McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program in Uzbekistan

Mercy Corps Uzbekistan

Baseline Assessment Terms of Reference

About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within.

Mercy Corps previously implemented programs in Uzbekistan from 1994-2007 ranging from strengthening civil society, enhancing economic development and supporting vulnerable groups with targeted assistance. In addition to these programs, Mercy Corps also founded a micro-credit institution in Uzbekistan, Barakot, to provide communities, especially women entrepreneurs, with access to loans and credit services; increase income generation; stimulate the local economy; and promote gender equity. Mercy Corps is currently pursuing re-registration in Uzbekistan.

Program Summary

Mercy Corps was recently awarded the USDA McGovern-Dole Food for Education program in Uzbekistan. The program will target 410 preschools in the Autonomous Region of Karakalpakstan and the southern region of Surkhandarya reaching over 90,000 children of 3-7 years old enrolled in the target preschools. The objectives of the program are to:

- Improve student attendance in preschools through the provision of daily school meals, improved learning environment, and access to clean water and sanitation;

- Promote reading readiness in preschools through the provision of age-appropriate pre-literacy activities, training and mentoring of preschool teachers and school administrators on pre-literacy instruction and enhancing community and family support for reading;

- Improve school infrastructure and the learning environment of preschool children through the construction or rehabilitation of preschool kitchens, classrooms and water and sanitation facilities;

- Increase knowledge of nutrition, health, and hygiene practices and safe food preparation and storage practices, by facilitating training for cooks, parents, and school officials.

The program is implemented from October 1, 2019 until September 30, 2024 and targets 410 preschools that will be enrolled in four phases:

- 1st phase targeting 60 preschools (enrolling in 2021);
- 2d phase includes 117 new preschools (enrolling in 2022) plus the 60 preschools from the 1st phase for a total of 177 schools;
- 3d phase will have 117 schools from the second phase plus 117 new schools enrolling in 2023);
- In phase 4, 234 schools in total will be served. This way each target school will receive a package of assistance during a two-year phase.

Purpose of the Baseline Assessment

Mercy Corps is looking to recruit a consulting entity to conduct a baseline / school entry assessment at the beginning of providing a two-year phased support to each of 410 selected preschools and exit assessment at the end of the two-year phase. The baseline entry assessment will serve two main purposes:

- It will provide baseline values for several key program performance indicators (please see Table 1 for the list of indicators and suggested data collection tools);

- It will serve as a tailored needs assessment focusing on infrastructure, school governance and school staff capacity, for each school entering the program to help guide program intervention (please see Table 2 for the details on topics and suggested data collection methods).

This baseline is a core part of the monitoring and evaluation plan for this program, including a midterm and a final performance evaluation with no counterfactual. The indicator values established through this baseline will be used for analysis of program effectiveness in both midterm and final evaluations.

Table 1: Key Program Performance Indicators to be Assessed and Suggested Tools

Indicator	**Suggested Data Collection Method**
Average student attendance rate in USDA supported classrooms/schools	Preschool attendance records (document review) and KIIs with school staff
Number of students enrolled in schools receiving USDA assistance	Preschool enrollment records (document review) and KIIs with schools' staff
Number of schools using an improved water source	Observation checklist based on UNICEF standards for water sources (improved and unimproved)
Number of schools with improved sanitary facilities	Observation checklist based on UNICEF standards for school latrines (improved and unimproved)
Percent of preschool children with acceptable score on reading readiness assessment during final year	Structured pre-literacy questionnaire for students in the final year, 15-20 per school[1]
Percent of caregivers of preschool children who report consuming at least 5 out of 10 food groups	Structured questionnaire (adapted from the HH Food Consumption Score) to be administered to a sample of caregivers [2]

Table 2: Needs Assessment Topics and Suggested Tools

Topic	**Suggested Data Collection Methods**
School infrastructure assessment	

[1] Exact sample size will be determined by the selected consulting entity in consultation with Mercy Corps
[2] Same as above

– Infrastructure base and needs – Kitchen equipment base and needs – Type of water source – Type of sanitation facilities – Handwashing facilities – Classroom environment – Educational, informational and communication materials	– Structured observation (infrastructure), 1 per school – Structured observation for existing materials and classrooms, 1 per school – Semi-structured KII (key school administration and kitchen staff), 2-3 per school
School governance and staff capacity	
– Parents and Teachers Associations (PTA) / Parents Committees (PC) – Documentation – Menu diversity and composition – Teachers skills and practices – Cooks skills and practices – Nurses skills and practices	– Group interview with PTA/PC members, 1 per school, up to 3 people per interview – Document review (staffing plan, menu, school feeding documents, PTA/PC minutes), 1 per school – Structured observation checklist for teachers, 2-3 per school – Structured observation checklist for cooks, 1 per school – Semi-structured KIIs (key school admin and kitchen staff), 2-3 per school

In addition to the school-based data collection outlined above, this baseline data collection will include a series of KIIs with local government officials, including representatives of local and/or regional pre-school education department, local government and health care facilities that provide services relevant to the program objectives[3].

