



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 09-Dec-2021 | Report No: PIDC32890

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

Country Maldives	Project ID P177768	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Maldives Atoll Education Development Project (P177768)
Region SOUTH ASIA	Estimated Appraisal Date Jun 06, 2022	Estimated Board Date Aug 30, 2022	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Ministry of Finance	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

Enhance access to, and quality of, secondary education.

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

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

DETAILS**World Bank Group Financing**

International Development Association (IDA)	9.00
IDA Grant	9.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Counterpart Funding	1.00
Borrower/Recipient	1.00



Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Maldives is an island state comprising nearly 1,200 coral islands grouped into 26 atolls, spread across roughly 90,000 square kilometers of the Indian Ocean.** The Maldivian population, about 540,500 as of 2020, is widely dispersed across the islands, many of them remote and physically vulnerable to inundation from rising sea levels, coastal storms, and flooding. Nearly 80 percent of the total land area of the country, which is less than 300 square kilometers, is lower than 1 meter above mean sea level. The country's exposure to natural hazards and climate variability poses a threat to lives and the economy. Maldives is expected to suffer a total loss of GDP due to climate change of 2.3 percent by 2050, and 12.6 percent by 2100, the highest impact in South Asia.¹ More than 30 percent of the population lives in the capital city, Malé, while the rest are distributed across 200 other inhabited islands.

2. **Maldives is classified as an upper-middle-income country with gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US\$7,455 (2020).**^{1F2} Real GDP decreased by about 30 percent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has been recovering rapidly and is expected to grow by around 20 percent in 2021. In 1980, Maldives was among the poorest countries in the world with a GDP per capita of US\$268; it is now on track to reach high-income status in the next decade. This sustained economic growth has resulted in significant poverty reduction, and Maldives performs well on poverty outcomes compared to its regional, income, and small island peers. Tourism has been key to Maldives' development success. Tourism directly and indirectly contributes to two-thirds of the Maldivian economy, 80 percent of exports, and at least 40 percent of state revenue collections. Despite limited backward links to local island economies, the 'one island, one resort' model has been successful in attracting a large volume of foreign direct investment and foreign exchange earnings from tourism. The high share of tourism in the economy is both a strength and a limitation. While it has lifted economic standards and living conditions, it has also made the Maldivian economy highly vulnerable to developments that affect the tourism sector and the direct and indirect transmission of these effects to other sectors of the economy.

3. **Maldives has been one of the hardest-hit economies in the world from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.** The Government of Maldives (GoM) took active steps to limit the spread of the disease to its population, restricting the entry of travelers from affected countries in 2020-21, including full border closures at times. These containment measures had significant, adverse impacts on the Maldivian economy, state revenues, and the livelihoods of many households whose incomes depend directly or indirectly on the tourism sector. However, the measures introduced by GoM to contain the COVID-19 pandemic have been successful with the number of cases detected falling to very low levels. This has enabled the Maldives to re-open the country, resulting in a substantial increase in tourist arrivals and generating a strong economic recovery. The COVID-19 pandemic also forced a prolonged period of school closure resulting in the school term shifting by about 6 months. The GoM is taking active measures to reduce school drop-out and learning loss through programs to follow-up out of school children and promote learning through alternative learning pathways.

¹ World Bank and ADB (2021), Maldives Country Climate Risk Profile; ThinkHazard.org

² World Development Indicators 2020.



Robust digitized learning programs that facilitate uninterrupted online teaching during potential future shocks, such as climate-related disasters, will help build resilience in the education sector beyond the pandemic.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

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

5. **Over the last few decades, the Maldives has had several notable achievements, particularly in terms of access to education.** Today, access to foundation and primary education are at near universal levels, a remarkable achievement for a country in which only 15 percent of children were enrolled in primary school three decades ago. Gender parity at the foundation and primary education levels are high. At the stage of primary education (grades 1-7)⁴, the net enrolment rate among both female and male students was almost 100 percent in 2019. At the lower secondary education stage (grades 8-10), the net enrolment rate among female students and among male students was again nearly 100 percent. At the stage of higher secondary education (grades 11-12) the overall net enrollment rate is 37 percent. Among female students the net higher secondary education enrollment rate is 56 percent and among boys 21 percent. The low enrollment rate at higher secondary education level is mainly due to an inadequate number of students successfully completing secondary education to obtain places in higher secondary education and to a limited number of schools that offer higher secondary education in the country.

