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# Project Information Document (PID)

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Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 25-Jul-2022 | Report No: PIDA33456

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Project Data**

Country Maldives	Project ID P177768	Project Name Maldives Atoll Education Development Project	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region SOUTH ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date 12-Jul-2022	Estimated Board Date 22-Sep-2022	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

Enhance access to, and quality of, secondary education.

**Components**

Enhancing Curriculum Delivery and Increasing Participation in Higher Secondary Education

Continuing Teacher Development

Measuring and Enhancing School and System Performance

Coordination, Monitoring, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Contingency Emergency Response

**PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)****SUMMARY**

Total Project Cost	10.00
Total Financing	10.00
of which IBRD/IDA	9.00
Financing Gap	0.00

**DETAILS****World Bank Group Financing**

International Development Association (IDA)	9.00
IDA Grant	9.00

**Non-World Bank Group Financing**

Counterpart Funding	1.00
Borrower/Recipient	1.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

**B. Introduction and Context**

Country Context

1. **Maldives is an upper-middle-income country with a robust growth trajectory prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Annual real GDP growth averaged 5.7 percent from 2000 to 2019 and real GDP per capita rose from US\$5,539 in 1995 to US\$10,208 in 2019.<sup>1</sup> The sustained growth has significantly reduced poverty, and Maldives performs well on poverty outcomes compared to its regional, income, and small island peers. The economy is dependent on a small number of sectors. In 2019, tourism accounted for 25 percent of GDP, transport and communication for 13 percent, and construction and wholesale/retail trade 9 percent each. The successful development of high-end tourism has been the main driver of economic growth in Maldives. However, the dependence on tourism makes the country highly vulnerable to macroeconomic and external shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, had a significant adverse impact on tourism and related sectors. Similarly, without appropriate climate mitigation and adaptation steps at the global and local levels, Maldives is predicted to suffer a total loss of GDP of 2.3 percent by 2050, and 12.6 percent by 2100, the highest impact in South Asia.<sup>2</sup>

2. **Maldives has been one of the hardest-hit economies in the world from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.** The Government of Maldives (GoM) took active steps to limit the spread of the disease to its population, restricting the entry of travelers from affected countries in 2020-21, including full border closures at times. These containment measures had significant, adverse impacts on the Maldivian economy, state revenues, and the livelihoods of many households whose incomes depend directly or indirectly on the tourism sector. However, the measures introduced by GoM to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have been successful with the number of cases detected falling to very low levels. This has enabled the Maldives to re-open the country, resulting in a substantial increase in tourist arrivals and generating a strong economic recovery.

<sup>1</sup> World Development Indicators, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmed, M. and Suphachalasai, S. 2014. *Assessing the Costs of Climate Change and Adaptation in South Asia*. Asian Development Bank.



3. **Maldives ranked 95 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2020.** This is the second highest HDI rank in South Asia after Sri Lanka. It also has the lowest rate of multi-dimensional poverty (MPI)<sup>3</sup> in South Asia, with approximately 28 percent of its population classified as multidimensionally poor. The adult literacy rate is 99 percent, life expectancy is 80 years, the infant mortality rate is 6 per 1,000 live births, and the maternal mortality rate is 53 out of 100,000 live births. The Maldives was an early achiever of many of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and has now adopted the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), including SDG 4 on the promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning. The GoM is seeking to accelerate human capital accumulation, increase employment opportunities for young people, and promote equitable economic and human development in the country.

4. Maldives is highly vulnerable to climate change and other external shocks due to its fragile ecological profile and low elevation, combined with its economic dependence on fisheries and nature-based tourism. Nearly 80 percent of the total land area of the country, which is less than 300 square kilometers, is lower than one meter above mean sea level, and the country is at risk of inundation from rising sea levels, coastal storms, and flooding. The country's resultant high exposure to natural hazards and climate change poses a growing threat to lives and the economy. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the country's dependence on a narrow range of exports and strategic imports such as food and fuel, and for a large proportion of the population in the climate-sensitive fisheries sector.

#### Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. **The Maldives has achieved practically universal enrollment at early childhood, primary and lower secondary education levels over the past few decades, while high gender disparity and low net enrollment is the major challenge at the upper/higher secondary level.** Today, access to foundation and primary education are at near universal levels, a remarkable achievement for a country in which only 15 percent of children were enrolled in primary school three decades ago. Gender parity at the foundation and primary education levels are high. At the stage of primary education (grades 1-7),<sup>4</sup> the net enrolment rate among both female and male students was almost 100 percent in 2019. At the lower secondary education stage (grades 8-10), the net enrolment rate among female and male students was again nearly 100 percent. At the stage of higher secondary education (grades 11-12) the overall net enrollment rate is 37 percent, with a 56 percent net enrollment rate among female students and 21 percent among boys. The low enrollment rate at higher secondary education level is mainly due to an inadequate number of students successfully completing secondary education to obtain places in higher secondary education and to a limited number of schools that offer higher secondary education in the country.

6. **The quality of general education needs to be strengthened, and with a special focus on the outer atolls.** The most recent National Assessments of Learning Outcomes (NALO) conducted in 2017 showed that learning outcomes are moderate, with considerable regional disparities between the capital city Male and the outer atolls. The average scores for English, mathematics and Dhivehi for Grade 4 and Grade 7

<sup>3</sup> The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) identifies multiple deprivations at the household and individual level in health, education and standard of living (UNDP 2019).

<sup>4</sup> The grades defined as primary, lower secondary and higher secondary are taken from the School Census of 2019, which provides the most recent statistics on schools and student enrollment. A new Education Act passed in 2021 has defined primary education as grades 1-6, secondary education as grades 7-10, and higher secondary education as grades 11-12. In the subsequent section of this PCN the new definition of grades will be followed.



students ranged between 50 to 60 percent. For the first language, Dhivehi, approximately 19 percent of Grade 4 and 6 percent of Grade 7 students failed to achieve a minimum score of 40 percent. Similarly, about 27 and 35 percent of Grade 4 and Grade 7 students failed to achieve a minimum score of 40 percent in English. In mathematics, approximately 20 and 33 percent of students in Grade 4 and Grade 7 failed to achieve a score of 40 percent. Moreover, a comparison of the time trend of results show that progress has been mixed. Between 2015 and 2017, Dhivehi results declined for Grade 4 students but improved for Grade 7 students. In English, there was no significant change in either grade. In mathematics, Grade 4 results did not show much change, but significant improvement was seen in Grade 7. There are also clear geographical disparities in learning outcomes among atolls, and between islands within atolls.

**7. The Maldives needs to strengthen support for children with complex learning profiles (CLP).** About 4,000 students (around 6 percent of all students) in 212 government schools across the country need an Individual Education Plan (IEP), either based on the confirmed diagnosis or on suspicion of having special educational needs. The Maldives has made progress towards promoting the inclusion of CLP children in the education system. However, more support is needed. The capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop CLP policy and programming also needs to be improved. Sufficient physical resources, such as space and equipment for CLP children, is a challenge in most schools. A critical aspect of improving the country's CLP program is the training of teachers. School teachers require specialized training to identify/initially screen children with CLP, and then plan interventions for these children.

**8. The COVID 19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the country's general education system, forcing the extended closure of primary and secondary schools across the entire country.** The GoM prepared an Education Response Plan (ERP) for the COVID 19 pandemic and mobilized resources to facilitate distance learning while schools were closed. The ERP also enabled schools to restart with appropriate sanitation and hygiene measures when feasible, including implementing social distancing measures in schools, staggered time-tabling of instruction, and delivering face-to-face teaching-learning activities combined with distance education. Distance mode education including e-learning tools and television were deployed to facilitate learning at home while schools were closed, setting the foundations for capacity building and replication in the aftermath of natural disasters, which are being exacerbated by climate change. As the GoM prepared for the reopening of schools, it deployed a multi-pronged strategy to (a) ensure that schools were safe for re-opening; (b) school drop-out after the pandemic was minimized; and (c) children were securely and efficiently reintegrated into the new classroom environment.

**9. The GoM Education Sector Plan (ESP) has four main goals.** First, 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. Under this goal the MoE has been expanding the number of schools providing higher secondary education in the atolls. Second, provide youth and adults with the necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Under this goal the GoM is planning to strengthen English language learning of students, as this is a vital skill for employment in the dominant tourism sector. Third, to ensure equitable access to lifelong learning and a high-quality higher education for all. Fourth, to improve the capacity of the MoE, Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE),



and atoll and island<sup>5</sup> level education institutions, to deliver high quality education. In addition, the GoM is seeking to improve science and mathematics education in the school curriculum, as a foundation for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and to strengthen vocational education (VE) options in schools.

