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DEVELOPING HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMS:

USAID EDUCATION HOW-TO NOTE

June 2021

How-To Notes provide additional design and implementation suggestions not covered in existing USAID Policy documents related to sub-areas of the USAID Education Policy.

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ACRONYMS

ACEI-GGA	Association for Childhood Education International-Global Guidelines Assessment
BELDS	Better Early Learning and Development Standards
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECERS-R	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
ISSA	International Step by Step Association
MELE	Measuring Early Learning Environments
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children (United States)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Pre-K CLASS	Pre-K Class Assessment Scoring Systems
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECT	Standardized ECD Costing Tool
SEL	Social-Emotional Learning
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WIDE	World Inequity Database on Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Access to high-quality pre-primary education can provide significant benefits to children, including improved learning outcomes,¹ increased school completion rates, and greater likelihood of attending tertiary education.² At a system level, high-quality pre-primary education can reduce grade repetition³ and decrease dropout rates,⁴ thereby improving the overall efficiency of the education system.⁵
- Pre-primary represents only one component of early childhood development (ECD), which includes links to nutrition, health, and safety to ensure children have the best start in life. Wherever possible, pre-primary programs should strive to leverage and build links with other sectors.
- Quality pre-primary education is characterized by strong teacher-child relationships,⁶ play-based learning approaches,⁷ individualized and inclusive instruction, and an attention to holistic development.⁸
- USAID’s interest in pre-primary education is in increasing access to high-quality pre-primary programming, especially for the most marginalized and vulnerable, with a focus on improving learning outcomes.

1. Greg Duncan et al., “School Readiness and Later Achievement”. *Developmental Psychology* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1428-1446. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0012-1649.43.6.1428>.

2. Caroline Krafft, “Increasing Educational Attainment in Egypt: The impact of Early Childhood Care and Education”. *Economics of Education Review* 46, (2015): 127-143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2015.03.006>.

3. Luis Crouch and Katherine A. Merseeth, *Stumbling at the First Step: Efficiency Implications of Poor Performance in the Foundational First Five Years*. Paris: UNESCO, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-017-9401-1>.

4. Jan Bietenbeck, Sanna Ericsson, and Frederick Wamalwa, “Preschool Attendance, Schooling, and Cognitive Skills in East Africa”. *Economics of Education Review* 73, no. 101909 (2019).

5. Mauren M. Black et al., “Early Childhood Development Coming of Age: Science through the Life Course.” *The Lancet* 389, (2016): 77-90. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)31389-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31389-7); Abbie Raikes et al., “Measuring Quality of Pre-primary Education in sub-Saharan Africa: Evaluation of the Measuring Early Learning Environments Scale”. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 53 (2020): 571–585. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.06.001>; N. Rao et al., “Effectiveness of Early Childhood Interventions in Promoting Cognitive Development in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.” *Hong Kong Journal of Pediatrics* 22, no.1 (2017): 14-25. <http://www.hkjpae.org/pdf/2017;22;14-25.pdf>; Jeffery C. Tanner, Tara Candland and Whitney S. Odden, *Later Impacts of Early Childhood Interventions: A Systematic Review*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2015. <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/evaluations/later-impacts-early-childhood-interventions>.

6. Margaret Burchinal, et al., “Threshold Analysis of Association between Childcare Quality and Child Outcomes for Low-income Children in Pre-kindergarten programs”. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 25, no.2 (2010):166–176.

7. Jennifer M. Zosh et al., *Learning Through Play: A Review of the Evidence* (white paper). Denmark: The LEGO Foundation, 2017. *Learning through Play*.

8. UNICEF, *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Quality in Early Childhood Education*. New York City: UNICEF, 2019. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/a-world-ready-to-learn-2019>.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE

OBJECTIVES

This How-to Note is written to support USAID Mission staff around the world in analyzing the pre-primary landscape in their context and designing pre-primary activities. Specifically, it offers guidance on how to:

- Systematically examine the pre-primary landscape, from policy and systems-level consideration to the on-the-ground reality;
- Identify the relevant stakeholders in each context’s pre-primary sub-sector and ensure USAID’s activities align with and support relevant existing initiatives and programs;
- Analyze the opportunities for USAID to engage in the pre-primary sector and determine what types of activities would offer the most value; and
- Define the components of a high-quality pre-primary provision to inform the design of pre-primary activities, and/or the integration of pre-primary elements into activities with a broader scope.

ORGANIZATION

This How-to Note includes the following sections:

TABLE I: HOW-TO NOTE SECTIONS

SECTION	DESCRIPTION
Executive Summary, Preface, and Introduction	This section provides a synopsis of the most essential information in the How-to Note and represents a stand-alone summary of the larger guidance. While readers are strongly encouraged to utilize the full guidance and associated tools, this section provides an overview of the key characteristics of high-quality pre-primary programs, the associated learning outcomes, and the topline considerations that should guide the design of pre-primary activities.
Chapters 1-6: Components of High-Quality Pre-Primary	This section comprises the core content of the How-to Note. Each chapter provides a more in-depth overview of a critical component of pre-primary programming including: Overview: A short clarifying section that frames the topic to be analyzed in each decision tree and provides a snapshot of what an ideal pre-primary scenario might include in relation to the chapter topic. Decision Tree: Each decision tree uses guiding questions to support activity designers to think systematically about their pre-primary context and determine a programming direction. Guidance Narrative: Each decision tree is followed by a guidance narrative that offers additional context, highlights potential challenges, and lists resources and programming considerations.
Putting it Together	This section supports readers to understand how to apply content from the How-to Note to the USAID Program Cycle. It includes sample theories of change and suggested indicators.

USING THE DECISION TREES

The decision tree format was chosen to support a systematic review of a large and complex pre-primary sector. Each chapter highlights critical considerations for deciding if and how to invest in pre-primary programming. Designing a pre-primary activity without a detailed understanding of the current landscape may result in investments that duplicate existing efforts, reinforce poor pedagogical and instructional practices, or fail to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable.

Decision tree questions have been kept purposefully high-level, including only those questions that are truly critical to understanding how USAID may engage in the sector. Where possible, it is recommended that a more comprehensive landscape review (using the questions in the Landscape Review workbook) be completed.

Each decision tree begins with a central question, which is designed to draw a clear context distinction. For example, the Access Decision Tree asks: **are most children, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, accessing pre-primary education?** This question achieves two aims: 1) to emphasize that access for the most marginalized and vulnerable is a top programmatic priority, and 2) to move readers toward questions on either the “weak access” or “strong access” side of the context spectrum. The subsequent questions follow the line with the most appropriate answer. To the greatest extent possible, partial and more nuanced answers have been provided to help readers choose the most appropriate pathway and point toward the most relevant guiding narrative.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

This Guidance Note is supported by several accompanying documents:

- [Examining What Works in Pre-Primary: A Review of the Evidence](#) – A comprehensive look at global literature on pre-primary programs, especially analyzing the aspects of quality and enabling environment that drive learning outcomes.
- [Developing High-Quality Pre-Primary Programs Workbook](#) – An Excel tool that includes all decision tree questions, as well as several additional landscape review questions. The purpose of the tool is to help readers further analyze their context and record their responses in one place.

INTRODUCTION

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood development is the period of time between conception and eight years of age when children develop across social, emotional, cognitive, and physical domains. Programs that support holistic ECD usually provide one or more aspects of nurturing care, such as the provision of adequate nutrition, good health, responsive caregiving, safety and security, and opportunities for early learning.⁹ Pre-primary education represents one type of early learning provision, typically serving children between 3 and 6 years of age.

Pre-primary is recognized in the [2018 USAID Education Policy](#) as part of Basic Education programming, which highlights its importance in addressing the learning crisis. It notes that “The most effective approaches to pre-primary education support the holistic development of a broad set of early skills across physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and other domains.” Furthermore, the [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education](#) commits to working with communities and state and non-state actors to improve children’s access to high quality early learning opportunities.

Other aspects of ECD are addressed in USAID documents, including the [Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity](#) (2019-2023), [Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025](#), [Blueprint for Global Health Resilience](#) (2021), and others.

Pre-primary is part of a continuum of early learning that should be integrated with holistic ECD services whenever possible. This document, however, focuses on the key components related to high-quality pre-primary programs.

DEFINING HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY

Pre-primary education is defined as any group-based, organized instruction serving children immediately prior to their entry into primary school, generally between the ages of 3 and 6 although the ages served may vary across contexts.¹⁰ A program may be school-based, center-based, or community-based, and include between one and three years of instruction. Schedules, models, settings, and many other features vary considerably in different contexts, but the defining characteristic of pre-primary is a focus on early learning.

Children who attend high-quality pre-primary programs are more likely to develop the skills they need to succeed in primary school, including emergent literacy and numeracy, social and emotional, and physical skills. They are also less likely to dropout or repeat grades and have an increased probability of completing their formal schooling.¹¹ These individual level outcomes can translate into greater efficiency

9. World Health Organization, UNICEF, World Bank Group, Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development: A Framework for Helping Children Survive and Thrive to Transform Health and Human Potential. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2018. https://nurturing-care.org/resources/Nurturing_Care_Framework_en.pdf.

10. UNICEF, Build to Last: A Framework in Support of Universal Quality Pre-primary Education. New York City: UNICEF, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/build-to-last-2020>.

11. Katherine Thomas, Examining What Works in Pre-Primary: A Global Review of the Evidence. Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2021.

across the education system by increasing the number of students who are in an age-appropriate grade, and their ability to progress from one grade to the next on time.

For a pre-primary sub-sector to reliably deliver quality programming and improve learning outcomes an enabling environment is required. This refers to the policy landscape and delivery framework in which quality, equitable, and inclusive pre-primary programs are developed, delivered, monitored and regulated. Additionally, pre-primary programs require adequate resources, a strong framework for quality regulation, and trained teachers to deliver age- and developmentally appropriate curricula. All of these components will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 1–6.

INTEGRATING PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

High-quality pre-primary is inclusive and based on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Integrating UDL means that programs include multiple means of engagement so that children can interact with the curriculum content; has representation that is varied and inclusive of all children in the program, including children with disabilities, children of different identities and backgrounds, etc.; and encourages multiple ways of expressing what children have learned. Applying these UDL principles will ensure that all children are able to equitably access learning.¹²

These principles should also be integrated at every level of the pre-primary education sub-sector, including teacher preparation and training, curriculum development, design of the physical environment, material development, and instruction.

FOCUSING IN ON “DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE” PRE-PRIMARY

In early childhood education (ECE), it is critical that teaching practices be *developmentally appropriate* for young children. For pre-primary education, this means programs should be play-based, and allow children the opportunity to develop their creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through a range of child-centered experiences. Developmentally appropriate practice develops children’s skills, abilities, and attitudes across a number of domains including social and emotional learning (SEL), language and literacy, cognition and numeracy skills, physical abilities, and attitudes toward learning.¹³

A key challenge in many contexts where pre-primary is available is that programming is not developmentally appropriate for young children and instead uses a curriculum and instructional strategies that mirror practices in primary school.¹⁴ Thus, it is critical in designing any pre-primary activity to emphasize the need for an approach grounded in play-based pedagogies.

12. Anne Hayes, Ann Turnbull and Norma Moran, *Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Read: Promoting Literacy for Learners with Disabilities* (First Edition). Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2018.

13. NAEYC. “Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth to 8 Years Old.” *Young Children* 4, no. 6 (2009): 20–29 <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap>.

14. Dana McCoy, Stephanie Simmons Zuilkowski, Hirokazu Yoshikawa and Gunther Fink (2016). “Early Childhood Care and Education and School Readiness in Zambia.” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10, no. 3 (2016): 482–506. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2016.1250850>; Josephine Ng. “The Impact of Children’s Learning during a Curriculum Reform in Singapore.” *International Research in Early Childhood Education* 5, no.1, (2014): 11-26.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1150989.pdf>; Sharon Wolf et al. “Measuring and Predicting Process Quality in Ghanaian Pre-primary Classrooms Using the Teacher Instructional Practices and Processes System (TIPPS).” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 45, (2018): 18–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.05.003>.

It is equally essential to recognize that the early childhood period is a time of rapid and significant development. Over the typical 3-year span of pre-primary programs, children change tremendously; thus "developmentally appropriate pre-primary" will look different for a class of 3-year-old children compared to a class of 5-year-old children. To illustrate this point, please refer to Annex III: Notes on learning outcomes, for a sample of developmentally appropriate learning expectations across the pre-primary age range.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Children are active learners who learn best through meaningful play experiences. As children play, they develop socially and emotionally, learn to solve problems, think critically and imaginatively, expand their language, fine tune their physical skills, and much more.¹⁵

Resources for play-based learning approaches often talk about different forms of play, such as guided play, free play, structured play, and pretend play, among others. Differentiating play in this way can be useful, especially when engaging in a technical task, such as developing a teacher training or reviewing curricula. For the purposes of this guide, however, play is discussed more generally, noting that whichever form is being practiced, the key characteristic should be the authentic connection children are able to make with the content.

Within a classroom setting, children often engage in playful experiences that have been purposefully planned by a teacher with the intent on teaching particular skills. For example:

A teacher wants to teach her class the number "5." She gives each child a set of five blocks and encourages them to build different types of towers before knocking them down and starting over. As they play, she may ask them to count each block and show them the numeral "5" to help build a connection between the numeral and the quantity of blocks in their tower. She can invite them to show their towers to their friends and count the number of blocks in their friends' towers. Through this fun, physical, creative, and social play activity, the children make connections to specific numeracy content.

Other play is more open-ended and guided by the physical environment, which teachers can use to arrange opportunities for authentic, child-directed play that supports the learning goals they have set. For example:

A teacher wants to encourage his students to develop their fine motor skills, practice new vocabulary for types of healthy foods, build social-emotional skills through joyful experiences with their peers, and encourage a gender-inclusive view of household tasks. To support this, he sets up a "play kitchen" in a corner of the classroom with spoons and bowls, several kinds of vegetables, and empty containers of other healthy items they've learned about. He invites his students to play freely in the pretend kitchen, demonstrates how to ask friends for turns with different items, and extends their language skills by talking with them about "what they will make for dinner." Guided by their own imaginations, the children in this scenario interact meaningfully with their environment and their peers to develop a range of skills.

15. LEGO & UNICEF. Learning Through Play: Strengthening Learning through Play in Early Childhood Education Programmes. New York, NY: UNICEF, 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf>.

SCHOOL READINESS

High quality pre-primary programs provide children with the opportunity to develop a broad set of skills, abilities, and attitudes that prepare them for future learning in primary grades and are often referred to as “school readiness.” While this term can also be used to refer to wider school readiness (i.e., including the readiness of children to attend school, the readiness of schools to receive them, and the readiness of families/communities to support their transition and learning) for the purposes of this document, it refers to the knowledge and skills a child develops and that support their continued learning in primary school. All pre-primary programming should seek to develop the range of skills in young children, instead of focusing on one or two domains in isolation. Table 2 below describes these school readiness domains in detail.

TABLE 2: SCHOOL READINESS DOMAINS¹⁶

DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION
Social-Emotional Learning	The skills necessary to support children’s ability to adapt to and thrive in the classroom’s social environment including, but not limited to, forming positive relationships with peers and adults; the ability to work and play in a group, thinking and acting independently; solving conflicts; managing responsibilities; and the ability to identify, express, and regulate emotions, exhibit self-esteem, and show respect toward others. The cultural context of the host country may place more or less emphasis on certain skills and/or require others to be added to this list.
Language and Literacy	The wide body of skills that support children to learn through oral and written communication, including, broadly: Language development skills, such as listening and speaking; non-verbal communication, including sign languages; receptive and expressive vocabulary development; grammar usage and understanding; appreciation and response to storytelling and conversation; and Emergent literacy skills, such as print concept, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabetic awareness, and analysis and comprehension of text.
Emergent Numeracy and Cognition	The general knowledge and skills that support effective learning and application of grade-level mathematics, science, and other academic subjects. Numeracy skills include, broadly, number sense, spatial awareness and geometry, ability to sort and classify, follow patterns and seriation, and simple mathematical operations.
Physical Development	This dimension refers to a child’s gross and fine motor development. This is the ability to use and control large muscles, for example when one walks, jumps, and raises or waves a hand, and to use and control small muscles, for example when one holds a pencil and grasps it or signs the alphabet.
Approaches to Learning	The skills and dispositions that foster children’s learning, including, but not limited to, the development of attention, engagement, and persistence in learning tasks; positive learning behaviors such as cooperation and risk taking; creativity; curiosity and initiative; and logic, reasoning, and problem solving.

