



Project Information Document/ Identification/Concept Stage (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 19-Nov-2019 | Report No: PIDC205857



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)	Environmental and Social Risk Classification	Project Name
P172631		Low	Maldives Learning and Measurement Advancement Project
Region	Country	Date PID Prepared	Estimated Date of Approval
SOUTH ASIA	Maldives	19-Nov-2019	
Financing Instrument	Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency	
Investment Project Financing	Republic of Maldives	Ministry of Education	

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PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	3.70
Total Financing	3.70
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	3.70
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	3.70

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Maldives, an archipelago nation of spectacular natural beauty, is a middle-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US\$10,536 in 2017. Maldives consists of nearly 1,200 islands and a registered population of about 436,330 inhabitants as of 2017. More than 30 percent of the population live in the capital city Malé, while the rest are distributed among just under 200 other inhabited islands. Basic human development indicators are high. Maldives ranks 101 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2017,[1] the second-highest HDI rank in South Asia after Sri Lanka. The adult literacy rate is



98.6 percent, life expectancy is 77.6 years, the infant mortality rate is 7.3 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality ratio is 68 out of 100,000 live births. The Government of Maldives (GoM) is seeking to accelerate human capital accumulation, increase employment opportunities for young people, and promote equitable economic and social progress in the country.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

Over the last few decades, the Maldives has had some notable achievements, particularly in terms of access to education. Today, access to primary and lower secondary education are at near universal levels—a remarkable achievement for a country in which only 15 percent of children were enrolled in primary school a few decades ago. While access to higher secondary education remains a concern, the most pressing challenge now facing the Maldives is to improve the quality of education.

The main indicator of the low quality of education is weak learning outcomes at all levels of the general education system. A review of student performance on the most recent 2017 National Assessments of Learning Outcomes (NALO) shows that learning outcomes are modest, at best, with substantial regional and gender disparities. While the average scores for Dhivehi, English and mathematics (for Grades 4 and 7) hover around 50 to 60 percent; but even more concerning is that a significant percent of students fail to achievement minimum scores in all subjects. For the first language, Dhivehi, approximately 19 percent of Grade 4 and 6 percent of Grade 7 failed to achieve the minimum pass percentage of 40 percent. Likewise, in English, about 27 and 35 percent of Grade 4 and Grade 7 students failed to achieve a minimum passing score. The story is similar in mathematics; where approximately 20 and 33 percent of students in Grade 4 and Grade 7 failed to achieve a minimum pass score. Moreover, a comparison of results over time, show that progress is mixed. Between 2015 and 2017, Dhivehi results declined in Grade 4 and increased in Grade 7. In English, there was no significant change in either grade and in mathematics, stagnation in Grade 4 results contrasted with a significant improvement in Grade 7. Also, there are clear gender disparities in performance, with females outperforming males in all subjects, across grades. Finally, there are also clear geographical disparities in learning outcomes: Laamu Atoll performed well below all others, while Greater Malé, Seenu and Gnaviyani Atoll had the highest results. The country clearly faces a challenge in improving learning outcomes and doing so equitably.

The Government of Maldives (GoM) is undertaking a comprehensive curriculum reform initiative for primary and secondary education. This new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is designed to serve as a blueprint for the content of primary and secondary education in the Maldives. The NCF defines seven key competencies, across the following learning areas: Islam and Spirituality; Language and Communication; Mathematics; Environment, Science and Technology; Health and Wellbeing; Social Sciences; Creative Arts; and Entrepreneurship. The reforms address syllabi across most subject areas at the primary and lower secondary levels. The key focus is on improving literacy and numeracy of students. The roll-out of this curriculum is a major undertaking and will need to cover education materials and textbooks, teacher quality and performance, classroom assessments, and overall school learning environment.



