



1. Project Data

Project ID P162890	Project Name Gambia Education Sector Support Program		
Country Gambia, The	Practice Area(Lead) Education		
L/C/TF Number(s) IDA-D2800,TF-A7053,TF-B5583	Closing Date (Original) 31-Dec-2022	Total Project Cost (USD) 40,488,106.49	
Bank Approval Date 28-Mar-2018	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Jun-2023		
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)	
Original Commitment	35,000,000.00	12,160,000.00	
Revised Commitment	42,160,000.00	12,158,989.83	
Actual	40,488,108.97	12,158,989.83	
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As stated in the April 20, 2018 Financing Agreement (p. 4), the project's development objective (PDO) was "to increase access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and basic education and improve the quality of teaching and learning." This statement is consistent with the one provided in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. 16).

Although the PDO indicators were not changed, there were amendments to PDO targets. During implementation, the targets measuring access to basic education and ECD (gross enrollment rates in lower



basic schools and in ECD, with sub-indicators tracking access of males) were changed, in light of updated 2022 and 2023 EMIS data based on the 2013 census data which replaced the 2003 census data that was used to inform the above indicators' baselines and targets at the time of appraisal. Nevertheless, the project's ambition did not change: the updated baselines and targets (all lower than the originals) reflected the same percentage point increases as the original sets of baselines and targets. In addition, the target for one PDO indicator measuring quality (average score of the Reading Comprehension Section of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Grade 3 in Public Schools) was reduced under the June 2021 restructuring and Additional Financing (AF) from 2.0 to 1.6, mainly in response to expected learning losses from the COVID-19-related school closures. Because the efficacy in achieving this outcome target earned the same rating against both the original and the revised targets, a split-evaluation of the project is not warranted.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

Yes

Date of Board Approval

10-Jun-2021

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1. Enhancing access to ECD and basic education (Original cost: US\$9.70 million + US\$0.98 million in AF, amounting to a revised estimate of US\$10.68 million; actual cost at closing: US\$10.29 million). The Component aimed to expand inclusive education for all, focusing on geographic and economic disparities, gender, students with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. The component had two subcomponents:

- **Subcomponent 1.1: Expanding the network of basic and ECD classrooms** through: (a) construction of ECD classrooms, including construction of toilets and provision of classroom furniture; (b) construction of classrooms in Lower Basic Schools (LBS) and Upper Basic Schools (UBS) in rural areas, including construction of toilets, provision of classroom furniture, and water-points; (c) a fund for special needs modifications; and (d) provision of donkey carts to transport students to schools in targeted communities. The main focus was on rural areas with the lowest enrollment rates.
- **Subcomponent 1.2: Expanding opportunities and access for out-of-school children** through: (a) a Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer program in select districts for children in vulnerable households from ages 7 through 12 in exchange for school attendance; (b) provision of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) to Koranic centers on the condition that basic literacy and numeracy are delivered; (c) a feasibility study of options for provision of Second Chance Education in targeted communities, possible models for a pilot, implementation of a pilot program based on the findings from the feasibility study; and (d) support for sensitization campaigns and consultations to convey



the benefits of education to village and religious leaders, villagers, and parents in targeted communities, and to better understand community needs through citizen engagement.

Component 2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning (Original cost: US\$18 million + US\$4.41 million in AF, amounting to a revised estimate of US\$22.41 million; actual cost at closing: US\$22.59 million). This component aimed to strengthen the curriculum with a focus on core subjects, and develop a strategic teacher training and management policy to improve classroom practices and ultimately learning outcomes. The component had three subcomponents:

- **Subcomponent 2.1: Curriculum revision and implementation.** This included the implementation of a revised curriculum for ECD, Lower Basic Schools and Upper Basic Schools, with a focus on English, science, and mathematics, including: (a) development of key competencies, learning goals and minimum standards (for ECD only); (b) provision of accompanying instructional and learning materials; (c) sensitization and training of teachers, principals, and cluster monitors responsible for curriculum delivery; and (d) M&E to ensure systematic introduction and evaluation of the revised curriculum.
- **Subcomponent 2.2: Improved teacher training and professional development** through the development of a strategic framework and coherent policy for pre-service and in-service teacher training which views teacher education along a continuum of improved teacher preparation and professional development training, including: (a) Pre-Service Training: (i) *introduction of an externally reviewed and overseen teacher competency test to evaluate graduating teachers which maps onto the teacher training standards in the revised curriculum;* (ii) *an external review of the revised curriculum and delivery model;* (iii) *improvements to the curriculum based upon the findings of the evaluation;* and (iv) *linkages to the in-service teacher training;* and (b) In-Service Training: (i) *analysis of the current in-service teacher training on offer;* (ii) *development of a structured framework for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) curriculum;* (iii) *development of standards and a strategic five-year plan for their operationalization;* (iv) *development of compulsory and optional training modules;* and (v) *internal and external quality assurance.*
- **Subcomponent 2.3: Teacher recruitment and deployment,** including: (a) strategic planning for matching supply and demand of teachers in the education sector; (b) payment of Student Teacher Stipends for non-salaried Diploma in Education and Advanced Diploma in Education trainees at The Gambia College; (c) Tuition Scholarships for University of the Gambia students with strong mathematics and science skills who agree to become teachers at the senior secondary level; and (d) Hardship Allowances for teachers in schools located more than 3 kilometers from the main road in Regions 3-6, with additional top-up pay for females.

Component 3. Technical and institutional support (Original cost: US\$7.30 million + US\$1.77 million in AF, amounting to a revised estimate of US\$9.07 million; actual cost: US\$7.61 million). The component focused on assessment of learning outcomes, improving data collection and management, and communications. It had three subcomponents:

- **Subcomponent 3.1: Strengthening capacity for data driven decision making** for the staff of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST), including: (a) enhancing the system for monitoring of student outcomes and distribution of the results; (b) developing a unified Education Management Information System (EMIS) between the MoBSE and MoHERST and providing support for an annual exercise to collect and analyze education statistics; (c) funding of a service delivery indicators (SDI) exercise to provide a regional benchmark of service delivery performance in the



education sector; and (d) enhancing the capacity of MOBSE and MoHERST staff to support data driven national policies.

- **Subcomponent 3.2: Implementation of communication strategy:** support for the implementation of the MOBSE's Communication Strategy for the education sector's strategic initiatives, including procurement of equipment, materials, publishing, dissemination, logistics and administrative costs.
- **Subcomponent 3.3: Project management and institutional support:** financing the salaries of consultants at the Project Coordination Unit (PCU); operating costs to coordinate the project; and capacity development for MOBSE and MoHERST staff.

Revisions to components

At the time of the March 2019 restructuring and the June 2021 AF, modifications were made to the project components to accommodate new circumstances and increased funding. Changes under each component are summarized here.

