

**AZERBAIJAN**

**Formative Evaluation of the  
School Readiness Programme**

**Draft Evaluation Report (vol.2)**

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### Terms of Reference Formative Evaluation of the School Readiness Programme

#### 1. Context and Description of Object of the Evaluation

Azerbaijan after restoring its independence in 1991 has achieved significant economic growth, including multi-fold increase of GDP and poverty reduction. Over the last decades, the country has been implementing systemic reforms at policy and institutional levels in both economic and social development areas with a focus on diversification of the economy and improving quality of public services, including education.

Preschool education in the Republic of Azerbaijan covers children from 1 to 5 years old with children entering primary education at the age of 6. The Preschool Education Law (2017) stipulates that the types of preschool institutions available for children in the national education system are nurseries, kindergarten-nurseries, kindergartens, School Readiness Groups in general schools, special kindergartens, family and community-based preschool education groups and other. There are 1,680 public and 105 private preschool institutions available in Azerbaijan (AzStat 2018).

Over the last 28 years, the country invested in improving the policy and quality of preschool education through policies, curricula and standards but the Azerbaijani preschool system is still facing significant challenges which have considerable implications on access, equity and quality of preschool education. The preschool enrolment rate of children age 1-5 remains low: only 26% are enrolled in preschool education and the gap between urban and rural areas remains high (37% and 16% respectively). Other constraints include no clarity on demand for preschool teachers, low quality of preschool teacher training, poor systems of data management and quality assurance processes at all levels of preschool education, unequal access to preschool education for children with disabilities, lack of inclusive preschools and poor capacities at “special kindergartens” for children with disabilities.

Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that the Government of Azerbaijan has ratified defines education as a right and recommends steps for this right to be achieved “progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity”, inequity in access to preschool education with about 74% of preschool age children (1-5 years) being out of early education, remains one of the key areas of deprivation for preschool age children in the country, particularly in provincial towns and rural areas. At the same time, the Azerbaijani preschool education system provides equitable access to boys and girls.

To address inequities in access to formal preschooling, the School Readiness Programme (SRP) model was established and piloted by UNICEF in a partnership with the World Bank as part of the Second Education Sector Development Project’s beginning in 2008. The School Readiness programme is a preschool education programme delivered at the general education schools to provide 5-year old children with early education enabling development of their cognitive, emotional, physical and communications skills to prepare them for primary education. It has a duration of a one academic year, covers 4 hours per day for four days per week and is free of charge in public schools.

The piloting stage of the project covering the period of 2009-2013 involved establishing and supporting around 100 SRP sections in schools for 5-year-old children targeting six low income rayons, where access to preschools was severely constrained. Key activities included teacher training, provision of learning and teaching materials for teachers and children and delivering the parenting awareness program on school readiness. The School Readiness Programme has its own curriculum framework which was developed by UNICEF. However, the project interventions were not limited to SRP but also included development of new Early Childhood Development standards and policies, including preschool curriculum, parenting education and other elements. The total budget allocated by the World Bank for the 5-year project, including all of the project elements was US\$ 1.6 mln. UNICEF contributed about US\$ 393,000 through staff time, technical inputs over the same period of time.

Building on the results of the School Readiness modelling over previous years, UNICEF advocated for ensuring scaling up of the model nationwide for all children. Consequently, MoE began formulating a new state programme for preschool education to support the expansion of the model. The model has

been rolled out at a national scale by the Ministry of Education as of 2015/2016 academic year. The Ministry of Education is responsible for allocation of premises, provision of learning materials, teacher training and supervision of the SRP teachers, who are existing primary school teachers trained to serve as SRP teachers. UNICEF provided technical support in the roll-out of the model during the period of 2014-2018 with total of about US\$ 160,000 funding spent.

Since the start of the national rollout of the programme in 2015-2016 academic year, preschool enrolment for children of age 5 increased from 24% in 2016 to 75% in 2018. The overall preschool enrolment rate for the child population of 1-5 age has consequently increased from 15.2% in 2016 to 26.2% in 2018 (AzStat 2018). The main purpose of the programme is to contribute to achieving the National Education Strategy goal of 90% of children aged 5 enrolled in a school preparation programme by 2020.

Over the last few years, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in developing quality assurance guidelines for non-formal preschool settings. The guidelines were tested by the Institute of Education under the Ministry of Education in 2018 to ensure effectiveness, quality and consistency in content, teaching, assessment and learning environment for alternative preschool models, including School Readiness Programme. At the same time, more teacher training resources were developed for the continuous professional development of the School Readiness teachers, guiding them through various aspects of early childhood education, including key child development milestones, child behaviour, learning environment and engaging parents in early childhood development.

The overall objective of the SRP is: to improve equitable access to quality preschool education and learning outcomes for 5-year-old children with focus on children from rural and underprivileged areas where access to preschool institutions is severely restricted.

The specific objectives of the SRP are:

- a. Increase the school readiness of children between 5 and 6 years of age, targeting areas with limited access to formal preschools;
- b. Improve capacities of schools and teachers to deliver quality pre-primary education;
- c. Improve policy framework for preschool expansion at a national scale;
- d. Strengthen demand of parents/families for preschool education.

## **2. Duty bearers & Right holders**

Duty bearers /entities affected by the program are the following:

- Ministry of Education;
- Institute of Education;
- Teachers' Professional Development Institute;
- Local education authorities;
- Schools;
- Parents and families; local communities;
- Representatives of civil society.

The right holders who should benefit from the program in the long term are THE following:

- Preschool-aged children.
- Families, parents, communities
- National and local education authorities
- Schools

## **3. Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of this evaluation is to measure the success of the School Readiness Program against specific objectives SRP and summarize good practices and lessons learned for both UNICEF, the donor and the government counterparts for consideration. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the SRP as an approach to strengthening the access to formal preschool education.

Although it has been 10 years that the program is under implementation it has never been evaluated. Considering this UNICEF had a mutual agreement with the MoE to conduct a formative evaluation of this programme.

The results of the evaluation will provide practical recommendations for improving the quality of SRP and stimulating expansion of other or introduction of new alternative preschool models to cover more preschool-aged children.

The primary audience of the evaluation will be:

- Government policy makers, such as the Parliament, the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Finance will acquire good practices and lessons learned from this programme, and will possibly use the results to contribute to other policy and programme development.
- Implementing institutions – the Government, Ministry of Education, local education authorities, and international organizations, as an important source of information for the further scaling-up of this initiative – more specifically to identify lessons learned during the implementation, understand the preliminary impact of the programme in providing equitable access to quality preschool education for all children.
- Schools and preschool education institutions and local communities in expanding access to preschool education for all children.
- Associations of parents representing the interests of children to further strengthen their monitoring and advocacy efforts.
- Civil society organisations for community outreach to parents and families for increasing demand for early childhood education.
- Academia for supporting research for expanding alternative preschool education models.
- The UNICEF Azerbaijan Country Office for future programming and support to the implementation of the National Education Strategy, as well as for informing the development of the 2021–2025 Country Programme.

The information presented in the final evaluation report should be easy to understand and comprehensible. Recommendations should be based on evidence and analysis, be relevant and realistic, with priorities for action made clear.

#### **4. Evaluation Objectives**

The overall purpose of the formative evaluation is to measure the extent to which the SRP has achieved the planned results and help ensure that the focus is kept on equity, inclusion and quality in the process of national scale-up of the programme.

The specific evaluation objectives are:

- a. Provide feedback to the UNICEF Azerbaijan Country Office and the Ministry of Education on the soundness (defined as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and preliminary impact, i.e. longer-term contribution, of the SRP;
- b. Reveal good practices and gaps in approaches; and
- c. Based on the experience from the Programme implementation to extract general lessons learned and recommendations aimed at further enhancement of the initiative; the evaluation outcomes will potentially inform strengthening of other existing or emerging models of preschool education to address inequity in access to preschool education in Azerbaijan;
- d. Assess the potential for replication of the model in other countries by capturing the changes at policy and programmatic levels.

#### **5. Evaluation Scope**

The evaluation should cover the period of SRP implementation (2008 to 2018). The geographical coverage is nation-wide.

#### **6. Evaluation Framework**

The program evaluation questions are formulated as per [OECD-DAC evaluation criteria](#): relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. Additional criteria such as coverage, coordination and coherence should also be used in the evaluation.

