The World Bank
Emergency Education COVID-19 Response

Project Information Document/ Identification/Concept Stage (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 07-May-2020 | Report No: PIDC222767

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)	Environmental and Social Risk Classification	Project Name
P174035		Moderate	Emergency Education COVID-19 Response
Region	Country	Date PID Prepared	Estimated Date of Approval
AFRICA	Gambia, The	07-May-2020	
Financing Instrument	Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency	
Investment Project Financing	The Gambia	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	4.95
Total Financing	4.95
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	4.95
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	4.95

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Three years into the transition from the previous regime which ruled from 1994 to 2017, the Government of The Gambia has taken important steps to lay the foundations for democracy and set the country on a new development path. Following Parliamentary elections in 2017, local elections were conducted in April 2018. The new Government has allowed for a free press, rejoined the Commonwealth, and rebuilt relations with Senegal and international financial institutions. Further, it has taken critical measures to restore independence of the judiciary, strengthen the governance and operational independence of the Central Bank, establish a treasury single account (TSA), and audit the civil service, uniformed services, and strategic state-owned enterprises

(SOEs). In February 2018, the Government adopted a National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2021 for more inclusive and private sector led growth, with strong financial support from donors. The Annual Progress Report on implementation of NDP for 2018 showed satisfactory progress, notwithstanding the challenges faced. A draft Constitution is now published for comments including strengthening and clearly defining term limits, limits of presidential powers, and accountability to the National Assembly.

Poverty incidence remains high and is associated with low endowment in human capital and assets. Due to lack of growth in per capita income coupled with high population growth, the proportion of the population living in poverty—measured using the national poverty line—remained unchanged between 2010 and 2015, at about 48 percent. In absolute terms, however, the number of poor people grew from 0.79 million in 2010 to 0.93 million in 2015. Poverty remains concentrated in rural areas, with almost 70 percent of the rural population being poor. Inequality has been low and stable since 2010 with a Gini coefficient of 35.9 percent. Marked improvements have been achieved in literacy, especially among the youth (15-24 years) whose literacy rates doubled from 31.8 percent in 2010 to 67.2 percent in 2015. However, learning outcomes still remain low. Chronic malnutrition (stunting) affects 25 percent of children under the age of five, and non-monetary indicators of poverty linked to infrastructure, health and nutrition illustrate that the country is lagging vis-à-vis peers in Sub-Saharan Africa. Considerable inequities remain in access to basic facilities and services such as electricity and sanitation facilities. Jobs are predominately informal, and lack of off-farm activities in rural areas results in underemployment and outmigration among youth.

Important progress has been made in restoring macroeconomic stability and reigniting growth. Following strong performance under the 2019 IMF Staff-Monitored Program (SMP), with a sharp reduction in the fiscal deficit, and debt relief from key multilateral and bilateral creditors, The Gambia was able to exit from debt distress paving the way for an Enhanced Credit Facility (ECF) approved by the IMF Board on March 23, 2020. Supported by increased tax revenues and strong donor inflows, the fiscal deficit was reduced from 6.2 percent of GDP in 2018 to 2.6 percent of GDP in 2019 Growth has remained robust at around 6 percent despite the fiscal adjustment and external shocks, including in the tourism sector. International reserves have been brought closer to prudential levels, interest rates have eased, and inflation has remained stable.

The unfolding global COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have severe socioeconomic consequences and slow efforts to consolidate public finances and enhance debt sustainability as well as the pace of poverty reduction. The tourism sector, which represents roughly 10 percent of GDP and drives overall economic performance, has been affected by travel restrictions in Europe - The Gambia's largest market. This will drag down tourism-related services and industries. Weakened remittances will delay construction activities given the importance of investment in the sector by the diaspora. Agricultural commodity exports may experience a price decline given subdued demand in the Eurozone, but on the upside, lower oil prices will improve terms of trade as The Gambia is a net oil importer. Trade and supply disruptions will also affect investments. Domestically, private consumption will be affected by containment measures and social distancing, while reallocation of government resources to emergency health and social expenditure may curb public investment. As a result, growth is expected to temporarily decline to 2.5 percent in 2020 while the external current account and fiscal deficits will temporarily widen. To mitigate the impact of the ongoing pandemic—and in parallel with this proposed project—the IMF is providing additional support through its US$21.2 million Rapid Credit Facility

