



Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary

Appraisal Stage

(ESRS Appraisal Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 05/27/2021 | Report No: ESRSA01449



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Region	Project ID	Parent Project ID (if any)
Lesotho	AFRICA EAST	P175065	
Project Name	Basic Education Strengthening Project (BESP)		
Practice Area (Lead)	Financing Instrument	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Education	Investment Project Financing	3/30/2021	8/26/2021
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)		
The Kingdom of Lesotho	Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Social Development		

Proposed Development Objective

To improve student retention and teaching quality in junior secondary schools in targeted regions of Lesotho and support the roll out of a new curriculum to strengthen ECCD service delivery

Financing (in USD Million)	Amount
Total Project Cost	7.10

B. Is the project being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project [including overview of Country, Sectoral & Institutional Contexts and Relationship to CPF]

The Basic Education Strengthening Project (BESP) aims to improve student retention and quality of education in junior secondary education in regions that have high-poverty and high-dropout rates and strengthening key areas of the ECCD sub-sector. To this end, the project supports activities that are priorities for the MoET currently within the context of its ESSP. These priorities include: (i) improving the retention of students in junior secondary education; (ii) scaling up the online teacher training program for junior secondary education teachers in Mathematics and Science; and (iii) a greater focus on strengthening access to and the quality of ECCD. The project is also closely aligned with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) FY2016-2020 and the human capital agenda which is a prominent priority in the



CPF. Specifically, the proposed operation is in line with CPF Focus Area 1 – improving efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector. Among the four strategic objectives under this focus area, the proposed project will directly contribute towards the objective of improving basic education outcomes.

The project supports three components. Component 1 will focus on improving the retention of students in targeted junior secondary education who have a high risk of dropping out due to a whole host of issues including poverty and the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Under Component 1, sub-component 1.1 focuses on expanding cash transfers to poor households to alleviate the economic burden of junior secondary education and motivate them to keep their children in school using the existing Orphans and Vulnerable Children Bursary (OVC-B) program and the Child Grant Program (CGP), both of which are managed and implemented by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD). Through the CGP, the project provides a bonus payment to households from the targeted regions, which suffer from high poverty and high dropout rate. Households receive a bonus payment when their child transitions to a secondary school. For the OVC-B program, based on the assessment of policies and practices which may affect the OVC-B program, the project will finance system and process adjustments to the OVC-B program and improve the targeting mechanism. Finally, communication and advocacy campaigns will be conducted to bring awareness of the CGP bonus payment and OVC-B program and increase the role of School Based Management Committees (SBMC) and communities in making schools accountable for students' school attendance. This sub-component also finances the cost of project management and capacity development for the MoSD. Under sub-component 1.2, the project will evaluate and scale up initiatives on youth groups (e.g. boys' and girls' clubs) in order to equip adolescent children with life-skills, reproductive health knowledge and other relevant areas that will help them make informed life choices including in regards to their schooling. Sub-component 1.3 scales up online teacher training program for junior secondary mathematics and science teachers. This training will build on the Progressive Mathematics Initiative and Progressive Science Initiative (PMI-PSI) approach that has been implemented in 27 schools supported under LEQEP.

Component 2 provides system strengthening support to the ECCD sub-sector in key areas that are critical to improving children's access to quality of early childhood education. The component will scale up implementation of the new curriculum and developing a costed and comprehensive expansion strategy for ECCD in Lesotho. Component 3 provides project management, capacity building and technical assistance support to enhance the MoET's capacity to implement the project and ultimately to improve access to high quality education for some of the most vulnerable children in Lesotho.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1. Detailed project location(s) and salient physical characteristics relevant to the E&S assessment [geographic, environmental, social]

The country is entirely surrounded by South Africa. It has a population of about 2.1 million that is growing at a modest rate of 1.3 percent annually. Lesotho is predominantly mountainous, with the highlands and mountain zones covering approximately 59% of the total land area. This land is mostly characterized by steep slopes with fragile soil formations which are extensively degraded. The highlands cover approximately 15% of the country, while the lowlands and Senqu (Orange) River Valley make up approximately 17% and 9% of the country, respectively. In terms of physical characteristics, the topography of some beneficiary schools is mainly mountainous, inaccessible and remote.



