



Concept Environmental and Social Review Summary

Concept Stage

(ESRS Concept Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 04/20/2020 | Report No: ESRSC01167



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
Nepal	SOUTH ASIA	P171516	
Project Name	Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education Project		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Education	Investment Project Financing	9/7/2020	10/20/2020
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
Ministry of Finance	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology		

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objectives are to strengthen market relevance and quality of higher education, boost collaborative research and innovation, and enhance equitable access for underprivileged groups.

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	1100.00

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The Project would support the government’s Program and will structure the Key reforms in four Results Area under Component 1: Supporting Academic Excellence and Inclusive Quality Education, and Component 2: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation. The four results areas are clustered around nine Disbursement Linked Indicators under Component 1 to achieve the PDO: (i) Results Area 1: Improved Teaching and Collaborative Research (DLI 1, DLI 2 and DLI 3); (ii) Results Area 2: Strengthening Governance and Financing of HEIs (DLI 4 and DLI5; (iii) Results Area 3: Widening Access to Quality Higher Education (DLI 6 and DLI 7); and (iv) Results Area 4: Improving and Extending Digital Connectivity (DLI 8 and DLI 9). The Component 2 will support Capacity Building, effective



implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Reform Component of the National Program. The implementation will be designed also taking into account the lessons learnt from the earlier projects in the sector.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Project location(s) and salient characteristics relevant to the ES assessment [geographic, environmental, social] The project has been developed to strengthen the market relevance and quality of higher education, boost collaborative research and innovation, and enhance equitable access for underprivileged groups. The proposed project fully aligns with the government development priorities and strategies at the higher education sector in Nepal. The proposed project will be implemented in all 7 provinces of the country. However, at this preparatory stage, the specific project locations are not yet known. The MOEST, the universities, University Grant Commission and its subsidiary implementing agencies, the students, faculty members associated with the universities will be the project beneficiaries. The project is expected to support reforms associated with the employability, skills and entrepreneurship of graduates in the job market and widening equitable access to quality higher education to underprivileged students and in lagging provinces. It is envisioned that under the project minor civil works like annex buildings, laboratories, rehabilitation and upgrading of existing buildings etc. will be supported. In addition, support will be provided to the institutions in improving and extending digital connectivity and purchase of digital equipment. Solid waste management is an issue in the country and there is no separate policy on e-waste management. Despite increasing female participation in enrollment in higher education, disparities remain in learning outcomes across geographical locations, income levels, ethnicity and caste, and between public and private schools.

D. 2. Borrower’s Institutional Capacity

The University Grant Commission (UGC) and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) will be the main project implementing agencies. Both these institutions have prior experience of implementing World Bank supported higher education projects and compliance of environment and social policies. However, the E&S risk management capacity in the sector remains weak. As this will be the first operation of MoEST under the Bank’s new ESF , considerable support on environmental and social risk management measures and preparation of ESF instruments is required. Borrower's capacity to manage the E&S risks will be specifically assessed during the project preparation and capacity building program will be developed and implemented as part of this project aimed at building capacity at federal and provincial levels.

Public Disclosure

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Moderate

The environmental risks associated with the project activities at this stage are moderate. The project is not supporting any activities that involve large scale infrastructure works. But minor civil works are anticipated to meet the required facilities such as laboratories, upgrading select academic institutions to meet the center of excellence standards (extension of annex or class rooms), transition of accredited autonomous colleges to universities which may entail upgrading of infrastructure to meet the university standards and extending connectivity with global networking facilities (computer centers, laboratories). As the activities are expected to be small scale the environmental impacts are not expected to be significant. The key environmental risks of the project would relate to waste water management from construction sites and laboratories, air and noise pollution and e- waste management etc. These



risks and impacts are expected to be site-specific, limited in number, and can be mitigated with measures that are readily identifiable.

Social Risk Rating

Moderate

The social risks associated with the project activities at this stage are deemed moderate. The project is not supporting any activities that involve large scale infrastructure works. As the activities are expected to be small scale the impacts are not expected to be significant. There may be temporary impacts on private assets or businesses and disruption to the students, faculty members, staff, communities during establishing or upgrading of infrastructure works. The project does not entail any land acquisition, resettlement or restriction of access to livelihoods, as all proposed activities will take place within existing structures and sites/campus premises, therefore no physical or livelihood related impacts are anticipated.

A risk of exclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from the benefits and opportunities provided by the project may arise, particularly for socially excluded, vulnerable, and those from lagging provinces. There may be risks of students not knowing about the program, not getting adequate information, and thus excluded from the underprivileged criteria in accessing scholarships. Capacity limitations of client to effectively consult and engage with stakeholders may have negative impacts on stakeholders. Inclusive public outreach would be considered in the finalization of the project to ensure proper disclosure of project related information and extensive stakeholder engagement. As per the standard practices of the ESF, the social risks will be assessed during subsequent updates of ESRS and project appraisal.