(RCF), and the Bank is doing the same through its US$10 million COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (P173798).The medium-term outlook assumes a V-shaped recovery and remains broadly favorable.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

The physical distancing required to arrest the COVID-19 spread has had a direct impact on the functioning of the education system. Following a presidential address on March 17, 2020, The Gambia closed all schools and education institutions as a measure to protect children and communities to control the spread of the virus. The school closure directly affects at least 674,300 children from early childhood to senior secondary school and more than 15,000 students in postsecondary institutions. On April 1, 2020, the President announced a State of Emergency which extended the school closure for 45 days, until mid-May. All the schools from ECD to postsecondary institutions are closed at least until then, with a possible extension of school closure. Meanwhile, since early April, the University of The Gambia has been working to transition to online classes where possible. Across all grade levels, immediate action is required to ensure continuity of learning during the crisis, and to prepare school systems to reopen once the pandemic subsides.

The Government has developed an Education Sector Coronavirus Response Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE). This emergency education strategy is anchored to the broader National Response Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Health. The Education Sector Response Plan has the objectives of: (i) ensuring that children and their families have access to relevant and timely information on COVID-19 to protect themselves from infection and reduce the transmission rate within communities; (ii) enhancing speedy recovery from the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector and improving the resilience of the sector; and (iii) ensuring continuity of learning during the school closure and progressively expanding curriculum coverage using multiple curriculum delivery platforms in the medium to long-term. The strategy was endorsed by the Local Education Group (LEG) on March 24, 2020.

The Office of the Permanent Secretary (MoBSE) is responsible for coordination of the Education Response Plan with support from relevant Directorates, Units, and Development partners. To monitor the implementation of the emergency strategy, a MoBSE Emergency Response Group has been established. The Office of the Permanent Secretary is also tasked with coordinating with the Ministry of Health to ensure complementarity of their response strategies. The emergency response efforts are already underway for the initial 21-day school closure period. The approach has been to deliver television and radio programming in a multi-grade format using Gambian content and other open source education content (e.g. Khan Academy) via a network of 17 radio stations, and 3 main television channels. Call-in lines following the programming have proven to be a valuable way of receiving community feedback on buy-in to the distance programming, what may and may not be working, demands for additional programming, etc. The educational programming is not only seen as a way to ensure continuity of learning, but also to keep children inside their homes as part of the effort to contain the spread of the virus. Regional directors, cluster monitors, and head teachers have also been working to inform school communities of the evolving distance learning options and providing community feedback to MoBSE.

A general overview of the education sector, based on its functioning prior to the school closures is provided below. Although there have been some improvements, the education system still faces challenges in access and equity, quality of learning, and data driven decision making. These key challenges are outlined below.

Access and Equity

Enrollment has been increasing in The Gambia prior to the crisis. The gross enrollment rate (GER) increased from 2013 to 2019 at all levels of education (Education Management Information System, EMIS); in Early Childhood Development (ECD) from 36.5 percent to 54.6 percent; in Lower Basic Schools (LBS) from 92.8 percent to 117.9 percent; in Upper Basic Schools (UBS) from 68.1 percent to 70.4 percent; and in Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) from 39.0 percent to 49.6 percent.   Although the primary completion rate increased from 73.6 in 2010 to 88.2 in 2019, the UBS completion rate has stagnated over the last 10 years (59.5 percent in 2010 and 59.0 percent in 2019).

Although universal primary completion has not been achieved, gender parity of girls has been met at all levels of education. The "traditional" gender disparities have been eliminated from ECD to senior secondary schools, however the post-secondary education level is still lagging at 69 percent in 2015. Girls register a higher GER and net enrollment rate (NER) at ECD, basic and secondary levels, as well as higher completion rates at lower and upper basic levels. Boys' slightly lower enrollment at primary level may be due to higher enrollments of boys in majalis or Koranic schools which are not included in the official school count figure.

Regional disparities in access to education are evident by variations in the GER. As an example, out of the 6 administrative regions, Region 2, close to Banjul, has the highest GER in ECD (65.8 percent) and in UBS (77.5 percent) while Region 5, a remote region, registers the lowest GER in both ECD (29.2 percent) and LBS (78.1 percent). Region 6 also has low enrollment particularly at upper basic level (37.4 percent) (EMIS 2019). The Government has been targeting interventions in these regions to mitigate socio-cultural and financial barriers that may negatively impact enrollment and completion rates, and it is possible these communities would be hardest hit in a COVID-19 economic downturn given job insecurity and lower access to health services.

