



Program Information Documents (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 11-Jun-2023 | Report No: PIDA275900

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Program Data**

Country Bangladesh	Project ID P178487	Program Name Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region SOUTH ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date 17-Apr-2023	Estimated Board Date 12-Sep-2023	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Program-for-Results Financing	Borrower(s) PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	

Proposed Program Development Objective(s)

The proposed Program Development Objective (PDO) is to improve student learning and retention, and build system resilience in secondary education

COST & FINANCING**SUMMARY (USD Millions)**

Government program Cost	1,532.00
Total Operation Cost	750.00
Total Program Cost	730.00
IPF Component	20.00
Total Financing	750.00
Financing Gap	0.00

FINANCING (USD Millions)

Total World Bank Group Financing	300.00
World Bank Lending	300.00
Total Government Contribution	450.00



Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. Bangladesh made rapid social and economic progress in recent decades and reached lower middle-income status in 2015. Stable macroeconomic conditions supported average annual real GDP growth of 6.7 percent between 2010 and 2019. Strong labor market gains contributed to a sharp decline in poverty, with the national poverty rate falling from 48.9 to 24.5 percent between 2000 and 2016. However, the pace of poverty reduction slowed in recent years even as growth accelerated, particularly in urban areas and in the west of the country.¹ Annual consumption growth of the bottom 40 percent (1.2 percent) trailed that of the overall population (1.6 percent) from 2010 to 2016. Bangladesh faces a high level of vulnerability to the effects of climate change. The Global Climate Risk Index ranks Bangladesh as the world's seventh most-affected country in 2000-2019² with high susceptibility to extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, and storm surges. Extreme heat, sea level rise, strong winds, and droughts are also part of the climate and geophysical hazards that the country faces.

2. A strong post-pandemic recovery was disrupted by rising global commodity prices and synchronous global policy tightening. Bangladesh navigated the COVID-19 pandemic with prudent macroeconomic policies, maintaining positive real GDP growth. An effective stimulus program supported a rapid economic recovery in FY21, as movement restrictions ended. However, worsening external conditions led to a surge in imports in mid-FY22. Inflation accelerated, driven by rising commodity prices and an upward adjustment in administered prices of petroleum products. In the first half of FY23, high inflation weighed on private consumption and fiscal consolidation measures slowed government consumption and investment growth. Exports remained resilient, growing by 9.8 percent in the first seven months (July-January) of FY23. On the supply side, strong industrial growth in FY22 slowed in the first half of FY23 due to energy shortages, rising input costs, and limited issuance of Letters of Credit (LCs) for key imports. Services growth also slowed from a FY22 post-pandemic rebound, as consumer purchasing power declined with rising inflation in the first half of FY23. Modest agricultural growth was sustained, although increases in the diesel price impacted production. Monetary policy was tightened through higher policy rates, although transmission was impaired by a cap on lending interest rates. Tight liquidity conditions and narrow net interest margins weighed on private sector credit growth.

3. The Balance of Payments (BoP) deficit widened in FY22 with rising imports. The current account (CAD) surged in the second half of FY22 amidst rising commodity and intermediate goods prices. Import price moderation and limited LC issuance narrowed the CAD in the first half of FY23, supported by resilient export growth. However, a sharp contraction in trade credit and lower medium- and long-term lending contributed to a financial account deficit, resulting in a US\$7.2 billion BoP deficit in the first half of FY23 and a 7.2 percent depreciation of the interbank exchange rate. Gross FX reserves declined by US\$12.6 billion over a one-year period to US\$32.6 billion at the end of January 2023 and authorities requested additional external financing from development partners. An IMF program was approved by the Executive Board in January 2023.

¹ World Bank, 2021. Bangladesh Systematic Country Diagnostic Update.

² [German watch \(2021\) Global Climate Risk Index 2021.](#)



4. The fiscal deficit widened to 4.3 percent of GDP in FY22 from 3.7 percent in FY21 but remained below a 5 percent of GDP target. Tax revenue remained among the lowest in the world at 7.6 percent of GDP in FY22. Expenditure growth accelerated with higher subsidy spending as a result of elevated commodity prices. Capital expenditure rose in FY22 led by infrastructure megaprojects, before being rationalized in the first half of FY23 to narrow the budget deficit.

