separate from responses..... no names are recorded, other personally identifiable information (PII) is recorded..... no PII is recorded, subjects are given a unique identifier..... other.....		

5.2	If subject name or any other PII is recorded, are procedures included for how this info will be kept separate from responses?		
5.3	Are subject recruitment procedures & sampling strategy adequately described?		
5.4	Do recruitment procedures clearly describe ways and means to ensure privacy of subjects throughout the recruitment process?		
5.5	If subjects are children or other vulnerable groups, are materials (e.g.: survey instruments, focus group topics, etc.) age appropriate?		
5.6	If subjects are children or other vulnerable groups, or if subject matter is sensitive, is recruitment sensitive to subjects' potential vulnerabilities (real or perceived) and does it ensure privacy throughout recruitment?		
5.7	Do recruitment procedures show indication of bribery, coercion, intimidation, compulsion, pressure, or force?		
5.8	Is recruitment of some members of the population and not others likely to result in resentment for either inclusion or exclusion? Have strategies to address this been adequately described?		
5.9	Are potential subjects likely to conflate participation with potential or actual goods or service provision? Have strategies to address this been adequately described?		
5.10	If subjects are paid, compensated, provided a gift, or provided other benefits or services for participation, is the incentive described and justified as non-coercive?		
5.11	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 6	Informed Consent: IC is a negotiation whereby subjects are informed about the study and their rights, and they agree to participate voluntarily. IC must be sought from each subject or the subject's authorized representative confirming this process.		
6.1	Type of Informed Consent: written & signed written not signed written & signed by authorized representative.. written with online checkbox..... verbal & signed or recorded..... verbal & signed by authorized representative.... verbal not signed or recorded..... active..... passive..... other		
6.2	Are the processes for obtaining each IC adequately described?		
6.3	Does the IC include a clear and simple invitation to participate, an explanation of what the subject will be expected to do, and why they are being recruited?		

6.4	Does IC include the purpose of the research presented in simple, age, education, and culturally appropriate local language?		
6.5	Does IC state that participation is voluntary, and subject may choose to not respond to any or all questions, or may withdraw anytime without consequences?		
6.6	Does IC include the expected duration of the subject's participation (hours/minutes)?		
6.7	Are subjects given a clear indication of who will have access to their responses and in what form?		
6.8	Are subjects given a clear description of potential re-use or sharing of data, with whom, and in what form?		
6.9	Does IC include a description of any risks or benefits to subjects?		
6.10	Does IC include a statement describing how confidentiality (or anonymity) will be maintained, and if there are any limitations to confidentiality?		
6.11	Does IC provide identity and contact info of investigators? Is the form of contact useful and appropriate given power dynamics and access to resources like phones and/ or transport?		
6.12	For child subjects, is IC being obtained from parent, guardian, caregiver, or authorized representative? If not, is a justification provided for why this is unnecessary?		
6.13	For child subjects, is their role in the study described adequately and in an age and culturally appropriate manner for them to provide written or verbal assent?		
6.14	Do IC materials advise subjects to keep focus group discussions (FGD) confidential from anyone outside the group?		
6.15	Where subjects differ by type (e.g.: age, sex, risk, status, etc.), are IC documents specific for each type?		
6.16	Where data collection differs by method (e.g.: survey, FGD, interview, audio recording), do ICs cover each method?		
6.17	If IC is written, is a copy left with subjects or there is explanation for not doing so?		
6.18	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 7	Subject Protections: Do submitted materials clearly identify protection against risk?		
7.1	Do materials describe protocols for subjects' safety throughout data collection, analysis, storage, and dissemination?		
7.2	Are all data collected necessary for the purposes of evidence generation?		
7.3	Do data analysis and reporting procedures ensure subject confidentiality (or anonymity) and security?		
7.4	If future contact with subjects is planned, does it provide for confidentiality and data security through the research period and beyond?		

7.5	If children or other vulnerable groups are subjects, have personnel had experience working with these groups? If not, what specialized instruction will they receive?		
7.6	Have personnel collecting data from subjects had ethical training specific to the target group?		
7.7	Are personnel collecting data aware of ethical issues that may arise and provided mitigation strategies?		
7.8	Additional comments or suggestions		
Section 8	Data Protections: Do data collection and storage protocols adequately ensure subject & data safety?		
8.1	Are data collection tools appropriate and constructed to assure subject confidentiality or anonymity?		
8.2	Do data collection procedures and environment ensure data security?		
8.3	Do procedures cover all data types (e.g., written, audio, video, observation), and are protections described for each type?		
8.4	If data will be shared with partners, is there a clear agreement or NDA?		
8.5	Do protocols describe chain of custody of data and protections for data transfer or transmission, storage, de-identification, and destruction?		
8.6	Additional comments or suggestions		

9.2. ANNEX 2 LIST OF RESPONDENTS IN THE KIIS AND FGDS
Table 5 List of respondents in the KIIs and FGDs

No	Type of meeting	Institutions	Number of respondents	Level
1	FGD	Ministry of Enlightenment, National Academy of Education	5	National
2	FGD	National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education	4	National
3 - 4	KII	PMPC	2	Local
5	KII	Local education authority	2	Local
6	KII	Local education authority	1	Local
7 - 9	KII	Principal of secondary school	3	School level
10 - 16	FGD	Teachers, assistant teachers, and specialists	31	School level
17	KII	Teacher	1	School level
18	KII	Specialists	2	School level
19	KII	Specialist	1	School level
20	KII	Assistant teachers	2	School level
21 - 25	FGD	Parents	25	School level
26	KII	Parents	2	School level
27	KII	Student	1	School level
27 - 30	FGD	Students	21	School level
31	KII	Specialists	2	School level
32	KII	Specialists	2	School level
33	KII	NGO representative	1	Local
34	KII	National Academy of Education	1	National
35	KII	National Analytical Centre	1	National
36	KII	Centre for Educational Support	1	National
37	KII	Academic representative, Expert Inclusive education	1	National
38	KII	NGO representative	1	National
39	KII	NGO representative	1	National
40	KII	Ombudsperson	1	National
41	KII	International NGO	1	International
42	FGD	UNICEF programme specialists/officer	3	International
43	KII	Academic representative	1	International
44	KII	National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education	1	National
45	KII	Private service representative	1	National
46	KII	Special school	1	School level

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47	KII	International NGO	1	National
48	KII	PPCR	1	Local
49	KII	Private service representative	1	National
50	KII	PPCR	1	Local

9.3. ANNEX 3 LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE DESK REVIEW AND SOURCES FOR SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

International strategic documents

- UN. (1989). Convention on the right of the child, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>
- UNESCO&UNICEF. (2019). On the road to Inclusion, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372193>
- UNESCO. (1990). World Declaration on Education for All Meeting Basic Learning Needs: Adopted by the World Conference on Education for All on 9 March 1990. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000127583>
- UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>
- UNESCO. (2009). Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education, available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000177849>
- UNICEF. (2012). The right of children with disabilities to education: A rights-based approach to inclusive education. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEECIS). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/126506/file/UNICEF-Right-to-Education-Children-Disabilities-ENG.pdf>

National legal and strategic documents:

- National project "Educated Nation" 2021-2025, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/P2100000726>
- National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education, Legal Framework for Special and Inclusive Education, available at: <https://special-edu.kz/news/85/single/366>
- Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, (2022), President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Address to the people of Kazakhstan, <https://www.akorda.kz/en/president-kassym-jomart-tokayevs-address-to-the-people-of-kazakhstan-35830>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (1997). Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated April 16, 1997 No. 94 About housing relations, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z970000094>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2002). Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated August 8, 2002 No. 345-II, On the rights of the child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, (with amendments and additions as of November 18, 2022), available at: https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1032460&pos=274;-60#pos=274;-60
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2002). Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated July 11, 2002, No. 343-II On Social and Medical-Pedagogical Correctional Support for Children with Disabilities, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z020000343>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2007). Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Education №319-111. (27 July 2007 as amended on 28 October 2019). available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z070000319>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2010). Law on the Rights of a Child in the Republic of Kazakhstan, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z020000345>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2017). On amendments to the order of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 27, 2017 No. 596 "On approval of the Rules

for per capita regulatory financing of preschool education and training, secondary, technical and vocational, post-secondary, higher and postgraduate education, available at: https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V1800017486?fbclid=IwAR39vbIY5wvtKDA31vAGgU86nJ3OoyHS1goUczwQUv-61zeHWZ8LvSRUx_4

- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2016). The concept of family and gender policies in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030. Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated December 6, 2016 No. 384. Available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/U1600000384>
- Republic of Kazakhstan (2021) Law on Inclusive Education dated June 26, 2021, No. 56-VII ZRK available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2100000056>
- Republic of Kazakhstan. (2021). Law on the introduction of amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of inclusive education, 2021, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z2100000056#z21>
- State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1000001118>
- State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/U1600000205>
- State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025, available at: <https://adilet.zan.kz/kaz/docs/P1900000988>
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9.4. ANNEX 4 PROGRAMMATIC SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

Table 6 Specific objectives of the programmes that are the object of the evaluation.

National programmes/projects	Specific objectives	Indicators
State Programme 2011–2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To improve inclusive education system in schools; ● To create conditions for life-long education, education for all; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of schools that created favourable conditions for inclusive education - 70% (out of their total number)
State Programme 2016–2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide equal access to quality pre-school education and training; ● To provide equal access to high-quality secondary education, to educate intellectually, physically, spiritually developed, and successful citizens; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of children aged 3-6 years attending preschool education and learning according to the new curriculum, in 2017 - 87.5%, in 2019 - 100%; ● Percentage of schools that transitioned to the new curriculum, in 2016 - 100%, in 2019 - 100%.
The State Programme 2020–2025 (in 2021 transitioned to The national project "Educated Nation").	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To address the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive education; ● To provide a safe and comfortable inclusive learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of 1-6 y.o. children attending preschool education - 85.3%, 3-6 y.o. children - 100%; ● Child wellbeing index in Kazakhstan - 0.73.
The national project "Educated Nation" 2021-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To provide access and to ensure equity in education; ● To create favourable conditions and environment for learning; ● To improve the quality of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of children with disabilities receiving special psychological and pedagogical support and early intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2022 – 50 ○ 2023 – 65 ○ 2024 – 80 ○ 2025 – 100

9.5. ANNEX 5 DETAILED METHODOLOGY

9.5.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Table 7 Conceptual framework

Basic concepts and approaches	Working definitions	Reference to the assignment
Inclusive education¹⁶⁹	<p>Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded – not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too. Inclusive systems value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all.</p> <p>UNESCO defines inclusive education as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children”. Inclusive education is not a marginal issue, but is central to the achievement of high-quality education for all learners and the development of more inclusive societies.”¹⁷⁰</p> <p>Inclusive Education (IE), as defined in the Salamanca Statement* promotes the “recognition of the need to work towards ‘schools for all’/institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs”http://www.unescobkk.org/education/inclusiveeducation/what-is-inclusiveeducation/background/¹⁷¹</p>	Having in mind that the focus of this FE is inclusiveness of education, and the understanding of its scope should be expanded beyond children with disabilities towards all children, this definition is used during the process of data collection and analysis.
Early Childhood Education and Care¹⁷²	Early childhood education and care includes centre and family-day care, privately and publicly funded provision, pre-school, and pre-primary provision. High-quality early childhood education and care lays the foundations for later success in life in terms of education, well-being, employability, and social integration. It is especially important for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Ensuring the provision of high-quality early childhood education and care is, therefore, also an efficient and effective investment in education and training.	The concept is relevant to the assignment, since the indicators of the programmes, related to inclusion in education, include such related to attending pre-school education.
Early Childhood Development¹⁷³	Early Childhood Development (ECD) encompasses physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, and motor development between 0-8 years of age. This period requires a continuum of intersectional interventions for children, their parents, and caregivers in order to safeguard and maximize children’s developmental outcomes	In terms of equal access to quality pre-school education, this evaluation takes into consideration the definition of ECD, as well as

		relevance of the interventions to the needs of small children and their development.
<i>Equity in education¹⁷⁴</i>	Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, socio-economic status, migrant background, age, special needs, or place of residence, do not hinder the achievement of one's educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a minimum level of skills (inclusion). Equity, defined in this way, does not imply that everyone should have the same results, nor does it imply teaching the same material or providing the same resources to all students.	The concept is used in this FE, since it is a theory-based equity focused evaluation, based on the notion of equal inclusion of all children, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, migrant background, age, special needs, etc.

9.5.2. METHODOLOGY

Desk review

The desk review is an appropriate method for this evaluation, because it allows getting familiar with the context in the country, regulatory framework, available studies, and reports, in order to collect information and review the available evidence regarding the educational reform and the overall situation in Kazakhstan.

At the initial phase of the FE the ET of Junction Bulgaria has reviewed the following documents provided by the office of UNICEF Kazakhstan:

- Law on Education
- Law on Inclusive Education
- State Program for the Development of Education 2011-2020
- State program for the development of Education 2016 – 2019
- State Program for the Development of Education 2020-2025
- National Project "Quality Education "Educated Nation" 2021 – 2025
- National Annual Reports on Education from 2015 to 2020

Furthermore, the desk review in the whole process of evaluation was based on additional sources, such as reports and documents published in 2022, national and regional data on education in annex 3.

Secondary data analysis

The secondary data analysis is chosen as a method for data collection in order to provide information regarding contextual aspects related to the educational reform process in the country, as well as baseline data regarding the different outputs, achieving results in view of effectiveness, efficiency, and other areas of evaluation.

Qualitative data collection methods

The evaluation team used 3 qualitative data collection methods: Key informant interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observations. The data was collected on a national/international, regional, and local/school level. As part of the assignment, travel to the capital and other five regions of the country were realised to conduct the field work. The regions are selected by the contractor in consultation with UNICEF and national stakeholders to reflect the diverse realities in the country. The specific criteria for choosing the regions are: economic development, geographic location, area, ethnic distribution, spoken language, urban/rural areas, level of child poverty, enrolment in early education and care. Some of the KII and FGDs were conducted online and others face-to-face, in order to be flexible and comply with the availability and location of the stakeholders, in some cases outside of the selected regions. The majority of the FGDs, KII, meetings and observations at the schools were conducted face-to-face.

The geographic area(s) – Almaty, Almaty region, Astana, Turkistan, Atyrau, Pavlodar

Selection of the participants – the detailed criteria of the selection is described in detail below for each of the qualitative methods.

