



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 27-Sep-2021 | Report No: PIDC32623



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country West Bank and Gaza	Project ID P177299	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Education MPA for West Bank & Gaza (P177299)
Region MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date Jan 24, 2022	Estimated Board Date Mar 31, 2022	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Palestinian Liberation Organization	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

Support immediate education recovery needs, and systemic education sector reforms to promote foundational skills, STEM learning, and a student assessment system focused on learning.

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	20.00
Total Financing	20.00
of which IBRD/IDA	0.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	20.00
Special Financing	20.00

Environmental and Social Risk Classification
Moderate

Concept Review Decision
Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue



Other Decision (as needed)



B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

- 1. As COVID-19 related lockdowns were eased during the majority of the first quarter (Q1) of 2021, economic activity in the Palestinian territories picked up during this period.** Given the decline in the daily number of new COVID-19 cases, especially in January 2021, the Palestinian Authority (PA) took a decision to significantly ease lockdowns until early March when some measures were reintroduced as cases spiked again. The ease in lockdowns combined with the launch of the vaccination campaign allowed consumer confidence to slowly pick up and business activity to gradually rebound. According to data published by the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Palestinian economy grew by 1.9 percent in Q1 2021, compared to the previous quarter. Growth was driven by an increase in private consumption as well as capital investments. However, comparing the economic performance in Q1 2021 to the same quarter in 2020 shows a contraction of 5.9 percent, indicating that the economy has not yet rebounded to its pre-COVID levels.
- 2. The unemployment rate has remained stubbornly high in 2021.** After the breakout of COVID-19 in the Palestinian territories in March 2020, the unemployment rate started to increase given the restrictions on economic activity and the loss of jobs for West Bank Palestinians in the Israeli market. The unemployment rate peaked at 28.3 percent in Q3 2020 until it slightly eased toward the end of the year, reaching 23.4 percent in Q4 2020. Even though the lockdowns were eased in 2021, the unemployment rate increased and reached 26.4 percent in Q2 2021 in the Palestinian territories. The increase could be explained by a 1.9 percentage point rise in the participation rate as a higher number of men and women were encouraged to join the labor market with the improvement in economic conditions. The overall rate masks a wide regional divergence whereby unemployment in the West Bank reached 16.9 percent in Q2 2021 while in Gaza it was 44.7 percent, reflecting the effect of the recent conflict compounded with worsening COVID-19 conditions and the ongoing isolation of the Strip.
- 3. Poverty has been adversely affected by slow growth over the past few years and the pandemic during 2020.** Based on the latest available official data, 22 percent of Palestinians lived below the US\$5.5 2011 PPP a day poverty line in 2016/17. In the West Bank, poverty rates are lower but sensitive to shocks in household expenditures, while in Gaza any change in social assistance flows can significantly affect the population's wellbeing. Projections based on GDP per capita growth suggest that the poverty rate has been constantly increasing since 2016, reaching 28.9 percent in 2020, a significant increase of 7 percentage points in the past four years. This represents approximately 1.4 million people living in poverty in 2020.
- 4. Overall, the near-term economic outlook for the Palestinian territories remains worrying given numerous undecided factors.** If the pace of the reconstruction process in Gaza remains as slow as it has been over the past several months, the Strip's economy is expected to shrink by 0.3 percent in 2021 due to the lingering effect of the war. The West Bank's performance, however, is expected to be more positive. If the vaccination campaign continues and the lockdown measures continue to be relaxed, for the majority of the remainder of the year, the West Bank economy is expected to grow by 3.6 percent, up from a very low base in 2020. In total, this indicates a growth rate of 2.9 percent for the Palestinian economy in 2021. This implies a near stagnation in real per capita income and worsening social conditions, especially in Gaza. This economic condition could be further exacerbated by the increasing vulnerability of the territory to climate change. Shortage of power and water accompanied by increasing warm temperature and irregular rainfalls could have a negative impact on agriculture and industries.¹



C. Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. **A Palestinian child starting school at age four could expect to complete 12.2 years of schooling by her 18th birthday.**^{2,3} Opportunities for young children to receive early childhood education have steadily increased, reaching 67.8 percent in 2019.⁴ Primary and lower secondary education are virtually universal at 97.4 percent⁵, and upper secondary education enrollment is also high at 71.8 percent.⁶ This places West Bank and Gaza (WB&G) not only above the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) average (11.6 expected years of schooling), but also ahead of the average for upper middle income countries (11.8 expected years of schooling).

