

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC6134

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 12-May-2015

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I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Afghanistan	Project ID:	P146184
Project Name:	Higher Education Development Project (P146184)		
Task Team Leader(s):	Harsha Aturupane		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	27-May-2015	Estimated Board Date:	06-Apr-2015
Managing Unit:	GEDDR	Lending Instrument:	Investment Project Financing
Sector(s):	Tertiary education (100%)		
Theme(s):	Education for the knowledge economy (100%)		
Financing (In USD Million)			
Total Project Cost:	50.00	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		
Financing Source			Amount
Borrower			0.00
Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund			50.00
Total			50.00
Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment		
Is this a Repeater project?	No		

B. Project Objectives

The project development objective is to improve quality and relevance, and expand participation, in higher education

C. Project Description

1. Description

The proposed project contains two components: a) a Higher Education Development Component that

would finance strategic initiatives to develop the higher education sector; and (b) an Innovation, Results Monitoring and Coordination Component that would support project coordination, monitoring and evaluation, research and policy studies, and communication. The project is intended to support the overall GoA higher education program. The project would also seek to complement and supplement the assistance provided by other development partners, such as the USAID funded Afghanistan University Support and Workforce Development Program (AUS/WFD) which assists 10 public universities, and the scholarship programs for Afghan students from countries such as India, Malaysia and Turkey.

The proposed HEDP would follow the framework of Investment Project Financing (IPF). However, within this framework, the task team would explore the option of using a disbursement-linked indicator (DLI) approach. The funds under the Higher Education Development Component would be released for eligible expenditure programs upon the achievement of disbursement linked-indicators. The Innovation, Results Monitoring and Coordination Component would follow the standard IPF financing modality.

Component One: Higher Education Development Program (US\$ 80 million)

This component will support the government program to improve the quality and economic relevance of the higher education sector, and increase participation in higher education, with a special focus on labor-market oriented degree programs. The following key themes would be supported under the overall program component.

Theme 1.1: Improving the Quality and Relevance of Teaching and Learning

Afghanistan needs to improve the quality of university education. Currently, university teaching is mainly based on traditional, teacher-centered methods. The project would assist academic staff to practice modern student-centered, outcomes-based teaching and learning methods. In particular, it would support universities to move towards blended teaching and learning, where face-to-face contact between staff and students are combined with the use of digital resources and e-based content. This could be implemented through a partnership with the Afghanistan National Research and Education Network (AfgNREN), which would help increase access to e-libraries and web-based e-learning opportunities between Afghan and foreign universities. The capacity of academics to incorporate these resources into their degree programs through suitable curriculum design, teaching learning methods, education material, and assessment strategies, would be developed under the project.

Theme 1.2: Capacity Building of Academic and Managerial Staff

With less than 40 percent of the academic staff currently holding a Master's degree or above, there is clearly an urgent need to increase the level of suitably qualified academics. As such, the project would support Human Resource Development (HRD) of academic staff in priority programs through: (a) the provision of scholarships for postgraduate degrees (Masters and Ph.D) for young academics, and; (b) based on a comprehensive plan for the development of Master's degrees in the priority degree programs, the HEDP will support the training of faculty to obtain Master's degrees in the relevant priority degree programs. Special preference for these scholarships will be given to female academics as only 16 percent of the public university faculty members in 2013 were women.

Staff Development Centers (SDCs) play an important role in the provision of continuous professional

development for university teachers and management. The project would support the development of the SDCs to provide the professional development activities required in universities, including in topics such as research methods, teaching and learning in higher education, ICT in higher education, student counseling, soft skills, and assessment and evaluation. In addition, SCDs would be used to provide training in areas such as planning, budgeting, administration, procurement, financial management, and monitoring, for the management cadre of universities.

Theme 1.3: Strengthening Quality Assurance and Accreditation

The current Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) system in Afghanistan is relatively isolated. In addition the quality assurance work only covers 13 of the 31 public universities. The project would also assist the MoHE to link up with international QA networks such as the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). The QA guidelines, protocols and processes would be upgraded to reflect current international trends. The project would also support the expansion of the QAA process to cover all universities. The updated QAA system would especially take into account the need to facilitate the development of good quality private higher education institutions.

The project would also strengthen the Quality Assurance and Accreditation and the Private Institutes of the Higher Education Directorates at the MoHE by building a cadre of young academic staff to undertake key stages of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation process, such as coordination of QA reviews, auditing, licensing, and the accreditation of higher education institutions. This would increase the pool of academics able to conduct quality assurance work in the country. In addition, the project would support the strengthening of Internal Quality Assurance Universities (IQAUs) at the universities. The IQAUs would take lead responsibility for the quality assurance processes within universities, and would support the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and heads of faculties and departments in establishing and maintaining a continuous quality culture in the university.

Theme 1.4: Governance Reform of Universities

Transforming the higher education system to a more decentralized governance structure, where universities enjoy greater substantive and procedural autonomy, is an important policy initiative of the MoHE. The project would support universities to prepare and implement strategic institutional development plans which progressively increase the quality and relevance of their degree programs and research outputs, based on feedback obtained from external and internal quality assurance reviews.