Below are a set of guiding questions that should be responded by the evaluation. However, it is expected that the international consultant may suggest additional questions or sub-questions, and

during the evaluation, additional information that adds substance to the key questions will be collected and included in the final evaluation report.

### **Relevance**

The extent to which the program meets the needs of target groups and right holders.

- To what extent does the programme, in terms of its design, scope and achievement of its objectives, address the underlying causes of the low coverage of children (girls and boys) in Azerbaijan by preschool education?
- Has the programme been designed according to international norms and agreements on human rights (HR) and gender equality (GE) and in line with national strategies to advance HR & GE?
- To what extent is the program design relevant vis-à-vis the overall program goal and the achievement of its objectives in the given period of time?
- To what extent did the program minimize the exclusion of the most underserved children?

### **Effectiveness**

The extent to which program activities achieve their outcomes. In evaluating the effectiveness of a program, the following questions should be considered:

- To what extent have the planned results/objectives been achieved to date (quantitative and qualitative)?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the programme objectives to date? Has the programme provided any additional (not directly planned) significant contributions/outcomes?
- Is there a demonstrable improvement in state knowledge and capacity related to coverage of the preschool-aged children?
- To what extent the approach was effective in identifying and addressing the different needs/rights issues of boys and girls?
- Have legislative acts and policies improved as a result of program implementation?
- How satisfied were the right holders from the program?

### **Efficiency**

The extent the management of the SRP ensure timelines and efficient utilization of resources.

When evaluating the efficiency of a programme, the following questions should be considered:

- How well have the financial resources been used/were funds managed in a cost-effective manner / what is the correlation between funds utilized and outputs/results achieved / could the same results be achieved with fewer resources?
- Did the program ensure co-ordination with other similar interventions to encourage synergy and avoid overlaps?
- To what extent were activities implemented as scheduled, how flexible was the program in adapting to changing needs?
- Were there other resources made available apart from UNICEF?

### **Impact**

The extent the program increased the system's capacities to ensure that excluded children benefit from SRP. When evaluating the impact of a programme, the following questions should be considered:

- Is there evidence of the programme contributing to the raising of the awareness of the relevant government and parliamentary institutions in relation to the importance of ECE expansion for child development and overall societal growth?
- Is there evidence of the programme contributing to an increase in the enrolment of children in preschool education in the country, particularly in relation to children affected by poverty and children living in rural areas?
- To what extent have achievements fed into national-level policy dialogue and supported the environment for implementation of child rights?

### **Sustainability**

Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of the program are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

When evaluating the sustainability of a programme, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent do the newly developed and approved policy (National Education Strategy, Preschool Education Law, and Preschool Education Curriculum) and the level of ownership of the initiative within the Ministry of Education and preschool institutions provide a good ground for a sustained and quality increase in the preschool enrolment rate after the end of external support?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the program?
- What capacities have been built at the institutional level and were they sustainable?
- To what extent has the program promoted the strengthening of already existing partnerships and establishment of new ones and to the strengthening of inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation both at the national and local level?

In addition to the 5 main evaluation criteria, the evaluation shall also focus on assessing the human rights-based approach and relevant cross-cutting issues, coverage, coordination and coherence.

**Cross-cutting:**

- To what extent are sex and age disaggregated data collected and monitored?
- In what ways and to what extent has the program integrated an equity-based approach into the design and implementation of its interventions?
- Does the program actively contribute to the promotion of child rights, especially the most vulnerable?
- To what extent and how does the program ensure a non-discrimination and equity focus?

**Coverage:**

- Did the program ensured the inclusive coverage?
- Which groups have been reached by the program and what is the different impact on those groups?
- Have vulnerable children been reached, including children with disabilities?

**Coordination:**

- What was the role of the other government and non-government entities community and other key actors in the design, coordination and implementation of program activities?

**Coherence:**

- What were the areas and ways of cooperation with other UN and donor agencies' in regard to the development of SRP?
- How does the program relate to the existing national and/or local policy on preschool-aged children?
- Was there coherence across interventions supported by different agencies?

**Methodology**

The international consultant will be requested to propose a detailed methodology as part of the inception report, which should be guided by the UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy<sup>1</sup>, the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)<sup>2</sup>, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis<sup>3</sup> and UNICEF's reporting standards.

It is expected that in the end, the program will reach six inter-related and coherent outcomes, which should be the main building blocks for achieving the goal of the program. Achievement of those six outcomes will be measured with a set of indicators to be provided to international consultant after the contractual arrangements.

**Evaluability assessment**

Clear program implementation structure, availability of baseline and target data for indicators and routine collection of data from the program implementation makes the program evaluable. The Ministry of Education and UNICEF will provide support in filling the data gaps to the extent possible. Since UNICEF was not directly involved in the data generation process of the programme, data sources should be validated.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF revised evaluation policy <https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14>

<sup>2</sup> UNEG Norms: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>, UNEG Standards: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT\\_IV-UNICEF\\_Procedure\\_for\\_Ethical\\_Standards.PDF](https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF)

The Ministry of Education has identified the following existing sources of information as reliable data sources:

- Baseline data
- Progress reports
- Studies conducted by international experts
- Presentations
- Mission Reports
- Agreement(s)/ MOU
- Financial documents (budget revisions)

All the documents listed above, together with a contact list of all for the program relevant professionals, a program implementing partners and consultants will be provided to the international consultant once a contractual agreement has been made.

The evaluation will undertake a transparent and participatory process involving relevant program participants and partners at the national and local levels and employing a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. The process is expected to take place within 4 months timeframe starting in September 2019.

### **Limitations to the evaluation**

There are several limitations to the evaluation which can hinder the process.

- There is no program Theory of Change available.
- Disaggregated data might not be available, or the quality of available data may not be good.
- Interviewing government counterparts for the evaluation may depend on their availability.
- Challenges in assessing the learning outcomes of beneficiary children due to incomplete or inconsistent data collected by the Ministry of Education

The applicants should discuss the above or other potential limitations in their proposal.

The evaluation should include the following steps:

#### ***Step 1: Desk review of relevant program documents***

The international consultant will review key program documents to understand the program approaches, process and activities since its inception in 2008 to date. The documents could include the relevant national policies, other study reports, program, documents, progress and monitoring reports; review meeting documentation, and international consultants' consultancy and mission reports.

#### ***Step 2: Preparation of Inception Report that includes evaluation methodology and tools***

The methodology should be prepared to cover all the intended objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation methodology design will be finalized in agreement with the reference group (with UNICEF, MoE) and inception report should be prepared based on the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group and submitted to reference group.

#### ***Step 3: Data collection***

The application of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods is expected, which should be human rights-based, including child rights-based and gender-sensitive. The data collected should be disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age, disability, and location. Field visits to schools and communities should employ methods ranging from document review, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, observation depending on the final methodology.

#### ***Step 4: Data analysis***

Collected data should be analysed by using the relevant analysis method that should be clearly described in the report.

#### ***Step 5: Sharing preliminary findings and recommendations***

The international consultant will share preliminary findings and recommendations with the reference group. While feedback will be taken into consideration and incorporated into the draft report, the international consultant is encouraged to guard against validity threats, such as personal bias.

### Step 6: Draft report

The international consultant prepares a draft report, with conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data. The report structure should follow UNICEF's evaluation report guidance.

### Step 7: Finalization of the evaluation report

The international consultant will present the final draft evaluation report to the reference group with a powerpoint presentation. Recommendations for the program evaluation report should also be presented. Comments and feedback on the findings and recommendations should be incorporated to finalize the report.