6. **Yet, WB&G is facing a learning crisis: when factoring in what Palestinian children actually learn at school, the adjusted years of schooling drop to only eight years.**^{7,8} In other words, in spite of the more than twelve years that Palestinian children can expect to spend in school, on average, they are only learning the equivalent of eight. At the heart of this learning crisis are three systemic and thus far intractable challenges.

7. **First, in their early grades, Palestinian students, on average, do not gain basic reading proficiency.** Reading with comprehension is arguably the most important skill a child needs to learn in their early school years. Without basic reading proficiency, children are unable to move on to “read to learn”. Reading is the gateway to further learning, including in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It is also essential for developing deeper learning skills such as problem solving and critical thinking. The World Bank’s Learning Poverty indicator measures countries’ progress in terms of children having the foundational skill of reading with understanding by the age of 10. There is currently no measure of Learning Poverty in WB&G due to the lack of participation in international assessments of student learning at around that age such as the 4th grade Progress in International Reading Literacy study (PIRLS) or Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). However, a 2014 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) found that around a quarter (26 percent) of 2nd-graders in WB&G could not answer a single age-appropriate reading comprehension question, and over a third (39 percent) could not read 10 or more correct words per minute, well below the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) expectations.^{9,10}

8. Poor reading outcomes are common among Arabic-speaking countries and there is a myriad of contributing factors. A 2021 World Bank report on “Advancing Arabic Teaching and Learning: A Path to Reducing Learning Poverty in MENA” found that some of the key factors influencing poor reading outcomes in the region included (1) the lack of exposure before school to printed materials and to vocabulary, including Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), through reading to children and word games, for example; (2) poor awareness of the science of learning to read and how best to teach Arabic language to young native speakers; and (3) ineffective preparation of teachers to teach reading in engaging and appropriate ways. A “delivery” model of education, in which the same material is presented in the same way and at the same pace to a class without alignment to their levels or needs, is particularly ineffective for reading, for which development ranges widely among children in the early grades.

9. **Second, as Palestinian students move to upper basic education, large deficiencies in STEM emerge.** Without basic reading proficiency, on average, Palestinian students are unable to gain mastery in early numeracy. Learning deficiencies in mathematics accumulate grade after grade, such that towards end of upper basic education (Grade 8) students are substantially behind in terms of knowledge and skills expected at that grade level. Results from the TIMSS 2011¹¹ showed that more than half of Palestinian students in Grade 8 did not meet the Low International Benchmark in mathematics, meaning that their skills were limited to some knowledge of whole numbers and basic graphs.¹² In that same assessment, WB&G was outperformed by neighboring MENA countries such as Jordan and Lebanon, and ranked 36th out of 45 participating countries.¹³ In the science test, WB&G had the fourth-largest gender gap out of 42 participating countries, with girls substantially outperforming boys. Overall, 41 percent of Palestinian students did not



reach the Low International Benchmark, meaning that they did not recognize basic facts from the life and physical sciences, nor demonstrate some familiarity with physical phenomena.¹⁴ Adding to deficiencies in math and science, recent evidence also highlights shortcomings in students' digital skills. In 2018, an MOE assessment of basic digital skills among grade-10 students revealed that only 13 percent of students knew how to send an email with an attachment, and less than half could apply a basic algorithm in a spreadsheet.¹⁵ Formal digital education classes for Palestinian students start in grade 5, later than for their peers in OECD countries. The curriculum is mostly theoretical, and teachers tend to leave the practical application as homework due to poor digital infrastructure at schools.

10. By secondary education, starting in Grade 11, the Palestinian education system tracks students in the academic stream¹⁶ into "Humanities" or "STEM" tracks. Unprepared with the necessary mathematics, science and digital knowledge and skills, and discouraged by the relatively high scores in the secondary school leaving examination ('Tawjihi') that are required for entry into higher education STEM fields such as medicine and engineering, the lion share of students (69 percent) and particularly worse performing ones, choose the Humanities track.¹⁷ Only 31 percent choose the STEM track, of which 96.5 percent choose the scientific stream and 3.5 percent select the IT stream.¹⁸ The result of this structure and approach is the stigmatization of the humanities, on the one hand, and a relatively small share of secondary students (22 percent) choosing to pursue higher education degrees in STEM, on the other hand.¹⁹ The WB&G have 52 tertiary education institutions (33 in the West Bank, 17 in Gaza), graduating close to 50,000 students annually. Roughly a quarter of graduates are in the field of education, a third in law and business, and other significant fields of study are medicine, the arts, humanities, and communication. Ensuring a sufficient and high-quality supply of STEM skills is critical not only for fulfilling the needs of the future workforce, but also for producing researchers and innovators who can help to solve some of the intractable challenges that WB&G faces.²⁰

