BELDS TOOLKIT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Q: How is Early Childhood Education (ECE) defined in the context of BELDS?

A: BELDS considers [UNESCO's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)](#) definition whereby, "Pre-primary education refers to organized programmes that are intentionally designed to include educational content for children usually aged 3 years up to the start of primary education, often around age 6."

However, it is also recognized that countries may have their own national definitions including contextualized age ranges, early childhood education services provided per age range, and other characterizations of ECE as stipulated in national policy and/or normative documents. One tool within the BELDS Toolkit supports countries with identifying, reflecting on and arriving at consensus on the national definition of the ECE space, where required and appropriate.

Q: What's the history behind the BELDS initiative?

A: GPE received funding from a consortium of foundations (Comic Relief, Dubai Cares, Hilton Foundation, and Open Society Foundation) to promote improved ECE subsector analysis, planning and implementation to address challenges for scaling up quality ECE. UNICEF was selected by GPE, through a competitive institutional bidding process in 2018, to lead the BELDS approach to support 4 pilot countries with integrating and/or strengthening ECE in education sector planning processes.

GPE also envisioned the end-result of the BELDS pilot to culminate in the co-creation of a globally-relevant toolkit, building on the pilot country experiences as well as global, regional and national development partners' technical inputs, experiences and existing resources. The BELDS work has taken place through in-country technical support, cross-country exchanges, and co-creation of the globally- relevant toolkit in 2019-2020. For more information on how the BELDS initiative came about, please see [GPE's website](#).

Q: Why and how were the four BELDS target countries selected? What were the selection criteria?

A: The final selection of the four BELDS pilot countries was conducted by GPE and UNICEF based on the following criteria:
* evidence of country demand and political leadership and interest in ECE scale up,
* timeline of Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and Education Sector Planning (ESP) cycle to ensure selected countries cover both the planning and implementation stages to enable testing of the tools in two critically different but important contexts,
* potential synergies between partners in country to maximize support and financing available,
* active engagement of the Local Education Group (LEG) and other key partners,
* technical capacity of national partners and key government stakeholders, and
* countries with staff capacity across UNICEF and partner institutions to convene and lead the work under BELDS.

For more information on the BELDS experience in the pilot countries, please see these blogs: Ghana, Kyrgyzstan (forthcoming), Lesotho, and Sao Tome e Principe.

Q: What's the purpose of the BELDS Toolkit? Why is a separate toolkit on ESA/ESP for ECE being developed when there are already existing guidelines on ESA/ESP (i.e. UNESCO IIEP Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines and Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation)?

A: The BELDS Toolkit complements and builds on existing guidance on ESA and ESP development. BELDS pilot countries' stakeholders have noted the value of being equipped with subsector-specific and practical tools to enhance their knowledge and capacity to mainstream ECE into ESAs and ESPs. Common experiences, technical support, and tools developed in the BELDS pilot countries serve as the basis for developing a collection of globally relevant tools that can benefit a wider range of countries.

Q: Why does the BELDS Toolkit only prioritize two phases: ESA and ESP development? What about implementation?

A: Due to the limited timeframe of the BELDS initiative and the shifting timelines of the pilot countries' ESP development processes, strengthening and integrating ECE in the ESA and ESP were prioritized phases of the ESP cycle. As the BELDS toolkit builds off common experiences, technical support and tools developed in the pilot countries to date, the ESA and ESP phases have also been prioritized. Implementation and monitoring tools will be developed as part of the forthcoming Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Initiative and added to the "living" BELDS toolkit in the future.

Q: What should countries considering using the BELDS Toolkit know before its use?

A: The BELDS toolkit was developed based on the premise that countries using it already have some level of political will and commitment for ECE across levels of the education system (national to local levels). To further support and enhance advocacy efforts for ECE, the toolkit includes tools and considerations to stimulate dialogue and commitment for ECE, particularly where ECE is not necessarily a priority or where there is a change in leadership that requires renewed advocacy to elevate the priority status of ECE. The toolkit itself can be used as a resource for advocacy and practical demonstration on how to prioritize ECE in the Education Sector.

Q: Who is the BELDS Toolkit target audience?

A: The target audience consists of stakeholders that have a role in ECE systems strengthening, planning, and management of ECE plans' implementation.

These could be members active in the ECE subsector (i.e. preschool directorate or ECE division/unit staff, planning staff, and statistics/EMIS staff of Ministries of Education and development partners and civil society organizations which support ECE planning and management of service provision and monitoring) and other Ministries' stakeholders that may not yet engage systematically and directly with ECE stakeholders (staff from Planning Ministries, Ministries of Finance, etc.).

The audience is purposefully broad, as there is a need to contextualize the "right" audience per country given human resources available and those responsible for decisions and technical inputs in the ECE subsector. For example, some countries have multiple "layers" within their Ministries at the national level and/or strong regional or local planning bodies active in ECE planning, management and provision. While the highest level of decision makers may not use this toolkit, technical staff with some decision-making authority should be engaged. In other countries, there are less "layers" and a

smaller pool of human resources charged with making decisions in the education sector and ECE subsector would be ideal users.

Q: Will the BELDS Toolkit be contextualized? If so, how?

A: The BELDS toolkit is a globally relevant toolkit countries may adapt and contextualize as relevant to their context.

The toolkit is not "prescriptive." Pre-determined timeframes for sections or tools' use are not included, as BELDS pilot countries have shown that the time needed to go through the different "steps" or phases of the ESA and ESP journey varies across countries. To respond to country considerations, the toolkit presents an outline of an iterative "journey" that a country may take, with an accompanying series of tools to support actions along the "journey." For each tool, suggestions are made on when to consider using the tool.

Q: The toolkit is going to be featured on an online platform. Will it be available for offline use, too? How will users be able to best navigate tools featured in the online platform based on contextual realities?

A: The toolkit will be featured in an online, web-based platform. All tools will also be available for downloading and offline use.

To navigate through the toolkit, there will be a self-assessment on the toolkit's online landing page which will help countries at varying "starting points" assess which portion of the "journey" and related tools might be most relevant. In addition to countries engaged in various stages of the ESA and ESP processes, the toolkit may be relevant in the following contexts:
- countries revising Education and/or ECE policies, norms, and standards;
- countries revising or strengthening their education data or accountability systems (including EMIS) to include ECE;
- countries that are doing "light" revisions to the ESP (transitioning from one ESP to another through a "lighter" process than the typical ESP process); and/or
- countries affected by emergencies analyzing data and determining Transitional Education Plans and/or emergency response plans which include ECE/ECD interventions.

Q: Is technical support required for using the BELDS toolkit?

A: The toolkit is designed to be used by stakeholders that have a role in ECE systems strengthening, planning, and management of ECE plans' implementation. While the BELDS toolkit is meant to follow a self-guided learning process, development partners are encouraged to provide on-the-ground technical support for the use of the toolkit, built into existing processes. "Feedback loops" with GPE may be established if the forthcoming KIX online platform has a "help desk" function (this is to be determined).

The online platform and future engagement with the KIX reference group will collect information on toolkit use/analytics, such as which tools were used, by whom, how, when and for which results. Information on toolkit use will later be able to be featured as case studies to refine and improve the toolkit's usability; however, this will not be part of the current BELDS initiative due to time constraints.