



ECORYS

**Final External Evaluation
of the Improving Preschool Education in Georgia
through Social Accountability Processes Project**

FINAL REPORT

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Table of contents

Executive summary	6
Introduction	11
1 Context and object of evaluation	12
1.1 Overview of preschool education in Georgia	12
1.2 Evaluation object: Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project	18
2 Aims and scope of the evaluation	26
2.1 Purpose and scope of the evaluation	26
3 Methodological approach	28
3.1 Approach and methods	28
3.2 Limitations of the study	30
4 Evaluation of Project results	32
4.1 Comprehensive monitoring system	32
4.2 The National Preschool Association	39
4.3 Results at the GPSA framework level	44
5 Evaluation of learning potential	49
5.1 Reflections on the GPSA ToA from Project implementation	49
5.2 Influential factors and circumstances for achievement of Project results	51
5.3 Aspects of the Project which could have been implemented better	54
5.4 Replicability potential in Georgia and beyond	55
6 Evaluation of sustainability	57
7 Key conclusions	61
8 Recommendations	64
9 Bibliography	66
10 Annexes	68

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CG	Civitas Georgica
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
QCA	Qualitative comparative analysis
ECEC	Early childhood education and care
FGD	Focus group discussion
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPSA	Global Partnership for Social Accountability
GoG	Government of Georgia
IDI	In-depth interview
IP	Implementing Partner
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KII	Key informant interview
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
MIDPLHSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labor, Health and Social Affairs
NAEC	National Assessment and Examination Center
NPA	National Preschool Association
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
PDO	Project Development Objective
SCI	Save the Children International
SCG	Save the Children International Branch in Georgia
SEN	Special educational needs
ToA	Theory of Action
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Terms of reference
TPDC	Teachers Professional Development Center
WB	World Bank

List of figures

Figure 1: GPSA Theory of Action 20

Figure 2: Theory of Change of the “Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project” 24

List of tables

Table 1: Evaluation questions	27
Table 2: Assessment of Project results against the GPSA results framework (version from November 2019)	45
Table 3: Assessment of validity of GPSA ToA assumptions based on evidence from Project implementation	48
Table 4: List of completed interviews at international and national level	67
Table 5: List of KIIs completed at municipal level	68
Table 6: List of IDIs completed at municipal level	69
Table 7 Evaluation Matrix	70
Table 8: List of other factors which are likely to have influenced Project achievements and non-achievements	73

Executive summary

Aims and object of the evaluation

With financial support from Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) of World Bank, the “Improving Pre-school Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project” has been jointly implemented by Save the Children Georgia and Civitas Georgica between April 2017 and March 2020. The main objective of this evaluation was to assess the Project outcomes and identify contexts in which social accountability mechanisms were most effective i.e. how and why do the outcomes vary across contexts. In particular, the evaluation looked at the connection among the various component parts of the Project, assessed Project outcome-level results, and Project’s contribution as per the global GPSA theory of action, and formulated recommendations for maintaining Project’s results as well as for any follow-up interventions.

Evaluation methodology

The final evaluation is **formative** in nature as its primary objective is to provide learning on the intervention’s achievements and their expected sustainability, as well as lessons learnt on the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. The Project was assessed against the three evaluation areas of results/outcomes, learning potential and replicability, and sustainability. The evaluation followed a **participatory approach** in order to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders and Project beneficiaries in particular are gauged and form the basis for the evaluation’s recommendations.

To demonstrate causality the evaluation also employed a theory-based approach to evaluation and simplified qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), which guided the analysis of the Project implementation in selected municipalities understood as cases to test theories of change and answer the question “what works best, why and under what circumstances”¹ Given a strong emphasis on learning and knowledge gathering purposes as well as on importance of contextual conditions expressed by the Client and GPSA Results Framework, QCA serves a learning purpose as it helps to unravel explanatory patterns for “success” and “failure” of existing cases, with the possibility to inform potential future cases.² As such, it is primarily oriented towards understanding what caused a certain effect (i.e. success, outcome, or impact) by asking the following overarching question: “What sets of factors are likely to influence an effect? . It traces factors, and their combinations, that are necessary, most effective, and make the difference for the effect as well as circumstances and key target groups affected.

Considering the evaluation key questions, scope and epidemic situation in the country the evaluation was conducted using qualitative methods including desk review of available Project documentation, state and international publications and other relevant secondary sources, as well as primary data collection. The latter was gathered using in-depth interviews with international and central-level stakeholders, local-level stakeholders and beneficiaries in 10 municipalities in which the Project was piloted, and an expert discussion.

Key findings

Project contribution to the Project outcome-level results

¹ Baptist, C., and Befani, B. (2015). Qualitative Comparative Analysis – A Rigorous Qualitative Method for Assessing Impact, Coffey. Retrieved from: <http://www.coffey.com/assets/Ingenuity/Qualitative-Comparative-Analysis-June-2015.pdf>

² Pattyn, V., Molenveld, A., Befani, B. (2017). Qualitative Comparative Analysis as an Evaluation Tool: Lessons from an Application in Development Cooperation, American Journal of Evaluation.

The most pronounced results related to a Project component that addressed development of a comprehensive benchmarking and monitoring system are as follows:

- ◆ In total, 35 municipalities opted to use the benchmarking methodology, overachieving the expected target established for 27 local administrative units. At the time of the final evaluation, three cycles of benchmarking is completed. Findings resulting from the comparative analysis of the two cycles of the benchmarking administered in 2018 and 2020 demonstrate changes municipalities have put in place in all 14 assessed domains. Most notable of these changes mainly concern the increased budget allocated for educational materials in kindergartens, increased parent participation, improved infrastructure in several preschools, increased number of staff to meet the requirements of law on early and preschool education and care, elaboration of teacher professional development strategy with respective budget and opening of additional preschool groups.
- ◆ The digitalized tool is user-friendly, supplemented by adequate capacity building activities and guidelines, which contributes to its well-reception and ownership by majority of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Its adaptability and flexibility is seen as its major advantage by stakeholders who expressed their readiness to continue its application.
- ◆ The National Preschool Association (NPA) a civil society organization (CSO) established within the project for the purpose of the benchmarking methodology utilization and policy advocacy, was incapacitated to influence improvements in policy practice and service delivery that was evidenced by following : a) an increased awareness among different stakeholders at municipal level, including parents, of high quality preschool services, national education standards and quality assurance mechanisms, and their respective roles to achieve them; b) evidence-based policy-making and improvements thanks to data on current status of preschool services, as well as practical and realistic recommendations; c) facilitating positive changes at institutional level, including better infrastructure, increased teacher qualifications, more optimal teacher-student ratios, and a viable and effective stakeholder communication and engagement mechanism in a form of Advisory Boards.

At the same time, the awareness of and engagement in the benchmarking study on the part of national-level stakeholders, including central governmental bodies, development partners and civil society, could be improved to ensure its application beyond the municipal-level accountability system and gain more support from central-level stakeholders.

The National Preschool Association (NPA) is well placed to drive the social accountability process and to make sure that required changes are advocated for and addressed within the relevant state structures. It is also prepared to assist efforts to assess preschool service delivery, push for evidence-based policy-making, and bond local actors under common aim of improving quality of preschool education. By triggering inter-municipal discussion and connecting key sector stakeholders at the local level the NPA creates feedback loops between various stakeholders, which are seen an important factor for increasing accountability in a successful community monitoring process.

The NPA plays an important role in facilitating learning across municipalities due to its potential to enhance the capacity of its own members, representatives of the municipality and kindergarten staff, thus, supporting the development of the preschool sector in the country. Based on preliminary evidence, it can be expected that stronger and more effective municipalities will support those who experience more difficulties in facing challenges in preschool education, thus levelling inequalities and ensuring more even development of the preschool education system.

Following up on the benchmarking system with technical recommendations for the preschool settings/municipalities, the Association shows potential for further development as the organization for voicing and advocating the rights and needs of preschool education society and thus promoting local

oversight and accountability for service delivery. However, for achieving a highly impactful benchmarking process and social accountability mechanism representation of parents and teachers in the NPA should be safeguarded. While views of these two groups are collected through the benchmarking exercise and other collective bodies (e.g. parents' advisory boards), their presence in NPA will support comprehensive interpretation of the benchmarking results and uphold beneficiaries' perspective. Designing the NPA membership package for parents and teachers might respond to the challenge. Also, further capacity building of the NPA's members through external support is required as the body is not considered as fully self-sustainable institution at the moment.

Project contribution as per the global GPSA theory of action

The intervention's achievements are equally substantial at the GPSA results framework level, earning it a reputation of a 'success story' within the GPSA itself. Built on a broad partnership between two complementary civil society organizations and a range of government and community actors, the Project developed collaborative social accountability mechanisms to address several critical development challenges in the preschool field in Georgia. Both the lead grantee and the partner organization report considerable gains in their technical, adaptive and organizational capacity as a result of the Project. However, the extent to which the solutions and approaches created within the Project are taken up further by Georgia's central as well as local self- government bodies remains to be seen.

Replicability and learning potential

The implementation of the Project offers rich learnings with regard to establishing collaborative social accountability mechanisms. Firstly, it largely validates the initial steps and most core actions GPSA Theory of Action (ToA) and also stimulates a reflection on how to effectively realize the core action of WB providing support to meaningful engagement between civil society and government. Secondly, it identifies several areas where the Project implementation could have been executed better and which will merit attention in future similar initiatives. These include 1) the need to provide clear information to grant applicants about the contractual practicalities to avoid large delays, 2) greater emphasis and structure to monitoring and evaluation practice, and 3) intensified investment of resources to engage central-level stakeholders in the initiative. Lastly, the Project illustrates the viability and adaptability of the benchmarking tool across contexts, but in the same time underscores the imperative to situate all similar efforts locally and within a particular setting to avoid failed attempts of replication understood simply as re-creation.

Main influencing factors

Out of a number of issues identified during the mid-term and final evaluation of the Project, the following five most influential factors were selected for achievement of Project results: 1. Implementing organizations and a form partnership; 2. Adaptive management approach; 3. Commitment of local decision-makers to preschool sector; 4. The Preschool Law and its aftermath; and 5. Outbreak of COVID-19.

Sustainability

The evaluation showed that benchmarking has a considerable potential for being continued after the Project completion, but the extent to which the tool and its results will be used in the longer term will depend on the its legitimization as well as increases in the municipal budgets for preschool education. The Project's sustainability is greatly supported by its ability to generate and maintain a strong local interest and ownership of the benchmarking, although a high degree of politicization of municipal authorities and frequent changes in personnel at the municipal level threaten the continuation of the benchmarking in the longer term. The likelihood that the NPA will continue to fulfill its function as a major advisory and advocacy body in the preschool education field in Georgia in the medium- to long-term is aided by the Association's strong local-level buy-in. Municipalities as a local self-governing unites (local government) are recognizing the benchmarking methodology as an useful tool for better governance and accountability. Accordingly, vast

majority of municipal kindergarten unions do plan to conduct annual assessments using the benchmarking tool developed within the Project to follow up on the progress and challenges. Furthermore, the benchmarking is perceived by the stakeholders at municipal, preschool and community level alike as part of their tasks, functions and regular work, thus showing potential for sustainability of this endeavor. Also, the benchmarking methodology is included in the draft Education Strategy of the Government to be approved by the end of 2021. Further advocacy will be ensured by SC to sustain all aspects of benchmarking in the strategy as integral procedure for kindergarten management endorsed by the central government

The NPA is becoming increasingly recognized as a potential partner by different actors in the preschool education field in Georgia, but the Association will necessitate external support to ensure its continued relevance and its ability to lead the benchmarking process. Although without tangible results so far, commendable efforts have already been made by the Project team to help the NPA gain more independence and institutional experience.

From the perspective of social accountability, the intangible results of strengthening relationships, experiences gained in collaborative action, and improved agency on the part of Project beneficiaries and local stakeholders, are likely to continue after the Project completion. Importantly, the tangible and intangible results of the intervention can also be said to have given SCG and Civitas Georgica a 'seat at the table' of education governance in Georgia – an achievement which can be highly effective in mitigating power asymmetries leading to barriers to the policy arena. There is sufficient evidence to believe that if pressure and positive inducements continue to be applied, the shifting of Georgian government's incentives, for instance to commit more resources to preschool education, is possible.

Lastly, the evaluation team identified some signs that lessons and foundations built by the Project may be picked up by other initiatives in the future. The World Bank project on ECEC which is being conceptualized at the time of this evaluation may offer a particularly suitable opportunity in this regard.

Key conclusions

The Project revealed a broad scope for innovativeness in developing social accountability initiatives when involving the community members and beneficiaries of preschool education in its development in several ways – through their participation in the benchmarking but also their association in the form of Parent Teacher Associations. By effectively engaging a broad range of actors and alignment with national-level efforts the Project ensured legitimacy, relevance and ownership of the process and confirmed the potential of (second generation) collaborative approaches to social accountability.

Benchmarking study methodology and instruments are effective tools and an important component of a social accountability system. They are adaptable to a variety of contexts or service areas and could be replicated elsewhere – even in the context of legislative and institutional barriers – if close attention to the local specificities and a multi-stakeholder consultative approach are ensured.

The NPA helped to create – and became a part of – a new form of social accountability in the preschool sector and directed more focus on ECEC in Georgia. By addressing the innovations introduced or reaffirmed by the Law on Early and Preschool Education and Care the Association contributes strongly to building the capacity of preschool sector representatives and providers to give more impetus to reforming the preschool sector. It encouraged the local stakeholders to take more active part in the preschool-related matters, pose questions, voice concerns and provide information about their needs.

Strong local anchoring of the initiative was enabled through previous work of the implementing organizations and the Project staff themselves. It secured an in-depth understanding of the local context and identification the right partners to work with for an intervention.

The evaluation confirmed that the provision of relatively large and flexible funding enabling for the implementation of longer-term interventions combined with adaptive management approach are a key to a successful and impactful intervention. The Project's multiple challenges and how these were resolved proved the importance of iterative action as opposed to rigidly sticking to the initial plan.

Recommendations

To the GPSA and the World Bank:

Improve the methodology for on-site and recurrent monitoring and evaluation cycle of the Project to ensure all the results are captured and documented on time.

Implement measures to leverage the presence and resources of the World Bank staff in Georgia more effectively to facilitate relationship building between civil society and the government.

To the Project team:

Improve the awareness of the benchmarking instrument and results beyond the Project direct beneficiaries at municipal level and among central-level governing bodies, civil society organizations and international development partners to increase the sustainability of project actions and buy-in of the project outputs by central government and other stakeholders

Identify potential allies, change agents and supporting resources to ensure continuity of the support to NPA to ensure sustainability of the benchmarking study at municipal level.

Supplement already existing guidelines and instructions on benchmarking study with additional resources to make the tool more self-explanatory and easy to use for newly joined municipalities.

Target accountability needs in the preschool sector in Georgia and other potential uses of the benchmarking methodology, instruments, systems and results with high potential of improving preschool services in Georgia. It could include the National Standard Monitoring systems of MoESCS (Monitoring system for education and teacher standards), MIDPLHSA (monitoring systems for Hygiene and Sanitation, and Nutrition and food Safety Standards) and MoESD (potential monitoring system for or design work for the development and approval of the Infrastructure Standard), as well as decentralization and municipal autonomy strengthening programs and instruments under MRDI. Specific actions undertaken in this regard could include a mapping of additional accountability needs in the preschool sector in Georgia, e.g. through a study or working groups including the owners of the benchmarking study, local and central preschool governance bodies, preschool experts (including international development partner representatives). These would be used to: specify additional accountability needs that could be addressed by benchmarking instruments, any needs for changes in the current design of study instruments, procedures and benchmarks if any, action plans, identify potential actors and resources to support the process.

Continue to provide technical support to the NPA to help the Association build its analytical, organizational, and civic capacities and its ability to adapt and remain relevant in the fast-changing preschool and general context in Georgia.

Introduction

This report is the third deliverable for the External Final Evaluation of the Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project (hereinafter ‘the Project’). It is the product of a four month-long examination, carried out between April and July 2020, of the Project design and implementation by Ecorys Polska evaluation team. The evaluation was conducted using qualitative methods including extensive desk review of available Project documentation, government and international publications and other relevant secondary sources, as well as primary data collection by way of in-depth interviews and expert discussion in 10 municipalities in which the Project was implemented. It builds on the Brief Mission Report submitted to the Client upon the completion of the fieldwork and incorporates the latest information available transmitted to the consultants by the Save the Children Georgia and Civitas Georgica Implementing Partner.

The Final Evaluation report closes the Analysis and Reporting Phase of the study. It presents the Project background, approach and methodology (including the evaluation questions and limitations to the study) applied and presents the findings of the evaluation against the following evaluation areas: Project results/outcomes, learning potential and replicability, and sustainability. Finally, recommendations for the maintaining the results of the Project implementation, as well as for future programming of similar intervention, based on the lessons learnt within the Project are provided.

The report is structured as follows:

1. Context and object of the evaluation
2. Aims and scope of the evaluation
3. Methodological approach
4. Evaluation of Project results
5. Evaluation of learning potential
6. Evaluation of sustainability
7. Key conclusions
8. Recommendations
9. Bibliography
10. Annexes:
 - Annex I: Informants’ consulted for the evaluation
 - Annex II: Evaluation matrix
 - Annex III: Other influencing factors

1 Context and object of evaluation

In this section we provide an overview of preschool education in Georgia, outlining its legal and institutional framework, the key challenges identified in literature and the recent efforts undertaken by governmental and non-governmental actors to alleviate these. The context description is followed by a presentation of the “Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project”.

1.1 Overview of preschool education in Georgia

Preschool service in Georgia caters to children aged 2-5 years and includes a preschool readiness program/service for 5-year-old children. Although preschool education in Georgia is not compulsory, access to public, free of charge, quality and inclusive preschool education for every child aged from 2 to 5 is stipulated by the Georgian law.

1.1.1 Georgia’s preschool policy and institutional framework

Applicable Laws and Regulations: In 2005, Georgia’s preschool education system underwent a major decentralization reform during which the overall governance of the preschool system was passed onto municipal governments. Since then, local municipalities have been responsible for the provision, management and funding of public preschool services.

In 2016, the Government of Georgia, supported by international organizations such as UNICEF, adopted the Law on Early and Preschool Education and Care which introduced major innovations targeted at improving quality, access and equity in ECEC sector throughout Georgia. The Law reaffirmed the decentralized governance of preschool education in Georgia and the responsibilities of local self-governance bodies to establish, govern and fund preschool institutions. However, the Law also stipulated the role of the central governmental bodies to define the national preschool policy on quality assurance – authorization/licensing procedures, minimum teacher remuneration and standards for preschool education, infrastructure, nutrition and food safety, Sanitation and hygiene, preschool teacher qualifications and certification processes. As per the Law, the standards must be met by all kindergartens for those to be authorized and therefore obtain a legal entity status. Most standards were approved in 2017, while, at the time of the report writing, the introduction of the standards related to school physical environment and authorization are still pending.

While the recent policy developments in the field of preschool education undoubtedly represents important progress, the aforementioned reforms remain in early stages of implementation and more resources and efforts on the part of municipalities will be required for their implementation across Georgia’s preschool institutions.

Governance and Management of Preschool Education in Georgia: The responsibility to administer the authorization procedures lies with municipal authorities (which in Georgia enjoy considerable autonomy), while the national-level bodies are charged with developing and maintaining the standards as well as providing general guidance and oversight functions in their respective fields of focus. Thus, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) develops national child development and quality standards for preschool education and preschool teachers (teachers and caregivers) professional standards. The MoESCS is also tasked with monitoring of applicability and effectiveness of the aforementioned standards and the development of appropriate teaching methodologies, and training contents for pre-service and in-service training of teaching staff at preschools. a specific monitoring system

to observe how effective the standards are is being set up under the ministry, consisting of regular surveys of preschool practitioners as well as observations of child development.

A designated Preschool Education Unit operates under the Preschool and General Education Development Department at the MoESCS to support the introduction of the new education and teacher standards. And **a unit under Teacher Professional Development Center (TPDC) and National Education Quality Enhancement center (NCEQE)**, specialized agencies under MOESCS are responsible for developing **standards for preschool teacher training programs and supporting and approving the short-term and long-term training programs**. In line with its responsibilities within the preschool system MOESCS strengthened its municipal representations – resource centers with preschool specialists in 2020. As of the reporting time, MOESCS has yet to approve the Preschool Teacher Professional Module, a document that should become the basis for **preschool teacher retraining and certification processes**. Considering the Preschool Law 2016 implies a new status of preschool teachers, no institution could meet the authorization requirements without having certain number of certified preschool teachers.