5. Real GDP growth is expected to decelerate to 5.2 percent in FY23 before returning to its long-term trend. Modest export growth is expected in FY23, led by rising RMG market share. Growth is expected to accelerate in FY24, as inflationary pressure eases and reform implementation accelerates, converging to around 6.5 percent over the medium term depending on the depth of economic reforms implemented. The fiscal deficit is projected to narrow to 3.7 of GDP over the medium term as revenues rise with increasing trade and economic activity, higher incomes, and tax administration reform implementation. The CAD will narrow as imports normalize with moderating commodity prices. Remittance inflows are expected to rise with a higher outflow of workers and resilient demand for workers in the gulf region. A financial account deficit is projected to contribute to external sector pressure in FY23, before returning to surplus in FY24.

6. Structural reforms are needed to support a faster pace of growth over the medium term. To achieve the vision of attaining upper middle-income status by 2031, Bangladesh needs to create jobs and employment opportunities by creating a competitive business environment, diversifying exports, increasing human capital, building efficient infrastructure, deepening the financial sector and establishing a policy environment that attracts private investment. At the same time, Bangladesh will need to implement coordinated policies and investments to address rising climate vulnerabilities.³ These reforms will support international competitiveness as Bangladesh prepares for graduation from the United Nations Least Developed Country (LDC) status in 2026, which will gradually result in reduced access to concessional financing and preferential external market access for its exports.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

7. Secondary education in Bangladesh is delivered through a public-private partnership (PPP) model which combines public financing with private provision. Non-government schools constitute more than 95 percent of secondary enrollment (Grades 6-12). Registered government and nongovernment schools and madrasahs receive public funds for teacher salaries, free textbooks, and stipends and tuition to disadvantaged students, particularly female students in rural schools. As of 2020, the secondary education subsector supports about 15 million students in grades 6–12 across 21,000 general schools and 8,000 madrasahs (religious schools that enroll more than 2.3 million students)⁴.

8. Bangladesh has made impressive gains in ensuring equitable access to secondary education, but gaps remain. Between 2000 to 2018, net enrollment rate (NER) increased from 58.6 to 65.4 percent in secondary (Grade 6 -10) and from 30.6 to 52.8 in higher secondary (Grade 11-12).⁵ During this period, gender parity in secondary education was attained. Although, more girls than boys are enrolled in higher secondary education, the completion rates are marginally higher among boys. Pre COVID-19, dropout rates for secondary school girls were at 42 percent⁶. This is especially concerning because girls have high aspirations – [86 percent of adolescent girls hope to attend university and 95 percent aspire to a professional career](#)⁷. However, child marriage, school-based violence, early pregnancies, lack of information about sexual and reproductive health, mental health issues migration, and additional

³ World Bank, 2022. Country Climate and Development Report.

⁴ [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#)

⁵ Human Capital Index, 2020

⁶ Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies 2017

⁷ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/investing-girls-education-time-covid-19>



household responsibilities because of climate change, are some of the main factors contributing to high female dropouts.

9. Despite the progress, learning levels were low and unequal in 2019 with low completion rate at both secondary and higher secondary levels. 2019 National Assessment of Secondary Students (NASS) data shows that nearly 25 percent of Grade 8 students and 45 percent of Grade 6 students remain below grade-level proficiency levels in Math in 2019. However, rural and poor students consistently perform worse than urban and richer students, respectively, across subjects. As per the 2020 Human Capital Index, a child born in Bangladesh could expect to receive about 10.2 years of schooling, but this would translate into only 6.0 years of Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS). The percentage of children aged 10 who are unable to read an age-appropriate paragraph was 58 percent in 2021. In 2020, completion rates were estimated to be only 64.2 percent in secondary and 27.1 percent in higher secondary.⁸

10. Quality issues in secondary education stem from insufficient support for students and teachers combined with long-standing systemic challenges. In fact, teachers are not even aware of how sharply some students are lagging. Grade 6 teachers significantly overestimate student skills and significantly underestimate the share of students who are below proficiency⁹. In addition, teachers do not have formal in-service support structures through which they can receive feedback to improve their performance. Nearly 42 percent of teachers believe there is nothing they can do to help a student learn if parents do not have enough education¹⁰.