Component 1. Enhancing access to ECD and basic education. During the March 2019 restructuring: (i) under **Subcomponent 1.1**, the number of ECD classrooms to be constructed remained the same (61) but instead of 20 using a community-based approach and 41 using the annexed approach, the numbers were modified to 10 community-based ECD classrooms and 51 annexed ECD classrooms. This modification was in line with an impact evaluation that showed that annexed ECD classrooms produce better education outcomes; (ii) **under Subcomponent 1.2**, to accommodate the government's request (received after the project's approval) to avoid direct cash transfers due to concerns over sustainability, the enrolment incentive program for the out-of-school children was modified from CCT to in-kind support provided through Mothers' Clubs. At the time of the 2021 AF, additional funding was provided to Subcomponent 1.2 to continue the support to out-of-school children. In addition, a small amount of funding was allocated to disability inclusion efforts well underway, including accessibility adaptations, training for newly recruited itinerant teachers, and a small number of learning aids not previously budgeted.

Component 2. Improving quality of teaching and learning. The June 2021 AF was used to: (i) support **Subcomponent 2.1's** revision of the curriculum and an immediate reprint of current textbooks to ensure they were distributed to schools during the life of the project since delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for timely printing of textbooks in line with the revised curriculum; (ii) support **Subcomponent 2.2's** activities to further enhance teacher quality by scaling up the support for teacher training; (iii) provide AF to **Subcomponent 2.3**, including for continued teacher attendance monitoring and classroom observation efforts, as well as some new activities - piloting the newly updated classroom observation tool and continued regional monitoring efforts conducted by regional education personnel; and (iv) cover costs of additional monitoring expenses related to the expanded teacher initiatives under Subcomponent 2.2 and the need to more frequently monitor the school-based remedial initiatives which were launched following the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

Component 3. Technical and institutional Support. The June 2021 AF was used to support: (i) **Sub-Component 3.1's** performance management of teachers by strengthening the system to improve data capture and analysis and linkage with the Human Resource and promotion systems, and funding for continued capacity data management and assessment; (ii) **Subcomponent 3.2's** communication for the pre-service and in-service training reforms, and school enrolment communication during the post-COVID-19 period; and (iii) **Subcomponent 3.3's** operations costs, capacity building activities, and enhanced technology within MoBSE, the regional directorates, and The Gambia College to improve their ability to



conduct and participate in technology enabled trainings, virtual planning sessions, and promote enhanced sector-wide communication, especially given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Cost. The total project cost was originally estimated at US\$35.00 million. The estimate was revised upward to US\$42.16 million, reflecting the AF of US\$7.16 million provided by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in June 2021. The actual project cost was US\$40.49 million, reflecting: (i) the cancellation of a textbook contract of US\$450,000, which was reimbursed in full to the Bank, (ii) exchange rate losses in the amount of US\$0.78 million; and (iii) US\$0.44 million in undisbursed IDA funds, returned to the Bank.

Financing and Borrower Contribution. The project was financed by an IDA grant in the amount of SDR 20.6 million (US\$30 million equivalent), a GPE grant in the amount of US\$5.0 million, and AF in the amount of US\$7.16 million, financed by a GPE multiplier grant. The GPE Multiplier is a financing instrument accessible to eligible countries, which mobilize at least US\$3.0 million in new and additional external financing for every US\$1 from the Multiplier. The Gambia mobilized external financing through a philanthropic organization, mainly focused on school construction. The AF was complementary to these investments. No government contribution was planned or provided.

Key Dates. The project was approved on March 28, 2018 and became effective on August 31, 2018. Its mid-term review was undertaken on July 14, 2020, and it closed on June 30, 2023, six months after the original closing date of December 31, 2022.

Restructuring and AF. The project underwent four restructurings, one of which also included an AF. **The first restructuring, approved on March 28, 2019:** (i) changed the proportion of community-based ECD and annexed ECD classroom construction; (ii) based on the government's request, modified the incentive program for the out-of-school children from conditional -cash -transfer to in-kind support; (iii) paid an outstanding balance of US\$128,000 for the digital content of English Language Art (ELA), which was developed under the previous READ Project; and (iv) adjusted the amount in the disbursement categories to reflect the modified arrangement for construction of the ECD classrooms and the amount disbursed under the Project Preparation Advance. **The June 10, 2021 Additional Financing and restructuring** significantly expanded the project scope and: (i) made changes to the project components which allowed for scaling up and optimizing teacher training reforms; (ii) revised downward the target of one PDO indicator in anticipation of learning losses due to the school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic; (iii) introduced adjustments to the IRIs; (iv) revised the project costs by component; and (iv) made some adjustments to the RF to account for the additional funds made available and the negative effects stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. **The third restructuring dated December 16, 2022:** (i) extended the project's closing date by six months from December 31, 2022, to June 30, 2023, to allow for completion of pending activities; reallocated US\$740,000 from Category 1 to Category 2 to reflect the accurate costing of the benefits program under Category 2; reworded the one IRI to more accurately capture the full set of beneficiary teachers who were to be assigned to mentors; and modified all the indicator end-target achievement dates to reflect the project's new closing date. **The fourth restructuring, approved in June 2023,** cancelled US\$450,000 (equivalent) under the project and reprogrammed it for the Results, Inclusion, Skills, and Equity (RISE, P179233) Project, which at the time was under preparation. The cancellation was associated with the textbook procurement which was not possible given an internal dispute between the government and the recruited textbook firm.



3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The PDO is highly relevant to current country conditions. As noted in the Bank's Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for FY2022-FY2026, The Gambia continues to face challenges in its efforts to improve equity of access to education and education quality. Despite increased enrolment in recent years and achieved full gender parity in enrollment in basic and secondary education, overall education access remains lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average across all education levels. Enrollment and completion rates across education levels are lower in rural areas, especially for girls and learners with disabilities. Key barriers include social norms and lack of safe or available transportation, roads, and schools that address the needs of learners with disabilities and girls. According to the 2020 Human Capital Index, a child in The Gambia who starts school at age four can be expected to complete 9.5 years of school before turning 18, but only 5.4 learning adjusted years of schooling. Despite gains in teacher recruitment and training, The Gambia still faces a lack of qualified teachers in some areas, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, and challenges in education quality. Total spending on education at 3.2 percent of GDP is lower than the SSA average of 4.5 percent; and while the government had implemented a number of interventions to mitigate financial and socio-cultural barriers to accessing and completing ECD and basic education, additional resources are needed for addressing remaining challenges in the education system. The project responded to this need by providing support for increasing access to education and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, the project's relevance to current country conditions is further strengthened by the support it provided for reducing the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the project's support for the country's remediation program targeted at children 'at risk'.

The PDO is highly relevant to the current development priorities of the country. Through its focus on increasing access, improving relevance, and supporting cross-cutting system improvements in curriculum and teacher management / training, the project is well aligned with the government's 2016-2030 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), and specifically ESSP 2016-2030's program areas focused on access and equity; quality and relevance; and sector management. Furthermore, the PDO is aligned with The Gambia's National Social Protection Policy 2015-2025, as well as The Gambia's National Development Plan 2023-27's priorities on human capital development and social inclusion.

