INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET
CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC9122

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 28-Jul-2014

Date ISDS Approved/Disclosed: 05-Sep-2014

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Tajikistan	Project ID:	P148291
Project Name:	Higher Education Project (P148291)		
Task Team Leader:	Sachiko Kataoka		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	04-May-2015	**Estimated Board Date:**	16-Jul-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:	15.00	Total Bank Financing:	15.00
Financing Gap:	0.00		

Financing Source	Amount
BORROWER/RECIPIENT	0.00
International Development Association (IDA)	7.50
IDA Grant	7.50
Total	15.00

Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment
Is this a Repeater project?	No

B. Project Objectives

The overarching objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of the higher education system and its education institutions to provide high quality and relevant education to its graduates. Specifically, the proposed Development Objective is:

To strengthen the higher education system through policy, program, and governance reforms that (i)

provide more equitable access and retention, (ii) enhance internal and external quality assurance capacity, and (iii) enhance relevance of academic programs to better reflect labor market demand.

C. Project Description

The project consists of four components: (i) enhancing access, equity and relevance of higher education; (ii) improving higher education governance; (iii) establishing quality assurance mechanisms; and (iv) project management and monitoring and evaluation.

Component 1: Enhancing Access, Equity, Quality and Relevance of Higher Education (USD 8 million)

This component supports various access, equity, quality and relevance enhancement activities at central and institutional levels. For activities at institutional level, this component (and only this component) may support minor civil works on campus.

Sub-component 1.1: Enhancing Equity within Higher Education (USD 2 million)

Vision: Those individuals traditionally under-represented in higher education experience greater vertical (i.e., enrollment, completion, etc.) and horizontal (i.e., program choice) equity.

This component would finance a pilot program to strengthen the programs and projects aimed ensuring under-represented students have access to the resources (financial support, university-related information, academic preparation, motivation, academic support services, etc.) that will help them succeed in higher education. Activities to be supported include:

-       Designing and piloting effective student aid instruments to assist with both living and tuition expenses and monitoring their effectiveness;
-       Developing a clearinghouse to provide access to documented successful policies and programs which institutions could replicate;
-       Designing and piloting academic and social support mechanisms to address possible inadequate academic preparation and assist students with the transition; and
-       Developing public campaigns to increase the youth's aspirations to attend higher education, particularly those who are traditionally underrepresented.

Sub-component 1.2: Enhancing Quality and Relevance through Curriculum Redesign (USD 4.5 million)

Vision: Higher education institutions improve the quality, relevance (both labor market and social), and accessibility of their programs.

This sub-component supports the development of funding programs to provide grants for HEIs to enhance their quality and relevance through the introduction of new programs/degrees, and revision of the existing program in collaboration with the private sector. Activities to be supported include:

-       Improving curriculum, academic programs, and learning materials with the support of pedagogical experts and local employers (including teacher prep programs);
-       Developing a wider range of study opportunities, including short-cycle programs, catered to the diversified set of knowledge, skills, and competencies in demand by Tajikistan's economy;
-       Strengthening the teaching and mentoring skills for current teaching staff (and to attract

prospective teaching staff);

- Improving learning resources and student support;
- Collaborating in industrial research with the private sector; and
- Developing and delivering centrally organized technical assistance programs for a group of HEIs on targeted topics.

Sub-component 1.3: Enhancing Access through Innovative Delivery Modes (USD 1.5 million)

Vision: The quality and relevance of part-time correspondence programs improves at least to the level of full-time programs to ensure access to good quality higher education among disadvantaged students.

This sub-component supports the transformation of part-time correspondence programs—in which 30 percent of the students currently enrolled come from more disadvantaged background—to modernized distance education programs to improve access to good quality higher education among disadvantaged students in rural areas. HEIs are strongly encouraged to collaborate closely with the private sector to take advantage of their skills and technologies to develop effective delivery modes, and to take into account their demand for graduates. Activities to be supported include:

- Using information and communication technology for distance education and e-learning to bring in and deliver world-class knowledge nationwide and to incr ease access to tertiary education, particularly for students in the regions, and life-long learning; and
- Linking distance education programs with the needs of local labor market in regions.

Component 2: Improving Higher Education Governance (USD 2 million)

Vision: The capacity of the Ministry of Education and Science is strengthened, in which autonomy and accountability are well-balanced and in alignment with the Bologna Declaration and international practices.

This component supports strengthening the capacities of the MOES in improving the higher education legal and governance framework to create an enabling environment for HEIs. Activities to be supported include:

- Strengthening the MOES' capacity in making higher education policies, and monitoring and evaluating HEIs' performance, including data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination;
- Providing capacity-building trainings, workshops, and programs for MOES and institutional leaders to jointly understand the expectations of the sector and the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders;
- Strengthening the capacity of the MOES in modernizing the higher education legal and governance framework, setting up the areas and levels of autonomy and the rules for accountability requirements;
- Supporting the MOES in identifying potential areas where corruption may exist throughout the higher education sector and implementing mitigation strategies;
- Revising the legal framework to fairly introduce private providers to the higher education market; and
- Examining ways to more effectively utilize the funding available and explore the feasibility of increasing state funding for higher education to support the MOES' policy objectives.