6. **The quality of general education needs to be strengthened, and with a special focus on the outer atolls.** The most recent National Assessments of Learning Outcomes (NALO) conducted in 2017 showed that learning outcomes are moderate, with considerable regional disparities between Male' and the outer atolls. The average scores for English, mathematics and Dhivehi for Grade 4 and Grade 7 students ranged between 50 to 60 percent. For the first language, Dhivehi, approximately 19 percent of Grade 4 and 6 percent of Grade 7 students failed to achieve a minimum score of 40 percent. Similarly, about 27 and 35 percent of Grade 4 and Grade 7 students failed to achieve a minimum score of 40 percent in English. In mathematics, approximately 20 and 33 percent of students in Grade 4 and Grade 7 failed to achieve a score of 40 percent. Moreover, a comparison of the time trend of results show that progress has been mixed. Between 2015 and 2017, Dhivehi results declined for Grade 4 students but improved for Grade 7 students. In English, there was no significant change in either grade. In mathematics, Grade 4 results did not show much change, but significant improvement was seen in Grade 7. There are also clear geographical disparities in learning outcomes: Laamu Atoll performed well below all others, followed by atolls such as Raa, Alifu Dhaalu, Faafu, and Noonu. In contrast, Greater Malé, Seenu and Gnaviyani Atolls had the best performance.

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

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



7. The **Maldives also needs to strengthen support for children with special education needs (SEN)**. About 3,200 students in 212 government schools across the country need an Individual Education Plan (IEP), either based on the confirmed diagnosis or on suspicion of having special educational needs. The Maldives has made progress towards promoting the inclusion of SEN children in the education system. However, more support is needed. There is a shortage of adequately trained teachers for SEN, and the capacity of the MoE to develop SEN policy and programming also needs to be improved. Sufficient physical resources, such as space and equipment for SEN children, is a challenge in most schools. A critical aspect of improving the country's SEN program is the training of teachers. School teachers require specialized training to identify/initially screen children with SEN, and then plan interventions for these children.

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

9. **The GoM Education Sector Plan (ESP) has four main goals.** The first goal is to improve learning for all through equitable access to quality education. The main results the GoM seeks to achieve under this goal are to ensure that all children from pre-school through grade 12 are enrolled in school, learning gaps across atolls are reduced, and overall learning outcomes are improved. The second goal is to provide youth and adults with the necessary skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The third goal is to ensure equitable access to lifelong learning and a high-quality higher education for all. The fourth and final goal is to improve the capacity of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), and atoll and island⁵ level education institutions, to deliver high quality education. Under the first goal the MoE has been expanding the number of schools providing higher secondary education in the atolls. Under the second goal the GoM is planning to strengthen English language learning of students, as this is a vital skill for employment in the dominant tourism sector. In addition, GoM is seeking to improve science and mathematics education in the school curriculum, as a foundation for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education, and to strengthen vocational education (VE) options in schools.

10. The MoE is being supported under the Learning Advancement and Measurement Project (LAMP) financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to improve English, mathematics and Dhivehi learning in foundation and primary education during the period 2020-2023. The LAMP supports 110 out of the 212 schools in the Maldives. The LAMP supports SBPD, quality assurance and NALO activities at the primary education level. The proposed Atoll Education Development Project (AEDP) will build on the LAMP and expand support to the Maldivian education system at the secondary education level as well as extend the LAMP initiatives to the remaining schools not covered by the LAMP.

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



Relationship to CPF

11. **The proposed Project is aligned to the World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Maldives (Report No. 103724-MV), updated by the Performance Learning Review of the CPF FY16–FY20 (Report No. 123696- MV), specifically its first Focus Area: Promoting Economic Opportunities for Maldivians.** Education is specifically identified as an important area of support under this objective. Through human capital development, the Project will increase economic opportunities for young people and promote equitable economic and human development in the country. The Project is also aligned to the priorities identified in the recent Systematic Country Diagnostics Update. The Project supports the following priority areas: (i) enhancing opportunities for the local population to benefit from existing industries; (ii) enabling opportunities for creation of new sources of growth; and (iii) jobs, environment preservation and resilience to climate change, and governance. Under the first priority area, the Project supports the development of learning outcomes in priority disciplines that will enable youth, upon completion of their education to access jobs in industries. Under the second priority area, the Project supports increasing access to and improving the quality of education at the secondary level leading to increased educational attainment of Maldivian youth, and under the third priority area the Project will demonstrate solutions in the education sector to enhance resilience to climate change and reduce GHG emissions

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Enhance access to, and quality of, secondary education.

Key Results (From PCN)

12. Following are the key results: (i) increased net enrollment rate in higher secondary education; (ii) improved English language learning in secondary grades; (iii) improved mathematics learning in secondary grades; (iv) improved science learning in secondary grades; (v) teachers complete improved continuing teacher development programs for English, mathematics, science, vocational education, and the green school initiative; (vi) improved school performance as measured through quality assurance evaluations. Baseline, annual and end line targets will be set during project preparation. All indicators will be tracked and reported by gender where relevant and applicable.

13. Baseline, annual and end line targets will be set during project preparation. All indicators will be tracked and reported by gender where relevant and applicable.