- **Key informant interviews**

The KII is a qualitative method, providing the opportunity to collect and analyse information on opinions, perceptions, attitudes, points of view and reasons for the influence of certain factors. Using KII, the evaluation gains the practices of the stakeholders, experts and decision-makers involved in the field of education. The method provides possibilities to participants to share their knowledge about programmes, implementation, strategies, and changes in the lives of beneficiaries as a result of this implementation. In this particular FE, KII were appropriate in order to understand the main goal and purpose of the programmes and reforms, the main assumptions and risk mitigations strategies, as well as all relevant specifics. A guide for KII was developed ([Annex 9.5.3](#)), containing different

questions to the different stakeholders. KIIs were conducted face-to-face or online via the Zoom platform. The respondents were chosen, having in mind the features of this method and they could be seen in [annex 2](#), but overall are ministry representatives, local level officials, other relevant government institution representatives, key international partners, representatives of implementing agencies, Ombudspersons, representatives of psychological, medical and pedagogical commissions, representatives of psychological and pedagogical correction rooms, rehabilitation centres, NGO representatives and UNICEF programme specialists, as well as school/kindergarten principals. A total of 32 KIIs were conducted at each of the three levels. The sampling method for qualitative data collection was based on the following *criteria* for recruiting respondents:

For the *national/international level* (a total of 13 KIIs):

- To have participated/currently participate in the planning of the programs, with a focus on inclusiveness in education;
- To have participated/currently participate and have a (specific) role in the implementation of the programs, with a focus on inclusivity;
- To have extensive experience in the respective position;
- To have participated/currently participate in different roles as a partnership organisation.

For the *local level* (a total of 9 KIIs):

- To have participated/currently participate in the planning/implementation of the programmes;
- To be aware of the design of the different thematic areas, such as inclusive education, etc.;
- To have extensive experience in the respective position.

For the *school level* (a total of 10 KIIs):

- To be in a decision-making position.
- **Focus group discussions**

This qualitative method was chosen, because it provides the opportunity to research in-depth the different aspects through motivations, attitudes and process of educational reforms, opinions, and perceptions of the different stakeholders, etc. In addition, the bigger number of respondents in a single conversation in comparison with KIIs allows for generation of new knowledge in the process of discussion. A guide for FGDs was developed ([Annex 9.5.3](#)). The respondents were chosen, having in mind the features of this method and they could be seen in [annex 2](#), but overall are beneficiaries including parents/caregivers, children/adolescents (incl. NEETs), teachers, health professionals, etc. FGDs were conducted face-to-face or online. A total of 19 FGDs were conducted with 89 participants at the school level, of them 12 decision makers at national/international level; 31 teachers/specialists at school level; 25 parents at the school level; 21 students at the school level. The recruitment of children in the schools was done by the school authorities. The sampling method for qualitative data collection was based on *preliminary criteria* for recruiting respondents, including additional criteria for parents and children participants in FGDs, which are the following:

For the *school level for parents/caregivers*:

- To have children 3-6 years old or 7 -12 years old;
- Both mothers and fathers;
- Some parents of children in vulnerable groups (children living in poverty and social exclusion, in rural areas etc.);
- Some parents of children with disabilities.

For the *school level for children/adolescents*:

- To be between 14-17 years old;

- Both boys and girls;
- Some of them living in poverty, in social exclusion, in rural areas, etc.;
- Some of them to be NEETs or out of school.

For the *school level for teachers/health professionals*:

- To have experience with working with children with special educational needs/children at risk in different vulnerable categories;
- To have extensive experience in the respective position.

For the different levels/types of participants screening questionnaires was developed and provided to the selected schools in order to facilitate the recruitment process ([Annex 2](#)).

Observations

The qualitative method of observation is chosen to research in-depth the school environment and general atmosphere in the classrooms and other premises in terms of accessibility (physical and informational), availability of resources (materials, technical equipment, technologies, books, etc.) in order to be able to see the level of inclusiveness of education and what effects the educational reform has brought about. An observation protocol was developed ([Annex 9.5.3](#)). 5 observations were conducted at the schools (face-to-face, if possible). Schools were chosen based on the *criteria* to be located in the six key regions, selected in the evaluation, to have activities related to inclusiveness and work with different groups of children including vulnerable categories.

9.5.3. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Interview guide

I. Introduction and warm-up

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work and how the findings of the evaluation will be used
- Giving information on audio recording
- Creating a relaxed and safe atmosphere

II. Relevance

National and local representatives (some of the questions will be used for all respondents)

- Thinking about Kazakhstan, what are the main goals of the reform based on the national programmes/projects (long-term and short-term goals)? Please, specify, thinking 10 years back, regarding: The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020; The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019; The State Programme for the Development of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2020–2025; The national project "Educated Nation" 2021–2025.
- How do you understand the concept of 'inclusive education'? How does it relate to the mentioned national educational programs?
- Talking about inclusivity of education specifically, how do you understand this term? How does the general public understand it?
- To what degree do the national goals correspond to the international treaties, global priorities in terms of inclusivity?
- To what degree do the national goals correspond to the national priorities, in terms of human rights, child rights in particular, non-discrimination and inclusion, as well as equality?
- Do you think that the educational system is able to adapt to the changing context and why? Probe for: COVID - 19 pandemic, digitalisation, migration, poverty.
- To what degree do the national goals correspond to the local needs? Is there any needs assessment on the needs of the different groups of vulnerable children - children with special needs, from low-income families, living in institutions, in conflict with the law, etc. and what is it?
- What were the changes in the planned education reform? Why did they happen? What were the barriers and difficulties in achieving the goals until now?

School principals (kindergarten representatives)

- How do you understand the concept of 'inclusive education'? How does it relate to the mentioned national educational programs?
- What are the specifics in the region regarding education? Probe for: *groups of children they work with - children with disabilities, from socio-economically disadvantaged families, from institutional care, etc.*
- To what extent are policy changes aligned with the situation and specific context in the region, local priorities?
- To what extent are policy changes aligned with the needs of children and parents?

- Up to what degree has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the situation in the school and region?
- What is the influence of digitalisation on the teaching and learning process?

III. Coherence

National and local representatives (some of the questions will be used for all respondents)

- Thinking about the programmes and priorities of inclusive education, which are the sectors and national priorities, with which they should be coordinated? *Probe for: social policy, early intervention, health policy, etc.*
- What are the other similar interventions carried out in the country?
- Which are the implementing agencies responsible for implementation of the programmes? Which are the other partners working with them? *Probe for: national, regional level, external (international level)*
- What is the level of collaboration and coordination between them?
- To the best of your knowledge, what are the strengths/weaknesses of the state education programmes? Have they been made based on analysis and are priorities stated in this analysis? What do you think about them?

School representatives (kindergarten representatives)

- What kind of organisations do you work with? Could you give examples?
- What is your level of partnership and coordination with them?
- What are the enabling and hindering factors?

III. Effectiveness

National and local representatives (some of the questions will be used for all respondents)

- What are the goals of the educational programmes and how were they changed over the years (2011 - 2021)? *Probe for: national and local level, inclusive education, pre-school education, primary school, secondary school*
- What is the level of achievement of the goals of the educational programs?
- Are there unexpected results? What are they? *Probe for: national and local level, inclusive education*
- To what degree is the National project "Educated Nation" 2021-2025 likely to achieve its goals? *Probe for: national and local level, inclusive education, pre-school education, primary school, secondary school*
- Did you have certain projects on which you worked at the school and, if yes, what were they?
- What are the risks and mitigation strategies taken into account in the process of implementation of the program?
- Is there national level data for an M&E system with indicators for data collection and measuring results? Is it segregated by gender, age, children with SEN, minority groups, geographical areas, etc.? How regularly is this data collected?

School representatives (kindergarten representatives)

- What has changed in your school in the last 10 years in terms of inclusive education? What factors influence this process? *Probe for: physical and informational access, school curriculum, competence of the teachers, learning materials and resources, work with parents, etc.*

- What are the good practices in terms of implementation of projects/interventions at your school? Could you provide examples from your professional experience?
- What are the bottlenecks and difficulties in the teaching and learning process? How could they be resolved?

IV. Sustainability

National and local representatives (some of the questions will be used for all respondents)

- In your opinion, in view of the achieved results of the state education programs, what is the level of sustainability? *Probe for: national and local level, inclusive education, pre-school education, primary school, secondary school. Also, school curriculums, teacher trainings, supervision mechanisms, continuous professional development*
- What are the concrete legal/institutional/financial mechanisms established to ensure sustainability of the state education programs? Why are they established, in what way is it expected that they will ensure sustainability of programmeresult?
- What are the key enabling factors toward achieving sustainability in the education sector?
- What are the key barriers/bottlenecks?

School representatives (kindergarten representatives)

- In your opinion, are the changes in your school as a result of the policy reform sustainable and in what way? *Probe for: school curriculums, teacher trainings, supervision mechanisms, continuous professional development*
- What are the factors influencing this?

V. Recommendations

- What recommendations would you formulate?

FGD guide

I. Introduction and warm-up

- Greetings and introduction of the moderator
- Explanation about the project and method of work and how the findings of the evaluation will be used
- Giving information on audio recording
- Creating a relaxed and safe atmosphere

II. Relevance

Teachers

- How do you understand the concept of 'inclusive education'? Please provide examples.
- What are the specifics in the school regarding education? *Probe for: groups of children they work with - children with disabilities, from socio-economically disadvantaged families, from institutional care, etc.*
- To what extent are policy changes aligned with your needs, the school's needs, as well as the needs of children and parents?
- Up to what degree has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the situation in the school and region?
- What is the influence of digitalisation on the teaching and learning process?

Parents

- Please tell us something about the school of your child. What are the differences at your school in comparison with other schools?
- Do you think that the needs of your child are being satisfied at the school?
- What are the difficulties and what else could be done in terms of improvement of the school environment?
- What happened during the COVID-19 pandemic and do you think the school system addressed challenges and issues properly?

Children

- Please describe your school. Interactive methods will be used (description with a short text, drawing or choosing pictures) Do you like your school? What do you like/don't you like?
- What are the differences at your school in comparison with other schools?
- Do you feel safe at school? How would you describe the environment?
- How would you describe your relationships with your peers? *Probe for:*
 - boys/girls, gender division;
 - children with SEN;
 - children speaking different languages and with different ethnic background;
 - children coming to school from afar;
 - children from other countries.

III. Effectiveness

Teachers

- What has changed in your school in the last 10 years in terms of inclusive education? What factors influence this process? *Probe for: physical and informational access, school curriculum, competence of the teachers, learning materials and resources, work with parents, etc.*
- What are the good practices in terms of implementation of projects/interventions at your school? Could you provide examples from your professional experience?
- What are the bottlenecks and difficulties in the teaching and learning process? How could they be resolved?
- What do you think about teacher competence to solve the difficulties in an inclusive classroom? What specifically do they need?

Parents

- Do you think your child's school accepts unconditionally all children into regular classes and in the life of the school? Please provide examples.
- What individual goals are identified for your child? What are the forms of individual work with children at school? Do you feel that teachers look at all children at what they can do rather than what they cannot do?
- What are the forms of extracurricular activities at the school?
- Are you involved in the life of the school and how? What forms of participation exist?

Children

- Please describe one typical day at your school.
- What are the changes in your school in terms of inclusivity? *Probe for: physical and informational access, school curriculum, competence of the teachers, learning materials and resources, work with parents, etc.*
- What do you think of the things you learn at school? Do they prepare you for the future? How, please explain.

IV. Recommendations

- How do you see the future development of schools and education in general in the country?
- What are your recommendations?

Observation protocol

Date:

Hour:

Place:

School:.....

Type of observed object (classroom, hall, cabinet, football field, sports/technological/other equipment)	Description of the current conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessibility (physical and informational) - availability of resources (materials, technical equipment, technologies, books, etc.)
Type of observed situation (lesson, extracurricular activity,	Description of the situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation of all children - pedagogical approach - team work - individual & group work etc.

9.5.4. CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

Consent form for all type of respondents/stakeholders

Dear Sir/Madam,

Junction Bulgaria is a company which was selected by UNICEF Kazakhstan to conduct a 'Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity'. The objective of this assignment is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan have been contributing to the inclusion of children of different levels of ability, in order to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system.

There are no direct material benefits to individuals participating in the research. We will ask you questions about the implementation of the state education programmes like planning, activities, and results. The interview/focus group will take approximately 60 minutes and it will be held online/face-to-face. You can decide not to participate in the discussion, or you can tell us that you prefer not to answer a specific question, and we will skip it. There is no need to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. If you like, you can end the interview at any time, and this will not affect your relationship with UNICEF.

All of your answers will be kept private and confidential, and the only people who will have access to this information are the researchers of the study. When we write up the results of the study, we will not connect your name to anything that you said.

Documentation and data such as consent forms, interview notes or reporting templates will be collected by Junction Bulgaria which will retain them for a maximum period of 24 months from the date of receipt. If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact us.

Name: Natalia Mihaylova

Telephone: +359 898 211 187

Email: natalia.mihaylova@junction.bg

Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

Are you willing to participate in this study?

Yes / No

If no, explain why: _____

If yes, you can sign below, and we will continue with the interview.

I confirm that I have read and agree to the information above, and I am willing to participate in the research.

Respondents' Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Consent form for parents/legal guardians/representatives, whose children will take part
in the research**

Junction Bulgaria is a company which was selected by UNICEF Kazakhstan to conduct a 'Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity'. The objective of this assignment is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan have been contributing to the inclusion of children of different levels of ability, in order to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system.

Children will have a voice in this evaluation by participating in a focus group and sharing their experiences and their views on what has changed in their schools and their participation in activities. Therefore, we ask for your support in involving your child in a focus group discussion. There is no direct benefit for children or parents/legal guardians/representatives in this research.

We will provide a short letter for children called an 'assent form' with explanation of their participation in the research. While discussing with children about their participation, please provide them with this assent form.

The focus group discussion will be conducted face-to-face/online with a group of other children of a similar age, and it will take approximately one hour. The information will be treated anonymously.

There are no right or wrong answers, we are solely interested in children's opinions. If they do not wish to answer a question, they don't have to and they can decide to leave the discussion. In this case, we won't be able to use the information they have provided.

Documentation and data such as consent/assent forms or data from the focus groups will be collected by Junction Bulgaria which will retain it for a maximum period of 24 months from the date of receipt.

If you have any further questions regarding this evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Telephone: +359 898 211 187

Email: natalia.mihaylova@junction.bg

Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

Are you willing for the child to participate in this study?

Yes / No

If no, explain why:

If yes, you can sign below.

I confirm that I have read and agree to the information above, and I am willing for the child to participate in the research.

Date:

Assent form for children

Hello,

We would like to present to you a study we are carrying out if you might like to take part in it. School is an important part of your lives and your opinion is key and necessary, whenever we are talking about education. This study is about changes in your school, school life and activities. This study is a part of a project of UNICEF Kazakhstan, aiming to understand the changes at schools and whether they led to positive results and what is your participation in this process. Children are part of this study and will have the chance to express their views and share their experiences.