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labor, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPLHSA) **develops as well as monitors the effectiveness of Standards for Hygiene and Nutrition**, while the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD) is responsible for the **Infrastructure Standard**. The central-level authorities are also responsible for developing **authorization rules and rules for maintenance of a register** of institutions by municipalities as well as a list of data and indicators to be included in such registers (Administration of the Government of Georgia) and collecting regular statistics in line with the mentioned regulations (National Statistics Office of Georgia). The government is late on approving Infrastructure Standard and Authorization Rule both due in 2017 (before the Preschool Law was amended on the deadlines for approving the aforementioned regulations)

All the coordination and management of preschool system is at the municipal level. Municipal-level **legislative bodies (“Sakrebulo”) and executive bodies (Mayors Offices) are responsible** for developing and approving operational regulations (including **monitoring system for national standards application in preschool institutions**, structure and responsibilities of preschool institution personnel, qualification requirements for preschool principals, long-term and short-term strategies and action plans and budgets). They, or bodies assigned by them will be also responsible for administration **of authorization and monitoring processes; and professional development and certification of preschool teachers**. At the municipal level, kindergartens are part of municipal-level Kindergarten Management Agencies/Unions (later kindergarten Unions) which support their management by handling procurement procedures, approving educational programs and processes and development/revision of annual action plans. Kindergarten Unions are responsible for coordinating and funding preschool institutions in line with the national preschool policy and standards, municipal strategies and budgets, all decision making with regards to applicable education methodologies and programs, menus for children, procurements of food and developmental materials, infrastructure rehabilitations and appointment of personnel. The role and mandate of preschool principals is limited¹, restricted to day-to-day oversight of education and care activities and communications with parents. **A Consultative Parent-Teacher Boards** are envisaged by the law at each institution with the role of considering education programs, budgets, problematic issues (complaints by parents of children attending the kindergartens) and quarterly reporting to Kindergarten Unions. The boards are currently being set up and started to operate in the aftermath of the law approval in 2016.

¹ Tbilisi kindergartens are exception with a wider autonomy than regional kindergartens, however, procurement functions are administered centrally by Kindergarten Management Agency in Tbilisi, too.

Although faring better than most other post-Soviet countries in the region, equal access and quality of preschool education in Georgia remains well below the European standards. In recent years, the demand for pre-primary education in urban areas has far outstripped the supply, resulting in many parents being unable to sign their children up for preschool care.² UNICEF-led studies carried out in 2018 and 2019 found that only 78% of all children aged 2-5 years and only 90% of 5–6-year-olds were enrolled in preschool institutions in Georgia in 2018.³ This figure varied considerably between regions and social groups. While some 87% of children aged 2-4 years participated in preschool education from the richest families, the corresponding proportion for their counterparts from poorest families was 61 %.⁴ Comparably, 96% of children aged 5-6 years were enrolled in preschool institutions from richest families, while the figure was as low as 74% from poorest families. The enrolment in Tbilisi amounted to 91%, but only 50.3% of young children in Kvemo Kartli and 68.5% of children in Samtskhe-Javakheti were enrolled (both densely populated ethnic minority regions). There are places, especially in rural and high mountainous areas, where children do not have access to preschool at all.⁵ Abundant evidence shows that children with special needs face considerable barriers in accessing and benefitting from preschool education⁶. Across the country, kindergartens' physical environments are not adapted to non-standard abilities and needs, overcrowded classrooms posing additional challenges to meeting special needs. As shown by the results of a GPSA study based on a survey of half of Georgia's municipalities and carried out in 2018 and 2019, as many as 67% of surveyed kindergartens were not adapted for persons with physical disabilities (PWD).⁷ Social stigma around disability is widespread in preschools and pedagogues' and caregivers' competences and awareness are inadequate to ensure an enabling environment for all.

Low level of accessibility and substandard environment of kindergartens are symptomatic of the poor quality of the whole preschool education system in Georgia. In terms of infrastructure, shortages are also considerable. The Public Defender's investigation of the physical environment, sanitary and hygienic conditions carried out in 2014 revealed that only 20% of Georgia's kindergartens function in a safe and adequate physical-infrastructure environment, while 55% require repairs. More recent evidence shows that the last five years have not brought many improvements. The 2018-2019 study of benchmarking data carried out by Civitas Georgica showed that a relatively large number of preschool buildings and exterior facilities were poorly equipped to support children's' education and development.⁸ In 10% of the preschools surveyed, developmental spaces were not available in the classrooms and 40% lacked them in the yards. Although hygiene was identified as one of the areas that has undergone improvement in the recent years and the related infrastructure was assessed as meeting basic requirements, the safety of preschool environments was found to be in an alarming state. Specifically, 18% of surveyed kindergartens did not have a single fire kit, 30% did not have first aid kits in every room, and a third of them lacked evacuation plans in the buildings.

In Georgia's kindergartens, low qualifications of staff are a norm, with few teachers having undergone initial and continuous development education in early childhood development and care. Shortages of educational materials, overcrowded classrooms and lack of child-free hours for planning, continuous development and education and self-evaluation on the part of caregivers further hinder quality service

² Public Defender of Georgia Child's Rights Center (2014). Special Report on Monitoring Of Preschool Institutions.

³ See for instance: UNICEF and National Assessment and Examination Center (NAEC) (2018). A study of Preschool education Quality or UNICEF and the Georgian National Statistics Office (2019). Georgia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

⁴ UNICEF, GEOSTAT (2018). The Georgia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

https://www.unicef.org/georgia/sites/unicef.org.georgia/files/2019-11/education_en.pdf (accessed on 10/04/2020)

⁵ Public Defenders' Office of Georgia, 2019. Public Defender's Recommendations to Mayors of Kvareli and Oni relating to Preschool Education.

⁶ www.edu.aris.ge. 2019. Interview with the Public Defender of Georgia (accessed on 10/04/2020).

⁷ GPSA (2020). Kindergartens 2018-2019- Aggregate Statistics and Analysis.

⁸ IBID

provision.⁹ This was confirmed by the results of a benchmarking study carried out by Civitas Georgia (CG) in the framework of the Project which links these issues to the root causes of inadequate salaries and unavailability of career development prospects.¹⁰ As a consequence of all these challenges, teachers lack the motivation to invest their time and resources in professional development. What is more, the few who do manage to improve their competences frequently leave the profession in favor of more financially rewarding career options.

Cases of physical violence and use of corporal punishment both by staff and children are common and have been identified in 40% of the preschool institutions.¹¹ During a monitoring mission in 2014, the Public Defender of Georgia Child's Rights Center found that only 10% of kindergarten staff reported having received training in sphere of protection of children from violence and other types of ill-treatment and possessed the relevant knowledge.¹² The monitoring mission also revealed an extremely low level of referral of children with special needs. The benchmarking study published in 2020 showed that these issues continue, with very few preschools having internal regulations establishing a referral system for cases of teacher or peer violence.

Existing assessments of the preschool education system allow to conclude that underqualified human resources, underinvestment and low capacity on the part of local governments are among the key root causes of Georgia's preschool education deficiencies.¹³ In 2018 and 2019, less than 5% of all municipal preschool budgets were spent on building repairs, furniture, toys and books together.¹⁴ Low levels of financing of infrastructure, educational and play resources on the one hand and caregivers' salaries on the other hand are a major problem, especially in some rural areas. Preschool services provision is further undermined by multiple inefficiencies and lack of appropriate policy implementation, in large part resulting from a **lack of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation data on services quality**. At the time of the report writing, the authorization rule has still not been approved, and neither initial assessment nor regular monitoring of the compliance of preschool practices to standards are being carried out. While some level of observation and documentation on the level of a child is common in most municipalities, such practices are fragmented, not standardized and unutilized at an aggregated level. Furthermore, preschool beneficiaries' (children and parents) feedback is neither sought nor included in any documentation and evaluation mechanisms.¹⁵ With negligible monitoring and involvement of beneficiaries and wider civil society¹⁶ in improving preschool education in Georgia, overall social accountability is very limited.

All these deficiencies result in children entering primary education unprepared for further stages of their education and development. The 2018 MICS Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI)¹⁷ results showed that only 90% of Georgian preschool-aged children are on track of development against the scale developed specifically for the study consisting of cognitive, physical, emotional development and literacy and

⁹ UNICEF, NAEC (2018). Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Georgia: http://unicef.ge/uploads/Preschool_quality_study-eng.pdf (accessed on 15/05/2019).

¹⁰ GPSA (2020). Kindergartens 2018-2019- Aggregate Statistics and Analysis.

¹¹ Public Defender of Georgia Child's Rights Center (2014). Special Report On Monitoring Of Preschool Institutions.

¹² <https://www.thegpsa.org/project/improved-social-accountability-bettering-preschool-quality-georgia>

¹³ Public Defender of Georgia Child's Rights Center (2014). Special Report On Monitoring Of Preschool Institutions

¹⁴ See for instance UNICEF, NAEC (2018). Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Georgia...

¹⁵ UNICEF, NAEC (2018). Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care in Georgia...

¹⁶ <https://www.thegpsa.org/project/improved-social-accountability-bettering-preschool-quality-georgia>

¹⁷ World Bank (2020). Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/371071559440981431/pdf/Georgia-Innovation-Inclusion-and-Quality-Project.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0dl6gVcAvmXzOv0wdra-DWb8rwPUR5X2LOFL16DgJmdrUXp3wu1GFLoA> (accessed on 10/04/2020)

¹⁷ ECDI: Early Childhood Development Index; percentage of children age 3-4 years who are developmentally on track in literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional, or learning domains. ECDI is calculated as the percentage of children who are developmentally on track in at least three of the four component domains.

numeracy.¹⁸ The indicators were particularly low for social-emotional development and literacy-numeracy components representing 89% and 25% of Georgian children respectively.

Lastly, vast anecdotal evidence shows that the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has upended the care and education systems, including those for the youngest children, around the world, including in Georgia.

The closures of preschool institutions for an undetermined period of time are highly likely to have affected not only young children's education and development, but also their access to nutrition and adequate supervision. As many lose their incomes and/or face the practical and emotional consequences resulting from physical isolation, food insecurity and domestic violence might be on the rise. Although the GoG was relatively quick in responding to the pandemic with emergency measures including distribution of food to families with young children, no information on how adequately and equitably such aid is being distributed across regions and social groups is available so far.

1.1.2 Recent efforts to improve preschool education

The consequences of poor preschool educational services in Georgia and the resultant need for their improvement are increasingly being recognized. The MoESCS consolidated Education Strategy 2017-2021 assigned significant importance to preschool education as an important stage in human life, which largely determines one's success in the future.¹⁹ Generally, the Government of Georgia (GoG) acknowledges that preschool education plays an important role in fostering positive attitudes towards learning among children. As observed by UNICEF, early and preschool education are also extremely important to ensure sustainable development of society and to provide equal opportunities for all children. Importantly, there is substantial evidence to suggest that children in disadvantaged circumstances achieve much better social and educational outcomes if they have participated in high-quality early childhood education programs.²⁰ In this context, the GoG has been stepping up its efforts in this field. For instance, the MoESCS has developed and is implementing a School Readiness Program for 5-year-old children to better prepare them for entry into primary school. As per the government website dedicated to preschool education and benchmarking study carried out by Civitas Georgica,²¹ the School Readiness Program is implemented in preschool education institutions as well as school readiness centers in public school buildings of Georgia.²²

Another notable initiative of the GoG's in the preschool education field has been to create a dedicated Unit of Preschool Education and, as mentioned earlier recruit preschool specialists at Resource Centers to support the municipalities in quality service delivery. As indicated on the MoESCS' website, several other recent activities of the Department include:

1. Developing guidelines to support local authorities in improving management efficiency of preschool education;
2. Developing alternative models of preschool education based on international practices and situation analysis in Georgia;
3. Setting up a monitoring group tasked with advising on how to improve preschool education services;

¹⁸ UNICEF, GEOSTAT (2018). The Georgia Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

¹⁹ MoESCS (2017). Consolidated Education Strategy 2017-2021.

²⁰ Smith, A. B., Taylor, N. J. (2015). "Early Childhood Education in New Zealand: Progress and Challenges in Achieving Children's Rights", in: *Enhancing Children's Rights: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice*, edited by Anne B. Smith, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756810/obo-9780199756810-0178.xml>

²¹ GPSA (2020). Kindergartens 2018-2019...

²² www.preschooleducation.ge

4. Organizing workshops for setting up qualifications' frameworks for preschool education institutions' ECEC staff;²³
5. Training of preschool practitioners of municipality Preschool Agencies;
6. Launching development of preschool "Curriculum for 2-5 year olds" and "for Mixed age groups", as well as instructional guideline for parents on child care and education together with Child Development Center of Ilia State University;
7. Monitoring of Preschool Education standards with a longitudinal methodologies;
8. Providing assistance and coaching to pilot kindergartens in adopting the National Preschool Education Standards;
9. Recruiting preschool specialists at ministry municipality offices (education resource centers) to provide support to municipalities with application of preschool education and teacher standards;
10. Together with UNICEF, building capacity of Zhvania School of Governance to support to local self-governance bodies in managing preschool education to high standards;
11. Together with UNICEF, working on Preschool Teacher Pre-service Education Subject Benchmark to be approved by National Education Quality Enhancement Center and applied by all university programs in the sector;
12. Together with World Bank, launching an education program – Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project (I2Q).²⁴

UNICEF is a GoG partner for several years regarding important initiatives, including initiation of the Preschool Law and national standards development, monitoring system of preschool education standards, elaboration of a range of preschool curricula and methodological resources for preschool teachers and directors, manuals of recommended standards, etc. Importantly, UNICEF is also supporting the Government of Georgia in coordination of preschool municipal systems and implementation of the preschool law, also in discussion related to a central Preschool Coordinating Body, that should ensure enforcement of national standards and equal access of all children to quality early education and preschool services.

In addition, **the World Bank has been a constant donor and development partner in Georgia, providing financial and technical support for the improvement of the country's social policies, including related to preschool education.** The World Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Georgia for financial years 2019-2022 contains a designated focus area entitled "Invest in Human Capital" which stipulates for the allocation of resources to preschool education. The CPF states that 'Early childhood development interventions will be critical to preparing Georgians for their working future, as most essential higher-order cognitive and socio-emotional skills, along with a strong sense of empathy, have their roots in the early years.' The "Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project", described in the subsequent section, is part of these efforts.

Moreover, in February 2020, the GoG and World Bank launched an Education program entitled "Innovation, Inclusion and Quality" (I2Q) targeting among others improving access and quality to preschool education in Georgia. The 128.3 million USD project allocates approx. 12 million USD for preschool and will focus on:

- (a) Improving the quality of ECEC programs across the country;
- (b) Increasing equitable access to Pre-School education for successful transition to school;
- (c) Improving infrastructure to support innovative primary education, including Pre-School.

²³ MESCS Department of Pre-school Education. <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=4908&lang=eng> (accessed on 15/04/2020).

²⁴ World Bank (2020). Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project...

The civil society also plays a valuable role in expanding access to and improving the quality of preschool education system in Georgia. With the support of Civitas Georgica, alternative preschool services where children can spend up to three hours per day have been established in some municipalities.²⁵ Numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) including international NGOs (INGOs), such as World Vision International, Ilia State University, Georgian Portage Association, Innovation for Inclusive Societies and McLain Association, provide capacity building with regards to standards and other key ECEC-related issues. In 2007, Georgia also joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) of the World Bank and UNICEF. Within the GPE framework, the government was supported in the development and implementation of Georgia's 2007-2011 Consolidated Education Strategy and Action Plan. Notably, the GPE approach also encouraged collaboration in the education sector in Georgia: partners from civil society organizations and development agencies were invited by the MoESCS to form an inter-agency group assisting the ministry in the development of the strategy.²⁶

Save the Children has been one of the key non-governmental organizations working with the Georgian government in the field of preschool education. Most recently, Save the Children's advocacy efforts resulted in the initiation of a new Inclusive Education Strategy and relevant Action Plan for years 2019-2022. As a result, a formal Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Save the Children and MoESCS within which the former provides technical assistance to the latter in the policy drafting process. In line with Save the Children's overall focus on social accountability, special efforts were made to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in the elaboration of the strategy. For example, a thematic working group was established with the participation of inclusive education experts, children with special educational needs (SEN) and parents of children with SEN, government and civil sector representatives. Regular round table meetings were held and a public hearing on the strategy was organized in order to maximize the social accountability of initiative.²⁷

Nevertheless, collaboration of the government with children, parents and the civil society in Georgia continues to take place on irregular, program/project basis rather than being an integral part of the overall policy-making processes. In the field of preschool education, progress, including on incorporating beneficiaries and civil society's views in policy-making, remains hampered due to the data deficit regarding preschool service delivery, financing of the services and related feedback collection from children and their parents.²⁸

And last, but not least, the COVID-19 pandemic and the respective lockdown efforts have put pressures on preschool education system in Georgia. Preschool closures for an undefined time affected both children's education and development, and their access to nutrition and adequate supervision. GoG was relatively fast in responding to the pandemic with emergency measures including distribution of food to preschool children's families and establishing some other safety nets.

1.2 Evaluation object: Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project

In this context, between April and October 2017,²⁹ SCG and the local NGO Civitas Georgica began implementing almost 3-year long "Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability

²⁵ A guidebook developed in 2012 about alternative preschool education for community development:

http://dspace.nplg.gov.ge/bitstream/1234/13375/1/Alternatiuli_Skolamdeli_Ganatleba.pdf (accessed on 17/05/2019).

²⁶ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/country/georgia>

²⁷ Save the Children Georgia. <https://georgia.savethechildren.net/news/national-inclusive-education-strategy-and-action-plan-georgia>

²⁸ UNICEF, NAEC (2018). Study on Quality of Early Childhood Education...

²⁹ The Project officially began in April 2017 but due to contractual issues, the full-fledged participation of both partners only commenced in October that year.

Processes Project” financed by the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) in particular. This section outlines the Project’s objectives, key features and implementation modalities. The Project description is preceded by a brief outline of the GPSA approach.

1.2.1 The Global Partnership for Social Accountability

The GPSA is a global multi-stakeholder coalition of donors and development actors providing funding and technical support to civil society organizations (CSOs) in GPSA partner countries to work together with governments to solve critical governance and development problems. Based on the recognition that ‘carefully designed, sensible public policies too often are not adopted or implemented because of governance failures [where] different individuals and groups in societies fail to commit, cooperate, and coordinate to achieve desirable development goals, the GPSA focuses on fostering multi-stakeholder compacts as vehicles for country-level governance reforms and improved service delivery.