The PDO was highly relevant to the Bank's 2018-2021 Country Engagement Note (CEN) for The Gambia and remains relevant to the Country's CPF for FY2022-FY2026. The project was in line with the 2018-2021 CEN, which covered the period until the CPF for FY22-FY26 was developed. Specifically, the project was aligned to the CEN objective 2: "Invest in human capital and build assets and resilience for the poor." The AF was aligned with the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) 2020, which informed the CPF for FY22-26, and particularly, SCD's priority to enhance primary and secondary education as part of the main objective to build human capital. The project was also in line with the CPF for FY22-26, especially CPF's Focus Area 3, under which the Bank supports and strengthens programs providing quality education to enhance human capital. More specifically, under the current CPF's Objective 3.3., the Bank supports the upgrading of the quality of education and technical and vocational skills and articulates the specific result of increasing the average score of the Reading Comprehension section of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). Additionally, the project was aligned with the GPE's 2016-2020 Strategy Plan, which focused on: (i) improved and more equitable learning outcomes; (ii) increased equity, gender equality and inclusion; and



(iii) effective and efficient educational system. Finally, the project was in line with the Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity by contributing to the education of children, which is a key driver of development and a tool for reducing poverty.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To increase access to ECD in The Gambia.

Rationale

To achieve the objective of increased access to ECD in The Gambia, the project supported outputs aimed at lifting key constraints to access. Specific outputs included: (i) newly constructed and equipped ECD classrooms, including toilets and water and sanitation facilities and accommodations for special needs students, and newly constructed donkey carts for transporting children, together supporting the intermediate outcome of easier physical access to ECD in rural areas with the lowest enrollment rates; and (ii) completion of sensitization campaigns and consultations directed at leaders, residents, and parents of targeted communities supporting the intermediate outcome of enhanced appreciation at the village level of the benefits of education. Together these supply- and demand-side interventions and anticipated intermediate outcomes were expected to boost enrollments in ECD.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes:

- A total of 61 ECD classrooms (annexed and community-based) were built by the project's end, **achieving the original unchanged target** (61). The breakdown for the newly built ECD classrooms is as follows: (i) 20 ECD classrooms annexed to existing Lower Basic Schools, (ii) 21 ECD classrooms annexed to multi-grade schools, and (iii) 20 community based ECD classrooms, **achieving the original target** of 41 annexed ECD classrooms and 20 community-based ECD classrooms, and **not achieving the revised target at the 2019 restructuring** of 51 annexed ECD classrooms and 10 community-based ECD classrooms.
- 100 donkey carts were constructed to provide pre-primary students with transportation.
- Under Component 3, communities were involved in planning and implementing targeted enrollment interventions in Region 5, **as envisaged**. As a result of the piloted activities, MoBSE data showed that there was increased enrollment of 44,426 ECD and Lower Basic School students in the targeted districts in Region 5. (Note: the ICR does not break down this aggregate enrollment result by ECD and Lower Basic Schools).



Outcomes

As noted in Section 2a, original baselines and targets for GER indicators were based on 2003 population data. During implementation, the baselines and end targets were recalculated based on the 2013 population data. Nevertheless, the project's ambition did not change: the updated baselines and targets (all lower than the originals) reflected the same percentage point increases as the original sets of baselines and targets. For this reason, only the updated baselines and targets will be reported here and under Objective 2.

- Gross enrollment rates for ECD increased from a baseline of 38.9 percent to 43.7 percent by the project's end, **not reaching the target of 47.4 percent**. This translates into an increase of 4.8 percentage points against a targeted increase of 8.5 percentage points (**56 percent achieved**).
 - The male ECD GER increased from a baseline of 37.5 percent to 41.5 percent, **not achieving the target of 47.3 percent**. This translates into an increase of 4.0 percentage points against a targeted increase of 9.8 percentage points (**41 percent achieved**).

As noted in the ICR (para 38), the drop in ECD GER between 2020 and 2021 is largely due to the drop in enrollments for all ECD centers at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Before that, in 2020, the actual ECD GER had reached 44.7 percent (43.2 percent for males) and expected to meet the set target by the project's end. As the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic subsided, the ECD GER in 2022 and 2023 began to increase, and by project closing, the rates were very close to the pre-pandemic rates. This suggests that the project's ECD GER targets are likely to be achieved in the near future, with sustained efforts.

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To increase access to basic education in The Gambia.

Rationale

To achieve the objective of increased access to basic education in The Gambia, the project supported outputs aimed at lifting key constraints to access. Specific outputs included: (i) newly constructed and equipped Lower Basic School classrooms, including toilets and water and sanitation facilities and accommodations for special needs students, and newly constructed donkey carts for transporting children, supporting the intermediate outcome of easier physical access to Lower Basic Schools in rural areas with the lowest enrollment rates for all students; (ii) one-off payments to 17 Majalis (traditional religious schools) to incite and support the inclusion of mathematics and English classes, alongside the religious curriculum expanding exposure of Majali students to a basic education curriculum; and (iii) targeted in-kind enrollment incentives, second chance education for out-of-school children, and completion of a sensitization campaign and consultations directed at leaders, residents, and parents of targeted communities, all supporting the intermediate outcome of lifting demand-side constraints to Lower Basic School enrollment. Together these



supply- and demand-side interventions and anticipated intermediate outcomes were expected to boost enrollments in Lower Basic Schools.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes:

- A total of 60 Lower Basic Schools/Upper Basic Schools classrooms were built by the project's end, **achieving the original unchanged target (60)**.
- 100 donkey carts were constructed to provide basic school students with transportation to school.
- 17 Majalis received support to offer mathematics and English classes alongside the religious curriculum.
- Second chance, part-time education was provided for two cohorts of learners through The Gambia School of Opening Learning program which targets students who did not perform well and/or needed to sit for final examination in the 9th and 12th grades.
 - In the first cohort, 590 learners in six regions were supported to study for the 9th grade final exam. Following a mock examination, 98 were supported to take the 9th grade final exam.
 - Under the second cohort, 1,841 learners (1,166 female) across 30 centers prepared for the 12th grade final exam. As reported by the TTL in an interview dated February 29, 2024, the purpose of studying for and passing at least one subject in a private 12th grade final exam is to secure one more credit because that increases 12 graders' chances to be admitted at a college or university, while giving them an opportunity to deepen their knowledge in a chosen subject. A mock examination led to 935 participants to sit for at least one subject in a private 12th grade final exam in 2022 and 1,646 in 2023. In addition to the provision of lessons, the program continues to provide wrap-around self-study materials and textbooks for the grade 12 end exam curriculum.
- Communities were involved in planning and implementing targeted enrollment interventions in Region 5, as envisaged. This initiative proved to be highly successful. The MoBSE conducted sensitization workshops for communities, provided 123 Mothers' Clubs with training on the program, and signed memoranda of understanding with them. As a result of the project activities, there was increased enrollment of 44,426 ECD and LBS students in the targeted districts in Region 5. (Note: The ICR does not disaggregate total enrollment data by level, i.e., ECD and Lower Basic Schools). Moreover, communities and schools reported that there had been an increase in attendance— due in part—to the provision of the school feeding programs supported through this pilot in some of the districts.
- 100 percent of Public Lower Basic schools completed a special needs assessment by the project's end, exceeding the original unchanged target (75 percent). The project supported the development of a screening tool for better identification of children with special needs that was piloted and finalized prior to roll out of the special needs assessment. The collected disabilities data is now used to inform budgeting and planning for assistive technologies, which was highlighted as a best practice on disability inclusion.
- The regular interval evaluation of the pilot Second Chance Program found that the program was successful in improving participants' skills. The 98 second chance learners, who took the 9th grade final exam, earned high pass rates in English (90 percent passed) and social and environmental sciences (96 percent passed), and lower pass rates in science (76 percent passed) and mathematics (57 percent passed). The program demand exceeded the available spaces, which showed its high relevance. There were participants who had dropped out of school long time ago.



