

## PROGRAM RESULTS ASSESSMENT

### A. Program Results Framework

1. The Additional Skill Acquisition Program (ASAP) has been designed by the Department of Higher Education and the Department of General Education of the Government of Kerala to complement post-basic education—higher secondary (grades 11 and 12) and undergraduate college—with market-driven vocational training and career counseling to make it more employment-oriented. The proposed Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan will reinforce ASAP's efforts to provide the disadvantaged youth of Kerala, enrolled in government and government-aided schools and colleges, with the opportunity to improve their English communication and basic information technology and soft skills, and to gain proficiency in vocational skills that are in demand in the high-growth service sector and emerging technology areas. By providing additional skills and career counseling, ASAP will enhance the employability of Kerala's youth and make the students market-ready by the time they graduate. Under this results-based lending program, ASAP will provide level 1 certification equivalent to levels 3–5 (i.e., basic diploma) of India's National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). The impact of the loan will be increased employment of Kerala's youth aged 15–24. The outcome will be increased employability of ASAP certificate holders.

2. The results framework has been designed to capture how the following outputs will translate into the desired outcome and impact.<sup>1</sup> The disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) and activities that are part of the program action plan (PAP) are identified explicitly.<sup>2</sup>

- (i) **Output 1. Market-relevant vocational training introduced in post-basic education.** Foundation training of 180 hours in English communication and information technology skills will be offered to higher secondary and undergraduate students after regular hours and on holidays. Students who complete the foundation training will be able to choose from a menu of vocational courses focusing on growing service sectors such as banking and financial services, business process outsourcing, customer support, health care, hospitality, printing, retail, telecommunication, media, and entertainment; and emerging technology areas such as electronic product testing, optical fibre installation, and mobile communication.<sup>3</sup> This training will be provided during vacations. ASAP has designed 33 courses to date based on consultations with industry associations, sector skills councils (SSCs), and student surveys. The proposed loan will enable ASAP to introduce new courses and update existing ones based on market response (DLI 2, PAP 1), strengthen quality assurance, and support tracer studies to track improvement in employability and employment outcomes (DLI 1, PAP 1 and 4). It will also help ASAP in arranging for internships with industry associations and companies to give exposure to the students.
- (ii) **Output 2. Access to quality vocational training enhanced.** This will help ASAP to enhance access to quality vocational training focusing on the service sector and emerging technology areas by supporting construction of 35

---

<sup>1</sup> Program Results Framework (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2).

<sup>2</sup> The key outputs are designated as DLIs. Those that are important for outcome achievement but difficult to link to disbursement are included in the PAP.

<sup>3</sup> The demand analysis shows the need for an additional 6.7 million skilled workers in Kerala by 2018, with 70% in the tertiary sector and 30% in the secondary sector. ASAP's vocational courses focus on the growth areas.

community skills parks (CSPs) and renovating 30 skill development centers (SDCs) (DLI 3). The existing industrial training institutes do not provide training in these trades which are increasingly relevant, considering the rapid rise in the share of tertiary sector in Kerala's economy. Provision of modern training facilities with gender-friendly design and easy access for the physically impaired will also enable ASAP to attract more students (DLI 4) and private skills providers (DLI 5), and improve the quality of overall training. Public-private partnership arrangements will be designed to outsource operation and maintenance of the CSPs to private operators (PAP 1.5). The proposed loan will ensure that each of the 14 districts of Kerala gets four to five modern training facilities on average. This will expand the training choices available to Kerala's youth and also help to counter the stigma attached to vocational training.

- (iii) **Output 3. Increased awareness and private sector participation facilitated.** This will support ASAP in increasing awareness about the importance of complementing post-basic education with relevant vocational training, provide career counseling to inform the youth about job opportunities, and enhancing student participation through outreach campaigns (DLI 4). Institutionalizing the engagement with industry associations and SSCs will facilitate private sector participation (DLI 5 and PAP 1.2), and ensure the continued relevance and quality of ASAP's training and certification.
- (iv) **Output 4. Improved program management and monitoring and evaluation.** This will build the ASAP secretariat's capacity to implement the program effectively and undertake tracer studies and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (DLI 6, PAPs 2-6). ASAP will hire experienced staff for strengthening the accounts, procurement, and safeguard functions.

3. It is clear from the results framework that all output indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, and transparent. Baseline figures and targets have been provided for each of them. The results chain is clear, and the focus is on the beneficiaries. The program soundness assessment discusses the importance being given by ASAP to stakeholder consultations, industry engagement, quality assurance, and M&E. A comprehensive management information system (MIS) has been designed to collect sex-disaggregated data on the different aspects of ASAP. It became fully operational with effect from 1 August 2014, and has already been populated with past data since inception of ASAP in 2012.

4. The ASAP MIS will collect the required information on the output indicators, which can then be sliced and analyzed from different perspectives: trainees (disaggregated by sex), trainers (including skill development executives and training providers by sex), foundation and vocational courses, the individual CSPs and SDCs and the courses they offer, and also by grouping the CSPs and SDCs by district. The district program managers and the staff of the schools and colleges that partner with ASAP can enter information on the trainees directly into the web-based ASAP portal linked to the MIS. This will help the secretariat capture information on the outcome indicator (1.2) and on all output indicators with DLIs (DLIs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6).

