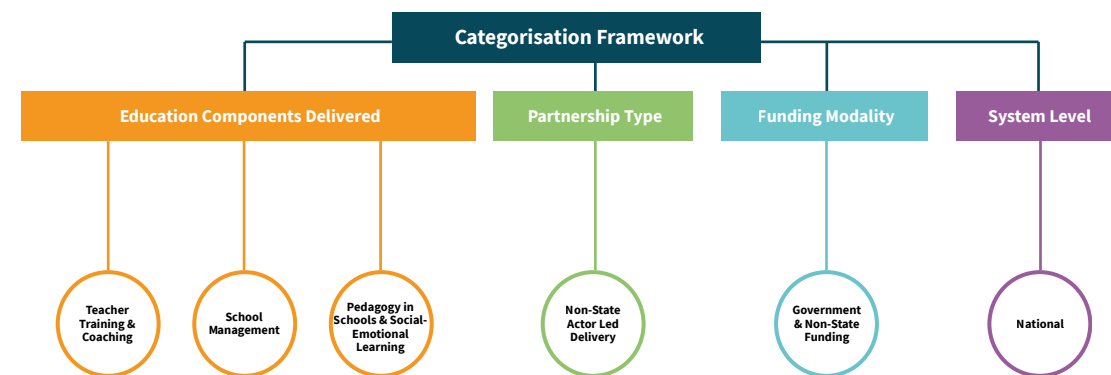




Case study

Armenia Education Initiative (AEI) Seroond Case Study



Case study

Timeline

- Background of the partnership
- Overview of the programme
- Roles & responsibilities of partners
- Key success factors of the partnership
- Impact of the programme
- Challenges & mitigation measures
- Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Armenia



~3m

Population

~1,390

Number of public schools

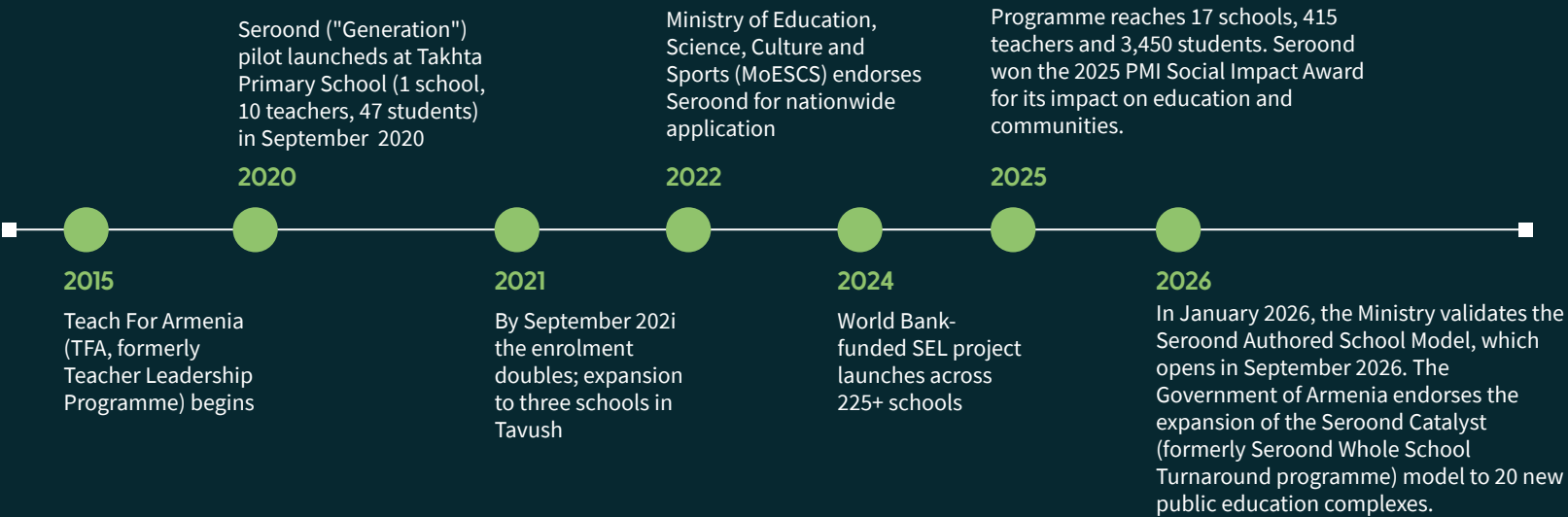
~37,000

Number of teachers

~415,000

Number of students in public schools

Timeline of the partnership



Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Background of the partnership



Armenia's educational tradition spans more than 1,500 years, reflecting a deep cultural commitment to learning and scholarship. Early centres of education were closely linked to religious institutions, with monasteries serving as hubs of knowledge and literacy. A major turning point came in the 5th century AD, when the creation of the Armenian alphabet enabled the development of formal schooling and written scholarship. For centuries, the Armenian Apostolic Church played a central role in sustaining education and literacy, even during periods of foreign rule.

