

SUMMARY POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL STRATEGY

Country:	Sri Lanka	Project Title:	Science and Technology Human Resource Development Project
Lending/Financing Modality:	Project loan	Department / Division:	South Asia Department / Human and Social Development Division

I. POVERTY AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY

Poverty targeting: targeted intervention—Sustainable Development Goals

A. Links to the National Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth Strategy and Country Partnership Strategy

Upgrading human capital, becoming a knowledge economy, increasing productivity and competitiveness, and pursuing strategic public and private investments are major government targets to realize economic growth and achieve upper middle-income status. Asian Development Bank (ADB) support to achieve this goal through the two major pillars of the country partnership strategy, 2018–2022—strengthening the drivers of growth, and improving the quality of growth—is integrally embodied in the proposed assistance. The proposed project also supports the government’s more recent development framework of Vision 2025, which aims to increase the access to tertiary education, drive the nation to become a digitally empowered economy, and enhance the quality and relevance of higher education promoting increased access and employability.^a It further assists in developing university infrastructure and exploring private sector engagement for education service delivery, supporting the Public Investment Program (2017–2020).^b It emphasizes the equal learning and employment opportunities for women and will promote rural integration. Expanding more employment-oriented programs, the proposed assistance will address challenges in youth unemployment, low female labor force participation, as well as poverty and marginalization among rural households.

B. Results from the Poverty and Social Analysis during PPTA or Due Diligence

1. Key poverty and social issues. Public higher education at undergraduate level is free and it has been long regarded as an important career ladder for anyone with merits, regardless of their social background. However, the limited enrollment capacity in higher education has created enormous pressure on school students. Around 19% of students who pass the examination for general certificate of education at advanced level will be able to go to state universities, leaving the rest to find other opportunities in private education. The proportion of enrollment in liberal arts and social science subjects is still high at 35% of all enrolments, and there is a high unemployment rate (55%) among these. The majority of enrollments in liberal arts and social science subjects are women (over 80%). Therefore, expanding employment-oriented, quality higher technology education programs will contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

2. Beneficiaries. An estimated 5,000 students from four public universities (University of Kelaniya, Rajarata University, Sabaragamuwa University, University of Sri Jayewardenepura) will benefit from the project during its implementation period of 5 years. As per the University Grants Commission admission policy, the students will be selected based on their academic merits with regional balance (i.e., district quota). An unspecified number of future university students and staff will continue to benefit beyond the project implementation period. The new technology programs will be free for undergraduate students, as in all state universities. Around 20% of university students are from the first and second income quintile groups. Private and public employers, more specifically the private companies that require professionals in the applied science and technology fields, will benefit from more qualified graduates. Research and innovation activities in the faculties will also impact expansion of private sector businesses and operations.

3. Impact channels. The proposed assistance will further improve the higher education system through (i) increasing enrolment in public universities, (ii) diversifying curricula to award degree programs in employment-oriented courses, (iii) improving the quality and relevance of technology degree programs, and (iv) strengthen industry links. These changes will have significant impact on students from rural and poor households as they get industry-oriented competencies to be employed. Two of the proposed four public universities are located in rural areas (Sabaragamuwa and Rajarata) while university students from poor households will also have access to two other universities in Colombo. Through enrollment and employment interventions for female students, the project will also contribute to women’s labor market participation.

4. Other social and poverty issues. While female students are outperforming male counterparts in all levels of education, this does not translate to commensurate success in women’s social and economic status, mainly because social norms require that women take care of family and child care, and there is a lack of career support systems for women. This leads to high unemployment among educated women. School-level career guidance should be strengthened, archaic labor laws need revision so as not to obstruct women’s employment, and family and employer support systems need to be improved to address these issues. Such changes will require strong government policy and concerted efforts among government, schools, social groups, the private sector, and development partners.