The quality and performance of teachers is a major factor contributing to the country's weak learning outcomes. The GoM has taken a number of steps to improve the quality of teachers in recent years. These include initiatives to improve teacher professional development and reward high-performing teachers. Still, teacher quality remains a serious challenge. Local capacity is low— approximately 1200 teachers (about 41 percent) of the secondary teaching force are expatriates. The implications of this are significant, as expatriate teachers may not understand the cultural context as well and may not be as committed to staying in the system— which in turn, could affect the quality and efficacy of teaching. Teacher training and deployment is another serious concern. The country has introduced a new curriculum, but quality reviews suggest that teacher training and preparation is not aligned well with this new curriculum. Moreover, there are gaps in teacher deployment for important subjects, especially from Key Stage 3 onward. Professional teacher development, which is increasingly recognized as a critical component of teacher effectiveness, also requires further attention. Principals, in particular, need more training to ensure that they can manage teacher professional development effectively. Also, it is not clear whether current School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) of teachers is adequate to teaching and learning needs at the school level across the diversity of atolls.

The country's system for measuring learning outcomes also needs improvement. A high-quality learning assessment system is critical for improving the quality of the education system and ultimately, for improving student learning outcomes. In recent years, the GoM has made progress in establishing a culture of national assessment, which links inputs with expected learning outcomes. To this end, the GoM instituted the National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALO) in 2015. The establishment of such a system is itself a notable accomplishment, but much remains to be done to ensure that these this tool is effectively used for education policy and planning. There are a number of shortcomings in the design, implementation, and utilization of NALO. First, careful review of the test design is needed to ensure that it fully captures the standards laid out in the curriculum reforms. Also, the curricula implementation and other innovations /reforms need to be more directly linked with NALO— i.e. the feedback loop that informs test design, policy and program planning needs to be strengthened. Third, NALO findings need to be more widely disseminated and discussed at appropriate levels of the system; to facilitate action needed to improve learning outcomes. Fourth, the NALO does not measure learning outcomes benchmarked against international standards. The Maldives needs to integrate tools used in international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS into its national assessments of learning outcomes.

The Government of the Maldives (GoM) has developed an Education Sector Plan (ESP) for 2019-2023 to develop the education sector. The ESP 2019-2023 has four main goals. The first goal is to improve learning for all through equitable access to quality education. The main results the GoM seeks to achieve under this goal are to ensure that all children from pre-school through grade 12 are enrolled in school, learning gaps across atolls are reduced, and overall learning outcomes are improved. The second goal is to provide youth and adults with the necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The third goal is to ensure equitable access to lifelong learning and a high-quality higher education for all. The fourth and final goal is to improve the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), and



decentralized agencies, to create a strong education system that is efficient in delivering high quality education.

Relationship to CPF

The proposed project is fully aligned with the Performance and Learning Review (PLR) of the Maldives Country Partnership Framework, specifically the Objective 1 : Enhancing employability and economic opportunities for Maldives. Education is specifically identified as an important area of support under this Objective. Through human capital development the project will increase economic opportunities for young people and promote equitable economic and social development in the country. Further, the PLR mentions that the WBG is coordinating its efforts with other development partners. The proposed project is a partnership between the funding agency, the GPE, and the Bank, to increase grant resources for the country.

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C. Project Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project development objective is to promote learning focused curriculum implementation and strengthen the measurement of learning outcomes

Key Results

The key results expected will be:

- (a) improved quality of curriculum delivery in primary and secondary education;
- (b) teachers with skills to deliver the new curriculum; and
- (c) improved measurement of learning outcomes for policy formulation.

D. Preliminary Description

Activities/Components

The project will have the following three components.

Component One: Strengthening Curriculum Implementation. Recognizing the importance of a sound curriculum for improving learning outcomes, the Government of Maldives (GoM) is implementing a new comprehensive curriculum framework. This framework is being monitored to understand how various components of the curriculum are implemented in the classroom and especially whether learning materials and teaching methodology are fully aligned . The Project would support the GoM to: (a) assess how the



intended curriculum meets with the taught curriculum in schools; (b) assess whether key competencies are incorporated into teaching/learning and school programs; (c) identify which pedagogical approaches are used; and (d) identify the practiced assessment approach and techniques, including Assessment for Learning (AFL). There is a need to enhance the technical capacity of curriculum staff in the National Institute of Education (NIE), school principals, leading teachers and Teacher Resource Centre (TRC) Coordinators to successfully implement the new curriculum at classroom level. The Project will support the GoM in its efforts to build the required capacity among these stakeholders.