D. Concept Description

14. **The Project is expected to directly benefit about 69,000 students, including around 3,000 children with special education needs, and approximately 8,000 teachers.** In addition, the Project will indirectly benefit suppliers of education material and equipment, and later on employers and tertiary education institutions that will receive better qualified secondary school completers.

Component 1. Enhancing Curriculum Delivery

15. **The delivery of the secondary education curriculum will be enhanced to improve the quality of secondary education and to promote participation in higher secondary education.** First, there will be a focus on improving the English language skills of students. It will also open a variety of future job opportunities for students, including in the key tourism industry and related services. Second, mathematics and science learning will be strengthened in the school curriculum to promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Mathematics and science and are increasingly important in the modern knowledge-based economy. Science will also increase environmental



awareness among students by incorporating learning on mitigation (e.g. food waste, energy efficiency, and recycling). Improved English language, mathematics and science learning levels will better prepare secondary school completers for higher secondary education. Third, the vocational education (VE) option will be strengthened in the school curriculum. This option will directly target the skills in demand in the local economy, defined as the atoll in which the school is located, as well as the national economy. Fourth, emphasis will be placed on developing green jobs skills that can advance sustainability transformations in key sectors, including tourism and allied services. The implementation of the Fehi Madharusa (green school) initiative will help raise awareness to reduce adverse environmental footprints, promote eco-literacy, enhance climate literacy and support students' emergency preparedness and response measures. Improvements in the quality of education at the secondary education level will also enable more students to qualify for higher secondary education, enabling increased participation in higher secondary education.

16. **The Project will increase the resources available for the teaching and learning of science, mathematics, English and vocational education.** The Project will support the development of science laboratories and vocational education workshops through the refurbishment of classrooms and the provision of equipment and technology in strategically selected secondary schools in the atolls. In addition, the Project will assist the expansion of ICT equipment and technology in atoll schools. The science laboratories, ICT facilities and vocational education workshops will incorporate green designs, such as the installation of solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems, and improved insulation that allows for energy efficiency and makes classrooms more resilient to rising temperatures. The refurbishment of facilities will take account of the learning needs of SEN students. The Project will also support digitization efforts, including online teaching systems for English language, mathematics, science and vocational education subjects to support uninterrupted learning during natural disasters.

Component 2: Continuing Teacher Development

17. **The component will assist GoM to carry out a program of continuing teacher development activities.** First, the component will assist the National Institute of Education (NIE), with the support of the Teacher Resource Centers (TRCs), to implement targeted teacher development programs (TDPs) for schools. The focus of these TDPs will be on improving subject content knowledge, pedagogical practices, career guidance skills, learning needs of SEN students, and climate change preparedness / emergency response of teachers. Through the outcomes defined in English, mathematics, and science subjects, teachers will be guided to use a skillful mix of learning and teaching approaches and instructional strategies, including activity-based learning, to stimulate children and promote an exciting and enjoyable learning experience. Teachers will also be guided in developing curricular materials and pedagogical practices for vocational education, including techniques such as hands-on problem solving, cooperative and team-based project learning, and activities that draw on knowledge and skills from various domains. An effective classroom assessment system to identify and assess the knowledge, understanding and skills students are developing in the classroom in each curriculum area will be incorporated, and teachers trained well for classroom assessment. Teachers will also be trained to provide career guidance to students. Special attention will be given to guiding students, and especially male students, to participate in appropriate higher secondary education subjects. The TDPs will be informed by the COACH⁶ principles to tailor the support to teachers to improve their teaching. Innovative approaches for the delivery of TDP, including blended approaches through online/ apps on smartphones will be supported under the Project.

18. **The component will also support School-based Professional Development (SBPD) of teachers to continuously improve teacher motivation, pedagogical skills, competencies and performance.** The SBPD program will focus on: (a) raising the ability of school principals and senior management teams to establish a learning culture within the school with

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



specific reference to English, mathematics, science and vocational education; (b) improve teacher motivation for their work; (c) enhance teacher performance by achieving required teacher competencies and improving their pedagogical practices; and (d) link teacher development activities to addressing student learning needs, including the needs of SEN students. SBPD is known from the international education literature to be the most effective mechanism for the continuous professional development of teachers. The NIE will measure (a) to (d) above through SBPD reports provided by the SBPD focal points in schools. The component will also support research to evaluate the SBPD practices in schools and their effectiveness in relation to improving student learning in the science, mathematics, English, and vocational education in the atoll schools. The Banks' Teach⁷ tool will be used as part of this evaluation to track and improve teaching quality.

