1. Key development issues and rationale for Bank involvement

Lesotho has the potential to improve basic education outcomes and to achieve the MDG goals for primary education by 2015, with assistance from international financial and technical support. The World Bank Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) (2006-09) highlights the need to improve human development outcomes. In the context of Lesotho’s location and paucity of natural resources, opportunities for growth center on its labor force. Improving the level of education and employability of the workforce is an essential prerequisite for sustained economic development. Education is one of the main mechanisms for social mobility, and presents opportunities for allowing the poor to partake on the economic growth of the country.

There are clear resource gaps in the government plan for the development of the education sector. In line with government policy, domestic resources have been focused on recurrent costs, and particularly payroll costs, leaving resource shortfalls in capital budgets. The shortage of adequate classrooms is acute, but provision of new classrooms has been constrained by both resources and implementation capacity. There remain some subjects and grades for which textbooks have not been provided. These resource gaps are likely to continue, as Lesotho is
currently operating with a budget deficit, and may be forced to continue reducing government expenditure in the coming years.

2. Proposed objective(s)

The project proposed objectives are: (i) to provide improved facilities at existing primary schools; (ii) to support and contribute to expand access to pre-primary education; and (iii) to support improvements in quality of teaching.

3. Preliminary description

The proposed will include three components:

Component 1: Improve the quality of primary school infrastructure
This component is expected to provide an additional fully furnished primary gender and disability friendly classrooms at existing schools, along with toilet blocks. Construction will develop within a new approach which makes greater use of smaller contractors, de-concentrated procurement and subcontracting of technical supervision of civil works. This approach is expected to speed up the pace of construction and reduce costs.

Component 2: Support and contribution to the expansion of pre-primary education
This component is expected to support the Government’s aim to maintain and expand access to reception classes especially for the poorest children, through contracting of care givers, procurement of learning materials, and catering services to existing additional reception classes.

Component 3: Contribution to improvements in quality of teaching
This component is expected to support the Government plans to improve learning outcomes in primary schools through (i) conducting analytical work to understand the conditions of education service delivery, teaching, and learning through school resources survey, classroom-based observation, skills profiles and training needs, and assessment of student outcomes measurement; (ii) assisting in increasing the qualification level of the teacher force in by attracting and/or retaining more qualified teachers in targeted schools and/or upgrading the qualifications of teachers working there; (iii) providing additional in-service teacher training aimed at improving on literacy and numeracy teaching; and (iv) providing textbooks in core subjects and grades where there are deficits and learning materials for the implementation of the new curricula.

4. Safeguard policies that might apply

The project is expected to target only OP/BP 4.01, Environmental Assessment. An Environmental and Social Management Framework has been prepared as well as a draft report format on environmental issues.

5. Tentative financing

EFA-FTI Catalytic Fund: ($m.)
Irish Aid

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Contact point
Contact: Cristina Isabel Panasco Santos
Title: Sr Education Spec.
Tel: (202) 458-9403
Email: cpanascosantos@worldbank.org