Quality of Learning

Improving learning outcomes is a significant challenge. For example, although EGRA data from 2007 to 2016 shows significant improvements in knowledge of letter sounds and word recognition, reading comprehension remains low. The 2016 EGRA showed that only one out of five (20 percent) reading comprehension questions are answered correctly. Another EGRA, including 4th grade students for the first time, will be conducted this year. Additionally, the National Assessment Test (NAT) is conducted bi-annually in grades 3 and 5 and annually in grade 8. Although low, the scores, have shown some improvements over time. The test items of 2012 and 2017 NAT G3 and G8 and those of 2012 and 2016 G5 NAT were linked so that the scores of these years would be comparable. The average scores of both English and Mathematics of all three grades have improved, as shown below.

Table 1. Average scores of National Assessment Tests of Grades 3, 5, and 8 in 2012 and 2016/17 (Common items only)

	2012	2016/2017
G3 English	45.8	53.2
G3 Math	39.0	44.6
G5 English	47.3	56.1
G5 Math	47.6	53.4
G8 English	47.3	58.4
G8 Math	43.9	49.8

A comprehensive curriculum revision for ECD, lower basic, and upper basic schools, with a particular focus on English, science and mathematics is underway, but not yet completed. At the same time, an overhaul of The Gambia College, which is the primary provider of teachers in the system is being planned including reforming the curriculum, degree tracks, and practicum requirements. At the same time, a bridge program which provides improved classroom mentorship and coaching for teacher trainees and new teachers is under development. All of these current and planned efforts are aimed at improving classroom instruction.

System Strengthening.

Support over time to the development of an EMIS has been fruitful and has led to improvements in teacher and student management as well as better targeting mechanisms. However, additional updates are necessary to make the data more accurate and reliably available. In addition to providing more detailed information on teacher qualifications and student-level data, the revamped EMIS would also ensure proper coverage of the post-secondary level of education.

Relationship to CPF

The project is aligned with the Country Engagement Note (CEN) FY2018-2021 and specifically Objective 2, which focuses on investing in human capital and building assets and resilience for the poor. Activities under this objective aim: to strengthen government efforts to preserve stability and sustainability growth and support human welfare and human capital formation critical to country competitiveness; mitigate shocks on the poor and vulnerable; and provide targeted safety nets to the poor, covering the rural poor and underserved regions. By supporting continued provision of learning to children, with a particular focus on protecting the most marginalized, and readying schools for safe return, the aim is to mitigate the shocks of the COVID-19 crisis on the education sector.

The project is also aligned to the goals stated in GPEs Strategic Plan (2016-2020) of: (i) improved and more equitable learning outcomes; (ii) increased equity, gender equality and inclusion; and (iii) effective and efficient education systems. Furthermore, it is aligned with the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, which supports GPE countries to deliver interventions included in their publicly available government response plan to

COVID-19 that enable learning to continue and education systems to recover from school closures. The project activities have been wholly derived from the LEG-endorsed Emergency Strategy Response Plan.

C. Project Development Objective(s)

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project's Development Objectives aim to: (a) support the dissemination and implementation of the education sector's COVID-19 strategic response plan; (b) ensure continued access to educational services via alternative forms of delivery; and (c) ready schools for reopening via accelerated learning programs and enhanced hygiene measures.

Key Results

Key results could include the following:

- Percentage of targeted communities benefiting from COVID-19 Sensitization Campaigns

- Share of LBS and UBS age children in the program area supported with distance/homebased learning.(By gender, level of education,age, disabilities, and region)

- Number of teachers trained to provide accelerated programs to mitigate loss of learning during school closure (By gender, grade level taught)

- Number of schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 (by level of education, region)

D. Preliminary Description

Activities/Components

The project will consist of four components: (i) Continuity of Learning; (ii)Safe Return to School; (iii) Community Engagement and Communications; and (iv) Project management and Evaluation.

Component 1. Continuity of Learning

Continuity of learning is not only essential to learning outcomes, but is also critical to keeping children engaged with learning so that the children are more likely to return to schools when they reopen. The economic downturn will put increasing pressure on families, which may put them in financial distress where they are less likely to send their children to school. Thus, continued education engagement, and a positive presence of the state in providing support to students, families, and teachers are critical to prevent

significant downturns in enrollment rates and learning outcomes. This is especially important for girls, children from poorer households, and children with disabilities.