16. The school readiness skills in Table 1 are documented in numerous frameworks, studies, and discussion papers on early childhood education. See the UNICEF Conceptual Framework for School Readiness (2012), Brookings Toward Universal Learning: What Every Child Should Learn (2013), UNESCO Overview: MELQO (2017), and The Learning Policy Institute Early Childhood Essentials (2019) for some good examples.

PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

This guidance is developed in line with the principles and priorities of the 2018 Education Policy, as well as best practice in pre-primary. Table 3 outlines how the principles and priorities apply to pre-primary programming.

TABLE 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

USAID EDUCATION POLICY PRINCIPLE OR PRIORITY	CONTEXTUALIZATION FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION
Prioritize country-focus and ownership	Delivering pre-primary at scale requires commitment and investment by country governments to develop relevant policy and plans, invest in infrastructure and personnel, and regulate and monitor a complex sub-sector.
Focus and concentrate investments on measurably and sustainably improving learning and educational outcomes	Quality is critical for pre-primary education to be effective and achieve intended learning outcomes. USAID should prioritize and support programs that include quality frameworks, developmentally appropriate curriculum, and appropriate resources, teacher training, and strong systems to support and sustain gains.
Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions	Strong systems with clear policies and dedicated, trained personnel are essential for driving and sustaining gains in pre-primary. USAID programs may support capacity building of local stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of pre-primary activities.
Work in partnership and leverage resources	In many contexts, the pre-primary sector includes a diverse group of stakeholders. Where appropriate, USAID activities should coordinate with other donors, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and other non-state actors to maximize investments in the pre-primary sector.
Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data	To further advance the pre-primary field and improve future programming, USAID's pre-primary education investments should be made with a commitment to expanding the research and evidence base.
Promote equity and inclusion	Poverty, location, religion, gender, ethnicity, and disability are key factors contributing to inequities in pre-primary. Considerations for equity and inclusion and an emphasis on access for the most marginalized and vulnerable should be prioritized in USAID programming.
Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being	In order to build quality pre-primary programming, it is necessary to invest in training teachers who are valued, treated with respect, compensated as professionals, and supported through specialized pre-service and in-service training and continuous professional development. Programming should also seek to build strong links with families and communities.
Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success	All curriculum and pedagogy must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the population being served. All pre-primary programming should recognize the uniqueness of young children and support pedagogy that is in line with the evidence.

KEY COMPONENTS OF PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMMING

When deciding to invest in pre-primary programming, it is critical to understand the current pre-primary landscape, which frequently includes a variety of stakeholders and programming approaches. This section provides an overview of the key components associated with a high-quality pre-primary sub-sector and highlights critical questions to consider when designing an activity. The rest of this document is divided into chapters to provide guiding questions, detailed information, and key recommendations related to each component. At a minimum, the following questions and considerations should be taken into account when designing any pre-primary activity.

POLITICAL WILL, INVESTMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

Is there a policy that specifically addresses pre-primary in National Development Strategies or Education Sector Plans?

The existence or absence of a pre-primary policy will influence USAID’s approach. In order to ensure country ownership and sustainability, pre-primary needs to be represented in Education Sector Plans (ESP) and official policy. In contexts where this is not the status quo, it may be necessary to work with advocates, technical working groups, and influential government champions to increase political will for pre-primary education. In other contexts, where there are no public sector stakeholders, activities may consider supporting community-based programming, NGOs and FBOs, or private sector organizations that provide pre-primary to the most marginalized and vulnerable.

REGULATING, MONITORING, AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

Is there a regulatory framework in place that articulates how pre-primary service provision is provided, regulated, and monitored?

Pre-primary sub-sectors are often complex, with multiple stakeholders, fragmented governance, and fractured systems.¹⁷ Many programs operate without being licensed, and in contexts where a diverse group of stakeholders operate, a lack of standards or regular monitoring make it difficult to determine whether programs are achieving the intended outcomes.¹⁸ A first step in supporting the pre-primary sub-sector may be to work with central and decentralized education authorities to establish and/or revise regulatory frameworks and effective monitoring procedures with new or existing quality standards.

ACCESS

Are the most marginalized and vulnerable children accessing pre-primary?

What are the key barriers to access for those groups not accessing pre-primary? (cost, location, disability)

17. Michelle Neuman, (2005) “Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care: Recent Developments in OECD Countries, *Early Years* 25, no.2 (2005): 129-141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140500130992>.

18. Neuman, “Governance of Early Childhood Education”; Pia R. Britto et al., “Strengthening Systems for Integrated Early Childhood Development Services: A Cross-national Analysis of Governance.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Science* 1308, (2014): 245-255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.12365>

Global data demonstrates that some to most children, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, are not accessing pre-primary education.¹⁹ Improving enrollment in pre-primary is especially critical for children with disabilities, for whom participation in early learning programs can mean earlier identification of disabilities and access to services. Any planning for pre-primary should include the identification of populations who are currently not accessing pre-primary and determining the key barriers (cost, geographic location, disability, etc.) to be addressed.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Are there structural and process quality standards in place?

Do programs use an evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, inclusive curriculum?

A high-quality pre-primary program is based on established structural quality standards that usually refer to regulations, policies, and other factors that shape the environment (child-teacher class ratio, personnel qualifications, etc.) and process quality standards that articulate the experiences children should have in pre-primary (positive teacher-student interactions, developmentally appropriate pedagogy, etc.). A key to quality at the classroom level is the use of a curriculum grounded in play-based pedagogy and the principles of inclusive education, and the provision of appropriate training for teachers. In many contexts, however, pre-primary programs may not be guided by clear standards, and use instructional strategies and pedagogies that are inappropriate for young children. A key focus of activities may be supporting the development and/or revision of pre-primary quality standards, curriculum, and pedagogical materials to ensure they reflect best practices.

TEACHER WORKFORCE

Do teachers receive training and continuous professional development opportunities that are specific to pre-primary and emphasize developmentally appropriate practice?

The amount, type, and quality of training teachers receive is indicative of the overall level of quality in the sub-sector. Pre-primary teachers often receive little to no training or were originally trained as primary teachers before being assigned to a pre-primary classroom.²⁰ Investments in teacher training that focuses on and supports developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom are essential to overall quality.²¹

19. UNICEF, A World Ready to Learn.

20. The Global Education Monitoring Report Team. Accountability in Education: Meeting our Commitments. Paris: UNESCO, 2017. <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2017/accountability-education>.

21. Rube G. Fukkink and Anna Lont. "Does Training Matter? A Meta-analysis and Review of Caregiver Training Studies." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (2007): 294–311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.04.005>; Mitter and Putcha, Strengthening and Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce; UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific, Pursuing Quality in Early Learning.

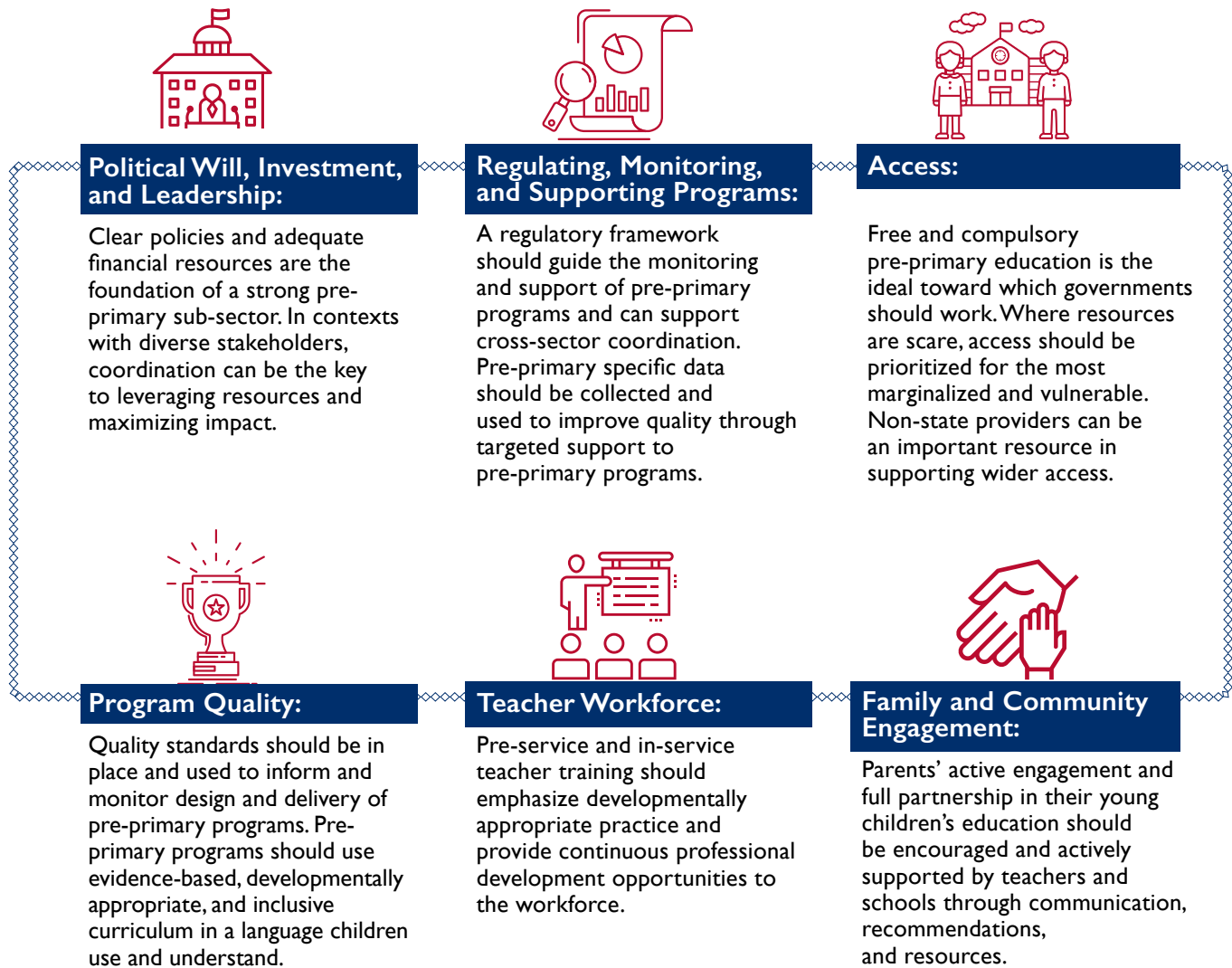
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Are parents, caregivers, and community members actively engaged with the program in a variety of ways?

As is true across all ages and stages of education, parents are central to supporting their children's learning. In some contexts, however, parents may not be aware of or understand the critical importance of ECE. Pre-primary programs should not only support parents' active engagement in their child's education but also further their understanding of the critical importance of the early years in a child's later academic success.

FIGURE 1: COMPONENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

COMPONENTS OF HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION OUR FOCUS AND PRIORITIES



Why Pre-primary?

Pre-primary education is a good investment for individuals, communities, and wider national interests. Quality early learning experiences and the foundational skills they support are associated with wide-reaching positive outcomes that carry significant returns on investment, including:

- A greater likelihood of academic success in and completion of primary school,
- Lower incidents of grade repetition and drop out and,
- Attainment of higher levels of education over one's lifetime.

When children attend a high-quality pre-primary program, they enter school with more of the skills they need to succeed. This starts them on an upward trajectory and allows them to engage more fully with future learning and helping them reach their full potential.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The following cross-cutting themes are addressed throughout this How-to Note and should be carefully considered while developing all pre-primary activities. Table 4 provides some pre-primary specific considerations. Additional guidance can be found in the linked USAID documents.

TABLE 4: CROSS CUTTING THEMES

CROSS-CUTTING THEME	PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS	ADDITIONAL USAID GUIDANCE
Pre-Primary Education in Crisis and Conflict	<p>Quality pre-primary education should provide a stable source of social and emotional support to young children living in conflict and crisis.²² These environments increase the complexity of delivering wide-scale pre-primary education, however, access to early learning opportunities is critical for these children.</p> <p>Pre-primary services in conflict and crisis should be tailored to the needs of the children. These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of and support to informal pre-primary education centers that rely heavily on volunteer teachers, • Promotion of pre-primary education curricula that strongly emphasize social and emotional learning, including coping mechanisms for stress and trauma, and • A more explicit focus on cross-sector linkages that bring more holistic services for young children under one umbrella, especially including health and nutrition services and child protection efforts. <p>See linked additional guidance on best practices for education in conflict and crisis for broader recommendations, for example in offering psychosocial support to teachers.</p>	<p>https://www.edulinks.org/topics/education-crisis-and-conflict</p>
Disability Inclusive Programming	<p>Early childhood represents a critical window for identifying functional difficulties and offering early interventions. Early identification increases the likelihood that children with disabilities will receive the support they need to continue accessing education as they grow.²³ Additionally, inclusive pre-primary can foster more inclusive attitudes among young children by exposing them early on to others who are different from them.²⁴ This early exposure can translate into more positive attitudes toward diversity and inclusion later in life.</p> <p>However, as many programs are not designed with inclusive education in mind, children with disabilities are systematically excluded, even at the pre-primary education level.</p>	<p>https://www.edulinks.org/topics/disability-inclusive-education</p>
Gender and Youth Workforce Development	<p>Gender parity in pre-primary education is generally strong.²⁵ This is likely partially due to the overall global gains in gender parity across education, and to the fact that pre-primary education provides childcare as well as education. The level of parity in pre-primary education does vary by context, however, and should be assessed when designing an activity.</p> <p>That said, pre-primary education may have a greater impact on issues of gender based on its impact on older girls and women. This is because pre-primary education lowers the burden of childcare on mothers and older sisters, which evidence shows has a significant impact on older girls' school attendance and women's engagement in the workforce.²⁶</p>	<p>https://www.edulinks.org/topics/gender-and-girls-education</p> <p>https://www.edulinks.org/index.php/topics/youth-workforce-development</p>

22. Kolleen Bouchane, "Early Childhood Development and Early Learning for Children in Crisis and Conflict." Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2019, New York City: UNESCO (2018).

23. UNICEF, A World Ready to Learn.

24. Thomas Hehir, Silvana Pascucci, Christopher Pascucci. A Summary of the Evidence of Inclusive Education. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, 2016. <https://www.abtassociates.com/insights/publications/report/summary-of-the-evidence-on-inclusive-education>.

25. Based on the author's analysis of UIS data.

26. Samuel Berlinski, Sebastian Galiani. "The Effect of a Large Expansion of Pre-primary School Facilities on Preschool Attendance and Maternal Employment." Labour Economics 14, no. 3 (2007): 665-680.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2007.01.003>; Daniel Z Halim, Hillary Johnson and Elizaveta Perova. Preschool Availability and Female Labor Force Participation: Evidence from Indonesia. The World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 8915. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2019. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3430527

CHAPTERS

1. Political Will, Leadership, and Investment
2. Regulating, Monitoring, and Supporting Programs
3. Access
4. Curriculum and Program Design
5. Pre-Primary Teacher Workforce
6. Family and Community Engagement
7. Putting it Together for Pre-Primary Programming



PHOTO: DENYS KUVAIEV / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

CHAPTER I: POLITICAL WILL, INVESTMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Decision Tree I is focused on the country's policies and strategies related to pre-primary education, as this is a clear indication of the high-level commitment and a point of leverage for garnering additional support. The associated guidance will discuss building to, or from, a central policy to promote effective leadership in the pre-primary sub-sector.

USAID's commitment to local ownership requires that investments correspond to the readiness of the country to own and sustain any gains made in the sub-sector. In an ideal scenario, pre-primary education will have the support of several influential champions, including those that control financial resources.