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

Assessment and management of environmental and social risks will be required for associated activities such as capacity enhancement and training, minor civil construction activities to facilitate the expansion, upgradation, standardization of institutions, widening access to quality education, and promoting digitization of university administration. In Nepal, the enrollment rate at higher education is low at 14.02% with female enrollment at 13.3%. Large share of these enrollment are in on -STEM areas with only 21.40% in technical field which shows poor alignment with labor market needs. Formal and informal school payments, language barriers, and physical location of education institutions, safety, and social norms/stigma are identified as some of the barriers that constrain their access to higher education in Nepal. It is envisaged that such activities might exclude specific groups of students such as females, from lagging provinces, and from low income groups to scholarship schemes, and other benefits. As the project does not entail any land acquisition or restriction in the use of land associated social risks will be minimum. These impacts will be assessed in detail and risks managed through social safeguard instruments. It is also envisaged that such activities might cause nominal environment such as dust, noise, on-site safety and e-waste and waste water management. All potential environmental risks and impacts are predictable, site-specific and expected to be temporary and reversible, low in magnitude, and site specific and will be managed through the implementation of required &S instruments. An Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA) will be undertaken followed by Environmental and social management Framework (ESMF). Additional assessments and/or plans required under the



ESF, including the E&S capacity assessment at the different levels of government in the sector, Labor Management Procedures, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan will be prepared. Considering that the project’s major activities will be executed in the existing education (universities and/or colleges) premises, it is critical to maintaining the health and safety of students, teachers and school staff, vendors, visitors and nearby communities throughout project lifecycle. It is also critical to ensure safe and proper transport of goods within the educational premises to avoid accidents. As part of the development of the stakeholder engagement plan (SEP), socially disadvantaged and underprivileged groups will be consulted to assess their barriers in access to higher education, and their inputs will be used in the ESA and developing mitigation measures that may be used under the project.

Areas where “Use of Borrower Framework” is being considered:

Borrower Framework is not being used.

ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

The clients will ensure that it will adopt a consistent, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally appropriate approach for the purpose of engaging stakeholders and disclosing project related information. To achieve project objectives engagement of stakeholders and targeted project beneficiaries including: public and private higher education institutions, teachers, graduates, current students, faculty members, management staff, academic institutions/industries, private sector institutions, research institutes, banking institutes, federal and provincial government. Both federal and provincial governments will require close support and capacity building to effectively engage with stakeholders and project beneficiaries and to avoid exclusion. In order to implement this approach, the MoEST will prepare Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) which will be proportional to the nature and scale of the project and associated risks and impacts identified. The SEP will be developed and implemented to ensure that stakeholder engagement activities are undertaken periodically and conducted in an appropriate manner. The SEP will lay out a strategy to identify and map key stakeholders, their analysis based on their interests and influence to the project and engagement strategies. The client MoEST is required to ensure that consultations are undertaken in inclusive and accessible manners, in terms of both format, timing and location. The draft SEP will be disclosed as early as possible before appraisal to allow meaningful stakeholder consultation. SEP will be updated, as necessary, during implementation and will be a condition in ESCP. The ESMF will include a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), which will be based on the existing systems established at the federal and provincial level to allow for grievances and feedback from the stakeholders.

Public Disclosure

B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts

A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.

ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

Though the project does not support large scale construction activities, minor civil works, such as expansion, upgradation, refurbishment, installation of equipment, networking and digitization will be conducted within the existing campus area. The majority of labor will be locally hired with the exception of a few skilled workers who may not be found in the project location. No labor influx is anticipated. However, risks related to OHS could be induced by minor civil works, which will be managed by incorporating in the works contracts specific OHS requirements that will



address potential hazards to workers and develop preventive and protective measures to be applied by the contractors.

