HIGHER EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (HEIP) - CAMBODIA

Project Number: P162971

ADDENDUM TO THE EQUITY PLAN

May 2020
1. Introduction

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has requested the World Bank to restructure the Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP) (P162971). The restructuring is a result of the recent Covid-19 outbreak, prompting the project to propose additional activities linked to e-learning/distance learning, as a method to ensure continuity of the provision of early childhood education and general education as well as higher education in Cambodia.

The restructured activities focus on developing and delivering online and distance learning materials for early childhood education, general education, and higher education. Systems to support these will also be strengthened including raising awareness with parents and communities, as well as educators and cash transfers to economically disadvantaged students and households. Key social risks of these activities relate to e-learning activities and online safety for teachers and students. Following two rounds of virtual meetings/discussions¹ with relevant stakeholders, this Addendum to the Equity Plan is therefore prepared in compliance with the World Bank’s Policy on Indigenous Peoples (OP 4.10) as a safeguard instrument to ensure equitable benefits to all, including particularly those that are marginalised, disadvantaged, poor/remote households, people with disabilities, and indigenous students.

The Addendum to the Equity Plan, which complements the existing Equity Plan, thus identifies social impacts, risks and benefits of the proposed activities to be addressed by responsible MoEYS’s Departments, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other relevant stakeholders. The Addendum begins with a general description of the existing/restructuring activities, a summary of actions/mitigation measures highlighted in the existing Equity Plan, and summary of social impacts and proposed mitigation measures for the restructured activities. The last section concentrates on a budget and draw upon the lessons learnt from the implementation of the existing Equity Plan, which help to inform the implementation of additional activities of the Addendum, and.

2. Project Description

2.1 Project Development Objective

The Project Development Objective (PDO) of HEIP is to improve the quality and relevance of higher education and research mainly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and agriculture at targeted HEIs and to improve governance in the sector.

¹ The project acknowledges that there are limitations to the consultations with the project beneficiaries in the development of this Addendum. Measures will be undertaken to remedy this shortfall. In particular, during the implementation of the project, consultations will be closely conducted in an appropriate manner, taking into account of the spread of Covid-19, with relevant project beneficiaries (students, parents, teachers) in the production of teaching materials/code of conduct, etc.

² The virtual meetings were held on 17 April and 23 April 2020 respectively. There were around 14 participants in each meeting, representing relevant line departments of MoEYS and MEF, as well as the World Bank. While the meetings discussed in general the process, options and actions related to the restructuring, safeguards issues and risks were highlighted. Key risks emerged from the discussion include risks associated with safety of students using online platforms, accessibility to e-learning/distance learning by poor families, issues related to code of conduct of participants in distance learning, as well as possible risks associated with Covid-19 spread within educational communities.
2.2 Project Components

The proposed project aims to enhance Cambodia’s competitiveness by increasing the relevance and quality of higher education provision in line with industrial needs. The proposed project will target two priority areas. The first is to improve the teaching, learning, and research in the fields of STEM and agriculture in HEIs that are connected to industries prioritized in the RGC’s Industrial Development Policy (IDP). The second part of the funding strengthens the higher education sectoral governance.

Component 1: Improving Teaching and Learning Capacity

There are three sub-components under this component:

- **1.1 Improving teaching and learning**: Activities include grants to the public HEIs for implementation of collaborative activities through partnership agreements with international and/or domestic HEIs, and for the improvement of facilities and collaborative activities with private sector partners;

- **1.2 Improving Institutional Capacity**: Activities under this sub-component include: technical assistance provided to the targeted public HEIs, equipment, training, and operational costs, with the aims to their institutional capacity including international and external accountability; and

- **1.3 Supporting private HEIs**: Activities under this sub-components are provision of grants to the private HEIS for implementation of: (a) collaborative activities through partnership agreements with international and/or domestic HEIs; (b) activities aimed at strengthening the private HEIs’ internal and external accountability in line with the accreditation standards.

Component 2: Improving Research in STEM and Agriculture

This component aims to improve the quality and relevance of research in STEM and agriculture fields by providing grants to the targeted public HEIs for the development and implementation of research projects that result in peer reviewed publications. In addition to research projects, the project will finance research equipment and facilities/laboratories; research consumables; research operation costs; and researcher incentives (to be financed by counterpart fund).

Component 3: Strengthening Sectoral Governance and Project Management

This component aims to strengthen the system of higher education sector to produce graduates equipped with transferable skills and knowledge, especially in STEM and agriculture. There are three sub-components:

- **3.1 Strengthening sectoral governance**: Activities under this sub-component include the implementation of institutional accreditation; the development and implementation of internal quality assurance guidelines for HEIs; the expansion of information management system to be used for policy and planning; provision of technical support to develop/process needed policy documents, including HEI autonomy, PhD standards, Human Resource Master Plan (HRMP), financial management and human resource form.
3.2 Project management and monitoring and evaluation: This sub-component support day-to-day implementation, coordination and management of project activities including planning, implementation, procurement, mentoring and reporting as well as environmental and social safeguards management.