11. **Third, across all education grades, the student assessment system presents a major hurdle to improving learning outcomes.** Shortcomings at every level of the student assessment system in WB&G are holding back progress in the education sector. At the classroom level, anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers are not sufficiently leveraging formative and diagnostic assessments to better support children's learning. At the examinations level, the high-stakes secondary school leaving examination Tawjihi sets powerful incentives that skew learning towards rote memorization and fuel a large private tutoring industry exacerbating inequalities of opportunity. The Tawjihi is also detrimental for those who fail the exam and are left without a degree after 12 years of education. At the systems level, design flaws in the national large-scale assessment (NLSA) and the lack of participation in international large-scale student assessments (ILSAs) have resulted in a scarcity of high-quality learning data to guide policy decisions, inform parents, and hold education stakeholders accountable for students' learning (or lack thereof).

12. The Tawjihi exam plays a key role in Palestinian society and determines students' career trajectory. Each year, around 80,000 12th grade students in WB&G sit for the final secondary school exam. The Palestinian Tawjihi serves a dual purpose: (1) it certifies completion of secondary school, and (2) it determines admission into higher education. Results from other exams and coursework are not factored into students' final grade. On average, about 65-70 percent of students pass the exam. Those who fail, face very bleak prospects on the job market. Over the past year, the MOE has launched an ambitious reform process of the Tawjihi. A secondary school diploma independent of the Tawjihi is under discussion, and the Ministry also aims to change the content and format of test items towards assessing higher-order skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and applying knowledge. While the reform is still at an early stage, the MOE has demonstrated strong political will and leadership to move this agenda forward.



13. The MOE is also working to improve student assessment at the systems level. Notably, WB&G officially joined the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, and is planning to rejoin TIMSS, which was last administered in WB&G in 2011 and only at grade 8 (not grade 4). These assessments will deliver high-quality, internationally comparable learning data that is urgently needed to better inform education policy decisions. A national assessment on Arabic, math, and science is administered every two years to a nationally representative sample of students in grades 5 and 9, but its technical design has shortcomings. For example, the assessment is lacking clear definitions of proficiency levels and cut-off scores following robust standard-setting methodologies. As such, the results cannot be used to report on Learning Poverty and its value added to inform education policy decisions is limited. The agreement to rejoin TIMSS at both grades 4 and 8, and possibly PIRLS in the future, is in line with the World Bank's Learning Data Compact with UNESCO and UNICEF to improve the availability, frequency, relevance, and timeliness of learning assessment data in all IDA/IBRD countries, and will provide WB&G with Learning Poverty estimates in the future.

14. **The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Gaza war have taken a heavy toll and further exacerbated existing challenges in the education sector.** COVID-19 school closures and almost a year of distance education have resulted in dramatic learning losses, especially among the youngest and most disadvantaged students. The MOE has developed an e-schools virtual learning environment and provided some printed materials during the period of distance education. However, few students have the necessary electronic devices and connectivity to fully benefit from e-schools, and students in the early grades are not able to study independently, requiring the support of parents or other family members. A World Bank simulation suggests that the pandemic may have caused learning-adjusted years of schooling in WB&G to drop by around 0.8 years. In Gaza, learning losses are likely to be even more dire. The recent war has damaged education infrastructure and inflicted severe trauma on countless children and youth, threatening prospects for many children to go back to school and be ready to learn this academic year.²¹

15. **Efforts to address the three systemic challenges have thus far been piecemeal, shortsighted, and hindered by limited funding.** Given the political and economic context of WB&G, MOE is heavily dependent on donor funding. While there have been many successful initiatives in the education sector²², these have often been limited to small pilots or interventions, that in their majority have not been scaled-up or mainstreamed into the system. For example, a technically strong early grade reading pilot was discontinued with the closing of a donor's project; a successful teacher training initiative was not mainstreamed into the education system's continuous professional development due to lack of funding; and various innovative initiatives supporting STEM education were so small that were unable to permeate the system.