## Workplan and Evaluation Management

Description of Deliverables	Time estimate	Assessment criteria
Desk-review & Inception report	15 days	All relevant program documents are reviewed and inception report that includes the result of desk review, consultation meetings and detailed evaluation methodology that is compliant with UNICEF requirements for inception report. The inception report will be assessed based on the Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS) review criteria. Among other inception reports should include the following components: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Evaluation plan including timelines and activities</li><li>2. Methodology</li><li>3. Data collection instruments (quantitative &amp; qualitative)</li><li>4. Ethical protocols (if relevant)</li><li>5. Quality control procedures</li><li>6. Training plan</li><li>7. Fieldwork plan including team composition, logistics, field monitoring, etc.</li><li>8. Plans for data analysis (quantitative and qualitative), report preparation and dissemination</li></ol>
Data collection	15 days (including travels)	Primary data is collected from target groups and partners based on the methodology described in the inception report.
Data analysis and first draft report	20 days	Relevant analysis methods applied to analyse primary and secondary data and a draft report is prepared. Reconstruct the Theory of Change based on the collected data.
Presentation of findings	5 days (including travels)	PowerPoint presentation of findings including practical recommendations is presented to reference group and program partners feedbacks recorded to be considered in the final report.
Final report	10 days	A final report should be between 30-50 pages and structured as per the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards <sup>4</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Executive summary</li><li>2. Object of evaluation</li><li>3. Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope</li><li>4. Evaluation methodology</li><li>5. Findings</li><li>6. Conclusions and lessons learned</li><li>7. Recommendations</li><li>8. Gender and human rights including child rights issues to be consolidated and clearly articulated from all report sections.</li><li>9. Annexes</li></ol> More detailed information of the UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports standard is provided in the UNICEF Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS) Review Template, which will be shared at the start of the consultancy. The evaluation report should be adjusted as per feedback of the external quality assurance entity.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards, July 2010

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The international consultant will be mainly responsible for overall evaluation including designing evaluation methodology, developing tools, guiding national consultant in data collection, analysing data, drafting inception and final reports with recommendations. There is no specific concern related to the conflict of interest of the international consultant.

For quality assurance purposes reference group consisting UNICEF staff, staffs of Ministry of Education and relevant partners will be established.

## **Dissemination**

The results of the evaluation will not be circulated to wider-public. The report will be disseminated to a reference group including the MoE in hard and soft copies. Also, the results of the evaluation findings will be disseminated through PowerPoint presentation.

## **Estimated Cost of Consultancy and Payment Conditions**

The financial proposal should include a breakdown of the budget amount including fee and number of anticipated working days, travel costs and per-diems. Payments will be processed per the payment conditions aligned with deliverables specified in the ToR, upon satisfactory completion of work assignment as assessed by UNICEF. In-country travel to the SRP implementation sites and interpretation services for the international consultant will be covered by UNICEF.

## **Qualifications**

The key qualifications required for an international consultant are as follows:

- Advanced University degree in education, social science, law or relevant area;
- 8-10 years of professional experience in evaluation and assessment of programs or projects;
- Previous experience in evaluating programs or projects for child education and child welfare;
- Demonstrated capacity to analyse the data and to write reports, in particular, evaluation reports;
- Facilitation skills, particularly the design of stakeholder consultation exercises as well as participatory methods;
- General knowledge of UN evaluation policy, norms and standards, including a human rights-based approach to programming and results-based management, including gender equality and child;
- Experience in working with UN / UNICEF and government entities.
- Excellent mastery of English including in report writing and presentation.

The international consultant must remain in strict adherence with UNEG ethical guidelines and code of conduct. Per the Criteria, for Ethical Review Checklist the evaluation does not need to go through an ethical review board. An international consultant should clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the evaluation process in his/her proposal.

## Annex 2 – Primary Data Collection Methods

Key informants	Research method	Tool	Notes
<b>CENTRAL LEVEL</b>			
UNICEF CO management and relevant staff members	Face-to-face in-depth interview	Interview guide	In Baku with Representative and Deputy Representative; Education Specialist; Child Rights Systems Monitoring Specialist; Financial Officer; Communication for Social Change Officer
Ministry of Education (Education Development Programme Department, Preschool Education Unit, Finance Department, Statistics and Analysis Department, Educational Resources Department), State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, Institute of Education, Teachers and Professional Development Institute, World Bank, United Aid for Azerbaijan, consultants <sup>5</sup>	In-depth interview	Interview guide	In Baku, with representatives of stakeholders, nominated by their management to meet the evaluator
<b>IN SAMPLED DISTRICTS</b>			
Executive Committees	In-depth interview	Interview guide	Officials / Professionals in charge of preschool education / kindergartens
District Education Departments	In-depth interview	Interview guide	Officials / Professionals in charge of general education / school readiness
Parents	Focus group	Focus group guide	One focus group in each sampled district. <i>Recruitment criteria:</i> 8-10 parents, gender balance (both mothers and fathers), from different towns, settlements and villages of the district whose children, both girls and boys, are now enrolled in the 1st school grade and who benefitted last year (2017-2018) of the Programme
Teaching staff	Focus group	Focus group guide	One focus group in each sampled district. <i>Recruitment criteria:</i> 8-10 teachers, gender balance (both women and men), from different schools located in different towns, settlements and villages of the district, teaching children now enrolled in the 1 <sup>st</sup> grade who benefitted last year (2017-2018) of the Programme. Beneficiaries of training in school readiness.
Education institutions (at least one kindergarten and one school in each sampled district)	Group interview	Interview guide	In each visited kindergarten/school, with the principal, master trainer and teachers who are currently teaching school readiness classes for 5-olds. Beneficiaries of training in school readiness (both master trainer and teachers).
	Participant observation	Site visit	Site visit to see the place where school readiness classes are organized in kindergarten/school and observe the children during classes.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Finance was on the list of key informants, but UNICEF CO advised that due to recent restructuring there is no official in place able to be a useful key informant for the evaluation.

## Annex 3 – Primary Data Collection Guides and Templates

### General methodological notes:

Each interview and focus group will start with the presentation of the evaluator and of the evaluation objectives, followed by the presentation of the participants. Whenever necessary, a brief presentation of the Programme will be also done.

The evaluator will confirm the interviewees that participation in the evaluation is voluntary and that their opinions will be confidential and presented in the report in an anonymous manner. They will be also reminded that they could withdraw anytime during the interview or focus group without any obligation to explain the reasons.

The participants in interviews and focus groups will be briefed in advance about the major topics to be discussed during the meeting. They will take place in Baku and in the sample districts, as the case. Interviews (individual or in group) will last around 1-1.5 hours each; focus groups with professionals and parents will have a duration of around 2 hours. At the end of interviews and focus groups, the evaluator will thank the participants for their feedback.

In line with standard evaluation practices, the interviews and focus groups will be attended only by the evaluator, the respective key informants and the interpreter.

### GUIDES FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

#### **Interview Guide for UNICEF CO**

*(multiple interviews; questions will be adapted for each interviewee)*

1. What strategic needs and priorities of the country have been addressed by the Programme?
2. What are the major achievements of the Programme that you are most proud of? What was the most challenging in achieving these results? Are there any unplanned effects of the Programme?
3. Did some pilot districts perform better than others? If yes, why?
4. How would you assess the cost-effectiveness of the school readiness model? (a. as such and compared to similar services for children aged 5 provided by other stakeholders, if the case; b. during piloting and after rolling-out)
5. How satisfied are you with the overall Programme management and implementation to date (*during piloting and after rolling-out*) i.e. performance of implementing partners, timelines, efficiency in utilization of financial and human resources (*including local contribution*), procurement, results-based monitoring, risks mitigation, coherence with other relevant interventions?
6. Please briefly describe the procurement procedures that you used for awarding contracts for consultancy and training work to the Institute of Education and to the Teachers and Professional Development Institute.
7. How would you describe UNICEF's cooperation with the World Bank, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Institute of Education, Teachers and Professional Development Institute,

other central level authorities, Parliament? What about cooperation with stakeholders at district level? What went well? What could have been done better?

8. What was the strategy used by UNICEF during the piloting and after the Programme was rolled-out to ensure that vulnerable children have access to the school readiness programme and of comparable quality?
9. What difference has the Programme made for vulnerable children (*which?*) in terms of: a) access to school readiness services; b) learning outcomes for children; c) reducing equity gaps; d) increased state budget allocation for preschool education? and e) changing/challenging social norms? What was the comparative advantage of UNICEF?
10. How do you explain the big difference between the number of children estimated to benefit from the Programme during the pilot phase and those that actually did? (4,000 vs. 687 in 2013)
11. How would you comment Yale report (2017)<sup>6</sup> conclusion according to which: “SRP is not necessarily expanding coverage to disadvantaged children as they remain out of school”?
12. According to statistical figures on the number of children in school preparation groups, it appears that until school year 2015/2016, the number was higher in the rural areas. As from school year 2016/2017, when the ministry took over the school readiness programme, the situation is the other way around. Would you say that priority was given to urban areas during the rolling-out phase?
13. What measures has UNICEF taken to ensure sustainability? Do you have any concerns related to sustainability?
14. In your view, what is the likelihood that the country will meet the target of 90% enrolment rate in 2020 and increase the coverage of vulnerable children, based on the model developed by the Programme? What are the favouring/blocking factors?
15. In your opinion, which are the top three priorities of the preschool education in Azerbaijan that needs to be addressed in the coming years? Do you see any particular role of UNICEF in addressing them?