Component 3: Measuring and Enhancing School and System Performance

19. **The component will help GoM to carry out a program of activities designed to support measurement of school performance through quality assurance (QA) reviews consisting of both self-evaluation by schools and external evaluations by the Quality Assurance Department (QAD).** The school self-evaluations will be conducted by stakeholders including principals, teachers, parents and local communities. This will enable extensive citizen engagement, including consultations, collection of stakeholder feedback, community participation in planning and decision making, and grievance redressal mechanisms. The QA process also provides opportunities for stakeholders, such as the principal, teachers, students, parents, and the local community to participate in planning and implementation of school development plans. The results of the quality assurance process will feed back into the school development plan, that would include the development of safe shelters in schools as part of the community disaster management plan, when necessary. The Project will provide school grants to enable schools to implement the recommendations of QA reviews to improve learning. The analysis of stakeholders' feedback will also examine gender related issues, so that timely action can be taken where needed. The needs of students, staff and stakeholders and management responses will also be incorporated in the school development plans. The relevant information on the implementation of these plans will be shared with the stakeholders. This QA process constitutes the citizen engagement mechanism for the Project.

20. **The component will support the design and implementation of science, mathematics and English national assessments of learning outcomes in secondary grades and strengthen the capacity of policy makers and education specialists to incorporate the findings from the assessments for strategic policy and management decisions.** In addition, the Project will support academics in higher education institutions to undertake policy analyses using the information and data from the assessments. National and international assessments of learning outcomes are the main instruments for assessing education systems and formulating education policies in OECD and middle-income countries. National assessments are useful to analyze: (a) the quality of learning in relation to the national curriculum; (b) strengths and weaknesses in knowledge and cognitive skills in the education system; (c) the learning levels of students across different atolls and islands; (d) educational and socio-economic factors associated with student learning outcomes; and (e) the evolution of learning achievements over time. International assessments are useful to analyze the quality of learning in the education system in relation to international levels. National and international assessments provide complementary information about the performance of education systems. The national assessments will be aligned to the UN's global proficiency framework⁸ and will include modules of test items drawn from international assessments such as PISA and/or TIMSS.

Component 4: Coordination, Monitoring, Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

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

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



21. **This component will assist GoM to carry out coordination, operations and monitoring support, capacity building and technical assistance, and communications in relation to the Project.** The Policy Planning and Research Division (PPRD) in the MoE will oversee activities under this component. The PPRD in the MoE will utilize expertise for implementation support and monitoring linked to the components of the AEDP. These will include experts with high-quality expertise and a proven track record of performance in the relevant areas. Expertise will also be drawn from universities and higher education institutions, and from consultant firms, as applicable.

22. **This component will also support capacity building of staff in the MoE, including in the NIE, QAD and PPRD, in areas relevant for their mandates.** The NIE and QAD and other relevant departments will also be provided with technical expertise for monitoring and implementation to achieve the Project’s development objectives. An early activity to be undertaken by the NIE will be a review of the school curriculum in the light of recent implementation experience. Finally, under this component, technical assistance will be provided for development and dissemination of any communications material needed to effectively implement and enhance the effectiveness of the Project.

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

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

23. The environmental and social risk rating for the proposed project is assessed as moderate at the concept stage in line with the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). In terms of physical interventions, the Project will provide finances to set up STEM laboratories and vocational skills workshops through the refurbishment of classrooms, the provision of equipment and technology, and the delivery of teaching-learning material including textbooks and supplementary reading material. In addition, the Project will assist the development of ICT laboratories, especially through the delivery of equipment and technology. Based on the project components identified at the concept stage, the overall environmental risks of the project are expected to be Moderate. Associated environmental impacts include (i) generation of e-waste; (ii) minimal risks of potential fire hazards; (iii) arrangements to ensure that sound management is undertaken over the lifetime use of products. These risks will be managed in line with the regulations of the Maldives Waste Management Department and Environmental Protection Agency.

24. Social risks and impacts could be considered moderate given the increased risks due to the presence of children when civil works are done in school environments as the school becomes open to outsiders. There could be increased health and safety risks for children due to construction hazards leading to accidents & injuries, exposure to COVID19 infection from project workers and even risks around child abuse and harassment. In addition, construction works could disturb ongoing school activities. There is also possible risk of exclusion of vulnerable and eligible schools in remote Island/Atolls including teachers benefiting from the support of the project if the criteria are designed in an equitable manner and if selection processes are not done in a transparent manner. Hence before any building works are undertaken, the project will assess and seek to safeguard any risks to children and prepare construction work plans in consultation with school officials to minimize disruptions to school activities. Further all contractors will implement strict health and safety protocols including ensuring that workers are vaccinated, adhere to a child protection guideline and sign a Code of Conduct. Finally, the project will ensure the selection of schools for support and teachers for training will be done in an equitable and a



transparent manner in consultation with key stakeholders. A Grievance Redress Mechanism will also be in place to address any grievances including a GRM for project workers.

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