16. **Through the 2017-2022 Education Sector Plan (ESP), the Ministry of Education put forward an ambitious education agenda that aims at overcoming piecemeal approaches to these critical education challenges, signaling technical and political commitment to education partners.** The ESP is centered around three sector goals focused on ensuring equitable access to education and balanced enrollment in secondary education tracks²³, developing student-centered teaching and learning pedagogy²⁴, and enhancing accountability and results-based leadership²⁵. Preparations for the 2023-2030 ESP are underway, with a clear focus on a comprehensive, longer-term education agenda, that harmonizes different partners' initiatives and efforts under a coherent framework of action. **This presents a unique opportunity for partners, including the World Bank, to help shape and implement such long-term vision, while seeking innovative approaches and instruments that can provide the technical, financial and implementation continuity that such tall order requires.**



17. **Better learning outcomes and more relevant skills are key to increase human capital in WB&G and unlock opportunities for Palestinian graduates.** The Bank’s Human Capital Index has shown that poor education is the most important factor holding back human capital formation in WB&G.²⁶ Surveys further suggest that many employers struggle to find workers with adequate digital, language, and soft skills.²⁷ At 42 percent youth unemployment, the prospects of Palestinian graduates are bleak.²⁸ While there are many roadblocks to improving human capital and labor market outcomes that are beyond the scope of the education sector, tackling the three intractable challenges in education is imperative to give every Palestinian child the opportunity to learn and thrive.

Relationship to CPF

18. The education multiphase programmatic approach (MPA) will support a strategic long-term education reform agenda focused on improving student learning outcomes and employability and will contribute to strategic priorities outlined in the government’s national development plan. The PA’s National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2023 centers on building a more resilient economy and developing human capital as part of its core strategy.

19. The MPA is fully aligned with and is a key element of the Assistance Strategy (AS) FY22-25 (Report No. 156451-GZ). The AS is aligned with the NDP’s main pillars and focuses on two areas: ‘strengthening institutions for economic and social prosperity and boosting innovation’ and ‘diversification for a well-connected Palestinian economy’. The proposed MPA directly contributes to the first area of focus of the AS on achieving better human development outcomes by focusing on (i) prioritizing investments in education to promote human capital, particularly in a Fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) context, (ii) supporting the transition towards a digital economy by equipping Palestinian youth with digital skills for the labor market, and (iii) promoting fruitful collaboration with the private sector to maximize finance for development.

20. The MPA is aligned with the 2020 World Bank Group (WBG)’s COVID-19 Crisis Response Approach Paper pillar on ‘Protecting the Poor and Vulnerable People’ and the 2021 WBG MENA enlarged strategy pillar on ‘strengthening human capital’ with its focus on improving learning outcomes, skills development and youth employability. Finally, the MPA is also in sync with the World Bank Group’s Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025, which describes investing in human capital as the first of six high-priority issues that the World Bank Group places emphasis on in FCV settings.

D. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Support immediate education recovery needs, and systemic education sector reforms to promote foundational skills, STEM learning, and a student assessment system focused on learning.

Key Results (From PCN)

Figure 1 summarizes the Program Results Chain for the entire MPA. The key results for MPA Phase 1 are listed below for each of the three project components. Phase 1 will, on the one hand, respond to immediate needs resulting from missed learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Gaza war, and on the other hand, lay the foundations for medium- and long-term reform of the education system.