The country's population is youthful, with 76 percent being below the age of 36. It is an open economy, traditionally centered on subsistence agriculture, with textiles, water, and diamonds as its main exports. An estimated 57 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line and 34 percent fall below the extreme poverty line. A wide (30 percent) poverty gap, high rates of unemployment, wide prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and climate vulnerability further constrain the scope for inclusive growth and improvements in living standards. The unemployment challenge is more severe among youth living in rural areas, those with low levels of education, and women. While gender gaps in education have narrowed, dropout of girls remains a problem, and tends to increase after primary school as the pressures of poverty, and traditional gender roles, often push girls into early marriage or intergenerational relationships. Further, pregnancy among adolescent girls is observed as a key driver of dropping out of school. The high rate of teenage pregnancy in Lesotho is a key contributing factor for poor outcomes in early childhood. In addition to its negative impact on girls' education (about 11 percent of girls who drop out of secondary education in Lesotho do so as a result of pregnancy) and the resulting risk of HIV/AIDS. With prevalence of GBV in the country overall, high rates of HIV infection, poor quality and limited access to GBV services, and the lack of specific policies or initiatives to address sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), children may find school unsafe and choose to drop-out.

The proposed project activities aim to address some of these existing social risks in the country through improving student retention and teacher quality in junior secondary schools in targeted constituencies throughout the country and pilot specific interventions to strengthen early childhood and care development (ECCD) service delivery. The project will support the following activities (a) Component 1: Improve transition to and retention of students in junior secondary education by (i) providing assistance to families to remove financial barriers to secondary education (cash transfer activities), (ii) supporting adolescent boys and girls through youth clubs and equip them with relevant life-skills and reproductive health knowledge to ensure that they stay in school, and (iii) strengthening online teacher training for math and science teachers in junior secondary schools; (b) Component 2: Piloting innovative models to explore options to strengthen ECCD service delivery by (i) piloting the revised curriculum in reception classes and ECCD centers, (ii) mapping of ECCD service providers and strengthening monitoring and support systems; (c) Component 3: Project management, capacity building and technical assistance.

It is expected that the Project will be mainly positive impacts and will be beneficial for the country as its aim is to improve student retention and teacher quality in targeted schools and to address the equity issues and social inclusion of vulnerable groups.

D. 2. Borrower's Institutional Capacity

With the exception to sub-component 1.1 (cash transfer), the Project will be implemented by the MoET, supported by the existing Project Facilitation Unit (PFU) which is responsible for the implementation of the ongoing Lesotho Education Quality Enhancement Project (LEQEP- P156001) and Lesotho Basic Education Improvement Project (LBEIP – P160090) approved under the Environmental and Social Safeguard Policies. The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) will implement sub-component 1.1. on supporting cash transfer scheme for students from low income households. In implementing this activity, the PFU within MoSD will collaborate closely with PFU within MoET. Notably, MoSD maintains a current PFU due to an ongoing WB-supported project in social protection sector. Although both PFUs have some experience in handling projects processed under the Bank's safeguards operational policies and procedures, their capacity remains limited due to lack of E&S staffing as well as absence of experience with World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). A dedicated Environmental and Social Specialist will be hired by the MoET.



Knowledge and understanding of ESF/ESSs' objectives and requirements of decision makers in MoET and MoSD, technical and, operational staff is relatively weak and will have to be supported by appropriate level of sensitization and capacity building intervention at the various stages of project implementation. The Bank will provide targeted capacity and support for environmental and social risk management to the PFU and other implementing partners during project preparation and implementation stages.

Any capacity gaps and strengthening measures, including training workshops in E&S risk management will be detailed in the Environment and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP).

II. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL (ES) RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

Moderate

Environmental Risk Rating

Low

The Project's Environmental Risk Rating is classified as Low due to the nature of the proposed interventions. During the Concept stage, the proposed environmental risk rating for the Project was classified as Moderate. This was due to construction works being envisaged, the works have since been removed from the scope of the project, leading to the change in the environmental risk rating from Moderate to Low. Overall, the project activities are focusing on capacity building type of activities including supporting a cash transfer scheme for students from poor households; youth awareness programmes; piloting and evaluating the new ECCD curriculum and mapping ECCD providers; as well as project management support. The Project will not support development of any physical infrastructure. However, under Sub-component 1.3: Strengthening online training models in Mathematics and Science for junior secondary school teachers, there will be some activities involving procurement of some ICT hardware (laptops) to scale up ongoing online teacher training initiatives on math and sciences. Additionally, under the same subcomponent, the Project will support the procurement of portable solar panels for teachers who do not have access to electricity at schools. The repairs, servicing and end-of-life disposal of ICT equipment and solar panels may result in environmental risks related to electronic wastes (e-wastes), hazardous waste and solid wastes if not managed appropriately. Environmental best practices shall be in place for managing repairs and end-of-life disposal of ICT equipment and solar panels involved in the online training programme. The type and amount of such equipment required, the associated cycle of replacement or upgrades, existing e-waste, hazardous and solid waste management measures in project implementing entities, regulatory framework, and in-country capacities, vendors, agencies to manage end of life disposal of electronic equipment, solar panels and parts will be analyzed during project preparation. As such, and in order to ensure the management of e-waste and other hazardous waste, the Project Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) will include a Waste Management Plan (WMP) proportionate to the level of risk. The WMP will include some simple technical guidelines on how to manage and arrange for the disposal of ICT equipment and solar panels (end-of-life and during repairs) in accordance with the requirements of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal which Lesotho is signatory to. All in all, the project activities are not expected to have any major adverse impact on the environment and human health. No long-term or irreversible adverse impacts are expected from project implementation. The potential adverse environmental impacts are minimal and there are no significant adverse risks which are complex, diverse, sensitive or unprecedented. The environmental risk rating will be reviewed periodically throughout the project life cycle to ensure that it continues to accurately reflect the level of risk that the



project presents. The ESCP for the Project includes measures to strengthen the MoET and MoSD’s capacities to manage Project environmental risks and impacts.

Social Risk Rating

Moderate

Proposed social risk is Moderate. Notably, the social risk rating during concept note stage for the proposed project was Substantial. Currently, at the appraisal stage, a Moderate risk rating is proposed due to following reasons: (i) project activities will no longer include any type of civil works, which means that there will be no risks or impacts associated with ESS5 such as physical or economic displacement; (ii) based on the Bank’s GBV/SEA/SH country-level risk assessment rating, the social risks of Sexual Exploitation/Harassment and GBV are rated as moderate; and (iii) project activities, by their very nature, serve as positive extenuation of some of the existing GBV risks in the country (such activities include assistance to low income households to achieve education outcomes/school retention; providing support to youth clubs within schools that serve as “safe space” to empower adolescent girls and boys to enable them to make informed decisions equipping them with relevant life-skills, information and knowledge, etc.). Thus, the project itself would not directly or indirectly cause or contribute to any of the pre-existing social issues related to gender-based violence, and in fact, would attempt to ultimately contribute to their mitigation through improving educational outcomes and school retention rates for girls and boys. Nonetheless, the project preparation took into account contextual risks of GBV as well as importance of safe environment schools, and a GBV Action Plan (as part of ESMF) has been prepared. The GBV Action Plan is proportionate to the GBV risks posed directly by the project activities (which are low to minimal), as well as cognizant of the broader GBV issues in education sector in Lesotho. Ongoing public health crisis due to COVID-19 also contributes to social risks. Social risks, therefore, mainly emanate on two fronts: (1) limited E&S capacity of the PFUs within MoET and MoSD; and (2) ensuring appropriate engagement with local communities and other relevant stakeholders (including with most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and ensuring their genuine stakeholder participation in decision-making processes of the project (especially those related to cash transfer sub-component). The following Standards will be particularly relevant to address social risks -- ESS 1, ESS2, and ESS 10. The Project does not pose any social risks associated with ESS7. The following instruments have been prepared and disclosed: draft Stakeholder Engagement Plan, and Environmental and Social Management Framework (which includes GBV Action Plan and Labor Management Procedures, all proportionate to the project risks). The ESCP for the project also includes measures for monitoring the ESF commitments of both MoET and MoSD, as well as requirements for E&S staffing and collaboration between these two entities with regard to sub-component 1.1 on cash transfer program. Component 3 of the project envisions project management, capacity building and technical assistance support to both PFUs in MoET and MoSD.

