

Ethiopia COVID-19 Education Response Project (P174206)
Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

1. Introduction/Project Description

Since its outbreak from the China's province of Wuhan in December 2019, corona virus disease (COVID19) has created humanitarian and socio-economic crises in an unprecedented way, touching nearly all countries and communities across the world. The pandemic poses a great danger to developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where health infrastructure is not robust.

Globally, the education sector has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic with 1.53 billion learners out of school and 188 country-wide school closures, impacting nearly 90% of the world's total enrolled learners. Such massive disruption to educational access due to spread of COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate the drop-out rates escalating the existing disruptions caused by armed conflicts, forced displacement, climate change induced disasters and protracted crises across the globe.

Coupled with the unprecedented threat from desert locust swarms, flooding and landslides, the COVID-19 crisis poses a significant risk to Ethiopia's ambitious economic and social transition. The Government of Ethiopia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included the indefinite closure of all schools on March 15, 2020, is impacting more than 26 million students. It is anticipated that school closures will increase the burden of care-related tasks, thereby impacting on girls' ability to stay engaged in education in the longer term. The situation might also increase pressure on boys to contribute to family income due to tightening economic conditions and lead to permanent school dropout.

The proposed project, in the amount of USD\$15 million in financing from the Global Partnership for Education COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, is being prepared to support the country's COVID-19 Education emergency response, recovery and mitigation as well as building resilience phases.

The Ethiopia COVID-19 Education Response Project (P174206) development objective is aimed to support continued learning during and after the closure of schools and strengthen education system recovery and resilience.

The project design is envisioned to support three components, such as i) Maintaining learning during school closures, ii) Mitigation and recovery, and iii) Building emergency response resilience. Below is a brief explanation of each of the three components.

Component 1: Maintaining learning during school closures.

- 1.1. Activities in Component 1 are intended to facilitate the implementation and communication of remote learning activities while schools are closed. The project will support a layered approach reflecting regional variability, cultural sensitivity, and technological capabilities in access to radio, television, newspapers,(?) and mobile

phones, employing all technologies to ensure that students have access to one or more forms of distance learning, with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable groups, including students with disabilities, as well as those from the poorest communities, historically underserved traditional local communities, and those living in remote areas. The project will seek to ensure accessibility (such as Braille for students with vision impairments), to online and other remote technologies to facilitate learning for students with disabilities. For TV and Radio, content will be converted and begin broadcasting within two weeks of Effectiveness. Content will also be made available over a set of toll-free phone numbers for students to call in; and online, in a low-data mobile phone-friendly format.

- 1.2. In addition, support will be provided to communication between students and teachers via SMS and alternative systems, taking into particular account accessibility for students and teachers in remote areas and students with disabilities. For disconnected areas, learning packets will be prepared and distributed via the postal service; through teachers and school leaders; and through markets and community health workers. Instructional content will also be included in national and regional newspapers.
- 1.3. Component 1 also supports communication about remote learning options and school reopening to parents, students, and teachers in a culturally appropriate/sensitive and accessible manner. Information about remote learning options and school re-openings will be conveyed to students, parents and teachers as a core topic of the project's stakeholder engagement.

Component 2: Mitigation and recovery.

The prolonged time away from school will necessitate efforts for re-enrollment, particularly of students from the most vulnerable groups, as well as accelerated remedial courses to regain lost learning, and preparing schools for safe reopening.

- 2.1. This component will support preparation and dissemination of accelerated lesson plans to teachers, adapting the curricula for the period of the school closure and successive term to be taught in accelerated fashion in the first few months after schools reopen; as well as guidance and support to teachers for provision of remedial learning to provide focused catch-up support to lower-performing learners.
- 2.2. The component will also support teachers through central provision of training and inputs, and through establishment of networks for peer-to-peer learning.
- 2.3. To ensure school environments are safe for reopening, the component will support improving hygiene and WASH facilities at selected schools, handwashing stations and buckets for handwashing; and guidance and support to school community committees for maintaining school cleanliness through monitoring activities and use of School Grants.