11. Finally, there are structural system-wide issues that need attention. The entire education system can benefit from timely and evidence-based decision making. There is considerable scope to enhance reliability and utilization of Education Management Information System (EMIS) data and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

12. Secondary education outcomes were showing modest improvements between 2017 and 2019, but there have been significant learning losses by the nearly two-year-long COVID-related school closures. NASS 2019 assessments in grades 6, 8, and 10 and three subjects (Bangla, English, and Math), showed improvements in learning compared to 2017 across all subjects and grades showing an average effect size of 0.32 standard deviations, which is considered as educationally significant level. However, secondary institutions remained largely closed between April 2020 and September 2021¹¹. Government's main response was through TV-based learning programs. However, among poorer students around 55 percent of students do not have access to TV; and among those who do, only 43 percent chose to watch TV-learning programs.¹² COVID-related school closures also negatively impacted adolescent mental health. COVID could mean further decline in LAYS from 6 to 5.1 years¹³. In fact, NASS 2022 assessments show that 14.5 months of school closures led to nearly 26 months of learning lost in secondary schools. Around 69 percent of learning losses were students failing to learn new skills (learning forgone), while 31 percent of learning losses were students forgetting skills they had already acquired (learning forgotten). The share of students attaining grade-level proficiency in Math for Grade 8 increased from 66 percent in 2017 to 68 percent in 2019 (under TSERO), but dropped to 29 percent in 2022. There were also significant increases in learning inequality. Students with low maternal education (a proxy for socioeconomic status) lost more than twice the learning than students with highly educated mothers¹⁴.

⁸[UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#)

⁹Sabarwal, Shwetlena et. al. (2021). Teachers in South Asia overestimate the performance of their students. Working Paper.

¹⁰ Sabarwal, Shwetlena. (2021). Teacher Beliefs: Why they matter and what they are. World Bank Research Observer.

¹¹ Bangladesh National Assessment of Secondary Students (NASS) 2019 Report.

¹² Biswas, K.; Asaduzzaman, T.M., Sabarwal, Shwetlena, et. al (2020). TV-Based Learning in Bangladesh. Policy Note. World Bank

¹³ Rahman, T., & Sharma, U. (2021). *A simulation of COVID-19 school closure impact on student learning in Bangladesh*. World Bank Policy Brief

¹⁴Djaker S., Angrist N, Asaduzzaman, T.M., Sabarwal, Shwetlena, et. al (2022). Forgone and Forgotten Learning: COVID-related



13. Gender-based violence (GBV) which includes sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEA/SH) is high among female students in educational institutions which is one of the main reasons for dropouts and low educational attainment. There are different types of harassment at educational institutions. These incidents of harassment and violence affected female students' mental health and educational outcomes with 90.2 percent reporting mental breakdown. This is a sad reality now even though the guidelines for combatting sexual harassment at educational institutions were released in 2009. The High Court ruled in 2009 that creating Sexual Harassment Prevention Committees (SHPCs) in all educational institutions and workplaces, as well as guaranteeing their active functioning and redressing cases within 30-60 days is mandatory. However, implementation of these guidelines has been negligible.

14. There is significant scope to better harness Bangladesh's secondary education system for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Bangladesh is vulnerable to climate risks that significantly hamper learning continuity. For instance, the 2007 cyclone damaged 700 schools, disrupting the schooling of approximately 50,000 children.¹⁵ Around 25,000 educational institutions are in disaster prone areas. Among these, about 20 percent were unable to recover buildings damaged from the last disaster¹⁶. For many students, especially from poorer households, any interruption to schooling presents the risk that students may not return to resume their education. In addition, more than two thirds of institutions are not trained in disaster management and climate change issues including loss and damage assessment and reporting processes/formats. Overall, the secondary education system could do much more to foster mindsets, behaviors, and skills for effective and sustained climate action through mainstreaming climate in the secondary school curriculum, raising awareness, and building system resilience.

15. The World Bank's support to secondary education has focused on both equitable access and quality, while building system resilience is critical in response to possible future shocks. Some achievements of the ongoing Transforming Secondary Education for Results Operation (TSERO: P160943) include: proficiency gains in reading and math among Grade 6 and 8 students; scale up of the Developing Reading Habit (DRH) program; providing stipends to 2.7 million beneficiaries annually; and targeted support and analytical work during COVID-related school closures. World Bank's timely support has informed both the government's COVID response action plan and the future engagement for learning recovery and building system resilience. The latter needs to be strengthened and institutionalized through targeted climate mitigation and adaptation measures concerted with innovative ICT solutions for introducing blended learning.

16. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has designed the Secondary Education Program (SEP) focused on recovering and boosting learning and enrollment. GoB's ongoing Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) is expected to close in June 2023. This SEP has been prepared alongside the design of LAISE operation (Program), and it will be approved by the Planning Commission before negotiations.