*Additional specific questions: reconstructed ToC and Results Framework; exact number of schools/kindergartens where piloting took place; budgeting during piloting; piloting end year; sensitivities that the evaluation needs to be aware (e.g. Yale report, UNICEF note from 2016, other)*

### **Interview Guide with the World Bank (donor for the piloting phase). former PCU Head and former consultants**

1. How did the Programme in Azerbaijan perform in terms of reaching its overall planned goal and outcomes during its pilot phase? To the best of your knowledge, what was the most significant impact/difference made?
2. How do you reflect on Programme management, including utilization of financial resources, monitoring and reporting? Do you consider that you have been sufficiently well informed about

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<sup>6</sup> Kathryn Moore, K., Markovic, J., Aggio, C., J., Ponguta, A. (2017), “Analytical Review of Governance, Provision and Quality of Early Childhood Education Services at the Local Level in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). Country Report for Azerbaijan”, Yale University, Child Study Center and Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy

the progress of the Programme?

3. How do you explain the eight times reduction of the initial budget planned for the school readiness component of the World Bank project?
4. What are the lessons learnt derived from your experience as donor / Head of PCU in assisting the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to conduct that initiative?
5. *(for World Bank)* What would you do differently in case you decide to support similar initiatives in the future?
6. To what extent do you consider the results of the Programme to be likely sustainable? Is there additional donor support needed to maintain the achieved levels of capacities and services?
7. *(for World Bank)* Would you consider supporting such projects in the future and why?

### **Interview Guide for the Ministry of Education**

*(multiple interviews with various units and departments; questions will be adapted for each interviewee)*

1. To what extent is the School Readiness Programme aligned with country priorities and its international human rights commitments? What needs of children and parents has the Programme addressed, in particular of the most vulnerable?
2. What was the role of the ministry/your department in the implementation and monitoring of the Programme? *(during piloting and after rolling-out)*
3. What are the major achievements of the Programme since the ministry took it over for scaling-it up at national level? What was/is the most challenging in achieving these results? Are there any unplanned effects that you are aware of?
4. Do some districts perform better than others? If yes, why?
5. What is your assessment of the quality of school readiness model (during the piloting and after its rolling-out)? (methodological guidelines; curriculum; teacher training and teaching aids; mentoring and supervision; endowment/physical facilities; size of groups; parents' participation; evaluation of learning outcomes; quality assurance, etc.?)
6. What difference has the Programme made for *vulnerable children* in terms of: a) access to school readiness programme *(ask about enrolment rates for 5-year-olds in 2008, 2015 and 2018, disaggregated by urban/rural, sex)*; b) learning outcomes; c) reducing equity gaps; d) increased state budget allocation for preschool education?; e) changing / challenging social norms?
7. According to statistical figures on the number of children in school preparation groups, it appears that until school year 2015/2016 included the number was higher in the rural areas. As from school year 2016/2017, when the ministry took over the school readiness programme, the situation is vice versa. Would that mean that priority was given to urban areas in the last three school years?
8. Please explain the available disaggregations of data on children in terms of vulnerability profile. Are you able to carry out analyses and take evidence-based policy decision based on these

data? In your view, what needs to be done so that decision-making is better informed in terms of equity issues to address?

9. *(if not too sensitive)* How would you comment Yale report (2017)<sup>7</sup> conclusion according to which: “SRP is not necessarily expanding coverage to disadvantaged children as they remain out of school”?
10. Looking ahead, in your view what would be needed to reach the target of 90% enrolment rate in 2020 set in the policy documents? Would that be possible without further external support?
11. How would you assess the efficiency of the Programme during the piloting and after its taking-over by the ministry? (management, monitoring system, efficiency of resources utilization, cost-effectiveness, synergy with governmental programs and similar initiatives of other donors/development partners, etc.)?
12. How much is the annual state funding for the school readiness programme? (total and per main cost categories; per child). What elements are considered when budgeting?
13. Are you satisfied about the partnership with UNICEF? What went well? What could have been done better? In your view, what is the comparative advantage of UNICEF compared to other international development partners active in Azerbaijan as far as preschool education is concerned?
14. In your opinion, which are the top three priorities of the country related to school readiness services and preschool education generally that needs to be addressed in the coming years? Do you see any particular role of UNICEF in addressing these needs?
15. Would you recommend other countries to replicate the Azerbaijani model? What would be the key prerequisites and methodological approaches for a successful replication?

### **Interview Guide for State Committee on Family, Women and Children**

1. Are you aware of the School Readiness Programme? *(if not, the evaluator will introduce the Programme: objectives, planned results, activities, implementing partners, budget, etc.)*.
2. In your opinion, to what extent is the Programme aligned with country priorities and its international human rights commitments? What needs of children and parents has the Programme addressed, in particular of the most vulnerable?
3. Did you have any role in promoting the Programme or supporting its initiatives *(new legislation, scaling it up at national level, lobby, etc.)*?
4. What are the major achievements of the Programme that you are aware of?
5. To the best of your knowledge, has the support provided by UNICEF for the piloting and rolling-out at country level been efficient?

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<sup>7</sup> Kathryn Moore, K., Markovic, J., Aggio, C., J., Ponguta, A. (2017), “Analytical Review of Governance, Provision and Quality of Early Childhood Education Services at the Local Level in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). Country Report for Azerbaijan”, Yale University, Child Study Center and Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy

6. As far as you know, to what extent has the Programme and the partnership of the Government and Parliament with UNICEF and World Bank contributed to improving the realization of children's rights, in particular of the most vulnerable ones, as far as access to quality preschool education is concerned? Does the Government has a system in place to monitor and measure the results of this partnership?
7. In your opinion, which are the top three priorities of the preschool education in Azerbaijan that needs to be addressed in the coming years? Do you see any particular role of UNICEF and of your organization in addressing them?

### **Interview Guide for Institute of Education and Professional Development Institute (PDI)**

*(questions will be adapted for each interviewee)*

1. Please briefly introduce your institute (mandate, role, governance, staffing, activities, major achievements).
2. What was your role in the implementation of the school readiness programme: a) during the piloting phase; b) after its rolling-out?
3. Which are the achievements that you are most proud of? What was the most challenging in your work as implementing partner?
4. *(for the PDI)* Please describe the training that you provide to master trainers and teachers to deliver the school readiness programme: number/year (disaggregated by master-trainers and teachers, sex, urban/rural, school/kindergarten), selection of trainees, training needs assessment, curriculum, duration in number of hours, size of groups, trainers, location, learning assessment, budget, follow-up, etc.
5. *(for the PDI)* Have you encountered any challenges in delivery the trainings? If any, have you managed to overcome them and how?
6. In your view, what would be the proportion of trained teachers per year who are able to provide school readiness programme at a suitable standard and using a child-centred methods? How would you assess that?
7. Do you have any role in assessing the learning outcomes of children who benefitted of the programme? If yes, please explain.
8. To what extent do you consider that the curriculum used for the school readiness programme is suitable for children aged 5 who have not received preschool education before that age?
9. Has the training curriculum include a module on the effects of preschool education for school readiness?
10. What is your assessment of the quality of school readiness model in terms of its implementation in the districts? Do you have any concerns? Do some districts perform better than others? If yes, why?
11. How would you describe your cooperation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education? What about cooperation with stakeholders at district level? What went well? What could have been done better?

12. To the best of your knowledge, what difference has the Programme made for *vulnerable children* in terms of: a) access to school readiness programme; b) learning outcomes; c) reducing equity gaps; d) increased state budget allocation for preschool education?; e) changing / challenging social norms?
13. *(if not too sensitive)* How do you comment Yale report (2017)<sup>8</sup> conclusion according to which: “SRP is not necessarily expanding coverage to disadvantaged children as they remain out of school”?
14. In your opinion, which are the top three priorities of the preschool education in Azerbaijan that needs to be addressed in the coming years? What role would you play in this process? Do you see any particular role of UNICEF?
15. In your view, what would be the key prerequisites and methodological approaches which would be required to replicate the Azerbaijan model to other countries?

