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Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 12-Jun-2024 | Report No: PIDA0188

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BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Project Beneficiary(ies)	Region	Operation ID	Operation Name
Cambodia	EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC	P180664	Second Higher Education Improvement Project
Financing Instrument	**Estimated Appraisal Date**	**Estimated Approval Date**	**Practice Area (Lead)**
Investment Project Financing (IPF)	06-Jun-2024	30-Sept-2024	Education
Borrower(s)	**Implementing Agency**		
Kingdom of Cambodia	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport		

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve quality and relevance of higher education and research mainly in STEM at targeted higher education institutions, and to provide immediate and effective response in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency.

Components

Improving quality and relevance of academic programs and research
Strengthening higher education sectoral governance and research management capacity
Contingent emergency response component

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

Maximizing Finance for Development

Is this an MFD-Enabling Project (MFD-EP)?	No
Is this project Private Capital Enabling (PCE)?	No

SUMMARY

Total Operation Cost	**63.00**
Total Financing	**63.00**
of which IBRD/IDA	**63.00**
Financing Gap	**0.00**

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing	
International Development Association (IDA)	63.00
IDA Credit	63.00

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. **In the two decades preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia experienced uninterrupted economic expansion.** It was one of the fastest-growing economies in the world between 1998 and 2019 with a sustained average real growth rate of 7.7 per cent, driven largely by tourism, manufacturing exports, real estate, and construction. The country reached lower-middle-income status in 2015 and aspires to attain upper-middle-income status by 2030. Cambodia has achieved considerable gains in socioeconomic indicators such as health and education, but equitable access to basic public services remains a challenge. The poverty rate declined from 33.8 per cent in 2009 to 17.8 per cent in 2019.

2. **With many developing countries entering the global economy, Cambodia will need to transform itself into an innovative economy in which competitiveness is no longer based on mass production, low-cost manufacturing efficiency, relatively unskilled labor, and low wages to continue to prosper in the decades ahead.** Cambodia needs economy where science, technology and engineering are integrated into the production process and where creativity, knowledge and design capabilities are embodied in well-educated skilled workers who advance the country's economic value chain and generate sophisticated, knowledge-intensive products. Making this transition will require improving the overall effectiveness of the university and national innovation systems.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

3. **Cambodia has established robust policy foundations aimed at producing highly skilled graduates, particularly in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), to respond the shortage of the graduates and growing demand for such expertise for maintaining growth and competitiveness in the global economy.** The overall percentage of the workforce with a university education in STEM-related sectors, such as construction and manufacturing, remains low, with university-educated individuals constituting only 7 per cent of the total workforce[1]. Thus, The recently

[1] National Institute of Statistics. 2019. Report on the Cambodia labor force survey 2019

endorsed Pentagonal Strategy-Phase I (PS-I), which aims to foster a robust and prosperous nation, with a focus on fostering growth, employment, equity, efficiency, and sustainability, provides the highest priority to human capital development. The PS-I aims to strengthen the quality of higher education, strengthening higher education governance at all levels, to promote research and development (R&D), and innovation, and to promote public-private partnerships; and to promote digital education and STEM[2]. The PS-I echoes the country's commitment in the Industrial Development Policy (IDP) 2015-2025, which is to widen and enrich the country's economic foundation. This is to be achieved by increasing the value generated in established pivotal sectors and by fostering the emergence of new growth areas, including the automotive and electronics industries, garment and footwear production, agro-industry, the extractive sector, creative industries, and tourism.

4. **In line with the key national policies, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has formulated several sectoral policies, including the Higher Education Subsector Strategy (2021-2030), and developing the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024-2028.** These policy documents place significant emphasis on increasing equitable access to higher education, improving its quality and relevance, and enhancing governance in the sector and HEIs. It also establishes clear targets to ensure that HEIs produce highly skilled graduates and research outputs that meet the demands of the job market and contribute to the national development agenda.

5. **As a result of promising commitment to the national policies, the higher education sub-sector has gradually expanded.** The growth primarily stems from the private sector. Currently, there are 84 private HEIs, representing 64 per cent of the total of 132 HEIs. This growth is mirrored in enrollment figures, which rose from under 20,000 students in the 1990s to 211,299 in bachelor's programs in 2023. Of these, approximately 47 per cent was enrolled in private HEIs and 37 per cent in fee-paying programs in public HEIs. However, despite this growth, Cambodia's gross enrollment in higher education is relatively low at around 18 per cent, compared to 91, 49, and 42 per cent in Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam respectively.