As per the GPSA’s Theory of Change (ToC), the main envisaged outcomes of the action are: (1) constructive engagement between actors in civil society and the executive branch of country governments for improved service delivery and responsiveness to citizen needs; and (2) collaboration between social accountability initiatives and state accountability institutions in overseeing service delivery by the executive branch.³⁰

The mechanisms through which these changes are to be achieved have been articulated in the GPSA’s Theory of Action (ToA), shown in figure 1. The intervention’s ToA operationalizes GPSA’s Theory of Change and lays out the key initial steps, core actions, medium- and long-term results, and the learning and growth envisaged. **The medium-long term effects** of the intervention include:

- ◆ Government and other stakeholders take **corrective measures** informed by multi-stakeholder compacts;
- ◆ Government takes up elements of collaborative social accountability processes to **apply, sustain or scale up collaborative social accountability** and/or inform substantive decisions;
- ◆ Vibrant and stronger **partnership** for collaborative social accountability;
- ◆ Experiences in collaborative accountability generate **knowledge and learning** that can be adapted and applied by other stakeholders;

The **long-term effects** are the following:

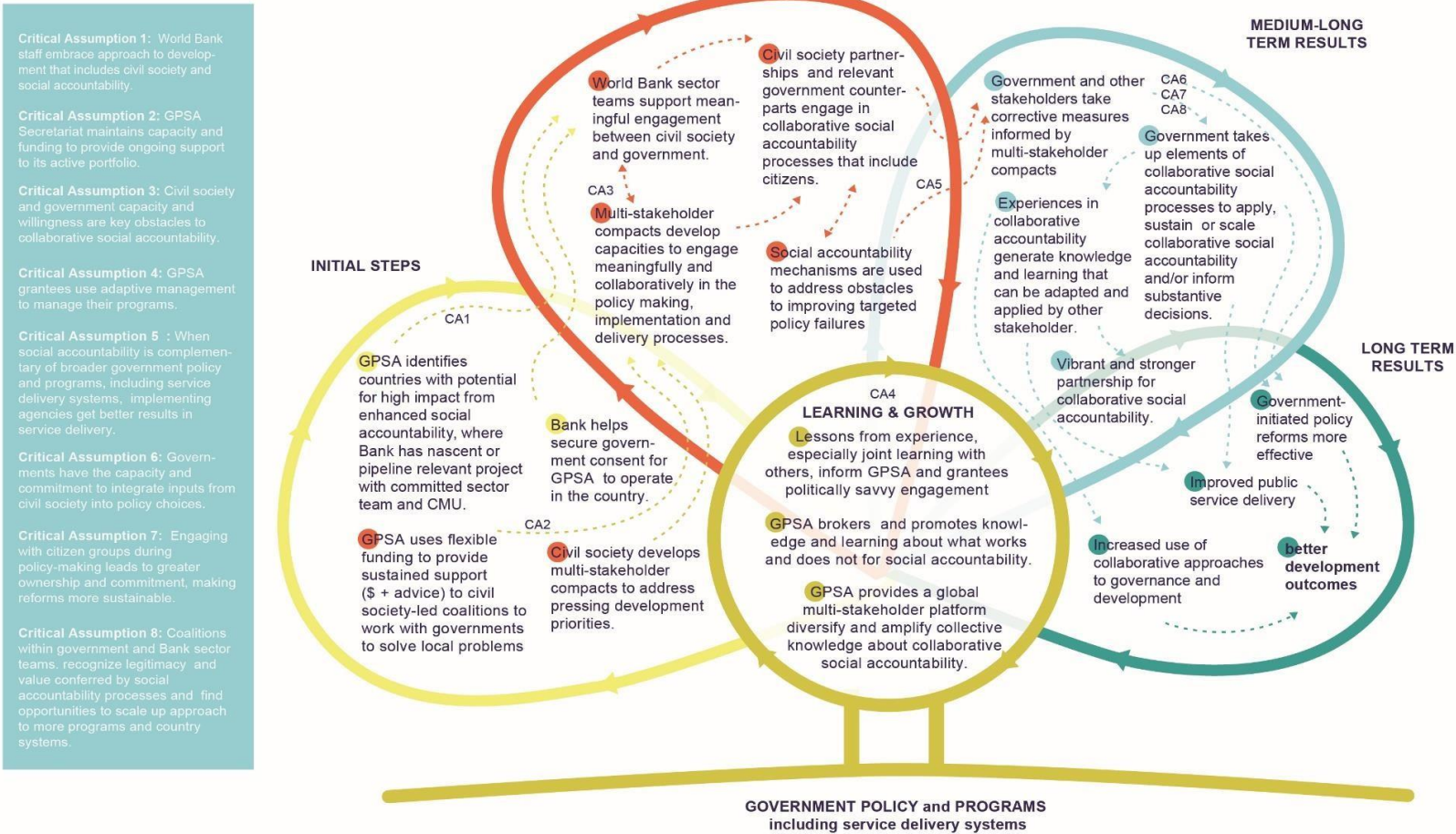
- ◆ Government-initiated policy **reforms** are more effective;
- ◆ Improved **public service delivery**;
- ◆ Increased **use of collaborative approaches** to governance;
- ◆ Better **development outcomes**.

³⁰ Global Partnership for Social Accountability: Results Framework.

Figure 1: GPSA Theory of Action

PROBLEM

Government processes in many countries lack meaningful engagement between citizens and government that can lead to more effective policy reforms and improved service delivery. Both government and civil society lack the experience and capacity to problem-solving together.



Source: GPSA Theory of Action note

1.2.2 Project's objectives, key features and implementation modalities

Implemented jointly by SCG and Civitas Georgica (CG), the “Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project” received a grant of 680,000 USD from the World Bank. Initially scheduled to start in January 2017, due to contractual complications, the Project only fully kicked off eight months later, i.e. in October 2017. As the delay shortened the Project duration from 36 to 29 months, a no-cost six-month extension was granted in January 2020, and the Project is currently scheduled to end on July 16th 2020.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to ‘Improve preschool education monitoring systems in Georgian municipalities through collaborative, social accountability-oriented benchmarking activities.’

The direct beneficiaries of the Project include preschool age children and their parents, teachers and caregivers in 42 of Georgia’s 64 municipalities.³¹ The Project’s indirect beneficiaries include all Georgian municipalities and preschools, which will be introduced to the social accountability tools, approaches and lessons of the Project via the outreach of the National Preschool Association. Furthermore, MoESCS and the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MIDPLHSA) can use the results generated from the implementation of the benchmarking methodology. As per the Project description fiche, the initiative is planned to directly reach up to 50,000 beneficiaries during its lifetime, although due to the addition of extra municipalities, the number is likely to be higher in reality.

As stated in the Project description fiche, the end goal of the Project is that the data collected via the benchmarking exercise is regularly used to inform decisions made in preschool education sector. According to project documents, these objectives are to be accomplished by the achievement of the three following **intended results**:

1. Creating a **comprehensive benchmarking and monitoring system** to assess quality of preschool services through a collaborative stakeholder process;
2. Establishing a **national mechanism for a) capacity development of preschool service providers** for improving service delivery and **b) improving social accountability practices** for bettering service delivery;
3. Facilitating **knowledge and learning** to enhance effectiveness of social accountability interventions and project management.³²

The Project is made up of the three components corresponding to the intended results:

Component 1: Benchmarking and Monitoring System for Preschool Services Assessment

Objective: To develop monitoring and benchmarking tools and guidelines for assessment, evaluation and monitoring of municipal preschool service provision through (i) carrying out participatory stakeholder consultations; (ii) piloting the proposed benchmarking methodology in seven pre-selected municipalities, documenting the results, lessons learned and best practices; and (iii) organizing workshops with participating pilot municipalities to discuss the results, common issues and gaps to further refine and revise the benchmarking methodology.

The main activities under this component include:

- ◆ Activity 1.1 - With the technical support of international and national experts, and in close

³¹ Initially, the SCG and the Implementing Partner intended to cover beneficiaries from 27 municipalities. This was later expanded to include additional 15 who expressed their strong interest and commitment to participate during the municipality selection process

³² <https://www.thegpsa.org/project/improved-social-accountability-bettering-preschool-quality-georgia>

consultation with central and local government, development of collaborative monitoring and feedback (benchmarking) methodology.

- ◆ Activity 1.2 - Develop guidelines to evaluate municipal preschool service provision through participatory process.
- ◆ Activity 1.3 - Piloting of the proposed monitoring and benchmarking methodology in 7 selected municipalities (Year One) and documentation of pilot results including challenges and success of implementation and political influences for further contextual adaptations.
- ◆ Activity 1.4 - Analyze information to inform the pilot and manage risks.

Component 2: National Mechanism for Capacity Development of Preschool Service Providers

Objective: Conducting capacity building sessions for local preschool service providers through the National Preschool Association (NPA) for all targeted municipalities on the benchmarking methodology to assess and improve quality care and development, resource allocation and accessibility issues, social accountability and feedback mechanisms for community members. Creating a web-based platform for exchange of experiences and good practices between municipalities and the NPA, conducting workshops to disseminate information aimed at strengthening partnerships between NPA, municipal governments and the MoESCS .

The main activities and corresponding outputs/deliverables of this component include:

- ◆ Activity 2.1 - Establishing a National Preschool Association (NPA) of Georgia to support of preschool service development and including task-force groups consisting of 5 to 10 members: parents, representatives of preschool institutions, civil society reps/ local NGO.
- ◆ Activity 2.2 - Building the capacities of the NPA members via a Training of Trainers effort to roll out the benchmarking methodology to assess and improve (a) quality care and development, resource allocation and accessibility issues; and (b) social accountability i.e. parents and community members feedback mechanism
- ◆ Activity 2.3 - Support NPA in all project locations to hold negotiations with local government and preschool service providers and sign the memorandum of understanding for collaboration in joint benchmarking utilization
- ◆ Activity 2.6 - Constructive engagement for national-level changes
- ◆ Activity 2.7 - Communicating benchmarking results to national and local authorities countrywide
- ◆ Activity 2.8 - Raising public awareness and debate about social accountability mechanisms for improved preschool education in Georgia, including lessons from the benchmarking highlighted.

Component 3: Facilitating Knowledge and Learning; and Project Management

Objective: Developing mechanisms for capturing and facilitating knowledge exchange among stakeholders through (i) designing indicators for lessons learned during the Project implementation; (ii) developing tools and mechanisms for learning and sharing them among social accountability practitioners (including benchmarking results); and (iii) implementing peer learning exchanges between the Recipient, NPA, municipal authorities, and the MoESCS.

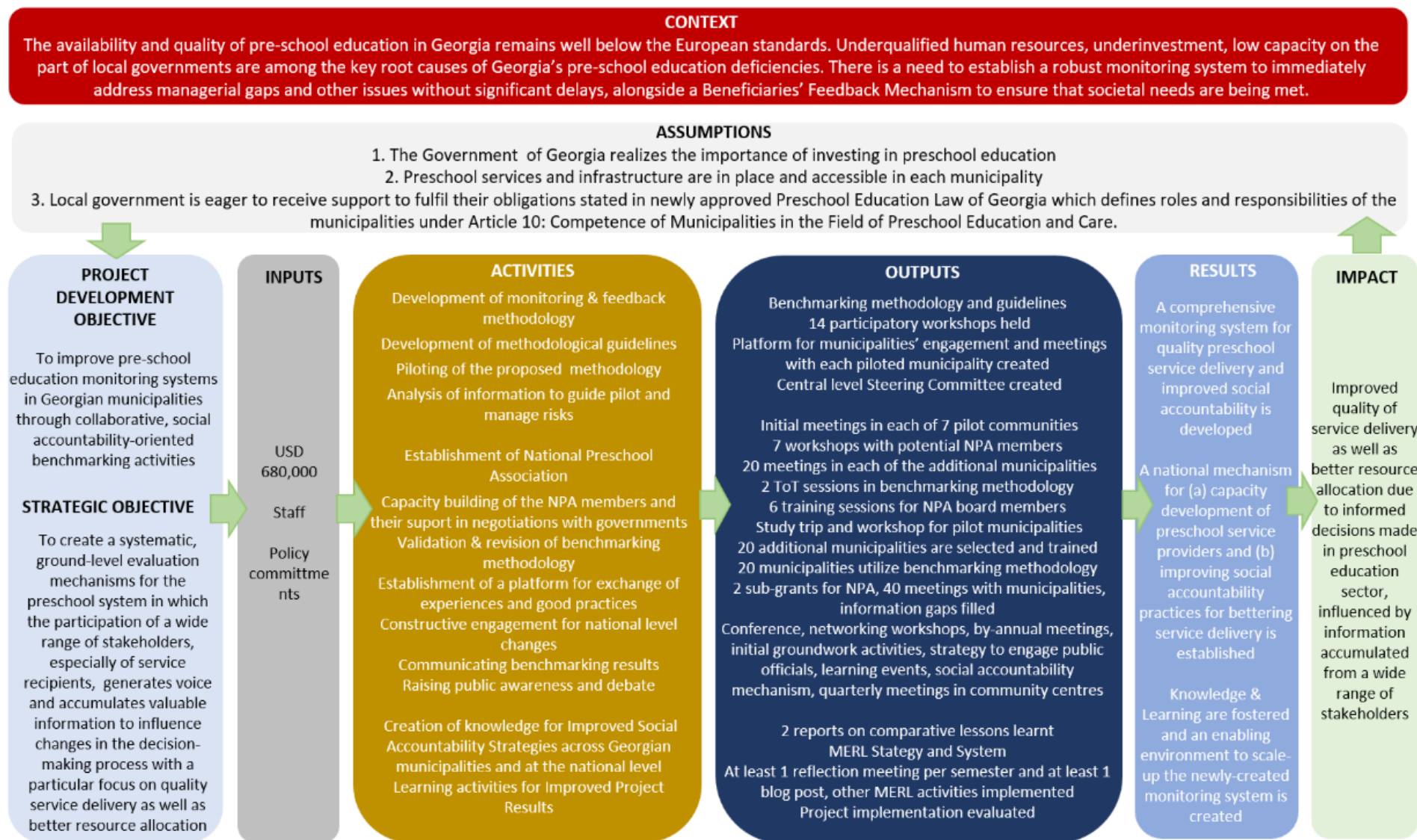
The main activities and corresponding outputs/deliverables of this component include:

- ◆ Activity 3.1. Knowledge for Improved Social Accountability Strategies across Georgian municipalities and at the national level

◆ Activity 3.2. Learning for Improved Project Results

Figure 2 depicts the Project's detailed ToC based on its logic model and other Project documents.

Figure 2: Theory of Change of the “Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes Project”



At the start, the Project aimed to target 27 out of the 71 municipalities³³ in Georgia which demonstrate the greatest dedication and potential to participate in the Project. The National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia was tasked with distributing information about the Project and a selection committee consisting from Project partners, World Bank, MoESCS, MIDPLHSA and UNICEF representatives was formed to pick the participating parties. The process of selecting participating municipalities was two-fold. In a first round, seven municipalities were selected for the initial pilot stage. These were selected on the basis of several considerations, such as varied size, urban and rural character and large ethnic minority population. Additionally, municipalities where Save the Children and Civitas Georgica already established strong ties and gained substantial trust among local stakeholders were preferred. The remaining 20 municipalities were selected based on their motivation and potential to successfully carry out the benchmarking. Importantly, both selection procedures also took into account the commitment (regulatory as well as budgetary) of municipalities to maintain the benchmarking procedure beyond the lifetime of the Project. Due to high interest and dedication expressed by a much larger number of municipalities and after internal discussions within the Project team, however, 42 municipalities which expressed the will to be engaged were included to participate in the Project activities.

The Project is implemented in a dual-management mode. As such, SCG is responsible for the management of the Project and implementation at the national and international levels, including reporting, finances, organizing study visits, contracting international experts and communication with MoESCS and the Steering Committee. Civitas Georgica, in turn, is responsible for all implementation matters at the local level, including the collaboration with municipal authorities and Project beneficiaries, capacity building activities, oversight over local experts, etc.

³³ In 2017, the number of municipalities was reduced to 64.

2 Aims and scope of the evaluation

This section presents the purpose of the final evaluation of the Project, providing an understanding of the focus issues and a base for the methodological approach described in the subsequent section. It also delineates the scope of the evaluation and outlines the main users of the final evaluation report.

2.1 Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The objective of this part of the assignment is to carry out the final evaluation of the “Improving Preschool Education in Georgia through Social Accountability Processes” Project, focusing on the Project outcomes and contexts in which social accountability mechanisms were most effective i.e. how and why do the outcomes vary across contexts.

The Project evaluation shall provide an **assessment of the delivery of the Project on strategy, outcome and output level**. In particular, the evaluation will place an emphasis on the following:

- **Connection among the various component parts** of the Project;
- Project **contribution to the Project outcome-level results**;
- Project **contribution as per the global GPSA theory of action**, including its key assumptions and process outcomes;
- The **factors** (contextual, organizational, sectoral) which influenced (positively and negatively) the achievement of the outcomes of the Project.

As per donor preferences expressed during the Inception Phase, the evaluation did not focus on Project individual components and outputs. Rather, it aimed to assess them at a meta level, with emphasis on the interconnectedness between them that ensures stronger social accountability and the circumstances in which they were achieved or not.

The final evaluation intends to generate learning and knowledge about the Project’s contribution to development outcomes and GPSA theory of action. It aimed to provide information and recommendations on **improving the social accountability strategies, programs and projects in general** and on the future actions to scale-up the utilization of social accountability-oriented processes **in Georgia particularly**.

The final evaluation assessed the period from the beginning of the Project - **April 2017 till July 2020**. In doing so, it covered **10 municipalities** of Georgia, including the 7 pilot municipalities. The municipalities for data collection were selected together with SCG in a purposeful manner, and included: Tianeti, Rustavi, Marneuli, Gardabani, Dusheti, Baghdati, Ozurgeti, Sachkhere, Bolnisi, and Batumi.

The primary intended users of the evaluation include Save the Children and implementing partner local NGO International Association Civitas Georgica, the World Bank, and the Global Partnership for Social Accountability specifically as well as the National Preschool Association. Stakeholders who are also expected to benefit from the evaluation findings include Georgia’s government bodies such as the Ministry of Education and Science, local governments and target communities.

In the light of the objectives of the study, and building on the results of the mid-term evaluation which explored the relevance, progress and risks to outcomes achievement and sustainability of the Project, the final evaluation covered the following principal evaluation areas:

◆ Results/outcomes

◆ **Learning potential and replicability**

◆ **Sustainability**

The table below presents the evaluation questions for which answers were sought to evaluate the intervention against the above criteria.

Table 1: Evaluation questions

Results/outcomes	
EQ1	Did the Project produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short, medium and long term?
EQ2	In what ways and in what circumstances (contextual, organizational, sectoral) has the results been achieved?
EQ3	What are the unexpected results – positive and negative – produced by the Project? In what circumstances and due to what factors did these unexpected results appeared?
EQ4	Is the benchmarking methodology used effectively in wide variety of municipalities with different political, environmental, ethnical and economic circumstances?
EQ5	Do the monitoring /benchmarking results lead to tangible improvements as defined by local stakeholders? Is the methodology transferred and adopted by non-participating municipalities?
EQ6	To what extent do the results validate the GPSA's theory of action and its adaptation to the Georgian educational contexts through the project?
Learning potential and replicability	
EQ7	How can this work be used to develop social accountability strategies and approaches in Georgia as well as other countries?
EQ8	What lessons can be documented from the implementation of the Project so far?
Sustainability	
EQ9	Under what conditions will the results be sustainable? What is the risk that the outcomes achieved will not be sustainable?
EQ10	What are the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Project framework in terms of long-term viability and sustainability?
EQ11	Is the Project intervention model replicable?

A full evaluation matrix including the methods and indicators used to seek answers for the specific questions is available in Annex 2.

3 Methodological approach

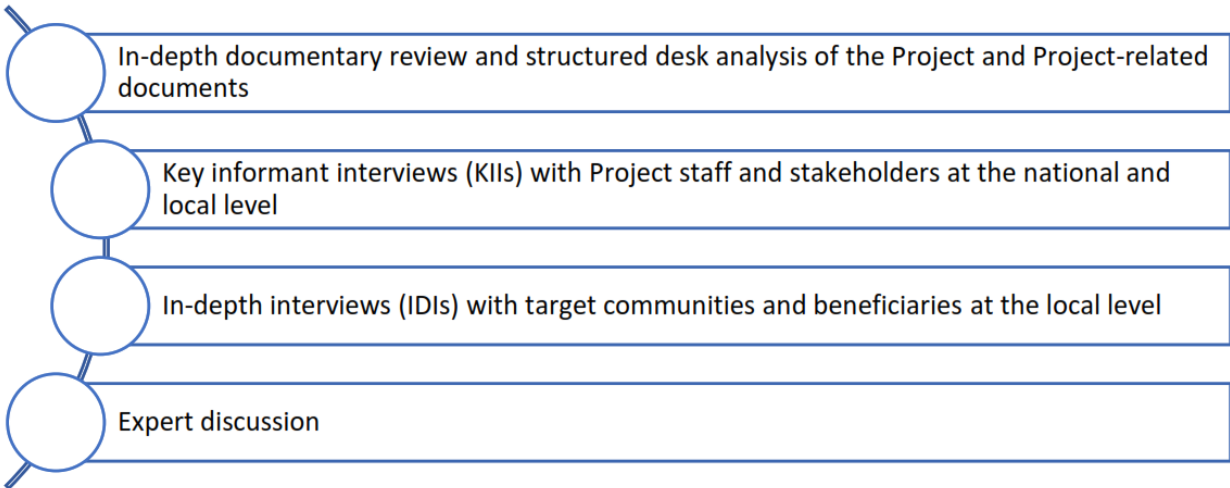
In this section, we present the approach and methods adopted for the implementation of the evaluation, including a description of the stakeholders consulted. The section also includes a brief outline of the limitations encountered during the research.

3.1 Approach and methods

The final evaluation is **formative** in nature as its primary objective is to provide learning on the intervention’s achievements and their expected sustainability, as well as lessons learnt on the implementation of social accountability mechanisms. The evaluation followed a **participatory approach** in order to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders and Project beneficiaries in particular are gauged and form the basis for the evaluation’s recommendations. Thus, the design of the methodology was guided by the principle to strongly engage the local stakeholders the Project beneficiaries in all selected locations. A series of in-depth interviews with all the most relevant stakeholders as well as the Project beneficiaries were organized to ensure this.