Pre-primary education should be clearly addressed in policy and have designated ministerial leadership, with one ministry (usually the Ministry of Education) responsible for the delivery and results of the sub-sector. Clear leadership increases the likelihood that pre-primary will benefit from sufficient funding and strategic sector planning and will be more closely aligned to the efforts made to support primary school, for example the revision of curriculum or teacher preparation programs.

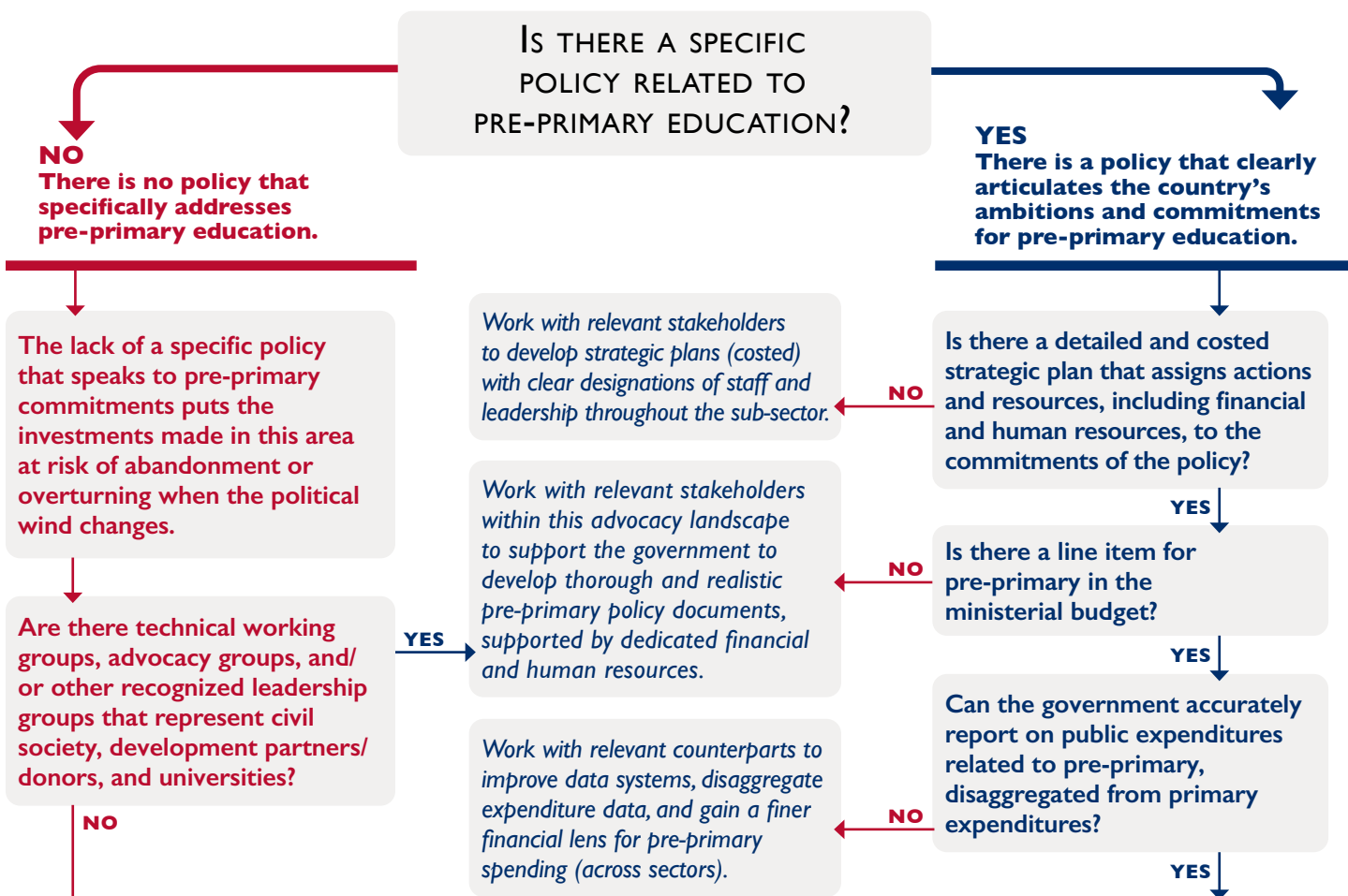
Public expenditure for pre-primary education should be planned through a costed strategic plan, included in the ministerial budget, and reported on accurately through a database that offers transparency. As pre-primary education has heavier resource requirements compared to some higher levels, the pre-primary budget should represent at least 10 percent of the total education budget.²⁷

27. Asma Zubairi and Pauline Rose. *Bright and Early: How Financing Pre-primary Education Gives Every Child a Fair Start in Life: Moving Toward Quality Early Childhood Development for All*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2017. <https://theirworld.org/resources/detail/bright-and-early-report-on-financing-pre-primary-education>.

FIGURE 2: DECISION TREE I

DECISION TREE I: POLITICAL WILL, INVESTMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

The goal of this tree is to understand: How can USAID support national commitment, investment, and leadership for the pre-primary sub-sector?



CONSIDER whether the absence of policy and clear advocates suggests that there is currently insufficient political will to support sustainable gains in pre-primary. Consider focusing energy on advocacy and generating this political will before advancing further with program planning.

DETERMINE who your leaders in the sub-sector are. These may be decentralized or community actors, especially where pre-primary is still largely informal or privately managed. These will be your core agents of change while you work to build political will in parallel.

AT A HIGH-LEVEL, the political and investment framework appear to be in good shape. Take a deeper look at the quality of the plans, the realism of the budgeting, and any areas where alignment between goals, planning, and resourcing can be improved. Work with relevant stakeholders and government counterparts to make these refinements where needed.

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE POLICY, STRATEGIC PLANNING, AND LEADERSHIP

A functional pre-primary sub-sector must have clear policies and a detailed strategic plan that outlines the roles and responsibilities of leaders and actors both vertically and horizontally throughout the system. Presently, however, only 48 low- and middle-income countries guarantee at least one year of free pre-primary.²⁸

Where these key documents are absent, USAID can:

- Work with advocates, technical working groups, and influential government champions to increase political will for pre-primary education.
- Work with relevant counterparts and stakeholders to develop policy instruments, including a pre-primary specific policy, strategic plans, and implementation guidance and training for staff at national and regional levels.
- After completing a stakeholder analysis, consider whether there are non-governmental actors who are best positioned to provide quality pre-primary to the most marginalized and vulnerable.



PHOTO: DAKA MAUREEN/ USAID KENYA

28. Source: UIS Database and SABER country reports.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

The pre-primary landscape may contain a diverse group of stakeholders, and a first step to any program design should be to conduct a thorough analysis of the pre-primary education and wider early childhood development landscape in a given context. Providers of pre-primary may include not only the Ministry of Education (or other ministries), but also FBOs, NGOs, and the private sector. Additionally, other donors and foundations may have made significant investments in particular activities or the sub-sector as a whole.

Identifying other stakeholders and understanding the current status of the pre-primary sector is critical for USAID to determine where it is best suited to fill gaps. Analysis can also support USAID Missions to harmonize their funding with other stakeholders and, in some cases, may lead to the decision to support existing initiatives instead of beginning stand-alone activities. Throughout the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating pre-primary programming, it will be critical to continue engaging diverse stakeholders to ensure the sustainability and strengthening of pre-primary education.

Important stakeholders to involve early in this process include:

The government: the ministry leading pre-primary education and any other relevant ministries.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has made significant investments in early childhood initiatives worldwide and often conducts mapping exercises and other studies that will support and inform your decision-making.

Research institutions and universities engaged in early childhood research.

Other major donors invested in early childhood work.

Civil-society organizations engaged in early childhood work

PROVISION OF A REALISTIC BUDGET

In most countries around the world, public expenditure for pre-primary is insufficient, with many spending less than 3 percent of their overall education budget on this age range, compared to the internationally recommended 10 percent. Estimates of the pre-primary need vs. current provision indicates a global financing gap of about \$39 billion.²⁹

One reason pre-primary is often so poorly resourced is because the sub-sector is inaccurately viewed as not meaningfully different from early primary school. For example, governments may not recognize the need for specialized teacher preparation and professional development in pre-primary, instead wrapping it into their general primary training plans. They may overlook the need for specialized curricula, learning materials, and assessments. Where countries do not recognize the tasks of managing the pre-primary sub-sector as specialized, resourcing inevitably falls short.

A better understanding of the real costs of developing and implementing pre-primary programming is a critically important step in laying the foundation for long-term sustainability of such efforts. Annex IV provides suggestions for budgeting for developing and implementing a pre-primary intervention or program and describes USAID's approach to real-time cost data capture in more detail.

29. Zubairi, Bright and Early.

USAID's Center for Education developed a comprehensive methodology for capturing and analyzing data on costs of donor-supported education programs, including in pre-primary education. It includes templates and tools for identifying cost-related questions, establishing a real-time cost capture approach, and analyzing collected cost data to answer the identified cost questions. Detailed data on costs will help improve planning and management of USAID investments in pre-primary programming.

To improve the process of costing, budgeting, and encourage proper funding for pre-primary provision, USAID can:

- Work with education authorities and other partners to analyze the gap in provision access and report on the extent to which the most marginalized and vulnerable children are accessing pre-primary. This will include vulnerable children, children with disabilities, and children who are marginalized due to ethnicity, religion, or some other factor(s), among others.
- Conduct thorough costing exercises of the current and target pre-primary education provision in advance of all pre-primary programs, in support of other partners, government, etc. Improve intervention efficiency through identification of cost drivers.
- Collect and report detailed, thorough, and accurate cost data for all pre-primary education programs. Inform intervention design, planning, and budgeting through a better understanding of intervention cost structures in different contexts. *Note: many ECD programs may include pre-primary components. Where possible, it is helpful to disaggregate this data from the larger programs.*
- Support accurate reporting on pre-primary education costs and spending through capacity building activities at the school, local, municipal, and central levels and study cost-effectiveness of comparable interventions to identify the least-costly models with the greatest impact on the outcomes of interest.

CHAPTER 2: REGULATING, MONITORING, AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

Decision Tree 2 centers on the existence and strength of a regulatory framework, which should ideally lay the foundation for an effective process of regulating and monitoring the pre-primary sub-sector.

In a well-regulated pre-primary education sub-sector, policies, standards, and written requirements will clearly articulate how pre-primary programs should develop and operate. There will be an official process for establishing and licensing a pre-primary program and defining operational requirements and policies. Ideally, these policies will be linked to structural and process quality standards (see Chapter 4).

Also important are the procedures to monitor whether providers are meeting the established requirements, being registered as expected, and receiving follow-up support and inspections by the appropriate education authority. Monitoring procedures, administered by competent personnel, are essential for preventing a disconnect between policies and on-the-ground implementation.

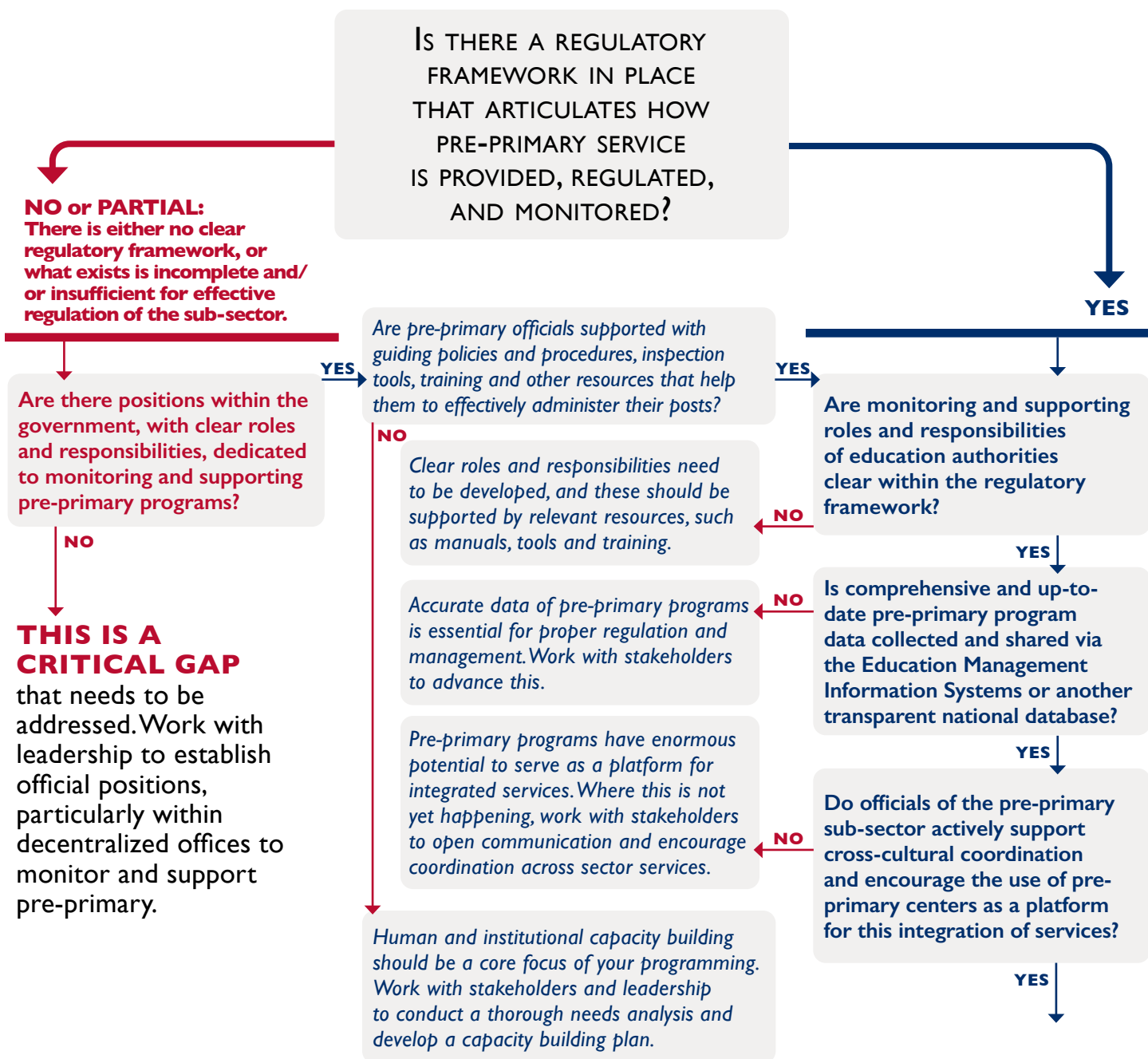
As education authorities monitor programs, they should collect data on program quality and apply it to support program improvement and ensure child safety and learning. This data should be included in the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and properly disaggregated from primary school data and other ECD programs.

In a high-functioning sub-sector, the ministry leading on pre-primary education will also dedicate resources to coordinating cross-sectorally and creating effective vertical governance links to support the ground-level delivery of policies and plans, as well as the reception of data and other feedback. This includes supporting pre-primary programs to connect with health and nutrition services, referral programs for supporting children with disabilities or specialized health needs, Water Sanitation and Health (WASH) programs, parenting education services, and more. It also includes supporting cross-sectoral messaging for families and communities to ensure widespread understanding of nurturing care practices.

FIGURE 3: DECISION TREE 2

DECISION TREE 2: REGULATING, MONITORING, AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

The goal of this tree is to understand: How can USAID support a well-regulated pre-primary sub-sector, ensuring high quality of both public and non-state provision?



MANY OF THE NECESSARY components are in place to support effective regulation, monitoring, and support of the pre-primary sub-sector. Work with stakeholders and government counterparts to conduct a thorough needs assessment of the regulatory system and offer support where areas for improvement are identified.