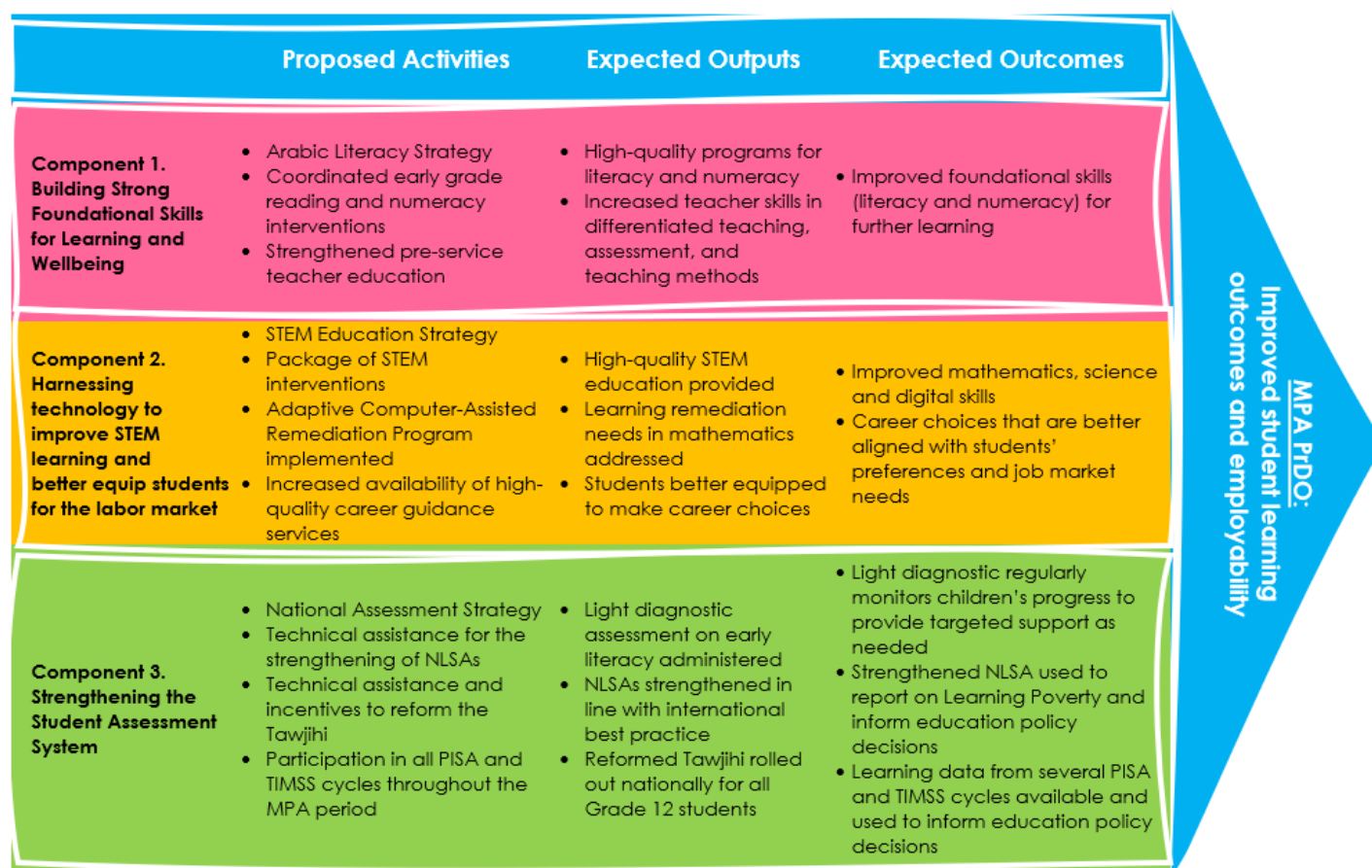
Component 1. Building Strong Foundational Skills for Learning and Wellbeing

- High quality programs for literacy and numeracy



- Increased teacher skills in differentiated teaching, assessment, and teaching methods
- Component 2. Harnessing Technology to Improve STEM Learning and Better Equip Students for the Labor Market**
- High quality STEM education provided
 - Learning remediation needs in mathematics addressed
 - Students better equipped to make career choices
- Component 3. Strengthening the Student Learning Assessment System**
- Light diagnostic assessment on early literacy administered
 - NLSAs strengthened in line with international best practice
 - Reformed Tawjihi rolled out nationally for all grade 12 students

Figure 1. Program Results Chain



E. Concept Description

21. The proposed MPA includes three phases focused on three components (or thematic areas) that address the most pressing education challenges in WB&G. Each phase will gradually contribute towards the program development objective of improving learning outcomes and employability. All three phases will be fully anchored in student learning



data to inform key investments and decision-making, with PISA 2022 serving as a baseline and subsequent international assessments monitoring learning progress. The three components that will gradually unfold under each phase are (1) foundational skills, (2) STEM, and (3) the student assessment system. Each component is briefly summarized below.

22. **Component 1. Building strong foundational skills for learning and wellbeing.** Learning Poverty—being unable to read proficiently by age 10—has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the Gaza war. Early reading, mathematics and other foundational skills are a gateway for learning as children progress through school. The MPA will support Palestine’s efforts to raise foundational skills and wellbeing of Palestinian primary school students, providing each child with a strong foundation for their future learning. This will be achieved through (1) the development of an Arabic Literacy Strategy; (2) the development and rollout of a package of early grade reading interventions; and (3) enhancement of preservice teacher education to align instruction to learner needs in phase 1. Scale-up of the literacy interventions would continue into phases 2 and 3, and focus would move to foundational skills associated with numeracy and support to children’s psychosocial and mental health. To embed the exemplary practices in WB&G’s education system, systems of school and teacher evaluation and improvement planning will be examined and developed to ensure they work toward sustaining and incentivizing improvements in foundational skills teaching and learning and wellbeing.