We will make a report with all these opinions and send it to UNICEF, an international organisation working for children's rights, and national authorities. UNICEF will see what changes the educational reform in the country has brought about in your school in order to improve educational quality.

1. We would like to invite you to take part in a focus group discussion, if you agree. Your name will not be asked for or recorded, therefore it won't be mentioned in the report.
2. The focus group will take no more than 60 minutes.
3. If you do not wish to answer a question, you don't have to and you can decide to leave the focus group. In this case, we won't be able to use the information you have provided.
4. There are no right or wrong answers – we are interested solely in your opinion.
5. You can ask your parent/teacher or the contact persons Natalia Mihaylova/Nurlan Imangaliyev (see contacts below) about anything that is not clear.

If you would like to participate, you should tell the adult who gave you this letter that you agree and write your initials down on this form. If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact us.

Thank you very much!

Name: Natalia Mihaylova

Telephone: +359 898 211 187

Email: natalia.mihaylova@junction.bg

Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

Your initials:.....

9.5.5. PROTOCOLS TO ENSURE SUBJECT'S SAFETY, PROTECTION OF SUBJECT'S IDENTITY AND PROTECTION OF DATA

Protocol to ensure subject's safety

Junction Bulgaria is a company which was selected by UNICEF Kazakhstan to conduct a 'Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity'. The objective of this assignment is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan have been contributing to the inclusion of children of different levels of ability, in order to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system.

The research team, which is properly trained in human subjects' protection, will ensure the safety of all participants through providing informed consent detailing the potential benefits and mitigation strategies for any possible risks, as well as protecting the autonomy of people. This means that the do-no-harm principle will be followed by maximising benefits and minimising risks for the research participants. They will be treated in an ethical manner by respecting their decisions and protecting them from harm. Efforts will be made to secure the well-being of participants while being involved in the research. Reasonable, non-exploitative and well-thought out and considered procedures will be strictly followed and administered fairly to each participant.

This researcher protocol is developed in view of including children as participants in this research and paying special attention to potential victims of child abuse. The interview guide for children does not include per se sensitive or harmful questions. However, if there are any questions, which would potentially cause the child to disclose information regarding abuse, violence, neglect or similar occurrence or if the child decides to disclose such information him/herself, researchers will follow this protocol. The steps, which will be taken, are the following:

- If a child shows in some way (face gestures, way of talking, blushing, etc.) that he/she experiences discomfort to talk on a specific topic, the interview could be stopped or any further questions on the topic could be avoided, depending on the child's wishes
- If a child discloses information regarding abuse, violence, neglect or similar occurrence, there could be potential limits to confidentiality, meaning that the case could be reported, depending on what has been disclosed according to the national legislation in Kazakhstan. If such a reporting is necessary, the child's name and other personal data may be disclosed, but the child will be informed prior to that. In addition to this, the researcher(s) will inform the child on where to receive help from relevant authorities and services.

If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact us.

Name: Natalia Mihaylova

Telephone: +359 898 211 187

Email: natalia.mihaylova@junction.bg

Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

Protocol for protection of subjects' identities

Junction Bulgaria is a company which was selected by UNICEF Kazakhstan to conduct a 'Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity'. The objective of this assignment is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan have been contributing to the inclusion of children of different levels of ability, in order to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system.

The research team will ensure that the evaluation does not collect identifying information such as addresses, email addresses, etc. Whenever names are used, the evaluation will not link individual responses with participants' identities. Confidentiality of information will be strictly maintained, since only the research team collecting/analysing data will have access to responses of individuals that could be identified. The evaluation team will make every effort to prevent anyone outside of the research from connecting individual participants with their responses. This will be done through password-protection of all documents containing data, which will be kept in a separate location and access to the documents will be restricted. Identifiable data will be encrypted.

Documentation and data such as consent forms, interview notes or reporting templates will be collected by Junction Bulgaria which will retain them for a maximum period of 24 months from the date of receipt. After that, the team will thoroughly dispose, destroy or delete study data and documents in accordance with predetermined timeframes for storage and enquiries. The team will also follow clear guidelines on transporting or transferring data such as encrypting electronic data, prohibit team members from taking it home from work and will ensure that if data is moved, the storage device such as USB or hard drive is password protected. Security codes will be assigned to computerised records.

If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact us.

Name: Natalia Mihaylova

Telephone: +359 898 211 187

Email: natalia.mihaylova@junction.bg

Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

Protocol for protection of data

Junction Bulgaria is a company which was selected by UNICEF Kazakhstan to conduct a 'Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity'. The objective of this assignment is to assess to what extent the state education programmes in Kazakhstan have been contributing to the inclusion of children of different levels of ability, in order to produce evidence-based recommendations for strengthening the education system.

The research team will ensure that data protection is ensured, since it is a part of the plan for data storage. Confidentiality and anonymity will be assured by replacing names and other information with encoded identifiers, with the encoding key kept in a different secure location. Research data in electronic/written form will be protected from tampering, loss, theft or physical damage by limiting access to it, in order to maintain its integrity. The team leaders will decide which team members are authorised to access and manage stored data and it will be kept together in a safe, secure location away from public access.

For electronic data, unique user IDs and passwords will be used that cannot be easily guessed. Passwords will be changed often to ensure that only current project members can access data, which will also be done through a centralised process. Administrator access rights will be evaluated and limited. Outside wireless devices will not be able to access the system's network. Anti-virus protection will be kept updated on every computer. The team will maintain up-to-date versions of all software and media storage devices. A firewall and intrusion detection software will be used to monitor access for internet connected storage. Encryption, electronic signatures, or watermarking will also be used to keep track of authorship and changes made to data files. There will be regular back-up of electronic data files (both on and offsite) and creation of protected copies. It will be ensured that data is properly destroyed. The team of Junction Bulgaria will retain data for a maximum period of 24 months.

If you have any questions about the research, or if problems arise, you may contact us.

Name: Natalia Mihaylova

Telephone: +359 898 211 187

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Name: Nurlan Imangaliyev (National consultant)

Email: imangaliyev@gmail.com

Telephone: +7707332948

9.6. ANNEX 6 EVALUATORS BIODATA AND JUSTIFICATION OF TEAM COMPOSITION

Table 8 Proposed team

Name of the expert	Title	Role in the assignment	Professional experience	Required qualification and area of expertise	List of similar projects worked on and role in them
Natalia Guerassimova Hristova-Mihaylova, PhD	Mrs.	Team leader	<p>Natalia has a PhD in Social Work and policies from South-West University in Blagoevgrad and a Master's degree in Pedagogy and Social Pedagogy from Sofia University. The topic of her PhD is 'Effectiveness of work with parents of children placed in social services in the community.' She is a certified expert in appreciative inquiry in the evaluation and action research of systems and policies from the University of Central Lancashire and New Bulgarian University.</p> <p>Natalia has more than 20 years' experience in education, social work development and social and child protection system reforms. In addition, Natalia has more than 15 years of professional experience as an evaluation team leader in consultative projects, regarding evaluation and assessment, situation analysis of different processes and policies, such as education, inclusive education, childcare reforms, child protection and social policy. She has worked with various counterparts and in different roles. Natalia has strong organisational and communication skills. She adheres to rigorous ethical standards, especially regarding participation of children in research, child protection issues, different cultures, disability, age, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 years' experience, in designing and implementing theory-based evaluations in ECARO. - PhD in Social Work and a master's degree in Pedagogy and Social Pedagogy. - 10 years specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, including early learning, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. - More than five years of documented experience in conducting development evaluations in education sector. - 15 years proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. - Solid knowledge of human rights-based approaches to programming, including child-rights, gender, equity, results-based management (RBM) principles, participatory approaches. - Solid knowledge of inclusive education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNICEF GAO, Abu Dhabi Office - United Arab Emirates; Technical assistance to UNICEF GAO in updating and contextualizing the Child friendly school (CFS) standards; Consultant, 2022 - For our children Foundation/UNICEF CO Bulgaria; In-depth analysis of the scientific content and detailed review of the report Deep dive analysis of national child poverty reduction policies, Consultant, 2022 - Terre des hommes Hungary; Baseline, mid-term and endline assessment on knowledge, attitude, practices and behaviours relating to peer violence among children in schools in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia and Final evaluation of the Child Protection Hub for Southeast Europe with purpose to determine the level of achievement of the expected outcomes from the realisation of the project, the level of sustainability of those results and the relevance to the local needs of the identified target groups; Team leader, 2021/2022. - SAPI/UNDP Turkmenistan, Development and conduction of a series of trainings for the newly hired social workers, social work managers, social service providers and allied workforce under the

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		<p>ethnicity and is experienced in leading teams and collecting national representative big-scale studies.</p> <p>During her work for UNICEF Bulgaria, UNICEF Ukraine, UNICEF North Macedonia, UNICEF Montenegro, UNDP Turkmenistan, UNICEF GAO Natalia has gathered an extensive experience in applying Human Rights Based Approach, gender mainstreaming and gender sensitive programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience of working in Ukraine and Turkmenistan. 	<p>Joint Programme in between the United Nations and the Government of Turkmenistan on improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive quality community-based social services. Analysis of cost and social benefits return. Analysis of the pilot and residential social services in Turkmenistan in terms of costs and the (planned) outputs and outcomes for the users of these services, Team member, 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNICEF Ukraine, Formative evaluation of the Education sector support, Team leader, 2021 - Foundation 'For Our Children', National representative study on ECD workforce with main goal is highlight the main directions for improving the quality of the early childhood development workforce, National consultant, 2020 - Association 'Parents' Identification of problem areas and successful models of interaction in the partnership between the educational system and parents of children with SEN, who study at Centres for special educational support, Team member, 2020 - America for Bulgaria Foundation, Evaluation of the Sustainability of 2009-2015 Schools of the Future Program, implemented in 45 Bulgarian schools; Team leader, 2018 - BAPID/MoES, Evaluation of system of special schools in Bulgaria, Evaluator, 2017
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					- BAPID , Project MINCE (Model for Inclusive Community Education). Needs assessment and development of a variety of methods and education programmes for people with severe intellectual disabilities. Project was implemented in Bulgaria, Austria, Germany, Croatia, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia, Expert, 2017.
Stoyan Mihaylov, PhD	Mr.	Team member, International evaluator	<p>Mr. Stoyan Mihaylov has a PhD degree in Sociology from Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski'. Stoyan is a highly qualified expert in the field of market and social research with 25 years' experience working as a researcher and project manager. The topic of his PhD is 'Deinstitutionalization or reinstitutionalization of children at risk in Bulgaria - assumptions, logic and metamorphosis.' Stoyan has developed a strong theoretical background as a sociologist and has a long practical experience in communication at a senior level in a multinational and multi-cultural environment, management, and leadership experience in a wide range of research and evaluation projects, identifying the most appropriate research approaches to various target groups, analytical skills developed in quantitative and qualitative surveys, including moderation of focus groups and in-depth interviews.</p> <p>Stoyan Mihaylov is a certified expert in appreciative inquiry in the evaluation and action research of the systems and policies from the University of Central Lancashire and New Bulgarian University. He has also</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 years specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, including early learning, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. - 10 years of documented experience in conducting development evaluations in education sector. - 20 years of proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. - Solid knowledge of human rights-based approaches to programming, including child-rights, gender, equity, results-based management (RBM) principles, participatory approaches - Solid knowledge of inclusive education. - Experience of working in Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Terre des hommes Hungary; Baseline, mid-term and endline assessment on knowledge, attitude, practices and behaviours relating to peer violence among children in schools in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia and Final evaluation of the Child Protection Hub for Southeast Europe with purpose to determine the level of achievement of the expected outcomes from the realisation of the project, the level of sustainability of those results and the relevance to the local needs of the identified target groups; Team member, 2021/2022. - UNICEF Ukraine, Formative evaluation of the Education sector support, Evaluator, 2021 - Association 'Parents' Identification of problem areas and successful models of interaction in the partnership between the educational system and parents of children with SEN, who study at Centres for special educational support, Team member, 2020 - America for Bulgaria Foundation, Evaluation of the Sustainability of 2009-2015 Schools of the Future Program,

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			<p>participated in training and qualification courses in Vienna, Brussels, Sofia, Bucharest and Nicosia on management and leadership skills, presentation, and communication skills.</p> <p>Stoyan has been in the role of research expert in number of projects, working with different counterparts: government entities, NGOs, etc. In his work, he adheres to rigorous ethical standards, especially regarding participation of children in research, child protection issues, different cultures, disability, age, and ethnicity.</p>		<p>implemented in 45 Bulgarian schools: Evaluator, 2018</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional development Agency and Business centre 2000, Dual project between Bulgaria and Romania. The focus is on risk management and risk prevention from natural disasters and accidents at school. The methodology of the research includes desk review, surveys with students, as well as interviews with teachers and principals, Research Expert, 2019
Raya Mihaylova	Ms.	Team member, International evaluator	<p>Raya Mihaylova has a master's degree in Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems from Utrecht University in The Netherlands and is currently doing a PhD in Sociology in Sofia University, focused on influence of technologies on social inequalities in education. She is a certified expert in action research of systems and policies. She has undergone training and is certified in analysing data via Qualitative Comparative Analysis.</p> <p>She has worked for six years as a research expert and has participated in a number of evaluation projects, regarding early childhood development and education, child protection, alternative care for children, children victims of bullying, situation analysis of different processes and policies, such as deinstitutionalisation, childcare reform. She has participated in projects, involving different countries in the region of East Europe and Western Balkans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More than five years of specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, including early learning, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. Master's degree in Sociology. - More than five years of documented experience in conducting development evaluations in education sector. - More than five years of proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. - Solid knowledge of human rights-based approaches to programming, including child-rights, gender, equity, results-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TdH Hungary, Baseline, mid-term and endline assessment on knowledge, attitude, practices, and behaviours relating to peer violence among children in ten schools in Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia, Evaluator/Expert, 2021 - Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Work on researching the multiple-faceted factors that influence inequalities in participation in higher education, the role of digital technologies in the educational process and their relation to educational inequalities in the project 'Dynamics of Inequalities in Participation in Higher and Adult Education: A Comparative Social Justice Perspective' (JustEdu), Researcher (PhD student), 2021 - UNICEF Ukraine, Formative evaluation of the Education sector support, Evaluator/Expert, 2021