PROMOTING A STRONG REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING PROCEDURES

In many countries, particularly those with a still-emerging policy landscape for pre-primary, the regulatory structure, policies, and procedures for establishing, operating, monitoring, and regulating the pre-primary sub-sector may be weak or non-existent. Especially where leadership in pre-primary is not clear and/or there is no governmental staff assigned to pre-primary oversight, the regulatory framework is likely to be underdeveloped or completely absent to support improvements. USAID can:

- Work with central and decentralized education authorities to establish and/or revise regulatory frameworks and monitoring procedures, especially to align with new or existing quality standards.
- Build the capacity of staff in charge of registering and licensing programs, conducting school inspections, and reporting on pre-primary provision to the ministry.
- Build the capacity of non-state pre-primary providers, families, and communities to register their programs.

BUILDING HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR PRE-PRIMARY MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

Staffing and training for pre-primary education is often insufficient at every level. Among the staff and institutions that do exist to support pre-primary, either in a dedicated or partial way, there is often an enormous need for capacity building.³⁰ It is particularly important to build understanding and specialized knowledge of the following areas in pre-primary:

- How young children learn and what teaching methodologies are appropriate for each age group;
- What children should learn in pre-primary and how that differs from, and prepares them for, primary school;
- What type of resources are needed for pre-primary education and what constitutes a safe and enriching pre-primary education space;
- How to assess young children's learning progress and how to use learning data to support curricular improvement; and
- How to engage families and communities as active partners in the pre-primary education process.
- To foster internal capacity at the ministry and leadership level, USAID activities can:
- Develop and deliver training programs for central- and municipal-level education authorities across a range of pre-primary-relevant topics;

30. Britto, Strengthening Systems.

- Embed staff at the central and municipal levels to improve efficiencies and establish better working procedures for pre-primary management; and
- Work with relevant ministerial counterparts to develop appropriate human resource plans at the central and municipal levels.

THE COLLECTION AND USE OF DATA

In many countries, pre-primary data is extremely poor and unreliable. Enrollment and attendance data, learning outcome data, availability of programs and the services they provide, and program quality are all important factors to understand in planning and regulating a pre-primary system.³¹ However, much of this information is either not collected or collected in a way that makes disaggregating, interpreting, or trusting the data difficult. The collection and use of thorough and accurate pre-primary data are a critical need.

The best use of data, especially in emerging pre-primary systems, is to identify programs that need support and provide it. While monitoring procedures will sometimes lead to the closure of some very low-quality programs, especially those that endanger the safety of children, it is most helpful for monitoring to identify lower-quality programs that need support to improve.³² Rather than enacting punitive measures for programs not meeting quality standards, targeted support should be offered and capacity building for programs built into pre-primary sub-sector improvement plans.

USAID's support on data collection and use could include:

- Developing or enhancing an EMIS where this is not available or does not currently reflect an accurate reporting of the pre-primary education sub-sector.
- Build capacity of central, municipal, and local education officers to collect and accurately report data from school inspections.
- Build capacity of school leadership, including central, municipal, and local education officers, to employ program data for school improvement planning and training.

Table 5 outlines the types of data that should be collected.

31. Britto, Strengthening Systems.

32. UNICEF, Build to Last.

TABLE 5: PRE-PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION

INDICATOR	COMPONENT	WHAT TO MEASURE	SOURCES AND METHODS
Inputs	System	Teacher qualifications Costing data	EMIS, monitoring reports from education officials
Outputs	Access	Enrollment and attendance Child-teacher ratio Teacher background Equity - access data disaggregated by gender, region, wealth, disability, ethnicity, and other marginalizing factors	EMIS, monitoring reports from education officials
Outcomes	Quality of programs and settings	Physical infrastructure and services available (including health and safety) Existence and use of curriculum Child-teacher interactions Family engagement Leadership and management	Studies, program evaluations, standard and quality assurance monitoring systems National/regional early learning assessments, classroom assessments,
	Learning outcomes	How children perform against locally established benchmarks, appropriate for the child's age and developmental level	Screening and diagnostic assessments, population measures (census-based household data)

COORDINATION

As pre-primary education exists within the wider landscape of ECD and is often combined with other services, a multitude of providers may come into play. As a result, sometimes pre-primary education falls to the purview of a ministry other than education, and/or may appear in the mandates of multiple ministries.³³ Wherever pre-primary education is officially located, it is essential that activities are coordinated across sectors related to ECD, including education, health and nutrition, social protection and family services, and water and sanitation.

To support better cross-sectoral coordination, USAID can:

- Provide a platform for coordinated activities. For example, preschool programs could provide the infrastructure for a school feeding program and important routine health checks.
- Support and advocate for innovative finance and public and private partnerships to help foster cross-sectoral ECD and pre-primary efforts.
- Support cross-sector coordination in ECD through non-education programs, such as newborn and maternal health programs that discuss the importance of responsive care and opportunities for early learning with parents during health visits. Agriculture and work programs can promote pre-primary attendance through coordinated messaging, or even partner with other activities providing these services for working mothers.

33. UNICEF, Build to Last.

CHAPTER 3: ACCESS

Decision Tree 3 focuses on whether our target population – the most marginalized and vulnerable – is currently accessing pre-primary education. This understanding is central to a decision of whether or not to invest in access.

Free and compulsory pre-primary education is an important goal that countries should seek to offer. There are several strong reasons for this:

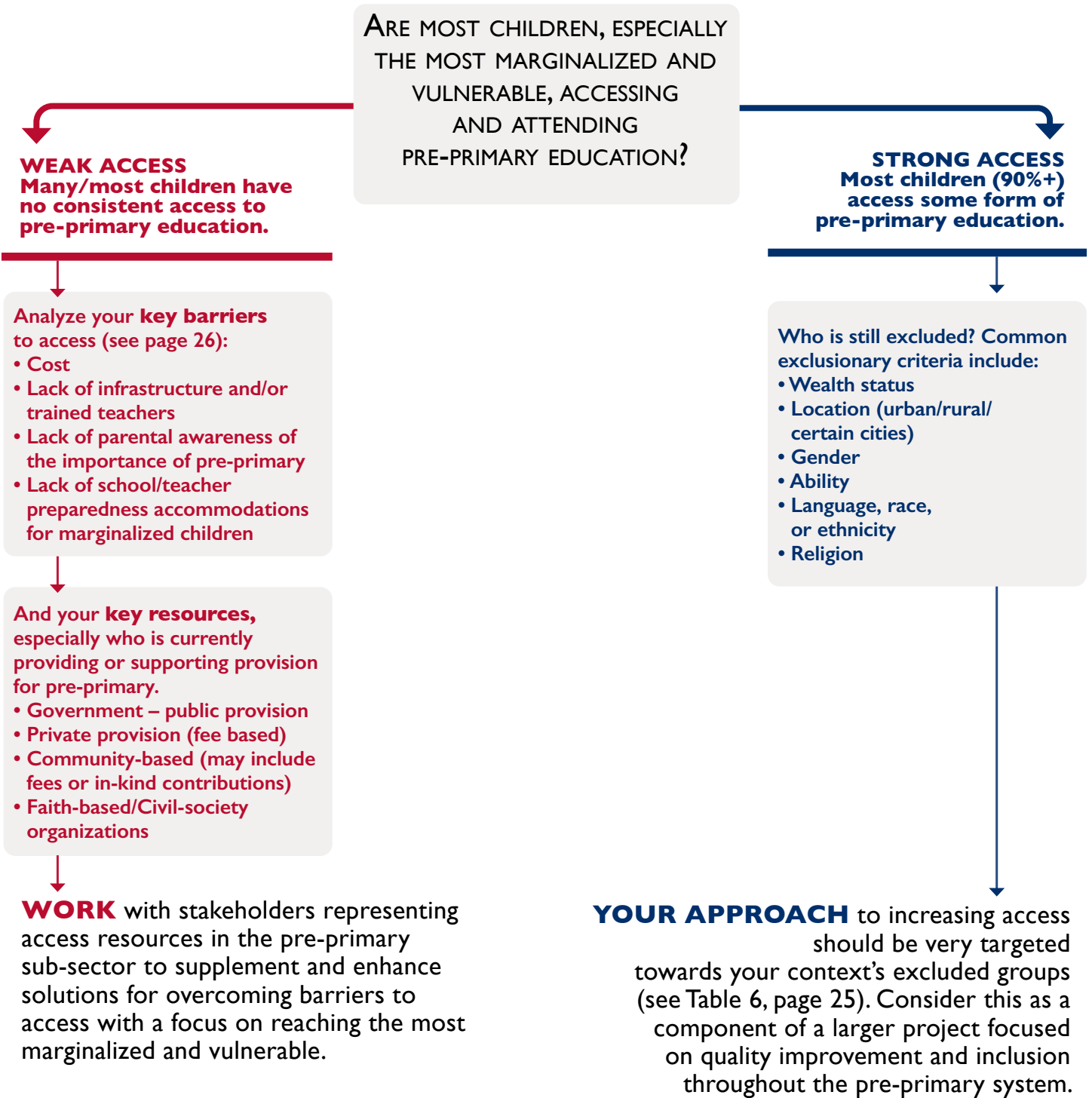
- Public pre-primary education is the best option for providing equitable coverage and ensuring access to the most marginalized and vulnerable.
- Making pre-primary education part of the public education system will encourage coherence between pre-primary education and primary-level schooling.
- Quality reforms will be easier to scale broadly than across multiple small private providers.
- The combination of free and compulsory are essential for driving attendance; free pre-primary on its own is not sufficient.

The need to ensure quality while increasing access is paramount, thus the road to universal pre-primary may require a slower, more strategic roll-out of services that will better serve children in the long term. In the meantime, numerous non-state pre-primary providers can help fill the gap through targeted quality improvement work and increased government monitoring of quality in these settings.

FIGURE 4: DECISION TREE 3

DECISION TREE 3: ACCESS TO PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The goal of this tree is to understand: How can USAID help support access to pre-primary for all children, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable?



With fewer than 41 percent of low-income children across the globe currently participating in any form of pre-primary education, access remains a critical gap.³⁴ While gender parity is often reasonably strong in the sub-sector, there is enormous disparity in relation to socio-economic status (with wealthy families being the most likely to access pre-primary education) and location (with most programs located in large cities).³⁵ Other marginalizing factors, such as living with a disability, being part of an ethnic minority, or practicing a non-dominant religion, significantly reduce children’s likelihood of attending school prior to primary school. Closing these gaps is essential, and pre-primary offers a valuable opportunity to better prepare the most marginalized and vulnerable children to succeed in primary school and close the achievement gap, which already exists upon school entry and widens as primary schooling continues.³⁶ Additionally, pre-primary programs provide a unique opportunity to identify potential disabilities and delays in advance of starting primary school.³⁷ This is critical, given the absolute necessity of early intervention and support for children with disabilities.

Unlike other sectors of the education landscape, pre-primary may be offered by a diverse group of stakeholders including:

- Publicly run pre-primary centers – these may be stand-alone centers or attached to primary schools.
- Privately run pre-primary centers – these may be individual programs or large companies running several centers around the country. These may be “low-cost,” averaging families under \$10/month, or very expensive, costing hundreds of dollars a month.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), FBOs, and other charitable programs – most often run by a charitable organization or a religious organization, these will generally be very low- or no-cost programs serving members of the community. Depending on the footprint of the organization, these may be individual programs or cover a wide geographic area.
- Community-run preschools – these may be formal or non-formal, may utilize volunteers from the community, and may be held in non-traditional locations, such as a yard or person’s home.

34. The Global Education Monitoring Report Team, Inclusion and Education.

35. According to the author’s analysis of the data presented in the World Inequity Database on Education:

<https://www.education-inequalities.org/>

36. Benjamin Alcott and Pauline Rose. “Learning in India’s Primary Schools: How do Disparities Widen across the Grades?” *International Journal of Educational Development* 56, (2017): 42-51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.05.002>; Blanden, Jo and Stephen Machin. *Intergenerational Inequality in Early Years Assessments*. London: Institute of Education University of London. 10.1332/policypress/9781847424761.003.0009.; Sean F Reardon, “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor.” *Community Investments: Summer* 24, no 2 (2012): 19-39.

37. UNICEF, *A World Ready to Learn*.

TABLE 6: CONSIDERATIONS ON EQUITABLE ACCESS

FACTOR	LESS COMPLETE ACCESS	MORE COMPLETE ACCESS	NOTES
Number of Years	One year or less (this includes short, accelerated programs, even those that aim to cover a full year of curriculum/content)	Two years or more	Pre-primary education is usually limited to three years, though some countries also include infant and toddler programs. Where availability is limited, at least one year of access should be prioritized for the most marginalized and vulnerable.
Schedule	Half-day programs: programs that meet fewer than five days per week	Full-day programs (about six hours); programs that meet five days per week	Five-day/week, half-day programs are not inappropriate for children, though offer less coverage to working parents than may be truly useful.
Costs covered by government	Partial coverage of pre-primary education operation costs (e.g., staff costs only)	Full coverage of pre-primary education operational costs, including infrastructure, materials, teacher and management staff costs, etc.	Where the government does not cover all costs, parents are generally expected to cover these through fees or in-kind support. For the most vulnerable and marginalized, this often has the effect of being “no access.”
Compulsory	No	Yes	Evidence finds that enrollment increases significantly only when provision is both free and compulsory.
Location	Mainly available in urban centers	Relatively equitable access in all communities across the country	Look for additional inequities within these locations, i.e., access in some urban centers but not others, etc.
Equity	Access is limited or denied – either intentionally or incidentally – to groups of children	Access is equally granted (even where enrollment is sparse) to all members of the community	<p>Typical marginalizing factors in pre-primary education are (from those with the most impact to the least):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealth • Disability (children with disabilities are often left out) • Location (rural children are often left out) • Ethnicity and language • Gender (gender parity in pre-primary education is encouraging overall)

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO ACCESS FOR PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

As with all levels of education, families face numerous supply- and demand-side barriers to pre-primary access. This is true whether the pre-primary sub-sector is dominated by public or non-state provision.

Cost

While free, universal, and compulsory are the goals, very few countries can currently offer free pre-primary to any portion of their population, and costs often fall to families in one form or another. When governments cannot offer fully free provision, they often focus on funding specific components, such as providing infrastructure, some of the required teachers, or materials. Schools then make-up the rest of their operational costs through fees charged to families.³⁸

In addition to fees for public or non-state provision, there are numerous additional costs that may affect families, including transportation to school (especially given young children are not encouraged to walk on their own to school as are older children), the cost of uniforms or other suitable clothing, the cost of materials, membership fees to Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and gratuities expected by teachers and headteachers, the cost of lunches and snacks or paying for school-provided meals, and income loss as a result of expected volunteering at school.

To lessen the burden of cost to families, USAID can:

- Support governments to more effectively cost and budget for fully free public pre-primary provision.
- Consider supporting programs that offer tuition subsidies for fee-based provision and cash transfer programs to support vulnerable and marginalized families where hidden costs, such as transportation, are the primary barrier.

Lack of infrastructure and trained teachers

As with all levels of education, infrastructure and personnel represent enormous cost factors, significantly affecting access. To help address this cost factors USAID can:

- Align systems strengthening and community engagement work with development partners, government, and private-sector investors that are working to provide additional pre-primary infrastructure.
- Support research and mapping studies to offer better insights into access gaps.

Lack of caregiver awareness of the importance of pre-primary education

In many countries and communities, the value of pre-primary education is still not well understood.³⁹ Parents, unfamiliar with play-based approaches, may not understand their value, and may not be willing

38. UNESCO. Education for People & Planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All. Paris: UNESCO, 2016. <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2016/education-people-and-planet-creating-sustainable-futures-all>.

39. UNICEF, A World Ready to Learn.

to ensure their children's attendance in pre-primary programs. To improve this, USAID can:

- Support social behavior change communications and parenting education programs that improve caregiver and community understanding of the importance of pre-primary and early learning programs.

Lack of school/teacher preparedness and accommodations for marginalized children

For marginalized children in nearly all countries, systemic exclusion is also a major barrier. This especially affects children with disabilities and children of oppressed ethnic and religious backgrounds. To increase access for these groups, USAID can:

- Engage with government policy reform to support better accommodations and protections for marginalized children.
- Support teacher training programs that change teachers' and school community's perceptions and give teachers tools to support marginalized children.
- Support efforts to retrofit existing curriculum and materials to integrate principles of UDL.