Gender is a cross-cutting theme for all MC assessments. As a minimum standard, all data will be disaggregated by age and gender. In addition, several gender-specific questions will be included in the data collection tools listed above, MC and the selected data collection company will work with the HQ Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) unit to identify appropriate questions and data collection techniques. The objective is to assess and understand the differences in the lives of women and men (parents and teachers), girls and boys, and to ensure they are equitably engaged as active stakeholders during the program. Furthermore, the analysis will examine the power relationships between and among these groups.

[3] Exact number of interviews will be determined by the selected consulting entity in consultation with Mercy Corps

Consultant's Responsibilities and Tasks

Consultant's tasks include:

i.) Literature review: The consultant will conduct a review of available documentation and reports from similar programs, including in the Kyrgyz Republic, to provide inputs into developing the assessment methodology and data collection tools.

ii.) Prepare the baseline assessment work plan with timeline in consultation with the MEL Manager.

iii.) Enrich and finalize the assessment methodology and data collection tools; translate into local languages/dialects.

iv.) Engage a team of experienced enumerators, consisting of residents from the regions in which data is being collected, to enable ease of access and responsiveness of respondents. Preference should be given to those who have previously conducted similar assessments or research projects.

v.) Identify and recruit a qualified expert on preschool literacy or early childhood development/education and an expert on infrastructure, preferably with a focus on schools and child-friendly facilities.

vi.) After the tools are finalized and translated, the consultant will digitize the structured tools for mobile data collection. Mercy Corps preferred digital data collection platform is Ona. For semi-structured tools and other relevant data sources, the consultant will develop suitable databases and data entry protocols.

vii.) Training of enumerators: Upon engagement of the enumerators, the consultant together with the MC MEL team will develop and deliver a three-day training for all assessment team members to ensure a shared understanding of the objectives of the assessment, tools and questions, data collection techniques and expected deliverables. The training must include a field practice exercise to pilot the data collection tools and field protocol.

viii.) Field work: Field work will take place in the target two regions, i.e. Karakalpakstan and Surkhandarya, Preference will be given to concurrent data collection in both regions. The first round of data collection will be conducted for approximately 60 Phase I schools.

ix.) Data quality: The consultant will do spot checks of data and use other quality data assurance methods. Additional data collection of missing or inaccurate data will done if necessary.

x.) The consultant will provide a clean and verified database to Mercy Corps, including translation into Russian and/or English.

xi.) Data analysis: The consultant will analyze the collected data and consequently generate the baseline assessment report based on the agreed upon structure in English and Russian languages.

xii.) Recommendations and lessons learned for the next round of data collection with regard to improving data collection tools, protocols, etc.

Methodology, suggested tools, protocols and databases will be reviewed and approved by MC prior to implementation.

Baseline Assessment Timeline

The consulting assignment is planned to last during the period from April to October 2021.

Deliverables

Five deliverables are foreseen under the consultancy. They include:

i.) Inception Report to be submitted three weeks after signing the contract. This will present:

a. Findings of the desk review;
b. Improvements to the baseline assessment tools and questions;
c. Data collection and quality assurance plan;
d. The finalized workplan for the assessment.

ii.) Draft Report: This is to be submitted within three weeks after the fieldwork. The report will present the quantitative and qualitative findings of the baseline assessment and practical recommendations to Mercy Corps on M&E Plan and PMP. The format for the draft report will be agreed with Mercy Corps at the outset of the consultancy.

iii.) Final Report: The consultant will produce the final report, taking into consideration comments from the Mercy Corps team (first draft) and USDA (second draft). The final report will need to be edited for publication in compliance USDA requirements on protecting personal data, including Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and be Section 508 compliant[4].

iv.) Field report (could be a standalone document or part of the baseline report) outlining all schools visited, issues encountered, solutions proposed, and a set of recommendations and lessons learned for the next round of data collection.

v.) Cleaned datasets with raw data in the original language and translation into Russian and/or English.

vi.) Baseline Assessment Brief: A 2-3 pages stand-alone brief describing the evaluation design, key learning and other relevant considerations. It will serve to inform any interested stakeholders of the baseline assessment and should be written in language easy to understand by non-evaluators and with appropriate graphics and tables.