23. **Component 2. Harnessing technology to improve STEM learning and better equip students for the labor market.** On average, Palestinian upper basic and secondary students have a weak mastery of mathematics, science and digital skills. The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Gaza war have exacerbated these learning deficiencies. Through this component, the MPA will aim to improve STEM learning, develop market relevant skills, and better equip students to make informed career choices and find jobs. To achieve this objective, under Phase 1, the component will aim at strengthening upper basic education (grades 5 to 9) students’ mathematics, science and digital skills, with a particular emphasis on addressing missed learning due to schooling disruptions. Phase 1 will also lay the foundations for an effective system of counseling, career services, and graduate tracking that helps students and graduates make informed career choices and be better equipped to pursue them. Phases 2 and 3 will build on the technical and implementation knowledge gained in the first phase, and will focus on scaling up the package of STEM interventions to secondary education students (grades 10 to 12), expanding its scope (to include “soft skills” and other 21st century skills), scaling the Adaptive Computer Assisted Remediation Program (ACARP) to benefit 9th grade students (transitioning from upper basic to secondary education) and 12th grade students (transitioning from secondary education to higher education or the labor market), and expanding the scope and reach (all students and graduates including those at the tertiary level) of the career guidance system.

24. **Component 3. Strengthening the student learning assessment system.** Shortcomings at every level of the student assessment system in WB&G are holding back progress in the education sector. Through this component, the MPA will strengthen the Palestinian student assessment system so that it promotes and incentivizes learning at all grade levels. To achieve this objective, under Phase 1, the component will: (1) strengthen assessments at the classroom and systems level to regularly monitor Learning Poverty and, particularly given school disruptions due to COVID-19 and the Gaza war, provide timely information on learning remediation needs; (2) lay the foundations to reform the secondary school leaving examination (Tawjihi) to promote higher-order thinking skills and reduce the high-stakes nature of the exam; and (3) ensure participation of WB&G in two international large scale student assessments (ILSAs) and the effective use of the resulting data to guide policymaking. The outcomes from international assessments will play a pivotal role in assessing progress in learning outcomes under the MPA and informing the design of interventions to be financed under phases 2 and 3. In phases 2 and 3, the lessons learned during phase 1 will be applied to strengthen the technical design of the NLSAs, gradually roll out the reformed Tawjihi exam, and continue providing technical assistance as well as Performance Based Conditions (PBCs) for continued engagement in ILSAs. This will enable the construction of nationally and internationally comparable trends in Palestinian student learning outcomes at upper basic and secondary education



levels, that continuously inform policymaking and provide a powerful tool to hold education stakeholders accountable for student learning.

25. To achieve its developmental objective, phase 1 of the project has the following four components.

Component 1. Building Strong Foundational Skills for Learning and Wellbeing

- Subcomponent 1.1 Development of an Arabic Literacy Strategy
- Subcomponent 1.2 Development and Rollout of a Package of Early Grade Reading Interventions
- Subcomponent 1.3 Enhancement of Pre-service Teacher Education to Align Instruction to Learner Needs

Component 2. Harnessing Technology to Improve STEM Learning and Better Equip Students for the Labor Market

- Subcomponent 2.1 Development of a STEM Education Strategy
- Subcomponent 2.2 Development and Rollout of a Package of STEM interventions
- Subcomponent 2.3 Enhancing career guidance to better equip students for the labor market