<p>5. Design features. The project will achieve the outcome through four outputs that address access (output 1 – innovative technology learning environment established), quality (output 2 – quality higher technology education programs implemented), and relevance (output 3 – industry and international research linkages strengthened) in an integrated way, augmented with the faculty management capacity enhancement (output 4).</p>
<p>II. PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERING THE POOR</p>
<p>1. Participatory approaches and project activities. For the design of academic programs, several industry consultations were carried out. Local employers and industry representatives, i.e., associations, chambers of commerce, etc., will be continuously engaged through industry advisory committees that each university has established. Students and staff, of which 50% will be women, are and will be consulted in facility design. For more women and students from rural areas to participate in the technology programs, the universities will actively participate in outreach programs for secondary schools and develop awareness materials featuring role models from disadvantaged backgrounds. Several focus group discussions of existing students and faculty members will be carried out to inform career guidance program design. Stakeholder consultations, including with local community representatives, were carried out to inform and receive feedback on the proposed construction activities. The requirements to involve industry and students are requirements in the design and monitoring framework (DMF) and gender action plan. Community consultation results are captured in the environmental assessments.</p> <p>2. Civil society organizations. Professional organizations (e.g., Institute of Engineers) and industry representative organizations (e.g., National Biotechnology Industry Association) are engaged to guide the industry-relevant degree programs, future internship placement, and joint training and research activities. The project will facilitate the establishment of a women’s think-tank comprising senior professional women in the technology field to mentor young female graduates during their early job placement and careers.</p> <p>3. The following forms of civil society organization participation are envisaged during project implementation, rated as high (H), medium (M), low (L), or not applicable (NA):</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information gathering and sharing (L) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation (L) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration (M) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partnership (M)</p> <p>4. Participation plan.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No. Participation or engagement of industry representatives is integrated in the project activities and, therefore, a separate participation plan has not been developed.</p>
<p>III. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT</p>
<p>Gender mainstreaming category: gender equity</p>
<p>A. Key issues. Despite satisfactory gender parity in some education sector indicators, major inequalities persist. Female students outperform male students at the secondary education level and outnumber them at the undergraduate level (62% of total undergraduates are female). However, female students’ predominance in arts streams (82.2% of arts stream students admitted to undergraduate courses in 2015 are female), and male students’ overrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) streams, demand attention. Gender stereotypes deeply rooted in the cultural psyche of the family, school, and society create a major blockage for girls to select STEM-related courses. There is not only a lack of guidance and encouragement by parents, teachers, and adults but also consistent discouragement for selecting such courses and lack of visible role models, i.e., successful female professionals in STEM areas, for female students. From employment perspectives, although the country’s unemployment rate decreased to 4.2% (male 2.7%, female 6.8%), youth unemployment rates stay alarming with 18.3% of youth aged 15–24 and 9.8% of youth aged 25–29 being unemployed (third quarter 2017). The rates are higher among women, with 23.9% in the 15–24 age group and 17.4% in the 25–29 age group being unemployed. When comparing unemployment rates with education levels, the largest proportion of unemployment is among educated (advanced level or above) women (10.8%). Lower female labor force participation has been a constant social and economic issue, and remains at or below 37%.^c Barriers to improving the female labor force participation rate are found both in the supply side—time, skill, mobility, capital, and information constraints—and demand side—discrimination at interviews and workplace. Existing norms and culture regarding women’s status and role in the family and society shape both types of constraints. As per the UGC tracer study, the job placement rate among science, engineering, and technology areas is high. Helping more female students participate in technology-oriented programs and encouraging them to take careers in nontraditional areas will help break the gender stereotype and empower women. The focus group discussions carried out with students and faculty members reveal that there is limited understanding of career opportunities among both students and faculty members, and a well-resourced, networked career guidance program, especially for female students, will be critical to bridging the gap. Professional women’s groups, especially from the private sector, will help present real-life role models and provide opportunities for young female graduates to learn from industry figures on how to progress their career and address gender bias that undermines or hinders their career success.</p>
<p>B. Key actions. The project promotes equitable participation of women in science and technology education and takes additional measures to facilitate employment for female graduates. Female students and staff will be consulted when designing university infrastructure and facilities to ensure all constructions have adequate gender considerations. Teaching curricula will be audited to ensure gender sensitivity, and faculty-wide gender training will be designed and delivered to lecturers and male and female students. The project aims at improving the employability of female graduates through life skills and leadership training to better prepare them for the labor</p>

market. It will also facilitate engagement of a women's think-tank comprising senior professional women in the technology field and alumni networks to mentor young female graduates early in their careers.

Gender action plan Other actions or measures No action or measure

IV. ADDRESSING SOCIAL SAFEGUARD ISSUES

A. Involuntary Resettlement

Safeguard Category: A B C FI

1. Key impacts. None. There is no involuntary resettlement impact in the three acquired land parcels. One local government official's residence was voluntarily relocated and obtained required legal clearances. Two households appealed for access to a main road through acquired land. The request was positively considered by the previous landowner, and the households were given alternative land and compensation.

2. Strategy to address the impacts. Not applicable.

3. Plan or other Actions.

- Resettlement plan Combined resettlement and indigenous peoples plan
 Resettlement framework Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework
 Environmental and social management system arrangement Social impact matrix
 No action

B. Indigenous Peoples

Safeguard Category: A B C FI

1. Key impacts. None. Is broad community support triggered? Yes No

2. Strategy to address the impacts. Not applicable.

3. Plan or other actions.

- Indigenous peoples plan Combined resettlement plan and indigenous peoples plan
 Indigenous peoples planning framework Combined resettlement framework and indigenous peoples planning framework
 Environmental and social management system arrangement Indigenous peoples plan elements integrated in project with a summary
 Social impact matrix
 No action

V. ADDRESSING OTHER SOCIAL RISKS

A. Risks in the Labor Market

1. Relevance of the project for the country's or region's or sector's labor market, indicated as high (H), medium (M), and low or not significant (L). Not applicable

unemployment underemployment retrenchment core labor standards

2. Labor market impact. Not applicable.

B. Affordability

The undergraduate degree programs will be offered for free following the government policy in state university education.

C. Communicable Diseases and Other Social Risks

1. The impact of the following risks are rated as high (H), medium (M), low (L), or not applicable (NA): NA

Communicable diseases Human trafficking Others (please specify) _____

2. Risks to people in project area. Not applicable

VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Targets and indicators. Gender indicators in the DMF include (i) female ratio in enrollment, number of graduates with industry attachment program (outcome), academic staff recruited (output 2), and faculty staff trained (output 4); and (ii) women-friendly features in faculty infrastructure (output 1) and special programs for female students' career guidance and job placement (output 4). These are also captured in the gender action plan.

2. Required human resources. The project management unit (PMU) will be responsible for monitoring DMF indicators. In coordination with gender divisions in each university, a gender specialist (consultant, intermittent basis) under the PMU will provide implementation support and periodic review of gender indicator progress, advise necessary remedial actions, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

3. Information in the project administration manual (PAM). The PAM includes detailed monitoring mechanism including biannual review by the project steering committee, quarterly review coordinated by the PMU and project implementation units, ADB review missions, midterm review, and other special review missions, as necessary.

4. Monitoring tools. Quarterly progress reports to update the progress towards DMF targets and gender specialist's activity reports will be the primary tools for gender action plan monitoring.

^a Government of Sri Lanka. 2017. *Vision 2025, A Country Enriched*. Colombo.

^b Government of Sri Lanka. 2017. *Public Investment Program 2017–2020*. Colombo.

^c Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka. 2017. *Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, Third Quarter 2017*. Colombo.