The methodology model designed for this evaluation aimed to utilize the best mix of data gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the research questions and generate maximum learning within the limits of resources and availability of data. In order to serve this purpose, the evaluation followed a **mixed-methods approach**, also allowing for the triangulation of findings to ensure their relevance. The data collection tools selected were qualitative and included in-depth desk research, key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) with target communities and beneficiaries, and an expert discussion. By doing so, focus was placed on discovering diverse and complex experiences and views of informants to comprehend the performance of the Project with all its nuance. While initially planned, due to the epidemiological situation, the organization of focus group discussions was not possible (and IDIs with the beneficiaries were carried out instead). Figure 3 below shows all four data collection methods used:

Figure 3: Evaluation data collection methods



To demonstrate causality the evaluation also employed a theory-based approach to evaluation and simplified qualitative comparative analysis (QCA), which guided the analysis of the Project implementation in selected municipalities understood as cases to test theories of change and answer the question “what works best, why and under what circumstances”³ Given a strong emphasis on learning and knowledge gathering purposes as

³ Baptist, C., and Befani, B. (2015). Qualitative Comparative Analysis – A Rigorous Qualitative Method for Assessing Impact, Coffey. Retrieved from: <http://www.coffey.com/assets/Ingenuity/Qualitative-Comparative-Analysis-June-2015.pdf>

well as on importance of contextual conditions expressed by the Client and GPSA Results Framework, QCA serves a learning purpose as it helps to unravel explanatory patterns for “success” and “failure” of existing cases, with the possibility to inform potential future cases.⁴ As such, it is primarily oriented towards understanding what caused a certain effect (i.e. success, outcome, or impact) by asking the following overarching question: “What sets of factors are likely to influence an effect?”. It traces factors, and their combinations, that are necessary, most effective, and make the difference for the effect as well as circumstances and key target groups affected.

The fieldwork took place at two levels: central and local level. It aimed at obtaining in-depth information and answer the evaluation questions, particularly where gaps in the literature/documents are identified. It also permitted the active engagement of the national and local authorities, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the study. Due to the epidemiological situation, all data collection which was initially planned to be carried out in-person was completed remotely, via online teleconferencing tools and well as phones, depending on respondent preferences.

At the central level, the **selection of interviewees for KIIs** included the perspectives of the following type of actors:

- ◆ Category I: Implementing partners
- ◆ Category II: Donor organization
- ◆ Category III: Bodies created within the Project
- ◆ Category IV: Governmental ministries
- ◆ Category V: Experts in the area of preschool education.

Altogether, **11 KIIs were successfully conducted at the central level.** A list of the completed interviews with respondents at the central and international level can be found in Annex I.

At the local/municipality level, KIIs and IDIs were conducted in 10 municipalities. These included the five pilot municipalities of Rustavi, Gardabani, Marneuli, Dusheti and Tianeti as well as Baghdati, Ozurgeti, Sachkhere, Bolnisi, and Batumi. Altogether, **21 KIIs and 14 IDIs were conducted in these locations.** The target group for the KIIs was mixed and included:

- ◆ representatives of municipal government responsible for preschool education;
- ◆ representatives of kindergarten unions;
- ◆ NPA representatives; and
- ◆ heads of kindergartens.

The IDIs focused on gauging the views of the beneficiaries of target communities of the Project, namely kindergarten staff and parents, especially those more familiar in development of preschool education and the Project where possible. The full list of interviews held at the local level can be found in Annex I.

While not envisaged by the ToR, an **expert discussion** was also organized. Following the reception of Client’s requirements related to the study and Ecorys’ experience from the mid-term evaluation of the Project, the Project team suggested this method to SCG as a way to further enrich the study findings. Specifically, in the inception phase, more focus on the study on circumstances (contextual, organizational, sectoral) and factors that impacted Project results was requested. As experience from the mid-term evaluation has shown, many respondents, particularly at the local level, were not very familiar with such issues. Therefore, gathering a group of stakeholders/experts knowledgeable about the Project and – more importantly – about its setting was agreed on as the best way to complement this explore this area of inquiry.

⁴ Pattyn, V., Molenveld, A., Befani, B. (2017). Qualitative Comparative Analysis as an Evaluation Tool: Lessons from an Application in Development Cooperation, American Journal of Evaluation.

Six experts took part in the discussion, representing municipality kindergarten unions and non-governmental organizations working in the preschool education field. The meeting was held on 19 June 2020 with the use of video conferencing tools (Microsoft Teams). The main goal of this event was twofold:

- ◆ To review **key factors, conditions, circumstances already identified** as decisive for achieving, sustaining, scaling-up and replicating the Project results; and,
- ◆ To contribute to explanation **how the main factors/circumstances influenced Project achievements (results) and non-achievements.**

The final evaluation has been implemented in three subsequent phases: inception phase, implementation phase and reporting and validation phase, each connected one of the three main deliverables: Inception Report, Brief Mission Report, and the Final Evaluation Report.

3.2 Limitations of the study

While the evaluation process followed a rigorous and tailor-made approach to maximize the validity and reliability of the findings, it is important to acknowledge several key limitations to the study results:

- ◆ **Epidemiological situation:** The evaluation implementation took place in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and restrictions on movement and gathering were also introduced in Georgia. The epidemiological situation effectively inhibiting any face-to-face interactions for the purpose of the evaluation. Therefore, all meetings and data collection previously planned on the ground were organized remotely instead. The evaluators employed all possible measures to mitigate the impacts of this change (for instance by using the telephone to ensure that no respondents are excluded from the process because of a lack of access to the internet). However, the potential extra value of exchanges during group or face-to-face interactions could not be capitalized on. Where group exchanges were organized (expert panel), internet instability of some participants caused connection issues, posing challenges to free-flowing and uninterrupted exchange.
- ◆ **Municipality sample limitations:** Data collection was limited to 10 municipalities participating in the Project. As a result, the evaluation does not include the views and opinions of many other municipalities which participated in the Project. Moreover, while the purposeful selection of the municipalities (including the seven pilot municipalities) allowed for obtaining rich evidence, it may have led to biases where stakeholders in the most active (and potentially positive towards the Project) only were consulted.
- ◆ **Exclusion of non-participating municipalities:** Given the scope and budget limitations of the evaluation, the views of non-participating municipalities were not sought for this evaluation. As a result, the evaluators were able to gain only limited insights about the reasons for which some municipalities did not participate in the Project. As a result, the evaluation's findings on the potential scaling up of the Project to include all Georgia's municipalities are arguably fragmentary.
- ◆ **Timing of the evaluation:** The evaluation began and ended while the Project was still on-going. Consequently, the quality and outcomes of several activities which have not been finalized by the time of the evaluation could not be appraised. The timing of the evaluation also limited the extent to which sustainability of the Project as well as changes which the intervention contributed to at the national level could be assessed. As such, the assessment of these areas focused on exploring the strengths and weaknesses, and risks and opportunities of the intervention which are likely to affect its sustainability and broader results. The commencement of the final evaluation only six months after the completion of the mid-term evaluation also meant that some of the findings and recommendations from the two assessment phases are alike.
- ◆ **Experts' discussion (panel) composition:** While the presence of the Project Coordinator from SCG during the expert panel had an informational value added both for the evaluation and the Project

team, it may have affected the freedom with which critical views were voiced from other panel participants (especially those who were directly engaged in the Project).

4 Evaluation of Project results

This chapter presents the key findings formulated based on a triangulation of collected data from an in-depth desk review, experts' discussion, as well as remote KIIs and IDIs with Project team, donor representatives, other stakeholders and the beneficiaries. The findings are presented against the evaluation areas of results to be achieved thanks to the Project.

4.1 Comprehensive monitoring system

Benchmarking is one of the three outcomes of the Project. It has been intended to respond to the critical need for information and evidence on the Georgian preschool provision by developing a comprehensive data collection and preschool service collaborative quality monitoring mechanism. In total, implementation of the component covered all 10 of Georgia's regions, 44 (out of 67) municipalities, 284 kindergartens and 16,241 children.³⁴

The benchmarking methodology is a compilation of tools developed based on international best practices and adapted to the national context. It consists of a benchmarking matrix comprising standards for 14 domains at two levels: basic and advanced, 3 survey instruments (and user guidelines) to assess performance of each preschool institution against the benchmarks. The instruments include a survey for parents, a self-assessment tool for preschool institutions, and a self-administered financial survey of the preschool unions. The instruments are based on national preschool standards. In addition, SCG initially planned to pilot the Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool to receive feedback on the quality of services from children themselves, however, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic precluded implementation of the required activities. According to the Project team, SCG plans to translate the tool and make it available for future uses, including through future SCG projects.

The benchmarking instruments were developed in 2017-2018, piloted in 2018 in 7 municipalities across Georgia and are currently used by 32 municipalities in total (7 pilot and 25 additional municipalities). In 2019, the tool was digitized. The benchmarking is intended to be implemented every 2nd year. The results are analyzed locally and intended to feed in the decision-making in preschool sector.

At the time of the final evaluation, three cycles of benchmarking (initial 7 municipalities in 2018, 25 municipalities in 2019 and final (second) round of 7 municipalities in 2019-2020) were conducted. In each cycle, the benchmarking was accompanied by revision and refinement of the instruments to further improve and adapt it to local situation, trainings of the entities/individuals in charge of application of the instruments, and analysis and interpretation of the results. The results of the benchmarking studies are discussed at participatory meetings at municipal level and recommendations developed to respond to challenges identified during the study. The Project also monitored how preschool policy is informed by the study results and what changes are being planned and implemented.

In this regard, **several improvements resulting from the benchmarking exercise were reported** by stakeholders. The most notable are:

- ◆ Increases in **parent participation** and engagement with preschool services;
- ◆ Increased **budgets allocated by municipalities** for developmental toys and books;
- ◆ Introduction of improvements in **preschool infrastructure**;

³⁴ GPSA (2020). Grantee Progress Report, May 2020.

- ◆ Organization of **trainings for teachers** to enhance their competencies;
- ◆ Implementation of **structural changes** in preschool services, such as: opening of additional preschool groups or designating an additional caregiver to a group to balance the teacher-student ratio in line with the stipulations in the preschool law.

Overall, the following three major types of results from the benchmarking component can be observed:

1. The tool is well received and owned by beneficiaries. It is being applied to collect information as to the status of preschool institutions against the benchmarks and to improve preschool quality and social accountability. The tool’s adaptability and flexibility is seen as its major advantage by several stakeholders interviewed:

“The possibility to adopt the benchmarking methodology to the specific municipal context, which is characterized by vivid geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity, reflects the potential for its replicability and for supporting more coherent development across the municipality and beyond” (Gardabani Municipality Field Report).

2. Findings resulting from the comparative analysis of two cycles of the benchmarking administered in 2019 and 2020 demonstrate changes municipalities have put in place in all 14 assessed domains. This way the benchmarking study has already captured the trend in preschool reforms of the last 2 years.
3. Parents’ and teachers’ awareness, engagement and satisfaction with the tool is considerable and increases over time. A survey to measure the achievement of the result indicator³⁵ related to the benchmarking component carried out by the Project team revealed that:

- ◆ The majority of beneficiaries who participated in the survey are familiar with the benchmarking tool. In 2020, as many as 59% (as compared to 45% in 2019) surveyed respondents indicated they were well aware of the instrument, and only 8% indicated they have not heard about it (as compared to 7% in 2019).
- ◆ Results from the 2020 measurement showed that 50% of respondents were active participants in the study (as compared to 41% in the 2019 round) and 19% (as opposed to 15% in 2019) were not engaged in the study in any way.
- ◆ In 2020, 54% of respondents said they were aware of the effects of the benchmarking study (the share in 2019 equaling 53%) and 33% (39% in 2019) were partly aware of the changes that followed the benchmarking assessment.
- ◆ In 2020, 67% fully agreed (62% in 2019) and 31% partly agreed (25% in 2019) with the statement that there were some general improvements in their kindergarten over the last year. What is more, 73% of these respondents in 2020 assigned the improvements to the benchmarking study, representing a 40% increase in comparison to baseline.³⁶

It should be also noted that national-level stakeholders have limited information on the benchmarking tool and, consequently, no tangible effects of the mechanism could be identified at national level.

A more detailed picture of Project results achieved at various levels is presented in the five subsections below.

³⁵ Implemented first in 2019 (benchmark) and subsequently in 2020.

³⁶ SCG (2020). Annex 5 to the GPSA Grantee Progress Report May 2020 – Report on Indicator 2 of Results Framework; and SCG (2019). Annex 6 to the GPSA Grantee Progress Report October 2019 – Report on Indicator 2 of Results Framework.

4.1.1 Changes at the municipality level

The Project was very active at municipal-level, where most of the preschool governance and management mandate is vested in line with the Preschool Law of 2018. **The benchmarking study provided the local self-government authorities with an effective tool for planning the preschool policy, strategies, action plans and budgets.** According to municipality-level management and governing authorities, the study substantially contributed to building the capacity of local governmental bodies to undergo preschool authorization and monitoring processes and other national regulations.

In the opinion of the respondents interviewed for this evaluation, the benchmarking provided the heads of preschool unions, mayors and municipality Sakrebulo members with an instrument which allows them to have a broader view of the preschool system in their respective administrative entities, identify strengths and weaknesses therein, and use these learnings as an evidence base for more informed decision making:

“The benchmarking helped the local government to better see those priorities, which have not been addressed in the budget projection [...]. The benchmarking methodology is seen as an effective instrument for identification and tackling of problems at the municipality-, preschool education management union-, and kindergarten-levels. The comparison across municipalities allows an easy access to the best practices in the country in the preschool education sector and opens the opportunity to replicate them” (Rustavi municipality).

“Benchmarking tool gave us an opportunity to clearly identify our strengths, resources and weaknesses that we needed to improve. Well, of course we were aware of our challenges to some extent, however, the benchmarking results gave us a clear picture, what needs to be done, where do we need more comprehensive work, what recommendations need to be considered for which kindergarten” (Bolnisi kindergarten union head, Bolnisi municipality).

One of the most prominent results of the benchmarking exercise, as per the interviewees during the assessment process, was obtaining **an increased insight into the preschool policy planning and implementation, leading to re-evaluation of preschool services and to viewing them more as an education rather than only a care system.** This new understanding of preschool policy in most of the cases **resulted in the re-organization of preschool spending** to the extend the limited resources allowed for, and thus to increases in the share of investments in developmental toys and books, training of preschool personnel and other needs.

At the same time, the benchmarking study results showed municipal decision-makers that **“one size fits all” approach towards financing their preschool institutions was not effective** and that they needed to take into account the differences between kindergartens and related varying needs:

“The benchmarking occurred to be an instrument that made it possible to expose differences between the kindergartens in the municipality in many areas. Due to the benchmarking exercise, the municipality divided the budget categories in a different way than it has been done before. More specifically, they took into consideration different and specific kindergartens’ needs in accordance with their location (as for rural and urban kindergartens), linguistic and cultural differences, mountainous and remote areas” (Gardabani municipality).

In general, the whole Project and the benchmarking study were well-timed, as pursuant with the Preschool Law enforcement, municipal authorities had to assess the current state of the preschool institutions against the new preschool standards in the light of forthcoming authorization process. The assessment of kindergartens, against benchmarks aligned with national standards, produced valuable data for municipal authorities. **It helped them to see which preschool institutions were ready to pass the threshold set by**

the standards and which would fail the authorization process if there were no further investments in financial and technical resources.

“The Project gave us a better understanding of the standards and this is very important to make decisions which impact the challenges which the municipality has to address. However, once we have to decide that we need all kindergartens to meet those standards, we need to mobilize solid funds for rehabilitation, renovation, equipment, which is not realistic within the municipal budget” (Ozurgeti municipality).

The benchmarking study built a strong foundation for preschool authorization and monitoring processes, which is implied by the law and has not been put in place so far. The benchmarking process not only enabled preschool authorities to simulate authorization and monitoring process and built their capacity in using these tools, but it also provided them with baseline information on where their preschool systems stand against the national standards and what could be the results and implications for the introduction of preschool authorization and monitoring. As such, it **urged them to start working towards improving preschool systems to better meet the authorization standards once they are enforced.**

The benchmarking study and other components of the Project **increased the communication between various preschool education stakeholders.** By supporting and engaging preschool policy-makers and practitioners it positively influenced the way they assess and appreciate each other’s strengths and contributions. Preschool management unions started to see the kindergarten personnel as their allies in the common mission, rather than their protégées, while kindergarten management and more so the parents started to realize that their views matter for local officials. Inter-municipal cooperation has also been strengthened as the Project helped different municipalities to communicate, identify each other’s practices and exchange experiences, recommendations and opinions.

Besides targeted results, the benchmarking study had also some additional effects. Firstly, it helped all municipality-level stakeholders, including parents, to better understand the preschool education standards and preschool practices encouraged to meet them. Secondly, the benchmarking-related analysis, development of recommendations and advocating cycle showed the kindergartens, preschool unions and municipality authorities some of the possible ways in which preschool service quality can be improved without direct fiscal burdens. With the support of the Project team, the municipalities began initiating diversified approaches to enhancing preschool quality through engaging more stakeholders (parents and community members).

Social accountability mechanism –benchmarking, used for keen analysis of obstacles that hinder improvement of preschool education service in municipalities and reflected perspectives of all stakeholders, led to changes and improvements in service delivery. Accordingly, benchmarking was and will be directly used to address obstacles to improving targeted service delivery.

4.1.2 Changes at the kindergarten level

The kindergartens were responsible for administering the benchmarking and were one of the end-users of the information. There is a perceptible conviction among kindergarten-level stakeholders that the Project has contributed to positive changes at preschool institutions, most of which were triggered by the benchmarking study results. These include improvements such as: renovation of the buildings and courtyards/outdoor spaces, procuring more equipment and toys. More importantly, it has been observed by respondents that **teaching methodologies and approaches to learning have changed resulting from teachers improved competences**, while preschool **principals developed a vision and better understanding of educational matters.** On the structural side, some municipalities reported they have **changed the number of children or teachers per group** to improve the teacher-student ratio. These all can translate to considerable qualitative changes in preschool services.

“I am a father of four children. My youngest child goes to the kindergarten. Therefore, I have

an opportunity to compare his educational and caregiving programs with those for the older children. This comparison allows me to assume that these new approaches are very modern and child-oriented. The educational process in the kindergartens is progressive now. Children are not forced to learn poems by hard; they are engaged in the activities, which facilitate development of critical thinking, creativity and logics” (Deputy mayor, Gardabani Municipality).

“The Project ensured capacity building of the staff in terms of modern approaches to preschool education and prepared them to meet the new state requirements resulting from the law. It also raised their awareness about their roles and responsibilities, including in the area of education quality and parental engagement” (Ozurgeti Municipality Report).

The respondents in one of the municipalities appreciated the attempt by preschool authorities to take the specific needs of educational institutions into consideration. For instance, preschools located in urban areas received educational materials focused more on the nature, while rural preschools were given more books on different topics.

Another important improvement was the change in kindergarten-parent communication and collaboration approaches. The benchmarking helped kindergartens hear parents’ voices and notice that parents’ attitudes were not as positive as previously assumed. It also **facilitated a better understanding of the need to improve communications and accountability towards the community and beneficiaries** and to invest in better communications and collaboration mechanisms. The parental feedback started to be structurally collected and addressed, whereas mechanisms for systemic communication/dialogue with parents were developed and applied. In consequence, the **engagement of parents in planning and implementation of preschool education has increased.**

“I can see the results of the Project in this respect: parents are more educated about the processes taking place at the kindergarten. The Project facilitated deepening of the interactions between the kindergartens and parents” (Member of the municipality council, Rustavi Municipality).

Specifically, the **advisory councils were established in line with the law requirements, which transformed previously existing parent-teacher committees into a more meaningful and goal-oriented structures.** Another good practice includes a regular communication with parents, including reporting to parents on individual development of children, reported by several municipalities. Parents in turn were engaged in the activities targeted at refurbishment of preschool facilities, fund-raising or advocacy efforts to community members on different preschool needs.

The preschools started to integrate electronic communication tools in the kindergarten-parent communication that came very handy during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. It enabled the preschools to closely collaborate with parents to plan and assist education of their children at home and monitored their progress.

“During the lockdown caused by the pandemic the kindergartens recorded small videos and home assignments for children. Parents were very much engaged and interested, inquiring about the assignments via phone and posing questions. They tried to assist their children at best of their ability. This is a new approach to preschool education, which the union is observing in the past years” (Rustavi Municipality Report).

Finally, the Project contributed to an **increased awareness of new education standards among preschool principals and teachers.** It empowered them to unite their efforts and start improving their kindergartens to meet standards-related requirements with internal resources available.