Component 3. Strengthening the Student Learning Assessment System

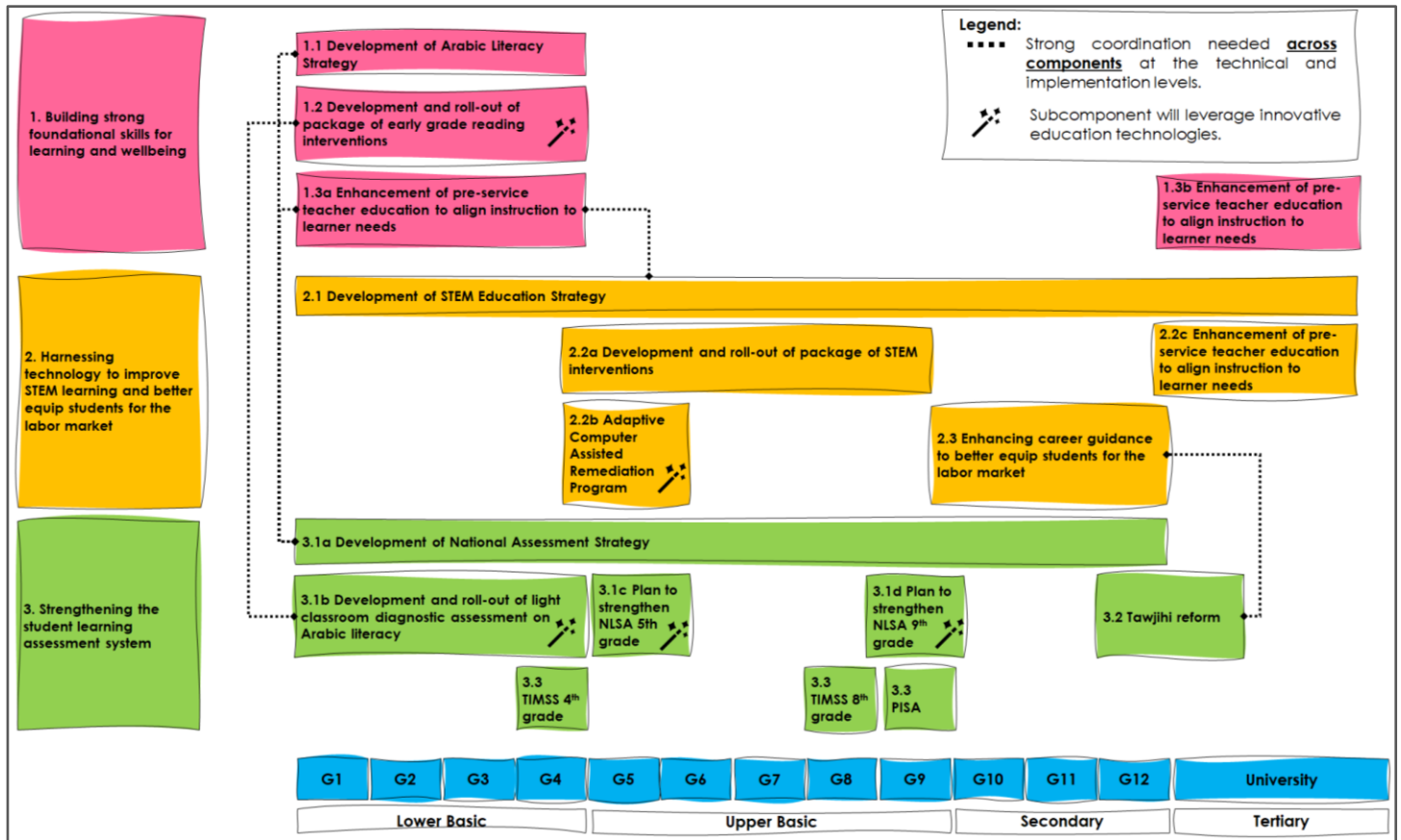
- Subcomponent 3.1 Strengthening the National Student Assessment System
- Subcomponent 3.2 Reforming the Tawjihi Exam
- Subcomponent 3.3 Supporting Participation in International Student Assessments

Component 4. Project Management and Implementation Support

26. The MPA is envisioned as a series of three IPFs with PBCs. A results-based financing mechanism for selected indicators has the potential to further support and incentivize the MOE to achieve its goals. Each phase of the MPA will be implemented over three years and will overlap to ensure seamless transition and continuity of activities, as well as complementarity and incorporation of lessons learned from preceding phases. The funding estimate for future phases is based on current discussion and could change based on country funding allocation and availability.