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		<p>and evaluations, focused on social policy and education. She has worked on research and evaluation regarding the DI process, focus on child rights, bullying at school, impact of social services for people with disabilities on local development, etc. Raya has conducted independent research projects in Bulgaria and The Netherlands, involving children, and adheres to rigorous ethical standards in research and evaluation. She has good writing, presentation, and analytical skills, and she has been part of different teams, therefore she has good interpersonal skills. She is well acquainted with software programmes for processing and analysis of qualitative information – NVivo, as well as statistical software programmes such as SPSS, Excel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management (RBM) principles, participatory approaches - Solid knowledge of inclusive education. - Experience of working in Ukraine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Association ‘Parents’, Identification of problem areas and successful models of interaction in the partnership between the educational system and parents of children with SEN, who study at Centres for special educational support, Research Expert, 2020 - Regional development Agency and Business centre 2000, Dual project between Bulgaria and Romania. The focus is on risk management and risk prevention from natural disasters and accidents at school. The methodology of the research includes desk review, surveys with students, as well as interviews with teachers and principals, Educational Researcher, 2019 - America for Bulgaria Foundation, Evaluation of the Sustainability of 2009-2015 Schools of the Future Program, implemented in 45 Bulgarian schools, Educational Researcher, 2018 - Social Activities and Practice Institute, A multi country research including Albania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. The primary focus is on violence and abuse at schools, Educational Researcher, 2017-2021 	
Alyia Bizhanova	Mrs.	Team member, National evaluator	<p>Aliya Bizhanova is 3rd year doctoral student and research fellow at Michigan State University (Erickson Fellowship). Her research interests are international and comparative education policies and systems. She is mixed-methods researcher. Aliya is currently working on large institutional partnership project between</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree in Education - Experience of working in Central Asia and CISs - Previous work in Kazakhstan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OECD Centre for Skills, Education and Skills Directorate: Contributing to the Kazakhstan National Skills Strategy 2030 report by conducting background research on institutional and regulatory settings for priority areas: adult learning, skills activation, labor market information systems, governance, and stakeholder

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		<p>MSU and the Government of Kazakhstan and research projects on secondary education in the US, Kazakhstan, and South Korea. Throughout her career, she has participated in large-scale national and international projects. Prior to MSU she worked at the World Bank country office in Kazakhstan as education specialist; at the OECD as a consultant for the National Skills Strategy project and lead researcher and lecturer at Almaty Management University. She holds a Master's degree from Vanderbilt University, USA (E. Muskie Fellowship) and a diploma of higher education from Samara State University, Russia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 15 years specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, including early learning, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. - 10 years proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. 	<p>engagement; Conducting country context analysis to strengthen evidence base for policy recommendations to ensure they are well-tailored to the country's needs; Collecting and addressing the feedback from the national stakeholders on the draft report; Leading operational visits and strategic sessions with high and mid-level Government officials and national stakeholders, Consultant, 2019-2021</p> <p>World Bank, Leading and contributing to the preparation, implementation and supervision of investment and research projects, including TVEM (project financing: \$US29.2 million), Youth Corps (\$US21.8 million), Skills and Jobs (\$US100 million), EMP (\$US67 million), Joint Economic Research programme in school inspection and assessment; E-learning, and postgraduate education; Conducting research (data collection and analysis) on Kazakhstan teachers' policies, student assessment, school autonomy and accountability through SABER Framework; Contributing to research work of the Human Development teams for collecting and analysing data on human development indicators and trends, including development of monitoring and evaluation system, results framework, and other outcome-based indicators; Managing a continuous policy dialogue with high and mid-level government officials (Ministries of Education, Labour, National Economy),</p>
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					international agencies, and NGOs, 2012-2019
Nurlan Imangaliyev	Mr.	Team member, National evaluator	<p>Nurlan Imangaliyev is a Master of Science in Educational leadership from Nazarbayev University. He has a pedagogical education and background and has been a teacher of English and German languages in Semey State Pedagogical Institute for 5 years. Additionally, he has worked as a teacher of English in NURORDA High School Astana for 8 years, therefore he has a total of 13 years of direct experience in the educational system. Nurlan is also very experienced as a researcher in conducting studies since he has worked as head of research and development at the same high school. He is currently an academic director at a professional learning centre, responsible for the academic content of teacher development programmes and curriculum. He speaks Russian and Kazakh language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree in Education - Experience of working in Central Asia and CISs - Previous work in Kazakhstan - More than 15 years of specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of education programming, quality education, education sector analysis and planning. - Proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NURORDA High School Astana, Head of Research and Development, 2012 – 2015 - USTAZ Professional Learning Centre, Academic Director, 2015 - current
Kamilla Rollan	Mrs	Team member National evaluator	<p>Kamilla Rollan is a Master of Science in Educational Leadership, Inclusive Education and is currently doing a PhD in University of Cambridge, UK, Faculty of Education and her thesis focus is Inclusive Education reform in Central Asia. She has more than 6 years' experience in research and projects in Inclusive education. She is founder of "Education For All" non-profit association in Astana, Kazakhstan, aimed at promoting educational access and building professional competencies of youth with special needs and disabilities in Kazakhstan. She has experience in working with UNICEF,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree in Education - Experience of working in Central Asia and CISs - Previous work in Kazakhstan - More than 5 years of specialized experience and technical knowledge and understanding of inclusive education, education sector analysis and planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Education for All" Public Association, Kazakhstan Chairperson; Co-founder of inclusive education center which provides access to out-of-school children with special needs to study in a mainstream educational setting; Supported launching a transition programme for young adults with disabilities to acquire professional and employability skills; Engaged in fundraising, project coordination, and financial management; 2016 – 2019 - "Social Trust Foundation" Public Foundation, Atyrau, Kazakhstan, Expert on Inclusive Education; Designed a project on

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		<p>Central Asian universities and NGOs which equipped her with a range of skills in developing and implementing inclusive policies and practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proven experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis - Solid knowledge of inclusive education - Solid knowledge of human rights-based approaches to programming, including child-rights, gender, equity, results-based management (RBM) principles, participatory approaches. 	<p>professional development of staff at residential institutions for children with disabilities; Supported project implementation, including coordination, PR activities, and maintaining contact with regional authorities, international experts, and sponsors; Facilitated monitoring and evaluation of the projects, finalized the evaluation reports; 2018</p> <p>- UNICEF, Astana, Kazakhstan; National consultant on Education and Child Protection; Maintained contacts with regional authorities on planning, implementation and monitoring of enhancement of child protection system with a specific focus on children affected by migration; Supported activities on establishment of early warning mechanism to prevent and respond to school dropouts; Supported evidence generation work-plan activities: research and evaluation; 2018-2019</p> <p>- University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, Research Assistant, Assisted data collection and reporting on the implementation of Early Warning System for dropout prevention in Kazakhstan (joint projects with UNICEF Kazakhstan); Translated and adapted teacher training materials and sessions on Action Research, SHARE Project, 2019-2021</p>
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9.7. ANNEX 7 EVALUATION MATRIX

Table 9 Evaluation matrix

Criteria of evaluation	Key questions	Sub-questions	Indicators	Methods for data collection
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well are the state education programmes aligned with global priorities (The World Declaration on Education for All, Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO), Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities (UNICEF), The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals) in terms of inclusivity? 	To what extent are the state education programmes aligned with global priorities in terms of inclusivity when it comes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Declaration on Education for All; Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO); Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities (UNICEF); The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. 	Level of alignment of the state education programmes with the global priorities (Education for All, Inclusive education, Equity in education)	Desk review of relevant sources of information KIs with ministry representatives, government institution representatives, key international partners, Ombudspersons, NGO representatives and UNICEF programme specialists
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are the state education programmes aligned to government priorities in Kazakhstan ("Kazakhstan-2050", Digital Kazakhstan, National Development Plan of Kazakhstan -2025, etc.) and commitments on human rights, including child rights, equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion? 	To what extent are the state education programmes aligned with government priorities in terms of commitments on human rights, incl. child rights, equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion when it comes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kazakhstan-2050; Digital Kazakhstan; National Development Plan of Kazakhstan -2025. 	Level of alignment of the state education programmes with the government priorities	Desk review of relevant sources of information KIs with ministry representatives, local level officials, government institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies, Ombudspersons, UNICEF programme specialists
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent and how well have the state education programmes adapted to the changing context within the education sector? 	To what extent the education system was able to adapt its strategies to the changing context in terms of:	Availability of amendments and changes in strategies for education in view of the changing context (COVID-19, migrant	Desk review of relevant sources of information KIs with ministry representatives, local level officials, government

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● changes in needs and priorities caused by COVID-19; ● changes due to the migrant and refugee wave; ● digitalisation in education; ● socio-economic changes. 	wave, digitalisation, socio-economic changes)	institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How relevant are the state education programmes in addressing inherent equity gaps, taking into consideration any disparities? 	<p>To what extent could the state education programmes address equity gaps in view of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gender disparities; ● presence of SEN or disabilities; ● living in families with low income; ● living in institutionalised care; ● living in remote areas, ● risk behaviour; ● being in conflict with the law (having parent(s) in conflict with the law); ● being from linguistic and ethnical minorities; ● migration (including refugees). 	<p>Availability of needs assessment and data, based on which there are priorities and activities related to gender disparities, children with SEN, low-income families, children in institutionalised care, living in remote areas, with risk behaviour, in conflict with the law, from linguistic and ethnic minorities, migrants</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, government institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies, Ombudspersons, NGO representatives and UNICEF programme specialists</p> <p>FGDs with parents/caregivers, children/adolescents (incl. NEETs)</p> <p>Secondary data analysis</p>
Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent the planned/implemented programmes enabled state coordinated interventions/measures? 	<p>In what aspects do the planned/implemented state programmes enable/disable coordinated measures?</p> <p>How did the state education programmes align with/fit with other interventions being carried out in the country?</p>	<p>Degree of horizontal integration between planned/implemented state programmes and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Other programmes in other sectors; ● Interventions/measures. 	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, local level officials, government institution representatives, key representatives of implementing agencies, representatives of PMPCs</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the Implementing Agencies' work fit with the work of external partners (global partners, regional partners, other government bodies, partner programmes /interventions)? 	<p>How did the Implementing Agencies work with the external partners?</p> <p>Were the state Programme interventions coherent with the Implementing Agencies' approach that is likely to have positive results, or are there critical gaps?</p>	<p>Degree of vertical integration between Implementing Agencies and internal/external partners at the different levels (global, regional, national)</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, local level officials, other relevant government representatives, key international partners, representatives of implementing agencies, Ombudspersons, representatives of PMPCs, NGO representatives and UNICEF programme specialists</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the state education programmes priorities chosen based on comparative strengths, capacities, and stakeholders' expectations? 	<p>Have the state education programmes been made based on analysis?</p> <p>Are priorities stated in this analysis and do they serve as basis for comparative strengths, capacities? Are they related to stakeholders' expectations?</p>	<p>Level of internal coherence and logic of the state education programmes in terms of: analysis used as a basis; strengths/weaknesses; priorities, capacity, approach, etc.</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, government institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the Implementing Agencies leverage their comparative advantage vis-à-vis other partners efficiently? 	<p>To what extent were the Implementing Agencies able to effectively collaborate and coordinate with one another and externally with key stakeholders?</p> <p>To what extent were the Implementing Agencies able to leverage existing partnerships, in order to be as efficient as possible for strengthening and improving service delivery?</p>	<p>Level of partnership and collaboration between implementing agencies and other key stakeholders</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, government institution representatives, key international partners, representatives of implementing agencies, representatives of PMPCs</p>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were the state education programmes effective in achieving their intended results, both at 	<p>To what extent have the state education programmes achieved the overall expected outcomes or are likely to achieve them?</p>	<p>Level of achievement of the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of schools that created favourable 	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, local level</p>

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<p>national and regional levels, overall and in terms of inclusivity?</p>	<p>What are the expected results at the national and regional level in terms of inclusivity?</p> <p>What is the level of achievement of the outcomes (likeliness of achievement), having in mind the phase of implementation of the programme?</p>	<p>conditions for inclusive education - 70% (out of their total number)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of children aged 3-6 years attending preschool education and learning according to the new curriculum, in 2017 - 87.5%, in 2019 - 100%; ● Percentage of schools that transitioned to the new curriculum, in 2016 - 100%, in 2019 - 100%. ● Percentage of 1-6 y.o. children attending preschool education - 85.3%, 3-6 y.o. children - 100%; ● Child wellbeing index in Kazakhstan - 0.73. ● Percentage of children with disabilities receiving special psychological and pedagogical support and early intervention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2022 – 50 ○ 2023 – 65 ○ 2024 – 80 ○ 2025 – 100 	<p>officials, representatives of implementing agencies</p> <p>Secondary data analysis</p> <p>Observations at schools</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To what extent have the state education programmes contributed to broader education goals? 	<p>Did the state education programmes actively contribute to the fulfilment of the right to education for all children?</p> <p>Did the state education programmes actively contribute to the fulfilment of</p>	<p>Level of contribution of the programmes to the fulfilment of the right to education for all children</p>	<p>Desk review of relevant sources of information</p> <p>KIIs with ministry representatives, local level officials, government</p>

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		the right to education for the most vulnerable children?		institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies, representatives of PMPCs, NGO representatives and UNICEF programme specialists, as well as school principals FGDs with parents/caregivers, children/adolescents (incl. NEETs), teachers Secondary data analysis Observations at schools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How effective have the state education programmes been in addressing inherent equity gaps or taking into consideration the disparities? 	In what ways and to what extent have the state education programmes been gender responsive or transformative? Have the most vulnerable groups been reached and how? If not, why?	Share of the different vulnerable groups which have been reached by the interventions in the programme in terms of: age, children with special education needs, minority groups, geographical areas	Desk review of relevant sources of information KIs with school principals, local level officials FGDs with parents/caregivers, children/adolescents (incl. NEETs), teachers Secondary data analysis Observations at schools
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the activities and measures planned/implemented through the State programmes enabled optimized use of resources? 	What is the level of invested resources and efforts in comparison with the achieved results of the state education programmes?	Level of efficient use of invested resources for achievement of the outcomes	Desk review of relevant sources of information Secondary data analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent were state education programme activities delivered in a timely and organized manner for the benefit of children at risk of exclusion? 	Were the results of state education programmes achieved on time?	Level of efficient use of time resources for achievement of the outcomes	Desk review of relevant sources of information Secondary data analysis