Component 3: Building emergency response resilience.

Ethiopia has faced emergencies leading to school closures in the recent past and is likely to face them again in the future. The pandemic provides an opportunity to strengthen emergency education response and resilience preparedness.

- 3.1. This component will enhance emergency coordination between local, regional, and central level education officials, through targeted enhancements to ICT infrastructure and provision of low-cost devices; and
- 3.2. It will also support an emergency helpdesk for members of the public to report school emergencies, as well as central systems for coordination and monitoring of official responses to reports, to facilitate effective emergency response and recovery efforts.

The Ethiopia COVID-19 Education Response Project is being prepared under the World Bank's Environment and Social Framework (ESF). As per the Environmental and Social Standard ESS 10 Stakeholders Engagement and Information Disclosure, the implementing agencies will provide stakeholders with timely, relevant, understandable and accessible information, and undertake meaningful consultations with them in a culturally appropriate manner, which is free of manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination and intimidation.

The overall objective of this SEP is to define a program for stakeholder engagement, including public information disclosure and consultation, throughout the entire project cycle, including during the period of government mandated COVID-19 restrictions as well as the period after these restrictions are lifted. The SEP outlines the ways in which the project team will communicate with stakeholders and includes a grievance mechanism by which people can raise concerns, provide feedback, or make complaints about project and any activities related to the project. The involvement of the local population, in particular members of communities who are affected by the project's activities, is essential to the success of the project in order to ensure smooth collaboration between project staff and local communities and to minimize and mitigate environmental and social risks related to the proposed project activities.

2. Stakeholder identification and analysis

A stakeholder is defined as a person or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a project, as well as those who may have interests in a project and/or the ability to influence its outcome, either positively or negatively.

Project stakeholders are defined as individuals, groups or other entities who:

- (i) are impacted or likely to be impacted directly or indirectly, positively or adversely, by the Project (also known as 'affected parties'); and
- (ii) may have an interest in the Project ('interested parties'). They include individuals or groups whose interests may be affected by the Project and who have the potential to influence the Project outcomes in any way.

Cooperation and negotiation with the stakeholders throughout the Project development often also require the identification of persons within the groups who act as legitimate representatives of their respective stakeholder group, i.e. the individuals who have been entrusted by their fellow group members with advocating the groups' interests in the process of engagement with the Project. Community representatives may provide helpful insight into the local settings and act as main conduits for dissemination of the Project-related information and as a primary communication/liaison link between the Project and targeted communities

and their established networks. Verification of stakeholder representatives (i.e. the process of confirming that they are legitimate and genuine advocates of the community they represent) remains an important task in establishing contact with the community stakeholders. Legitimacy of the community representatives can be verified by talking informally to a random sample of community members and heeding their views on who can be representing their interests in the most effective way.

2.1 Methodology

In order to meet best practice approaches, including in line with COVID-19 restrictions and related parameters, the project will apply the following principles for stakeholder engagement:

- *Openness and life-cycle approach*: public consultations for the project(s) will be arranged during the whole life-cycle, carried out in an open manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion or intimidation;
- *Informed participation and feedback*: information will be provided to and widely distributed among all stakeholders in an appropriate format that is accessible and understandable, taking into account cultural sensitivities, literacy levels of stakeholders, and special needs of stakeholders with disabilities and stakeholders that are members of other vulnerable groups; opportunities are provided for communicating stakeholders' ongoing feedback, for analyzing and addressing comments and concerns;
- *Inclusiveness and sensitivity*: stakeholder identification is undertaken to support better communications and build effective relationships. The participation process for the projects is inclusive. All stakeholders at all times encouraged to be involved in the consultation process. The Project will provide equal access to information to all stakeholders, taking into consideration cultural sensitivities and literacy levels. Sensitivity to stakeholders' needs is the key principle underlying the selection of engagement methods. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups, in particular women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, and the cultural sensitivities of diverse ethnic groups.