Figure 2. Summary of Project Components in Phase 1



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

The MPA Phase 1 is expected to have overall positive impact, the environmental and social risks at the concept stage are rated moderate, considering the following risks and impacts and the institutional capacity. The environmental risks at the concept stage of the MPA Phase 1 are rated moderate, due to the following risks and impacts and the institutional capacity. Phase 1 components 1, 2.2, and 2.3 will enhance the learning foundation skills and those component will have no adverse environmental impacts. However, potential face to face training activities may entail



risk of exposure to COVID-19. The implementation of component 2.1 will include equipping computer labs at schools in different districts of West Bank and Gaza Strip with different IT and internet equipment, and some of the equipment may require installation, but no civil works are envisaged. Minor environmental risks and impacts include management and disposal of electronic waste at the end of life are expected, while installation of IT equipment may entail occupational health and safety risks on workers including risk of exposure to COVID-19, and related accidents, in addition to generation of minor amounts of wastes. Although the MPA phase 1 activities are yet to be confirmed in the Gaza Strip, any political unrest may cause delays of implementing some of the project activities that rely on supply of goods. The MPA Phase 1 will only support sites that have been cleared of Unexploded Ordnances (UXO) and cleared of related rubble in the Gaza Strip, and therefore, the risks and impacted due to UXOs will be low. The scale of supply of electronic equipment is not expected to have adverse impact on energy consumption, however, component 2.1 design should consider including energy efficiency in the equipment's technical specifications. None of the activities are expected to have adverse impact on biodiversity, tangible or intangible cultural heritage. On social aspects, the project is expected to have overall positive impacts. The project does not involve any civil works or land acquisition and resettlement. However, certain risks have been identified at concept stage that need to be assessed and mitigated as required. The social risk at concept stage is assessed as moderate. The primary social risk across all components is of exclusion and inequitable access to project benefits. There is a potential risk that schools and staff (teachers, principals, supervisors, counselors), and consequently students and parents/families, in underserved and marginalized areas (e.g. rural and remote locations, access restricted areas (ARAs etc.)) might not benefit equitably from the interventions supported under the project (e.g. provision of books, trainings, piloting of score card, use of digital technology for learning, provision of digital skills etc.). Similarly, there is a need to ensure that the requirements of children with disabilities, learning and physical, and voice and needs of underserved and marginalized groups (e.g. women headed households, the poor, people in remote locations etc.) are not overlooked in the development of learning strategies, stakeholder engagement and information dissemination mechanisms included in the project design. Additional social risks pertain to data privacy breach in the use of digital technologies, health and safety of workers and communities due to potential exposure to COVID-19, for example during face-to-face trainings and installation of equipment; and labor management issues. At concept stage, the sexual harassment (SH) and sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) risk is rated as moderate. The project will also be implemented in rural/remote locations where the risk of SEA/SH is potentially higher and there is reduced access to support service providers for survivors of gender based violence (GBV). In the PMA Phase 1, there is also a risk of SEA/SH during face-to-face trainings. Furthermore, while the use of digital technology for learning is an extremely important intervention, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, there is some risk of SH) and SEA in the digital space. The SEA/SH risk will be properly assessed during preparation, on the basis of further information, and the current risk rating will be revised accordingly. Social risks will be assessed during project preparation in a social assessment included in the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) that will be prepared for the project. Recommended mitigation measures will be used to inform project design (as appropriate) and included in the risk mitigation measures included in the ESMF. MPA Phase 1 will be implemented by the PCU, that hosts an Environmental and Social Officer (ESO) supporting implementing of the environmental and social requirements of the ECD Project activities in West Bank, the ESO will also be assigned to the MPA. The ESO is of limited experience, where the Bank team has been providing extensive support to assist and guide the ESO to ensure compliance of E&S requirements. The ESO requires extensive capacity building to be able to manage the environmental and social requirements for both projects. As the MPA phase 1 and the subsequent phases will also be implemented in the Gaza Strip, the PCU will hire a part-time social officer (SO) whom will be responsible to follow mainly the OHS, labor management, and social requirements, including stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanisms. An ESMF will be prepared by the PCU including: a social assessment of potential risks, the risk of exclusion and inequitable distribution of project benefits and SEA/SH (including in the digital space); an electronic waste (e-waste) management plan in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to guide the handling and disposal of the e-waste; guidelines to minimize exposure to COVID-19;



labor management procedures (LMP); community health and safety plan; requisite SEA/SH risk mitigation measures, proportionate to the level of risk, and an implementation plan; guidelines for OHS measures during minor activities related to supplying and installation of the IT equipment; and energy efficiency specifications to be included in the contract documents related to IT goods. The ESMF will be prepared, consulted on, reviewed and cleared by the Bank and disclosed by project appraisal. The Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) for the MPA Phase 1 shall include the institutional arrangements, capacity building activities proposed for MOE, PCU teams, specific training for the ESO and the proposed SO, and orientation to school administrations on management and handling e-waste at the end of life. The ESCP will be prepared, reviewed, and cleared by the Bank and disclosed by project appraisal.

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APPROVAL

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