Public Disclosure

B. Environment and Social Standards (ESSs) that Apply to the Activities Being Considered

B.1. General Assessment

ESS1 Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Overview of the relevance of the Standard for the Project:

ESS1 is relevant to the Project.

Regarding environmental impacts, the current proposed project activities will not involve any civil works or construction of physical infrastructures that could potentially result in significant and irreversible adverse environmental impacts and risks. However, under Sub-component 1.3: Strengthening online training models in Mathematics and Science for junior secondary school teachers, there will be some activities supporting to



procurement of some ICT hardware (laptops) and portable solar panels. The repairs, servicing and end-of-life disposal of ICT equipment and solar panels may result in environmental risks related to electronic wastes (e-wastes), hazardous waste and solid wastes if not managed appropriately.

Potential downstream impacts of the project include potential environmental impacts regarding community health and safety. Sub-component 1.2 plans for interventions including educational program on health awareness including topics such as basic health, nutrition, hygiene, etc. that will decrease health and safety risks of the target audience of the education programs.

To mitigate for potential adverse environmental impacts, the MoET and MoSD will prepare an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) by project appraisal. The ESMF will include a Waste Management Plan (WMP) proportionate to the level of risk. The WMP will include applicable technical guidelines on how to manage e-waste and hazardous waste including storage, collection, transport, reuse, recycling, and disposal in accordance with the requirements of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal which Lesotho is signatory to. The ESMF will also include Labor Management Procedures (LMP) and GBV Action Plan. Furthermore, the ESMF will include a negative list and provide guidance on screening for potential risks and on managing unavoidable environmental and social impacts. Any sub-project classified as Substantial or High Risk will be ineligible. The draft ESMF will be publicly disclosed, both in-country and on the World Bank's website before appraisal.

An inclusive stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) has been prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders. However, the COVID 19 pandemic poses a challenge for stakeholder engagement and disclosure of information, and stakeholder engagement and consultation processes will be guided by the World Bank's "Technical Note: Public Consultations and Stakeholder Engagement in WB-supported operations when there are constraints on conducting public meetings" (March 20, 2020) and the MOET and MoSD guidelines. An updated SEP will identify vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and explore differentiated methods to enable their effective participation in decision-making processes of the project (especially those related to cash transfer sub-component).

A draft Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) has been prepared by the Borrower. The ESCP sets out the substantive measures and actions that will be taken by the MoET and MoSD to meet environmental and social requirements. The MoET and MoSD will monitor the environmental and social performance in accordance with the ESCP.

ESS10 Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

The Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Social Development will engage in meaningful consultations with all stakeholders during project preparation and throughout the project life cycle as per ESS10 requirements. An inclusive stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) was prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders. To ensure inclusive engagements consultations will also target vulnerable groups, especially the remote rural communities, elderly, children with special needs, persons with disabilities, women, female-headed households and orphans and vulnerable children. The SEP aims to ensure timely, relevant and accessible information (format and location) to stakeholders with a particular focus on groups that are more at risk of exclusion from project activities (such as communities in remote inaccessible rural areas and vulnerable groups). The SEP includes a description of all stakeholder consultations (in-person gatherings were limited due to COVID-19), and maps out key stakeholders. It also indicates communication channels for all stakeholders and will include the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the implementation of the project.



The SEP includes a culturally appropriate and accessible GRM (in format and location) as an effective channel for receiving feedback, managing and resolving complaints arising due to project activities. The GRM will also accommodate SEA/SH reporting, and the GRM will be proportionate to the GBV risks posed by the project. The project-level GRM will build on the experiences of the ongoing education and social protection projects financed by the World Bank in Lesotho.

As the COVID-19 pandemic poses a challenge for stakeholder engagement and disclosure of information, as stakeholder engagement and consultation processes cannot be conducted in a traditional way. Consultations will therefore, be conducted in line with guidelines set out in the World Bank’s “Technical Note: Public Consultations and Stakeholder Engagement in WB-supported and operations when there are constraints on conducting public meetings” (March 20, 2020) MOET, MoSD, and WHO guidelines.

B.2. Specific Risks and Impacts

A brief description of the potential environmental and social risks and impacts relevant to the Project.