Alongside these developments, a considerable restriction has also been reported in terms of addressing the needs identified thanks to the Project. The **key obstacle to the implementation of recommendations**

developed on the basis of benchmarking results, as indicated by most of respondents, **are budget limitations**. There were some municipalities, which reported minimal improvements administered as a result of the benchmarking study.

4.1.3 Changes at parent/community level

At grassroots level, the Project mostly worked with parents of children attending municipal kindergartens. However, it also indirectly outreached to wider community, notably more “powerful members of the community” in its attempt to engage them in improving preschool services.

The most significant effect on the community level was education of parents about the preschool system in Georgia and its quality standards, as well as about parental role as legal stakeholders of the system who are to take part in social accountability mechanisms, request information on the quality of preschool services, and demand improvements. They also learned about their roles and responsibilities in terms of more meaningful engagement in their children development process.

“[Parents] are even required to monitor the activities [at kindergartens]. This is not a joke, we are allowed to attend the lessons and observe the educational processes in the groups” (Parent, Tianeti Municipality).

The benchmarking tools and accompanying guidelines and trainings served to increase parents’ knowledge about these issues as a side effect to their involvement in the benchmarking study. One of the questionnaires (out of the three in the benchmarking study) was a parent survey that asked their opinion on the quality of the preschool services and processes. As reported by one of the municipalities, the parents participating in the benchmarking found the survey questions very relevant to the preschool system needs and **this tool helps them push municipality decision-makers to give answers to the existing challenges**. Through the survey parents received a tool to have their voice heard at institutional and municipal levels, to express their opinion about the services provided to their children and to be accounted for. The questionnaire collects information on attitudes of parents towards preschool services they receive and thus provides the decision-makers with their feedback, which should be taken into account. This way the Project targeted preschool and municipal actors to invest in managing parent expectations and attitudes, improve mutual communication and report to parents in their attempt to improve the visibility of the improvements in the kindergartens in the context of new preschool law, standards and benchmarking study results.

“A significant result of the benchmarking has been that now parents realized that there are some standards in preschool education that are good practice (having read the benchmarking questions during self-administration of questionnaires) and started thinking about this. Some actions implemented based on benchmarking recommendations included holding meetings with parents during which individual child development was discussed with each parent, or putting up information for the parents on information board in preschools” (SCG).

Another notable development contributing to **better understanding of preschool processes and more active engagement on the side of parents** are consultative boards of preschool institutions, where parent represent a majority of obligatory members (5 out of 7 members are parents, 2 teachers/caregivers). Consultative boards are structural components of preschool management implied by Preschool Law of 2018. They should meet at least quarterly and perform important functions, such as providing recommendations on: preschool service, educational schedule and materials, preschool budget and asset management, addressing parents’ complaints. They also report quarterly to the municipal-level decision-makers providing them with overall recommendations (Preschool Law 2018, Article 18, Consultative Board).

While the creation of the consultative boards cannot be assigned to the Project as such, the Project greatly **contributed to their establishment and capacity building of both preschool management and parents on roles and responsibilities of the board** (as it did with regards to other preschool regulations)

Thanks to the Project's focus on parental engagement, the following positive outcomes have been identified in this regard. For instance, the interviews in Tianeti municipality showed that **parents are in regular communication with the managers in majority of the kindergartens and in a constant dialogue with the Mayor's office** "about every topic of parental interest". Municipal-level decision-makers also use consultative processes that involve parents as useful tools for planning their preschool systems. As stated by one parent:

"[The government] organizes meetings with [parents] regularly and at these meetings [they] have a chance to exchange opinions and receive more information about municipal plans" (Parent, Tianeti Municipality).

"A teacher of my child informed me about this Project. Of course, all parents were informed equally. This resulted in active engagement of parents in everyday events and activities. The parents are aware of the education program and we are attending different relevant activities. We are regularly discussing different ideas related to the kindergarten-based education" (Parent, Gardabani Municipality).

4.1.4 Changes at national level

The uptake of the social accountability mechanism at municipal as well community level is high and evidenced by the finding that benchmarking, used for identification of challenges associated with quality of preschool education service delivery in municipalities and reflecting perspectives of all stakeholders, led to changes and improvements in service delivery. Therefore, it is a tool for planning the preschool policy, strategies, action plans and budgets that is also very highly assessed by parents and kindergarten community members.

Having the mandate to develop and support the implementation of preschool standards, central as well as local-level government institutions are to set up the monitoring and evaluation system⁵³⁷ In line with the Preschool Law they are expected to be equipped and capable to make improvements based on the evidence retracted from monitoring. As reported by Ministry representatives , the information received from benchmarking study might correspond with their needs in this aspect and contribute to building an effective standard assessment system.

The national-level stakeholders see a possibility to plan and implement the benchmarking study to better fit the diverse needs of central bodies. At the same time, and without harming its primary and core objective of supporting municipalities, it could be used to build sound self-assessment and development oriented systems. In doing so confidentiality of information would have to be ensured to encourage the self-assessing actors to present the real preschool situation in their municipality to external bodies with both its strengths and weaknesses.

The national-level stakeholders pointed out the potential of the benchmarking study to: 1) fill the gap in the information on the quality of preschool system; and 2) address the need for monitoring the reform implementation. **They see a space for cooperation and alignment of the benchmarking exercise with other similar efforts**, such as collection of data on preschool sector, assessment of national education standards' effectiveness (as already mentioned), or building unified platforms and systemic tools for municipal-level decision-makers to support their policy-making, and thus decentralization reforms in Georgia, with a sound information base. However, **the awareness on the actual benchmarking methodology, instruments and –**

⁵ MoESCS is the only central government body that is required to monitor the implementation of only one standard

to some extent – the results of benchmarking study is somewhat absent at the central level. In consequence, at the time of evaluation, no significant effects and results, or the lack of thereof, could be observed at the national level.

4.1.5 Changes among other actors

No perceptible impact could be measured for initiatives of other actors in the preschool area or beyond. As benchmarking study is owned and used by municipal-level stakeholders (the NPA, municipal governments, preschool unions and preschool institutions), other actors both at municipal- and central levels are less involved in this process. In consequence, they have limited or no access to the information regarding the benchmarking study methodology, procedures, implementors and results.

4.2 The National Preschool Association

Establishing a professional National Preschool Association (NPA) **for a) capacity development of preschool service providers** for improving service delivery and **b) improving social accountability practices** for bettering service delivery was one of the two major areas of action implemented within the Project that aimed at creating a systematic, ground-level evaluation mechanisms for the preschool system. Among the main reasons behind its creation is that, in Georgia, there are no instruments to monitor, provide feedback and develop recommendations for the preschool sector to improve service delivery and advocate for changes. This resulted in exclusion of various community-level stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, and children, from influencing public decision-making and thus poor targeting of government actions to address their needs and perspectives.

One of the NPA's roles is to address the above-listed challenges by implementing the national monitoring mechanism and ensuring that information gathered from local communities and parents will be brought to the decision-makers' attention. It is also to support kindergartens in quality improvement, capacity building of staff, as well as strengthening of horizontal (inter-municipal) and vertical coordination. **The Association is the first professional association of preschools in Georgia whose activities reflect both the interests of beneficiaries of preschool services, (parents and children) and professionals,** who directly provide preschool services (preschool caregivers, managers, and other staff).³⁸ By supporting community and parent action, **it empowers individuals to provide information that helps governments be accountable for service delivery.**³⁹ The assumption is that this wider range of engaged actors contributes to an improved quality of service delivery as it helps to identify immediate and systemic causes that impede the implementation of reforms and policies.⁴⁰

In mid-2020, 3 years after the Project's commencement, **there is an operating National Preschool Association (NPA) with functioning governance structures and sufficient operating budget, represented in 44 municipalities in Georgia.**⁴¹ The number of municipalities covered is higher than specified by an indicator for intermediary outcomes (i.e. 27 municipalities), which stems from high interest among municipalities in the NPA, which was joined by more municipalities than planned. Established as a platform of advisory professionals, the NPA follows up on the benchmarking system with technical recommendations for the preschool settings/municipalities. It therefore **shows potential for further development as the organization for voicing and advocating the rights and needs of preschool education society** and thus promoting local oversight and accountability for service delivery. The membership fees introduced for NPA

³⁸ GPSA_Part2_Save the Children-Rev_CO-120416.

³⁹ Guertzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). "The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions: Lessons from Social Accountability for Education." Global Partnership for Social Accountability Note 13. World Bank, Washington, DC. <https://gpsaknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/gpsa-not-13-education.pdf> (accessed on 5 July 2020).

⁴⁰ Guertzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). "The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions..." and World Bank (2018). World Development Report 2018 — LEARNING to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28340> (accessed on 5 July 2020).

⁴¹ The NPA unites 44 municipalities, out of which 9 opted out from undergoing benchmarking exercise.

members are to ensure sustainability of this mechanism after the Project's completion.

4.2.1 Capacity development

Research evidence shows that a more educated population generally demands more transparent use of public resources, better service delivery, and government accountability.⁴² On the contrary, a community with limited skills and knowledge who has little or no access to objective information remains unaware of weaknesses of the public policies as well as their desired outcome. This prevents them from demanding better quality of services from delivering institutions and governments.⁴³

As the mid-term evaluation (2019) of this Project summed up, there were visible limitations in the capacity and awareness among stakeholders and beneficiaries at municipal level when it came to triggering improvements in the preschool education sector. This refers above all to: low competencies of kindergarten staff and low preschools' capacity to become more independent entities providing quality services; limited involvement of parents in the kindergarten matters and their low awareness of preschool education for child development; and limited capacity to implement decentralization process at municipality level. These deficiencies were further reflected by minimal engagement of kindergartens in influencing reforming processes and limited interest of parents in the quality of ECEC provided. All these created obstacles for collaborative efforts to identify and solve contextualized problems and to advocate for implementation of necessary changes. In consequence, it was one of the main reasons why the improvement of quality of preschool services and education has rarely been at the frontline of local authorities' attention.

The final evaluation results show that the NPA plays a visible role among municipalities due to its potential to enhance the capacity of its own members, representatives of the municipality and kindergarten staff, thus, supporting the development of the preschool sector in the country. The meetings and training, which the NPA organized with the support of Civitas Georgica and Save the Children, made local representatives of preschool education management unions better prepared to assist kindergartens in their growth, while targeting challenges associated with lack of information among preschool directors, teachers and parents. The focus on capacity building among system specialists addressed one of the key needs in the preschool sector which is the lack of investment in professional development of this stakeholder group.

The contribution of the Association in terms of organizing trainings, events and different activities for the kindergartens and unions and thus increasing their knowledge related accountability in the preschool sector is assessed as significant by municipal stakeholders. It encouraged the participants to take more active part in the preschool-related matters, pose questions, voice concerns and provide information about their needs. This refers, amongst others, to the NPA's focus on development of parents' consultative body and parents' engagement in general (as illustrated earlier in section 4.1.3). Since parents in Georgia take very limited interest in the quality of ECEC provided and are rarely involved in the kindergarten matters, their increased influence on and involvement in the kindergarten matters became one of the NPA's chosen priorities. The main activity undertaken to achieve this was transforming the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) into advisory boards mandated in the new preschool law, which have more advice-giving character and can oversee the school budget. After participating in a training on kindergarten advisory boards conducted within the Project, the NPA conducted such training for parents where they identified issues that they will address through a joint initiative. In one case, for instance, they drafted a letter together to a local

⁴² Botero, J. C., Ponce, A. and Shleifer, A. (2013). "Education, Complaints, and Accountability". *Journal of Law and Economics* 56 (4): 959–96, quoted in World Development Report 2018.

⁴³ World Bank (2018). World Development Report 2018...

businessman, who owns a producing company, asking for financial assistance for purchasing new books for kindergarten library. As a result, they received 50 new books. While this approach did not address the capacity of preschool providers directly, it gave them previously unavailable insights on how their institutions are perceived by parent community. Parents, on the other hand, gained access to information on how much (or little) their children are benefitting from preschool (apart from receiving immediate care and nutrition). Equipped with this knowledge (including benchmarking process), parents can now hold preschools (and municipal decision-makers) accountable, while preschools can improve their services accordingly.

The Association plays an important role in facilitating learning across municipalities. Based on preliminary evidence, it can be expected that stronger and more effective municipalities will support those who experience more difficulties in facing challenges in preschool education. Accordingly, adapting best practices from more advanced municipalities can contribute to levelling inequalities among municipalities and thus more even development of the preschool education system. In a longer term, securing effective peer learning practice will result in more equal opportunities for children in accessing quality preschool services.

“In the context how preschool education is arranged in Georgia, the NPA can play an important role in experience sharing and thus levelling the inequalities across municipalities” (MoESCS’ representative).

“Experience sharing is very important. We are in constant communication with each other. For example, during the lockdown we were sharing experiences related to food distribution to the children at home. The Association also strengthens the personal relationships between the members and supports professional collaboration” (NPA representative).

By addressing the innovations introduced or reaffirmed by the Law on Early and Preschool Education and Care (e.g. authorization procedures, national standards, decentralization process in general) the NPA contributes strongly to building the capacity of preschool sector representatives and providers to give more impetus to reforming the preschool sector. It also supports municipal-level stakeholders in fulfilling their obligations related to implement decentralization process. Such assistance and focus helps to tackle the lack of guidance or strengthening activities among municipalities concerning the changes and requirements introduced by the law. For instance, trainings are planned on the procurement rules, which remain a great responsibility and a weak point for kindergartens unions who face difficulties in administering large tenders (e.g. on the food provision, constructional work).

“The authorization issues remain to be very painful for every municipality. In Ozurgeti we have 44 kindergartens in the municipality out of which apparently only three kindergartens meet all five standard criteria. At the meetings of the Association we are discussing the advantages and shortages of the standards. Based on the existing conditions we have to choose between the available kindergartens in every village which cannot meet the standard or optimization of many institutions. We have the kindergartens in some villages which are located in the buildings of the municipalities. Once we have to decide that we need all kindergartens to meet the standard we need to mobilize solid funds for rehabilitation, renovation, equipment which is not realistic. The Project gives us a better understanding of the standards and this is very important to make decisions which we still have to address” (NPA representative).

“The NPA is very motivated to advocate for the amendments in the authorization rule. “We know exactly that we need to advocate for the realistic regulations and plan to do so. We can protect our ideas against those decisions of civil servants who sit in their office and issue orders while they have

no clue about the real situation in the municipalities” (Head of the preschool education management union).

Thanks to the capacity building of NPA members throughout the Project, the Association is prepared to assist efforts to assess preschool service delivery, push for evidence-based policy-making, and bond local actors under common aim of improving quality of preschool education. Involving NPA member municipalities in the benchmarking exercise from the very beginning and handing-over its coordination to the Association at the second stage of the Project were powerful factors that ensured empowerment of the NPA members and ownership of the process. It equipped them with knowledge and skills necessary to understand the benchmarking methodology and applied instruments, analyze the results obtained, and develop recommendations for preschool institutions and other relevant actors. As a body designated to support the sustainability of benchmarking, the Association can now coordinate the monitoring process, encourage and motivate preschools to carry out self-assessment, and assist preschool institutions in sharing their experience, finding solutions, and planning remedial activities.

However, it was highlighted by the majority of respondents that NPA needs further capacity building through external support. Since the NPA is still a new body, it has not yet developed to its full capacity by the time of Project completion (more about this issue can be found in the section 6 that evaluates sustainability of the Project components). This maintains the validity of mid-term evaluation findings, which revealed reservations when it came to the Project’s ability to sufficiently train the NPA members to provide quality capacity building (other than for the benchmarking process implementation).

“The preschool unions and institutions are not strong enough. The perception that they are at the steering wheel, they can initiate, plan and implement something, is still not there. They still need capacity building. It is still too early to assure them that they can do it” (Preschool education expert).

Yet, when referring to the training of trainers (ToT) implemented withing the Project, the quarterly report of the Project team stated that it is “not expected that all trainers immediately would become highly qualified trainers and use all knowledge they receive during the ToT”. It also highlighted that those who benefited most were trainers who already had good trainer skills prior to the training. These trainers are then to develop their own training plans and train their fellow Methodists/teachers in their municipalities. It should be therefore ensured that trainers at the Association’s disposal should all be able to offer a quality capacity building opportunity to kindergarten educators.

4.2.2 Improving social accountability practices

The establishment of NPA filled the gap in the preschool sector, which now has a body representing preschool stakeholders at the municipal level. The Association is seen as a forum or platform for networking and information sharing between preschool practitioners and decision-makers from different municipalities. It gives the member municipalities an opportunity to support each-other through valuable recommendations, advice based on their ad hoc experiences, and to voice requirements to the central government. This access to a pool of opinions helps the Association to identify and target common problems and to develop a wider perspective of the preschool sector situation across the country.

“In the context how preschool education is arranged in Georgia, the NPA can play an important role in experience sharing and thus levelling the inequalities across municipalities” (MoESCS’ Representative).

By triggering inter-municipal discussion and connecting key sector stakeholders at the local level the NPA creates feedback loops between various stakeholders, which are seen an important factor for increasing

accountability in a successful community monitoring process.⁴⁴ It also engages preschool institutions and local policy-makers in problem solving to support implementation of necessary changes and reforms before they can be meaningfully held to account for delivering quality education.⁴⁵

The NPA is active at municipality level. The Association wrote a letter to municipality councils reminding them of 5 municipal-level normative acts to be adopted and met with mayors to explain them the benefits of implementing these documents. It also advised them on improving professional development of preschool staff. The result of this activities was that it was decided that 1 % will be spend on professional developments (NPA representative).

Research evidence shows that NPA is well placed to drive the social accountability process and to make sure that required changes are advocated for and addressed within the relevant state structures. As reported by various stakeholders, the NPA is mobilized to participate in decision-making process and – when necessary – to push for and support collaboration for regular appliance of the benchmark methodology. It has the capacity to monitor the quality rollout of benchmarking and the use of benchmarking results for the improvement of preschool practices. Since the NPA members are often members of kindergarten unions, they are well positioned to use the monitoring results in decision-making process and to monitor municipal budgets in order to check reflection of changes necessary to improve preschool quality and access.

The Association was moving very fast towards the progress. This is a great opportunity to have the connection throughout the country. You can see a big picture and this is very good. [The NPA] can present the unified requirements to the central government and push for real and necessary changes. The Association has a great potential to have an influence on the formation and reformation of the system in the country. This is the institution which is listened by the ministries and the parliament. This is a solid organization which unifies the unions, Civitas Georgica and Polish partners too. This solid representation is acknowledged by the mayors who concluded the memorandum of understanding recently. They took accountability for the efficiency of the processes (Head of the kindergarten union).

The local authorities express high support for the NPA, which suggests they acknowledge its reputation and institutional potential. Although not planned within the framework Project activities, the mayors signed a joint declaration on importance of provision of quality preschool services – a document developed, discussed and agreed with NPA board and the Mayor of Rustavi. This shows that the NPA successfully managed to direct **local bureaucrats’ attention towards ECEC and recognize it** as part of their social accountability. To maintain the momentum, the NPA’s action plan for 2020 envisages strengthening the partnership between the Association and other governmental as well as non-governmental entities in the country.

“I may even say that [mayors] are looking at the events differently. We have different situation in our municipality now in terms of mobilization, attention to the preschool education, engagement of the local government bodies (Head of the kindergarten union).

The central administration started to recognize the NPA’s role and involve – or looking to involve – it in their efforts as a partner and lawful representative of the sector. The inclusion of the MoESCS’ representatives in meetings and fora created within the Project increased visibility and position of the NPA at the national level. For instance, the MoESCS invited NPA representatives as members of selection committee recruiting preschool specialists for MoESCS’ regional offices and involved its members in hiring

⁴⁴ World Bank (2018). World Development Report 2018...quoted in Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions...”

⁴⁵ Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions...”

staff for resource rooms. This cooperation opened a space for the NPA to share the key issues on preschool sector that were identified by the Association with the preschool reform group and to advocate the school readiness program. Acting at the national level also increased NPA's recognition among municipalities where "it respected for its great potential to influence the formation and reformation of preschool education system in the country" (Municipality reporting fiche on Gardabani). All this implies that the **NPA helped to create – and became a part of – a new form of social accountability in the preschool sector and directed more focus on ECEC in Georgia.**

At the same time, it has been reported by some respondents (an expert in the preschool sector and MoESCS' representative) that the NPA does not yet appear to have much outreach at the central level. In a view of central administration representative, the Association might become an important actor that plays a part in decisions-making process, but it needs to be more pro-active in reaching the government with its messages.