PforR Program Scope

17. The proposed Program will be to support a subset of the Government's program. The Program is clustered around three results areas under the Program for Results (PforR) component (US\$280 million from IDA) and a Technical Assistance component (TA, US\$20 million) using the Investment Policy Financing (IPF) instrument. The five-year implementation period of the Government program and the World Bank-supported LAISE operation is the same. The sustainability of the results under the PforR component is supported by an enhanced country system for program implementation, harmonization of strategic interventions and implementation arrangements, and

Learning Losses from National Assessments in Bangladesh

¹⁵ P.K. DAS (2010). Climate Change and Education in Bangladesh. UKAID

¹⁶ UNICEF (2022). The Heat Is On, Towards a Climate Resilient Education System in Bangladesh



institutionalization of key reforms in the sector. The boundary of the LAISE operation has been selected to maximize World Bank's value added and provide focused support on high-impact result areas related to student learning and retention. The scope of the Program is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Alignment between Government program and PforR Program

	Government program (SEP)	PforR Program	Reasons for non-alignment
Objective	Improve overall education quality and access in secondary education	Improve student learning and retention, and build system resilience	Program provides greater outcome orientation and objective results
Duration	2023-2028	2023-2028	Fully aligned
Geographic coverage	All government supported secondary schools and colleges	All government supported secondary schools and colleges	Fully aligned
Results areas	Stipends, school grants, civil works, school construction, operation and maintenance, ICT in education, school leadership, data management systems, teacher professional development, remedial education, vocational education in secondary institutions, learning assessment systems; capacity building of decentralized education functionaries; fuel cost, salary and allowances, capital and recurring grants, machinery, cash wages.	RA 1: Student support for improved learning, retention and resilience (formative assessments, remedial education, ICT for learning, stipends, addressing SRGBV, support for mental health and aspirations). RA 2: Improved teacher competency (teacher professional development and training in pedagogy, use of ICT in education, climate awareness, and teacher management). RA 3: Improved secondary systems and resilience (blended learning, climate resilience via schools & student action, school leadership, data management systems, vocational education, operation and maintenance, capacity building for decentralized education).	Civil works, school construction, fuel cost, salary and allowances, recurring grants, cash wages, high valued machinery contracts & land acquisitions will not be included in the Program boundary because they are not directly linked to the objective of the Program and will be financed by the GoB
Financing	US\$1,532 million	US\$730.00 million	

C. Proposed Program Development Objective(s)

Program Development Objective(s)

18. The proposed Program Development Objective (PDO) is to improve student learning and retention, and build system resilience in secondary education.



There are four PDO indicators:

- PDO 1: Share of students that meet basic proficiency standards in Grades 8 in Math and Bangla (Percentage; disaggregated by subjects)
- PDO 2: Grade 10 (of those started in Grade 6) retention rate (Percentage; disaggregated by gender)
- PDO 3: Share of Grade 6 and 8 students in targeted institutions actively using blended learning for Math or Bangla (Percentage)
- PDO 4: Share of students in targeted institutions exhibiting improved climate change mindsets and behaviors (Percentage)

19. Measurement of these indicators is defined, as follows. For PDO 1, grade-level proficiency will be measured using the NASS assessment framework. This framework defines six performance bands such that students below Band 3 are below grade-level proficiency. The same framework has been used for national assessments in 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2022 and will be used in the two national assessments to be carried out under this program for tracking PDO 1. For PDO 3 and PDO 4, institutions will be identified using a need-based approach. Institutions which already have readiness will be given priority.

20. Targets for learning achievement factor in the massive shock of COVID-related school closures. Schools were closed in Bangladesh between March 2020 and September 2021. Learning assessment conducted in May 2022 shows massive learning losses in Grade 8. The targets for PDO 1 are 65 percent student proficiency for Grade 8 Math and 90 percent for Grade 8 Bangla. These represent a much sharper learning trajectory than has been historically delivered by the system. By the end of the Program, learning losses from COVID would have been fully recovered and the system transformed to deliver sustained learning. Proficiency levels at Grade 6 will be tracked closely but are not a part of the PDO indicators, given the lack of robust baseline.

21. The program will focus on two key subjects (Math and Bangla) for two key grades (6 and 8). These subjects and grades have been chosen based on extensive discussions with MoE and teacher focus-groups as the key grades for supporting learning and retention. This choice allows for focused implementation and a robust mutually reinforcing results chain and minimizes the risk of diffusion of effort and resources. Grade 6 builds foundational skills for secondary, and Grade 8 is the gateway for higher secondary, which comes with selection of streams and high-stakes examinations. Math and Bangla are considered key for facilitating learning in other subjects, life-long learning, and labor market prospects.