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How efficiently did the Implementing Agencies respond to equity-based challenges in relation to state educational programmes? 	Was the management and coordination process efficient enough to cover any equity-based challenges in relation to state educational programmes (in terms of gender, age, presence of disabilities, regional difference, other types of vulnerabilities, etc.)?	Level of efficient management and coordination for addressing equity-based challenges	Desk review of relevant sources of information Secondary data analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent, and in what ways, did the Implementing Agencies proactively leverage key partners to ensure efficient use of existing platforms (service, community, and media delivery platforms) and resources for educational activities? 	<p>Were Implementing Agencies efficient in leveraging key partners for usage of existing platforms for dissemination and resources for educational activities?</p> <p>Were there any inefficiencies because Implementing Agencies did not work with certain partners (or if the Implementing Agencies only worked with the same set of partners)?</p>	Availability of proactively used existing platforms for dissemination and resources of educational activities	Desk review of relevant sources of information Secondary data analysis
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent the Implementing Agencies are committed to further support inclusion in education and able to sustain? 	<p>To what extent are Implementing Agencies committed to support inclusion in education at the different stages like pre-school level, primary and secondary education?</p> <p>To what extent are Implementing Agencies committed to support inclusion in education in terms of its different aspects?</p>	Level of sustainability in terms of commitment of Implementing Agencies to support inclusive education at the different levels	KIIs with ministry representatives, government institution representatives, representatives of implementing agencies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are legal, institutional, and financial mechanisms established to ensure sustainability of programme results? 	<p>What concrete (legal/institutional/financial) mechanisms are established?</p> <p>In what way is it expected that they will ensure sustainability of programme result?</p>	Availability of legal/institutional/financial mechanisms to ensure sustainability	Desk review of relevant sources of information KIIs with school principals, ministry representatives FGDs with teachers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there conditions to ensure quality of the services (curriculum, 	What are the conditions to ensure quality of the services when it comes to:	Availability of conditions for quality to ensure sustainability in terms of school curriculum,	Desk review of relevant sources of information

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teacher training, supervision mechanisms, etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School curriculums; ● Teacher trainings; ● Supervision mechanisms; ● Continuous professional development. 	teacher trainings, supervision mechanisms, continuous professional development	KIs with school principals, ministry representatives, implementing agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the key barriers and bottlenecks toward achieving sustainability in the education sector? 	<p>What are the key enabling factors toward achieving sustainability in the education sector?</p> <p>What are the key barriers/bottlenecks?</p>	Degree to which key barriers are identified and mitigation strategies are applied	KIs with ministry school principals

9.8. ANNEX 8 THEORY OF CHANGE

Figure 8 Theory of Change – Inception stage

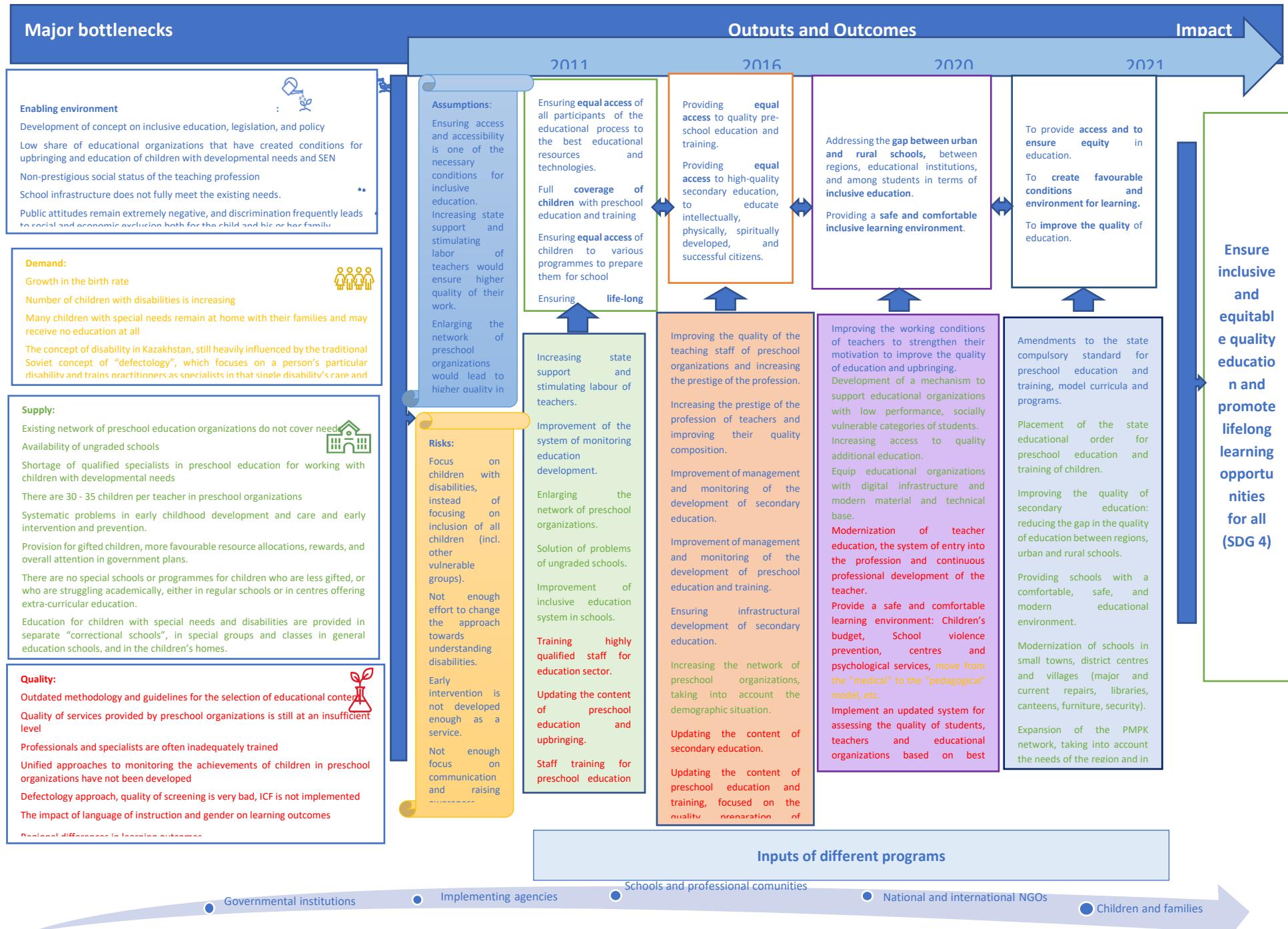
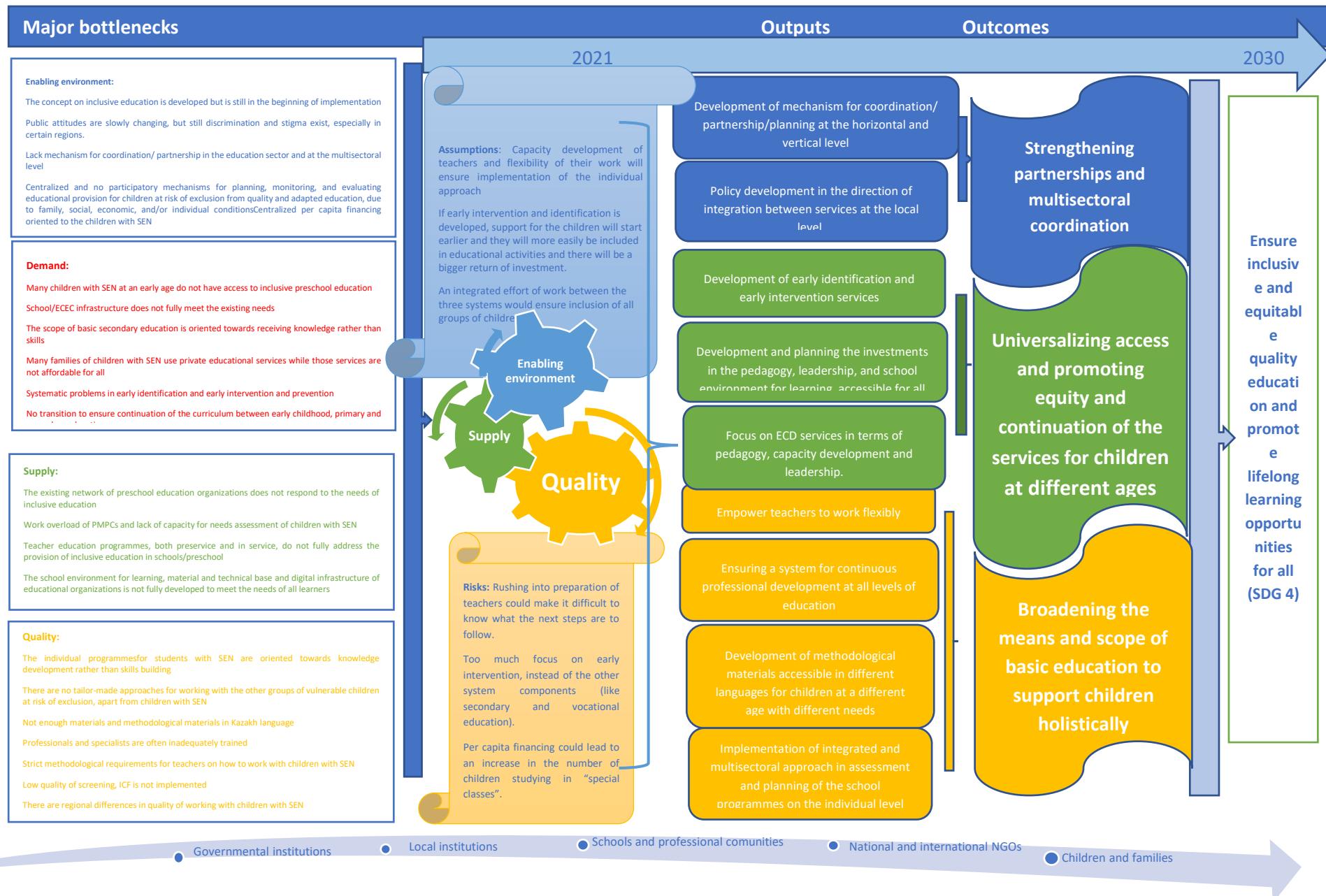


Figure 9 Theory of Change – revised final stage



9.9. ANNEX 9 FIELDWORK PLAN AND TIMELINE

Table 10 Fieldwork plan and timeline

Project implementation phase	Activities	Timeline	Deliverables	Location
Inception phase	Desk research	2nd week of October 2022 – 4th week of October 2022	Draft inception report; Ethical review; Presentation to reference group; Theory of change; Final inception report and completed comments matrix	Home based
	Interviews with stakeholders	1st week of November 2022 – 3rd week of November 2022		
	Reconstruction of the Theory of change	3rd week of November 2022 – 4th week of November 2022		
	Development of draft inception report, including evaluation design, evaluation matrix, theory of change, detailed methodology, workplan, data collection instruments, consent/assent forms, etc.	2nd week of November 2022 – 1st week of December 2022		
	Presentation to reference group	4th week of January 2023		
	Ethical review	1st week of February 2023		
	Final inception report and completed comments matrix.	2nd week of January 2023		
Data collection Phase	Desk review	2nd week of January – 3rd week of February 2023	Post data collection debrief	Home based
	Secondary data analysis	2nd week of March – 2nd week of April 2023		
	KIIs, FGDs and observations	4th week of February 2023 – 1st week of March 2023		
	KIIs, FGDs and observations	4th week of April 2023		Turkistan, Pavlodar
	KIIs, FGDs and observations	1st week of May 2023		

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	Post data collection debrief	4th week of April 2023		Astana
Analysis, triangulation, and report writing	Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations	1st week of May 2023	Presentation with preliminary findings and recommendations Draft evaluation report Recommendations co-creation workshop/meeting Final report Created and disseminated materials for an external audience	Home based
	Draft evaluation report and theory of change	2nd week of May 2023		
	Facilitating a recommendations co-creation meeting/workshop	1st week of June 2023		
	ERG review and UNICEF quality assurance facility	4th week of May 2023		
	Final report meeting UNICEF quality standards and management response plan	1st week of June 2023		
	Creation and dissemination of materials for an external audience	2nd week of June 2023		

9.10. ANNEX 10 OTHER TECHNICAL ANNEXES

9.10.1 ALIGNMENT OF THE STATE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WITH GLOBAL PRIORITIES

Table 11 Level of alignment to the World Declaration on Education for All

World Declaration on Education for All - priorities	State Programmes for Development of Education - priorities	Level of alignment ¹⁷⁵
Universalizing access and promoting equity	In all four state programmes there are priorities related to ensuring equal access to the educational process in view of educational resources, technologies, programs, quality pre-school education and training, high-quality secondary education, as well as addressing the gap between urban and rural schools, between regions, educational institutions, and among students in terms of inclusive education.	High
Focusing on learning	In most of the state programmes, the quality of education is the focus of efforts, including creating conditions for an effective learning process in order to ensure the intellectual, spiritual, moral and physical development of students. The analysis of one of the topics, related to learning, is updating of the content of preschool and secondary education and upbringing, which is included in the 2011–2020 state programme, while the rest three state programmes have a gradually increasing focus on learning.	High
Broadening the means and scope of basic education	In terms of broadening the scope of basic education to meet the newly emerging needs of children in the changing context, all state education programmes are oriented towards new standards of education, based on competitive approaches, development of new educational content, through creation of humane educational environment. Furthermore, there is a focus on assessing the individual needs and achievements of students, thus determining the individual trajectory of each student and taking into account his/her individual abilities and increase their motivation to develop skills. The country extended secondary education to 12 years of schooling, updating the curriculum in the areas: artistic and aesthetic, scientific and technical, environmental and biological, tourist and local history, military-patriotic, socio-pedagogical, educational and recreational, etc. at all levels to move away from the knowledge-based paradigm and memorization to critical thinking and problem-solving	High
Enhancing the environment for learning	In terms of enhancing the environment for learning, the state education programmes are oriented towards providing a safe and comfortable inclusive and modern learning environment to improve the quality of education. Ensuring infrastructural development of secondary education is also among the priorities of the programmes, including development of material and technical base and digital infrastructure of educational organizations. It is envisaged to equip rural general education and "vulnerable" schools with teaching materials, computer equipment and digital technology.	High

Strengthening partnerships	When it comes to strengthening partnerships, in some of the state programmes there is information regarding increasing the participation of partners in the training of personnel for the requirements of the economy, creation of modern colleges in partnership with the business environment. In order to improve the efficiency of communications and management at all levels of the education system, the vertical management of the programme 2020-2025 include optimisation through direct subordination of district and city education departments to regional education departments.	Medium
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Table 12 Level of alignment to UNESCO's Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education