**10. The GoM is implementing a comprehensive curriculum reform initiative for early childhood education, primary education and secondary education.** This new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), initially launched in 2015 and updated in 2020, is designed to serve as a blueprint for the content of foundation, 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 secondary education levels. The key focus is on improving literacy and numeracy of students in primary and secondary education and widening the curriculum options available to students in secondary education. The roll-out of this curriculum reform is a major undertaking and covers education materials and textbooks, teacher quality and performance, classroom assessments, and overall school learning environment.

**11. Although the GoM is taking steps to improve the quality of teachers as a major determinant of learning outcome, teacher development programs need to be strengthened and realigned with the new school curriculum.** These include a program of School-Based Professional Development (SBPD) and the strengthening of the services provided by the Teacher Resource Centers in each atoll. Nevertheless, teacher quality remains a major challenge. Particularly, teacher development needs to be more closely aligned with the new school curriculum. SBPD, which is increasingly recognized as a central component of teacher effectiveness and performance, requires more attention at secondary education level. Also, the current teacher development program needs to be strengthened to meet the teaching and learning needs of schools across the diverse range of atolls. In addition, school principals and section heads need greater capacity to manage teacher professional development effectively.

**12. The country's system for measuring learning outcomes is being improved.** A high-quality curriculum referenced learning assessment system is vitally important 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 measures learning outcomes at the system level. To this end, the GoM has instituted the National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALO). The establishment of such a system is itself a notable accomplishment, although greater attention is needed to ensure that this tool is effectively used for education policy and planning. The NALO is conducted for Grades 4 and 7 in schools in both Male' and the outer atolls. The NALO provides information to strengthen curriculum implementation, creating a feedback loop to policy and program planning. NALO findings are expected to be widely disseminated and discussed at appropriate levels of the education system to facilitate the actions needed to improve learning outcomes. Over time the NALO needs to be

<sup>5</sup> The Maldives has two spheres of administration, national and local. Administratively, there are currently 189 inhabited islands contained in 19 atolls, and 3 cities (Malé, Addu and Fuvah Mulak) in the country. The responsibility for education lies primarily with the MoE and schools. City and Island Councils have an oversight function of the schools, although in most cases this is chiefly in terms of the physical environment of schools. Each atoll has a Teacher Resource Center (TRC), based in one of the larger islands within the atoll. The role of the TRC is to support continuing teacher development in the schools located within the islands belonging to the atoll.



developed further, especially to be implemented at secondary education grades and to measure learning in science, mathematics and English at this level. Tools from international assessments such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS will be integrated into future rounds of the national assessments of learning.

**13. The Maldives has developed a school quality assurance and enhancement system.** This system is implemented over a range of domains such as general management, physical and human resources, curriculum implementation, co-curricular activities, student achievements, student welfare, school health and nutrition, and school-community interactions. The existing system for quality assurance of schools is being strengthened, with a focus on building the capacity of school stakeholders to carry out effective self-evaluations, and the capacity of education officials to conduct robust external quality reviews and utilize the findings in the development and implementation of school improvement plans. Special attention needs to be given to quality assurance and enhancement of schools in the atolls where learning outcomes are lowest and/or have been most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**14. The MoE is being supported under the Learning Advancement and Measurement Project (LAMP) financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to improve English, mathematics and Dhivehi learning in foundation and primary education during the period 2020-2023.** The LAMP supports SBPD, quality assurance and NALO activities at the primary education level. The proposed Atoll Education Development Project (AEDP) will build on the LAMP and expand support to the Maldivian education system at the secondary education level.

**15.** The climate crisis has significant impacts on the education sector in the Maldives. Among these are the destruction or damage to school and/or other critical infrastructure, such as roads, caused by natural disasters like flooding, which frequently disrupt the learning process and affect the wellbeing and security of children and adolescents. School closures due to natural disasters without adequate remote learning structures, have a significant negative impact on learning outcomes. Existing school building designs in many parts of the Maldives are also inadequate and dated, particularly in face of the changing climate. Rising temperatures often create inhospitable learning environments in classrooms and expose students to communicable diseases like dengue fever. Similarly, buildings routinely lack access to fresh water, causing unhygienic conditions exacerbated by high temperatures. Other impacts include an increase in absenteeism and dropouts as households suffer losses to income and food security, and therefore can no longer afford to pay school fees or may pull their children out of school to help earn additional income.