Consultant Management

The consultant will report to the MC MEL Manager and work closely with the M&E teams in Mercy Corps Uzbekistan and HQ. The MEL Manager will monitor and track progress of the various activities under the consultancy.

To support the consultant in carrying out the tasks outlined above, MC will provide the following:

- All relevant program documents, including program design documents, PMP, and workplan;
- Data collection tools and protocols used for a similar program in Kyrgyzstan;
- Required permissions and letters of support for the Government of Uzbekistan;
- Recommendations on available data collection companies or enumerators;
- Technical support from MC program and HQ experts, where needed.

[4] MC and USDA will provide necessary guidance.

Required Skills, Experiences and Competences

Mercy Corps is looking for a consulting entity that can provide a team with the following composition requirements:

1. A highly experienced team leader with the relevant masters' degree in any of the following areas: sociology, development studies, education, health, nutrition or any other relevant field to manage the overall process and lead methodology development, analysis and reporting
2. An engineering / a subject matter expert in infrastructure, preferably with a focus on school infrastructure and familiarity with applicable international standards, such as UNICEF, to provide technical support in developing infrastructure assessment tools and training the data collection team, as well as provide analytical insights into the findings.
3. A pre-literacy / early childhood education specialist to provide technical support in developing pre-literacy assessment tools and training the data collection team, as well as provide analytical insights into the findings.
4. An analyst / statistician / digital data collection expert.
5. A team of experienced enumerators for the preschool assessment with direct field data collection experience with qualitative and quantitative tools and mobile-based data collection
6. A team or a group of enumerators for the pre-literacy assessment with an education background and/or expertise in literacy-related measurements, with direct field data collection experience with qualitative and quantitative tools and mobile data collections
7. Supporting team members as needed (translation, data entry, transcription and note taking, etc.).

Proposal Submission

An Offeror may submit a proposal covering either the full scope of services and tasks or selected services and tasks included in this Terms of Reference. The proposed scope must be clearly described in the technical proposal. The proposal can be submitted in **the English or Russian language**.

The proposal must be submitted in electronic form at tenders@mercycorps.org by **April 6, 2021, 18:00 Tashkent time**. The questions must be submitted in written at uz-pro@mercycorps.org by **March 26, 2021, 18:00 Tashkent time**. **The answers will be provided by March 31, 2021, by 18:00 Tashkent time.**

Technical proposal must include:

- Two-three page narrative describing the following
  - Proposed scope of services and tasks as per the Terms of Reference
  - Proposed partnership if any
  - Proposed data quality assurance mechanism/s
  - Experience with mobile-based data collection platforms (Ona, ODK, Kobo) on tablets and/or smartphones
  - Proposed mobilization and training strategy for enumerators
- CVs of key personnel, 3 page max per personnel
- List of similar projects implemented by the Offeror in the area of education, nutrition, infrastructure
- List of reports and publications produced by the Offeror in the area of education, nutrition, infrastructure
- Three references from past clients
- Price offer based on the template below

Proposed Service Type	N of Services Proposed	Price per Unit in USD including all related costs and taxes	Total Price
Design, testing and finalization of tools for preschool infrastructure/capacity	___consultancy days		
Design, testing and finalization of tools for pre-literacy/nutrition	__consultancy days		
Structured pre-literacy questionnaire for students in the final year, tentatively 20 per school	___respondents		
Structured questionnaire (adapted from the HH Food Consumption Score) for a sample of caregivers	___respondents		
Key informant interview (3 key school administration and kitchen staff per school, 4 local government)	___respondents		
Structured observation (infrastructure, classrooms, materials, etc.)	___checklists		
Structured observation (3 teachers per school; 1 cook per school)	___checklists		
Group interview for PTA/PC (1 per school, up to 3 people per interview)	___groups		
Preschool document review (attendance, enrollment, staffing plan, menu, school feeding documents, PTA/PC minutes if any)	___ preschools		

Evaluation Criteria

Trade-Off Method

Mercy Corps Tender Committee will conduct a technical evaluation which will grade technical criteria on a weighted basis (each criteria is given a percentage, all together equaling 100%). Offeror's proposals should consist of all required technical submittals so a Mercy Corps committee can thoroughly evaluate the technical criteria listed herein and assign points based on the strength of a technical submission.