Component 4: Contingent Emergency Response. The objective of the contingent emergency response component, with a provisional zero allocation, is to allow for the reallocation of financing in accordance with the IDA Immediate Response Mechanism in order to provide an immediate response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed.

In addition to these original project activities, the restructuring proposes the following additional activities:

- **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Sub-Sector:** The restructuring will support the production of radio programs in forms of storytelling and others for kids and parents via social media and TV channels. The restructuring will support this sub-sector by developing a monitoring mechanism to ensure that their products will be benefiting the targeted audience.

- **General Education Support (Grade 1-12):** Support will be provided to general education to raise the public awareness of the e-learning and distance learning schedules and arrangements. The support will be directed towards the Adaptive Learning System, where production of questions and tasks for students in primary schools (grades 1-6) and upper-secondary schools (grades 10-12) will be made, in order for them to perform self-learning with teachers’ guidance. In addition, the proposed restructuring will support a number of core activities for more and better video production, coordination and broadcasting the recorded videos to reach all the students. Two guidelines will also be produced to ensure smooth implementation of distance learning in general education level and school reopening when the pandemic is over. The project will provide support to the development and operations of several core courses of the training programs at Royal University of Phnom Penh, including the development and operations of distance learning materials, videos and mechanism.

- **Higher Education Support:** The restructuring will support all five targeted HEIs to enable them to set up distance learning and/or blended learning platform, and to support economically disadvantaged students (i.e. cash transfer for internet/printing).

3. Potential social impacts regarding the equitable access to the project benefits

The restructuring proposes a set of additional activities concentrating on ECE, e-learning/distance learning for HEIs and general education of grade 1-12. The activities under the existing project remains unchanged. Given this, the previous Equity Assessment, which was conducted in 2017 in the form of a rapid social assessment of the challenges facing women, disadvantaged students (including students from poor households/remote areas), remains pertinent to this proposed restructuring. Likewise, the social risks/impacts as well as proposed measures (identified in the existing Equity Plan as activities to mitigate social risks) remain applicable to the existing project activities.