### C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

The project development objective is to enhance access to, and quality of, secondary education.

Key Results

- Increased net male enrollment rate in higher secondary education (percentage)



- School level learning outcomes in English language, mathematics and science improved in secondary education grades (percentage)
- Improved teaching practices in secondary education grades (percentage)
- National assessments of learning outcomes completed and utilized for program development (number)

#### D. Project Description

##### **Component One: Enhancing Curriculum Delivery and Increasing Participation in Higher Secondary Education (US\$ 6.25 million IDA, 0.25 million GoM)**

16. The objective of this component is to promote strategic initiatives at the country level to strengthen and develop the general education system with a special focus on secondary grades. The activities under this component will be mainly implemented by schools with policy and technical support of the MoE (mainly the Policy and Performance Review Section and the School Administration Section), National Institute of Education (NIE), and the Department of Inclusive Education (DoIE). The following key sub-components will be supported under this component.

###### **Sub-component 1.1: Improving learning in strategic subjects in secondary education grades**

17. The delivery of the secondary education curriculum will be enhanced to improve the quality of secondary education in subjects of strategic importance for economic development. First, there will be a focus on improving the English language skills of students. This will help open a variety of future job opportunities for students, including in the key tourism industry and related services. Second, mathematics and science learning will be strengthened in the school curriculum to promote STEM education. Mathematics and science are increasingly important in the modern knowledge-based economy. Science will also increase environmental awareness among students as the Project will strengthen the learning on mitigation (e.g., food waste, energy efficiency, and recycling) and adaptation (e.g. changing patterns of rains and floods, natural defenses mechanisms, and increased water stewardship). Improved English language, mathematics, and science learning levels will better prepare secondary school completers for higher secondary education and tertiary education in the future. Third, the vocational education (VE) option will be strengthened in the school curriculum. This option will directly target the skills in demand in the local economy, defined as the atoll in which the school is located, as well as the national economy. Fourth, emphasis will be placed on developing green jobs skills that can advance sustainability transformations in key sectors, including tourism and allied services. The implementation of the Fehi Madharusa (green school) initiative will help raise awareness to reduce adverse environmental footprints, promote eco-literacy, enhance climate literacy, and support students' emergency preparedness and response measures. In addition, it will promote sustainable behaviors among youth and develop capacities for adaptation to climate change, as well as specific skills for green jobs to support a low carbon economy and climate resilience. Improvements in the quality of education at the secondary education level will also enable more students to qualify for higher secondary education, enabling increased participation in higher secondary education.

18. The AEDP will increase the resources available for the teaching and learning of science, mathematics, English and vocational education (VE). The AEDP will support the development of science



laboratories and vocational education workshops through the refurbishment of classrooms and the provision of equipment and technology in secondary schools with large student populations in the atolls. In addition, the Project will assist the expansion of ICT equipment and technology in atoll schools. The science laboratories, ICT facilities and vocational education workshops will incorporate green designs, such as rainwater harvesting systems and improved insulation that allows for energy efficiency and makes classrooms more resilient to rising temperatures. Schools will also be trained in measures to reduce e-waste. The refurbishment of facilities will take account of the learning needs of students with complex learning profiles (CLP). The Project will also support digitization efforts, including online teaching systems for English language, mathematics, science and vocational education subjects to support blended learning and uninterrupted learning during natural disasters (e.g., floods). Similarly, these efforts will enhance data recovery and backup systems of e-learning to prevent data loss in the event of such natural disasters.

19. The Maldives has an atoll-wide network of schools that provides universal access to primary (grades 1-7) and lower secondary (grades 8-10) education. However, until recently access to higher secondary education (grades 11-12) was very limited, initially to one school in Male', and then to four more schools in the atolls. The government has now expanded access to higher secondary education through 37 strategically selected schools across the country. These schools serve as hubs for higher secondary education in the atolls and in Male'. However, as noted in the sector context, there is high gender disparity in higher secondary education enrollment, with the participation rate of boys only about one-third the rate of participation of girls.

20. A key outcome of the AEDP is to increase the enrollment of boys in higher secondary education and reduce the gender disparity in higher secondary education participation. Under this sub-component schools will provide good career guidance for male students and their families in secondary grades to increase the demand for higher secondary education. This will include information on the benefits of higher secondary education which will enable students to obtain better quality jobs with higher pay, as well as access university education and advanced technical education opportunities beyond schooling.