Institutional development of universities will be strengthened through a Mentor Program. Mentors will be senior academics and their principal role will be to support institutional development and achievement of the goals and targets set in university development plans. The mentors will be expected to interact closely with the senior management of universities through regular visits and written reports. The institutional development plans would also implement activities to promote substantive and procedural autonomy. Substantive autonomy would contain curriculum diversification among universities, and the attendant changes required in assessment methods, teaching and learning activities, and education materials. The Parliament recently passed a by-law providing greater fiduciary autonomy to universities, especially the power to raise and use funds through research and consulting services, and extension courses. This would greatly facilitate procedural autonomy. The project would assist universities to develop managerial skills needed at the university level, such as planning, budgeting, administration, procurement, financial management, and monitoring, to benefit from the by-law.

Theme 1.5: Promoting Research and Innovation

The MoHE is seeking to promote research in universities. The project would support this initiative. Funds would be available for innovative research programs involving Masters Candidates, research partnerships with overseas universities, and innovative activities to increase university revenues through applied research. Training in research methodologies would be provided by the Staff Development Centers. The proposals for research would be competitively selected by the MoHE. These funds for research would mainly be for the priority degree programs.

Theme 1.6: Increasing Participation in Priority Degree Programs

There is substantial pressure on the MoHE to increase enrollment in higher education. The MoHE is seeking to expand enrollment with a focus on priority, labor-market relevant university degree programs. The project would assist this strategy, with support for planning and managing the expansion process. Further measures would specially target the relaxation of constraints for female participation in university education. Consultations during project preparation suggest that orientation programs for women before entering university, and security and transportation, are very important. Universities could also provide financial assistance for female students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enroll in, and graduate from, priority degree programs.

Component Two: Innovation, Results Monitoring and Coordination Component (US\$ 20 million)

This component aims to strengthen the capacity of MoHE and the universities to achieve the HEDP objectives. It will provide support in the areas of: coordination, monitoring and evaluation, research and policy studies, and communication. The policy studies could include tracer studies of graduates to analyze their job search and labor market experience, and beneficiary satisfaction surveys among staff and students of institutions and programs supported by the proposed project. The resources for communication would enable the higher education authorities to ensure that development initiatives are appropriately disseminated to political authorities, policy makers, academics and researchers, students, and the general public. The component would also help MoHE to design and realize policy reforms, such as piloting and evaluating innovative approaches to promote female enrollment in priority programs.

D. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The project will be implemented throughout Afghanistan at existing higher education facilities, and possibly at new locations if so required. The project activities may include renovation of existing buildings and construction of new buildings such as university lecture halls, ICT centers, laboratories, libraries, dormitories, and water, sanitation, residential and transportation facilities. The physical terrain across much of the country is characterized by mountainous areas and rolling hills, severely cold winters that leave mountain tops snowcapped and additional risks to people and infrastructure from soil erosion, landslides and other natural disasters. These factors will pose additional challenges at some locations that would need to be considered and addressed.

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

At the moment the capacity of the MoHE for safeguards implementation is low as the ministry's experience with implementing similar World Bank funded projects is limited. However, the PCU at MoHE is incrementally developing its internal capacity for safeguards management, which has been

further enhanced during the preparation and implementation of a site specific ESMP for construction of two buildings in Kandahar University.

During project preparation, the TT will provide training on particular aspects of safeguards management relevant to the proposed project. Furthermore, the project design, specifically under Component 2, will provide the necessary support through TA to ensure the PCU has the required capacity to successfully manage the project from a safeguards perspective.

Additionally, the PCU will recruit a Gender and Social Safeguard Officer to build the capacity within the MoHE to mainstream gender across the ministry and its policies and programs, as well as to implement the implementation of land acquisition for civil works as per the RPF. The Gender and Social Safeguards Officer will also monitor and report on the implementation of the gender mainstreaming and the RPF. Finally, the PCU will also recruit an Environmental Safeguards Officer to support preparation, implementation and monitoring of the ESMF, and more broadly mainstream environmental issues across the project activities.

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Abdul Mohammad Durani (GSURR)

Marzia Meena Sultan Ahmad (GSURB)

Mohammad Arif Rasuli (GENDR)

II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	Yes	Since project activities comprise renovation of existing buildings and possibly at new locations, if so required, any adverse environmental and social impacts associated with these investments will be small-scaled and site-specific. The MoHE will therefore conduct an environmental assessment and prepare a sectoral environment and social management framework (ESMF) to address potentially negative environmental and/or social impacts.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	TBD	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/ BP 4.12	Yes	The project will be implemented throughout Afghanistan at existing higher education facilities, and possibly at new locations if so required. The

		project activities may include renovations of existing buildings and construction of new buildings such as university lecture halls, ITC centers, laboratories, libraries, dormitories and water, sanitation, and transportation facilities. As such a sub-project might land acquisition, the MoHE will prepare a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) that clarifies resettlement principles, including the definition of "project affected peoples" (i.e., eligibility), compensation matrix, organizational arrangements, and consultations.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	

III. SAFEGUARD PREPARATION PLAN

A. Tentative target date for preparing the PAD Stage ISDS: 15-Jun-2014

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed.
The specific studies and their timing¹ should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

The safeguards studies required will be conducted during July-August 2014.

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader(s):	Name: Harsha Aturupane	
<i>Approved By:</i>		
Safeguards Advisor:	Name:	Date:
Practice Manager/ Manager:	Name:	Date:

¹ Reminder: The Bank's Disclosure Policy requires that safeguard-related documents be disclosed before appraisal (i) at the InfoShop and (ii) in country, at publicly accessible locations and in a form and language that are accessible to potentially affected persons.