INCREASING ACCESS THROUGH NON-STATE LOW-COST PRE-PRIMARY PROVIDERS

Investing in non-state, low-cost pre-primary provision is most relevant in contexts where public provision is limited, and non-state provision is widely available. The cost of setting up new pre-primary programs, including infrastructure development, recruitment, training, procurement of materials, etc., is considerable. Comparatively, supporting families to attend existing non-state programs is often a cost-effective choice, as most non-state providers come with resources such as ready infrastructure, teachers, toys, and materials.

In many communities, non-state, low-cost, pre-primary providers may be the only option available. Some families in these contexts may make the difficult decision to invest their limited resources into school fees, though often with little to no assurance of the program's quality.⁴⁰ To ensure investments in non-state provision are effective, USAID can:

- Support quality improvement in non-state provision through improved curriculum, teacher training and continuous professional development, and school management training.
- Support programs that educate parents and communities about quality in pre-primary and encourage market-driven accountability for non-state providers.
- Support and encourage government officials to monitor and regulate the non-state pre-primary provision to ensure safety of children and quality of services.

40. Liesbet Steer et al. Non-state Actors in Education in Developing Countries: A Framing Paper for Discussion. Washington D.C.: Center for Universal Education at Brookings, 2105. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/102215-Non-State-Actors-in-Education-Framing-paper-Final.pdf>.

IMPROVING ACCESS: EXPANDING PRE-PRIMARY TO REFUGEE POPULATIONS

Access to early learning opportunities can have positive long-term impacts for all children but is particularly important for young learners in crisis and conflict contexts. Since 2013, iACT has worked with the refugee populations, beginning in Chad, to develop programming that is focused on and responsive to the needs of young children (3-5 years of age) affected by trauma, violence, and displacement.⁴¹ The resulting “Little Ripples” curriculum uses play-based pedagogies to develop children’s abilities across domains including literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional development using activities, stories, music, games, and the inclusion of mindfulness practices. When possible, the program also includes a free school meal. Little Ripples teachers are often members of the refugee community and go through three teacher trainings to receive certification. An impact evaluation of the program in Tanzania showed that after four months in the program, approximately 90 percent of students passed their academic assessment, and impact assessments from Chad have shown similar results over the past two years.⁴² The program is currently being implemented in the Darfur refugee camps in eastern Chad, for Burundi refugees in Tanzania, in Eastern Cameroon with refugees from the Central African Republic, and in the Katsikas refugee camp in Greece.

41. Kelsey Dalrymple and Sara-Christine Dallain. “From Little Ripples to Big Waves: Comprehensive Early Childhood Programming for Refugee Children.” *Early Childhood Matters* (The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2019), 106-109. <https://earlychildhoodmatters.online/2019/from-little-ripples-to-big-waves-comprehensive-early-childhood-programming-for-young-refugee-children/>

42. Dalrymple and Dallain, “From Little Ripples.”.

CHAPTER 4: PROGRAM QUALITY

Decision Tree 4 centers on developmentally appropriate and inclusive curricula, with the assumption that if this critical element is in place, structural and process quality standards also likely exist. This will not be the case in every country, however, and Missions are encouraged to work with relevant stakeholders to strengthen elements of the quality framework that may have been overlooked or underdeveloped.

While there is no universal definition of pre-primary quality, the literature provides a strong framework that, contextualized within each country, should form the central pillar of setting standards, developing curriculum, and designing programs.

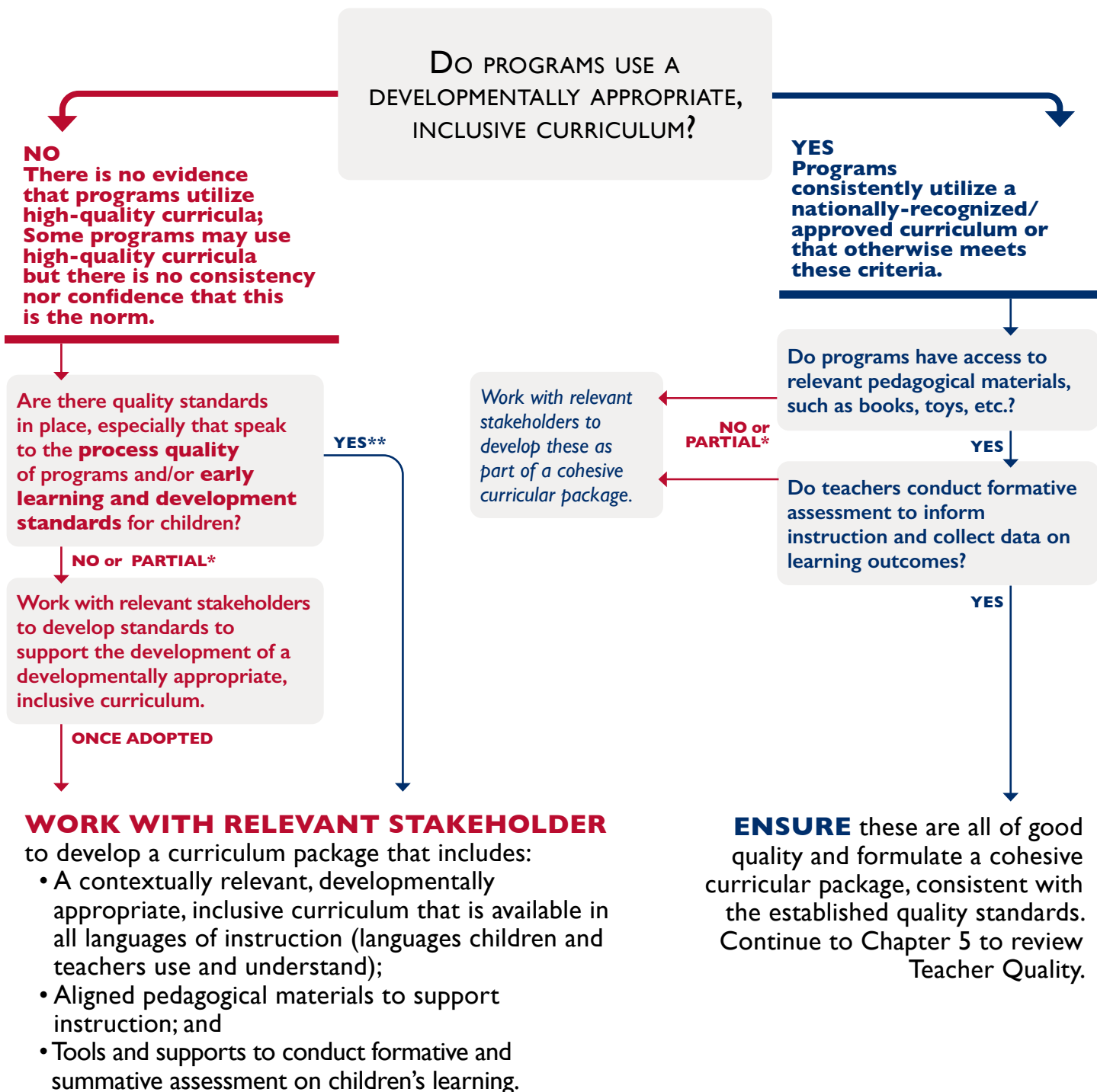
Pre-primary education programs should be guided by a quality framework that encompasses **structural quality** and **process quality standards**. The former includes aspects of quality that are usually easy to regulate and easy to observe and measure. The latter articulate the ideal experiences children should have in their programs. Quality standards (discussed in detail on page 31) are an important foundation for designing programs and inform the process for monitoring and supporting pre-primary programs (Chapter 2).

Building from the quality standards, high-quality pre-primary programs will utilize a developmentally appropriate, and inclusive curriculum that guides learning in a language the children use and understand. This curriculum should be accompanied by resources for the teacher, including guides, play materials, age-appropriate literacy and numeracy materials, and other relevant teaching and learning materials as detailed in the curriculum. The curriculum should provide guidance on children's desired development and learning outcomes and on conducting formative assessment. Formative assessment is especially important in early childhood as young children develop at different rates and require individualized approaches with differentiated levels of support to learn effectively.

FIGURE 5: DECISION TREE 4

DECISION TREE 4: QUALITY FRAMEWORK (FOCUS ON CURRICULUM)

The goal of this tree is to understand: What activities can USAID support to improve the quality framework for pre-primary provision? In your analysis, think about the programs you identified in Chapter 3: Access, as serving and/or having the potential to serve the most marginalized and vulnerable children.



*These do not exist, are incomplete, or are insufficient.

**These are complete, officially recognized, and of good quality.

DEVELOPING QUALITY STANDARDS

Quality in pre-primary programming is determined by both structural and process quality standards. Structural quality includes the aspects of quality that are usually easy to regulate and easy to observe and measure.⁴³ Some of these include:

- Personnel qualifications and training, which details the qualifications and training of teachers and school management, such as highest degree of education attained, number of years of experience, specialized training, and staff salaries. The specialized training teachers have received is a particularly strong predictor of how teachers will behave and engage in the classroom and whether they are likely to interact with children in responsive, relationship-building ways that denote good quality.
- Class size and child-teacher ratio, which details the number of children that adults are actively responsible for at a time. For example, a pre-primary program with 40 children, one teacher, and one paraprofessional assistant teacher would have a Class Size of 40 and a child-teacher ratio of 20:1. These metrics are significant, as lower child-teacher ratios are strongly associated with better learner outcomes for children. There is no international standard for child-teacher ratio, but Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) country reports indicate many low- and middle-income countries aim for a child-teacher ratio of 25:1. In practice however, few countries meet this goal; it is common to find child-teacher ratios higher than 50:1, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).⁴⁴
- Physical space, which refers to the space provided for instruction and play-based learning, health and safety considerations such as access to drinking water, handwashing facilities and practices, toileting facilities, and safety conditions. Many countries that have any standards in place often have policies related to the physical space requirements. These can be very specific, indicating a certain amount of square footage of indoor and outdoor space per child, construction materials used, the types of amenities available, distance of structures like latrines and kitchen, etc.

Process quality standards articulate the ideal experiences children should have in pre-primary programs.⁴⁵ These standards should address elements such as:

- Positive, responsive teacher-student interactions, which are a strong predictor of the acquisition of language, pre-academic, and social skills, and are associated with lower levels of conflict in early adolescents.
- Pedagogy, use and availability of materials, and the approaches that teachers take in the classroom to support learning, such as whole group or small group instruction, using open questions and dialogue, conducting formative assessment, and individualized instruction and inclusivity.
- Play-based pedagogical approaches, which are fundamental to early learning, including guided play, in which a teacher has designed an environment with specific learning experiences in mind, and free

43. Cassidy et al., “Revisiting the Two Faces of Child Care Quality: Structure and Process.” *Early Education & Development* 16, no. 4 (2005): 505–520; Abbie Raikes et. al, “The Measuring Early Learning Quality & Outcomes Initiative: Purpose, Process and Results.” *Early Years*, (2019): 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2019.1669142>.

44. SABER data.

45. Raikes et al., “Measuring Early Learning Quality”, 1–16.

play, in which children are encouraged to explore and follow their own interests within a safe and appropriate environment, are known to support children’s cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.⁴⁶

- Family and community engagement, which links school-based and home-based learning and develops a partnership to support learning outcomes.

Where standards either do not exist, are insufficient, or are not utilized effectively by programs, USAID can:

- Work with relevant stakeholders and government counterparts to establish and/or revise quality standards.
- Support programs that provide technical assistance and training to administrators and teachers to align their programs with established standards.



USAID/CHHEANCHHUMY CHHIN

46. The Learning Through Play brief, developed by the LEGO Foundation and UNICEF, provides an overview of how to integrate play throughout the curriculum and teacher training.

COMPONENTS OF QUALITY: HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION⁴⁷

In addition to providing early learning and meeting the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of children, pre-primary programs have a responsibility to support children's health, safety, and nutrition. For some programs, this will include strong partnerships with health and food providers that offer comprehensive health and nutrition services. For other programs, this will relate only to the work of the program and the services they are able to offer. Regardless of "how much" programs are able to offer in terms of health and nutrition services, it is essential that activities always adhere to minimum quality standards.

Some countries will have their own minimum standards established. Where these are not available, the following list can serve as a guide.

Safety

Physical environment: programs should ensure that buildings, play equipment, toys, etc. are sturdy and safe for children's use. The physical environment should also be secure to ensure young children stay safely inside the property and unauthorized adults remain off the property.

First aid care: programs should have trained personnel available with up-to-date training in first aid and basic emergency services (such as the Heimlich maneuver). The program should have a fully stocked first-aid kit that includes bandages, antiseptic, gloves, etc.

Safeguarding: it is the responsibility of all programs to ensure that staff are vetted and there is no evidence they pose a risk to children. Programs should have policies in place that avoid isolating children with adults and provide a safe avenue for reporting misconduct or suspicious behavior.

Health

Hygiene and sanitation: programs should ensure that the environment is hygienic and that children have access to sanitary toileting and hand-washing facilities. Teachers should teach children about proper hygiene practices, especially handwashing and the importance of covering one's face when they cough or sneeze.

Physical exercise: to support children's physical development and promote health, programs can provide physical exercise every day (outdoors to the extent possible). This should include physical free play, as well as teaching children organized games.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition: most programs will serve a snack and meal (either provided by the school or by the parents) during their day. Programs can use snack and meal times to encourage principles of proper nutrition. If the program is providing the food, they should plan menus that provide for dietary diversity, are nutrient dense, and avoid empty calories such as sugar. If programs are supervising meals, they should help children make healthy choices, such as eating their proteins and nutrient-dense foods before eating sweets or less nutritious foods. They should also communicate with parents about what to send for children to support proper nutrition.

47. These recommendations are compiled from numerous sources detailing the needs of young children and quality measurement and monitoring considerations. These are shared in the Quality section of the References. Excellent summary references include The Nurturing Care Framework (WHO 2018) for considerations of young children's holistic needs and Overview: MELQO: Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (UNESCO, UNICEF, The World Bank 2017) for considerations on quality in service delivery.

SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

All curriculum and pedagogy must be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the population being served. This is critical to the success of pre-primary provision and essential for every stakeholder to fully internalize. Using instructional strategies or content that is more academically rigorous than young children are prepared for will not result in improved learning outcomes. A high-quality curriculum for pre-primary should encompass the following elements (Table 7):

TABLE 7: CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY CURRICULUM⁴⁸

PRE-PRIMARY CURRICULUM SHOULD BE...	THAT MEANS...	BUT KEEP IN MIND...
Developmentally appropriate	The program's content and approaches align with the children's developmental level and do not seek to build skills that are too advanced or for which children do not have the prerequisite skills.	Children develop at very different rates, especially in early childhood. Some children are ready to start reading at 4 years old, while others will be ready at 5 or 6. A good curriculum will encourage children to develop at their own rate and provide opportunities for children at all levels.
Play-based	Children are given the opportunity to learn and solidify understanding through natural, playful experiences. Children learn best when they can make internal connections with content and new skills, a process that occurs most naturally through play.	This does not mean that every moment of a child's preschool day should be spent in unguided free play. This means taking a playful approach to learning, and incorporating play, even in guided learning situations. Whole group and individual direct instruction are appropriate and necessary for learning certain skills. Specialized teacher training should instruct teachers on balancing these approaches.
Inclusive	Classrooms and learning opportunities are designed to support all children, including children with disabilities and students of different identities and backgrounds. Curriculum should include principles of UDL and representation in content of groups that are systematically excluded.	The rights and full learning potential of children with disabilities may benefit from the presence of specialist support or environments. For example, learners who are Deaf best realize their learning potential in language rich environments, i.e.: bilingual sign language schools and other educational environments that are part of an inclusive education system.
Aligned vertically to lower and higher education levels	The curriculum should offer a coherent progression of skills, building logically on previous learning and preparing children fully for the next stage of learning.	Pre-primary curriculum should always be developmentally appropriate for the students it serves. If the primary curriculum is not itself fully developmentally appropriate for children of that age, focus should be on enhancing primary curriculum.
Available to children in a language they use and understand	Children are learning in a language they use and understand. It is essential that teachers are teaching in a language they know and understand.	In bilingual programs, there should be a heavy emphasis on oral language development in the second language and children must have an opportunity to solidify learning in their primary language.