Component 3: Establishing Quality Assurance Mechanisms (USD 4 million)

Sub-component 3.1: Improving Internal Quality Assurance Mechanisms (USD 2.5 million)

Vision: Higher education institutions establish internal quality assurance mechanisms that assure the credibility of their degrees internationally and domestically, and invest in improving the quality and relevance of their programs.

This sub-component supports HEIs in developing internal quality assurance mechanisms in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Activities to be supported include:

-        Developing a strategy, policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programs and awards;
-        Developing a culture that recognizes the importance of quality and quality assurance in their work and a commitment at all levels of an institution to ensuring that its programs have clear and explicit intended outcomes;
-        Establishing formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programs and awards;
-        Developing criteria, regulations and procedures for assessment of students;
-        Strengthening human resource management policies and procedures to assure the quality of teaching staff, including staff recruitment and appointment procedures and professional development opportunities;
-        Developing information systems and using relevant information for the effective management of their programs of study and other activities;
-        Providing key and relevant information about their programs, intended learning outcomes, qualifications awarded, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, and learning opportunities available to their students; and
-        Providing HEIs grants to establish IQA units and implement IQA activities.

Sub-component 3.2: Enhancing the External Quality Assurance Mechanisms (USD 1.5 million)

Vision: The higher education degrees and diplomas issued by Tajik higher education institutions are internationally recognized and credible, and offer valid representation of skills and competence.

This sub-component supports transforming the existing State Agency for Supervision in the Sphere of Education (SASSE) into a national quality assurance (QA) agency in accordance with the ESG that will exercise the independent decision-making authority for quality assurance for higher education. Activities to be supported include:

-        Supporting the MOES in organizing quality awareness campaigns, covering Parliament, central government, civil society and other stakeholders;
-        Supporting the QA agency in:
•   training staff in various tasks required to oper ate the agency;
•   developing standards and guidelines for external and internal quality assurance, including guidelines for institutional and program accreditation;
•   assessing HEIs' internal policies and procedures;
•   organizing training workshops on quality assurance for HEIs;
•   developing a database required for QA purposes;
•   publishing external QA reports;

•	developing and implementing follow-up procedures after the initial QA processes and conducting periodical follow-up reviews;
•	establishing partnerships with overseas QA organizations;
•	developing a database for external reviewers (local and international);
•	piloting institutional accreditation;
•	analyzing system-wide issues based on findings of institutional reviews, evaluations and assessments; and
•	financing computer equipment and furniture.

Component 4: Project Management and Monitoring and Evaluation (USD 1 million)

The MOES will ensure efficient and effective implementation of the project to achieve project objectives, including monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the investment. Activities to be supported include:

-	Coordination of project implementation activities, communication flow and dissemination of information;
-	Developing and implementing a M&E system with updates on key performance indicators;
-	Preparing progress reports by sub-components, quarterly reports to government and completion report;
-	Implementation and management of the procurement process, disbursement and financial management.

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

The proposed Project will support higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country. Specific locations of the HEIs to be supported under the Project are to be identified during the implementation, but it is expected to cover HEIs in many locations. There is a component that will finance proposal-based quality and relevance enhancement activities, which may include small scale rehabilitation of existing campus facilities. However, there will be no land acquisition or major civil works. Specific locations of HEIs that may invest in small scale rehabilitation are to be identified during the implementation.

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The implementation agency, the Ministry of Education and Science has implemented Bank-funded education projects and is familiar and capable to be compliant with safeguard policies.

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Ruma Tavorath (GENDR)

Angela Nyawira Khaminwa (GURDR)

II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/ BP 4.01	Yes	The proposed Project will provide a small scale funding to higher education institutions to finance activities to improve quality and relevance or programs. This may include small-scale rehabilitation of campus facilities such as

		laboratories and classrooms. The impacts will be site specific, temporary and not irreversible, and that those are typical impacts associated with the buildings rehabilitations and small constructions. The scope of potential small scale rehabilitation, if any, cannot be identified until the project implementation. Hence, the team will request the government to prepare, disclose and consult an Environmental Management Framework (EMF) prior to the appraisal. The EMF will provide guidance for preparation of site specific EMP checklists or EMPs to be prepared during the project implementation. Possible civil works that require a regular EMP include rehabilitation of laboratories and classrooms.
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	No	
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	The proposed Project will support the development of higher education institutions and this may require the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure. However, the project will not support any physical works that would require land acquisition or cause involuntary resettlement impacts as per OP 4.12. Sites visits and screening will ensure the exclusion of any sites with involuntary resettlement risks.
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: 27-Jan-2014

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing[1] should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

---

[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.

The specific activities will be identified during the implementation on a proposal basis. Hence, the team will request the government to prepare a generic Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for rehabilitations that will be used for all sites prior to the appraisal.

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader:	Name: Sachiko Kataoka	
Approved By:		
Regional Safeguards Coordinator:	Name: Agnes I. Kiss (RSA)	Date: 05-Sep-2014
Sector Manager:	Name: Mario Cristian Aedo Inostroza (SM)	Date: 05-Sep-2014