- A mock examination led to 935 students sitting for at least one subject in a private 12th grade final exam in 2022 and 1,646 in 2023.

Outcomes

- Gross enrollment rate in Lower Basic Schools in targeted districts in Region 5 increased from a baseline of 61.2 percent to 75.6 percent by the project's end, **exceeding the revised target** of 70.8 percent. This was an increase of 14.4 percentage points, exceeding the target increase of 9.6 percentage points (**or 150 percent achieved**).
 - The GER among males in Lower Basic Schools in targeted districts in Region 5 increased from a baseline of 53.9 percent to 63.9 percent, **fully achieving the revised target** (63.9 percent). This was an increase of 10 percentage points over the baseline (**100 percent achievement**).
- The regular interval evaluation of the pilot Second Chance Program found that the program was successful in improving participants' skills. The 98 second chance learners, who took the 9th grade final exam, earned high pass rates in English (90 percent passed) and social and environmental sciences (96 percent passed), and lower pass rates in science (76 percent passed) and mathematics (57 percent passed). The program demand exceeded the available spaces, which showed its high relevance. There were participants who had dropped out of school long time ago.
- A mock examination led to 935 students to sit for at least one subject in a private 12th grade final exam in 2022 and 1,646 in 2023.

Rating High

OBJECTIVE 3

Objective

To improve the quality of teaching and learning in The Gambia.

Rationale

To achieve the objective of improved quality of teaching and learning in The Gambia, including improved average score of the Reading Comprehension section of EGRA in grade 3 in public schools, the project supported the following outputs: (i) increased percentage of public LBS completing special needs assessment; (ii) revised core subjects curriculum of grades 1-6; (iii) increased number of teachers trained on the integrated language and literacy curriculum for grades 1-3; (iv) a revised community-based ECD model; (v) improved pupil/textbook (core subjects) ratio at public Lower Basic Schools; (vi) increased share of schools using revised Classroom Observation Tool (COT); (vii) increased number of teachers receiving tuition scholarships in UTG mathematics and science bachelor's program; (viii) externally reviewed and overseen end-of-year examination for students completing the revised Gambia College programs; (ix) increased number of diploma students who complete the Lower Basic Schools English and mathematics initiative; (x) increased number of newly qualified Lower Basic School teachers and teacher trainees assigned to a trained induction mentor; (xi) a populated central database of in-service teacher training. Together these outputs were expected to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Neither the Theory of Change (ICR p. 5) nor the project's results framework provided any articulation (or measurement) of anticipated intermediate



outcome(s) or outcomes, supported by these outputs (e.g., mastery of revised curricula, improved in-service teacher performance in terms of pedagogical and subject matter competency and practice, attendance, among others) that would have documented improved teaching quality under Objective 3 (as measured by improvements in Grade 3 EGRA results).

Outputs and intermediate outcomes:

- 100 percent of PLB schools completed a special needs assessment, **exceeding the original unchanged target** (75 percent). Trainers were trained to use the project-supported special needs screening tool and they in turn trained over 1,640 teachers and principals on developing inclusive cultures, policies, and practice. There were also 16 additional itinerant teachers recruited and the entire itinerant teacher force totaling 64 was extensively trained under the project. These teachers subsequently supported children in Madrassas and the broader network of schools in The Gambia. Also, a module on special education was incorporated into the pre-service teacher training. The schools completed the screening and collected disability data that is now integrated into the annual EMIS data collection process.
- The core subjects' curriculum of grades 1-9 was revised and finalized, **exceeding the target of revised curriculum from grades 1 to 6**, and it is now a competency-based curriculum; 85.1 percent of teachers were trained on the integrated language and literacy curriculum for grades 1-3, **not achieving the target** (100 percent). The review of core textbooks for grades 1-9 was completed. The printing and distribution of the textbooks and teachers' guides will be completed under the RISE project (P179233).
- 13,583 teachers were trained, **exceeding the end target** of 10,000; among them, 5,442 teachers were trained on the synchronized EGRA (ECD, G1-3), 2,536 - for continuous professional development, and 268 - on Progressive Science Initiative and Progressive Math Initiative (PSI-PMI), and ELA.
- The community-based ECD model was reviewed and revised, **as planned**. In addition, the minimum standards for ECD were established and are being used.
- The pupil / textbook (core subjects) ratio at public Lower Basic Schools decreased from a baseline of 4.10 to 2.75, **not achieving the original unchanged target** (1.10).
- 1,000 diploma students completed LBS English and mathematics initiative, **almost achieving the original unchanged target** (1,200); among them 60 percent were females, **exceeding the end target** (40 percent).
- 90 percent of schools used revised Classroom Observation Tool (COT), **reaching the original unchanged target**. A total of 733 head teachers and senior teachers, and 67 cluster monitors completed COT training. As reported by the task team in an interview dated February 29, 2024, the data received from the revised COT were: (i) used by the MoBSE to improve the curriculum and teacher training, (ii) shared with the teachers to improve classroom practices; and (iii) used by the Bank team in the development of the follow-on RISE project.
- A total of 124 teachers received tuition scholarships in UTG (The Gambia College) mathematics or science bachelor's program, **not achieving the original unchanged target** (300); among them, 20 percent were female teachers, **not reaching the original unchanged target** (30 percent).
- 100 newly qualified Lower Basic School teachers and teacher trainees were assigned to a trained induction mentor, **not achieving the original unchanged target** (300). The mentorship program for student teachers and newly qualified teachers was developed along with handbooks and portfolios for mentor teachers and newly qualified teachers.



- A central database of in-service teacher training was in place and populated by the project's end, **as planned**. The database specifies the most current trainings teachers have successfully completed and will be used to tabulate and track actual training financed and completed training.
- A total of 9 large-scale primary/secondary learning assessments were completed, **exceeding the original unchanged target** (4).
- **As planned**, the EMIS was expanded to cover post-secondary level to improve the availability of data throughout the system.
- Externally reviewed and overseen end-of-year examination for students completing the revised The Gambia College programs was in place, **as envisaged**. The project supported the development of The Gambia College External Competency Exam (GCECE) which was piloted in 2020 and 2021 and revisions were made to the test design and means of reporting/benchmarking. The GCECE was used as a recruitment criterion in 2022 based on the modifications. In 2022, 42 percent of The Gambia College's graduating students achieved the threshold for Lower Basic Schools recruitment, and in 2023, their share increased to 50 percent. Those that did not were not appointed as teachers but were given a report card identifying areas of weakness and were promised an opportunity to retake the exam. The Bank-supported follow-on RISE project will continue to use the GCECE through a performance-based condition to incentivize an increase in the percentage of graduating primary school teachers who score at or above minimum proficiency on GCECE with the aim of fostering higher educational standards. This activity has been transformational within the teacher training college and system in The Gambia.
- The project contributed to the government's decision to convert The Gambia College School of Education to a University of Education and to restructure pre-service teacher training, whereas three years of initial training for Lower Basic School teachers is now required to receive an advanced diploma; capacity was also built in the development of basic content courses in English and mathematics (see ICR, para 49).
- The project supported physical infrastructure improvements in The Gambia College and provided the latter and the regional In-Service Teacher Training coordinators with needed equipment and vehicles.
- A total of 473,673 students benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning, exceeding the original unchanged target (411,000); of which 50 percent were female, as originally planned. The ICR (p. 19) noted that the target was exceeded because of the project-supported activities aimed to increase enrollment and improve teaching and learning, which contributed to student retention.