"So far the NPA is not very active. It is the MoESCS that actually tries to reach out to them, involving them in some ministry-level administrative commissions as a major stakeholder" (MoESCS' representative).

As indicated in the mid-term evaluation of the Project, one reason for a weaker link between the NPA and the Ministry, if compared to municipal level, could be the relatively low level of engagement of the Steering Committee in the Project – the only body which secured the representation from the MoESCS.

Another potential obstacle for achieving a highly impactful benchmarking process and social accountability mechanism is the lack of representation of parents and teachers in the NPA. As argued by the World Bank, "community monitoring tends to have more impact when it covers things that parents can easily observe [...], and when a range of stakeholders (not just parents) are brought together in ways that lead to action".⁴⁶ While views of these two groups are collected through the benchmarking exercise and other collective bodies (e.g. parents' advisory boards), their exclusion from the NPA might have a negative impact the interpretation of the benchmarking results by subtracting the beneficiaries' perspective.

Finally, **while there are high expectations towards the NPA's activity, the body is not considered as fully self-sustainable institution at the moment,** according to the informants. For instance, the local government of one municipality "adopted" the Association as part of the city self-governance to ensure its continuation. There is an agreement among municipal-level respondents that the NPA still needs resources to become a stable structure capable of improving social accountability practices. As argued by a preschool education expert interviewed during this study, additional interventions might be needed, which require additional support, because beneficiaries need to see the results, that is the benefits of functioning social accountability mechanism.

4.3 Results at the GPSA framework level

The Project's overall results expected by the GPSA should be assessed positively. The Project's ability to address some of the key needs in the preschool education field in Georgia using collaborative social accountability processes has earned it a reputation of a success story within the GPSA itself.

As stressed by several interviewees, **the partnership between the lead grantee and the partner organization was built on mutual respect, trust, and capacity and experience complementarity,** enabling the Project team's high effectiveness and resilience in the face of challenges. **Considerable capacity gains** for both organizations can be identified as a result of the joint implementation experience. The last phases

⁴⁶ World Bank (2018). World Development Report 2018...

of the Project implementation showed that the partners' adaptive capacity understood as ability to adapt, adjust and modify interventions in due course has been especially strengthened. The partner organization also reported improved awareness and familiarity with Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) approaches and child programming, and both organizations said that they are developing or already developed new tools, procedures and/or approaches as a result of the Project.

In addition, the Project managed to **engage a range of relevant stakeholders** with a large role in preschool service delivery in Georgia, alongside a **large number of beneficiaries** of the initiative. As one interviewee stated, the Project is an illustrative example of how engaging different actors at the local level can help stimulate wide ownership of the Project and boosting its results:

“In effect, larger network is supported and a geographic target expands because an individual CSO has a limited capacity – it is possible to reach 7 and then 20 or more municipalities, but how do you get into all municipalities in a county? In this case, it is a set of interlinked strategies to ensure the sustainability and scalability of the model, which is not very common” (GPSA representative).

Table 2 below summarizes the Project's achievements at the level of the GPSA results framework. Outcomes 3 and 4 have not been included as the responsibility to assess them lies exclusively with the GPSA Secretariat. Performance indicators used to make judgments on achievements were adopted based on suggested indicators in the results framework and refined to adjust them to the level of the specific intervention.

Currently, it is also premature to assess the reaching of the GPSA PDO “to contribute to country-level governance reforms and improved service delivery through developing more sustainable and effective CSOs supporting collaborative social accountability initiatives.” However, the remaining sections hope to offer some speculation in this respect.

Table 2: Assessment of Project results against the GPSA results framework (version from November 2019)

Result	Indicator	Extent of achievement	Justification
OUTCOMES			
<p>Outcome 1:</p> <p><i>Civil society partnerships (lead grantee and partners) and relevant government counterparts engage in collaborative social accountability processes that include citizens.</i></p>	<p>High share of the most relevant actors who are responsible for preschool delivery in Georgia who are involved in the project activities as an active stakeholder</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project directly involved municipal authorities, kindergarten unions and preschool heads and teachers in 66% of Georgia’s municipalities; The majority of concerned stakeholders claim to continue to carry on with the benchmarking and NPA participation, and it is possible that more municipalities will also take part in the process in the future.
<p>Outcome 2:</p> <p><i>Elements of collaborative social accountability are taken up by governments beyond individual GPSA projects.</i></p>	<p>The government seeking to:</p> <p>(i) apply or sustain elements of collaborative social accountability mechanisms after life of the project</p> <p>(ii) adapt insights from GPSA projects to scale them through programs or policies; or</p> <p>(iii) apply them in additional localities or sectors.</p>	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A large proportion of the municipalities studied pledge to continue the benchmarking beyond the Project duration; Additional municipalities which did not participate in the Project also expressed the will to participate in the NPA; Central government realized the potential of the benchmarking tool and considers it in the sector strategy; Some evidence that this will be taken up by the World Bank-supported ECEC program; Limited evidence for achievement may stem from the timing of the evaluation and better results in this respect may be observed in the future.
<p>Outcome 5:</p> <p><i>Social accountability mechanisms are used to address obstacles to improving targeted service delivery</i></p>	<p>Social accountability mechanisms helped to address one or more key obstacles to service delivery, or other relevant obstacles, given existing service delivery chains and systems and political economy contexts</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The collaborative development of the benchmarking tool and the NPA to support its continuation allow to address the issue of a shortage of evidence on the state and financing of preschool provision at the kindergarten and municipal level required for informed policy-making; The Project represents an opportunity to advance on the implementation of the Law on Preschool Education by providing the infrastructure needed to fulfil the law’s requirements related to monitoring of preschool provision and standards’ meeting; The intervention made a notable contribution to the horizontal and vertical (although admittedly mostly at local level) alignment of stakeholders.

<p>Outcome 6:</p> <p><i>Civil society grantees have improved capacity to engage meaningfully and collaboratively in the policy making and implementation and service delivery processes.</i></p>	<p>Improved capacity to engage meaningfully and collaboratively with government.</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the lead grantee and the partner experienced boosts in their capacity to adapt, adjust and modify the course of interventions according to emerging needs and issues; • SCG and CG had their technical and organizational capacities improved as a result of Project implementation experience as well as trainings in which the organizations took part in. Notably: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – CG revised some of their operational manuals relating to procurement and logistics as a result of participating in the Project; – As a result of CG coordinators’ participation in the training „Child Protection and Psychological First Aid” organized by Save the Children, CG developed their own ethical code to be followed when working on projects involving children; – CG staff reported having improved their understanding of monitoring and documenting key achievements and having learnt substantially from the Project MEAL methodology to do this. • SCG staff reported that experiences and insights from the Project are being used to help Save the Children’s global thematic team to develop a common “Child-Centered Social Accountability” approach to programming.
INTERMEDIATE RESULTS			
<p>Output 1:</p> <p><i>Civil society grantees lead multi-stakeholder compacts.</i></p>	<p>Involvement from at least three fit-for-purpose stakeholder groups</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project directly involved a large number of municipal authorities, kindergarten unions and preschool heads and teachers in 66% of Georgia’s municipalities; • Other stakeholders such as preschool and benchmarking experts as well as an education officer from Teacher Professional Development Center were also involved, albeit in a more task-based, ad hoc manner; • The Project team made attempts to engage national-level stakeholders, but limited success was achieved in this regard.
<p>Output 2:</p> <p><i>World Bank sector teams support meaningful engagement between civil society and government.</i></p>	<p>World Bank sector teams supported engagement between civil society and government</p>	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation findings show that the World Bank sector team supported the lead grantee with trainings (including on civic engagement) and hosting a meeting with national government representatives; • However, limited evidence was identified for the World Bank to effectively play the role of ‘a broker’ between SCG and the national government.
<p>Output 3:</p> <p><i>Lessons from experience inform GPSA engagement.</i></p>	<p>Lessons learned from other grants informed project design and implementation</p>	<p>Partially achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Project team reports having studied and highlighted successes of other GPSA-supported social accountability interventions to increase stakeholders’ interest and participation in the Project;

	Lessons learned during implementation informed course corrections		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piloting (benchmarking) solutions and consultations were an important part of the Project. The results and lessons learnt from these steps were consequentially introduced throughout the intervention;• Nevertheless, there is little evidence for the Project to have used the findings and recommendations from the independent mid-term evaluation.
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5 Evaluation of learning potential

This section presents reflections on the GPSA ToA resulting from Project implementation, it briefly summarizes the key areas where planning or implementation could have been carried out better, and considers the replicability of the intervention in Georgia and beyond.

5.1 Reflections on the GPSA ToA from Project implementation

The Project validates the initial steps and most core actions envisaged in the ToA. The core action of WB providing support to meaningful engagement between civil society and government is somewhat an exception to this. As summarized in table 2 in section 4.4, the World Bank sector team supported the lead grantee with trainings (including on civic engagement) and hosting a meeting with national government representatives. Moreover, the TTL was described by the Project team members as “always present, supportive and active when we discuss project progress with government officials”. However, the evaluators believe that the project could benefit more from World Bank’s role as ‘a broker’ between SCG and the national government, and it’s support in encouraging the central authorities to partake in the intervention.

Table 3 below summarizes the evaluators’ assessment of all critical assumptions based on experiences from the Project implementation.

Table 3: Assessment of validity of GPSA ToA assumptions based on evidence from Project implementation

	Critical Assumption	Evidence for occurrence	Justification
1	WB staff embrace approach to development that includes civil society and social accountability	Considerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WB staff supporting the Project in Georgia were described to support SCG in the form of capacity building, technical advice, and specific guidance on civic engagement.
2	GPSA Secretariat maintains capacity and funding to provide on-going support to its active portfolio	Considerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Project team reported having used the resources published on GPSA web-page as well as Knowledge Platform to prepare for different meetings and workshops with municipal governments. For example, examples of successful GPSA-funded projects were used to justify the intervention and highlight its importance to various stakeholders; Project team took part in the final conference on “Preschool education in Georgia” organized within the Georgian-Polish project and had the opportunity to discuss the project idea with representatives of several municipalities from Adjara, Samegrelo and Kvemo-Kartli regions and MoES.
3	Civil society and government capacity and willingness are key obstacles	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity at both local and central governments is low and frequent changes of staff at both levels result in losses in capacity and institutional memory achieved by projects.

	to collaborative social accountability		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While interviewed ministries expressed their readiness to learn more about the instruments, their actions show limited commitment to recognize, endorse and use the effects of the Project. CSOs show high willingness to work with government bodies, but their financial capacity remains relatively unstable.
4	GPSA grantees use adaptive management to manage their programs	Considerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptive management was used throughout the Project, with frequent meetings between Project team to come up with adjustments and modifications, e.g. increases in Project scope, modification at activity level, etc. Thanks to adaptive management possibility, the Project team could direct resources where they were most needed, and administrative burden was minimized;
5	When social accountability is complementary of broader government policy and programs, including delivery systems, implementing agencies get better results in service delivery	Considerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong buy-in of the benchmarking tool at the local level largely due to the mechanisms' direct relationship to the latest Law on Preschool Education; Project achievements supported by on-going attention to legislative and policy developments in the field.
6	Governments have the capacity and commitment to integrate inputs from civil society into policy choices	Low-moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the Project confirmed the commitment to change on the part of many municipal authorities, their engagement in similar initiatives is highly dependent on interests and motivation of individual decision-makers at municipality level. In effect, improvements are highly sensitive to changes of staff, resulting in frequent losses in capacity and institutional memory achieved by individual projects; Both capacity and commitment to change at the central level are not yet guaranteed. While central government actors express their commitment verbally, little evidence for this in practice was gathered.
7	Engaging with citizen groups during policy-making leads to greater ownership and commitment, making reforms more sustainable	Too early to assess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too early to assess, but evidence for an increased engagement in processes to improve preschool education at parent and kindergarten level have been found.
8	Coalitions within government and Bank sector teams recognize legitimacy and value conferred by social accountability processes and find opportunities to scale up approach to more programs and country systems	Too early to assess	N/A

5.2 Influential factors and circumstances for achievement of Project results

This sub-section sums up the major factors affecting the implementation of the Project and the achievement (or non-achievement) of its results identified during KIIs and expert discussion as well as in the Project documents. It contributes to an understanding of what worked and what did not work during the Project implementation and why.

Out of a number of issues identified during the mid-term and final evaluation of the Project, five most influential factors were selected for achievement of Project results: two internal, at the Project management level, and three external that refer to the local, national and global levels. These are discussed in more detail below. Other contextual circumstances identified through the study which are likely to have facilitated or inhibited the Project achievements are listed in Annex III.

1. Implementing organizations and a form partnership

The stakeholders representing all category groups of respondents highlighted the complementary and deeply collaborative partnership between SCG and Civitas as the main factor facilitating effective implementation of activities, involvement of a wide range of actors, and overcoming challenges to achieve results. The partnership formed by Civitas and SCG was based on a mutual recognition and brought a combination of complementary – not competitive – expertise and capacity.

“The fact that CIVITAS and SCG were able to see that they were stronger if they create a partnership was crucial” (GPSA representative).

The Project’s success is also due to its ability to involve a large number of municipal authorities, field experts, as well as parents and teachers both through benchmarking and NPA’s project. The Project **team’s reputation, existing connections and experience of previous cooperation** with municipal-level entities facilitated this immensely. It also helped to shift preschool stakeholders’ perception of the benchmarking instrument: from a tool for “punishment of weaker preschools or exposure preschool institutions negatives” to a “supportive instrument for a supportive tool”. The Project team’s proactivity, commitment, adaptability, positivity, and effective management have been listed as qualities that contributed to building high involvement and trust among Project stakeholders and beneficiaries.

“Civitas has been long in the field and has good communication with municipality-level decision-makers, they are trusted. So this should be a very positive factor for a project to be successful. The very idea that municipality management wanted to become part of the NPA already says a lot” (Preschool education expert).

SCG’s and Civitas’ Georgia experience and expertise also **ensured thorough understanding of complex social and political environments**. According to the donor representative, the Project team possessed a deep understanding of the realities of the preschool community and the interactions between the actors at this level (the preschool director, teachers, parents, and also the children) amongst others. This enabled the Project team to appropriately assess the needs, risks and sustainability considerations from the very beginning of the intervention.

“There were many incentives to support the idea of a National Preschool Association. Implementing organizations did a good reading of the context, analysis of understanding that this would be a very good way of sustaining and scaling up the model over time” (GPSA representative).

2. Adaptive management approach

The Project team recounted that the GPSA’s encouragement to follow an adaptive approach to Project management significantly facilitated its implementation by giving a lot of room to change activities based

on the situation, without burdensome reporting. In addition, as highlighted by the GPSA representative interviewed for this evaluation, the possibility of this approach was leveraged by the Project team to the maximum, **allowing for making the most relevant adjustments, taking advantage of arising opportunities, and tackling risks and challenges.**

“Civitas and SCG felt comfortable that they were allowed to do what made more sense for them. It is not realistic to expect CSOs at the stage zero what they are going to do exactly point by point. What is need is to understand how these initiatives interact in complex social and political environments and that based on this is necessary to adjust them during the implementation” (GPSA representative).

The possibility and willingness to adapt the approach to shifting circumstances and to form a strong partnership within the Project (as listed above) was underpinned by **a flexible grant-making framework and funding that provided incentives for CSOs to partner or collaboration, and by a flexible funding.** This refers not only to flexible financial resources and uncapped operational expenses, but also to adaptive management and learning, where adaptiveness of project implementers is rewarded.

3. Commitment of local decision-makers to preschool sector

Recognition of the role preschool education on the part of municipal authorities was indicated by all stakeholders as crucial for the Project’s achievements and the lack of thereof. Where high involvement in the Project activities and its immediate results have been observed, the **preschool education management union enjoyed full support** and attention of the local government and mayor’s office already before the start of the Project. This often coincided with **previous engagement of the municipal authorities in other projects with SCG and/or the implementing partner or other similar projects.**

“Despite of the existing infrastructural problems, gradually the preschool educational institutions are developing in Rustavi thanks to the support of the Mayor and mayor’s office. [...] We are lucky to have very supportive Mayor and a council. They try very hard to improve the preschool education services and you can see results of their efforts gradually [...] Yes, the Mayor is extremely attentive and sensitive to the problems of the kindergartens” (NPA representative).

“First of all, let me assure you that the Mayor is very much engaged in the preschool education in our municipality. He is doing the best of his ability to support the kindergartens. He allocates of good portion of finances from the municipality fund to the kindergartens budget. He is physically engaged in different activities while visiting the kindergartens quite often. As far as I heard he is observing the lesson hours and talks to the directors, teachers and parents” (Member of the municipality council).

The commitment to preschool education by municipal politicians translated into spending priorities in preschool sector and more frequent and quality communication with kindergarten community. On the contrary, less dedicated municipalities, with lower motivation to become proactive without external motivation (e.g. regulation, finances, discipline), did not achieve such results as their more involved counterparts. While it can be argued that more affluent municipalities found it easier to put the results of the benchmarking and strategies into action, the experts’ discussion implied that “it is not the size of the budget that counts that much, but the priorities of the budget and what the spending is allocated to”.

On the other hand, as argued by a preschool education expert, **“the preschool system in Georgia depends too much on political circumstances”**, such as elections, which influences on the stability of preschool personnel at municipal and sometimes institutional level. The fact that the success of the Project results and their sustainability are highly dependent on interests and motivation of individual people at municipality level, it makes them highly sensitive to changes of staff, which in turn result in losses in capacity and institutional memory achieved by the Project. For instance, after the local elections that took

place after the initial stage of the Project, some municipal staff trained within the Project left their positions. Accordingly, the discussions with mayors had to be started from the beginning after mayors were replaced. As a result, strategies for improving municipal preschool systems to be developed with the support of the Project have not been implemented as municipality-level staff involved in this activity was replaced by newcomers who did not know about this process. A similar situation occurred in relation to the capacity building of preschool staff.

“[In] the upcoming elections, expectations by all stakeholders all the resources will be directed to it and everything else at municipal level will become of secondary importance. After the elections, usually so many things change that there is a high probability that the study will not be continued, without external support. The best possible resource in the scenario is to continue it at the preschool level” (Preschool specialist).

4. The Preschool Law and its aftermath

The Project commencement was very timely as it came into force soon after the adoption of the new law on preschool education. Without the law stipulations on authorization of preschool and collection of preschool data, it could be more difficult to implement the benchmarking study and address changes in preschool system. However, **the failure to implement some clauses of the law prevented the local authorities from implementing some intended changes** (e.g. budget was allocated for teacher training and authorization, but it could not be enforced as teacher training program and authorization procedures have not been approved).⁴⁷ While initially, the prospect of the law being implemented gave a momentum and motivation to stakeholders, the prolonged lack of progress appears to negatively affect their motivation after some time.

“The Project in its design was closely aligned with legal provisions. However, since many things were not implemented, some of the Project outputs had to be revised, or did not bring as high impact as they would have done if situated in different circumstances” (Experts’ discussion).

The stakeholders expected that a major reform is approaching and many things will improve, but the implementation did not meet their expectations. Since **the idea of developing authorization and internal monitoring systems have never materialized**, the Project lost its reference points as it was designed to support these to two elements. As reported by the stakeholders, “the Project implementers were puzzled to redefine what the benchmarking system would serve, what to set benchmarks at?” The law also envisaged preschool independence, but **the kindergartens’ autonomy remains highly limited**. The Ministry of Regional Development postulates that the kindergarten unions – not kindergartens – can be the authorized “entities providing preschool services” based on the interpretation of the law. The argument used by the central authorities to explain this situation points at inadequate financial and human resources at the kindergarten level and this would be too costly to make them more autonomous. However, because preschools are not independent, “they do not take actions themselves, wait with every decision, and changes needed take more time or they don’t take place at all” (Experts’ discussion). It can be expected that a knock-on effect of these constraints will be a **decreasing impetus and a lack of possibility of kindergarten personnel to become active actors in the social accountability process** – a situation preventing them from improving their capacity in this field and therefore representing a vicious circle.

All this indicates that the focus on ECEC is not as strong as it used to be when both the Preschool Law and the Project entered the political arena of the education sector. Since 2020 was announced the year of

⁴⁷ For instance, deadlines for enforcement of certain national-level standards and legislation implied by the law were not met. This refers, amongst others to teacher training module enforcement, authorization standards and procedures enforcement, teacher remuneration government decree, infrastructure standard.

education, the idea to develop a concept note on what the vision, priorities and target situation of the Georgian government should be in the field of preschool education came from the MoESCS. The SCG organized a meeting with the Ministry's staff, including the Deputy Minister of Education and field experts for this purpose. However, the Deputy Minister resigned since and "with her [resignation] the government's understanding of the role of preschool education dissipated" (Implementing organization). In fact, the Deputy Minister responsible for preschool changed two times and the Ministry could not appoint an expert within the preschool unit, which also affected the implementation of preschool policy.