Sub-Component 1.1 Extending Remote Learning Opportunities.

MoBSE has already launched targeted radio, mobile, and television educational programming since schools have closed. The aim would be to support and increase these efforts so that the majority of children across the country have access to some form of education programming. Radio coverage is nationwide, and 73 percent of families are estimated to have a radio or television according to Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 2018 data, while approximately 90 percent of families are estimated to have access to a mobile phone. Building on the materials and early analysis developed during the initial 21-day closure, the project will support: (i) the development (or adoption of internationally available) radio, television, and online programming; and (ii) printed educational packets (including stationary and writing implements) with priority for the most vulnerable communities who do not have access to educational technology, based on MICs survey data, triangulated with EMIS data and Regional Education Directorate information. In addition to developing and adapting content, and establishing the online platform, this would include equipping regional radio stations with the capacity to manage and implement education programming; as well as capacity building of teachers who are subject experts and radio and television broadcasters to adapt and deliver education content across these platforms. An indicative schedule of programming by grade and subject has already been developed and utilizes a multi-grade teaching approach for the broadest coverage of the student population.

Given that children with disabilities are among the most vulnerable, many forms of distance learning are not accessible to learners with disabilities, and that specialized support is critical for this population. As such, the project will support the network of itinerant teachers to continue to provide one-to-one support for special learners in primary school. This would take place through regular phone check-ins, remote psycho-social and educational support to families, and, where possible, provision of existent accessible materials (e.g. braille readers) directly to homes.

Sub-Component 1.2 Building Resiliency Through Sustainability Measures

The Gambia has been and remains vulnerable to internal and external shocks which could lead to additional school closures in both the immediate and mid-term. At the same time extraordinary, rapid efforts to catalogue and pull together a variety of distance learning resources have been championed in response to COVID-19. As such, sustainability measures will be implemented at the school and regional level to ensure continued access to learning opportunities, and enhanced communications networks in the case of additional emergencies and school closures. This would include:

- **Development of an online platform to serve as a repository for all of the learning materials developed.** The platform would ensure that education content developed is not only made available digitally for those that have mobile devices, but that school districts, teachers, and head teachers can continue to access the content post-crisis.

- **Provision of routers and dongles to schools and regional offices** to tap into existing internet connections being made available by the philanthropic donor MRC-Holland. This ensures easier strategic communications at regional, district, and school level and leverages pre-existing internet access points; and,
- **Provision of radios and televisions within schools, particularly in rural communities**. Radios and televisions will not only allow for enhanced communication and learning opportunities during the traditional school year, but also allows for rural households which may be without regular access to communication technology to access critical life-saving messages and educational information in times of crises.

Sub-Component 1.3 Supporting the Most Vulnerable

Until schools closed, 161,767 students (approximately 30 percent) were benefitting from school meals and for the most vulnerable students that was the most nutritious and sometimes only meal for the day. Schools meals were provided by World Food Programme (WFP) in regions 1,3,5 and 6 and by the government in regions 2 and 4. However, due to the school closure, the most vulnerable students no longer have access to sufficient amounts of food. To mitigate this situation, the project will finance the distribution of essential food items to the most vulnerable families and restart school meals immediately after the school reopening until the WFP returns to provide its service.

Component 2. Safe Return to School.

The return to school will require careful planning to ensure safety of children, teachers, and education personnel aligned with health guidelines, as well as educational approaches which address missed instruction hours, and provide psycho-social support. As such, Component 2 will support activities aimed at: (i) promoting a healthy learning environment for safe reopening of schools; and (ii) providing accelerated learning opportunities, and psychosocial support to students and teachers.

Sub-component 2.1. Healthy Schools

To ensure that schools are prepared for reentry of students in the wake of COVID-19, the project will support efforts to ensure health and hygiene measures in schools. This will include: (i) thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting schools; (ii) provision of soap, hand sanitizer, and basic hand washing materials; (iii) a campaign (including printed materials) which promotes good hygiene and handwashing in schools; and (iv) water treatment of preexisting school water sources where water quality is found to be unsatisfactory. Although pre-primary and primary schools are the main target of this sub-component, all secondary schools will also be included, given that over 85 percent of all secondary schools are attached to upper basic schools.