UNESCO's Policy and Guidelines on Inclusion in Education - priorities	Policy actions and State Programmes for Development of Education	Level of alignment ¹⁷⁶
Attitudinal changes and policy development	<p>In terms of attitudinal changes and policy development, policy documents and reports point out the fact that public attitudes remain extremely negative, and discrimination frequently leads to social and economic exclusion both for the child and his or her family¹⁷⁷. Furthermore, the concept of disability in Kazakhstan, still heavily influenced by the traditional Soviet concept of "defectology", which focuses on a person's particular disability and trains practitioners as specialists in that single disability's care and correction moves from the "medical" to the "pedagogical" model, etc.¹⁷⁸</p> <p>None of the state education programmes directly address the change in this model and public attitude, except for the State Programme for 2020-2025, in which it is stated that the provision of public services in the field of special and inclusive education will be optimized and automated, within which information systems for health care and social protection will be integrated. This will allow psychological-medical-pedagogical consultations to move from the "medical" to the "pedagogical" model. The activities of the PMPK will be aimed at determining the educational needs of children.</p> <p>In addition, in 2015 a conceptual Approach to inclusive education was developed by the National Academy of Education, with proposed amendments to the terminology used in relation to children with special needs in order to de-stigmatize disability and accelerate the development of inclusive education. Therefore, a new definition on inclusive education was introduced enlarging the definition, meaning that children with SEN are not only children with disabilities and there was a change in the medical approach.</p>	Low
Ensuring inclusion through early childhood care and education	When it comes to ensuring inclusion through early childhood care and education, in the 2011-2020 and 2016-2019 state education programmes systematic problems in ECD and early intervention have been identified, including an increase in the number of children on the pre-school waiting list and shortage of school places caused by demographic processes. It is highlighted that it is necessary to achieve full coverage of children with preschool education and upbringing and ensure equal access of children to various programmes to prepare them for school. Additionally, in the State Programme for 2020 - 2025 it is stated that only 20% of kindergartens, 60% of schools, 30% of colleges have created conditions for inclusive education.	Medium

	Therefore, it is necessary to increase the network of preschool organisation, place a state educational order for preschool education and training of children.	
Inclusive curricula	<p>State Programme for 2011–2020 outlines the major bottlenecks and among them is: outdated methodology and guidelines for the selection of educational content. The programme 2016 – 2019 confirms that the quality of services provided by preschool organizations is still at an insufficient level.</p> <p>The updating of the content of curriculums is the focus of some of the state programmes in view of learning, like in the 2011 and 2016 state education programmes in view of updating of the content of preschool and secondary education and upbringing. At the same time there is no actions towards transition and articulation of the curriculum between early childhood, primary and secondary education.</p>	Medium
Teachers and teacher education	<p>When it comes to teachers and teacher education, in 2011 a key aim is state support for training highly qualified staff for education sector, stimulating teacher development. In 2016 the State Programmes sets forward aims for an advanced training system, since it is stated that a qualitative update of teacher professional development programmes is needed. Additionally, in the same programme it is pointed out that Kazakh teachers will take part in TALIS research, the results of which will develop recommendations for improving the quality of the country's teaching. In the 2020 programme it is also stated that the qualification requirements for teachers working in the context of inclusive education (subject teachers, teachers, teaching assistants and others) will be updated based on the professional standard and conditions of teachers' work would be improved.</p>	High
Resources and legislation	<p>In 2007, the introduced Law on Education states that all citizens have the right to free preschool, elementary, general secondary, and vocational education, as well as free higher education on a competitive basis, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, social and economic status, language, religion, health status and other individual characteristics. In 2015 the conceptual approach to inclusive education was developed proposing amendments to the terminology used in relation to children with special needs in order to de-stigmatize disability and accelerate the development of inclusive education. In 2021, an amendment to the legislation in view of inclusive education was adopted establishing a universal approach to children with disabilities by including them in the educational environment through the implementation of programmes of PMPCs and consultation. Each of the programmes has set forward resources for its implementation and the analysis shows that these resources are increasing with each programme. It should be noted that there is a focus on allocating resources for teacher development as well as school environment and infrastructure.</p>	High

Table 13 Level of alignment to UNICEF's Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities

Areas	Universal and targeted measures in UNICEF's Inclusive Education Initiatives for Children with Disabilities	State Programmes for Development of Education (outputs in the programmes)	Level of alignment ¹⁷⁹
Right of access to education	Removing the barriers including physical, mobility, communication and attitudinal barriers to education faced by children with disabilities, and which impede access to education.	<p>In terms of removing barriers, the analysis shows that in the State Programme for 2011-2020, outputs include enlarging the network of preschool organizations, as well as solutions of problems of ungraded schools. Additionally, it is planned that by 2020 the schools will establish barrier-free zones for disabled children by means of installation of lifting devices and ramps, special equipment in sanitary rooms, installation of handrails, special desks, tables etc. In 2016, it is set that infrastructural development of secondary education will be ensured. Additionally, the increasing of the network of preschool organizations is still an output set forward to be achieved, taking into account the demographic situation. In the national project set forward in 2021 it is stated that there will be interventions towards reducing the gap in the quality of education between regions, urban and rural schools, as well towards modernization of schools in small towns, district centres and villages (major and current repairs, libraries, canteens, furniture, security).</p> <p>It should be noted that removing barriers should be focused on information access and communication, as well as work with attitudes, while such actions have not been identified and there is a primary focus on physical access.</p>	Medium
	Working to support parents in order that they can support their children's access to education.	<p>Working to support parents is not a focus of the state education programmes, although such actions are identified in some of them. In 2011, it is mentioned that the role of board of trustees with parents' participation will be increased in schools. In 2016, it is mentioned that there is consulting support for parents, as well as a mechanism for remote training of parents on the care of children of preschool age. Additionally, in the 2020 programme it is stated that mobile advisory and methodological assistance will be introduced to teachers, parents, and children with SEN.</p>	Low
	Early identification and assessment to ensure that any developmental delay, impairment or particular difficulty experienced by the child is identified and addressed as early as possible in order to ensure the	<p>Early identification and assessment ensuring early years education and inclusion of children with disabilities remains a challenge in the country. In 2019 in a Human Rights Watch report it is stated that PMPCs are a key barrier to children with disabilities studying in mainstream schools. PMPC consultations, organized under local departments of education or the MoES, are</p>	Low

	<p>provision of appropriate support and care.</p> <p>Early years education for every child with a disability to ensure that they are able to benefit as fully as possible from their formal education and achieve a positive transition.</p>	<p>typically made up of doctors, a speech therapist, psychologist, and other specialists, who assess children with disabilities and issue a conclusion with a recommendation as to whether a child should study in a mainstream school or in a special school for children with disabilities, or at home, as well as the types of rehabilitation and support services to which the child is entitled.¹⁸⁰</p> <p>This issue is commented in the State Programme of 2016-2019 in terms of the share of educational organizations that have created conditions for their upbringing and education being only 9.1%, which means that the inclusion of preschool children with special educational developmental needs in the educational environment remains a relevant challenge. Additionally, it is pointed out that there is a shortage of qualified specialists - defectologists¹⁸¹, speech therapists and psychologists. In the 2021 national project it is pointed out that there will be an expansion of the PMPC network, taking into account the needs of the region and in accordance with modern requirements and standards. However, the barriers created by the PMPCs towards inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education, are not explicitly targeted with the expansion of the network of such consultations.</p>	
	<p>Ensuring access to and availability of inclusive education for all children, supported by the necessary resources, measures and adaptations within schools to accommodate differing needs.</p>	<p>In terms of ensuring access to and availability of inclusive education for all children when it comes to necessary resources and adaptations, an e-learning system application is pointed out in the State Programme for 2011-2020. Regional centres for new technologies in education are envisioned in the regional and municipal education departments to ensure functioning of the e-learning system, with each academic programme having a developed teaching and methodical package of materials. Schoolbooks and teaching-methodical materials and e-books are also indicated. The disabled children studying at home will be provided with a set of computer hardware and software. In the 2016 programme, it is mentioned that there are interdisciplinary and project activities, use of information and communication technologies (ICT), integration of students with special needs. Also, textbooks and teaching materials in embossed font for blind children (Braille) and large font for visually impaired children have been introduced. Additionally, in the 2020 programme, it is planned to gradually introduce online learning with elements of proctoring and distance technologies with the development of</p>	<p>Medium</p>

		<p>mechanisms for their quality assurance, as well as to develop a mechanism to support educational organisations with low performance and socially vulnerable categories of students. Educational organizations will provide conditions for students with SEN (equipping with special equipment, furniture, personnel, textbooks and educational and methodological complexes, ramps, lifts, elevators, etc.). In the 2021 national project it is indicated that a digital teacher project for children from socially vulnerable families will be implemented and schools will be equipped with subject rooms for physics, chemistry, biology and STEM education. Comfortable conditions for students in secondary education institutions will be created, including the provision of drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene. However, there is no further specific indication regarding introduction of resources for children with disabilities at schools, apart from supporting their education at home.</p>	
	<p>Creating inclusive learning environments in which children learn together, and which enable children with disabilities to acquire the core academic curriculum and basic cognitive skills, together with essential life skills.</p>	<p>In terms of creating inclusive learning environments, data shows that only a small percentage of school-aged children with disabilities in Kazakhstan get a quality, inclusive education in a mainstream school. The majority of children with disabilities are educated at home, isolated from their peers with visits from teachers only a few times a week or month; segregated in special classrooms in mainstream schools; or attend special schools for children with disabilities, which can be located far from their families and communities. Children with disabilities living in psychiatric-neurological institutions receive very little or no education at all.¹⁸²</p> <p>In the State Programme 2011-2020 it is stated that special and inclusive education classrooms will be created with favourable conditions for ensuring equal access to teaching and upbringing of disabled children (ensuring availability of teachers, defectologists, psychological-pedagogical accompaniment of children, and special individual technical and compensatory facilities). Additionally, special kindergartens have been envisioned in different regions in the country. In the state programme from 2016 it is indicated that accompanying children with SEN in an inclusive environment will be provided, but it is unclear what are the aspects of creation of an inclusive environment and to what degree this would allow for children to work together.</p>	Low

Right to quality education	A child-friendly, safe and healthy environment to enable all children to reach their full potential, and which adopts a holistic approach to their education, health and well-being. Positive learning opportunities providing appropriate support for all children.	<p>In terms of creating a child-friendly, safe and healthy environment and positive learning opportunities for all children in the State Programme it is pointed out that there will be an improvement of inclusive education system in schools. This means that the content of children's extended education in basic areas: artistic-aesthetic, scientific and technical, ecological-biologic, tourist and regional study, military-patriotic, social-pedagogical, educational-recreational etc. – will be renewed in order to form competitive advantages of an individual in creative activity, continuous education and vocational self-determination. In the 2016 state programme it is set out that the content of preschool and secondary education will be updated. According to the National project 2021-2025 there will be a placement of a state educational order for special psychological and pedagogical support for children with developmental disabilities, as well as amendments to the state compulsory standard for preschool education and training, model curricula and programs. Schools will be provided with a comfortable, safe, and modern educational environment. At the same time, new pedagogical approaches like the child-centred and holistic approach have not been mentioned in the programmes.</p>	Medium
	Investment in and support for teachers to enable them to teach within inclusive environments.	<p>In terms of investment and support for teachers, in the 2011 programme it is stated that the programme of training the teachers of extended education and teachers organizers for related professions will be improved, there will be increasing state support and stimulating labour of teachers, training of highly qualified staff. In the 2016 programme it is stated that there is a need for teachers with special education and methodological support. It is also pointed out that in the light of new approaches, the areas of professional competence of teachers are expanding. These are interdisciplinary and project activities, the use of ICT in teaching and management, the integration of students with SEN and consulting support for parents. In the 2020 state programme is also emphasized on the improvement of working conditions of teachers to strengthen their motivation to improve the quality of education and upbringing, as well as modernization of teacher education, the system of entry into the profession and continuous professional development of the teacher. The qualification requirements for teachers working in the context of inclusive education (subject teachers, teachers, teaching assistants and</p>	High

		<p>others) will be updated based on the professional standard.</p>	
	<p>Rights-based learning and assessment in which assessment processes are sensitive to the situation of children with disabilities, including their language and culture.</p>	<p>In terms of rights-based learning and assessment, there is a focus on improvement of the system of monitoring and education development in the State Programme2011-2020. In the 2016 state programme, it is emphasised that there is an improvement of the monitoring of the development of preschool education and training, as well as secondary education. In the 2020 programme, it is pointed out that an updated system for assessing the quality of students, teachers and educational organizations based on best practices will be implemented.</p> <p>In terms of sensitivity to the situation of children with disabilities in view of their language and culture, it can be seen in the programme of 2011 that a new system of continuous learning of the Kazakh language "kindergarten– school, vocational lyceum, college – higher educational institution" will be created which will allow every Kazakhstani citizen to acquire the state language in full. Special attention is given to the development of the Kazakh language through learning centers, language courses.</p> <p>In general, there are systems for monitoring and assessment and focus on learning the Kazakh language, but it is unclear whether these policies are targeted toward children with disabilities in particular.</p>	Medium
Respect for rights within education	<p>Respect for identity by recognising, for example, the right of deaf and blind children to respect for their culture and language through provision of learning in sign language.</p> <p>Respect for participation rights – the right of children, including children with disabilities, to be involved in matters concerning their education, at the level of individual decisions affecting them, in the way that their school is run and in relation to broader education policy and delivery.</p>	<p>When it comes to respect for rights within education, especially regarding identity, language and culture, in the 2016 State Programme2016-2019, it is stated that elements of a multilingual education programmewith the study of Kazakh, Russian and English languages will be gradually introduced in all organizations of preschool education and training. In the 2020 programme, it is pointed out that the intellectual, spiritual, moral and physical development of the student will be ensured. All schools and colleges will implement a project aimed at developing national and family values, increasing the role of the family in raising children, and introducing a new format of interaction between schools and parents based on the experience of "Bilim-innovation" lyceums. A value-based approach to education and upbringing will be an integral part of</p>	Low to Medium

Respect for integrity – children with disabilities have the right, both within school and when travelling to/ from school, to be protected from all forms of violence, bullying or harassment, and to school discipline which is respectful of their dignity.	<p>the entire school system of schools, reflected in the school climate, culture, behavior and attitudes of all employees. This programme contributes to the formation of self-knowledge, self-development, social responsibility and socialization of students and integration of values in the school curriculum.</p> <p>When it comes to respect for participation rights, in the state programme of 2011 it is stated that in order to ensure more active participation of the youth in solution of problems in the sphere of youth policy, the presence of young people in representative bodies is necessitated.</p> <p>In terms of respect for integrity and violence prevention, in the 2020 programme it is stated that a safe and comfortable learning environment will be ensured in view of school violence prevention, centres and psychological services, move from the "medical" to the "pedagogical" model, etc.</p> <p>There are certain activities related to respect for children's rights within education and prevention of violence, but in none of the three areas (identity, integration and participation) they are specifically targeted towards children with disabilities.</p>	
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9.10.2 ALIGNMENT OF THE STATE PROGRAMMES WITH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Table 14 Level of alignment to Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy

Areas	Kazakhstan-2050	State Programmes for Development of Education	Level of alignment ¹⁸³
Inclusive and effective socio-economic development	<p>The strategy stipulates principles of inclusive and effective socio-economic development with a focus on government commitment to equality. To ensure equal opportunities the strategy stipulates a “guaranteed minimal social standard” that includes equal rights to education, healthcare and social protection. Gender non-discrimination and non-discrimination of other vulnerable groups are outlined as a priority.</p>	<p>The education programmes prioritise inclusive and equal approach to high quality education and learning based on non-discriminatory basis regardless of children’s and their family’s ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and other factors. The programmes pay attention to development of human capital as a foundation for sustainable economic and social development of the country.</p>	High
Equal opportunities for quality education	<p>The strategy emphasizes development of accessible and high-quality education through equitable funding mechanisms and expanded education opportunities to all citizens despite their socio-economic status.</p>	<p>Provision of equal opportunities for high quality education is ensured through closing the gap between the rural and urban schools in terms of the access to infrastructure and resources and quality of teaching and learning. All programmes recognize the unequal access to education services between different regions within the country, schools with different languages of instruction, and socioeconomic status of families. As a solution to close the gap, rural and “vulnerable” schools are offered targeted funding.</p>	High
Modernization of all education levels	<p>The strategy prioritises development of all education levels and bringing up the whole system to a new level. At all education levels (preschool, secondary, technical and higher education) equal conditions are being created for all children to receive education of high quality. At the preschool level, access is being expanded. In secondary education, more schools are being built. In technical and vocational education, a new system of engineering and</p>	<p>To strengthen equal and inclusive funding to education services, the programmes state introduction of the per capita funding in secondary education.</p> <p>The programmes emphasize equal and inclusive access to all levels of education, secondary, technical and vocational and higher education and stipulates funding and attention to socially vulnerable groups such as orphans, and students with special needs.</p> <p>To increase the access to high quality early childhood education, there is a plan to widen the network of preschool</p>	High

	<p>modern technology is being established. At the higher education institutions special attention is being paid to research and accessible funding.</p>	<p>institutions through public private partnerships model and per-capita funding. The Education programme 2016-2019 stipulates free access to technical and vocational education to ensure equal access, especially for low income and vulnerable families. New qualification requirements for teachers and specialists working with the special needs children will be developed.</p>	
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Table 15 Level of alignment between Digital Kazakhstan Programme and the state education programmes

Areas	Digital Kazakhstan	State Programmes for Development of Education	Level of alignment ¹⁸⁴
Development of human capital	The programme focuses on development of human capital, and skills and knowledge of young generations and education services through better access to digital resources and rights. It prioritises access to digital resources and improvement of digital literacy by all population groups.	The education programmes outline the importance of improving education as a mechanism to develop a country's human capital. It sets the goal to increase global competitiveness of education and human capital.	High
Commitment to inclusive education for all	The programme puts emphasis on providing equal access to new digital services. It is planned to digitize government services and decrease government involvement and interaction with the citizens through automated online and computer services, so each citizen can have access to services and digital infrastructure wherever they are. It also recognizes the issue of unequal access to internet for citizens in rural areas and stipulates actions to close the "digital access" gap between urban and rural locations.	The state education programmes recognize the importance of equal access to education for all children and families regardless of their background and socio-economic status through increased digital infrastructure and digital research access. Commitment to inclusive education for all children is outlined in the state education programmes through focusing on closing the gap between the rural and urban schools in terms of the access to infrastructure and resources and quality of teaching and learning. Programmes recognize the unequal access to education services between different regions within the country, schools with different languages of instruction, and socioeconomic status of families. As a solution to close the gap, rural and "vulnerable" schools are offered targeted funding.	High

Digitalization of education at all levels	The programme has a focus on digitalization of all economic sectors and mentions the need to expand access to education opportunities to all citizens through free of charge online courses to develop digital skills and literacy. It covers development of digital skills in secondary, technical and vocational, and higher education levels. It also talks about digital infrastructure such as access to broadband Internet in secondary schools and higher education institutions	State education programmes focus on digitalization efforts in education at all education levels. Digital infrastructure is being updated through increased access to the Internet, development of digital online resources to improve digital skills and literacy, cloud technologies, and wireless technologies. Each education level is supported by targeted funding and special programmes with focus on each level.	High
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Table 16 Level of alignment to the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025

Areas	State Programmes for Development of Education	Level of alignment ¹⁸⁵
Ensuring access and equity in education	<p>All state programmes highlight their commitment to ensuring accessible and equitable education. Thus, one of the claimed goals of the Programme 2011-2020 is to ensure equal access of all participants in the educational process to educational services, resources and technologies. The share of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education should be 70% by 2020. Among the objectives of the Programme is also the provision of equal access for children to preschool education programs.</p> <p>The 2016-2019 Programme stipulated that the accessibility of quality and equitable education for all is implemented at all levels of education. By 2019, the Programme sets the goal of reaching 40% of TVET and 100% of universities that would have created equal conditions and barrier-free access for teaching students with special educational needs. The 2020-2025 programme further reinforces reaching the target of 100% of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education by 2025.</p> <p>Furthermore, among the key objectives of the National Project 2025 are ensuring the accessibility and quality of pre-school education and improving the quality of secondary education, namely reducing the gap in the quality of education between regions, urban and rural schools in Kazakhstan (PISA).</p>	High
Creating favourable conditions and environment for learning	<p>The 2011-2020 programme set the task of creating conditions for lifelong learning by 2020, regardless of learners' age, level of education and professional qualifications. Also, the Programme sets the target to cover 70% of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education by 2020. The 2020-2025 programme further reinforces the target of achieving 100% of schools that have created conditions for inclusive education by 2025. Objective 3 of the National Project 2025 is to provide schools with a comfortable, safe and modern educational environment. Although most state education programmes set the target of creating conditions for inclusive education, there is no explanation of what these conditions are.</p>	Medium

Improving quality education	the of	<p>Enhancing the quality of education is one of the objectives of the Programme2011-2020. This programmealso emphasises that the quality of education is primarily dependent on well-trained teachers. In this regard, measures would be taken to raise the status of the teaching profession and improve the professional training of teachers. Furthermore, the aim of the 2016-2019 Programmeis to ensure equal access to high-quality preschool education. For this, a complete transition of schools at the level of secondary education to the updated content of education based on the experience of NIS schools is envisaged.</p> <p>This discourse is continued in later programmesas well. One of the objectives of the 2020-2025 Programmeis to reduce the gap in the quality of education between urban and rural schools, regions, educational institutions, and students. Improving the quality of education for students at all levels of education is the main goal of the National Project 2025 as well. The objectives are to improve the quality of secondary education by reducing the gap in the quality of education between regions, urban and rural schools in Kazakhstan (PISA), as well as providing affordable and high-quality technical and vocational education.</p>	High
Improving efficiency of education management and financing	the of	<p>In terms of education management and financing, there has been a major course to transition to per capita funding. One of the goals of the 2011-2020 Programmeis to improve the financing system, focused on ensuring equal access to educational services. In particular, the Programmeindicates that in 2011 a methodology for per capita normative financing will be developed, which will improve the efficiency of budget expenditures and will help increase the availability of quality education for different segments of the population. The 2019-2019 programmestates that in 2019 the process of introducing per capita funding in all city schools will be completed following a positive test. Programme2020-2025 also continues to follow the course of improvement of per capita financing.</p>	Medium

Developing human capital for the digital economy	<p>One of the goals of the Programme 2011-2022 is the development of competitive human capital for the economic well-being of the country. Among the tasks are the development of digital educational resources for organisations of secondary, technical and vocational education. Similarly, the key goal of the 2016-2019 Programme is the development of human capital for sustainable economic growth, however, the digital economy as such is not mentioned. The 2020-2025 programme foresees the continuation of work on the development of the digital infrastructure of educational organisations. As part of the World Bank's Secondary Education Modernization project, over 5,000 schools will be provided with laptops and printers. More than 2,500 schools with no internet connection or low connection speed will receive 1,200 data centres. Furthermore, the National Project 2025 has planned activities for the period 2022-2025: Implementation of the Digital Teacher project for children from socially vulnerable families. The state education programmes often do not directly link their desirable outcomes to digital economy accommodation, yet they outline efforts to develop digital skills among learners.</p>	Medium
Increasing the global competitiveness of Kazakhstan's science and increasing its contribution to the socio-economic development of the country	<p>One of the goals of the 2011-2020 Programme is to ensure the integration of education, science and industry. For this, it was planned to create research universities participating in the organisation and conduct of fundamental and applied scientific research. More so, one of the goals of the 2016-2019 Programme is to ensure the actual contribution of science to the accelerated diversification and sustainable development of the country's economy. In particular, the following tasks are set: strengthening the scientific potential and the status of a scientist, modernising the infrastructure of science, and improving the management and monitoring of the development of science. Furthermore, the second goal of the 2020-2025 Programme is to increase the contribution of science to the socio-economic development of the country. The plan follows the course taken in the National Development Plan of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025 to increase spending on science to 1% of gross domestic product. The National Project 2025 does not mention increasing the competitiveness of Kazakh science.</p>	Medium

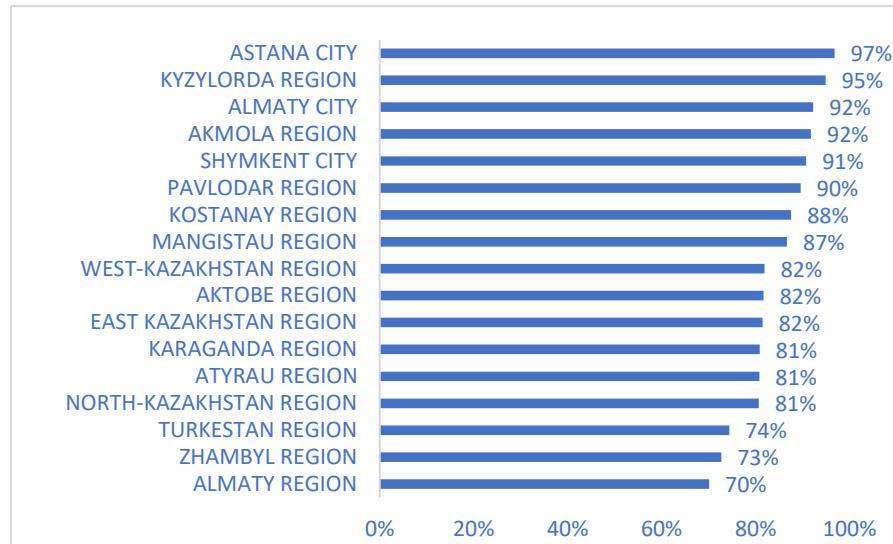
9.10.3. PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO VULNERABLE GROUPS OF CHILDREN

Table 17 Analysis, priorities and activities related to vulnerable groups of children

Programmes/ Group of children	Gender disparities	Children with SEN/disabilities	Children from low- income families	Children in institutionalized care	Children living in remote areas	Children with risk behaviours/in conflict with the law	Children from linguistic/ ethnic minorities	Children migrants
The State Programme20 11–2020	No	Yes ¹⁸⁶	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
The State Programme20 16–2019	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
The State Programme20 20–2025	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
The National Project 2021– 2025	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

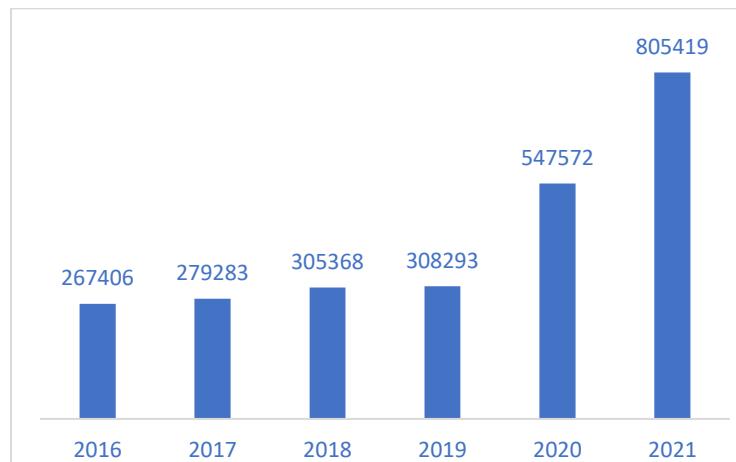
9.10.4. ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OUTCOMES

Graph 19 Share of state secondary schools that provided conditions for inclusive education per regions- 2021



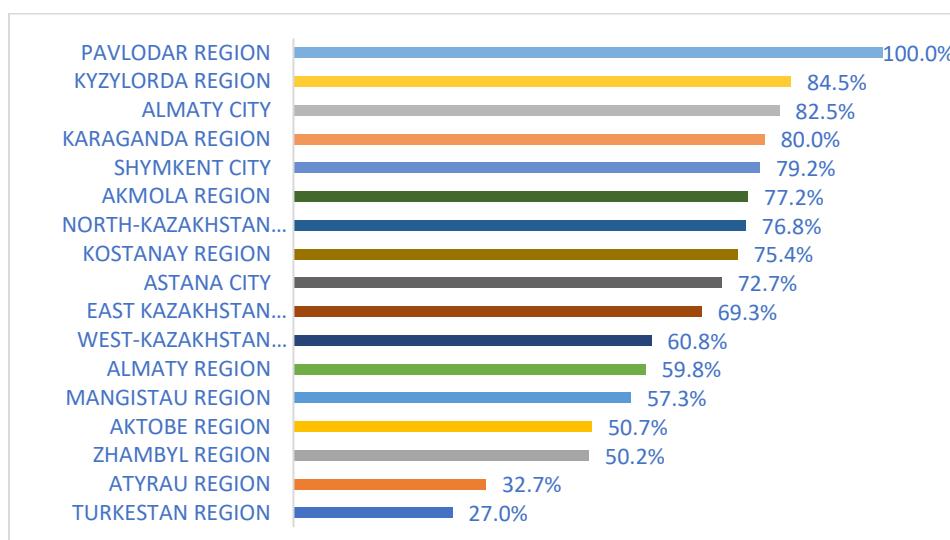
Source: National Report on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021

Graph 20 The total number of computer equipment used in the educational process



Source: National Report on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021