During the Soviet era (1920 – 1991), Armenia's education system was integrated into a highly centralised model designed to promote universal literacy and technical skills. Education was state-controlled, standardised, and widely accessible, but it prioritised memorisation and ideological instruction over critical thinking or student-centred learning.

Following independence in 1991, Armenia undertook major reforms to transform this inherited model. Curricula were redesigned to emphasise Armenian language, history, and culture, and Russian-language instruction was gradually phased out. However, the transition occurred rapidly, and many teachers were not adequately prepared for the shift, affecting the quality of instruction across the system. Further reforms in 1999 began aligning Armenia's education system with Western models, and in 2006, the country transitioned from a 10-year to a 12-year compulsory education system.



More recently, the Armenian education system has faced significant pressures shaped by political, social, and economic challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War intensified existing strains and influenced policy priorities. In response, the MoESCS introduced a new national curriculum framework beginning in 2021, shifting the system away from a memorisation-heavy approach toward a competency-based model focused on critical thinking, collaboration, and student-centred learning.

Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships



Despite these reforms, important challenges remain, particularly in rural and underserved communities. While enrolment rates remain high, the quality of learning outcomes is uneven across the country. Students in Armenia spend an average of 11.3 years in school, yet acquire learning equivalent to only about 8 years of effective education. According to the World Bank's 2022 Learning Poverty Brief, approximately 27% of late-primary students are not proficient in reading.

Similarly, the 2023 Human Capital Index suggests that a child born in Armenia today is expected to be nearly 40% less productive as an adult due to gaps in education quality and health outcomes.

Human resource challenges further compound the picture. With the average teacher age at approximately 50, the public education system must both increase the productivity of its existing workforce and develop a

stronger pipeline of new educators over the coming decade. Although the government has introduced updated national standards and teacher certification mechanisms, many teachers still lack the support and training needed to foster students' social-emotional development, civic responsibility, and problem-solving skills.

Recognising these challenges, Armenia Education Initiative (AEI, formerly Teach For Armenia) partnered with the Government of Armenia and international partners to design and implement the **Seroond Catalyst**, a collaborative initiative aimed at strengthening public schools and improving outcomes for students across the country.



Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Implementation timeline
Design of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Overview of the programme

Implementation timeline

2015

Armenia Education Initiative (AEI) established its Teacher Leadership Programme

Armenia Education Initiative (AEI) began addressing educational inequity through teacher leadership development and school support in underserved communities. The Teacher Leadership Programme has reached approximately 38,000 students across Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh (until 2023).

2020

Seroond launched as a pilot Whole School Turnaround Programme

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war with Azerbaijan, AEI partnered with the Government of Armenia and Kizazi Global Education Network to launch **Seroond**. The pilot launched at Takhta Primary School in Tavush - a border community facing declining enrolment, limited teacher capacity, and risk of closure within a year. The programme initially worked with 10 teachers and 47 students.

2021

Pilot results demonstrated and programme expanded to three schools

Student enrolment at Takhta Primary School surpassed 100 students. Seroond expanded to two additional schools in the Tavush region.

2022

Ministry of Education endorsed Seroond for nationwide application

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports endorsed Seroond for nationwide application, marking its transition from a pilot intervention to a scalable model for Armenia's public education system.

2024

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) approach scaled to 225+ schools via World Bank-funded project

The programme extended its Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) approach to more than 225 schools through the World Bank-funded Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Project, delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Armenian State Pedagogical University, and the Republican Pedagogical-Psychological Centre.

2025

Seroond scaled to 17 schools nationwide

The Seroond Catalyst reached 17 schools across Armenia, serving 415 teachers, 3,450 students, and their families.

2026

Government endorsed expansion to 20 newly built education complexes

Following proven impact on student outcomes, teacher development, parent engagement, and school culture, the Government of Armenia endorsed the **expansion of Seroond to 20 newly built public education complexes**, a significant step toward systemic national transformation. At the same time, the Ministry validated the Seroond Authored School Model, which opened in September 2026.

Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Implementation timeline
Design of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Overview of programme

Design of the programme

The Seroond model

Seroond is designed to strengthen the Armenian public education system through a holistic approach to school improvement. The programme creates an ecosystem that supports:

1 Whole Child Development

The programme integrates academic learning with **social-emotional learning and student leadership development**. Students develop competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, citizenship, and character.

2 Whole School Development

Teachers and school leaders receive ongoing professional development and coaching to strengthen instructional practices, collaborative school culture, and shared leadership.

3 Community Engagement

Parents and community members participate in workshops, school activities, and collaborative initiatives that strengthen partnerships between schools and communities.

4 Government Integration

The programme works in close coordination with national and regional education authorities to ensure alignment with public education priorities and to support scaling of effective practices.

Through this model, Seroond fosters collaborative partnerships between teachers, school leaders, students, families, government institutions, and education experts.

The programme operates through a two-year school Catalyst cycle, during which schools receive structured support including teacher mentoring, leadership development, social-emotional learning integration, and community engagement initiatives.

Case study

- Timeline
- Background of the partnership
- Overview of the programme
 - Implementation timeline
 - Design of the programme
- Roles & responsibilities of partners
- Key success factors of the partnership
- Impact of the programme
- Challenges & mitigation measures
- Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

The Seroond model



A central element of the Seroond model is the development of 21st-century competencies, often referred to as the 6Cs. These competencies guide both teaching practices and student learning experiences:

1 Critical Thinking

2 Creativity

3 Collaboration

4 Communication

5 Character

6 Citizenship

Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Implementation timeline
Design of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

The Seroond programme supports whole-school turnaround through a **two-year implementation cycle** designed to build sustainable school capacity.

Phase 1: Building Foundations (Year 1, Semester 1)

The first phase focuses on creating a nurturing and collaborative school environment. Key activities include:

- Whole-school assessments of academic performance and student life skills
- Diagnostic numeracy and literacy assessments
- Co-creation of school vision and values with teachers, students, and parents
- Introductory professional development workshops for teachers
- Establishment of social-emotional learning routines in classrooms

This phase helps schools establish a shared understanding of the turnaround process and identify priorities for improvement.

Phase 2–3: Deepening Learning (Year 1 Semester 2 – Year 2 Semester 1)

The second stage focuses on improving instructional quality and student learning experiences.

Teachers receive ongoing mentoring and coaching while implementing:

- inquiry-based and project-based learning
- collaborative learning strategies
- differentiated instruction
- visible thinking routines
- structured reflection and feedback cycles

Teachers also participate in peer learning activities such as lesson study cycles, peer observations, and collaborative planning.

Case study

- Timeline
- Background of the partnership
- Overview of the programme
- Roles & responsibilities of partners
- Key success factors of the partnership
- Impact of the programme
- Challenges & mitigation measures
- Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Phase 4: Sustaining and Scaling (Year 2 Semester 2)

The final stage focuses on sustainability and system learning. Key activities include:

- teacher-led professional development structures
- communities of practice within schools
- peer mentorship between teachers
- student leadership initiatives
- sharing best practices with other schools

Participating schools are positioned to become **model schools that can mentor other schools within the public education system.**

Roles and responsibilities of partners

The Seroond programme represents a collaborative partnership between the Government and a non-state education organisation focused on strengthening the public education system. In this partnership:

Government partners	• Identify participating public schools • Support coordination with regional education authorities • Align the programme with national education priorities and reforms • Facilitate policy dialogue and learning for system-level improvement
Armenia Education Initiative (AEI) /Seroond	• Design and implement the Seroond model • Provide on-site coaching, teacher professional development, and leadership support • Support schools in implementing evidence-based teaching and learning practices • Collect and analyse data on school improvement and student outcomes

Through this model, the government retains ownership of the public school system while leveraging the technical expertise, innovation, and implementation capacity of AEI.

Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Key success factors of the partnership

The success of the Seroond programme is rooted in a partnership model that combines **government leadership with the innovation and implementation capacity of a non-state organisation**.

- **Embedded within the public education system:** Rather than creating parallel structures, Seroond works directly with public schools, teachers, and regional education authorities. This ensures improvements strengthen the existing system and can be sustained beyond the programme cycle.
- **Alignment with national reform priorities:** Armenia's shift toward competency-based education requires new teaching approaches, stronger leadership, and greater attention to social-emotional development. The Seroond model supports these goals by integrating teacher professional development, student-centred pedagogy, and whole-child learning into everyday school practice.
- **Capacity building over short-term intervention:** Through ongoing mentoring, professional learning communities, and teacher-led development structures, schools gradually build the internal capacity needed to sustain and spread transformation.
- **Evidence and learning:** Continuous data collection on student outcomes, school culture, and teacher development enables both government and programme partners to refine the model and identify opportunities for scaling.