For the purposes of effective and tailored engagement, stakeholders of the proposed project(s) can be divided into the following core categories:

- **Affected Parties** – persons, groups and other entities within the Project Area of Influence (PAI) that are directly influenced (actually or potentially) by the project and/or have been identified as most susceptible to change associated with the project, and who need to be closely engaged in identifying impacts and their significance, as well as in decision-making on mitigation and management measures;
- **Other Interested Parties** – individuals/groups/entities that may not experience direct impacts from the Project but who consider or perceive their interests as being affected by the project and/or who could affect the project and the process of its implementation in some way; and
- **Vulnerable Groups** – persons who may be disproportionately impacted or further disadvantaged by the project(s) as compared with any other groups due to their vulnerable status¹ and that may require special engagement efforts to ensure their equal representation in the consultation and decision-making process associated with the project.

¹ Vulnerable status may stem from an individual's or group's race, national, ethnic or social origin, color, gender, gender orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, age, culture, literacy, sickness, physical or mental disability, poverty or economic disadvantage, and dependence on unique natural resources.

2.2. Affected parties

Affected Parties include local communities, community members and other parties that may be directly affected by or otherwise experience direct impacts from the Project. Specifically, the following individuals and groups fall within this category:

- Educational institutions on different levels: (MoE, REBs, WEOs, EFCCC, TVET Institutes, etc);
- Schools communities: students, teachers, school administration staff;
- Households with pupils / parents, with particular attention to female-headed households and households headed by persons with disabilities and with students with disabilities
- Parents, students and teacher association (PSTAs);
- Teachers' Associations;
- Local administration/Government officials
- Affected communities in the project areas;
- Non-Governmental Organizations including Religious leaders and organisations, children's advocacy and disabilities advocacy groups
- Private sector providing direct educational services, supply of educational materials, and other small businesses around schools and universities;
- Development partners;
- Local community leaders, including chiefs, headmen and headwomen, especially for communities as identified for application of ESS7;
- Labor groups, including those representing workers who would be involved in installation of project infrastructure or provision of goods/services for the project.

2.3. Other interested parties

The projects' stakeholders also include parties other than the directly affected communities, including:

- Traditional media, including newspapers, radio, and television networks
- Participants of social media
- Politicians
- Other International CSOs and NGOs
- The public at large
- Government agencies responsible for licensing and regulating the diffusion of online, radio, television, newspaper, and other media services
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2.4. Disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups

It is particularly important to understand whether project impacts may disproportionately fall on disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups, who often do not have a voice to express their concerns or understand the impacts of a project and to ensure that awareness raising and stakeholder engagement with disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups(on distance education and virtual learning in particular)be adapted to take into account such groups or individuals particular sensitivities, concerns and cultural sensitivities and to ensure a full understanding of project activities and benefits. The vulnerability may stem from person's origin, gender, age, health condition, economic deficiency and financial insecurity, disadvantaged status

in the community (e.g. minorities or fringe groups), dependence on other individuals or natural resources, etc. Engagement with the vulnerable groups and individuals often requires the application of specific measures and assistance aimed at the facilitation of their participation in the project-related decision making so that their awareness of and input to the overall process are commensurate to those of the other stakeholders.

Within the Project, the vulnerable or disadvantaged groups may include and are not limited to the following:

- Disadvantaged and vulnerable students including those:
 - o female students,
 - o learners with disabilities and other special needs,
 - o vulnerable children with non-special needs,
 - o students from emerging regions and pastoralist woredas,
 - o students living in remote areas with limited access to technology;
 - o students in extremely poor families with limited resources to access telecommunications technology
- Refugee and IDP students;
- The poor and vulnerable parents including elderly, single mothers, children headed households, orphans.