Table 1 below summarises the potential social risks identified and the proposed measures to mitigate these risks captured in the Equity Plan:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social risks/impacts</th>
<th>Proposed mitigation actions</th>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inequitable access to higher education by the disadvantaged/vulnerable groups</td>
<td><strong>Provision of scholarship and/or emergency fund:</strong> The Government scholarship program has been carried out targeting students with disadvantaged backgrounds (women, poor students, students from remote areas).</td>
<td>While the activities are ongoing, report on progress and how the program is implemented to date has been overlooked. Progress report on this scholarship program will be featured in the next six-monthly project progress report.</td>
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<td>Construction and/or renovation of dormitories: This is in response to students’ request that number of students per room should be no more than 4 persons and with separate toilet per room. The design of dormitory building shall take into account the support for disabled person.</td>
<td></td>
<td>This remains at the early stage of implementation, given that the project recruiting firms to design/construct buildings/dormitories for students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of English language/computer literacy class/mentorship program/orientation day and city tour: These specific activities aim to assist vulnerable students from disadvantaged (indigenous peoples, poor, disabled, rural areas etc.).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation of these activities is patchy. Not all targeted HEIs carry out some activities to assist disadvantaged students. While few HEIs (i.e. Royal University of Phnom Penh) implement these activities, they are on an informal basis. The project commits to extend these informal measures to other targeted HEIs, and a clear workplan with activities to be undertaken by each HEI will be developed. Each target HEI will also report on its implementation of the workplan.</td>
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**This Addendum to the Equity Plan** is prepared in compliance with the World Bank’s Policy on Indigenous Peoples (OP 4.10) as a safeguard instrument to ensure that adequate measures are put in place to address potential risks/gaps in the provision of services associated with the restructured activities listed in Section 2.2. above. This Addendum to the Equity Plan, which complements the existing Equity Plan, thus identifies potential social impacts and risks and proposed measures to address these risks as follows:
Table 2: Social risks/impacts as a result of restructuring activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restructured activities</th>
<th>Social risks and impacts</th>
<th>Proposed mitigation actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECE Sub-Sector</strong>: The restructuring will support the production of radio programs in forms of storytelling and others for kids and parents via social media and TV channels The restructuring will support this sub-sector by developing a monitoring mechanism to ensure that their products will be benefiting the targeted audience.</td>
<td>While most Cambodian households possess a TV/mobile phone, not all of them (particularly the vulnerable/remote poor households) have this privilege. Thus, the disadvantaged households, children and parents alike, may not benefit from these project activities. In particular, they may not be aware of the timing of each program/broadcasting. Besides language may be a barrier for disadvantaged households (indigenous, people with disability) in accessing the programs. Furthermore, different members of households (including women who perform their housework), in particular disadvantaged households, may have other priorities related to their daily subsistent livelihoods and they may not have enough time watch/listen to radio/TVs. Household may also prefer contents that are related to their life stories.</td>
<td>The project will offer the production of radio programs in addition to TV productions and dissemination via social media, so that disadvantaged households may increase their opportunity in accessing these activities. The production of the contents will take into consideration the relevance, priorities/needs of disadvantaged households (children, parents). The project will attempt to broadcast/air these storytelling productions at time where intended audiences are available and the broadcasting schedules will be made known to the public via schools/local authorities and on TVs, radios, social media. The productions will be made available in indigenous peoples’ languages, and sign language for people with hearing impairments.</td>
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<td><strong>General Education Support (Grade 1-12)</strong>: Support will be provided to general education to raise the public awareness of the e-learning and distance learning schedules and arrangements. The support will be directed towards the Adaptive Learning System, where production of questions and tasks for students in primary schools (grades 1-6) and upper-secondary schools (grades 10-12) will be made, in order for them to perform self-learning with teachers’ guidance. In addition, the proposed restructuring will support a number of core activities for more and better video production, coordination</td>
<td>Engaging school students to online education/activities may involve some risks associated with online safety for students (particularly minor students) and teachers. These safety risks include cyberbullying, identity thief/hacking, breach of privacy, scams, access to online pornography. Disadvantaged households, children and parents alike may not benefit from these project activities since they do not possess a computer, TV or access to internet. Furthermore, while the activities focus on distance learning, some students need to print/photocopy some reading materials/assignments which</td>
<td>The project will develop an awareness raising campaign to strengthen the public awareness about safety for online users including some preventive measures. Furthermore, a code of conduct, in consultation with students, teachers, parents, will be developed for teachers, students, parents, regarding their use of e-learning/distance learning. Training shall be provided to these relevant stakeholders prior to engaging in e-learning/distance learning. The project will provide financial support to disadvantaged/poor households to ensure that advantaged students/households remain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Restructured activities | Social risks and impacts | Proposed mitigation actions
--- | --- | ---
and broadcasting the recorded videos to reach all the students. Two guidelines will also be produced to ensure smooth implementation of distance learning in general education level and school reopening when the pandemic is over. The project will provide support to the development and operations of several core courses of the training programs at Royal University of Phnom Penh, including the development and operations of distance learning materials, videos and mechanism. | involves additional costs/burdens for them. In addition to the above risks, while these project activities focus on online learning, there are some possible risks related to physical interactions between students and teachers (during the handing of assignments, distribution of reading materials etc.). | benefit from the project (i.e. in their access to reading materials, internet, etc.). The project will seize the opportunity to raise/strengthen awareness among students, parents, teachers, about environmental and social sustainability such as basic hygiene/sanitation practice. Furthermore, the project will disseminate key messages (related to the prevention of Covid-19 infection) as guided/issued by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization.

Higher Education Support: The restructuring will support all five targeted HEIs to enable them to set up distance learning and/or blended learning platform, and to support economically disadvantaged students (i.e. cash transfer for internet/printing). | University students from poor/disadvantaged backgrounds may not benefit from these activities since they cannot afford a computer/internet access. | The project will provide financial support to disadvantaged/poor students to ensure that they can seize the opportunity from e-learning/distance learning.

4. Lessons-learned and budget

Lessons can be drawn from the project experience in the course of implementing the existing Equity Plan. Success in the implementation of the Equity Plan lies in strengthened capacity of relevant project safeguards team, close management/reporting of/on safeguards implementation, and a budget. While safeguards focal points within implementing agencies and HEIs have been appointed, their capacity related to safeguards, its implementation and monitoring requires further strengthening.

A series of safeguards clinics have been organized with some technical support from the World Bank. In addition, an initiative to launch a capacity enhancement workshop in March 2010 (with participants from safeguards focal points, project staff, and other stakeholders) has been hindered by the Covid-19 outbreak. This workshop needs to be re-convened prior to the implementation of activities under the restructured project.

In addition to these capacity development efforts, the project will liaise with relevant departments/ministries charged with scholarship programmes, to assess the progress of scholarship provision to disadvantaged students as per the Equity Plan. Such assessments will be featured in the project six-monthly progress reports.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restructuring Sub-components</th>
<th>Proposed mitigation actions</th>
<th>Estimated Budget</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECE Sub-Sector</strong></td>
<td>Consultations/translation for the production of radio/programs/TVs/social media</td>
<td>60,700</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Education Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>(Grade 1-12):</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness campaigns for safety of online users</td>
<td>85,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Training on code of conduct for e-learning/Covid-19 prevention awareness</td>
<td>25,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support provided to vulnerable/poor students (Grade 1-12)</td>
<td>2,522,600</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Higher Education Support</strong></td>
<td>Support provided to vulnerable/poor university students</td>
<td>111650</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL (USD)</strong></td>
<td>2,804,950</td>
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