Together, these elements make Seroond not only a school improvement initiative but also a collaborative model for strengthening public education systems through government–non-state partnerships.

Case study

Timeline

Background of the partnership

Overview of the programme

Roles & responsibilities of partners

Key success factors of the partnership

Impact of the programme

Challenges & mitigation measures

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Impact of the programme

Since its launch in 2020, the programme has demonstrated measurable improvements in both academic performance and student development, while also strengthening school culture and leadership within participating public schools.

- Across current Seroond schools, the programme has produced significant improvements in learning outcomes, including:

27%

improvement in
numeracy achievement

24%

improvement in
literacy outcomes

- These gains reflect the impact of strengthened instructional practices, ongoing teacher mentoring, and the introduction of student-centred learning approaches such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based instruction, and differentiated teaching.
- Beyond academic performance, the programme has also contributed to the development of critical life skills among students. Assessments conducted across participating schools show:

37%

growth in student leadership skills

- Students increasingly demonstrate initiative, confidence, and the ability to collaborate with peers and address challenges within their school and community environments.
- At the school level, the Seroond model has led to substantial improvements in school culture and collaboration:

100%

of the 17 schools participating in the programme between 2020 and 2025 reported improvements in school culture

90%

of 880 parents surveyed across seven schools (2025 and 2026 end-of-year surveys) reported that the improved school environment positively influenced their child's attitude toward school and learning motivation

- Teachers and school leaders report stronger staff-student collaboration, greater trust, and increased parent and community engagement.
- The programme's success has enabled expansion to 17 schools across Armenia, reaching 3,450+ students and 415 teachers, while informing broader education reform.

Together, these outcomes show that the Seroond model can simultaneously improve academic learning, student leadership, and school culture, the three pillars of sustainable school transformation.

Case study

- Timeline
- Background of the partnership
- Overview of the programme
- Roles & responsibilities of partners
- Key success factors of the partnership
- Impact of the programme
- Challenges & mitigation measures
- Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Challenges & mitigation measures

Implementing the Seroond programme within public schools presented several challenges. Each was addressed through deliberate strategies to protect the quality and sustainability of the programme.

Challenges		
Teacher resistance and legacy mindsets	Capacity constraints in schools and government	Sustaining change and scaling impact
Some teachers initially struggled to adopt new pedagogical approaches due to long-standing habits, traditional teaching methods, and scepticism about the programme’s value.	Many rural schools faced limited human resources, high teacher workloads, and constrained administrative capacity. Similarly, regional authorities had limited capacity to actively oversee and support systemic transformation.	Ensuring that new practices persisted beyond the programme cycle and could be scaled across the public system required intentional strategies.
Mitigation measures		
- Conducted introductory workshops and ongoing professional development to demonstrate the effectiveness of student-centred learning and SEL practices. - Engaged teachers in co-creating school vision and values, ensuring their perspectives shaped programme design. - Established peer learning communities and mentorship structures to model new practices and provide continuous support.	- Implemented a collaborative leadership model, distributing responsibility among school leaders, teachers, and Seroond coordinators. - Provided on-site coaching, structured action cycles, and monitoring tools to support implementation without overburdening existing staff. - Strengthened government engagement by aligning programme activities with national priorities and sharing data-driven insights to inform policy and resource allocation.	- Developed teacher-led professional development structures, peer mentorship, and communities of practice to embed knowledge internally. - Positioned schools as model sites to mentor other schools and support system-wide learning. - Regularly shared evidence and lessons with regional and national education authorities to support policy adoption and long-term sustainability.

Case study

- Timeline
- Background of the partnership
- Overview of the programme
- Roles & responsibilities of partners
- Key success factors of the partnership
- Impact of the programme
- Challenges & mitigation measures
- Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

Guidance for similar government non-state partnerships

The Seroond experience highlights several lessons for effective collaboration between governments and non-state actors.

a) Align programmes with national priorities

Programmes are more sustainable when they directly support government reform agendas and public system goals.

b) Focus on strengthening public systems, not parallel structures

Working within public schools and building local capacity ensures that improvements can be sustained and scaled.

c) Invest in school leadership and teacher capacity

Transforming schools requires ongoing coaching, professional development, and collaborative learning structures.

d) Engage the entire school community

Meaningful change occurs when students, teachers, parents, and local stakeholders are actively involved in school improvement.



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