5. Outbreak of COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic was an important external factor that affected the Project implementation in 2020:

◆ **Piloting of IDELA.** As public kindergartens were closed, SCG was unable to pilot the Save the Children International Development and Learning Assessment (IDELA) tool that is designed to capture the status of children's knowledge and development. Accordingly, no information could be gathered with the use of this tool to draw conclusions on the early and preschool education and development service quality. The SCG plans to have the tool ready for piloting when kindergartens reopen by translating and adapting IDELA to Georgian context. SCG have started searching other sources of funding to secure the budget for piloting of the tool.

◆ **Organization of trainings and meetings.** The NPA did not manage to organize the trainings that were planned for all unions and to continue meetings on thematic mini-projects selected within the Association as future initiatives. Also, the training sessions to be carried out at the kindergartens are pending until the time when preschools are reopened. There are concerns that these and other interruptions caused by the pandemic will result in losing the momentum in the implementation of Project activities and follow up developments.

"We are afraid not to lose this sparkle of motivation among the people here [due to the pandemic]" (Head of the kindergarten union).

◆ **Applying Project results.** As reported by one head of kindergarten union, during the times of pandemic, the works towards the use the benchmarking results to plan the next educational years and request the budget accordingly have paused. Due to pandemic, all preschool resources were directed towards crisis management and thus, as reported by some stakeholders, the funds that became available after benchmarking, are no longer available.

"Pandemic has influence exactly on [Project] results - money was not allocated, changes could not be implemented" (Expert's discussion).

Finally, the pandemic has also shed a new light on some of the Project elements, as reported during the expert's discussion. For instance, it showed what activities and mechanisms could be moved into the virtual space and implemented fully online. It also exposed those aspects that could not be implemented at all in this unexpected context.

5.3 Aspects of the Project which could have been implemented better

Several issues with regard to the Project implementation were identified in the course of the evaluation. It is important to discuss these briefly to provide further learning for future similar endeavors.

Firstly, **more details about the contractual strategy and requirements of the donor could have been provided to the grant applicants at the stage of the Project proposal development.** It is the understanding

of the evaluators that there was an initial misunderstanding with regard to the contracting authority (eventually World Bank branch in Georgia and not GPSA), resulting in delays in involvement of Civitas Georgia and the need to re-structure the partners' collaboration (where all procurement had to be carried out by SCG instead of CG).

Secondly, **knowledge creation and management and learning from the experiences gained throughout the Project could have been given more attention in the beginning of the intervention.** As highlighted by several stakeholders interviewed for this study, activities for monitoring the result framework indicators could have been planned and carried out in a more systematic and structured way. This refers to the first year of the Project implementation specifically, when the stakeholder survey was to be carried out to monitor the results indicators that were part of the Project. Those surveys did not take place on time, because of the initial delays on the donor's side. As revealed by SCG, the Project team is still collecting data from municipalities to calculate the level of achievement on the indicator “% of identified issues addressed” by municipalities. This is likely to be finalized in July, after the preparation of the draft final evaluation report.

Thirdly, the evaluators would like to reiterate their conviction already voiced at the stage of the mid-term evaluation that the **Project would have benefitted from investing more efforts to engage the central-level stakeholders, and the relevant MoESCS' staff.** Even at the stage of the final evaluation, the level of the Project activities' integration with current works undergoing at the central level could have been higher, and so does the general awareness about the Project plans on the part of central government actors. There is substantial evidence to suggest that establishing a dialogue with the national policy-makers from the very start of the Project could have helped to increase their interest and buy-in, further increasing the alignment of the Project results with government efforts in this field. However, the MoESCS staff turnover jeopardized the relationships with MoESCS that project staff started to build from the beginning of an intervention. The evaluators believe that the World Bank could have assumed a greater role in facilitating this process as an adviser to SCG on how best to assure central government involvement.

Lastly, several stakeholders noted that the **guidance provided to the NPA on how to implement the benchmarking tool could have been given more attention.** One interviewee thought that creating a toolkit on the use of the tool would enable its independent use after the completion of the Project.

5.4 Replicability potential in Georgia and beyond

There is a vast body of evidence illustrating how frequently attempts to replicate development interventions across contexts fail. All initiatives are erected in specific national and local conditions, and legal and institutional frameworks which influence both the success and failures of development efforts in very concrete and interdependent ways. The NPA created by the Project is a good example. In theory, its replicability in other contexts would be possible in other decentralized contexts. In practice, however, its successful establishment and continuity would depend on a range of interrelated factors such as the presence of keen sector representatives, endorsement from relevant government structures, and – above all – a locally rooted leadership with established local relationships and nuanced understanding of local power dynamics. However, even in the presence of these factors, no identical intervention can be replicated in a different context, whether geographical, sectoral, or temporal. As a World Bank Group report from 2017 underscores, a multitude of intricate and interrelated differences in power asymmetries and factors driving change are at play across contexts, limiting the extent to which replication, as understood in the traditional sense, can be effectively practiced.

As a consequence, as the Bank postulates, attention should be shifting away from asking “What works?” to inquiring “What are the dynamics and pathways towards change?”⁴⁸ In other words, **rather than trying to re-create the intervention in other contexts or fields, actors inspired by the achievements of the Project should try to “scale up the approaches and processes through which solutions are developed.”**⁴⁹ Thus, for example, carrying out of thorough needs and feasibility assessments and adaptation to subject and local context in collaboration with relevant experts would be an imperative for any efforts wishing to successfully develop and deploy the benchmarking methodology internationally or in other fields in Georgia. The advantage of the benchmarking methodology from the replicability perspective is that the resources required to implement it need not be intensive as the benchmarking largely relies on self-assessment by the beneficiaries. Close attention to the local specificities and readiness to adapt and twist the mechanism would nevertheless be required. A consultative approach and dialogue with local and central stakeholders are a highly effective practice to achieve this. The evaluation team hopes that this report sheds some light on the key learnings from the Project approach and processes which can be used for collaborative social accountability action.

⁴⁸ Fox, J. (2016). “Scaling Accountability through Vertically Integrated Civil Society Policy.” Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton referenced in World Bank Group (2017). Citizens as Drivers of Change: How Citizens Practice Human Rights to Engage with the State and Promote Transparency and Accountability. Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁴⁹ World Bank Group (2017). Citizens as Drivers of Change...

6 Evaluation of sustainability

Since at the time of this report writing, the Project is still on-going, it is premature to comprehensively assess the sustainability of the Project. As such, this section tries to assess the extent to which the benefits of SCG and CG's work are likely to continue after their completion, focusing on the identification the main Project strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and risks likely to affect the sustainability of the Project. It attempts to chart out the conditions under which the intervention's results will continue in the shorter and the longer term.

The evaluation showed that **benchmarking has a considerable potential for being continued after the Project completion, but the extent to which the tool and its results will be used in the longer term will depend on the its legitimization as well as increases in the municipal budgets for preschool education.** The vast majority of kindergarten and kindergarten unions' staff interviewed said that they do plan to conduct annual assessments using the benchmarking tool developed within the Project to follow up on the progress and challenges. As stated by one kindergarten union head:

"We have trained directors and some of those trained conduct meetings/trainings for caregivers; hence, they will keep on with the procedures that we have gone through to date"(Kindergarten union head).

Moreover, the NPA appears prepared to take over the coordination of the benchmarking process. The NPA member municipalities were involved in the benchmarking process from the very beginning and took over all the coordination and support from the Project experts from the second benchmarking stage onwards. As one expert involved in the Project and interviewed for this study summarized:

"They analyzed and developed recommendations for preschools by themselves. This empowered them and gave ownership of the process, enabled them to understand the process and study the benchmarking instruments better"(Preschool education expert).

The Project's major strength has been its ability to generate and maintain a strong local interest and ownership of the benchmarking – achievements which represent considerable opportunities from the perspective of the Project's sustainability. It is well-evidenced by the fact that the benchmarking component is being replicated by more municipalities than initially targeted by the project (44 instead of 27). What is more, the benchmarking is perceived by the stakeholders at municipal, preschool and community level alike as part of their tasks, functions and regular work, thus showing potential for sustainability of this endeavor.

"[The Project team] were able to adapt the work so the benchmarking process was owned by the stakeholders/beneficiaries. They take the ownership and do not see it as something owned by Civitas or SCG"(GPSA representative).

However, some stakeholders believed that the **high degree of politicization of municipal authorities and frequent changes in personnel at the municipal level pose serious threats** to the continuation of the benchmarking in the longer term. As such, some interviewees believed that sustaining the wide use of the tool in the long term will require the benchmarking to be made an obligation for the municipalities. The need for further legitimization of the tool was seen as important by several types of respondents. Ideally, this would be done through securing central government's deep engagement in the process and integration of the tool as a part of the new preschool legislative and policy framework which implements provisions for a monitoring system.

"Civitas or SCG, together with the NPA, could make the use of benchmarking as simple as possible and – more importantly – integrate it into the matters that preschools already have to do to comply

with the ministry requirements. If they perceive it as a tool that helps them to see their preschool needs, they will become engaged because of their own will” (GPSA representative).

According to experts on preschool education, the benchmarking study is in its early years of implementation and it still needs external support to institutionalize. The actors responsible should be encouraged to use their capacities to implement the study independently and continue to see benchmarking values, despite difficulties and more urgent needs, such the pandemic and upcoming election.

Some kindergarten representatives doubted that the recommendations developed as part of the Project will materialize, attributing this risk to the significant deficit in the municipal budget:

“Sadly, we might not be able to implement the recommendations, well, because we do not have resources to implement them, we cannot. We do not have means to separate centers. We had a hard time, we managed it somehow, it is not enough though” (Preschool representative).

The fact that little or no reaction to the needs identified as part of benchmarking study has been reported in some municipalities poses a serious threat to maintaining the interest in its further appliance and perceiving it as a valuable tool that leads to tangible results.

The probability of the NPA continuing to fulfil its function as a major advisory and advocacy body in the preschool education field in Georgia in the medium- to long-term is supported by the Association’s strong local-level buy-in. Evidence gathered for the evaluation clearly shows that the Association is highly valued by the kindergarten stakeholders and municipal authorities alike across the municipalities which participated in the Project. The Project was able to secure a solid degree of ownership of the NPA by its members, with some members being especially active and potentially leading the organization successfully forward. The fact that kindergarten union representatives are members of the NPA additionally facilitates the introduction of changes at the kindergarten level, since it is the unions which hold the power to do so. Moreover, the fact that the NPA has a budget of its own from the member contributions is likely to suffice to, at least, conduct the benchmarking exercise in upcoming year. For the NPA to continue being a player, however, the buy-in of the municipal authorities will need to be maintained. One reason for this is that NPA’s plan for sustainability assumes that the municipal governments maintain their approval for the unions’ to make financial contributions to the Association. Secondly, the NPA is counting on the municipalities to pay for the training and certification of teachers services delivered by its pool of trainers. Since employing certified teachers in preschools is a requirement of the new law, this sustainability plan has a chance of being successful. Ultimately, in the context of low budgets for preschool education, the municipal authorities will need to stay convinced that NPA’s technical and organizational capacities are strong.

In order to maintain Project results sustainability plan for the NPA will require at the least approval and endorsement from the central-level structures engaged in preschool strategic direction, oversight and financing. At the same time, interviewed representatives of the MoESCS, which is in charge of defining the teacher training and certification process, showed a limited knowledge about NPA’s objectives and plans. While the respondent admitted that discussions were held with the Project implementing organizations on the integration of the benchmarking with the government’s EMIS database efforts, she had no knowledge about NPA’s plans to provide teacher training services to the kindergartens. Admittedly, the lack of close cooperation with the central government bodies with NPA is by large a result of staff changes and political instability at the central level.

The NPA is becoming increasingly recognized as a potential partner by different actors in the preschool education field in Georgia, but external support will be required to ensure the association's continued relevance and its ability to lead the benchmarking process. The evaluation showed that the NPA is beginning to position itself as a competent and collaborative partner in the eyes of several national and local-level actors. SCG's progress report from May 2020 states that "the NPA board members are regularly invited to join the coordination meetings organized by [education] ministry or subordinated agencies such as Teacher Professional Development Center and they are asked to express their position in relation to different aspects of preschool education". As already mentioned in section 4.2.2, Project team also reported that the MoESCS involved NPA members in hiring staff for resource rooms, and also used the Association's help for dissemination of some materials. The latest progress report also notes that "international agencies (UNICEF), NGOs (World Vision) and local CSOs also involve NPA in their activities through inviting them to discussions or requesting feedback on different issues related to the improvement of access and quality of preschool education service". Nevertheless, several stakeholders interviewed for this study believe that to continue this trend, the NPA will need to "prove itself" and further increase its visibility and showcase its potential achievements. Moreover, considerable evidence suggests that external funding for capacity building and project implementation will be required if the Association is to establish itself a major player in the preschool field.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an additional risk to the sustainability of the results, especially with regard to maintaining the momentum that the NPA managed to build. The Association will need to employ pro-active measures to overcome this challenge. SCG's current efforts in this regard should be applauded. The Project Coordinator reported trying to support the NPA to develop guidelines on preschool reopening after the pandemic is somewhat under control. She proposed that guidelines from SCI and UNICEF are adopted to the Georgian context. In the same time, the preschool representatives do not seem to see much use for this, so they did not pick this up. Currently, the NPA reportedly focuses on food delivery to families with preschool aged children, who may risk being food insecure as a result of not attending kindergartens. While certainly a noteworthy initiative, the NPA's background and goals are arguably better suited to support the return to preschools in autumn 2020. For the organization to be taken as a serious partner in the field, it will need to become involved in Georgia's response to tackle the challenges not only relating to care, but also the educational aspect of preschool.

Although without tangible results so far, commendable efforts have already been made by the Project team to help the NPA gain more independence and institutional experience. In addition to above-described assistance, SCG together with the NPA developed funding proposals for the NPA in an attempt to ensure more financial resources for the NPA. While these were not successful, they certainly served as a learning to the NPA in how to apply for funding. The NPA's plan to hire a fundraising manager to raise extra money and assume responsibility of day-to-day issues should also be seen as a positive step towards the body's sustainability. The pledges of SCG and Civitas Georgica to continue providing technical support and engaging the NPA in other projects of theirs represent a chance for the association to develop its capacity and presence further.

Crucially from the perspective of social accountability, the results of strengthening relationships, experiences gained in collaborative action, and improved agency on the part of Project beneficiaries and local stakeholders are likely to continue after the Project completion. The evaluation suggests that the consolidated partnership between SCG and Civitas Georgica is likely to bear more fruit in the future. Even after the expiry of the contract between the two organizations, they continue to work together on various matters related to the Project. Likewise, the majority of local-level participants indicated that they will continue to reflect and make efforts to improve preschool education, and to communicate more with each other. Greater vertical (between the kindergarten staff and the preschoolers' parents and caregivers on the

one hand and between kindergarten unions and the municipal authorities on the other) and horizontal communication (especially between union representatives) can be expected in both the shorter and the longer term. These multi-level relationships described in more depth in the previous chapters should facilitate the longer-term enjoyment of benefits from the Project.

“The connections formed by the Project between the central and local government, preschool education management union, NPA and kindergarten communities, are a good example of how to plan Projects in the education sector” (Rustavi municipality).

Both the tangible and the more intangible (or relational) achievements of the intervention can also be said to have given SCG and Civitas Georgica a ‘seat at the table’ of education governance in Georgia. As the evaluation demonstrated, the Implementing Partners’ efforts at municipal and central levels resulted in their recognition as important players in the Georgia’s preschool education landscape. As shown by social accountability literature of the last few years, such achievements can be highly effective in mitigating power asymmetries driven by capture, clientelism, and exclusion and leading to barriers to the policy arena.

In fact, as described in earlier sections, greater attention to preschool education on the part of some stakeholders can already be observed. Notably, some municipalities reported having started making plans for further preschool improvements post the GPSA-supported intervention. Moreover, some representatives of local authorities expressed their aspirations to become champions of preschool education in Georgia and maintaining the momentum that has been created thanks to the Project. **If pressure and positive inducements continue to be applied, the shifting of Georgian government’s incentives, for instance to commit better resources to preschool education, is possible.**

Lastly, the evaluation team identified some signs that lessons and foundations built by the Project may be picked up by other initiatives in the future. The Project team themselves reported to build on the intervention’s achievements in their future endeavors, while the World Bank representatives confirmed that the benchmarking component in particular is being considered for other work in Georgia.

“There are hopes that on the monitoring the Project can build on the work that has been already done by the SCG’s Project on social accountability [...] It has to be seen when the ECEC component of the new Project is sketched, what will be the part of it. It is more certain that the monitoring part will be in” (WB Georgia).

7 Key conclusions

Effective and strategic engagement of a broad range of actors in the Project illustrated the potential of (second generation) collaborative approaches to social accountability “combining diverse types of expertise, outreach capacities, and influence in order to work simultaneously on the range of dimensions involved in addressing complex problems.”⁵⁰ In line with the simple truth underlying the GPSA approach – that not one stakeholder can handle the task of solving critical development challenges alone – the Project focused on preschool unit and local authorities, but also included citizens and, to some extent, central-level actors. Despite instability and politicization of Georgia’s civil servants at both the local and central levels, engaging (and maintaining engagement of) municipal- and union-level representatives proved feasible and fruitful. In addition, working at the level of the lowest units in the system – in this case the parents, caregivers/teachers and preschools’ staff in general – increased legitimacy and ownership of the process. It is also a likely pre-condition for the Project continuity due to specific dynamics (i.e. staff turnover at the municipal level due to political circumstances).

Aimed at facilitating the implementation of the Preschool Law to support decentralization and service quality improvements, **the intervention was broadly aligned with national-level efforts, giving it a strong foundation for legitimacy and relevance.** As a result, the intervention rooting was ensured while avoiding the risk of being completely separate from national-level legislative policy changes – a major hindrance to impact and sustainability befallen on many first generation social accountability approaches focusing solely on service providers.⁵¹ While room for improvement in this area exists within the Project, the Project team is aware of this and reported taking all steps to achieve this in the near future.

Overall, **the Project showed how a multi-stakeholder route to accountability enables the fostering of ownership and thus continuity, even in the context of multiple legislative and institutional barriers commonly stifling progress in developing and emerging economies across the world.** As such the intervention validated GPSA’s approach, where “co-producing social accountability, or at least collaborating with others in a hands-on process to deliver public goods and services through mutual and continuous engagement” underlie the effectiveness of collaborative social accountability and other participatory approaches. It created a dynamic that “brings in new information, shared expectations, new sources of power, translators that can speak to and broker actions from different groups, and joint responsibilities”⁵² and “may also affect the sense of possibility, of agency that is critical to facilitate collective action for learning.”⁵³

The Project implementation processes illustrated the **importance of carefully identifying the problems and feasible entry points through obtaining an in-depth understanding of the local context and identifying the right partners to work with for an intervention.** In this Project, focus was placed on municipal-level authorities and specialists who are ultimately responsible for delivering preschool services and are deeply knowledgeable about the regulations. It was therefore critical that Project implementing organizations understood the realities of the preschool community. They knew (or learnt) how different actors interact at this level (the preschool director, teachers, parents, and also the children) and they were able to listen to possibilities that were there to support them, to increase their capacity to understand their roles.

⁵⁰ Guerzovich and Schommer (2016) cited in Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions..”

⁵¹ Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions..”

⁵² Guerzovich and Schommer (2016) cited in Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions..”

⁵³ Levy, et al. (2018) cited in Guerzovich, M. F., Poli, M. and Fokkelman, E. (2020). “The Learning Crisis and Its Solutions..”

Strong local anchoring of the initiative was enabled through previous work of the implementing organizations and the Project staff themselves. SCG, an international organization with local personnel, partnered with a local NGO with long standing experience and reputation in the education sector, and with a network of relationships at the local level. The resultant outcome, as summarized by one interviewee, was that “[the Project] was extremely well-tailored to local context. The parents had very good knowledge of the local context and solid experience and partnerships built in municipalities, which has helped the implementation a lot” (World Bank representative).