21. In addition, the higher secondary schools will be provided with greater teaching-learning material and equipment, especially for IT and science, but also for English, mathematics and skills education. The improved quality of resources available to higher secondary schools, with stronger IT, English language, STEM and skills education, are expected to increase the demand for higher secondary education among male students, as these will improve employment opportunities in the labor market.

### **Component 2. Continuing Teacher Development (US\$ 0.50 million IDA, 0.25 million GoM)**

22. The component will assist GoM to implement a program of continuing teacher development. The activities under this component will be mainly implemented by schools with the policy and technical support of the National Institute of Education (NIE).

#### **Sub-component 2.1. Improving the delivery of teaching services**

23. This sub-component will assist the NIE, with the support of the Teacher Resource Centers (TRCs), to implement targeted teacher development programs (TDPs) for schools. The focus of these TDPs will be on improving subject content knowledge for English, mathematics, science and skills education where needed; strengthening pedagogical practices including differentiated learning needs and styles for male and female students; career guidance skills aligned with current and future labor market demands;



learning needs of students with complex learning profiles; increase environmental awareness, promote eco-literacy, and enhance climate literacy among teachers; and improve their climate change preparedness / natural disaster emergency response. The NIE, with support from the Project, will identify the professional development needs of teachers on a regular basis and organize a menu of capacity building and training activities. Teachers will select from this menu of TDP options according to their professional development needs.

24. Through the learning outcomes defined in English, mathematics, and science subjects, teachers will be guided to use a skillful mix of learning and teaching approaches and instructional strategies, including activity-based learning and project-based learning, to stimulate children and promote an exciting and enjoyable learning experience. Teachers will also be guided in developing curricular materials and pedagogical practices for skills education, including techniques such as hands-on problem solving, cooperative and team-based project learning, and activities that draw on knowledge and skills from various domains. An effective classroom assessment system to identify and assess the knowledge, understanding and skills of students in each curriculum area will be incorporated, and teachers trained well for this classroom assessment. Teachers will also be trained to provide career guidance to students. Special attention will be given to guiding students, and especially male students, to participate in appropriate higher secondary education subjects. The TDPs will be informed by the COACH<sup>6</sup> principles to tailor the support to individual teachers to improve their pedagogical skills for teaching. Innovative approaches for the delivery of TDP, including blended approaches through online/ apps on smartphones will also be supported under the Project. The Banks' Teach<sup>7</sup> tool will be used as part of this evaluation to track and improve teaching quality.

#### **Sub-component 2.2. School-based Professional Development (SBPD) of teachers.**

25. The SBPD program will focus on: (a) raising the ability of school principals and senior management teams to establish a learning culture within the school with specific reference to English, mathematics, science and vocational education and green job skills; (b) improve teacher motivation for their work; (c) enhance teacher performance by achieving required teacher competencies and improving their pedagogical practices; and (d) link teacher development activities to addressing student learning needs, including the needs of CLP students. The NIE will measure (a) to (d) above through SBPD reports provided by the SBPD focal points in schools. The component will also support research to evaluate the SBPD practices in schools and their effectiveness in relation to improving student learning in science, mathematics, English, vocational education and green job skills in the atoll schools.

26. At each school, a competent Professional Development (PD) coordinator is identified by the principal and works as a focal point. Teacher Resource Center (TRC) coordinators are expected to provide guidance and support to PD coordinators. In order to apply the SBPD activities and develop schools to become learning communities, there is a need for on-going capacity building of the PD coordinators and TRC coordinators.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/teachers/brief/coach-helping-countries-accelerate-learning-by-improving-in-service-teacher-professional-development>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/teach-helping-countries-track-and-improve-teaching-quality>.



27. The AEDP will assist the MoE, especially the National Institute of Education (NIE), to further develop the system for SBPD by improving the capacity of PD coordinators and TRC coordinators, helping schools undertake SBPD activities, and assisting the NIE to monitor the implementation of SBPD in schools. All schools in Male' and the outer atolls will implement SBPD programs according to an annual cycle.

28. The range of SBPD activities can include school-based mentoring, peer learning, peer coaching, individual consultations, visits to classrooms in other schools and islands, and online interactions, including social media, apps, and cloud computing, for networking among teachers.