Special attention is being paid to strong foundational literacy and numeracy skills. These are critical for learning achievement and the Maldives is establishing a program to ensure that these skills are developed from an early age. Solid educational foundations in the early years lays the groundwork for strong learning achievement later in the schooling cycle. As such, to improve learning outcomes, the GoM is developing and implementing a program to address skills gaps in children from Key Stage 1 onwards. Such an initiative includes the development of screening tools to identify children with learning difficulties, as well as a program of remedial action to help these children to develop these requisite skills. The Project will support the GoM to establish a remedial literacy and numeracy program at the relevant Key stages, starting from Foundation stage. This will include support for conducting a global review of screening tools and programs for remedial action to identify best international practice in this area; assistance for the adaptation of literacy and numeracy screening tools to the Maldivian context; as well as support for the development of a remedial program to address learning difficulties.

Component Two: Strengthening Teacher Education and Development. Strengthening the quality of pre-service teacher education is particularly important if the Maldives is to improve the quality of education. Quality reviews suggest that there are gaps in teacher knowledge and competencies to teach the new school curriculum. More needs to be done to ensure that pre-service teacher education pedagogy is aligned with the new competency-based curriculum. The Project will support the GoM to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education programs. This will include reviewing the current curriculum for pre-service teacher education and helping to upgrade the pre-service teacher education program in line with the requirements of the recent curriculum reforms.

Strengthening professional teacher development, particularly school-based teacher development, is important for improving education quality. To improve teacher quality, the school-based teacher development (SBTD) program needs to be strengthened to ensure that these programs are effective in improving teacher motivation, knowledge and practice. The Project will support the GoM to develop the SBTD program. This will commence with a review of the current practices in SBTD and suggest actions for further development of SBTD through measures such as the sensitization of school principals to their leadership role in SBTD, and strengthening the capacity of schools to identify and implement relevant SBTD programs. Related to this, the Project will also support the GoM to further develop the quality of Teacher Resource Centers (TRC), which already play a vital role in the professional development of teachers in schools. It will be important to leverage this platform to further enhance SBTD.



Component Three: Improving the Measurement of Learning Outcomes. The Maldives needs to focus on improving its system for measuring learning outcomes, especially in relation to international levels of cognitive achievement. The Maldives has instituted a system of national assessments of learning outcomes (NALO) which is designed to measure learning outcomes against minimum standards set out in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for Dhivehi, English and mathematics. NALO provides some useful distributional information, such as mean scores, as well disaggregation by gender, and location (Atolls). Still, there other information, such as the percentage of students reaching minimum, intermediate, and advanced proficiency benchmarks which need to be more clearly established and communicated to stakeholders. The NALO also needs to incorporate measurement instruments from international assessments such as PISA or TIMMS to enable the country to benchmark its learning outcomes against global standards. The Project will support the GoM to implement national assessments of learning outcomes which contain modules from international assessments. This would also include identifying the right assessment for the country and in-country capacity building to prepare for participation in future international assessments. In addition, the Project will support the GoM to more effectively utilize NALO for policy and planning purposes, with a special focus on implications of NALO results for curriculum design and implementation, teacher education and development, quality assurance of schools, and resource allocation.

Environmental and Social Standards Relevance

E. Relevant Standards

ESS Standards		Relevance
ESS 1	Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	Relevant
ESS 10	Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure	Relevant
ESS 2	Labor and Working Conditions	Relevant
ESS 3	Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 4	Community Health and Safety	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 5	Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 6	Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 7	Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities	Not Currently Relevant
ESS 8	Cultural Heritage	Not Currently Relevant



ESS 9	Financial Intermediaries	Not Currently Relevant
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Legal Operational Policies

Safeguard Policies	Triggered	Explanation (Optional)
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No	The proposed project activities do not have any impacts on international waterways and therefore this policy is not triggered
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No	There are no disputed areas in the Maldives therefore this policy is not triggered.

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The grant operation is classified to have 'low risks' as activities are fully TA in nature such as analysis of the literacy strategy, study of the system for learning assessments and key education development initiatives and stakeholder consultations on GPE ESPIG application; without any envisaged environmental and social risks and impacts. It will not involve any physical works nor any feasibility studies or detailed design or development of any strategy or plan leading to any investment. Thus the associated environmental and social risks of the grant operation and potential downstream impacts of the studies it will finance are thus assessed to be negligible and thus classified as low in line with the ESF.

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