## **B. Disbursement-Linked Indicators**

5. The DLIs have been selected on the basis of consultations with the ASAP secretariat. Only six DLIs have been selected to keep the focus on the core outputs essential for realizing the desired outcome and impact. They provide adequate flexibility and scope for encouraging

innovations on the part of the secretariat. For example, DLI 2—“number of new or updated industry-accredited vocational courses offered”—will ensure that the ASAP secretariat continues to track the effectiveness of vocational training and engages with industry associations and SSCs to assess which courses are effective, which ones have to be terminated, and which ones need updating. The ASAP secretariat has shown considerable initiative in designing 33 market-relevant courses. This DLI will encourage them to continue with and deepen industry engagement and stakeholder consultations.

6. Similarly, result number 2.2—“proportion of CSPs for which operation and maintenance is outsourced to private partners”—while not a DLI, has been explicitly mentioned in the results framework. This takes cognizance of the effort being made by the secretariat, with assistance from ADB, to design the CSPs well, factor in the feedback of skills providers and industry, and structure innovative public–private partnership options to attract private operators.

7. The secretariat will recruit a chartered accountant and a procurement specialist to lay a strong foundation for the scaling up of ASAP. Under the proposed loan, ASAP will offer level 1 certification, which is equivalent to levels 3–5 of the NSQF. ASAP plans to develop intermediate and advanced vocational courses by 2017 so that it can offer certification at levels 2 and 3, which would translate to levels 6 and 7 (i.e., advanced diploma) of the NSQF. ASAP’s skills proficiency certification for levels 1 and 2 will be offered either by the state government or jointly by industry and government depending on the course. The level 3 ASAP certification will be offered jointly by industry, a university, and government. ADB will help the secretariat design these courses through the proposed capacity development technical assistance (TA) attached to the ADB loan. The strengthening of the secretariat under the TA, engagement of key personnel, and the expansion of ASAP to levels 2 and 3 will sustain the program beyond 2018.

### **C. Managing Risks and Improving Capacity**

8. Efforts of most state governments in India to vocationalize higher secondary and undergraduate education have not been successful to date owing to several weaknesses, such as little or no institutionalized engagement with the private sector in course selection, design, and delivery; inadequate flexibility in the timing of vocational training; neglect of awareness building; and inability to offer market-relevant vocational training. As confirmed in the program soundness assessment, ASAP has been consciously designed to avoid these common weaknesses.<sup>4</sup> From the very beginning, the ASAP secretariat has been engaging closely with industry associations and SSCs for identifying courses, designing the curriculum and delivery methods, organizing internships, and assessing quality. As reconfirmed by the demand analysis (done as part of the economic analysis), and the 2013 Kerala Skill-Gap Study, ASAP offers vocational courses that focus on areas with robust growth prospects, such as telecommunication; banking, finance, and insurance; hospitality and tourism; and health care. The ASAP secretariat has signed memoranda of understanding with SSCs for automotive, retail, plumbing, health care, and rubber. ASAP’s MIS will enable it to track the entire results chain from intermediate results to the outputs and, eventually, the outcome. The secretariat is focusing on ensuring quality through ongoing engagement with industry associations and SSCs, video monitoring of random training sessions, and surveys of students and employers.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Program Soundness Assessment (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2).

<sup>5</sup> Program Monitoring and Evaluation System Assessment (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2).

9. The impact indicator is “increased employment of Kerala’s youth,” while the outcome indicator is “increased employability of ASAP certificate holders.” Since some ASAP graduates may continue their education for another 1–2 years after getting the certificate, tracking employment outcomes (i.e., the impact) will be difficult. Similarly, the concept of “employability” is subjective and cannot be measured solely through an MIS, however well designed. It refers to a person’s ability to gain and retain employment, and depends on a mix of factors: (i) a person’s basic education; (ii) vocational skills relative to the needs of a particular job or market environment; (iii) awareness of and ability to access relevant job opportunities; and (iv) soft skills including interpersonal skills, work ethics, and fluency in the main business language. It is context-specific and affected by both supply and demand-side factors.

10. Through the proposed TA, ADB will help the secretariat in addressing the conceptual, methodological, and practical challenges of tracking the main outcome indicator (DLI 1), i.e., “increased employability of female and male ASAP certificate holders over the 2016 baseline.” An index of employability will be designed and tested. It will draw on multiple sources—feedback from firms where ASAP trainees undertake internships, employer surveys, and tracer studies to establish a baseline (by 2016). This will be tracked over time to assess and improve the effectiveness of ASAP’s design and implementation so that the overall employability of its certificate holders improves. ASAP certificate holders, who wish to look for jobs soon after getting their certificates instead of continuing with higher education, will also be tracked to assess whether or not they are able to get placed within a reasonable time. A detailed M&E strategy will be prepared to use a multipronged approach consisting of the MIS, beneficiary group feedback, and periodic tracer studies and M&E surveys of firms to establish the baseline, and track the outputs, outcomes, and ultimately the impact. This will also help triangulate the findings established through the MIS.

11. In addition, the ASAP secretariat has agreed to engage, through a competitive and transparent process, a third-party firm to undertake independent validation of the outputs and outcomes. This multipronged approach and combined efforts will make it possible to track the outputs and outcomes of the proposed loan.