In addition, contractors will be requested to prepare and enforce a Code of Conduct that include measures to prevent Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/ Sexual Harassment (SEA/SH). Although labour influx is not anticipated, the client MoEST will be responsible to develop project level Labor Management Procedures (LMPs), which, among others, will identify the main labor requirements and risks associated with the project, and will help MoEST to determine the resources necessary to address project labor issues. The LMPs will also specify the mechanism to raise grievances related to the project staff and labors. While preparing LMPs, issues like use of child labor, forced labor, discrimination in wage rates, hygiene and sanitation of labor camps will be considered. The project's ESMF will provide guidelines about potential labor issues and their management by the contractors. Complaints received and resolved will be reviewed during implementation support missions.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Though there are no major construction activities in the project, there might be small scale construction works related to improvements/rehabilitations while adjusting spaces of equipment for digitization. So, the expected environmental risks are associated with small scale construction such as carrying, handling and storage of construction material, solid, waste water management and rise in noise and dust levels. Mitigation measures at construction and rehabilitation sites will include standard pollution prevention and control measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy and the World Bank Environment, Health and Safety Guidelines. The ESMF will provide guidance in developing ESMPs to manage and prevent pollution from the construction activities if the results of the E&S screening as per the ESMF require the preparation of those plans. The plans will include measures to manage, solid and hazardous waste handling and disposal, e-waste management and efficient use of energy, water and other materials.

ESS4 Community Health and Safety

The construction works, if any, under HERP will be carried out inside the existing boundaries of the campuses. In Nepal, the campuses, especially the community supported campuses, are managed in limited land areas. As such, the construction works inside the campus premises might pose some risks to the students and teachers residing in the nearby communities. Movement of vehicles for transportation of goods to the construction sites may lead to risk of accidents. Construction works inside the campus premises may also disturb the household/communities that are close to the campus boundary. Such disturbances will occur in varied forms such as dust emission, noise pollution, increased generation of waste etc. The project will ensure safety of students and staff/workers during the rehabilitation works by adopting adequate OHS and community health and safety protocols following WBG EHS Guidelines. Screening procedures will be enforced as outlined in the ESMF and subsequent ESMPs that will be prepared .

ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement



The project does not include activities that would require land acquisition, leading to physical or economic displacement of the people. There will be no land-based impact. In order to ensure the land availability, it will be made mandatory for all campuses to submit evidence of land use/ownership during project social screening. As the specific project locations are not known yet, the institutions benefitting from the program will be nationwide and located on lands owned by the institution. The social screening requirements will be strictly enforced for all works at campus level and will be monitored by E&S team of the project. Depending on the identified risks, site specific ESMPs will be prepared and disclosed.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

This ESS is not expected to be relevant because the project activities, will be constructed in existing premises and is not anticipated to affect or involve any impacts on biodiversity or natural resources hence ESS6 is not relevant.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

Nepal is a country with diverse social groups that are widespread throughout the country and it has identified 59 groups as ethnic indigenous groups or nationalities. Nepal also has a sizable proportion of Dalit population who are amongst the most vulnerable group, both socially and economically. Of the total population, the indigenous and Dalit groups account for about 37 percent and 14 percent respectively. Under the NEHERP, it is unlikely to have adverse impacts to indigenous people as the project doesn't aim to acquire or put restriction in use of land or take land on lease that belongs to indigenous peoples for the project activities. However, the possibility of exclusion of indigenous peoples to project's benefits, such as student financial assistance and equal access to education cannot be ruled out. ESS 7 is therefore relevant for this project. Actions to ensure IPs/vulnerable groups receive the full benefits of the project will be addressed in the ESMF and SEP. During preparation, the project will consult with representative institutions of relevant affected indigenous peoples at different levels to ensure that the project gains broad community support from these groups and they do not miss the opportunities offered by the project.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage

Given the nature of activities under this project, which will be confined within the existing campus premises, the chances of impacts on culture and heritage are not expected. EES8 is not relevant.

ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

The proposed project will not involve any financial intermediaries.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways No

OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas No

Public Disclosure



III. WORLD BANK ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DUE DILIGENCE

A. Is a common approach being considered?

No

Financing Partners

Not applicable

B. Proposed Measures, Actions and Timing (Borrower’s commitments)

Actions to be completed prior to Bank Board Approval:

- Environment and Social Assessment (ESA)
- Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)
- Institutional capacity assessment and capacity building program
- Environment and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP)

Possible issues to be addressed in the Borrower Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP):

- Labor Management Procedures (including specific Occupational Health and Safety Checklist and Procedure)
- Preparation and Implementation of Specific plans (ESMPs, SEP,);
- Screening reports showing the results of E&S screening of subprojects;
- Project level and worker GRMs
- Implementation of the Capacity Building Program

C. Timing

Tentative target date for preparing the Appraisal Stage ESRS

10-May-2020

IV. CONTACT POINTS

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Public Disclosure



Borrower: Ministry of Finance

Implementing Agency(ies)

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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VI. APPROVAL

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Practice Manager (ENR/Social)	David Seth Warren Recommended on 20-Mar-2020 at 13:28:8 EDT
Safeguards Advisor ESSA	Agi Kiss (SAESSA) Cleared on 20-Apr-2020 at 23:30:56 EDT