### **Interview Guide for Executive Committees and district education departments**

*(officials in charge of preschool education, to be adapted to the type of respondent)*

1. How do you see your role in the process of improving the access to preschool education in your district?
2. Since when is the school readiness programme delivered in your district? For how many children/year? In how many educational institutions?
3. *(for district education department)* What was the specific contribution of your institution to the setting up and running of the school readiness programme in your district? *(funding, rehabilitation of premises, equipment, selection of schools, monitoring, mentoring, etc.)*.
4. What challenges have you faced, if any? Who helped you in overcoming these challenges? *(UNICEF, Ministry of Education, other)*
5. *(for district education department)* Have the trainings of teachers been able to increase enough their knowledge and skills to deliver the school readiness classes? What evidence do you have to substantiate your answer? *(ask the respondents to specify if UNICEF or the Institute delivered the training)*
6. *(for district education department)* Are there any teachers who participated in the training, but who did not (are not) teaching at the school readiness classes? If yes, why?
7. *(for district education department)* Are the curricula, teaching aids and guidelines compliant with the existing quality standards?
8. *(for district education department)* If involved in the selection of schools, what selection criteria have you used?

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<sup>8</sup> Kathryn Moore, K., Markovic, J., Aggio, C., J., Ponguta, A. (2017), “Analytical Review of Governance, Provision and Quality of Early Childhood Education Services at the Local Level in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). Country Report for Azerbaijan”, Yale University, Child Study Center and Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy

9. To what extent do you think the school readiness programme is covering the needs of children of preschool age in your district, in particular those aged 5? (*ask about the district enrolment rate of 5-year-olds*) Are there any groups of children who are not attending although they have the eligible age? Why?
10. What do you think have been the biggest achievements of this programme in your district?
11. (*for district education department*) How would you assess the knowledge and skills level acquired by children who attended school readiness classes compared to those who did not? (*ask respondents to place their answer on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 means the same and 3 means much higher*). What other effects of the school readiness programme did you notice (*e.g. socio-emotional, motor*)?
12. How is the school readiness programme funded? (*sources of funding*). Have you had/Do you have enough funding to ensure the delivery of this programme to the extent and quality needed?
13. In your opinion, which are the top three priorities of the preschool education in your district that needs to be addressed in the coming years?

### **Group Interview Guide for principal, master trainer and teachers**

*(in each visited school, with the principal, master trainer and teachers who are currently teaching school readiness classes for 5-olds and who benefitted of training courses in school readiness)*

#### **A. Experience in setting up and running school readiness groups**

1. Since when is your institution delivering school readiness classes? For how many children/year?
2. What was the role of your institution in the process of setting up and running school readiness groups?
3. Have you faced any challenges in setting up and running this programme? Have you received support to overcome them? If yes, from whom and for what.

#### **B. Exploring learning experience**

4. Thinking about the training you attended to be able to organize and deliver the school readiness classes, which new skills and knowledge have you retained? (*1-2 examples*).
5. Have you used the new skills and approaches in your work with the children and parents?
6. To what extent have you been satisfied with the training you have attended? (*ask the respondents to specify if UNICEF or the Institute delivered the training*)
7. Have you benefitted of any mentoring / methodological support to deliver the school readiness programme? (*from e.g. district education department, UNICEF consultant*)
8. How do you assess the relevance and quality of the teaching and learning aids?
9. Have you noted any change in your attitude concerning preschool education for school readiness compared to the time before getting involved in the programme? (*1-2 examples needed*)
10. Are there any teachers who participated in the training, but who did not (are not) teaching at the school readiness classes? If yes, why?

#### **C. Exploring actual changes in learning outcomes, behaviours and attitudes**

11. What is the profile of children attending the school readiness classes (*family background, disability/special education needs, ethnicity, IDP, etc.*)? Please briefly describe your enrolment criteria and procedures.

12. In your opinion, to what extent has this programme cover the needs of children of preschool age in your village/town?
13. Although it is very early, but have you already noticed any effects of the school readiness programme on children since you started it in October 2019?
14. How much, do you think, are parents interested in their children attending the school readiness programme?
15. In your view, are there any changes needed to be done to improve the school readiness programme? *(get the respondents reflect on equity and quality)*

### **Group Interview Guide for principal and educators**

*(in each visited kindergarten)*

1. Since when is your institution delivering school readiness classes? For how many children/year?
2. Have you faced any challenges in running these classes? Have you received support to overcome them? If yes, from whom and for what.
3. *(for educators)* What training have the educators received to be able to deliver the school readiness classes? To what extent have you been satisfied with the training you have attended?
4. *(for educators)* Have you benefitted of any mentoring / methodological support to deliver the school readiness programme? *(from e.g. district education authority, executive committee, other)*
5. What is the profile of children attending the school readiness classes *(family background, disability/special education needs, ethnicity, IDP, etc.)*? Please briefly describe your enrolment criteria and procedures.
6. In your opinion, to what extent has this programme cover the needs of children of preschool age in your locality?
7. How much, do you think, are parents interested in their children attending the school readiness programme?
8. In your view, are there any changes needed to be done to improve the school readiness programme? *(get the respondents reflect on equity and quality)*

## **GUIDES FOR FOCUS GROUPS**

### **Guide for Focus Group with teaching staff**

*(teachers teaching children now enrolled in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade who benefitted last year of the school readiness programme)*

#### **Introduction**

- *Introduction of the evaluator to the group*
- *Presentation of participants*
- *Provision of background information to the focus group:*
  - *The purpose of the discussion*
  - *The intended recipients of findings and how they will be used*
  - *How feedback will be handled (issues of anonymity, confidentiality, data protection)*
  - *Rules of the focus group: who speaks when and agreement on how to indicate when one wants to speak*
  - *The time allocated for discussion and explanation of the focus group approach*
- *Answering any questions participants might have.*

#### **Discussion**

## A. Exploring learning experience

- Have you benefitted of training to be able to deliver the school readiness classes last year?
  - If yes, which new skills and knowledge have you retained following this training? (1-2 examples). Have you used the new skills and approaches in your work with the children and parents? To what extent have you been satisfied with the training you have attended? (*ask the respondents to specify if UNICEF or the Institute delivered the training*)
  - If not, have you encountered any challenges in delivering the school readiness classes last year? In your opinion, would you have needed specific training?
- Have you benefitted of any mentoring / methodological support to deliver the school readiness programme? (from e.g. *school principal, district education department, master trainer, UNICEF consultant*)
- How do you assess the relevance and quality of the teaching and learning aids?
- Have you noted any change in your attitude concerning preschool education for school readiness compared to the time before getting involved in the programme? (1-2 examples needed)

## B. Exploring actual changes in learning outcomes, behaviours and attitudes

- What is the profile of children that you are teaching now in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade? (*residence, occupation of parents, socio-economic status of the family, disability, ethnicity, IDP, etc.*)
- Have these children attended any school readiness classes before entering the 1<sup>st</sup> grade? (*get a rough proportion from respondents*). Have you noticed any difference in terms of integration in the school process between the children who have and who have not? Please provide specific examples.
- How would you assess the knowledge and skills level acquired by children who attended school readiness classes compared to those who did not? (*ask respondents to place their answer on a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 means the same and 3 means much higher*). What other effects of the school readiness programme did you notice (*e.g. socio-emotional, motor*)?
- Have all children from your community equal opportunities to attend the school readiness programme? What makes you say that?
- How much, do you think, are parents interested in their children attending the school readiness programme?
- In your view, are there any changes needed to be done to improve the school readiness programme (*get the respondents reflect on equity and quality*)?

## End of Discussion

- Thanking participants for attending and giving feedback.

## Guide for Focus Group with parents

*(parents of children who benefitted of school readiness programme last year and who are now in 1<sup>st</sup> grade)*

### Introduction

- *Introduction of the evaluator to the group*
- *Presentation of participants (age, occupation, residence, family size, members of preschool age)*
- *Provision of background information to the focus group:*
  - *The purpose of the discussion*
  - *The intended recipients of findings and how they will be used*
  - *How feedback will be handled (issues of anonymity, confidentiality, data protection)*
  - *Rules of the focus group*
  - *The time allocated for discussion and explanation of the focus group approach*
- *Answering any questions participants might have.*

## Discussion

- How did you learn about the school readiness programme available in your village/town?
- What were the main reasons which made you decide to enrol your child in the school readiness programme? Have you faced any challenges in enrolling your child in this programme?
- To what extent are you satisfied with the school readiness programme that your child attended last year? (get an appreciation from respondents of their satisfaction level: low, average, high). Can you provide any concrete examples of the programme impact on your child?
- In your opinion, how important is for a child to attend preschool education?
- In your opinion, can all parents from your community send their children to the school readiness programme if they wish that? If not, what stops them? What children from your community, according to you, do not attend it? Why?
- What can you say about your children's teachers? How prepared do you think they were to work with your child?
- Have you been involved in the school activities and/or in monitoring the quality of school readiness programme?
- Have you noted any change in your attitude concerning preschool education for school readiness compared to the time before your child attended it? (*1-2 examples needed*)
- If you were in a position to decide, what actions would you take primarily to improve the access of children from your community to school readiness programme and its quality?

## End of Discussion

- Thanking participants for attending and giving feedback.

## MAPPING TEMPLATES

### Training courses delivered (*template*)

Title of the course	Training provider	Main training topics	Period and location	No. of training hours/course	Target audience	No. of trainees	
						Male	Female

### Curricula and other resources produced with the support of the Programme (*template*)

Title and author of the document	Type*	Year of publication/release/finalization

\* C=Curriculum, EM=Education materials, T=Toolkit, G=Guidelines, S=Study, R=Review, O=Other (please specify)

**Children in preschool education (template)**

School year	Children 1-5 years old							
	No. of children enrolled in preschool education					Enrolment rate (%)		
	Total	By sex		By residence		Total	Urban	Rural
		girls	boys	urban	rural			
1	4	5	6	7	8			
2010-2011								
2011-2012								
2012-2013								
2013-2014								
2014-2015								
2015-2016								
2016-2017								
2017-2018								
2018-2019								
School year	Children 5 years old							
	No. of children enrolled in preschool education					Enrolment rate (%)		
	Total	By sex		By residence		Total	Urban	Rural
		girls	boys	urban	rural			
1	4	5	6	7	8			
2010-2011								
2011-2012								
2012-2013								
2013-2014								
2014-2015								
2015-2016								
2016-2017								
2017-2018								
2018-2019								

**Education institutions providing preschool education (*template*)**

School year	Institutions providing preschool education to children 1-5 years old				
	Total	By type of institution:		By location:	
		kindergartens	schools	urban	rural
1	4	5	6	7	8
2010-2011					
2011-2012					
2012-2013					
2013-2014					
2014-2015					
2015-2016					
2016-2017					
2017-2018					
2018-2019					

  

School year	Institutions providing school preparation to children 5 years old				
	Total	By type of institution:		By location:	
		kindergartens	schools	urban	rural
1	4	5	6	7	8
2010-2011					
2011-2012					
2012-2013					
2013-2014					
2014-2015					
2015-2016					
2016-2017					
2017-2018					
2018-2019					

## Annex 4 – Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Questions (EQ)	Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information	
<b>RELEVANCE: alignment of the Programme to Azerbaijan’s priorities, international commitments and needs of target groups and beneficiaries</b>				
EQ1	<p>To what extent is the Programme <b>aligned with the country policies, strategies and priorities</b>?</p>	<p>Evidence of consistency between the outcomes and specific interventions of the Programme <u>and</u> the national needs and priorities of the preschool education, identified in the situation analyses and country policy papers and strategies aimed to guide and advance preschool education reforms and advancement of human rights and gender equality</p> <p>Common understanding amongst stakeholders about the expected and actual links between the Programme results and selected national priorities</p> <p>Stakeholders can identify actual or potential areas of divergence between the national strategies and the Programme strategies and results</p> <p>There is evidence that the Programme has kept/has not kept its relevance in time</p>	<p>Mapping of situation and contextual analyses Documentary review focused on links between the situation analyses, studies, key national strategies and Programme Results Matrix</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Documentary review, interviews</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, key national implementing partners, World Bank</p> <p>ibid</p>
EQ2	<p>Is the Programme relevant in terms of <b>internationally agreed goals and commitments of the country</b>, norms and standards guiding the work of UNICEF in Azerbaijan and the Government?</p>	<p>Evidence of alignment of Programme objectives and specific interventions with the international human rights and gender equality standards, SDG (goal 4), UNICEF Regional Flagship Result for Learning 2018-2021</p> <p>Clear identification of specific Programme results and strategies addressing issues and recommendations from treaty body reports</p> <p>Stakeholders can identify actual or potential areas of divergence between recommendations from treaty bodies, and results and strategies of the Programme</p>	<p>Documentary review and structured desk analysis focused on relevant treaty body reports, concluding observations, SDG commitments <u>and</u> linkages with Programme objectives and planned results</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Education, World Bank</p>
EQ3	<p>Has the Programme addressed to date the <b>underlying causes of low coverage</b> of children in preschool education in Azerbaijan and responded to the needs of 5-year-old children, especially of the most vulnerable, from the perspective of: - Equity (inclusiveness)</p>	<p>Level of adequacy of Programme design to the needs of vulnerable children (living in rural and remote areas, IDPs, with disability, belonging to different ethnicities, etc.) identified in reliable statistics, assessments, studies, reviews of early childhood education, poverty, social exclusion, vulnerability and deprivation in Azerbaijan</p> <p>Sex and age disaggregated data is collected and monitored</p>	<p>Stakeholders mapping Mapping of statistics, available situation and contextual analyses Documentary review and structured desk analysis focused on the links between the analytical literature, Programme conceptual notes and implementation strategies, and human rights principles, equity and gender</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p>

Evaluation Questions (EQ)		Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human rights principles (non-discrimination, participation, etc.)</li> <li>- Gender mainstreaming</li> </ul>	<p>by UNICEF (during the pilot phase) and Ministry of Education (during the rolling-out phase)</p> <p>Presence of equity, HRBA and gender equality as cross-cutting issues within the Programme documentation (PAD, implementation strategies, accountability (results) frameworks (including indicators) and reporting)</p> <p>Evidence of consistency between the needs and priorities for broadening access to school readiness of vulnerable children, the strategy implemented by the Programme and the overarching principles of equity, anti-discrimination, gender equality, participation and progressive realization of children's rights</p> <p>Examples of most effective/ineffective approaches and strategies for addressing the key causes of inequality and discrimination hindering the access of children aged 5 to school readiness opportunities in the reference period, in particular of vulnerable children</p>	<p>equality Testing of the ToC</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Focus groups Site visits, direct observation</p>	<p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, ExCom, district education authorities, principals</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p> <p>Parents Schools/Kindergartens, children (during site visits)</p>
<b>EFFECTIVENESS: the extent to which the Programme interventions attained planned objectives and results</b>				
<b>EQ4</b>	<p>What is the <b>achievement level of planned results</b> (quantitative and qualitative) compared to stated objectives and current stage of implementation?</p>	<p>The Programme has a well-defined intervention logic, demonstrating how the outputs will produce the intended outcomes</p> <p>Objective comparison of actual outputs achieved against the set targets, including consideration of annual adjustments</p> <p>The outputs produced the intended outcomes (quantitative and qualitative)</p> <p>Intended outcomes (i) have been achieved, (ii) have been partially achieved (in which areas) or (iii) have not been achieved to date</p>	<p>Mapping and documentary review of results against the reconstructed ToC and based on available monitoring reports, internal M&amp;E systems of UNICEF and data available at national and district levels</p> <p>Contribution analysis to determine progress against intended results and pathways generated</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Site visits, direct observation</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, ExCom, district education authorities, principals, World Bank</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p> <p>Schools, children (during site visits)</p>
<b>EQ5</b>	<p>To what extent have the Programme interventions contributed to <b>expanding school readiness classes</b> in Azerbaijan from the perspective of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- coverage of 5-year-old children</li> <li>- legal and policy framework</li> </ul>	<p>Enrolment rate of 5-year old children in preschool education, disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, residence</p> <p>Education strategies and related action plans include specific provisions on promoting school readiness</p>	<p>Documentary review focused on annual progress reports, deliverables and relevant statistics</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, State Committee on Family, Women and Children</p>

Evaluation Questions (EQ)		Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information
	(achievements fed into the policy dialogue) - raising awareness of parents and professionals	Professionals and parents are able/unable to indicate at least two examples of change in their attitudes towards promoting preschool education for 5 year-olds	Focus groups	Affairs, ExCom, district education authorities Professionals and parents (during site visits)
<b>EQ6</b>	What were the main <b>factors</b> which contributed or hindered the achievement of the intended Programme outcomes to date?	Factors identified and rated as promoting or diminishing the effectiveness of the Programme  Evidence of UNICEF, Ministry of Education, ExCom and district authorities making good use of facilitating factors and country context (operating space) to achieve outputs and outcomes	Mapping of factors which promoted or impeded the progress against intended results for contribution analysis  Contribution analysis to determine factors which promoted or blocked the progress against intended results  Documentary review focused on available determinant analyses, MTR, annual progress reports, risks analyses  Interviews  Focus groups	Reference materials for evaluation  UNICEF, Ministry of Education, national implementing partners, World Bank, ExCom, District education authorities, principals  Professionals, parents (during site visits)
<b>EQ7</b>	Has the implementation of the Programme produced any <b>additional, unplanned</b> effect (positive or negative) until present?	Evidence through examples of additional results/effects and their appraisal  Effects (positive or negative) of identified results	Documentary review, including MTR, RWPs, progress reports and evaluation reports, third party researches, studies and assessments, data from M&E systems  Interviews  Focus groups Site visits, direct observation	Reference materials for evaluation  UNICEF, Ministry of Education, national implementing partners, World Bank, principals  Professionals, parents (during site visits) Schools/Kindergartens and beneficiaries
<b>EFFICIENCY: extent to which the management of the Programme ensured timelines and an efficient utilization of resources to achieve its objectives</b>				

Evaluation Questions (EQ)		Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information
<b>EQ8</b>	How well has the implementation of the Programme been <b>managed</b> ? What <b>monitoring and reporting systems</b> and tools have been used and how did they contribute to the Programme management process?	<p>Management of the Programme ensured timeliness and quality of outputs and efficient use of resources (during piloting and after rolling-out)</p> <p>Chosen management and implementation modalities are in line with best practices of Government, UNICEF or other donors' interventions</p> <p>Evidence that chosen management modalities provided for needed efficiency, timely delivery and adaptation/flexibility in the Programme implementation</p> <p>Examples of management intervention for overcoming barriers and constraints in implementation</p> <p>Stakeholder perceptions about the efficiency of the overall Programme management</p>	<p>Document review and system analysis focused on the Programme management, monitoring and quality assurance arrangements and responsibilities</p> <p>Systematic data review, particularly of UNICEF and Ministry of Education M&amp;E systems and data</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus group</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, national implementation partners, World Bank, ExCom, district education authorities, principals</p> <p>Professionals</p>
<b>EQ9</b>	Were financial <b>resources</b> used appropriately during the piloting and rolling-out phase? Were funds managed in a cost-effective manner to achieve expected results? Could the same results have been achieved with fewer resources?	<p>Financial resources are broadly in line with scale and scope of expected results</p> <p>Perceptions about costs vs. benefits of Programme results and the efficiency of implementation modalities used (avoiding waste and duplication)</p> <p>Examples of Programme activities with a good/poor cost-effectiveness level; evidence of efforts made to achieve efficiency gains and savings</p> <p>Value for money</p>	<p>System analysis of management strategies</p> <p>Documentary review of resource utilization reports, delivery mechanism, costing scenarios, benchmarking studies</p> <p>Systematic data review, particularly of M&amp;E systems and data of implementing partners</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, national implementation partners, World Bank, ExCom, district education authorities, principals</p>
<b>EQ10</b>	To what extent and how has the implementation strategies of the Programme contributed to institutional <b>coordination, coherence</b> in approaches and better <b>synergies</b> , avoiding overlaps with similar interventions?	<p>Efficiency gains/no gains achieved through synergy (concerted efforts to optimize results and avoid duplication)</p> <p>Coherence level between the Programme and similar interventions' objectives; coordinated implementation schedules (government – non-government entities, UN and other donor agencies)</p> <p>Demonstrable effects of complementarity or/and overlaps, both upstream on the level of UN/donor coordination and downstream on Programme implementation level</p>	<p>Stakeholder mapping</p> <p>Mapping of similar initiatives</p> <p>Documentary review of similar initiatives, minutes of coordination meetings, reviews, progress reports and evaluations</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Education, World Bank, CSOs</p>
<b>IMPACT: long-term effects produced by the Programme interventions upon the vulnerable children and progressive realization of children's rights</b>				

Evaluation Questions (EQ)		Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information
EQ 11	To what extent has the Programme impacted on the learning outcomes of 5-year old children in the districts where school readiness classes were established?	<p>Evidence/Examples of negative/positive/no effects and benefits of the school readiness Programme on beneficiary children</p> <p>Knowledge and skills level of school readiness beneficiary children compared to non-beneficiary children (from a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 means the same and 3 means much higher, as assessed by teachers of 1st-graders)</p> <p>Satisfaction level of parents/caregivers concerning the effects of the school readiness Programme on the integration of their children into the school 1st grade (low/average/high)</p>	<p>Mapping of progress against recommendations from treaty bodies</p> <p>Documentary review and structured desk analysis focused on progress reports, field monitoring reports, training reports, learning outcomes assessments</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Site visits, direct observation</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, national implementation partners, district education authorities, principals, teachers</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p> <p>Schools/Kindergartens (during site visits)</p>
EQ12	What was the impact of the Programme on the protection and realization of beneficiary children's rights to equitable, quality education?	<p>Credible contribution of the Programme to the progressive realization of children's rights (none/modest/significant)</p> <p>Stakeholders can provide examples of school readiness Programme's contribution to the promotion of children's rights, in particular of children in vulnerable situations</p>	<p>Documentary review of reports of international treaty bodies, assessment studies, UNICEF M&amp;E systems and data</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p> <p>Site visits, direct observation</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, national implementation partners, ExCom, district education authorities, principals, teachers</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p> <p>Schools, beneficiary children (during site visits)</p>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY: extent to which the benefits (results) achieved by the Programme are sustainable (likely to continue beyond the intervention cycle)</b>				
EQ13	To what extent are the results (benefits) obtained to date by the Programme <b>sustainable</b> or likely to be maintained over time?	<p>Evidence of:</p> <p>a. Rolling-up of the Programme country-wide, after piloting by the Programme: at a lower/same/higher quality level (group size, staffing, qualification level of teachers, duration/week, teaching aids, premises);</p> <p>b. School readiness Programme is part/is not part of the standard service provision provided to 5-year-old children</p> <p>c. Allocations of funds/Lack of allocations of funds in national budget for the functioning of services tested by the Programme</p> <p>Triangulation of perceptions about the sustainability of the</p>	<p>Document review focused on Programme deliverables and results, sustainability strategies, risk mitigation approaches</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, State Committee on Family, Women and Children Affairs, national implementation partners, ExCom, district education authorities, principals, teachers</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p>

Evaluation Questions (EQ)		Indicators/Descriptors	Data Collection Methods	Sources of information
		Programme results/benefits	Site visits, direct observation	Schools/Kindergartens
EQ14	What <b>measures</b> have the MoE and UNICEF undertaken to ensure that results achieved by the Programme to date are not lost?	<p>Evidence of exit strategies and measures undertaken by UNICEF to ensure ownership and sustainability of results (legal/policy, financial and institutional/capacities)</p> <p>Evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Concrete changes in national policy and legal framework that can sustain the Programme results</li> <li>b. Institutional capacity in place to sustain levels of achievement (teachers, curriculum, learning aids, school infrastructure)</li> <li>c. Financial allocations to ensure the operation of the school readiness classes</li> <li>d. Ownership of the Programme results within the Ministry of Education, district education authorities and schools</li> </ul> <p>Ensuring sustainability is a subject matter regularly discussed by the UNICEF and the Government</p> <p>Risks to the sustainability of the Programme results have been identified and addressed</p>	<p>Mapping of policies and strategies</p> <p>Analysis of the legal, policy and institutional framework in place that will help to sustain the Programme results/benefits</p> <p>Documentary review focused on exit strategies, minutes of meetings between UNICEF and national counterparts</p> <p>Mapping of risks and systemic barriers to sustainability, risks mitigation strategies</p> <p>Analysis of mitigation measures</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Focus groups</p>	<p>Reference materials for evaluation</p> <p>UNICEF, Ministry of Education, World Bank, ExCom, district education authorities, principals (during site visits)</p> <p>Professionals, parents (during site visits)</p>