Outcomes

The average score of the Reading Comprehension section of EGRA, Grade 3 in public schools decreased from a baseline of 1.23 to 0.82, **not achieving either the original target** (2.00) **or the revised target** (1.60); among female third graders, the average score decreased from a baseline of 1.20 to 0.94, **not reaching either the original target** (2.00) **or the revised target** (1.60). As noted in the ICR (p. 19), the end target for this indicator was revised downward at the time of the AF in anticipation of learning loss due to the school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the decline was greater than expected.

Although the average EGRA score for all public schools decreased, not reaching the reduced target for Grade 3 average EGRA score of 1.60 for reading comprehension, the EGRA sample included at-risk students benefiting from the project-supported, after-school remediation program focused on Reading and Math (*The Effective Intervention Remediation Program*), who outperformed their peers and actually met the 1.60 project end target on the reading comprehension section of EGRA. The Task Team informed IEG (by email of April 30) that the *Effective Intervention Remediation Program* was initiated and assessed in The Gambia prior to



the project. Results revealed a 3.2 standard deviation improvement on the composite EGRA and EGMA scores (children benefiting from the remediation program vs. control group, which did not benefit from the remediation program). Based on this positive result, The Gambia sought support to continue the remediation intervention, securing project support for its implementation in Region 5, and the support of its partner, Effective Intervention, for its implementation in Regions 3 and 4. The MoBSE is in the process of expanding the program to reach all early grade students to address the learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and to mainstream 'lessons learned' from this approach into the formal education system. The follow-on RISE project supports the 'mainstreaming' of this intervention in a select number of pilot schools.

The project strengthened institutional capacities for assessing and improving education quality. Under Component 3, the capacity for data driven decision making in the education sector was increased through MoBSE's improved capacity for data collection, system management, and assessment of learning outcomes, including (i) development and implementation of The Gambia College Eternal Competency Exam and the Classroom Observation Tool; (ii) development of a screening tool for identification of children with special needs and the annual integration of the screening data into the EMIS; (iii) implementing the Service Delivery Indicator survey, which showed that in 2020, few teachers were proficient in the curriculum they taught, specifically in English and mathematics, and in how they taught it; (iv) development and implementation of individual student IDs; and (v) implementation of the NAT and EGRA assessments. The project also supported MoBSE's development of a new competency-based curriculum for G1-9 core subjects (i.e., curriculum framework, syllabi, pupil books, teacher guides, and implementation guides). While some of these intermediate outcomes are reported to serve as tools for improving teaching quality, the ICR did not provide data or other evidence showing that the quality of teaching in the classroom has indeed improved.

In short, the overall efficacy of Objective 3 achievement is rated as negligible because (i) overall Grade 3 EGRA scores were not achieved. They actually regressed from baseline levels, largely due to learning losses attributable to COVID-19; (ii) at-risk beneficiaries of the project-supported remediation program in Region 5 achieved the reduced target for Grade 3 EGRA score of 1.60 for reading comprehension; and (iii) improved institutional capacities for assessing and improving education quality hold promise for tracking and inciting improved teacher performance and learning outcomes, but as of yet, have provided little measurement or indication of improved teacher performance/improved quality of teaching in the classroom, or of improved teacher attendance (among others), as a result of project interventions and outputs.

While the ICR reports on the "number of students who benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning," as an outcome indicator, whose target was exceeded, IEG does not consider this to be an adequate measure of improved quality of teaching and learning. Neither do the RF and Theory of Change include other relevant PDO indicators (or intermediate outcome indicators) that might have enabled the assessment of teaching and learning quality improvements under the third project objective (e.g. measures of improved teacher quality/classroom practices as a result of project outputs achieved, including improved teacher training and management, or results of the revised Teacher Observation Tool, which was applied by 90 percent of the schools).

Rating



Negligible

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Overall efficacy under the PDOs was Substantial, based on substantial achievement of the first objective (increased access to ECD), high achievement of the second objective (increased access to basic education), and negligible achievement, overall, of the third objective (improved quality of teaching and learning). Under Objective 3, increases in Grade 3 EGRA were negligibly achieved, largely because of learning losses due to COVID-related school closures. Nevertheless, project-supported remediation interventions for students at risk in Region 5 resulted in these beneficiaries' achievement of the reduced Grade ERGA target of 1.60 for reading comprehension. The ICR reported on the development and use of tools and other outputs for improving the quality of teaching, but provided no data or evidence to show whether or to what extent teaching quality improved.

During the February 29, 2024 meeting between the task team and IEG, the task team shared their views of the project's attribution/contribution and counterfactual as follows.

Attribution/Contribution. During and around the time of project implementation, there were very few donors engaged in The Gambia's education sector, the largest being the Bank, followed by MRC Holland Foundation. The Bank and GPE provided the bulk of the project funding, while the MRC Holland Foundation, UNICEF and WFP provided much smaller funding and played a complementary role. The project's achievements can be largely attributed to the Bank and GPE, on the one hand, as they provided most of the project funding and technical assistance, and The Gambia Government, on the other hand, whose commitment, active participation and expertise, were pivotal in achieving the project's results.

Counterfactual. Given the government's financial and capacity constraints, further reduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the international partners' limited engagement in The Gambia's education sector, it is unlikely that the outputs and intermediate outcomes contributing to increased access to ECD and basic education and improved quality of teaching and learning would have been achieved without this project. This includes, among others, the building of 121 classrooms, provision of transportation for ECD and basic school students, in-kind support and enrolment campaigns for out-of-school children, technical support to The Gambia College, revision of curricula, improved teacher training and competencies, as well as improved teacher recruitment and deployment, reducing learning losses associated with the COVID-19 pandemic through support for remedial initiatives, and improved availability of critical data for evidence-based decision making at the sector level, including data on students with special needs, and data on students' performance.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency



Economic efficiency. The PAD's cost-benefit analysis was limited to quantifiable benefits of the project. Based on 2015 data and strict conservative assumptions on the project's benefits, the present value of the overall project benefits was estimated to be US\$40.23 million while the present value of costs was estimated to be US\$25.08 million. The corresponding net present value (NPV) of the project benefits was US\$11.00 million. The internal rate of return (IRR) associated with this NPV was estimated to be 17.5 percent, demonstrating the rationale for investing in education in The Gambia. Moreover, the results of the PAD's sensitivity analysis showed that the project could achieve more if successfully implemented and well managed. The updated cost-benefit analysis presented in the ICR showed that the IRR at closing was 17.8 percent - similar to the estimated IRR at appraisal, confirming the project's economic viability. Despite an additional financing of about US\$1 million, the results of the disaggregated cost-benefit analysis related to enhancing access to ECD and basic education (Component 1) were lower than those estimated at appraisal, while the additional financing of over US\$6 million on quality interventions (Components 2 and 3) produced cost-benefit results at closure that were not significantly higher than those calculated at appraisal. This, however, does not suggest inefficiency given the challenging context in which the project was implemented, including the COVID-19 pandemic's negative effects, increased project costs, especially Component 1's construction costs, as well as foreign exchange rate losses and limited institutional capacities, as reported by the task team in an interview dated February 29, 2024.