ESS2 Labor and Working Conditions

ESS2 is relevant to the project interventions. The project is expected to employ direct and contracted workers (consultants). There will be no labor camps or labor influx under the project given that the project does not finance civil works.

There is a potential risk of workers being exposed to COVID-19 during project implementation. The LMP will be prepared as part of the ESMF, and will include mitigation measures to prevent and minimize the risk and spread of the COVID-19 virus in the PFUs such as a distribution of appropriate Personal Protective Equipments (PPEs). Furthermore, as a first step in ensuring safe re-opening of schools, MoET has developed the following two key documents: (i) Operating Guidelines for the Containment and Management of COVID-19 for Schools and School Communities, and (ii) School Reopening Strategy in Response to Novel Corona virus (COVID-19) in line with WHO COVID-19 Guidelines. MoET will work closely with MoSD to bring them up-to-date on these COVID-19 related guidelines. A separate worker Grievance Redress Mechanism for labor issues will be established and a focal point will be appointed to receive and address workplace grievances. The workers' GRM will be outlined in the LMP. LMP will also describe rights and responsibilities of the types of workers involved in the project, and will have appropriate code of conduct that aim to reduce SEA/SH risks.

ESS3 Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

ESS3 is considered relevant to the Project. Sub-component 1.3, Strengthening online training models in Mathematics and Science for junior secondary school teachers, will support procurement of some ICT hardware (laptops) and portable solar panels. This activity will potentially result in the generation of e-waste, hazardous waste and solid waste. It is important that implementing agencies involved, have systems to minimize and manage e-waste efficiently by reuse/recycling, and disposing of in an environmentally appropriate manner. The ESMF will include a Waste



Management Plan (WMP) with applicable technical guidelines on how to manage e-waste and hazardous waste including storage, collection, transport, reuse, recycling, and disposal in accordance with the requirements of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal to which Lesotho is signatory. The project is not anticipated to be a significant emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs). The Project is not a potential significant user of energy and water. However, project activities will contribute to better resource efficiency through the procurement of energy efficient ICT equipment.

ESS4 Community Health and Safety

ESS4 is relevant to the Project. Although the Project is not expected to result in any adverse community health and safety risks and no construction works are planned. Potential environmental impacts regarding community health and safety are expected as potential downstream impacts of the project. Sub-component 1.2 plans for interventions including educational program on health awareness including topics such as basic health, nutrition, hygiene, etc. that will decrease health and safety risks of the target audience of the education programs. Moreover, there are underlying SEA risks that need to be addressed as described in the ESCP. Teachers and workers involved in the project should sign a code of code and receive specific training on SEA. GBV Action Plan which will be part of ESMF, will identify GBV/SEA risks and propose measures proportionate to the risks.

ESS5 Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

ESS5 is not relevant to the Project. The project will not finance any civil works, and there are risks or impacts, such as economic or physical displacement, associated with ESS5.

ESS6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

ESS6 is considered not relevant since the Project activities will not have any impact on biodiversity and living natural resources.

ESS7 Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

ESS7 is not relevant to the Project as there are no groups in Lesotho meeting the criteria as set out in ESS7.

ESS8 Cultural Heritage

ESS8 is not relevant since the Project will not have any impact on tangible or intangible cultural heritages.

ESS9 Financial Intermediaries

ESS9 is not relevant to the Project for the suggested project activities.

B.3 Other Relevant Project Risks



No other relevant risks anticipated currently.

C. Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Projects on International Waterways	No
OP 7.60 Projects in Disputed Areas	No

B.3. Reliance on Borrower’s policy, legal and institutional framework, relevant to the Project risks and impacts

Is this project being prepared for use of Borrower Framework? No

Areas where “Use of Borrower Framework” is being considered:

Borrower Framework is not being considered under this project.

IV. CONTACT POINTS

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Borrower/Client/Recipient

Borrower: The Kingdom of Lesotho

Implementing Agency(ies)

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Education and Training

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Social Development

V. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Public Disclosure



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VI. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Elizabeth Ninan Dulvy, Louise Victoria Monchuk
Practice Manager (ENR/Social)	David Seth Warren Cleared on 06-May-2021 at 08:00:54 GMT-04:00