**Component 3: Measuring and Enhancing School and System Performance (US\$ 1.50 million IDA, 0.25 million GoM)**

29. The component will assist GoM to measure the performance of the school system through quality assurance activities and national assessments of learning outcomes. The activities under this component will be mainly implemented by the Quality Assurance Department (QAD), and by schools with the policy and technical support of the QAD.

**Sub-component 3.1. Modernizing Quality Assurance for School Improvement**

30. Quality assurance (QA) is a key feature of education systems in many high-income countries, such as Scotland, Singapore, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and several Asian middle-income countries, including Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Quality assurance provides a framework for the systematic review and monitoring of an education system to determine whether an acceptable standard of quality is being achieved over the medium-term and enhanced over the long-term in line with global developments in education.

31. The sub-component will help GoM to carry out a program of activities designed to support measurement of school performance through QA reviews consisting of both self-evaluation by schools and external evaluations by QAD. The AEDP will help the MoE to establish a regular, annual QA system for schools, with the main emphasis on internal self-evaluations. The school self-evaluations (SSEs) will, in turn, feed into the School Improvement Plans for the following year. QAD has prepared QA standards to facilitate the assessment of education inputs, processes and outcomes by schools (self-assessment) and by regional and national level authorities (monitoring and supervision). External evaluations of schools will be conducted by the QAD with special emphasis on the weaker schools which have lower student learning levels or lower transition of especially male students from lower secondary to higher secondary education.

32. The school self-evaluations will be conducted by stakeholders such as principals, teachers, student, parents and local communities. This will enable extensive citizen engagement, including consultations, collection of stakeholder feedback, community participation in planning and decision making, and grievance redressal mechanisms. The QA process also provides opportunities for stakeholders to participate in planning and implementation of school development plans. The results of the quality assurance process will feed back into the school development plan, that would include the availability of potable water, water and sanitation services, energy efficiency, and the development of safe shelters in schools as part of the community disaster management plan, when necessary. The



relevant information on the implementation of these plans will be shared with the stakeholders. This QA process constitutes the citizen engagement mechanism for the Project. The QAD will also prepare a central QA report which summarizes the main findings of the school level QA reports, to feed into the external QA reviews conducted by the QAD and inform education program development at the national level. The central QA report will be uploaded into the Maldives Education Management Information System (MEMIS).

**Sub-component 3.2. National Assessments of Learning Outcomes for Policy and Program Development**

33. National assessments of learning outcomes (NALO) have become one of the main vehicles for assessing education systems and formulating education policies in OECD countries and middle-income countries. National assessments are useful to analyze: (a) the quality of learning in the education system; (b) the particular strengths and weaknesses in the knowledge and skills of students; (c) the education performances of different atolls and islands; (d) educational and socio-economic factors associated with student learning outcomes; and (e) the evolution of learning achievements over time.

34. The AEDP will support the MoE to implement national assessments of learning outcomes in grades 4 and 7 according to a regular cycle for key subjects such as English, mathematics, Dhivehi and science, and also for grade 9 for English, mathematics and science, and use the results and findings for education program development. The AEDP will help build the technical capacity within the MoE, especially the QAD, to undertake rigorous, state-of-the-art national assessments. The Project will also build the capacity of policy makers and education specialists within the MoE, including NIE and the PPRD, to use the results and findings from national assessments for strategic policy and management decisions. The national assessments under the Project will help monitor learning outcomes over time. In addition, the Project will support the administration of contextual questionnaires to stakeholders to enable the analysis of factors that contribute to learning outcomes, such as school-related, classroom-related, and child-related factors. International assessments are useful to analyze the quality of learning in the education system in relation to international levels. National and international assessments provide complementary information about the performance of education systems. The national assessments will be aligned to the UN's global proficiency framework<sup>8</sup> and will include modules of test items drawn from international assessments such as PISA and/or TIMSS and/or PIRLS. The NALO reports will be uploaded into the MEMIS.