48. Thomas, What Works in Pre-Primary.

Where high-quality, evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, inclusive curriculum documents (curricula, teacher guides, support documents, assessment guides, etc.) do not exist or are insufficient, USAID can:

- Work with the relevant stakeholders and government counterparts to develop and/or revise the pre-primary curriculum to be better aligned with established standards, be more inclusive, and improve the program’s developmentally appropriateness, etc.
- Work with relevant stakeholders to develop or revise teaching and learning materials ensuring alignment to the curriculum and the standards.

CONNECTING GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING TO PROGRAM-LEVEL DELIVERY

Even where regulatory frameworks are well established, systemic disconnects, such as a majority of schools failing to meet established quality standards, are common. USAID can invest in systems strengthening and program quality improvement activities such as:

- Provide in-depth and targeted training for program staff to improve their practice in alignment with the quality framework.
- Build capacity of school leadership and education authorities to monitor and evaluate programs against quality standards and utilizing this monitoring data to develop actionable training and school improvement plans.

The pre-primary sector has already developed a range of tools that may be used to assess the quality of pre-primary programs. A few of the more widely used tools are included in Table 8.

TABLE 8: TOOLS FOR MEASURING PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAM QUALITY

TOOL	DESCRIPTION	DOMAINS
Scoring System (Pre-K Class Assessment Scoring System)	Assesses classroom quality in settings for children ages 36 to 60 months. All observers are required to receive prior training and are encouraged to use videotape footage.	Ten dimensions of classroom quality across these three domains: emotional support; classroom organization; and instruction support
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)	Assesses group programs for children ages 2 to 5. The tool is mostly used for policy development, program evaluation, advocacy, and training. ECERS-R includes classroom observation and a teacher’s interview from the enumerator.	Seven domains: space and furnishings; personal care routines (health and safety); language and reasoning; activities; interactions; program structure; and parents and staff.
Association for Childhood Education International-Global Guidelines Assessment (ACEI- GGA)	GGA is mostly used for self-assessment by centers, to design new early childhood programs, or to improve existing programs.	Domains for environment and physical space, curriculum content and pedagogy, educators and caregivers, partnerships with families and communities, and children with special needs.
International Step by Step Association (ISSA) Principles of Quality Pedagogy	Assesses quality in ECCE teaching practices and classroom environment and is primarily used for planning and improvement.	Seven focus areas: interactions; family and community: inclusion, diversity, and values of democracy; assessment and planning; teaching strategies; learning environment; and professional development.
Measure Early Learning Environments (MELE)	Measures the quality of early learning environments for children ages 3 to 6 years. It includes a classroom observation tool, teacher/director survey, and parent survey.	The MELE addresses environment and materials; teacher-child interactions; pedagogy and approaches to learning; family and community engagement; inclusion; and play.

Source: Adapted from Early Learning Partnership: Measuring the quality of early learning programs: Guidance Note, page 12 (2016).

CHAPTER 5: PRE-PRIMARY TEACHER WORKFORCE

Decision Tree 5 is anchored to the quality (and quantity) of training that pre-primary teachers receive, as evidence shows this is the strongest predictor of their actual classroom practice.

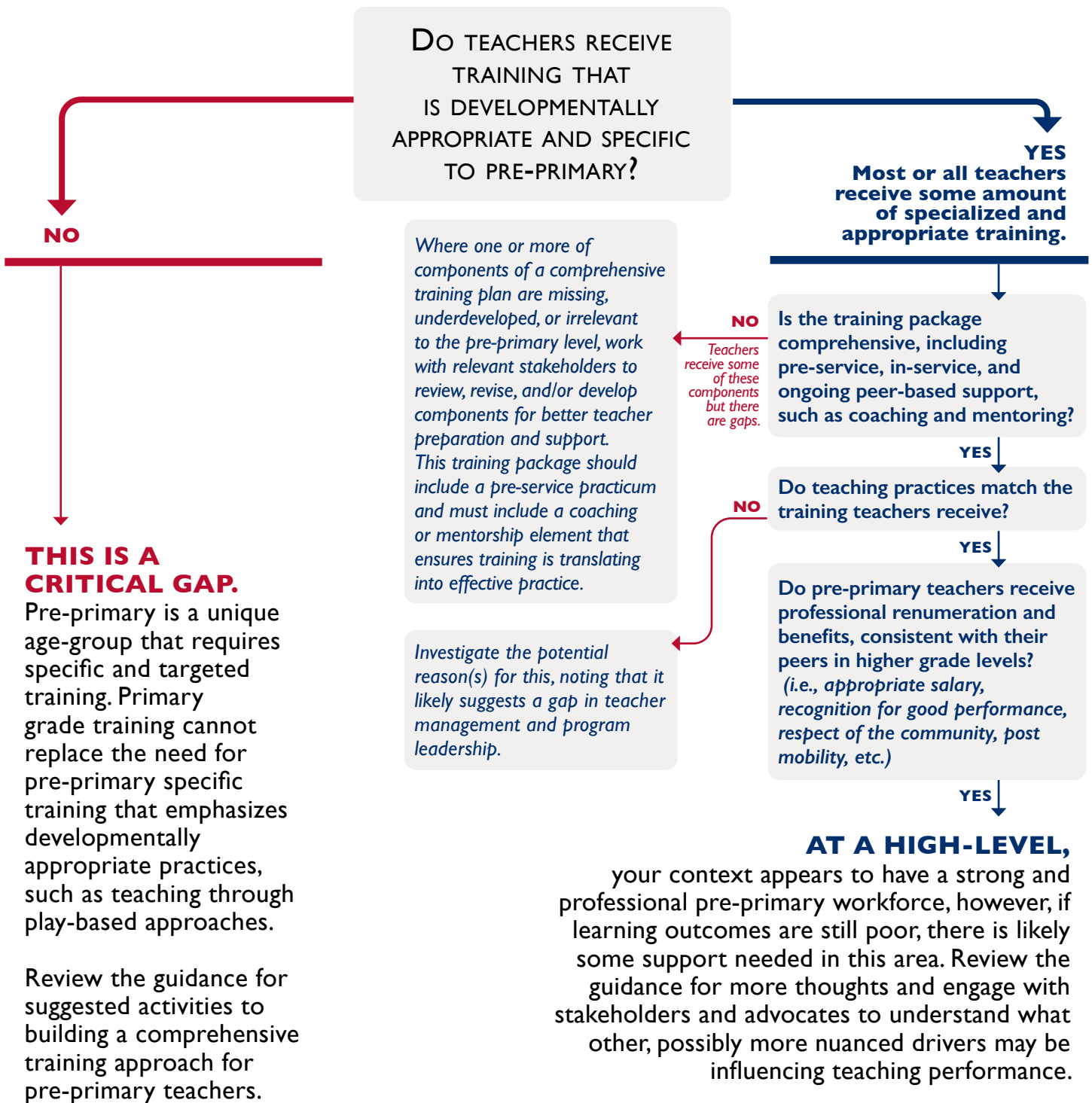
A skilled and specialized workforce is critical for delivering high-quality pre-primary education. This workforce should receive specialized training and continuous professional development in developmentally appropriate practice, including play-based learning approaches, and how to scaffold learning and differentiate instruction for children at varying developmental stages. Training and professional development opportunities should be built around professional standards that include a framework for teacher competence. Where the pre-primary teacher workforce is well established, a teacher's competencies and preparation should be confirmed through a teacher certification process.

Skilled pre-primary teachers should receive the respect enjoyed by other skilled professionals, enjoy appropriate compensation and benefits, and be supported so that they stay in the career long-enough to become masterful teachers, coaches, and mentors.

FIGURE 6: DECISION TREE 5

DECISION TREE 5: TEACHERS

The goal of this tree is to determine: How can USAID provide the most comprehensive support to teachers, in order to improve children’s learning outcomes?



INVEST IN HIGH-QUALITY AND COMPREHENSIVE PRE-PRIMARY TEACHER TRAINING

Given the emerging status of pre-primary education in many countries and the plethora of informal programs that exist globally, our working definition of “teacher” encompasses all the people that fill the role, rather than those who have secured the official title. For the purposes of this guidance and its associated documents, a “teacher” is anyone who leads a group of children with the aim of improving their early learning skills. This includes people who are recognized by some authority as a professional teacher, and those who are not. They may be labeled as teachers, facilitators, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, care providers, volunteers, or some other term. Currently, volunteers and paraprofessionals make up a large segment of the pre-primary teacher workforce and require the same consideration and training as those officially recognized as teachers.⁴⁹

Paraprofessionals and volunteers are critical to the current pre-primary education landscape and, rightfully, advocates do not want to see these individuals disenfranchised by a focus on formalizing the workforce. Currently, in most contexts, providing pre-primary access at scale without paraprofessionals and volunteers is unrealistic from a cost, recruitment, and training perspective.⁵⁰ Given the nature of programs for young children, it is likely there will always be a place for volunteers and paraprofessionals to support high-quality pre-primary education. However, it is essential that countries work toward the development of a formal, well-trained, well-respected, professional workforce.

In all USAID programs, comprehensive teacher training should be a top priority, regardless of the official “status” of the workforce. A comprehensive teacher training package prepares teachers to support a wide variety of learners with different learning needs and will include:

- Specialized pre-service training. Note that pre-primary pre-service training should always include a practicum component (student teaching), combined with theory. Practice is essential for new teachers given the very heavy emphasis in pre-primary on meaningful interactions, designing purposefully play opportunities, differentiating instruction, and scaffolding individual children’s learning.
- In-service training that focuses on developmentally appropriate practice, play-based pedagogy, the use of formative assessment to guide differentiated instruction, and a general understanding of inclusive education principles and practices. Continuous professional development should include coaching, mentoring, and communities of practice.
- A professional competency framework that details what knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, technical skills, and other attributes are required to be an effective pre-primary teacher.

49. UNICEF, *Build to Last*.

50. Steven W. Barnett and Milagros Nores. “Investment and productivity arguments for ECCE,” in P. T. M. Marope & Y. Kaga (Eds.), *Investing Against Evidence: The Global State of Early Childhood Care and Education*, eds. P.T.M. Marope & Yoshie Kaga (Paris: UNESCO, 2012), 73–90. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002335/233558E.pdf>

To support the development of a well-trained, specialized pre-primary teacher workforce, USAID can:

- Work with relevant stakeholders and government authorities to develop or revise the pre-primary pre-service training curriculum to emphasize developmentally appropriate, inclusive, play-based learning.
- Support programs that pioneer the use of coaches and provide the relevant training. As with other education levels, coaching has proven to be extremely effective in improving pre-primary teacher practice.⁵¹
- Work with relevant stakeholders and government to develop a professional pre-primary teacher competency framework and ensure all training aligns to it.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS, INCLUDING PARAPROFESSIONALS, TO ADVANCE IN THEIR CAREER/VOCATION

Due to the lack of attention and respect often given to pre-primary teachers, especially paraprofessional teachers, motivation to work and learn is often undermined. As an example, pre-primary teachers are routinely paid very little, receive pay late, or do not receive pay at all. To encourage interest and motivation in the pre-primary workforce, USAID can,

- Support school leaders to implement recognition systems to highlight teacher achievement.
- Work with school management and local education authorities to strengthen systems to improve efficiencies that affect teachers, for example, improving management practices around timely teacher salary payments.

Work with government and other stakeholders to develop wide-scale training programs for in-service teachers that are either untrained or under-trained.

TRAINING TEACHERS AT SCALE: VIETNAM'S SCHOOL READINESS AND PROMOTION PROJECT

Vietnam's School Readiness and Promotion Project (funded by the International Development Association Credit at \$95.19 million) worked over a period of five years to increase access to and the quality of preschools at scale . Key interventions included the expansion of full-day, full-year enrollment in preschools; lunch subsidies for poor and ethnic minority children; improvement of quality via teacher training and the development of a quality assurance system and an accreditation process; and the support of policies to determine standards and ensure the use of quality assurance systems to increase monitoring and reporting on ECE. Within four years, the project had trained more than 2,000 core teachers to provide professional development to a further 25,000 ECE teachers . Training for teachers introduced more child-centered and play-based approaches via cascade-trainings with follow up support provided by provincial and district officials. After four years of implementation, nearly all preschool managers (99 percent) and most preschool teachers (93 percent) had completed the training.⁵²

51. UNICEF, A World Ready to Learn.

52. ... A World Ready to Learn.

CHAPTER 6: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Decision Tree 6 focuses on the behavior of schools to encourage active participation by parents, caregivers, and members of the wider community.

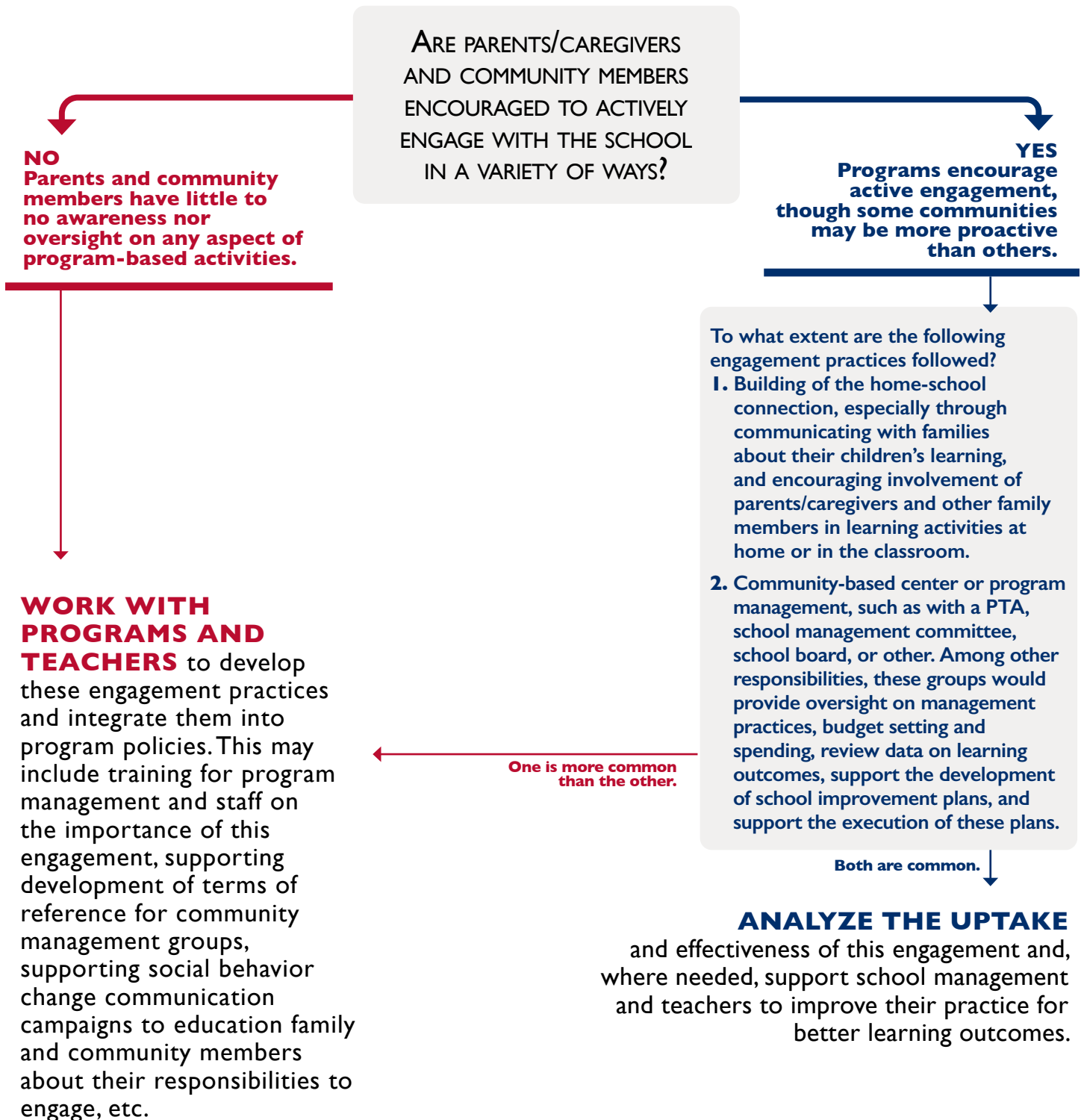
Families and communities are central to the high-quality functioning of pre-primary programs. The most important role that parents, caregivers, and other family members play is as a partner in their child's learning. A strong home-to-school connection ensures a continuity of learning that will support children whenever they are not with their teacher. This is critical as most young children will spend a maximum of 25 hours a week in a pre-primary program, and 95 or more hours at home. In a strong home-to-school connection, parents will be actively informed about what children are doing at school and continue to offer similar opportunities at home. Schools may loan resources to parents or offer ideas of games that would support learning. Parents will have up-to-date information on children's progress, especially of any indication a teacher might see of a delay or disability. Parents may also volunteer in the classroom, acting as a classroom assistant, providing small-group supervision, acting as a guest speaker, and offering other support.

Another key role is as an agent of accountability. Participation in governing bodies such as PTAs and School Governance Committees (SGCs) allow parents and wider community members to provide supervision and oversight to school management and to help shape and support the program's vision. This is especially important in contexts where there may be no other functioning oversight mechanism, for example in contexts where the government does not maintain sufficient staff for monitoring and regulating the pre-primary sector.

FIGURE 7: DECISION TREE 6

DECISION TREE 6: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The goal of this tree is to determine: How can USAID support schools and teachers to engage families and communities in learning and school management and support?



ENCOURAGING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN THE LEARNING PROCESS

The importance of the home-to-school connection in pre-primary cannot be overstated because young children need a continuity of learning that exceeds what can be accomplished in a typical pre-primary school day. The level of time, commitment, and confidence parents have to support their young children's learning will vary greatly from family to family. Teachers may find it difficult to build family engagement activities into their days while also keeping up with the pre-primary programming. However, it is essential that programs create the greatest opportunity possible for parents to play an active role in their children's learning through approaches such as:

- Keeping parents informed about what children are doing at school and encouraging parents to continue these activities at home. This could mean loaning out books that children have listened to at school, sending home the lyrics to songs they are singing in the classroom, or offering ideas about math games parents can play with their children.
- Keeping parents up to date on children's progress, including any indication a teacher might see of any developmental and/or learning delay. In pre-primary, this communication needs to be more frequent than regular school reporting periods. Ideally, teachers should be touching base with parents, either through a short note or conversation, at least once every two weeks.
- Create opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom. Parents can contribute in many ways, including acting as classroom assistants, providing small-group supervision, acting as a guest speaker, and more. These efforts are especially helpful if they allow the teacher to spend more one-on-one time with students who need extra support.

To encourage strong family engagement in pre-primary education programs, USAID can:

- Develop and deliver in-service training programs for teachers and school management on how to engage families to best foster learning for young children (including how this may differ from practices with older children).
- Support programs to include parents in meaningful decision-making about their children's learning. Approaches include reviewing learning plans, holding regular parent-teacher conferences to discuss progress and concerns, and maintaining two-way communication at all times. This is especially important for supporting children with disabilities.
- Encourage programs to provide learning activities for parents to do at home with their children.
- Promote communications for parents and communities on the importance of pre-primary and encourage enrollment and attendance for all age-appropriate children.

ENCOURAGING OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY VIA FAMILY- AND COMMUNITY-RUN GOVERNANCE COMMITTEES

To ensure all pre-primary programs have well-functioning parent- and community-led governing groups, USAID can:

- Work with governments and education officials to develop policies around the creation and role of PTA/SGCs to give their authority legitimacy.
- Support programs that develop and deliver PTA/SGC training modules that support all stages of development, from creation to management.
- Work with community leaders to strengthen the pre-primary education voice of current PTA/SGCs. This is especially important where pre-primary programs are attached to primary schools that may have active PTA/SGCs, but poor pre-primary representation.
- Work with governments and education officials to develop policies around the creation and role of PTA/SGCs to legitimize their authority.



PHOTO: TUGELA RIDLEY/USAID KENYA

CHAPTER 7: PUTTING IT TOGETHER FOR PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMMING

IDENTIFYING KEY ENTRY POINTS

High-quality pre-primary education is proven to build foundational skills and advance school readiness in children. Children who attend high-quality pre-primary programs are more likely to demonstrate improved learning outcomes in later grades, have increased rates of school completion, and decreased rates of repetition and dropout. As this guidance makes clear, there are numerous ways to invest in this work, whether as a focused pre-primary activity, as a component of an activity with a wider focus, or through advocacy and support of USAID’s partners active in the sub-sector. In many contexts, pre-primary provision is likely to be in its nascent stages, and the existing gaps will be numerous.

As a first step, it will be important to determine who the key stakeholders are in the pre-primary space and how USAID-funded activities may leverage or coordinate with others to create programs that reach the most marginalized and vulnerable children. In determining how to ensure that pre-primary programming is of high-quality, training and support for the existing teacher workforces is a priority, especially in contexts where this is non-existent or it is not distinguished from the training primary teachers receive. In many cases, there will also be a need to develop a curriculum and materials that are appropriate for young children.

This section, Putting It Together, will help you apply the content in this guidance to the USAID program cycle and take tangible steps toward program design. Additionally, the resources in the annex will support a more in-depth landscape review and forward planning of data collection and reporting.

This section brings together the research, recommendations, and resources to align with the USAID Program Cycle (see Table 9).

TABLE 9: ENTRY POINTS, KEY STEPS, AND RESOURCES

ENTRY POINT	KEY STEPS	RESOURCES
National Education Policy	<p>Review the existing ESP and education sector policies, as well as policy and planning documents for other Ministries with a role in pre-primary provision, to determine what, if any, representation pre-primary has in the education sector.</p> <p>Identify stakeholders both in the public and private sectors. The pre-primary landscape may be diverse and varied in some contexts and include both public, private, faith, and NGO stakeholders</p>	<p>SABER WB</p> <p>GPE Website and Better Early Learning and Development Standards (BELDS)</p>
Country Development Cooperation Strategy	<p>Address how pre-primary programming may contribute to Mission-level objectives and country development goals. In addition to the clear, direct contributions of pre-primary to the quality of education overall, pre-primary programming can also support goals in other sectors. For example:</p>	<p>The Case for Pre-Primary in this document provides key talking points for why to support pre-primary.</p> <p>The Global Child THRIVE Act directs USAID to support cross-sectoral</p>

ENTRY POINT	KEY STEPS	RESOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The availability of pre-primary can provide opportunities for youth employment, by recruiting young people as early childhood education teachers. Access to pre-primary improves maternal employment rates by allowing women to return to the workforce earlier. Pre-primary settings may serve additional purposes. For example, they may be used for conducting health screenings and interventions like deworming, as well as distribution sites for supplemental nutrition packages. Determine if there is opportunity for pre-primary to be part of a cross-sectoral, integrated objective. As one component of the ECD sector, pre-primary is most effective when delivered as part of integrated programming that supports nutrition, health, and early learning opportunities for children ages 3-6 years. If the Mission is preparing to conduct Mission-wide assessments for the Country Development Cooperation Strategy, include questions related to pre-primary provision. 	<p>programming for ECD across USAID activities.</p> <p>USAID’s Strategy on Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity includes an objective focused on “Strong Beginnings” for young children.</p>
Assessment & Analysis	<p>Accurately assessing the pre-primary landscape in a given context can be challenging due to the variety of stakeholders and limited availability of data on attendance, or the quality of existing pre-primary programs. Missions can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the guiding questions provided in this document to identify key challenges and opportunities for developing high-quality pre-primary programming in their given context(s). Consider developing mapping exercises on existing stakeholders, financial analysis, and analysis of populations not able to access pre-primary education. Use secondary sources for data including IDELA reports, and data from UNICEF’s MICS. Be aware that many of these data sets are designed to address ECD more broadly, but they still contain useful information. Interview key informants in the relevant ministries and organizations active in the pre-primary space. 	<p>Save the Children’s International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) reports</p> <p>UNICEF’s Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)</p> <p>SABER reports on Early Childhood Development & Ratings</p>
Activity Design	<p>If designing a stand-alone pre-primary activity, information gathered by answering the guiding questions in this document will support design teams to identify key stakeholders, gaps, and challenges in the current pre-primary landscape and within specific technical areas.</p> <p>Design teams should work to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify & engage diverse stakeholders from across the sector (public, private, NGOs, or FBO supported pre-primary programs). Understanding the context will support USAID in designing an activity that fills a gap and builds on best practices. Design teams may also consider 	<p>The ECE Accelerator Toolkit provides a roadmap for Education Sector Analysis and Education Sector Plan Development for pre-primary.</p> <p>The Learning through Play: Strengthening Learning through Play in Early Childhood Education Programmes brief provides guidance on how to strengthen learning through play in programming.</p> <p>Examples of Theory of Change include:</p>

ENTRY POINT	KEY STEPS	RESOURCES
	<p>where USAID can support and collaborate with other stakeholders active in the sector as opposed to designing new interventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Requests for Information to gain a better perspective on the current context for pre-primary and to identify innovative approaches that may improve access to and the quality of pre-primary programming. • Develop a Theory of Change that links investments in pre-primary with key priorities in the USAID Education Policy, including greater access to high-quality programming and improved learning outcomes and developmental growth for young children. • Identify key objectives for each activity in alignment with the pre-primary programmatic principles and the principles of the 2018 USAID Education Policy, as well as the opportunities and gaps identified in earlier analysis. While every activity may not be able to address ALL the elements of pre-primary programming discussed in this guidance note, the intermediate results should be linked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IF high quality pre-primary activities are implemented, and if the most marginalized and vulnerable populations are reached THEN children will achieve improved school readiness abilities. • IF teachers are trained in developmentally appropriate practice, and IF they are given the appropriate resources to use in the classroom, and IF they continue to be supported in the classroom THEN they will deliver high-quality instruction to young children leading to improved learning outcomes. <p>Examples IRs might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to pre-primary for the most marginalized and vulnerable, especially children with disabilities, increased. • Capacity of pre-primary teachers to use developmentally appropriate pedagogical practices improved. • Inclusive education principles integrated into pre-primary curriculum and teacher training.
Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>As USAID expands its footprint in the pre-primary sector it is important to capture the number of learners and teachers supported by USG activities. In preparing their monitoring and evaluation plan, Missions should plan to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose key performance indicators for the activity that are pre-primary specific. Whenever possible, indicators should capture the pre-primary students and teachers as a distinct population, even when they may be reached as part of a larger activity (such as kindergarten students that are part of an early grade literacy or numeracy activity). • Choose indicators and assessment tools that measure performance close to the intervention. For example, if your intervention focuses strongly on teacher training, teacher performance is an excellent outcome to measure. • Plan for monitoring and observation throughout the life of the activity. Several tools exist for classroom observation at the pre-primary level. • Identify evaluation questions that can be used to inform future pre-primary activities and contribute to learning. • Decide which tool will be used for measuring learning outcomes in pre-primary programs. USAID does not endorse a specific tool for this purpose, but several tools are available for adaptation as outlined in Table 7 of this document. 	<p>Standard indicators for pre-primary include:</p> <p>ES.I-53: Number of learners in pre-primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance</p> <p>PIRS supp-1 Pre-Primary Skills Improvement</p> <p>*Note that several other indicators include a pre-primary disaggregate</p> <p>The World Bank’s TEACH Early Childhood Education classroom observation tool</p> <p>Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 is focused on ECD with reference to pre-primary</p>

ENTRY POINT	KEY STEPS	RESOURCES
<p>Cost Measurement</p>	<p>Ensure that cost data is collected from the start of any pre-primary programming. Data on cost, cost-efficiency, and cost-effectiveness are critical to achieving country ownership of pre-primary programs by providing governments with the information needed to determine which interventions are most likely to be sustainable and scalable based on costs and outcomes. To measure cost-effectiveness of different programs or interventions, data from impact evaluations would be needed to be analyzed alongside cost data.</p>	<p>USAID's Cost Reporting Guidance and Cost Analysis provide a detailed process and framework for integrating cost analysis throughout an activity.</p>
<p>Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting</p>	<p>Collaborate with other stakeholders to better understand the scope of the work that is already ongoing in the sector, what has been learned to date, and where gaps in knowledge exist.</p> <p>Identify learning questions related to gaps in knowledge that can be addressed via the activity. Pre-primary remains a sector with limited evidence on what works in many contexts and learning agendas should be a key component of any activity.</p> <p>Incorporate learning and adaptation throughout the life of the activity. As USAID begins its work in this sector, there is likely to be ample need for adaptation during the life of a project.</p>	<p>USAID's CLA toolkit</p> <p>Sample learning agenda questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What pre-primary outcomes are most important for ensuring improved foundational skills amongst all learners in later years? • What are the most cost-effective models of pre-primary education in resource limited contexts?

ANNEX I: ADDITIONAL LANDSCAPE QUESTIONS

The following list of questions were developed through our consultation process with internal and external experts. This list is currently being developed into an interactive workbook tool to accompany this guidance.

POLITICAL WILL, INVESTMENT, PROVISION

- Is there a specific policy related to pre-primary education?
- Is there strong advocacy at the ministerial level for pre-primary education?
- Are there any other (non-public) stakeholders investing in pre-primary?
- Is pre-primary a key strategic priority within written strategic documents, such as the National Development Plan or Education Sector Plan?
- Is there some form of pre-primary provision available and currently being accessed by families?
- Is there a specific line item in the ministerial budget for pre-primary?
 - Is the pre-primary policy linked to a costed strategic plan?
 - Do decentralized agencies have specific line items for pre-primary education?
- Can the government accurately report on public expenditures related to pre-primary?
 - Are pre-primary expenditures disaggregated from basic/primary education?
 - What is the current spending on pre-primary?
 - What is the distribution of funds?
- Does the pre-primary budget cover the needs of the pre-primary-aged populace and the plans outlined in strategic documents?
 - How strong is the costing analysis?
 - How large is the gap in financing?
 - Which resources are most glaringly insufficient?
- Are resources reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable children?
 - What percent of expenditure targets the most marginalized and vulnerable?
 - What percent of children in the lowest two quintiles are accessing publicly funded pre-primary programs?

- What services do they receive?
- Are there technical working groups, advocacy groups, and/or other recognized leadership groups that represent civil society, development partners/donors, and universities?
 - What role do they play in regard to pre-primary leadership?
 - What successes have they had in this respect?
 - What are their key system priorities?

GOVERNANCE, REGULATION, AND SUPPORTING PROGRAMS

- Is there a regulatory framework in place that articulates how pre-primary provision is provided, regulated, and monitored?
- Are there positions within the government, with clear roles and responsibilities, dedicated to monitoring and supporting pre-primary programs?
 - What is their authority level and to whom do they report?
 - What are their key responsibilities?
- Are pre-primary officials supported with guiding policies and procedures, inspection tools, training, and other resources that help them effectively administer their posts?
- Are there dedicated human resources for managing pre-primary at BOTH the national and decentralized levels?
 - Are there any levels of government missing from this picture?
 - Do their responsibilities align with their level of responsibility/influence in the system?
 - Are there any complications in the reporting structure to note for these positions?
- Does the government have operational policies and monitoring procedures in place to regulate pre-primary provision?
 - Are pre-primary programs required to register with some government authority?
 - Do programs comply with the registration requirements?
 - Does the government keep a list of operating programs?
 - How confident are you of its accuracy?
 - Are government staff available and trained to conduct monitoring procedures?
- Do regulations and monitoring procedures connect to established quality standards?