Sub-component 2.2 Accelerated Learning

Sub-component 2.2 will support the development and implementation of accelerated learning opportunities to address the instructional hours lost during the crisis. Informed by data supported under Component 4, the accelerated learning program will provide condensed learning opportunities at the reopening of the school

year, and potentially provide extended instruction time to learners. In addition, this subcomponent will provide psychosocial support to students and teachers.

Component 3. Community Engagement and Strategic Communication.

The extensive well-established networks of schools, school communities, education personnel and teachers, represent a key avenue to ensure delivery of critical messaging around health, safety, and learning both during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as during the post-crisis period when children begin returning to schools. The project will support the government to deliver critical messages related to the education emergency response strategy via multiple channels – television, radio, print, and via mass mobile messaging. These strategic communications would support the Emergency Education Response Strategy and be focused on communicating key messages related to learning, including but not limited to: (i) school closure updates; (ii) current information on logistics, access, and availability of learning programs across all formats for students; and (iii) any education emergency response updates. The aim of the messaging is to sensitize all school communities to the availability of importance of participating in distance learning opportunities. At the same time, communications support would also be provided to reinforce messaging from the Ministry of Health around health and hygiene practices to stop the spread of COVID-19. This would include providing child and family friendly messaging about prevention of and protection from COVID-19, and psychosocial health during home based learning (including print materials, television and radio messaging, and engaging children in poetry, drama, and storytelling).

The component would include sensitization of mother's clubs, school management communities, regional education directorate (RED) staff, teachers, and education personnel to ensure dissemination of clear, accurate information. Notably, the component builds upon and expands the preexisting call-in numbers attached to the radio and television programming which has been made available during the crisis. These call in numbers provide an opportunity for community engagement and feedback, and for parents and students to pose questions. The sensitization efforts, and community engagement opportunities may also allow for identification of community-driven approaches to support distance education efforts, and community responses to the crisis.

Component 4. Technical and Institutional Support.

This component will support data collection, and use, as well as project management and implementation. This would include M&E of activities funded by the proposed project, high frequency surveys on which students are accessing distance learning opportunities and how often, as well as a rapid assessment of students upon their return to schools in order to adapt accelerated learning programs.

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	Relevant
ESS 4	Community Health and Safety	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

Legal Operational Policies

Safeguard Policies	Triggered	Explanation (Optional)
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No	

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

This Emergency Education Coronavirus Response Project is focused on intervention strategy in the education sector facing the context of COVID-19, it is also aligned with World Bank support for the National Response Plan under the leadership of the Ministry of Health through three key preparatory actions, namely: (i) ensuring that children and their families have access to relevant and timely information on COVID-19 to protect themselves from infection and reduce the transmission rate within communities; (ii) enhancing speedy recovery from the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector and improving the resilience of the sector; and (iii) ensuring continuity of learning on a minimal curriculum delivery during the initial 21-day school closure and progressively expand curriculum coverage using multiple curriculum delivery platforms in the medium to long-term. The strategy was endorsed by the Local Education Group (LEG) on March 24, 2020. The project will be carried out across the 6 regions of the country and the activities will focus on assisting families and students on the continuity of education during this period of health crisis, the implementation of a strategy to resume school activities after the crisis and community involvement. The project will also ensure the distribution of essential food items to the most vulnerable families. The project will rely on local radios, television, school management committees, staff of the regional education directorate (RED), teachers, educational staff and the internet to disseminate information timely, clear and precise information. The project will be implemented by the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) of Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) which manages the current education sector support program (GESSP - P162890), which

has been in force since August 2018. The PCU has substantial experience working on WBG operations, given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, however there is limited experience developing and implementing educational activities and safety measures which are aligned with the physical distancing measures. Mitigation measures include building on preexisting technology platforms and data collection experience, using best practice examples from reopening schools following the Ebola crisis, cross-sectoral coordination with the Ministry of Health, and continued support from local education partners. In addition, the PCU does not have any prior experience working with the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework, and currently does not have environmental and social safeguard specialists in place, although hiring is underway. The PCU is currently supported by one part-time environmental and social consultant. The capacity of the MoBSE to manage the environmental and social (E&S) risks is therefore considered weak. Capacity support will be provided by ongoing support and training by World Bank officers of dedicated focal points for environmental and social specialists and consultants in the PIU.

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