**Sub-Component 3.3. School-Based Learning Enhancement Grants**

35. The Project will provide school-based learning enhancement grants (SBLEGs) of 15,000 rufiyaa (about US\$1,000) per school per year to enable schools to improve learning outcomes and socio-emotional skills of students, and to increase higher secondary enrolment of boys, especially through measures identified from QA reviews, feedback from SBPD programs, and from the NALOs. All schools with secondary grades are eligible for the grants. Special attention will be paid to improving learning in English, mathematics, science and VE, and the green schools initiative, in secondary education. Also, attention will be paid to measures to increase boys enrollment in higher secondary education. Part of the SBLEGs can be used for school level teacher development activities such as SBPD to improve teacher effectiveness, with a special focus on the teachers at secondary education level in the priority disciplines. A further part of the school grants can be used to enable schools to implement the recommendations of QA reviews to improve learning and increase higher secondary enrolment. The School Administration (SA)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/global-proficiency-framework-reading-and-mathematics>.



section of the MoE will assist the OMSU to monitor the efficient utilization of the SBLEGs by including it in the annual performance review of the school principals.

36.

**Component 4: Coordination, Monitoring, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance (US\$ 0.75 million IDA, 0.25 million GoM)**

37. Under this component the Project will help the MoE to coordinate and monitor the Projects' activities, as well as provide technical assistance and knowledge support to the MoE agencies and to schools. Project coordination would be through a team of experts in operations, monitoring, procurement, financial management, and environment and social safeguards, who would assist the MoE, including atoll level officials such as the Teacher Resource Center (TRC) Coordinators, to implement and monitor Project activities efficiently. This monitoring will include observing and measuring all outcomes and intermediate outcomes of the Project. The monitoring activities will take place at three levels: national, atoll and school. The purpose of monitoring will mainly be formative, and support implementation at each level by identifying problems and taking action to resolve issues and remove bottlenecks to implementation. A Maldives education management information system (MEMIS) is in place and the statistics generated through it will be used for monitoring purposes.

The resources from the Project will also support policy and program development in areas relevant for the education system. In addition, the Project will support communication and dissemination of information to education stakeholders, including political authorities, policy makers, academics and researchers, principals and teachers, students, and the general public.

Cross-cutting areas

38. The human resources in the education sector need to be developed urgently. The majority of education staff members in the MoE and the Atoll Education Offices have not had adequate management and leadership training. Therefore, the AEDP will assist the MoE to develop the human resources in the education sector, with a special focus on the staff of the MoE and associated institutes and departments. MoE staff, including from the Atoll Education Units, will be provided with tailored short-term courses and/or programs to develop their administrative, managerial and technical skills for work in the MoE and Atolls.

**Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) (US\$ 0)**

39. This component will allow for rapid reallocation of Project proceeds in the event of a natural or man-made disaster or crisis that has caused or is likely to imminently cause a major adverse economic and/or social impact. To trigger this component, the GoM would need to declare an emergency, a state of a disaster or provide a statement of fact justifying the request for the activation of the use of emergency funding. To allocate funds to this component the GoM may request the World Bank to re-allocate Project funds to support response and reconstruction. If the World Bank agrees with the determination of the disaster, and associated response needs, this proposed component would draw resources from the unallocated expenditure category and/or allow the government to request the World Bank to re-categorize and reallocate financing from other project components to cover emergency response and recovery costs. This component could also be used to channel additional funds should they become available as a result of an emergency. Disbursements would be made against a positive list of critical goods or the procurement of works, and consultant services required to support the immediate response and



recovery needs. An Operations Manual detailing financial management, procurement, safeguards and other necessary implementation arrangements will apply to this component.

#### 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

40. Based on the project components, the overall environmental and social risks of the Project will be Moderate. In terms of physical interventions, the project will involve minor civil works such as the refurbishment of existing buildings to set up STEM laboratories and vocational skills workshops through the refurbishment of classrooms, the provision of equipment and technology, and the delivery of teaching-learning material including textbooks and supplementary reading material. In addition, the Project will assist the development of ICT laboratories, especially through the delivery of equipment and technology. The procurement, use, and disposal of this equipment will lead to the generation of E-waste at the end of its useful lifecycle that will have to be managed via protocols and arrangements to ensure that sound management is undertaken in line with the regulations of the Maldives Waste Management Department, Environmental Protection Agency, and follows Good International Industry Practice (GIIP) including requirements of ESS3. The project is preparing an E-Waste Management Plan to address this concern.

41. Before any building works are undertaken, the Project will assess and seek to safeguard, and mitigate, any risks to children. Preparation of construction work plans will be done in consultation with school officials, and parents, to minimize disruptions to school activities. Further all contractors will implement strict health and safety protocols including ensuring that workers are vaccinated, adhere to a child protection guidelines and sign a Code of Conduct. Finally, the project will follow a selection process, identifying schools for support and teachers for training, will be done in an equitable and a transparent manner in consultation with key stakeholders.

42. Due to the nature of associated Moderate risks and scale of Project interventions, the sub-project specific ESF instruments have been identified in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) which identifies actions to be undertaken with regards to environment and social standards as well as agencies responsible for implementing various activities listed in the ESCP. ESF instruments prepared include: ESIA, ESMP, Labour Management Procedures (LMP), Occupational Health and Safety Management Plans, Community Health and Safety Plans, an E-Waste Management Guidance Document, and a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). A Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is included in the LMP to specifically address workers' rights and concerns. The SEP also provides a GRM which can be utilized by impacted persons and the general public. All ESF documents were disclosed in the country and on the Bank's website on July 18, 2022.



43. A Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harrasement (SEA/H) assessment has been conducted for this project. Domestic violence and Sexual Harassment are rated low risk. Since the GBV risk rating is rated 'low', a separate GBV action plan will not be required. However, other measures will be put in place based on the GBV Good Practice Note for projects with Low GBV risks. The project will incorporate initiatives at the school level which will impact TVET and STEM programs as well as influence learning institutions and teacher training. Interventions include educating students, staff, parents, and communities on gender equality, GBV, and SEA/H. Protocols will be established to address biases, harassment or violence. Vulnerable groups, especially females, will be empowered to report any cases encountered, and made aware of GRM system. All contracts and staffing will be subject to Code-of-Conduct clauses which will include gender issues, equality, prevention of GBV and SEA/H.

44. Diversifying the existing curriculum and promoting TVET and STEM for all persons will ensure boys and girls, either in Male' or rural islands, have equal chances and opportunity to access these subjects. Vocational education training subjects will target both genders to avoid stereotyping certain courses to certain groups. Teacher groups, principals, and parents will be made aware of opportunities for both genders, and encourage girls to enter non-traditional fields. Education at secondary level will promote equality for all students. Additionally, school development plans will include measures to ensure gender equality.

45. The coordination activities in the MoE will be assisted by a small team it is proposed to recruit or secondment of qualified Environmental and Social Specialists along with the project effectiveness, that will manage oversight of ESF implementation. The Government of Maldives has gained experience in World Bank-financed projects through its successful implementation of the MEERY project in the Education sector and this project will be the third project in the Maldives under the ESF and it will benefit from the support of the Bank's E&S specialists in further enhancement of E&S management in projects. Some of the E&S staff of ongoing projects have already received ESF training as part of the project, additional training will be carried out with all stakeholders once the E&S staff is recruited.

## **E. Implementation**

### Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

#### **National Level**

46. The MoE will be in overall charge of the project. The MoE will implement the project through its institutions, such as the Policy Planning and Research Division (PPRD), the National Institute of Education (NIE), the Quality Assurance Department, the Human Resource (HR) and School Administration (SA) sections, and the Physical Facilities Development Division (see Annex One for more details). These institutions will implement the activities of the Project in line with their respective mandates and responsibilities. All these agencies have experience of working with and successfully implementing Bank financed projects. The coordination activities in the MoE will be assisted by an Operations and Monitoring Support Unit (OMSU) consisting of a small team of full-time staff with expertise in project management and monitoring, procurement, financial management, and environmental and social safeguards. The Project will have a steering committee, chaired by the Minister of Education and comprising of the heads of the education agencies implementing Project components, to facilitate implementation at the policy level. The PPRD through the OMSU will coordinate the various agencies to forge synergy and establish consistency. The MoE will be assisted by the Atoll Education Offices and Teacher Resource Centers (TRCs) to implement and monitor the activities of the Project at island and school level.

**School Level**

47. The AEDP will follow the principle of subsidiarity, where power and responsibility are devolved to the maximum extent possible to the frontline service delivery agencies, in this case the schools. The key activities to improve school performance under the Project, such as the improvement of English language, mathematics and science learning levels, increase in the participation of male students in higher secondary education, the quality assurance program and the professional development of teachers, will be implemented mainly at the school level. The school heads and senior management teams will be responsible for the organization and management of these activities. The principals and senior management teams will also lead the internal self-evaluations of the quality assurance process. Further, they will lead the needs assessments of teacher skills and competencies in relation to the school development plans and organize the professional development programs required.

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