Vulnerable groups within the communities affected by the project will be further confirmed and consulted through dedicated means, as appropriate. Description of the methods of engagement that will be undertaken by the project is provided in the following sections.

3. Stakeholder Engagement Program

3.1. Summary of stakeholder engagement done during project preparation

Due to the emergency and the need to address issues related to COVID19, no dedicated consultations beyond authorities of the implementing ministry and education experts, including planning directorate of the MoE, and GEQIP-E PforR Program Coordination Office under the MoE, have been conducted. Additionally, the project links to a long series of education projects and programs in the country, which influenced the design of the project. The Ministry of Education also refers to recent consultations conducted for the Additional Financing to GEQIP-E for Refugees Integration (P168411). However, in line with COVID19 parameters, project stakeholder consultation and engagement activities during the preparation phase will not be deferred but rather will be designed to be fit for purpose to ensure effective and meaningful consultations to meet project and stakeholder needs. The presence of substantial numbers of students and their families who are members of historically underserved traditional local communities (ESS7) in this project in particular, merits a fit for purpose, tailored approach to ensure meaningful consultations. Such an approach will use best efforts to ensure that these and other stakeholders have opportunities to provide inputs on project design and identify possible unknown project risks. Within the social distancing and other parameters set by the national government, the Project Implementation Unit will make all reasonable efforts to conduct consultations with stakeholders through diversifying means of communication, including based on type and category of stakeholders. This will include

online channels, such as zoom, webex, and skype, and where these are not available, to employ TV, radio, newspaper, dedicated phone lines, public announcements, or mail. The channels used to undertake the stakeholder engagement will depend upon the technological and cultural circumstances of the affected stakeholders, and will provide them with clear mechanisms to give their feedback and suggestions.

3.2. Proposed strategy for information disclosure

In terms of methodology, it is critical that the various project activities are inclusive and culturally sensitive, thereby ensuring that the vulnerable groups outlined above will have meaningful opportunities to participate in Project design and benefits. An inclusive information disclosure strategy will include household-outreach and focus-group discussions in addition to village consultations, ensuring usage of languages appropriate for the respective affected students and their communities, the use of verbal communication or pictures instead of text where literacy is in issue, etc. Likewise, the project will need to adapt the methods of stakeholder engagement to COVID19 physical distancing and other national requirements with recognition that the situation is developing rapidly. The project will have to adapt to different geographic requirements as well. The project will ensure that the updated ESMF, SEP and ESCP are adequately consulted with the community.

Multiple channels will be used to publish the SEP, ESMF, ESCP and other information linked to project activities once the SEP, ESCP and ESMF are approved by the World Bank. These include: (i) disclosure of all relevant documents in the relevant sites and through the World Bank website. (ii) publication of posters and public notification in the targeted areas accessible to local communities including the pastoral and under-served community.

Social media platforms will be widely utilized to disseminate information regarding the project activities and facilitate basic and automated communication with students, parents and school community. Further, the project will disseminate information via chatbots on WhatsApp and Viber. Official Facebook account and telegram channel will also be used for dissemination of information related with the project activities.

Further, the project will ensure that the relevant parts of the ESCP are shared for general orientation on the Government's commitments.

A more detailed plan will be established within one month of the effective date as outlined in the ESCP, aligned to the prepared ESMF and social assessment.

3.3. Future of the project

Stakeholders will be kept informed as the project develops, including reporting on project environmental and social performance and implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan and grievance mechanism. Feedback will be sought, and implementation adjusted as necessary.

4. Resources and Responsibilities for implementing stakeholder engagement activities

4.1. Resources

The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the regional educational bureaus and its relevant directorates, will be responsible for and will oversee and coordinate the

implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and related stakeholder engagement activities. The MoE will allocate adequate budgetary resources for community outreach and stakeholder engagement activities as indicated in the component 1 and 2 of the project. To this end, the project under Project Coordination, component 3, has assigned (\$ 0.35M) of money. This money among other things will be used to implement the activities indicated in the SEP. However, the updated SEP will provide a detailed budget estimate for various stakeholder engagement activities indicated in the SEP.

4.2. Management functions and responsibilities

The project implementation arrangements are as follows:

At the federal level, the project will be implemented by the MoE and University Faculties of Education under the Ministry. The MoE will serve as the executing agency and will have overall responsibility for policy guidance and oversight for project implementation. The Steering Committee established to oversee the coordination, monitoring, and implementation of the GEQIP-E program will be pooled to integrate the coordination of the project activities. The Planning and Resource Mobilization Directorate (PRMD) of the MoE will be the main IA with the task of preparing the annual work plan and budget and carrying out the project activities, with the support of MoE directorates and agencies, universities, and REBs. The already existing Program Coordination Office (PCO) under the PRMD will be responsible for overall implementation and coordination of project activities across MoE directorates and agencies, universities, and REBs.

At the regional level, in each of Ethiopia's nine regions and two city administrations, the project will be implemented by the REBs. The REBs have responsibility for overseeing all regional and sub-regional project implementation. The REBs report to the MoE's PRMD. At the woreda level, the project will be implemented by Woreda Education Offices (WEOs), and schools. The WEOs have responsibility for monitoring the Program's implementation in schools and report to the REBs. Some regions also have Zonal Education Offices (ZEOs) and ZOFEDs with oversight of woreda-level implementation on behalf of the regional administrations. At the school level, where most of the Program's expenditures are incurred, the school management will be responsible for managing all school-level activities and the PSTAs will have a monitoring role. Cluster resource centers in the field will provide training, management, and monitoring support to schools. The implementation of the project will also require active engagement and collaboration of students' families and most importantly participating students. Students and their families will provide continuous feedback to the respective education office on the key challenges they may encounter during implementation and possible mitigation measures to takele the challenges.

Thus, MoE and specifically the PRMD will be responsible for carrying out stakeholder engagement activities, while working closely together with other entities, such as REBs, WEOs, local government units, media outlets, health workers, etc. . The project implementers will also monitor and follow-up the effectiveness of SEP and gauge the level of satisfactions of affected persons and other interested groups through regular consultations, periodic surveys, community feedback loops and other appropriate mechanisms. And the stakeholder engagement activities will be documented and tracked through quarterly progress reports, to be shared with the World Bank.

5. Grievance Mechanism

Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs) can be used as a tool to stay engaged with communities and share information when other direct measures for stakeholder engagement and consultations are more limited during the outbreak of infectious diseases like COVID19 pandemic. The existence of the grievance mechanism will be communicated to all stakeholder groups via the channels used to reach these groups for stakeholder consultations, including advertising it in local radios, newspapers and/or local noticeboards. The Project will provide a summary of the implementation of the grievance mechanism to the public on a regular basis, after removing identifying information on individuals to protect their identities.

Well-functioning GRMs include multiple channels for voicing feedback or grievances, are widely accessible for different stakeholders, culturally appropriate, and entail strong complaint resolution and feedback functions. GRMs are one of the most frequently used Citizen Engagement tools in Bank projects and are mandatory for all IPFs under the new ESF.

The main objective of a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is to assist to resolve complaints and grievances in a timely, effective and efficient manner that satisfies all parties involved. Specifically, it provides a transparent and credible process for fair, effective and lasting outcomes. It also builds trust and cooperation as an integral component of broader community consultation that facilitates corrective actions. Specifically, the GRM:

- Provides affected people with avenues for making a complaint or resolving any dispute that may arise during the implementation of projects;
- Allow anonymous grievances to be raised and addressed; compliant boxes and others that allows anonymity of the complainant will be available
- Ensures that culturally appropriate and mutually acceptable redress actions are identified and implemented to the satisfaction of complainants; and
- Avoids the need to resort to judicial proceedings.

5.1. Description of GRM

Effective grievance handling mechanisms (GRM) play an important role in the process of addressing complaints and disputes arising from issues during project implementation. It will be developed and applied to meet the needs of affected people, being cost-effective, accessible, designed to take into account culturally appropriate ways to handle community concerns, and working based on a well-defined time schedule. This project will use, in line with the flagship education program GEQIP-E, the Ethiopian public grievance mechanism, supported amongst others by the Bank's Enhancing Shared Prosperity for Equitable Services (ESPES) program. The existing Public GRMs are being supported by ESPES program to ensure their functionality and effectiveness through the provision of continuous capacity building trainings as well as monitoring of their effectiveness based on the developed GRM guideline. ESPES program. Thus, the complaints and grievances of affected people in the course of COVID19 Education Response Project implementation will be handled in a formal, transparent, cost-effective, culturally appropriate and time-bound manner. The GRM were established as an inbuilt part of the PTSA structure to deal specifically with complaints related to the school grant component and incorporated into the school grants guideline for strengthened and more effective applicability. Besides, the GRM will be monitorable at school level (PTSA and the School Management Committee), and WEO levels. Thus, it will be necessary to ensure that the PTSA structure

continues to function throughout the country. However, the existing GRM will be strengthened to meet the requirements of ESS10 and fit the situation of COVID 19.

Different types of grievances will be handled at different levels: schools' level (Parent Teachers Students Associations (PTSAs) and school's management committee), community level (Kebele administrations), Woreda level (Education Offices of Woredas), Regional level (RBEs) and Federal level (MoE) including via dedicated hotline to be established. Project-affected persons are also entitled to present their complaints and grievances to the Ethiopia Institute of Ombudsman (EIO), which is an autonomous body that reports to the Parliament. If complainants are still not satisfied by one or more of the above levels of GRM structures, they have the right to also appeal their cases to the regular courts at their convenient.

The GRM will include the following steps:

Step 0 : Grievances discussed with the respective education office

Step 1: Complaints will be received in person or through phone calls/SMS by either kebel administrations/schools PTSAs or school's management committee, as appropriate, and recorded in formal grievance registration book for further review;

Step 2: The responsible local offices and PSTA and schools' management committee members review and resolve the cases, within certain timeframe, depending on the weight of the case, and provide a written response/feedback to the complainants.

Step 3: If the complainants not satisfied with the resolution at the local/schools' level, they will appeal to the WEOs. schools notify WEOs of their complaints in a formal letter, through a representative who files the case in person, or by making a phone call. The WEOs bring the complaints of schools to the attention of SIP implementing units of the REBs in a similar way. Subsequently, the regional SIP implementing units review the complaints and notify the WEOs of the decisions made who will communicate the outcome to the respective schools in due manner.

As indicated above, once all possible redress has been proposed and if the complainant is still not satisfied then they should be advised of their right to legal recourse.

During SEP updating, detail description of the GRM including timelines will be provided.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

The SEP will be periodically revised and updated as necessary in the course of project implementation in order to ensure that the information presented herein is consistent and is the most recent, and that the identified methods of engagement remain appropriate and effective in relation to the project context and specific phases of the development. Any major changes to the project related activities and to its schedule will be duly reflected in the SEP. Quarterly summaries and internal reports on public grievances, enquiries and related incidents, together with the status of implementation of associated corrective/preventative actions will be collated by responsible

staff and referred to the senior management of the project. The quarterly summaries will provide a mechanism for assessing both the number and the nature of complaints and requests for information, along with the Project's ability to address those in a timely and effective manner. Information on public engagement activities undertaken by the Project during the year may be conveyed to the stakeholders in two possible ways:

- Publication of a standalone annual report on project's interaction with the stakeholders.
- Several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be monitored by the project on a regular basis.

Further details will be outlined in the Updated SEP, to be prepared within 1 month of effectiveness. This will include information describing how, when, and where the results of stakeholder engagement activities will be reported back to affected stakeholders and broader stakeholder groups.