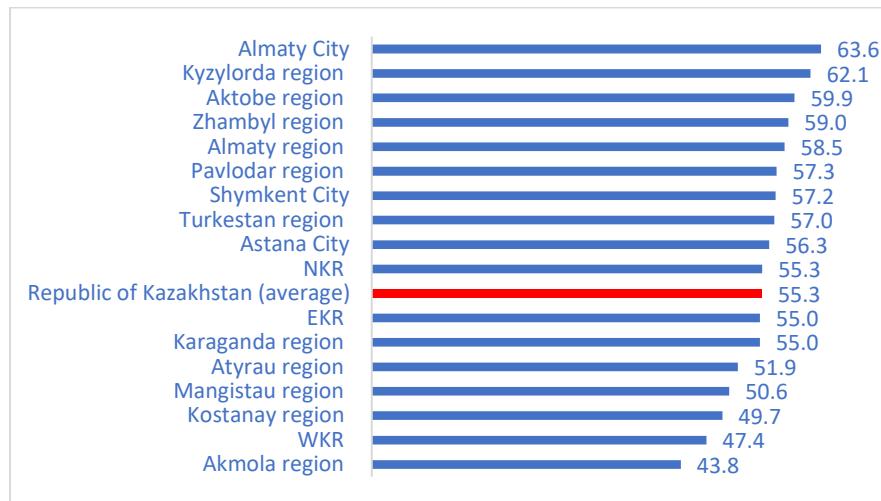
Graph 21 Number of children in ECED organisations by type

Source: National Bureau of Statistics
Graph 22 Share of state kindergartens that have created conditions for inclusive education for children with special educational needs of the total number of state kindergartens - 2021, %

Source: National Report on the state and development of education system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2021

The child wellbeing index is composed of four main areas: 1) Child: assesses the physical and psychological health of the child and his/her personal skills, consisting of three components, namely, "Psychological well-being", "Physical health" and "Skills"; 2) Family and society: assesses the interaction of the child with others, in particular with family, friends, school, the employer's relationship to employees with children, etc., consisting of four components, namely, "Family", "Household Resources", "Employer" and "Socialization"; 3) Public Policy: assesses public policy in terms of providing the conditions for obtaining services of education, health care, as well as the development of family policy, consisting of three components, namely, "Education", "Social Policy", "Health"; 4) Welfare of the country: assesses the issues of general economic, environmental, infrastructure and safety of children's living environment, consisting of four components, namely, "Economy," "Ecology", "Infrastructure" and "Safety". It could be seen from

the data that the child well-being index is measured as 55.3 on average in the country (0.55 if varying from 0 to 1) and varies across the country.

Graph 23 Overall index of child well-being in Kazakhstan in 2021



Source: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Economic Research Institute JSC¹⁸⁷

9.10.5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMMES TO THE FULFILMENT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

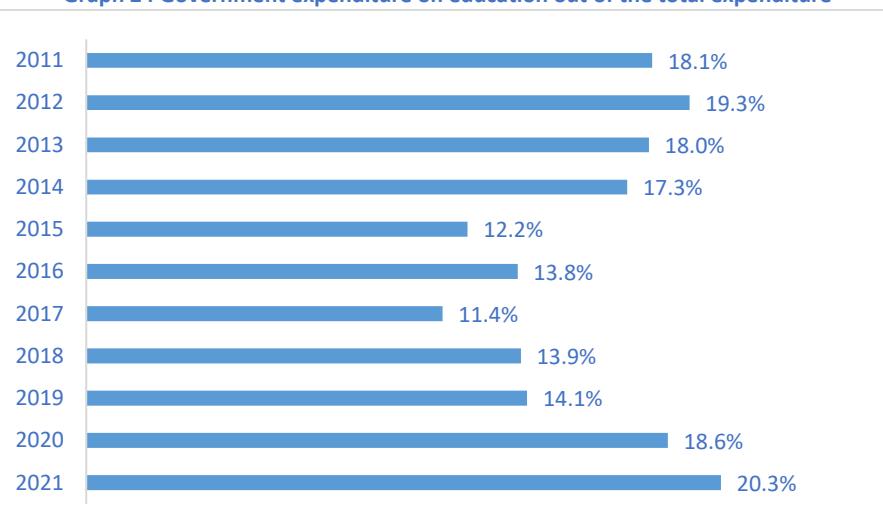
Table 18 Learner's degree of access to inclusive education

Groups of children	Type of institutions, schools, classes	Data on learner's access to education
Children with SEN 0-6 years old	Special kindergarten; Special groups in general kindergartens; Inclusive kindergarten; Home-schooling; Private centres	<p>The share of children in special kindergartens is 14% in 2016, 13% in 2017, 12% in 2018, 8% in 2020, 13% in 2022 (data from National Reports).</p> <p>The share of children in special groups in general kindergartens is 21% in 2016, 23% in 2017, 20% in 2018, 15% in 2020, so this share is decreasing. In 2022 the share is 11% (data from National Reports).</p> <p>The share of children in inclusive kindergartens is 41% in 2022 (data provided by National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education).</p> <p>The share of children in other organisations of education, healthcare, and social services (private and public) for 2022 is 35% (data provided by National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education).</p>
Children with SEN 7-18 years old	Special schools; Inclusive schools; Home schooling; Private schools	<p>The number of children with SEN in special schools isn't changing and the share varies between 14% and 15% since 2016 (data from National Reports).</p> <p>Equal access to education is ensured, considering SEN and the individual capabilities of children. In 2018, there were 98 651 children aged 7-18 years with SEN, or 2,6% of the population of this age. Of these, 33% were enrolled in regular classes of secondary schools, which is 9,7% higher than in 2017. (National Report 2018). In 2021, 43.6% of children with SEN had the opportunity to study in secondary schools. (National report 2021), while in 2022 this share is 52% (data provided by the National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education).</p> <p>The home-schooled children are 12% from total number of children with SEN in 2022 (data provided by the National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education).</p>
Children in conflict with the law	Boarding schools	There are 292 children in conflict with the law in boarding schools in 2011 and 192 in 2021, so their number is also decreasing (National Bureau of Statistics)
Children from ethnic minorities and migrants	General school system	Foreigners and stateless persons have the same rights to education as citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2017, there were 8,805 students from the families with "Oralman" (repatriates) status in the country. 12,260 immigrant

		<p>children went to secondary schools (9,493 people from CIS; 2,767 people from far abroad) (National report 2017).</p> <p>In 2017, there were 13 schools with Uzbek, 12 schools with Uighur, and 2 schools with the Tajik language of instruction. 3,746 schools taught 1,323,300 students in Kazakh; 1,237 schools taught in Russian (378,614 students); 2,037 schools (1,253,900 students) taught in Kazakh and Russian (mixed) (Data from IAC centre).</p>
Children from rural and remote areas	Boarding school; general school system	<p>Local executive authorities arranged a free-of-charge daily delivery of 22,819 students to the nearest schools and back home (2016 - 19,174), and places in boarding schools at schools for 3,244 children (2016 - 3,104). As of 2017, 9,216 students from remote villages with no schools lived in the boarding schools (75% of them are girls) (Data from National Reports).</p> <p>Since 2016, following optimization, the number of rural schools has decreased (-133 units), and urban schools have increased (+47 units). The increase in students in urban schools for the period from 2016-2018 was 183 140 students, in rural schools – 66 390 students. The total student population in three years increased by 9%. (Data from National Reports).</p>
Children orphans and without parental care (in guardianship, foster care, children's homes, homes for children with disabilities, boarding schools)	Boarding schools; General school system	<p>There is a trend to reduce the number of children in orphanages over the past five years. In 2011 orphans and children without parental care in the educational system were 10 492, in 2017 – 6 223, while in 2021 – 3 168. The number of children in institutions for social protection is also decreasing from 812 in 2011 to 610 in 2021 (National Bureau of statistics).</p>

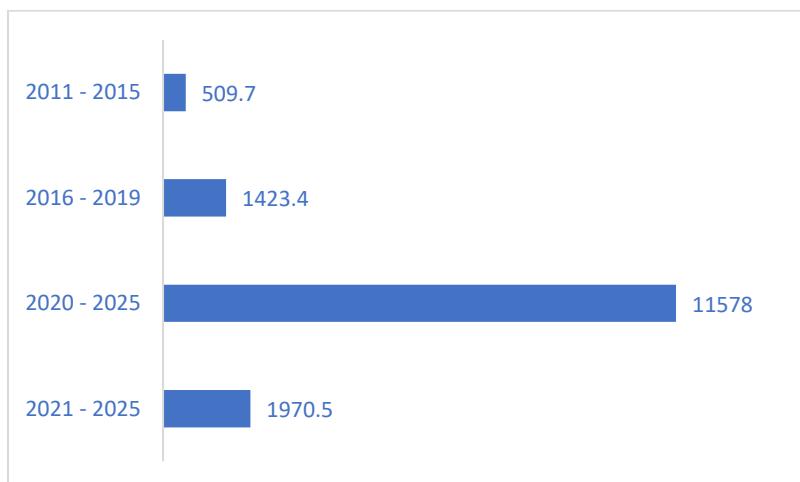
9.10.6.EFFICIENT USE OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OUTCOMES

Graph 24 Government expenditure on education out of the total expenditure



Source: World Bank database

Graph 25 Budgets of State programmes(in billion KZT)



Source: National State Programmes on Education

9.10.7. EXISTING PLATFORMS FOR DISSEMINATION OF RESOURCES FOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Table 19 Management and coordination

Area	How are the processes managed and coordinated?
Policy development	The educational policy, incl. inclusive education, is planned at the national level. As it was mentioned in the Coherence part, the main responsibility is of the MoE, although the programmes point out work in coordination with all other engaged ministries. Two are the main institutions at the national level, related to inclusive education - National Scientific and Practical Centre for the Development of Special and Inclusive Education and National academy of education named after Y. Altynsarın. Their tasks are related to developing methodologies, training specialists, developing programmes and support for the local level where the implementation of the policy is realised.
Referral mechanism towards services	The main entrance towards inclusion in the educational system is PMPC. They are subordinate of the MoES and local educational departments. PMPCs make the assessment of a child's development and provide recommendations to parents whether the child should be in an inclusive group in a general school, in a special group in a general school or in a special school, home-schooled, in a PPCR, etc. The PMPCs collaborate with primary health centres, local educational departments, schools, kindergartens, RCs. Children can be referred from public institutions, child protection, parents, GPs, etc. and PMPCs don't have an outreach mechanism. Only children with some learning difficulties and needs can be referred to the PMPCs.
Work with different groups of children at risk of exclusion from the educational system	The work with different groups is realised at general schools, special schools, special classes and groups, special kindergartens or in home-schooling. The first stage of working with children is the needs assessment and the approach is rather needs-oriented instead of rights-oriented, since the system is interested rather in the share of those who created conditions for inclusive education and the number of included children, instead of those who still aren't included. There is an individual programme only for children with learning difficulties and disabilities, while the social pedagogue works with the other groups additionally at the school. This programme is based on the recommendations of PMPC, but additional analysis and evaluation is made by correctional rooms and schools, as shared by stakeholders during the KIIs. However, the individual programme is rather based on educational and learning goals, instead of the development of the child. The parents are not involved in the development of the program. Different professionals work with the children – general teachers and specialists, implementing the program. <i>"Collaboration is essential to strengthen links between PMPC, correctional rooms and schools in implementing and monitoring individual development plans for children, supporting inclusion and early intervention."</i> ¹⁸⁸
Data collection	At a national level data is collected in the National Education Database, which is not publicly accessible. Stakeholders express the idea of integrated work between the sectors through the introduction of a shared database between the different institutions in the educational, health and social sector. Statistical data on children with SEN are kept at the same time by the Ministry of Enlightenment, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. <i>"The data provided by different departments varies significantly, which questions their completeness and accuracy. Consequently, there are no unified approaches in the measures taken to support people with SEN."</i> ¹⁸⁹
Monitoring and evaluation	The indicators set in the programmes are followed up in the national reports in terms of education. They are public but can be found for the period after 2015. There is a lot of information in the reports, but it is often presented in a different way, related to the changing

	concepts and priorities over the years, so they are not consistent enough to monitor all changes like for number of children for specialised groups in regular schools, number of home-schooled children, etc. In view of monitoring, there aren't institutions that follows up on the data or certain mechanism for collaboration between the sectors or even within them. Such a monitoring framework has been made, but is not reflected in the strategic documents, since it's not approved. In this framework it is indicated that there isn't monitoring and evaluation of the quality of inclusive education.
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9.10.8. MECHANISMS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Table 20 Schedule of introducing per capita financing Pilot¹⁹⁰

1.09.2013	in 7 regions
1.01.2014	Thirteen more schools of Akmola region were included in the pilot project
1.01.2017	Five more schools of Nur-Sultan and Almaty were included in the pilot project
Implementation	
1.09.2018	All public and private secondary schools in Nur-Sultan
1.01.2019	All private schools in Kazakhstan
1.09.2019	All public schools in Almaty, Shymkent
1.09.2020	Full-scale introduction in all urban secondary schools of Kazakhstan

Graph 26 Ratio between the budgets of the programmes for professional development and retraining of personnel in PET and secondary education



Source: Budgets of the State Education programmes

9.11. ANNEX 11 RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Research Ethics Approval

9 February 2023

Stoyan Mihaylov, PhD.
Junction Bulgaria
122, Cherni Vrah Blvd.
1407 Sofia, Bulgaria

RE: Ethics Review Board findings for: *Formative Evaluation of the State Programmes for Development of Education with the Focus on Inclusivity* (HML IRB Review #680KAZA23)

Dear Dr. Mihaylov,

Protocols for the protection of human subjects in the above study were assessed through a research ethics review by HML Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 31 January – 09 February 2023. This study's human subjects' protection protocols, as stated in the materials submitted, received **ethics review approval**.

You and your project staff remain responsible for ensuring compliance with HML IRB's determinations. Those responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ensuring prompt reporting to HML IRB of proposed changes in this study's design, risks, consent, or other human protection protocols and providing copies of any revised materials;
- conducting the research activity in accordance with the terms of the IRB approval until any proposed changes have been reviewed and approved by the IRB, except when necessary to mitigate hazards to subjects;
- promptly reporting any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others in the course of this study;
- notifying HML IRB when your study is completed.

HML IRB is authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, IORG #850, FWA #1102).

Sincerely,



D. Michael Anderson, Ph.D., MPH
Chair & Human Subjects Protections Director, HML IRB

cc: Raushan Ibrasheva, Zhanar Zhumabekova, Zhaiyk Sultan, Tatiana Aderkhina, Penelope Lantz, JD

9.12. ENDNOTES

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