## Annex 5 – Evaluation Sample

Apart from desk review of relevant documentation, interviews with key informants and focus groups, the evaluation methodology included site visits to a sample of target districts for in-depth review. The following sampling criteria have been used:

- 1) *Rural/Urban regional balance*: it was considered useful to ensure that the sample included both rural and urban districts given the significant differences in terms of preschool development opportunities as well as perceptions and attitudes towards early learning that would need to be analysed by the evaluation. Having in view the focus of the Programme on rural areas, 2 of 3 sample districts were predominantly rural.
- 2) *Economic regions*: the construction of the sample took also into consideration the economic regions and made sure the sample districts were located in regions with different development levels, based on the gross product output (GDP) per capita (in manats).
- 3) *Vulnerability profile of beneficiary children*: the Programme has mainly aimed at promoting an improved access of vulnerable children to PSE and the evaluation had to analyse the equity dimension of the implementation work and results. The sample has been thus constructed to include children in various adversity circumstances i.e. rural children (no or reduced physical access), internally-displaced children (IDPs), children belonging to ethnic minorities (language and religious barriers).
- 4) *School readiness groups*: given the objectives of the evaluation, the sample considered the districts where a large number of school preparation groups were opened; the evaluation wanted to explore the factors which promoted that development, but at the same time check the quality of service provision.
- 5) *Involvement in the model piloting*: since the evaluation will look into both pilot and rolling-out phases, the sample includes pilot and non-pilot districts to support the analysis of UNICEF's contribution to modelling and innovation as well as of the implementation processes once the Ministry of Education took over the Programme.

**The Sample which resulted after the review of key Programme documentation, relevant statistics, analysis against sampling criteria and discussion with UNICEF CO is composed of three districts: Lankaran, Gusar and Yamasal (Baku).**

The table below provides an overview of the sampling criteria and compliance of the sampled districts.

Sampling criteria	Lankaran	Gusar	Baku (Yasamal)
<b>Urban/Rural regional balance (population<sup>9</sup>)</b>			
• Predominantly rural	√ (61% rural population)	√ (79% rural	-

<sup>9</sup> Percentages for Lankaran and Gusar calculated based on data of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (figures for 2019), <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/?lang=en>

Sampling criteria	Lankaran	Gusar	Baku (Yasamal)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominantly urban</li> </ul>	-	population) -	√ (100% urban population)
<b>Economic regions with different development levels (GDO/capita)<sup>10</sup></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lankaran</li> <li>Guba-Khamaz</li> <li>Absheron</li> </ul>	√ (2000.1 manats) - -	- √ (3,130 manats) -	- - √ (5,272 manats in the region; 27,804 in Baku)
<b>Vulnerability profile of children</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predominant rural child population</li> <li>Internally-displaced children</li> <li>Children belonging to ethnic minorities<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>	√ (64% <sup>12</sup> ) - √ (Talysh, 25,5%)	√ (78%) - √ (Lezgins, 90.4%)	- √ √ (Russian, 6.5%) -
<b>School readiness groups</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 100 groups opened in 2017</li> </ul>	√ (156 groups, the highest number in the country)	√ (102 groups)	√ (117 groups, for Absheron)
<b>Involvement in piloting of the model</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot district</li> <li>Non-Pilot</li> </ul>	√ -	- √	- √

<sup>10</sup> State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (figures for 2018), [https://www.azstat.org/webmap/index.php?geolevel=iqtisadi&v=off&year=2018&indicator=00010&section=19&colorFrom=edf8fb&colorTo=810f7c&cc=3&ms=method\\_Q](https://www.azstat.org/webmap/index.php?geolevel=iqtisadi&v=off&year=2018&indicator=00010&section=19&colorFrom=edf8fb&colorTo=810f7c&cc=3&ms=method_Q), retrieved October 22, 2019

<sup>11</sup> State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018), "Azerbaijan Regions", Statistical Yearbook, Baku – figures from 2009 population census. For Baku, the percentage refers to the whole city.

<sup>12</sup> Percentages for Lankaran and Gusar calculated based on 2019 data in State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2019), "Children in Azerbaijan", Statistical Yearbook, Baku

## Annex 6 – Documents Consulted during Evaluation

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#### **Programme documentation:**

- Programme description, activity plan and budget; monitoring and progress reports, agreements/contracts with various implementing partners; ToR and reports of consultants; training reports; Programme deliverables; Programme statistics; national legislation, strategies and action plans; UNICEF documents (situation analysis, country programmes and results frameworks, RWPs, annual reports, mission reports, mid-term reviews, policy notes, budgets)

#### **Internet resources:**

<https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/?lang=en>

<https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/?lang=en>

[https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/en/002\\_1.9en.xls](https://www.stat.gov.az/source/healthcare/en/002_1.9en.xls)

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## Annex 7 – People Consulted during Evaluation

No.	Name	Position	Institution/Organisation
<b>UNICEF</b>			
1.	Edward Carwardine	Representative	UNICEF Azerbaijan
2.	Min Yuan	Deputy Representative	UNICEF Azerbaijan
3.	Leyla Hasanova	Education Specialist	UNICEF Azerbaijan
4.	Tamerlan Rajabov	Child Rights Systems Monitoring Specialist	UNICEF Azerbaijan
5.	Fatima Jafarova	Financial Officer	UNICEF Azerbaijan
6.	Elza Ibrahimova	Communication for Social Change Officer	UNICEF Azerbaijan
7.	Kenan Mammadli	former Education Specialist	UNICEF Sri Lanka
<b>Ministry of Education, other central level authorities and public bodies</b>			
8.	Narmina Alnagiyeva	Head of Preschool Education Unit	Ministry of Education
9.	Orxan Abbasov		Ministry of Education
10.	Elvin Rustamov	Head of Educational Resources Department (and former Head of PCU of World Bank project)	Ministry of Education
11.	Elvin Nasibov	Head of Economics of Education and Statistics Department	Ministry of Education
12.	Rauf Orucov	Head of Finance Department	Ministry of Education
13.	Mr. Vugar	Finance Department	Ministry of Education
14.	Emin Amrullayev	Head of Education Development Programmes Department / Interim Director of Institute	Ministry of Education / Institute of Education
15.	Vafa Yagublu	Director	Teachers and Professional Development Institute
16.	Parviz Aliyev	Senior Advisor in Child Issues Division	State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs
<b>International development partners</b>			
17.	Elvira Anadolu	Health Specialist	World Bank Country Office in Azerbaijan
18.	Turgut Mustafayev	Former education consultant	World Bank Country Office in Azerbaijan
<b>District Education Departments</b>			
19.	Aslan Ibrahimov	Head of the Department	Lankaran Education Department
20.	Zaur Aghazade	Head of Methodists' Unit	Lankaran Education Department

21.	Zabita Safarova	Methodist	Lankaran Education Department
22.	Gorkhmaz Muradov	Head of Methodists' Unit	Gusar Education Department
23.	Nazira Babayeva	Methodist	Gusar Education Department
24.	Radik Sarukhanov	Lead Counsellor	Gusar Education Department
25.	Rovshan Bunyatov	Lead Counsellor, coordinator of data system of general education institutions	Gusar Education Department
26.	Fuad Babayev	Head of Section General Education	Baku Education Department
27.	Ms. Khalida		Baku Education Department
<b>Schools and kindergartens</b>			
28.	Ilgar Pashayev	Principal	School #8, Lankaran
29.	Mr....	Principal	Kindergarten #16, Lankaran
30.	Yegana Askarova	Principal	School #4, Lankaran
31.	Naira Klichova	Principal	School #6, Gusar
32.	Kamran Tahirov	Principal	School Hil Village, Gusar
33.	Lida Gojaghayeva	Principal	Kindergarten #3, Gusar
34.	Ms. Elena	Principal	School #18, Baku
35.	Azad Ahmadova	Principal	Kindergarten #11
<b>District authorities</b>			
36.	Gunesh Guluzade	Responsible official for kindergartens	Executive Committee Lankaran
37.	Rasila Arifgizi	Deputy Head of Administration, Head of Public Policy Division	Executive Committee Lankaran
38.	Ms Ema		Executive Committee Gusar

**Note:**

The list above does not include the teachers, other professionals and parents from the sample districts who were participated in the focus groups discussions and group interviews.