D. Environmental and Social Effects

22. This is a hybrid operation consisting of a PforR with an IPF component. Thus, two separate due diligence streams (PforR and IPF) would be followed for this program. Overall Environmental and Social (ES) risk of the program has been assessed as low.

23. PforR Component: The PforR component would support student learning recovery initiative, student retention, improved teacher effectiveness, improved pedagogy, skills and mindsets, teacher capacity development, improved teacher management and secondary systems. No construction work or land acquisition would be financed under this component. There is no likelihood of impacting biodiversity, indigenous people or any cultural heritage. However, generation of e-waste from use of ICT equipment will need not be addressed. Further, a few segments of



the population may be excluded from project benefits due to lack of infrastructure and accessibility which needs to be taken care of through stakeholder consultation and identification of the disadvantaged and the vulnerable. ES risk of the PforR part has been rated as low. An Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA) has been conducted to assess the relevant ES risks and impacts, as well as the policies and procedures of the government and implementing agency to address the ES issues in question. Consultations with various stakeholders, including the Program staff, Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), potential beneficiaries including teachers, students and parents were carried out. The implementing agency has the experience in implementing a PforR Program under the World Bank financing. An assessment of the implementing agency's experience, human resources, and practices has also been undertaken to assess any gap in institutional capacity to address various risks and impacts related to the current Program. A few gap filling measures have been recommended which forms the part of the Program Action Plan (PAP).

24. IPF component: The IPF component under the LAISE operation will support the capacity development of relevant counterparts and agencies in specific areas, including (i) teacher professional development, management, and ICT; (ii) strengthening quality and timeliness of reporting, fiduciary and safeguard management (including issues of social inclusion, gender sensitivity and SEA/SH risk assessment and management); (iii) undertaking assessments and evaluation studies, and commissioning the independent verification agency; and (iv) strengthening coordination among various government entities. The IPF component would neither support any construction work nor would be used for design of any civil construction. Hence the outcome of the IPF component is not likely to affect the physical environment and will not cause any labor influx as well. No biodiversity, natural/critical habitat, ecosystem, or living natural resources will also be affected. This component will not include any land acquisition or resettlement activities. No adverse impacts on community health and safety, small ethnic communities, and cultural heritage are expected. The potential for gender-based violence (GBV)/sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and use of child/forced/trafficked labor is minimal for the IPF part. The SEA/SH risk using the Education SEA/SH screening tool only for the IPF part has been rated low. The ES risk of the IPF part has been rated as low. A screening of the TA activities to be funded through IPF instrument has been undertaken. The implementation of the IPF component should adhere the provisions of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and the Labor Management Procedure (LMP) have been integrated with the ESCP.

Legal Operational Policies

Triggered?

Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50

No

Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60

No

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts (With IPF Component for PforR)



The IPF component will support the capacity development of relevant counterparts and agencies in specific areas, including (i) teacher professional development, management, and ICT; (ii) strengthening quality and timeliness of reporting, fiduciary and safeguard management, undertaking assessments and evaluation studies, and commissioning the independent verification agency; and (iii) strengthen coordination among various government entities. This component would neither support any construction work nor would be used for design of any civil construction. Hence the outcome of the TA is not likely to impact the physical environment and will not cause any labor influx as well. No biodiversity, natural/critical habitat, ecosystem or living natural resources will also be affected. The TA will not include any land acquisition or resettlement activities. No adverse impact on small ethnic communities and cultural heritage are expected. The potential for GBV/SEA, use of child/forced/trafficked labor is minimal. Considering the nature of the proposed IPF activities, both the environmental and social risks have been rated as Low.

E. Financing

Table 2: Break down of financing by source for the duration of the Program 2023-2028

Source	Amount (US\$million)	Percent
Government Financing	450.00	60 percent
International Development Association (IDA)	300.00	40 percent
Other Development Partners	0.00	0.00 percent
Total Program Financing	750.00	100.00 percent

Development Partners

25. The proposed Program will support Government's Secondary Education Program which is expected to have IDA resources as the only external funding. The government's program is not expected to have any additional investments from other development partners in the form of either co-financing or parallel financing. However, the development partner consortium will be leveraged to ensure donor collaboration, coordination, harmonization, and that duplication of effort is minimized.

Program Financing

Sources	Amount (USD Million)	% of Total
Counterpart Funding	450.00	60.00
Borrower/Recipient	450.00	60.00
International Development Association (IDA)	300.00	40.00
IDA Credit	300.00	40.00



Total Program Financing	750.00	
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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower :	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH		
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