Implementation efficiency. It took less than six months after project approval to reach effectiveness. The project was extended by six months to enable implementation of pending activities. By the extended project end, most of the envisaged outputs were successfully delivered and overall efficacy in achieving objectives is assessed as substantial. By project closing, almost 100 percent of the project's net financial resources (i.e., net of the US\$450,000 cancelled funds for textbooks) had successfully been disbursed. The US\$450,000 linked to the cancelled textbook contract was reimbursed in full to the Bank and reprogrammed for the follow-on RISE project. As reported by the task team in an interview dated February 29, 2024: (i) despite the foreign exchange loss in the project funding, the government was able to implement the project with the allocated budget and achieve or exceed the majority of project targets; and (ii) around 16 percent of the allocated funding to Component 3 was saved and reallocated to other project components to cover increased costs resulting from supply issues and increased prices due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including increased classrooms' construction costs under Component 1, enabling the project to build the planned 121 classrooms with the available project funding.

Some shortcomings affected implementation efficiency, although these were largely caused by factors outside the project's control and some of them were overcome. For instance, the NAT and EGRA were delayed due to the COVID-19-related school closures. The pandemic also likely led to the temporary decreases in ECD enrollment rates and learning losses that resulted in lower-than-expected achievement of the EGRA reading comprehension PDO indicator. There were initial delays in the Majali interventions, as some of the originally targeted Majalis could not provide proof of land ownership and were consequently replaced by Majalis that met this condition. Also, there were issues with the project's financial management, as some of the financial transactions had not been adequately documented by the government, which resulted in "qualified opinion" of the project's first external audit. These initial issues were, however, overcome and the remaining four external audits were all of "unqualified opinion" (i.e., clean). There were challenges with the timely printing and delivery of textbooks to LBS due to an unexpected price increase from the firm that had been hired for this purpose, although the firm indicated that the higher price was due to price increases caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine. There were also challenges within the MoBSE procurement team related to the time required to complete the international competitive bidding process for the textbooks. Despite MoBSE's and the Bank's efforts, the price increases and the reduction in printing time led to the termination of the textbook contract. Before the project ended, the task team proactively cancelled the funds (US\$450,000) that had remained for reprinting out-of-date textbooks and strategically reprogrammed them to the follow-on RISE



project. As reported by the task team in an interview dated February 29, 2024, since by the project end, textbooks could not be revised in line with the new curriculum and existing textbooks had to be reprinted, reprogramming the unused US\$450,000 for textbooks to the follow-on RISE project can be seen as an efficiency gain since these funds will be used for provision of textbooks that are revised, which will also save some costs to the government for replacing out-of-date textbooks with revised textbooks.

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

The relevance of the PDO is rated **high**, as the objectives were highly responsive to: (i) current country conditions; (ii) current development priorities of the country; (iii) and the Bank’s most recent CPF (FY2022-2026). Efficacy is rated **substantial**, based on substantial achievement of the first objective (increased access to ECD), high achievement of the second objective (increased access to basic education), and negligible achievement of the third objective (improved quality of teaching and learning). Efficiency is rated **substantial** due to favorable internal rate of return and implementation efficiency gains despite the challenging implementation environment. While Relevance is rated High and Efficacy and Efficiency are rated Substantial, the shortcomings in achieving the important third objective constitute “moderate” shortcomings in the project’s overall outcome and result in a **Moderately Satisfactory** Outcome rating.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The risk that the development outcome will not be sustained is modest, as project activities have been institutionalized throughout the education system and further support for their maintaining, improving and/or scaling up is to be provided under the follow-on Bank-supported RISE project. **First**, the new competency-based curriculum will be used as the anchor to a structured pedagogy package in the follow-on RISE project.



Second, the Mothers' Clubs will continue to function and provide in-kind support for at-risk children. **Third**, the piloted Second Chance Program will continue to offer out-of-school over-aged children with an opportunity to return to school. **Fourth**, the Teacher Competency Exam was fully institutionalized and capacity within The Gambia College was increased. **Fifth**, ECD minimum standards were established and the newly built classrooms under the project increased the access to ECD. **Sixth**, the tool for identification of children with disabilities was fully institutionalized with data entered into the EMIS and used for making policy decisions. **Seventh**, hardship allowances to teachers were fully integrated into the national budget as a standalone budget line item. **Eighth**, the EMIS was improved, and data are used to inform policy decisions. **Finally**, the follow-on RISE project will provide support to the following: (i) Mothers' Clubs to continue raising enrollment rates in Region 5; (ii) the Second Chance Program; (iii) The Gambia College and improved pass rates on The Gambia College Teacher Competency Exam; and (iv) further improvements to the EMIS to support data driven decision-making. In addition, the planned structured pedagogy package to be financed under the RISE project will seek to bring together many elements that were supported under this project, including teacher training, assessment, and inclusive education.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The Project design was based on lessons learned from the successful implementation of the READ project (P133079) as well as international and in country evidence from successful education projects, including the successful PSI-PMI initiative, as well as the 2013 Scoping Survey Report on Majalis and Quranic Memorization Centers in The Gambia, and the 2014 Evaluation Report on the CCT to 12 Majalis across the country. The design and its underlying theory of change was straightforward and focused. The project objectives were clear, outcome-oriented, highly relevant, and appropriately pitched for the government's capacity and development status of ECD and basic education in The Gambia. The project components were clearly structured, and the activities were comprehensive, complementary to each other, and selected in close collaboration with the government. The RF contained baselines and indicators that enabled tracking progress towards achieving intermediate and final outcomes. The IPF financing instrument and traditional indicators were appropriate, given the constrained macroeconomic environment that had created problems for the implementation of the DLIs in the previous READ project. The project risk was adequately assessed as substantial, with appropriate mitigation measures centered on recruitment of a well-qualified and experienced PCU, timely guidance, and capacity building.

Project implementation was mainstreamed into the government's education management system. An inter-ministerial senior management team (SMT) – comprised of MoBSE, MoHERST, permanent and deputy permanent secretaries, directors, and the PCU manager - was responsible for oversight of the sector and the project activities. The members in SMT and PCU had implemented previous Bank-financed projects and their staff remained largely unchanged since 2006, which further strengthened the project implementation readiness. The MoBSE was the key implementation agency, and the MoHERST was to be consulted for all pre-service teacher training activities. The Regional Education Directorates were given responsibility to supervise all school-related interventions via the head teachers and cluster monitors within their respective regions. The West African Exams Council in partnership with the Standards and Quality Assurance Directorate and the Planning Directorate in the MoBSE were given responsibility for assessment-related activities.