6. **Despite the increase in numbers of HEIs and students enrolling for higher education, the need to improve access, quality and relevance of higher education and research, and governance remains.**

7. **In terms of access**, most of the enrolled students are from higher income households. Specifically, 44.8 per cent of enrolled students come from the top income quintile, while only 2.5 per cent come from the bottom income quintile[3]. Further, enrollment disparity exists between urban and rural areas, with 30 per cent from urban areas enrolling for higher education versus only 10 per cent from rural areas.

8. **The quality of higher education is deemed unsatisfactory.** First, the academic programs, especially in STEM, are generally not up to date. The self-assessment of 56 programs from 29 HEIs, conducted in 2022, did not meet the MoEYS' national minimum standards, and the outcome- or competence-based education was not implemented. In addition, only two Cambodian programs have been accredited by ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), compared to Laos (5), Thailand (83), and Viet Nam (388)[4]. Second, the country is short of highly skilled faculty members to provide quality teaching and research. Many faculty members hold low qualifications with 8.8 per cent with PhD degrees, and 67.6 per cent with master's degrees. In addition, most faculty members are part-time and enter teaching positions without undergoing proper pedagogical training. Third, HEIs have limited modernized physical infrastructure for teaching, research, and student dormitories. In 2022, the STEM-major student-laboratory ratio was 206:1 nationwide. The top three public HEIs in Phnom Penh (Institute of Technology of Cambodia, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Royal University Agriculture) are short of classrooms, with the student-classroom ratios of 92.8, 133.1 and 68.2 respectively, in 2024[5].

[2] Cambodia. 2023. Pentagonal Strategy-Phase I
[3] based on the National Census in 2019
[4] https://www.aunsec.org/discover-aun/thematic-networks/aun-qa/aun-qa-assessed-programmes
[5] To address the issue of limited classroom availability, both RUPP and RUA implement a multi-shift system, allowing them to maximize the use of

9. ***The relevance of higher education needs to be strengthened***. First, the alignment of higher education with national development priorities in Cambodia is crucial to address the skill mismatch. Today, only one out of five students major in STEM, which is vital for economic growth. Specifically, in 2021-22, 5 per cent enrolled in natural and physical sciences, 10 per cent in information technology, 8 per cent in engineering and related technology, and 3 per cent in agriculture. This trend is attributed to the high costs associated with scientific education and a scarcity of qualified faculty. Consequently, only 26 per cent of tertiary graduates in 2022 specialized in STEM subjects. Furthermore, a mere 15% of these graduates found employment in STEM-related sectors such as manufacturing, which paradoxically suffer from a workforce predominantly lacking higher education[6]. Second, there is insufficient industry-university collaboration. Most HEIs run their academic programs, with little or no regular consultation with potential employers. As a result, the lack of effective partnerships, internships, and work-integrated learning opportunities hampers the ability of HEIs to stay updated with industry trends, tailor their curricula and research areas to meet industry needs. In terms of university-industry R&D collaboration, Cambodia was ranked 84th, behind Laos (63rd), Thailand (38th), and Viet Nam (26th) in the 2022 Global Innovation Index.

10. ***Research and development (R&D) face significant challenges.*** One key challenge is the limited funding and resources allocated to R&D activities in universities, producing an insignificant number of research outputs and contributing little to technology-transfer. In terms of scientific outputs, from 2010 to 2019, Cambodia's HEIs published 3,397 research papers, much lower than Thailand (143,019) and Viet Nam (53,623). Based on the 2022 Global Innovation Index, Cambodia ranked 103rd on the gross expenditure on R&D, and the R&D expenditure expressed in the percentage of GDP has been around 0.1 per cent to 0.3 per cent. This lack of financial support restricts the ability of researchers to conduct high-quality studies, invest in advanced equipment and technology, and to attract talented researchers and faculty members. As a result, Cambodia lags in producing cutting-edge knowledge that could contribute to economic growth and social development. Another challenge is the shortage of skilled researchers and professionals in various fields. This issue is rooted in the education system's inability to provide quality training and opportunities for students to pursue careers in R&D. The enrollment for PhD programs in STEM is critically low, with only 5 per cent out of 1,330 PhD students enrolled in 2023 pursuing STEM-related fields.

11. **Faculty members are inadequately trained for advanced research and innovation, which limits the capacity of HEIs to effectively collaborate in R&D activities with industry and international institutions.** The scarcity of researchers is highlighted by the 2015 statistic that showed only 30.4 researchers per million people, compared to Viet Nam's 678.6 and Korea's 7013.5 per million, indicating a significant gap in research capacity in the region. Additionally, the structure of the academic career system fails to adequately incentivize faculty members to pursue R&D endeavors. This is due to the disproportionate emphasis on teaching responsibilities, which are often tied to session-based compensation, thus leaving little room for R&D. Furthermore, the absence of an effective performance appraisal and evaluation system, with defined career paths, exacerbates the issue. The primary reliance on student evaluations for performance assessment disproportionately favors teaching over research, resulting in R&D efforts being underreported and unrecognized[7]. While the recent introduction of the 'Professorship' titles (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor) in a few public HEIs is a step forward, it does not address the systemic issues hindering faculty engagement in R&D. Addressing R&D challenges requires a concerted effort to invest in infrastructure, provide adequate funding, incentivize for researchers, and enhance the quality of education and training in research disciplines.

12. **The sectoral governance framework is a pivotal cross-cutting theme that requires substantial improvement.** The recent study by the World Bank[8] found that Cambodian HEIs grapple with insufficient autonomy, including

their existing classrooms by conducting classes at different times throughout the day.

[6] World Bank. 2024. Reimagining Higher Education in Cambodia: Modernizing governance for Improved Access and Relevance

[7] CDRI. 2020. Cambodian academics: Identities and roles

[8] World Bank. 2024. Reimagining Higher Education in Cambodia: Modernizing governance for Improved Access and Relevance

organizational autonomy, academic autonomy, and autonomy in Human Resource and Financial Management, which constrains the HEIs' ability to manage their resources and operate in a flexible and efficient way. In terms of system-wide governance, the involvement of numerous government ministries and agencies in supervising and providing higher education in Cambodia and their administrative overlap present a challenge to the strengthening and coordination of quality assurance. Moreover, there exist few accountability mechanisms reflecting university performance and actual use of resources. Informed strategic policy decisions guiding the development of tertiary education are also greatly impeded by the absence of a comprehensive higher education management information system along with regular and reliable labor market outcome analyses. Thus, there is a need for a more robust accountability system to ensure that HEIs adhere to national goals and policies, aspire to offering academic quality and program relevance, attract and retain high-performing renowned researchers, promote financial transparency, and maintain good governance and management.

13. **The proposed IDA Second Higher Education Improvement Project II (HEIP2) builds on the achievements of the on-going HIEP and the closed HEQCIP.** It will advance the Bank's engagement in the subsector by continuing to implement the HEIP activities at another level and proposing new activities, with a strong focus on increasing the quality of HEI's academic programs to meet national or regional standards and to strengthen the linkage between HEIs and the industry. HEQCIP and HEIP have also built a strong foundation for sectoral capacity development and have created a healthy policy environment to advance to a larger investment in the selected HEIs and sectoral strengthening.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

To improve quality and relevance of higher education and research mainly in STEM at targeted higher education institutions, and to provide immediate and effective response in case of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency.

Key Results

PDO Level Indicators

- Percentage of graduates from targeted HEIs securing employment within one year
- Number of PhDs enrolled in STEM programs that fulfill MoEYS' requirement[9]
- Number of research results utilized by industry or government agencies

D. Project Description

14. **The proposed project will be financed by an International Development Association (IDA) Credit (US$63 million).** It will use an Investment Project Financing modality (IPF).

15. **The proposed project aims to enhance Cambodia's competitiveness by increasing the quality of higher education provision and research mainly in STEM in line with priority industries[10].** The proposed project will target two

[9] The requirements are based on Prakas on Managing PhD Programs, dated July 23, 2012, and Guideline on PhD Program, dated January 10, 2024. These documents provide detailed requirements on course structures, faculty quality and research experience, student recruitment, thesis defense, and graduation, among others.

[10] STEM-related fields that are potentially linked with priority industries outlined in the IDP and PS-I include, but are not limited to, mechanical engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, material sciences, agricultural and food sciences, robotics and automation engineering, information technology, data science and analytics, environmental engineering, and software engineering. While these areas are highlighted, the project will also retain the adaptability to support emerging fields, whether they are STEM-related or not, that may become high-priority during implementation.

priority areas: 1) to improve the teaching, learning, and research in STEM in HEIs that are connected to industries prioritized in the IDP and PS-I and 2) to strengthen the higher education sectoral governance.

16. **The project will support nine selected public HEIs and relevant departments in MoEYS.** The public HEIs include five within Phnom Penh—Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC), Royal University of Agriculture (RUA), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Prek Leap National Institute of Agriculture (NIA), Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA)—and four in provinces—Svay Rieng University (SRU), National University of Battambang (NUBB), National University of Cheasim Kamchaymear (NUCK), and University of Heng Samrin Thbongkhmum (UHST). Among these, ITC, RUPP, RUA, NUBB, and SRU are HEIs that are currently supported under the HEIP, while NIA, NUCK, and RUFA are new additions. The rationales behind the selection are as follows. First, ITC, RUA, RUPP and NIA are leading universities in STEM, with a combined enrollment of 43 per cent in STEM subjects in 2022, and they cater to a majority of students from rural areas and low-income families by providing government scholarship opportunities (around 35 per cent in 2023). They also maintain low annual tuition fees, typically ranging from US$400 to US$800. This stands in stark contrast to the annual fees of US$3,000 to US$6,000 charged by private universities running similar STEM programs. Second, SRU, NUBB, NUCK, and UHST are key provincial institutions with the mandate to expand provincial access and contribute to regional economic growth by supplying skilled workforce and conducting research to meet local industrial needs. These institutions have also demonstrated a robust annual enrollment growth rate of 8 per cent from 2019 to 2023, which underscores their expanding role in higher education and regional development. Third, RUFA, as a leading institution in the fine arts, plays a vital role in the development of creative industries, which are increasingly recognized for their contribution to economic diversification and innovation. By nurturing talent in archaeology, RUFA contributes to the conservation and preservation of the country's historical sites and artifacts, while its programs in architecture and urbanism are essential for designing sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure and urban spaces.

17. **The proposed project will comprise three components:** (1) Improving quality and relevance of academic programs and research; (2) strengthening sectoral governance for higher education and research management capacity; and (3) providing contingent emergency response component (CERC).

Component 1: Improving quality and relevance of academic programs and research (US$50.00 million)

18. The component aims to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education and research at the targeted HEIs in the fields of STEM, and potentially other complementary fields which are deemed necessary for the country's development.[11] The proposed sub-components are: 1.1: Improving quality and relevance of academic programs; 1.2: Improving quality and relevance of research; and 1.3: Strengthening institutional governance.

Sub-component 1.1: Improving quality and relevance of academic programs (US$40.50 million)

19. This sub-component builds upon HEIP's curriculum modernization efforts by introducing a new aim to improve the quality and relevance of potential undergraduate and graduate academic programs in STEM and other related fields to meet national and regional standards. The core activities include the following:

20. **Curriculum development.** This sub-component will further update curricular to be in line with the outcome-based education (OBE)[12] framework and continue to strengthen industrial connection through consultations, potentially co-development of certain curriculum modules, arrangement of guest lecturers from industry, and internships. Such activities aim to foster students' employability and 21st-century skills to meet market demands. This sub-component also encourages the curricular update to include content on climate change and disaster resilience to align with the Cambodia's climate commitments and strategies. This sub-component will also provide technical support to potential programs to

[11] However, these fields are not the main priorities and subject to further discussion and evaluation for possible inclusion.
[12] OBE is a theory that emphasizes achieving specific learning outcomes. It aligns curriculum, teaching methods, assessments, and resources to ensure students acquire the defined knowledge, skills, and attitudes by the end of their program.

prepare for meeting national or regional standards, a crucial new step to ensure quality recognition. It will introduce support for the development of short (online) non-degree programs to offer greater flexibility for skill-focused learning to students seeking to advance their careers without the time commitment required for traditional degree programs, representing a novel activity for addressing the immediate needs of the market. Additionally, it will also introduce technical assistance for the development of online degree programs to expand access in targeted HEIs. This new initiative builds on the foundation of the Cambodia Cyber University Network (CCUN) by (i) conducting a feasibility study for the implementation of online degree programs, and (ii) designing the structure of these programs to meet national educational standards and effectively serve student needs.

21. **Capacity development.** This sub-component will continue to strengthen the capacity of education delivery by (i) upgrading lecturers' professional qualifications to increase the number of Master and PhD holders; (ii) enhancing instructional expertise in line with updated curriculums and improved facilities; (iii) and improving graduate student supervision skills, which is instrumental for graduate programs. This capacity building will be done through degree programs, short courses, and faculty exchange. This sub-component will also introduce mentoring support by high-capacity targeted HEIs to those with lower capacity in two forms of partnership programs: a) academic program teams with successful record in meeting national or regional standards will extend their support to other teams within the institution to obtain similar standards and b) the high-performing HEIs will offer support to other targeted HEIs in strengthening their academic programs. In the field of engineering, for example, this will be achieved by offering mentorship and opportunities for advance degree programs through the creation of the Cambodia Engineering Education Development Network (CEED-Net)[13].

22. **Infrastructure improvement.** This sub-component is an extension of efforts under the HEIP, focusing on modernization and expansion of laboratories, libraries, and infrastructure necessary to compliment the updated curriculums and help HEIs obtain national or regional academic program accreditations. It will also construct additional classrooms, laboratories, and necessary offices to cater to the high demand for programs identified under the HEIP. This sub-component will encourage adoption of climate resilient design measure and universal design principles to the extent possible. The improvement of educational facilities will narrow the gap in equitable access to quality higher education and research between urban and provincial HEIs. It will also expand access to quality education programs at targeted public HEIs.

Sub-component 1.2: Improving quality and relevance of research (US$6.50 million)

23. This sub-component builds on the success of HEIP, aiming to improve the quality and relevance of STEM research at the targeted HEIs, by introducing a strategic shift from knowledge production towards the utilization of research results by industry or government agencies. It underscores the importance of applied research in strengthening industrial ties and centers on the development, transfer, and commercialization of technology and research that drive the national policy development. Key activities are two-fold. First, this sub-component will extend its support to selected research projects under HEIP, with the goal of refining these projects for effective technology transfer and securing standard certifications for primary laboratories[14]. Second, it will support the research teams to develop and implement new research projects, building on the results of research project under HEIP, in collaboration with industrial partners or government agencies to ensure the utility application of research results. This could also include research projects focused on developing climate-resilient agricultural practices, enhancing disaster preparedness, and promoting sustainable technologies. These research projects are expected to contribute by generating valuable data and insights that inform effective strategies and practices for climate adaptation and mitigation. These new research projects to be supported by this sub-component will be

[13] CEED-Net will be designed as a platform that promotes the advancement of human resources in the engineering sector throughout Cambodia and fosters a strong network of academic collaboration among national and regional HEIs.
[14] By pursuing standard certifications for their labs, research teams could affirm the quality and safety of their research facilities, foster local and international trust to attract private partnerships and funding and enhance the marketability of research innovations.

selected and approved by a research committee established by HEIP2. Additionally, it will support research teams to pursue advance degrees to ensure research sustainability. It will also launch new initiatives that will strengthen research funding rules and enhance researchers' working conditions to reduce teaching, notably through the introduction of a performance-based system.

Sub-component 1.3: Strengthening institutional governance (US$3.00 million)

24. This sub-component builds upon the foundational work of HEIP by continuing to improve the institutional governance capacity of the targeted HEIs to implement their long-term strategic plans to increase the quality and relevance of teaching, research and services. It maintains the focus on strengthening data management, internal quality assurance (IQA), tracer studies, student grievances, research management, human resources management, and financial management. Through these activities, HEIs are expected to improve institutional capacity in line with national institutional governance standards. This sub-component will also introduce the implementation of a performance-based management system at the targeted HEIs. As a new initiative, this system will be designed to offer appropriate incentives to attract and retain talented faculty and staff, promote accountability within the HEIs, and foster continuous professional development, using annual result agreements with measurable key performance indicators.

Component 2: Strengthening higher education sectoral governance and research management capacity (US$13.00 million)

25. This component aims to strengthen the system of higher education sector by improving sectoral governance, research management and development, and project management. The proposed sub-components are: 2.1: Strengthening higher education sectoral governance, 2.2: Building research management capacity, 2.3: Strengthening project management. This component will be managed by DGHE and central departments at MoEYS.

Sub-component 2.1: Strengthening higher education sectoral governance (US$6.50 million)

26. This sub-component aims to advance DGHE's effort in strengthening higher education sectoral governance. It will continue supporting DGHE to strengthen the implementation of the IQA system, tracer studies, and student grievances, initiated under HEIP, and expand it to more public and private HEIs. The expanded implementation of the IQA system also includes a new focus on achieving national and regional quality recognition in collaboration with the ASEAN University Network-Quality Assurance (AUN-QA) and other agencies. Additionally, this sub-component also aims to assist DGHE in launching new initiatives, including:

(a) supporting HEIs to implement an OBE curriculum framework to address the need for standardization, as previous curricular revisions, especially supported by the HEIP did not adhere to specific standards;

(b) conducting strategic research on the higher education sub-sector to generate data and insight that can inform and shape for policymaking; and

(c) developing a comprehensive regulatory framework to govern online education to guide the implementation of both non-degree and degree online programs, ensuring they meet quality standards and are delivered effectively.

27. This sub-component will also construct a new building for DGHE to accommodate the needs for additional staff and expanded operations.

Sub-component 2.2: Building research management capacity (US$ 3.50 million)

28. This sub-component aims to support DGHE to institutionalize a system-wide competitive research fund, the Higher Education Research Fund (HERF), building on the experience of research fund management under HEIP and HEQCIP. HERF is intended to support HEIs to build institutional research capacity, contribute to knowledge building and transfer, nurture young researchers to pursue their research interest, and support graduate students to obtain advance degrees. Specifically, this sub-component aims to support DGHE to manage and award the HERF to HEIs, through transparent and

competitive selection process, to conduct research mainly in STEM, climate change and disaster resilience, and other relevant fields. To ensure sustainability of the program, Inter-Ministerial Prakas will be processed for approval, and the research fund will be financed jointly by the project fund and government's research fund. This sub-component also aims to provide technical assistance to DGHE to: (i) institutionalize necessary regulatory frameworks (e.g., research management and commercialization of research, and research procedures and financing rules) to build research and development ecosystem to attract and retain researchers in higher education; (ii) attract funding from the private and public institutions to increase the annual amounts of HERF; and (iii) implement the database system of researcher profiles and laboratory facilities[15].

Sub-component 2.3: Strengthening project management (US$3.00 million)

29. This sub-component will support day-to-day coordination, and management of project activities on planning and execution, FM, procurement, construction, supervision and reporting, internal and external audits, and environmental and social safeguards management. A key focus will be on enhancing the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems to ensure that DGHE and targeted HEIs can effectively track progress, measure outcomes, and assess the impact of the project activities. This will involve the development of clear roles and responsibility among DGHE and the targeted HEIs to ensure a collaborative approach to data oversight, the establishment of thorough data collection strategies and systematic data storage, and the provision of training for M&E staff. These activities will ensure efficient project management and early identification of corrective measures to solve implementation problems.

Component 3: Contingent Emergency Response (CERC)

30. The CERC with zero allocation will provide swift response in the event of an Eligible Crisis or Emergency, by enabling Cambodia to request the World Bank to re-allocate uncommitted project funds to support emergency response and reconstruction[16]. The project will develop a CERC manual and other necessary documents to ensure that CERC can be activated at any time during an emergency. The CERC manual, annexed to the project operations manual (POM), will also consider climate risks on both mitigation and adaptation.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Area OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

[15] Research profile database will include information about researchers such as their status, areas of expertise, publications, funding sources, and other relevant detail, while the laboratory facility database will include details about laboratory facilities, such as their names, obtained standards/certification, areas of research they specialize in, experiments they can conduct, and other pertinent information. The purpose is to establish a comprehensive database that aids in recognizing research strengths and opportunities for investment within the country.

[16] An "Eligible Crisis or Emergency" refers to an event that has resulted in or is likely to result in a significant negative impact on the economy and/or society due to natural or man-made crises or disasters (based on Paragraph 12 of the Bank Policy: Investment Project Financing, which pertains to Projects in Situations of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints). It may include extreme climate event (e.g., flood), nature disasters (e.g., earthquake), public health emergency (e.g., COVID-19), and any natural disaster or man-made crisis.

31. Proposed project works include construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, libraries, and other infrastructure as well as the provision of learning and lab equipment. All construction is expected to take place in existing campuses, and thus land acquisition will not be required.

32. Main environmental risks related to construction and rehabilitation include (i) pollution and dust generation from the earth work and vehicles, (ii) construction waste and wastewater, (iii) noise and vibration, (iv) traffic disturbance due to transportation of materials to construction sites, (v) occupational health and safety risks to workers and also to teachers and students in the campus due to machinery movements, and (vi) Unexploded Ordnances. These environmental risks and impacts are temporary and will be relatively moderate and localized in nature. The environmental risks and impacts during project operation include a) domestic solid wastes and wastewater from the daily operation of the institutions and laboratories; b) hazardous and non-hazardous waste generated during laboratory operation; c) OHS and safety risks for the teachers and students during class hours in the laboratories; and d) inefficient practices of resource use including water and electricity.

33. The Social risk under the project is considered moderate based on the highlighted construction-related risks, and risks of exclusion from the technical assistance activities. While the project is expected to benefit Cambodia's youth population, including women, there is a risk that project benefits will not reach indigenous groups if project activities take place in areas where these groups are present. There are also risks that activities that may have nation-wide impacts, do not consider the needs of Indigenous groups and other vulnerable groups such as students with disabilities. Proposed project works are limited to existing learning facilities and thus land acquisition will not be required. There will be site-specific Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risks to workers and potentially to the community living close to the HEIs. The project will also need to be mindful of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) risks, both during rehabilitation and the operation of the project supported facilities (dormitories, classrooms, etc.) though this risk is assessed as low.

34. To manage project environmental and social risks and impacts, the Borrower has prepared and disclosed an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which includes (i) Screening procedures; (ii) Environmental and Social Codes of Practice (ESCOP); (iii) Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) template; (iv) Labor Management Procedures (LMP); (iv) Chance Find Procedures; and (vi) Fertilizer and Pesticide Management Plan. In addition, a standalone SEP (Stakeholder Engagement Plan) including a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) has been prepared to guide the Borrower's stakeholder engagement, including with indigenous groups. An Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) also sets out the important measures and actions required for the project to meet environmental and social requirements over the project's lifetime. All these environmental and social instruments were consulted on April 11, 2024, and disclosed in-country on May 24, 2024 on the MoEYS website, https://moeys.gov.kh/kh.

35. In accordance with the screening procedure of the project's ESMF, site -specific ESMPs will be prepared during the project implementation for new constructions with significant negative environmental and social risks and impacts. Key measures and requirements from the site-specific ESMPs will be included in the bidding document and Contractor ESMP (C-ESMP) which forms part of work contract to be complied with by the contractor and will be closely monitored by the PMT, ESU and the project's ES supervision consultants.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

36. **The proposed project will be implemented following a similar structure as arranged under an ongoing HEIP.** MoEYS will assume overall responsibility for coordination and implementation of the project, including procurement,

disbursement, and FM and will be in close collaboration with targeted HEIs. At the highest level, the project management arrangements will require strong support from MoEYS leadership. Under the current arrangement for ongoing projects, the Minister has established a Project Management Committee (PMC) responsible for the oversight of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP). The PMC is led by the Minister and the Secretaries of State and Under-Secretaries of State responsible for higher education sub-sector. The PMC will be responsible for: (i) approving the project's annual activities, operational plan, and budget allocations; and (ii) overseeing progress and compliance with agreed project guidelines. The Project Director will be Secretary of State in charge of the higher education sub-sector.

37. At the project management level, the Project Management Team (PMT) will be chaired by the Secretary of State (or the Under Secretary of State) responsible for the Directorate General of Higher Education. The PMT will include senior representatives from targeted HEIs and DGHE. The main roles of PMT are to provide day-to-day implementation oversight, monitoring FM and procurement, project reporting, auditing, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and reviewing operational plans. Project Teams (PTs) will be arranged at DGHE, and the targeted HEIs, and will include members of the department/office/unit of Finance within each institution. Project implementation will be carried out by each PT, supported by existing MoEYS technical departments, including Department of Construction, Department of Finance, and Procurement Unit. The nine public HEI PTs will be established to coordinate and implement the project activities. The PTs will assume responsibility for work plans and budgets, progress reports, financial reports, monitoring, procurement, and safeguards.

38. **The relevant departments of MoEYS and targeted HEIs will monitor the achievement of annual targets of the project indicators**. This will be done within the monitoring and evaluation framework of HEIP2. The proposed monitoring indicators are provided in the 'Results Framework and Monitoring' section. The data related to output indicators will be provided semiannually, while MoEYS will provide outcome-related data annually. The progress in meeting the monitoring indicators will be reviewed by the World Bank semiannually and a midterm review (approximately 30 months after the Effectiveness Date) will be carried out to assess implementation status. Where appropriate, all data collected will be disaggregated by gender, education subsectors, and in some cases by districts or provinces to understand and respond to specific issues.

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