Award criteria shall be based on the proposal's overall "value for money" (quality, cost, etc.) while taking into consideration donor and internal requirements and regulations. Each individual criteria has been assigned a weighting prior to the release of this tender based on its importance to Mercy Corps in this process.

Offeror(s) with the best score(s) will be accepted as the winning offeror(s), assuming the price is deemed fair and reasonable.

When performing the Scoring Evaluation, the Mercy Corps tender committee will assign points for each criteria based on the following scale:

Point	Rationale
0	Not acceptable; has not met any part of the specified criteria
1-4	Has met only some minimum requirements and may not be acceptable

5	Acceptable
6-9	Acceptable; has met all requirements and exceeds some
10	Acceptable; has exceeded all requirements

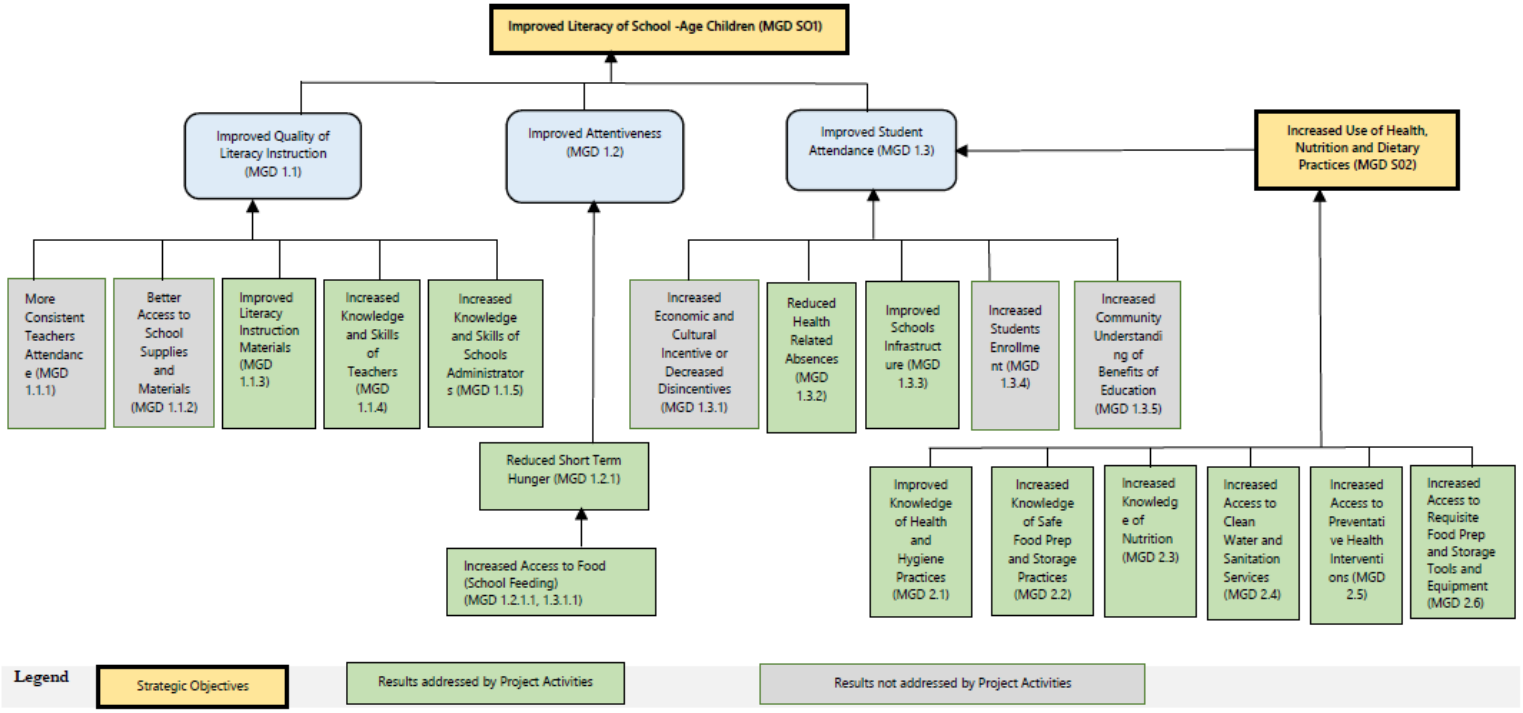
Evaluation Criteria	**Weight (%)**	**Points (1-10)**	**Weighted Points**
	A	B	(A*B)
Offeror's ability to provide key personnel and enumerators with the necessary qualifications	25%		
Data collection experience for relevant projects in Central Asia and/or Uzbekistan	20%		
Data collection experience in public pre-schools or schools	10%		
Price per unit	20%		
Data quality assurance mechanism	15%		
Experience with Mercy Corps and/or US Government-funded projects	5%		
Experience with mobile-based data collection platforms (Ona, ODK, Kobo) on tablets and/or smartphones	5%		
Overall Score:			

Attachment E
Results Framework

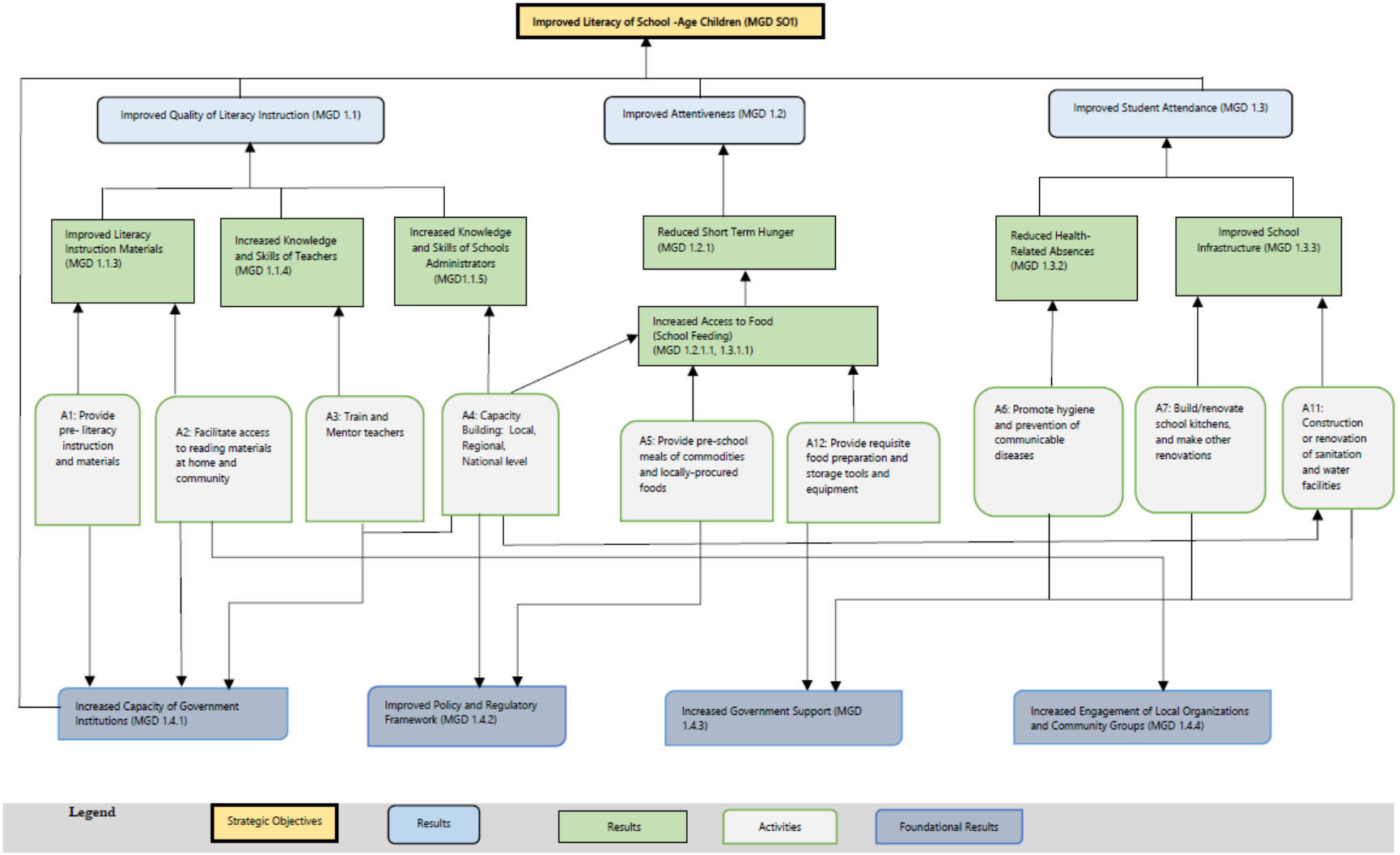
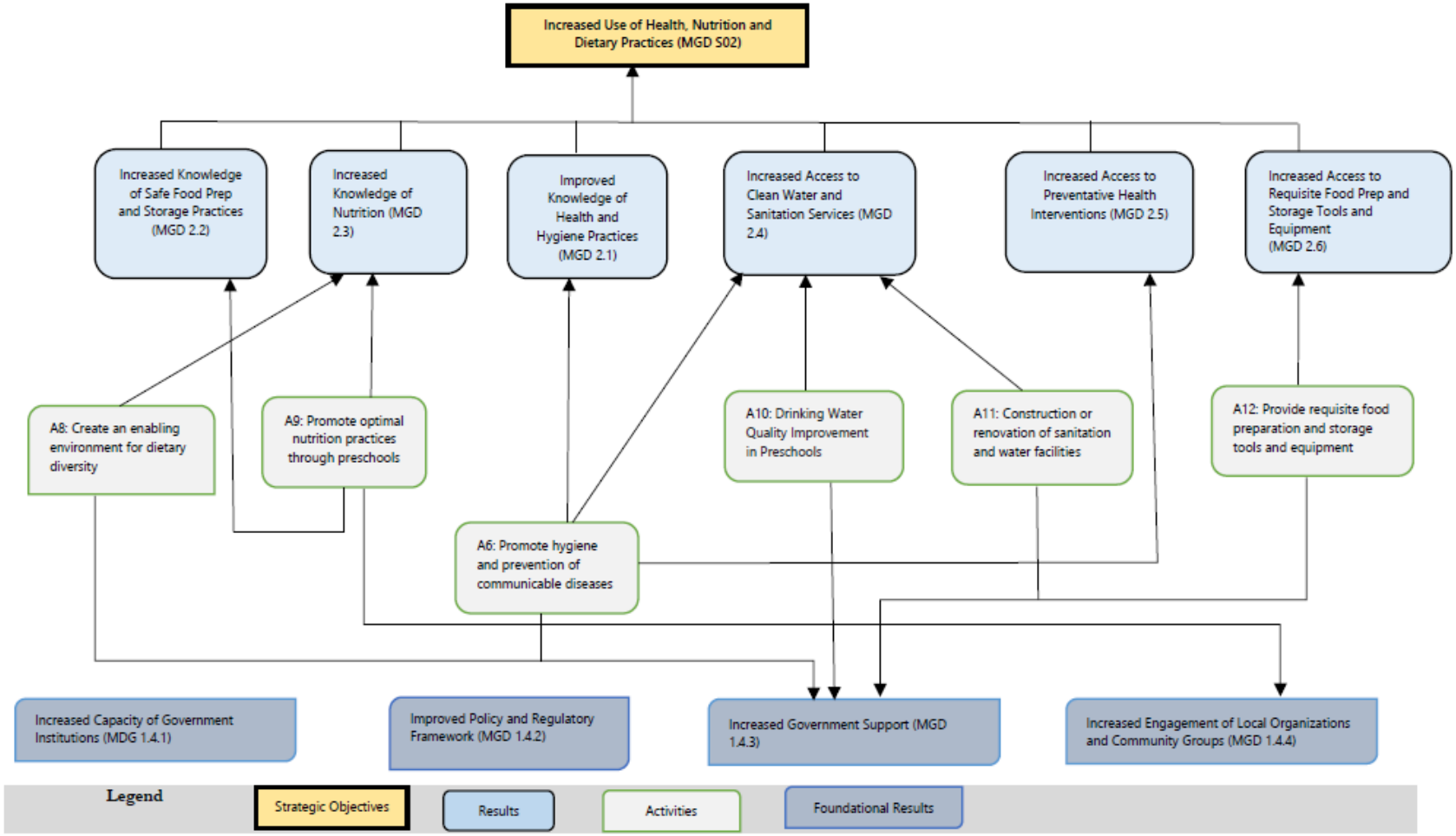
McGovern Dole Uzbekistan (FFE2019) Program-Level MGD Framework

Critical Assumptions

1. Government will continue its momentum to achieve teacher quality, including providing improved in-service and pre-service training.
2. Parents will remain motivated to read to their children.
3. National, regional and local stakeholders (government officials, school administrators, parents) continue to support and actively engage with the project
4. Government or communities are willing to provide a 20% contribution to fund project activities during and after project completion.



McGovern Dole Uzbekistan (FFE2019) - Project Level Results Framework (SO1)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