Quality-at-Entry Rating

Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Semi-annual supervision missions - staffed with education specialists, fiduciary and safeguards staff, and consultants - provided the needed technical expertise to support project implementation. In total, 10 Bank review and implementation support missions, including a mid-term review, were undertaken, averaging over two ISRs per year. The Bank team was actively engaged in supporting the government's efforts to implement the project. The Bank's team worked with the government to find appropriate solutions to implementation challenges, including the provision of help with the project's 2019 restructuring and the preparation of the AF. The supervision teams consistently reported on financial management (FM), procurement, and safeguards progress during supervision missions and worked with the MoBSE, PCU and other implementation agencies, to build their capacity in these areas. The Bank team also provided remote implementation support during the COVID-19 pandemic through weekly virtual monitoring missions. Safeguards compliance was monitored regularly. The missions also systematically documented project progress in aide memoires, back-to-office reports, and ISRs, keeping Bank management informed on progress and providing the foundation for the ICR's analysis.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The theory of change, as presented in Figure 1 (ICR, p. 5) was logically sound for the most part, with clear links between inputs, outputs, outcomes, and the PDO. However, its articulation of intermediate outcomes was not consistently complete (e.g., the lifting of supply- and demand-side constraints to access; and, especially improved teacher competencies and performance, and the uptake and effective application of outputs, as contributions to improved quality of teaching and learning). The PDO was clearly articulated at the outset and did not change. The PDO-level indicators and the intermediate results indicators that were chosen were clearly defined and provided good measures of progress and outcomes, albeit with above-noted gaps in the articulation and measurement of the results chain leading to the quality outcome indicator of improved learning outcomes. The project's M&E arrangements were closely aligned with sector priorities. MoBSE had the critical M&E function of coordination and implementation supported by the EMIS team of the Directorate of Planning. The M&E arrangements were generally adequate, although there were some inconsistencies across data sets (IHS, EMIS, etc.). M&E within the sector was to benefit from additional capacity building under Component 3 as well as strengthened data at the post-secondary level and included data collection at The Gambia College and the University of the Gambia. In addition to regular



tracking of the PDO and intermediate results indicators, the sector was to benefit from a rigorous impact evaluation on the CCT that supported Koranic centers in Region 5, an evaluation of the pilot Second Chance Program, as well as SDI survey, EGRA and NAT assessments.

b. M&E Implementation

Reporting of M&E data was carried out during the entire life of the project. The M&E data were collected and analyzed in a methodologically sound manner. The RF was revised to refine indicators, both targets and definitions. During project implementation, original baselines and targets related to objectives 1 and 2 were appropriately updated to reflect more accurately the updated EMIS data, based on 2013 census data that replaced the 2003 census data used to inform baselines and targets at appraisal. The education sector benefited from strengthened M&E capacity and improved availability of M&E data: (i) the MoBSE developed the unique student IDs and included them in the EMIS; (ii) the EGRA and NAT assessments were completed; (iii) the SDI was completed with results made available within the education system and donor community; (iv) the teacher observation tool was developed and regional administrators and teachers were trained on its use; (v) the disability screening tool was developed and training was conducted on its use; (vi) The Gambia College Eternal Competency Exam was developed; and (vii) the post-secondary school database was developed, as well. The evaluation of the pilot Second Chance Program was successfully done and it found that the program was successful in improving participants' skills, especially in English (90 percent pass rate) and social and environmental sciences (96 percent pass rate), and to a lower extent in science (76 percent passed) and in mathematics (57 percent passed). The planned evaluation on the CCT that supported Koranic centers in Region 5 was not carried out since the CCT was replaced with in-kind support.

c. M&E Utilization

Project M&E data were used to track project implementation progress, identify implementation issues, measure progress towards achieving outcomes, inform the scaling up of activities within the AF and the analysis of the ICR. The unique student IDs are used for identification of all students in the education system and monitoring individual student progress within the system. The EGRA and NAT results are used by the MoBSE to make policy decisions for remedial activities and improve teacher training programs to address student needs. The SDI and the COT are used to improve training, and were also used in the development of the follow-on RISE project. Also, the disability screening tool was used to identify children with disabilities, and it is considered best practice, while the GCECE is being used by The Gambia College to determine the level of achievement of students and by the MoBSE as a recruitment tool - a considerable achievement of the project.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards



The parent project and the AF were rated as Category 'B' partial assessment. OP/BP 4.01 "Environment Assessment" was triggered due to project activities that included construction, which could result in small to moderate site-specific negative impacts on the biophysical environment and the recipient communities. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a simplified Environmental and Social Impact assessment/Environmental Management Plans (ESIA/EMP) were prepared to provide guidelines for screening, preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the site-specific environment work. The Project also triggered OP/BP 4.12 "Involuntary Resettlement", and a Resettlement Policy Framework was prepared outlining the policies and procedures to be applied in the event of relocation. All the parent project documents were publicly disclosed. At the time of the AF, all the safeguards' policies remained unchanged, and the documents were updated and publicly disclosed.

Overall, safeguards activities included: (i) hiring an ES specialist; (ii) training of PCU staff on social assessments, ES risk management, grievance management, monitoring and reporting, and monitoring and managing contractors and subcontractors; and (iii) discussions on the ESMF and sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment (SEA/SH), SEA/SH grievance management, and Codes of Conduct for project workers and related training. Additionally, the voluntary donation of land by communities for schools was systematically verified through the Bank's supervision missions and appropriate documentation was provided, and it was discussed in training sessions. During implementation, the Bank added a corporate requirement for inclusion of Occupational Health and Safety to reflect the training of contractors hired under the project. The COVID-19 protocols were monitored, and teams were in compliance. An action plan was developed to ensure that all ES requirements and risks mitigation measures were followed. The Bank's ES team followed this closely to ensure identified issues were adequately addressed. The project's main GRM became effective in 2021. Once the GRM was established, complaints were recorded consistently and monitored for completion, although the PIU did not always escalate or flag grievances of concern to the Bank in a timely manner. The Bank discussed this frequently with the PIU and significant improvements were observed during the project period. Following discussions with the affected individuals, matters were resolved in a way that was sensitive and agreeable to the complainants. While the ICR did not make an explicit statement about the Borrower's compliance with environmental and social safeguards, IEG notes that safeguards were consistently monitored during project implementation and that Implementation Status Reports (ISRs) consistently rated safeguards compliance as Moderately Satisfactory (ICR, para. 73, p. 32).

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management (FM). According to the ICR (para 74, p. 32), the project's overall FM performance was rated Moderately Satisfactory, while overall FM residual risk rating remained Moderate. IEG also notes that ISRs consistently rated FM as Moderately Satisfactory throughout the project life. Systematic periodic reviews were undertaken to ensure adequacy and soundness of the project's FM arrangements.