- Do monitors look at aspects of both structural and process quality?
- Is comprehensive and up-to-date data pre-primary program data collected and reported through the EMIS or other transparent, national databases?
 - What kind of information is collected?
 - What are the sources of information and on what schedule is data collected/updated?
- Is data used to inform planning and improvements at the school, municipality, and/or national level?
 - How is data used and by whom?
 - Are there any incentives or punitive measures attached to data/results?
 - Are there professional development and improvement planning considerations attached to data/results?

ACCESS

- Is there any public provision of pre-primary education?
 - How many years of pre-primary does the government offer?
 - Is the provision fully free?
 - If not, what does public expenditure cover and what is the true average cost to families to attend public pre-primary?
 - Is attendance compulsory?
- Are most children, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, accessing public pre-primary?
 - What percent of children are accessing [free and] public pre-primary?
 - What inequities exist in the groups of children accessing public pre-primary?
 - Which children is public provision systematically not reaching?
 - Where is most public provision offered (e.g., urban and rural)? Do certain cities have disproportionately more spaces than others?
- Do the government, NGOs, development partners, or private investors subsidize non-state pre-primary provision (tuition vouchers or cash transfer programs)?
 - What does this cover?
 - What is the average real cost to a family participating in subsidized non-state pre-primary programming?

- Are these subsidies distributed equitably?
- Are the most marginalized and vulnerable children accessing pre-primary through non-state provision?
 - What percent of children in the lowest two quintiles access non-state pre-primary?
 - What trends do you notice in the data? (i.e., what inequities might exist in how children access non-state provision?)
- Do opportunities exist in the market to expand private provision for the most marginalized and vulnerable?
 - Are there financial institutions available to finance private expansion?
 - Are there providers willing/able to expand their footprint with the support of USAID or government subsidies?

QUALITY

- Do programs use an evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, inclusive curriculum?
- Are there minimum infrastructure requirements consistent with guidelines for child-friendly schools?
- Are there quality standards in place, especially that speak to the process quality of programs and/or early learning and development standards for children?
- Are there minimum professional standards (training, certification, and competence requirements) for pre-primary education teachers?
- Are there program standards related to both process and structural quality?
 - Are pre-primary programs guided by a nationally recognized curriculum?
 - Does the curriculum promote play-based approaches?
 - Does the curriculum support the development of holistic school readiness skills?
 - Does the curriculum promote inclusive strategies?
 - Does the curriculum ensure children are learning in a language they know and understand?
 - Do programs have access to relevant pedagogical materials such as books, toys, etc.?
 - Do teachers conduct formative assessment to inform instruction and collect data on learning outcomes?
- Are there established school readiness benchmarks that guide assessment and data collection on learner outcomes?

- Do the benchmarks cover emergent literacy and numeracy?
- Do they include social and emotional skills?
- Do they promote physical skill development?
- Are they inclusive of children with disabilities?
- To what extent does pre-primary implementation align with the above (or other) established quality parameters and supports?

TEACHERS

- Are there specialized training programs for pre-primary teachers?
 - Is there a specialized pre-service program?
 - Is there a specialized in-service training program?
- Are there specialized continuous professional development opportunities?
 - Are these training opportunities available to paraprofessionals and volunteers?
- Do pre-primary teachers receive in-classroom coaching on a regular basis?
- Do teachers receive training that is developmentally appropriate and specific to pre-primary?
 - Does it emphasize play-based methodologies and hands-on learning?
 - Does it promote the development of broad skills, including emergent literacy and numeracy, social and emotional skills, motor development, and others?
 - Does the training integrate principles of UDL throughout?
- Does it promote inclusive education approaches and practices for children with disabilities?
- Do teaching practices match the training teachers receive?
- Do teachers receive any form of recognition, reward, and/or motivation?
 - Are they paid a living wage?
 - Do they receive respect from the community, particularly leaders of the education system?
- If they are certified, are there career pathways through which they can advance?
- Is the average pupil-to-teacher ratio (PTR) no more than 25:1?

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Involvement: For registered pre-primary programs, is there a parent-led governing body supporting decision making and school improvements?
- For informal, unregistered, and/or community-based pre-primary programs, do parents play an active role in leadership, instruction, and/or maintenance of the program?
 - Are PTAs (or similar) common?
 - Do parents have budgetary oversight?
 - Do parents have defined responsibilities regarding the school?
 - Are parents encouraged to volunteer at school?
- Engagement: Do teachers interact regularly with parents and community members as partners in children's learning?
 - Do parents receive guidance on activities they can do at home to support learning?
 - Are parents informed about how their child is developing and any concerns the teacher has?
 - Is information about student learning and other school data shared with the community via school report cards, open data, newsletters, etc.?

ANNEX II: STANDARD AND SUPPLEMENTAL INDICATORS FOR PRE-PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

STANDARD AND SUPPLEMENTAL INDICATORS SPECIFIC TO PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMMING

- ES.I-53: Number of learners in pre-primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance
- Supp-I: Percent of pre-primary learners meeting locally defined minimum standards in early learning following participation in USG-assisted programs
- ES.I-6 disaggregate: Number of pre-primary educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance
- ES.I-50 disaggregate: Number of public pre-primary schools receiving USG assistance
- ES.I-50 disaggregate: Number of private pre-primary schools receiving USG assistance
- ES.I-55 disaggregate: Percent of pre-primary learners, including kindergartners, targeted for USG assistance who have the appropriate variety of reading materials in the language of instruction with inclusive representation of diverse populations
- Supp-8 disaggregate: Number of pre-primary schools built with USG assistance in compliance with USAID accessibility standards
- Supp-8 disaggregate: Number of pre-primary schools upgraded with USG assistance in compliance with USAID accessibility standards

STANDARD AND SUPPLEMENTAL INDICATORS THAT COULD BE APPLICABLE TO PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMMING

- ES.I-12: Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance
- ES.I-14: Number of classrooms built or repaired with USG assistance
- ES.I-51: Number of learning environments supported by USG assistance that have improved safety, according to locally defined criteria
- CBLD-9: Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance
- Supp-7: Number of parents or community members trained to support children's education with USG assistance
- Supp-I I: Percent of instructional time lost to teacher absenteeism
- Supp-I5: Education system strengthened - policy reform
- Supp-I6: Education system strengthened - data systems
- Supp-I7: Percent of learners regularly participating in distance learning programming funded with USG education assistance

ANNEX III: NOTES ON LEARNING OUTCOMES

USAID’s key objective in investing in pre-primary education is to improve learning outcomes, ensuring children are ready to enter and learn at primary school, and gain the essential foundational skills they need to succeed.

This How-to Note and its associated documents frequently discuss the concept of school readiness and the importance of developmentally appropriate pre-primary for young children. This Annex provides some additional notes on the topic of learning outcomes that are in line with developmentally appropriate early learning and some resources for measuring outcomes.

A “SPECTRUM” OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This How-to Note and its associated documents state that children develop at different rates and learn skills along a developmentally appropriate spectrum. Table 9 provides some context to this statement with example reading targets for children within the pre-primary age group. While this table is not comprehensive, it offers a glance at how reading skills build over time and help develop strong foundations for children entering primary school.

TABLE 10: SAMPLE READING TARGETS FOR PRE-PRIMARY

AT OR AROUND...	3 YEARS OLD	4 YEARS OLD	5 YEARS OLD	6 YEARS OLD
Appreciation and Response	Show enjoyment of listening to stories.	Show engagement when listening to stories, such as making connections between story events and their own life.	Show interest in literature and seek out literacy activities, such as requesting a specific story to be read.	Show independence and interest in literature, such as sitting quietly with a picture book or familiar story.
Print Concepts	Show an understanding that printed words and symbols carry meaning.	Recognize that print is something that can be read.	Recognize some writing conventions such as tracking (direction) of text.	Recognize many common writing conventions, such as spacing between words and basic punctuation.
Phonological Awareness	Show an awareness of rhythm in language.	Recognize similarities in words, such as words that rhyme or that start with the same sound.	Orally blend and segment syllables.	Orally blend and segment sounds.
Alphabetic Awareness	Begin to recognize the difference between letters and other symbols, like shapes.	Recognize the letters of familiar words, such as those in their own name.	Match some letters with their sounds.	Match most letters with their sounds.
Comprehension	Recall favorite characters and some events in familiar stories.	Recall some literary elements, such as characters and main events of a story.	Recall functional elements of stories such as a sequence of events.	Recognize analytical elements of stories, such as problem and solution.

Table 10 describes some global tools for measuring pre-primary learning. Each of these can be adapted to country contexts. Refer to the School Readiness Indicator in Annex II for clarity on how USAID defines school readiness. As an important note, school readiness assessments should always be used to support better instruction and should never be used to bar children from entry into primary school.

TABLE 11: ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR MEASURING EARLY LEARNING

ASSESSMENT	DOMAINS MEASURED	PURPOSE
UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys Early Child Development Index (MICS ECDI)	Learning Literacy and Numeracy Physical Development Socio-Emotional Development	Population Monitoring
Save the Children International Development Early Learning Assessment (DELA): 3-6 years	Emergent Language/Literacy Emergent Numeracy Problem Solving Motor Development Social-Emotional	Impact Evaluation
Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes Measure of Development of Early Learning (MELQO MODEL): 4-6 years (UNESCO, 2017)	Pre-literacy Pre-Numeracy Fine Motor Skills Executive Function Socio-Emotional Skills	Population monitoring

Source: Adapted from Early Learning Partnership: Measuring the quality of early learning programs: Guidance Note, page 12 (2016).

ANNEX IV: COSTING OUT PRE-PRIMARY INTERVENTIONS

A. BUDGETING AND PLANNING

When planning a new initiative, funders and implementers need to take into consideration the costs of different inputs. This section illustrates the types of costs likely to be incurred during the development, roll-out, and monitoring and evaluation of a new intervention or activity in pre-primary education.

TYPICAL COST “INGREDIENTS” TO BUDGET FOR IN A PRE-PRIMARY INTERVENTION

Budgets are commonly organized along standard cost “ingredients,” including:

- Labor costs and benefits (HQ, expatriate, local)
- Costs of travel, transportation, and per diem (international, local)
- Equipment and supplies, including relevant hardware and software for HQ and field office, field office vehicles, field office rent, furniture, utilities, etc.
- Other direct costs, including training participant costs
- Indirect costs (overhead/G&A/fees)

The cost of development and implementation can be calculated based on precedence for the development of similar programming in the country/context. If there is no precedent for developing/implementing a pre-primary intervention, assumptions can be made based on a similarly structured primary education intervention.

When planning/budgeting for the design and development of a pre-primary intervention, it is helpful to consider the costs of the following inputs:

1. HQ, expatriate, and local labor (including fringe benefits and allowances, as applicable):
 - Technical expertise for developing intervention content, for example: curriculum design or mapping, instructional design, material development
 - Technical expertise in specific relevant content areas, for example: education technology, gender, accessibility and inclusive education, knowledge transfer/capacity building
 - Formative evaluation specialist(s) to oversee continuous piloting and assessment of content
2. International and local travel, transportation, and per diem
3. Equipment and supplies, including rent, utilities, computers, supplies, etc.
4. Other direct costs: bank fees and other administrative costs; ongoing communications costs

When planning/budgeting for the roll-out of a pre-primary intervention/activity, it is helpful to consider the costs of the following types of inputs and activities:

1. HQ, expatriate, and local labor (including fringe benefits and allowances, as applicable): senior staff time to implement/supervise the implementation and report back to stakeholders, including the donor; management of operations, and other relevant technical expertise, for example communications, partnership building, private sector engagement, community mobilization
2. International and local travel, transportation, and per diem
3. Equipment and supplies, including rent, utilities, computers, supplies, etc.
4. Other direct costs: training participant costs, printing and distribution of materials; bank fees and other administrative costs; ongoing communications costs

When planning/budgeting for the monitoring and evaluation of a pre-primary intervention/activity, it is helpful to consider the following costs:

1. HQ, expatriate, and local labor (including fringe benefits and allowances, as applicable): monitoring specialist(s) time to develop a database and a monitoring plan; evaluation specialist(s) time to design and manage evaluation activities to measure outcomes and impact; monitoring, evaluation, and learning team staff time for ongoing data collection, data processing, and analysis (e.g., data entry, etc.)
2. International and local travel, transportation, and per diem
3. Equipment and supplies, including computers, software, mobile data collection technology, etc.
4. Other direct costs, including remote data collection costs, if applicable; training costs for data collection (e.g., venue, materials, trainer stipends, participant costs, etc.)

B. DOCUMENTING ACTUAL COSTS OF DEVELOPING, ROLLING OUT, AND MONITORING AND EVALUATING A PRE-PRIMARY INTERVENTION/ACTIVITY

Once the activity moves from a planning/budgeting phase to the development/roll-out phase, USAID implementing partners should document and report on the actual costs of developing, rolling out, and monitoring and evaluating the intervention/activity. USAID Missions should include the [cost-reporting requirement](#) as part of the award. USAID has developed a system for tracking costs of developing and implementing USAID-funded education interventions, which can be used by any funder to track costs of developing and implementing a pre-primary activity in real time. USAID's cost-tracking system is designed to be applicable across the entire spectrum of education delivery system and can be applied to pre-primary interventions, as well. It identifies 11 general cost categories: one category that covers general operations and management and ten categories that cover expenditures related to specific technical result areas. Table 10 outlines which cost categories (and illustrative sub-categories) to consider for various activity tasks.

TABLE 12: [USAID'S COST REPORTING GUIDANCE](#) COST CATEGORIES AND THEIR APPLICATION TO USAID-FUNDED PROGRAMMING IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

STANDARD CATEGORY	STANDARD SUB CATEGORIES	APPLICATION TO TRACKING COSTS OF PRE PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMING
General operations, management, reporting	General operations General management [Donor] reporting	Management and operations costs shared with other technical result areas (e.g., rent, security, finance, general management); monitoring costs related to reporting to the funder
Assessments and evaluations	Assessments and evaluations Research	Expenditure on formative/summative assessments; research and evaluations of pre-primary interventions
Pre-service training (teacher education)	Intervention development Intervention implementation	Expenditure on pre-primary teacher preparation interventions
In-service teacher training	Intervention development Intervention implementation	Expenditure on in-service pre-primary teacher training
Teaching and learning materials (TLM)	New TLM development and testing Production and distribution of TLMs	Expenditure on materials for pre-primary education, including development, printing, and distribution. Can include digital content and distance learning materials/programs. Production and distribution can be tracked separately, if needed
System strengthening	Policy revision/development Capacity building Data systems strengthening	Expenditure on policy work around pre-primary; system-level capacity strengthening around pre-primary; pre-primary-related data system strengthening
Private sector engagement	Development of public-private partnerships Internships/direct placement Labor market assessments	Expenditure on development of public-private partnerships around pre-primary education
Parents/community engagement	Intervention development Intervention implementation	Expenditure to generate caregiver and community awareness of and engagement in pre-primary education
Infrastructure	Permanent schools/ classrooms Temporary schools/classrooms School policies on safety	Construction/renovation/upgrading of space for pre-primary education
Grants, scholarships, and cash transfers	Scholarships Grants to individuals Cash transfers	Expenditure in the form of scholarships, grants, or cash transfers to support learner participation in pre-primary education
Block grants	To government institutions To NGOs Direct service delivery	Block grants to local entities for supporting the development of pre-primary programming or some specific components of such programming
Other (if applicable)	As appropriate	As appropriate

Under the USAID cost-tracking system, all expenditures during the activity implementation should be captured under the relevant technical cost category and reported to USAID according to the reporting schedule specified in the award. As part of cost-reporting activities, implementers are also required to report on the associated contributions of other parties, such as donated office space, materials, or labor, using [USAID templates](#). The amount of time that teachers or parents spend in training should be reported, as well. Additionally, activities must report details of the pre-primary intervention, including the intervention's theory of change, intended beneficiary characteristics, geography of implementation, and other pertinent information, as specified in the [reporting templates](#). All USAID-funded activities should use USAID's approach to capturing cost data. For more information, please consult USAID Cost Reporting Guidance and associated documentation found on [USAID Cost Measurement website](#).



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