The implementation of the Project confirmed the invaluable role which adaptive management can play in effective action. The Project’s multiple challenges and how these were resolved proved the importance of iterative action as opposed to rigidly sticking to the initial plan. The evaluation of the Project also confirms that not all activities will bring results, and that sometimes there will be steps back. However, since social accountability is not a linear but a circular and complex process, development practice would benefit from a move away from optimization of resources in the traditional sense to yielding of frequently intangible changes as foundations for collaborative action.

The evaluation confirmed that **the provision of relatively large and flexible funding enabling for the implementation of longer-term interventions, is a key to a successful and impactful intervention.** Specifically, the provision of uncapped operational expenses (no limits on operational costs) was mentioned as a means to ensure significant investment in the quality of teams built behind the projects. This holds true especially for initiatives with an innovative character, where there is a need to test new solutions and keep modifying and adjusting the intervention to the emerging developments.

At the practical level, the Project revealed a **broad scope for innovativeness in developing social accountability initiatives** which exists and is increasingly taken advantage of when programming second generation social accountability interventions. Indeed, the Project did not adopt the traditional methods of developing social accountability where the role of the community focuses on observing government processes with the goal of holding the authorities to account. Rather, it involved the community members and beneficiaries of preschool education in its development in several ways – through their participation in the benchmarking but also their association in the form of Parent Teacher Associations.

The benchmarking study has been well informed from GPSA social accountability ToC and best international and national expertise and practices. The Project team invested adequate resources to a) make it applicable to the preschool services area to build capacity of local stakeholders to understand the importance of benchmarking as an accountability instrument; and b) to apply it for their specific needs (thus take ownership) and for the improvement of preschool municipal services in the Project supported municipalities.

Benchmarking study methodology and instruments are effective tools and an important component of a social accountability system. They serve a number of objectives that create foundation for social accountability. Firstly, the benchmarking is an effective M&E mechanism for public services and methodologies applied therein. The benchmarking studies can monitor public services, identify strengths and weaknesses, suggest ways for improvement and produce information on effectiveness of the methodologies applied in public services. Secondly, the results obtained through benchmarking systems empower both public bodies and civil society to deliver quality public services and to monitor the quality of services received and require improvements. Thirdly, it increases awareness of both public bodies and civil societies on standards and practices of quality services.

The benchmarking study standards and instruments produced and piloted within the Project are adaptable to a variety of contexts or service areas and could be replicated elsewhere. There is potential for the benchmarking too to be applied not only beyond the municipalities participating in the

Project, but also beyond the preschool sector and the Georgian context. However, close attention to the local specificities and a commitment to adapt and twist the mechanism through a consultative approach and dialogue with local and central stakeholders would be of paramount importance in such attempts. Overall, in line with the practice propagated by the World Bank, actors looking to implement similar initiatives in other contexts should focus their attention on how to “scale up the approaches and processes through which solutions are developed” rather than trying to re-create the specific intervention itself.

8 Recommendations

GPSA and the World Bank

Improve the methodology for on-site and recurrent monitoring and evaluation cycle of the Project to ensure all the results are captured and documented on time. GPSA/World Bank monitoring standards and requirements could be established more clearly at the start of the Project and their adherence executed more effectively throughout the implementation period. For example, scenarios where data on indicators' achievement is collected hastily or one evaluation cycle follows the previous one only by several months should be avoided. The evaluators also strongly recommend that the implementation of the final evaluation of any GPSA-supported initiative begins only after the completion of the Project, and preferably at least few months after, to ensure that adequate evidence is available for a well-informed assessment of project results and sustainability.

Implement measures to leverage the presence and resources of the World Bank staff in Georgia more effectively to facilitate relationship building between civil society and the government. As a major donor and reputed development organization, the World Bank is in a unique position to help civil society organizations establish a dialogue with the national policy-makers. It can position itself as a 'broker' and/or active 'observer' in these relationships.

Project team

Improve the awareness of the benchmarking instrument and results beyond the Project direct beneficiaries at municipal-level and - most importantly - among central-level governing bodies, civil society organizations and international development partners. Increase awareness of local, national and international beneficiaries on the effectiveness of the benchmarking study and its effects on the better accountability, engagement of stakeholders and improvement of public services. **Map and identify resources and partners to plan and deliver activities targeting better visibility of the benchmarking methodology and comprehensive monitoring system** created within the Project among stakeholders in other sectors and municipalities beyond the Project coverage to achieve replication of the results beyond the project coverage and targeted sector and location.

Identify potential allies, change agents and supporting resources to ensure continuity of the support to NPA to ensure sustainability of the benchmarking study at municipal level. It could include: a) support from the initiative related to Mayor's Declaration, b) additional commitment from municipal-level decision-makers and central bodies (including MRDI with strong interest in decentralized preschool governance, string municipal-level structure, quality assurance instruments), c) orchestrating between the alternative needs of MoESCS and MIDPLHSA to collect systemic and comprehensive data on preschool system and effectiveness of national policies and standards, and d) resources and expertise of international development partners and INGOs and NGOs with strong hold and interest in preschool sector.

Simplify and supplement already existing guidelines and instructions on benchmarking study with additional resources such as video instructions on: a) the objectives, structure and characteristics of the benchmarking system, its procedures, major actors and results; b) information about application of each instrument (all three surveys and benchmarking matrix; and c) about each phase of benchmarking process (collecting of data, analysis and interpretation of data, developing recommendations and advocating for changes, evaluating and documenting the results, and the whole quality cycle of the benchmarking study – designing, implementing, assessing and revising).

Target accountability needs in the preschool sector in Georgia and other potential uses of the benchmarking methodology, instruments, systems and results with high potential of improving preschool services in Georgia. It could include the National Standard Monitoring systems of MoESCS (Monitoring system for education and teacher standards), MIDPLHSA (monitoring systems for Hygiene and Sanitation, and Nutrition and food Safety Standards) and MoESD (potential monitoring system for or design work for the development and approval of the Infrastructure Standard), as well as decentralization and municipal autonomy strengthening programs and instruments under MRDI. Specific actions undertaken in this regard could include a mapping of additional accountability needs in the preschool sector in Georgia, e.g. through a study or working groups including the owners of the benchmarking study, local and central preschool governance bodies, preschool experts (including international development partner representatives). These would be used to: specify additional accountability needs that could be addressed by benchmarking instruments, any needs for changes in the current design of study instruments, procedures and benchmarks if any, action plans, identify potential actors and resources to support the process.

Continue to provide technical support to the NPA to help the Association build its analytical, organizational, and civic capacities and its ability to adapt and remain relevant in the fast-changing preschool and general context in Georgia. In the months following the completion of the Project, the provision of continued support to NPA's COVID-19 response efforts is strongly recommended to enable the Association to contribute to ensuring that both care and education needs of preschoolers' are met. In the medium to longer term, SCG's and CG's assistance to the Association could take the form of: a) engaging the NPA in SCG and CG project and initiatives; b) supporting the NPA in applying for external funding; c) linking the NPA with other civil society and state organizations working in the preschool field; and d) holding regular (e.g. quarterly or bi-annual) meetings with the NPA representatives to discuss the Association's progress and provide advice.

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- <https://www.thegpsa.org/project/improved-social-accountability-bettering-preschool-quality-georgia>

10 Annexes

10.1. Annex I: Informants interviewed

Table 4: List of completed interviews at international and national level

No	Stakeholder type	Name	Function and organisation/institution	Role/relevance in the Project	Interview date
1	Category I	Nino Pruidze	Save the Children International Branch in Georgia	Project Coordinator	17/06/2020
2		Giorgi Meskhidze	President, Civitas Georgica	Implementing partner	15/06/2020
3	Category II	Nino Kutateladze	Senior Education Specialist, Task Team Leader, World Bank	Representative of Project's donor	30/06/2020
4		Maria Poli	Senior expert consultant, Governance and Social Accountability, GPSA	Donor institution	22/06/2020
5		Florencia Guersovich	GPSA	Donor institution	29/06/2020
6	Category III	Ekaterine Lezhava	Deputy Head of Preschool and General Education Department	Central-level Steering Committee	08/06/2020
7		Zaur Karimov	Head of Marneuli Kindergarten Union	NPA*	08/06/2020
8	Category IV	Tamar Toloraia	Head of Preschool Education Division	MoECS	05/06/2020
9		Nikoloz Rosebashvili	Head of Regions and Municipality Relations Department	MRDI	08/06/2020
10	Category V	Tamuna Bakradze	Preschool Education specialist	GPSA Project consultant	06/06/2020
11		Nino Jjavadze	Preschool Education Specialist	GPSA Project consultant	07/06/2020

* NPA - National Preschool Association, MoECS - Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, MRDI - Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia

Table 5: List of KIIs completed at municipal level

No	Municipality	Name	Function and organisation/institution	Role/relevance in the Project	Interview date
1	Tianeti	Nino Tsomaia	Head of the preschool education management union	engaged in this project since launching and possess all information about the project	15.06.2020
2		Ganishashvili Manana	member of the municipality council	can show perspectives as the outsider	18.06.2020
3	Rustavi	Lali Nozadze	The head of the educational methodology at the union of kindergartens in Rustavi	active participant of the project as kindergarten director (former) member of the NPA	12.06.2020
4		Nino Kavtaradze	member of municipality council	well-informed about the project	13.06.2020
5	Marneuli	Ketino Minadze	NPA member		22.06.2020
6		Nona Nadibaidze	Kindergarten union director/preschool institution manager		29.06.2020
7	Gardabani	Jemal Davitidze	Head of the preschool education management union	engaged in all activities of the project while representing the municipality	18.06.2020
8		Rezo Egadze	Deputy Mayor, curator of the preschool education in the municipality	engaged in the activities that concern preschool education in the municipality. Being father of four children, he shows perspectives of parents as well	17.06.2020
9	Dusheti	Marika Otarashvili	Head of kindergarten management union		22.06.2020
10		Ledi Varsimashvili	Preschool Institution Manager/Kindergarten Director		26.06.2020
11	Baghdati	Eka Grdzelidze	Methodist at the kindergarten union		22.06.2020
12		Tamila Paikidze	Bagdati kindergarten union head		22.06.2020
13	Ozurgeti	Maka Chkonia	Head of the preschool education management union	NPA co-founder and representative of	11.06.2020

				the project in the municipality	
14		Keso Tsetsckhadze	Director of the kindergarten	active participant of project activities	15.06.2020
15	Sachkhere	Mariam Gogiberishvili	Head of the preschool education management union	member and representative of Sachkhere Municipality in NPA	8.06.2020
16		Natia Jajanidze	Kindergarten director		10.06.2020
17		Nino Gogoladze	Kindergarten director		11.06.2020
18	Bolnisi	Lela Gogmachadze	NPA representative/ Head of kindergarten management union		22.06.2020
19		Manana Zaalishvili	#2 Kindergarten director/preschool institution manager		26.06.2020
20	Batumi	Nino Babakishvili	Kindergarten manager/director		23.06.2020
21		Nana Eremashvili	Kindergarten director/Preschool institution manager		26.06.2020

Table 6: List of IDIs completed at municipal level

No	Municipality	Name	Status	Interview date
1	Tianeti	Mariam Mchedlishvili	Parent	17.06.2020
2	Rustavi	Maia Kokolashvili	parent	13.06.2020
3	Marneuli	Pati Samkharadze	Parent	16.06.2020
4		Maia Chilindirishvili	Parent	16.06.2020
5	Gardabani	Nino Shoshiashvili	parent (Kindergarten #2 of village Sartichala, Gardabani municipality)	16.06.2020
6	Dusheti	Elene Ogbaidze	Teacher/Caregiver	15.06.2020
7		Lia Tsiklauri	Parent	15.06.2020
8	Baghdati	Nino Megrelishvili	Kindergarten director	16.06.2020
9		Mariam Baghashvili	Parent	16.06.2020
10	Ozurgeti	Nino Lomjaria	parent, kindergarten #6	16.06.2020
11	Sachkhere	Lika Chumasvili	Parent	06.06.2020
12	Bolnisi	Giorgi Satskov	Parent	16.06.2020
13		Tinatin Kurtskhalidze	Parent	16.06.2020
14	Batumi	Nato Chakhvadze	Parent	23.06.2020

10.2. Annex II: Evaluation matrix

Table 7 Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation Question	Indicator(s), data	Collection method(s) ⁵⁴	Data sources ⁵⁵	Comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we are looking at • What we are looking for • Key areas of enquiry
Assessing achievement of results/outcomes				
<p>Did the Project produce or contribute to the intended outcomes in the short, medium and long term?</p> <p>In what ways and in what circumstances (contextual, organizational, sectoral) has the results been achieved?</p>	<p>Objective comparison of actual outputs achieved against the set targets, including consideration of annual adjustments</p> <p>Outputs, outcomes, milestone indicators planned and achieved from the Monitoring system.</p> <p>Evidence from the stakeholders and beneficiaries on achievement of expected results.</p> <p>Evidence from Project Documentation and/ or Reports that document the change planned and achieved.</p>	<p>DR</p> <p>KIIs</p> <p>IDIs</p>	<p>PD</p> <p>PR</p> <p>MD</p> <p>NS</p> <p>LS</p> <p>BE</p>	<p>We will investigate whether, how, why, and in what context were the inputs intended outputs/ outcomes achieved or not achieved. For this, we will undertake a meta-level analysis, focusing on the interconnections between the Project component parts, as well as the contextual factors. We will also investigate factors which are internal to the Projects, such as whether appropriate mitigation strategies were employed to tackle the risks, at the start of the Project and after the mid-term evaluation was completed.</p>
<p>What are the unexpected results – positive and negative – produced by the Project? In what circumstances and due to what factors did these unexpected results appeared?</p>	<p>Unplanned outputs/outcomes from the monitoring system.</p> <p>Evidence through examples of additional results/effects and their appraisal.</p> <p>Effects (positive or negative) of identified results</p> <p>Evidence from beneficiaries and stakeholders on achievement of unintended side effects (both positive and negative ones)</p> <p>Comments from beneficiaries and stakeholders on the factors that have impacted the unintended side effects of the Project</p>	<p>DR</p> <p>KIIs</p> <p>IDIs</p>	<p>PD</p> <p>PR</p> <p>MD</p> <p>NS</p> <p>LS</p> <p>BE</p>	<p>Here we are focused on stakeholders' and beneficiaries' perspective as well as try to capture what has happened outside of specific design intentions.</p>
<p>Is the benchmarking methodology used effectively in wide variety of municipalities with different political, environmental, ethnical and economic circumstances?</p>	<p>Evidence and examples of effective use of the benchmarking methodology by municipalities.</p>	<p>DR</p> <p>KIIs</p>	<p>PD</p> <p>PR</p> <p>MD</p> <p>NS</p> <p>LS</p>	<p>This is also in the core of the enquiry – have the inputs achieved the intended outputs/ outcomes in relation to the application of the benchmarking methodology by municipalities. If not, why not, and what change in approach or implementation is indicated.</p>
<p>Do the monitoring /benchmarking results lead to</p>	<p>Comments from the stakeholders as well as beneficiaries regarding</p>	<p>DR</p>	<p>PD</p>	<p>This question will be focused on the beneficiaries' opinions</p>

⁵⁴ DR - Desk Review; KIIs (Key Informant Interviews); IDIs (In-depth interviews).

⁵⁵ PD – Program Documentation (including the Country Program document and Budget, theories of change, other), PR – Project Reports (annual, situation reports, other), MD – Monitoring Data, OD – Other Documents, IS – International Stakeholders, NS – National Stakeholders, LS – Local Stakeholders (excluding beneficiaries), BE – Beneficiaries.

tangible improvements as defined by local stakeholders? Is the methodology transferred and adopted by non-participating municipalities?	the achievement of expected results with regard to the monitoring /benchmarking aspects of the intervention.	KIIs	PR MD NS LS BE	expressed during the interviews complemented by the success stories provided by the local stakeholders.
To what extent do the results validate the GPSA's theory of action and its adaptation to the Georgian educational contexts through the project? To what extent and how sectoral systems enabled or disabled project implementation? What, if any, were the Project's contributions to strengthening those sectoral systems and addressing bottlenecks and other implementation gaps in sectoral delivery chains? To what extent, why and how have Project's lessons informed broader reform efforts, including those led by the government, WBG country and sector dialogues, operations and strategies, and other development partners? <i>Has the Project approach contributed to development of social accountability?</i>	Evidence from the Project's intervention logic, demonstrating how the outputs produce the intended outcomes in the country/sectors' contexts. Evidence through examples of additional results/effects and their appraisal. <i>Opinions of key stakeholders and beneficiaries of the effectiveness of the GPSA strategic approach.</i> <i>Evidence of any change in social accountability since the Project was implemented.</i>	DR KIIs IDIs	PD PR MD NS LS BE	The GPSA's ToA will be carefully investigated to understand how the change was expected to happen in the country/sectors' contexts. <i>We will seek to identify any correlations or preferably casual relations of any observable changes in terms of sectoral systems, reform and social accountability in Georgia with introduction of the Project approach.</i>
Assessment of replicability/learning potential				
How can this work be used to develop social accountability strategies and approaches in Georgia as well as other countries?	Recommendations formulated by different kind of Project's stakeholders as well as beneficiaries.	DR KIIs IDIs	PD PR NS LS BE	It is important to investigate the different perspectives when responding to this recommendation questions.
<i>What lessons can be documented from the implementation of the Project so far?</i>	<i>Recommendations formulated by different kind of Project's stakeholders as well as beneficiaries.</i>	<i>DR KIIs IDIs</i>	<i>PD PR NS LS BE</i>	<i>As above. Some good practices or Project's shortcomings could already have been mentioned in Monitoring Documents, which will also be used as a source of information to reply this research question.</i>
Assessing Sustainability				
Under what conditions will the results be sustainable? What is the risk that the outcomes achieved will not be sustainable?	Opinions of stakeholders and beneficiaries on risks to the sustainability of the Project results and measures to be undertaken to ensure ownership and sustainability of results (legal/policy, financial and institutional/capacities)	DR KIIs IDIs	IS NS LS BE	We are looking for indications that can include control of design or implementation processes, taking responsibility for policy or planning frameworks or taking some level of financial responsibility.
<i>What are the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Project framework in terms of long-term viability and</i>	<i>Opinions of stakeholders and beneficiaries on long-term viability and sustainability.</i>	<i>DR KIIs IDIs</i>	<i>IS NS LS</i>	<i>Based on the gathered opinions we will prepare SWOT analysis including both current situation as well as future prospects.</i>

<i>sustainability?</i>	<i>Any measures introduced to secure long-term sustainability and its effectiveness.</i>		<i>BE</i>	
<i>Is the Project intervention model replicable?</i>	<i>Feedback from stakeholders.</i>	IDIs	<i>IS NS LS</i>	<i>On the top of the above we will look for potential to replicate the intervention model under other conditions. We will need to specify these conditions and identify the factors responsible.</i>

10.3. Annex III: Other factors influencing on Project achievements and non-achievements

In addition to main factors influenced the achievement and non-achievement of the Project outputs and results discussed in section 4.4, table 8 below presents a list of other factors identified through the study which are likely to have facilitated or inhibited the Project achievements. These are divided into factors internal (e.g. Project organizational, management and monitoring processes, support received from the GSPA) and external to the Project. The latter are further divided into national, global regional (i.e. municipality) level.

Table 8: List of other factors which are likely to have influenced Project achievements and non-achievements

Internal Factors	External factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the assumptions and risks were adequately identified at the inception of the Project. • The extent to which appropriate mitigation and adaptation strategies were employed by the Project staff to address any risks or emerging issues threatening the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the Project. • The amount and quality of the technical and financial support provided by the GSPA/World Bank. • Leveraging on partnerships to create synergies of the Project with other interventions. 	National and global level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of social accountability mechanisms applied in the country in public service delivery in general. • Level of social accountability inherent in the preschool policy. • Power dynamics / Level of politicization of the pre-school environment (influence of political appointments and power structures and relations on decision-making and coordination capabilities). • Attention and engagement of international stakeholders in supporting (pre-school) education in Georgia. • Readiness of the social partners to take up the social accountability role and functions.
	Municipality level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality type (size in terms of population and kindergarten numbers, proportion of ethnic minority groups in the municipalities' populations, urban/rural divide (Batumi, Rustavi are completely urban), distance from center. • Previous engagement of the municipal authorities in other projects with SCG and/or the CG or other similar projects. • Institutional and organizational capacity of the municipal government; • Gender relations (and their influence on e.g. relations between kindergarten staff/heads and municipalities/sakrebulo). • Effectiveness and capacity of the kindergarten unions and/or associations. • Competencies of kindergarten staff. • Level of involvement of parents in the kindergarten matters and their awareness of pre-school education for child development. 	