Transaction reviews were periodically carried out to ascertain whether funds had been used in accordance with the conditions and standards set forth in the project's Financing and Grant Agreements and to determine if funds had been used as planned. While the project's overall FM performance was generally strong throughout implementation, there were some challenges, including: (i) incomplete monitoring and late retirement of advances/imprest given to project officers; (ii) recovery of ineligible transport refund rates paid to the project; and (iii) weak controls over imprest approval and subsequent review of retirements by project and finance officers. The project's first external audit was of "qualified opinion", revealing that some of the financial transactions had not been adequately documented by the government. Notwithstanding these initial challenges, the project's remaining four external audits were all of "unqualified opinion" (i.e.,



clean). The manual of procedures was effectively updated during project implementation. The Internal Audit Directorate provided strong fiduciary oversight of the project and periodic reports were shared with the Bank. The accounting software for the project remained functional and up-to-date, FM staffing was sound, and the unaudited interim financial reports were of adequate quality and generally submitted on time. Though four out of the 5 external project audits were of unqualified opinion, these audits pointed to the need to further strengthen the government's internal control mechanisms to ensure that project funds continued to be used effectively and efficiently. By project closing, 100 percent of the project's net financial resources (i.e., net of the US\$450,000 cancelled funds) had successfully been disbursed. The US\$450,000 linked to the cancelled textbook contract was reimbursed in full to the Bank and reprogrammed for the follow-on RISE project.

Procurement. At closing, the project's overall procurement performance was rated Satisfactory, indicating an improvement over the initial ratings of Moderately Satisfactory during the project's early years, while the associated residual risk rating remained Substantial. The project's Procurement Plan was regularly updated during the project's life and included the main interventions and deliverables procured under the project. The accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of the information in the Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) system improved significantly during project implementation, particularly the information related to contract administration, including payment, delivery, and completion of all procurable activities. The Bank's task team worked closely with the government throughout implementation to ensure that procurement activities were carried out in accordance with the agreed procedures and guidance. As a result of a concerted effort of the Bank's task team and the government, all the approved contracts - except for the printing and distribution of textbooks contracts - were reflected in the STEP tool and successfully completed prior to the project's closing. As previously mentioned, the textbook contract was terminated given the inability of the supplier to print and deliver the textbooks on time. The final comprehensive Procurement Risk Assessment and Management System (PRAMS) Assessment was carried out on April 30, 2023, and showed that the project's overall procurement performance remained Satisfactory.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

N/A

d. Other

Gender. Despite the project's measures to address the gender imbalance in education, such as provision of in-kind support, second chance education, support for *Majalis*, and having gender-disaggregated indicators with a special focus on boys, boys in The Gambia continue to have lower GER in ECD and basic education, while enrolment rates over the project period show a consistent and increasing representation of girls in education, with the share of girls in Lower Basic Education going from 52 percent to around 53 percent, and in Upper Basic Education at 55.7 percent (2.6 percent increase). In 2021, 8.1 percent of females in primary-school age were out-of-school, compared to 19.1 percent of their male counterparts. Related to that, the follow-on RISE Project (P179233) has included activities to further address gender-based differences and barriers, including gender issues affecting the Lower Basic Schools teacher workforce, access and quality



issues for boys, and to apply a gender lens to the development or review of new textbooks, structured teacher guides, teacher professional development and support activities.

Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity. While poverty reduction and shared prosperity were not part of the PDO statement, the project contributed indirectly to poverty reduction and shared prosperity by contributing to beneficiary children’s human capital formation and future earning potential through supporting the pre-primary, primary and lower secondary sub-sectors, including through in-kind donations, which were a direct response to the household survey’s findings that the cost of school was prohibitive, even though it was fee free (ICR, pp. 26-27).

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	High	Substantial	While the project reported on outputs that were poised to contribute to improvements in the quality of teaching, no evidence was provided on whether intended improvements in teaching quality were actually achieved.
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial	

12. Lessons

The ICR (pp. 35-36) presents a number of lessons generated through this project:

Education enrollment rates can be improved through targeted interventions to eliminate barriers to equal access, especially when they are well documented and tailored to a particular country context, and discussed and supported at the community level. As the experience of this project showed, enrolment can be increased through interventions that address actual needs, such as (i) providing in-kind support through community-based Mother’s Clubs, which provided more transparency at the community level and community knowledge of what the actual local needs for food, school uniforms, supplies, etc. were; (ii) provision of an innovative Second Chance Education Program; and (iii) development of tools to identify children with disabilities and use the data to inform inclusive education planning - all of which, as demonstrated by MoBSE data, helped increase enrolment rates in Region 5.

Ensuring pre-service and in-service teachers’ pedagogical competence and the measurement of teachers’ performance against quality standards are both essential for enhancing



children’s learning outcomes. The project invested in activities aimed at improving teacher competency both through pre-service and in-service teacher training, focusing on a continuum of improved teacher preparation and professional development training, and it provided technical assistance to The Gambia College School of Education to support the staff and build management capacity. At the pre-service stage, the share of aspiring teachers completing the revised The Gambia College programs who pass the externally reviewed and overseen end-of-year examination (i.e., pre-service teachers who meet the 50 percent benchmark in teaching literacy and numeracy) increased from 42 percent in 2022 to 50 percent in 2023; and the passing of the GCECE was used as a recruitment criterion in 2022. Additionally, the development of a college-based practicum model for student teachers and a school-based mentorship program were important investments in improvements in teacher competency, which is a pre-requisite for improved classroom practices and better learning outcomes.

Hardship allowances can have a transformative effect on the equitable distribution of teachers. The project provided hardship allowances for lower and upper basic education teachers in remote areas with additional incentives for female teachers, which had a strong, positive impact on the proportion of qualified teachers in hardship schools. This major achievement resulted in the government’s decision in 2023 to add a line item in the budget for the hardship allowance.

Non-formal pathways to education are difficult to sustain without greater efforts to institutionalize the approach and to clarify and strengthen accountability for results. Although the effort to offer reading and mathematics sessions at *Majalis* was important given the lack of state curriculum in these institutions, the intervention did not move beyond the initial pilot stage. However, in neighboring Senegal which has a similar intervention initially based on The Gambia intervention, and supported by the Bank, the government has managed to greatly scale the intervention over time. This difference might be partly explained by the approach in Senegal which utilizes performance-based contracts between the state and the Koranic schools, which in turn allows for results agreements and better monitoring and accountability.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was well written and candid. It provided a detailed overview of the project. The evidence was of adequate quality and sufficient to reach conclusions in assessing the achievement of the PDO. The ICR contained a well-articulated theory of change that helps the reader understand how the ratings were reached. The report sought to triangulate data to reach conclusions and was focused on results. The lessons presented in the report were clear, evidence-based, and useful for difficult contexts. The ICR adhered to the guidelines overall, with some minor shortcomings, such as (i) the ICR’s discussion of efficacy lacked an assessment of attribution/contribution and the counterfactual, and (ii) an inconsistency in the reported pupil-textbook (core subjects) ratio at public LBS – in the RF, the achieved ratio was reported to be 1.27, whereas the ICR Efficacy section (para 47) reported that it was 2.75. These, however, were promptly addressed by the task team on 02-29-24. The ICR’s Efficacy section, in para 36, based the assessment of the achievement of the first objective



“Increase access to ECD” on indicators that relate to the second objective “Increase access to basic education” (e.g., ‘number of Lower Basic Schools and Upper Basic Schools classrooms built’ or ‘increase in GER at Lower Basic Schools in select districts’), and vice versa (para 39). The ICR did not include an explicit statement confirming the Borrower’s compliance with environmental and social safeguards.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial