

PROGRAM RESULTS ASSESSMENT

A. Program Results Framework

1. **Country level.** The National Policy Framework (NPF)¹ of the Government of Sri Lanka aims to achieve the "fourfold outcome" of a productive citizenry, a contented family, a disciplined and just society, and a prosperous nation, through a program of 10 key policies. The NPF makes the development of human resources a key national priority, and the "reawakening of school education" one of the pathways to obtain the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for global competitiveness. The NPF also lays out the program for people-centered economic development through harnessing the power of youth, incentivizing entrepreneurs, and infusing new technology to enhance production and productivity. Achieving all this will require transforming an examination-centered education system into a student-centered education system, with emphasis on innovation and technology, especially information technology. Thus, the NPF lays out the need for comprehensive education reforms, from the pre-primary to the tertiary level, and emphasizes a "technology-based society," where the information technology competencies and skills of future generations are developed to create a "smart nation."

2. The NPF recognizes income inequality and commits to inclusive development. To this end, it specifically mentions upgrading rural schools and other actions to reduce disparities. The envisaged education sector reforms are meant to equip rural young people (especially girls) with the skills required in an inclusive knowledge-based economy, which will go a long way toward reducing gender, socioeconomic, and regional disparities.

3. **Sector level.** The General Education Sector Development Plan (GESDP), 2020–2025 complements these national aspirations.² It presents a comprehensive plan for education reforms to underpin Sri Lanka's transition to a knowledge economy, which requires a skilled and globally competitive workforce. The GESDP responds to the demand from the country's productive sectors for a more effective workforce relevant to both current and future labor markets, especially in subject areas related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In short, the GESDP provides operational guidance on achieving the NPF's vision of reawakening school education. The GESDP has four thrust areas: equity, quality, stewardship, and evidence-based policy:

- (i) **Strengthening equity in education.** The GESDP will ensure learning opportunities for all with a special focus on disadvantaged provincial and rural students.
- (ii) **Improving the quality of education, especially in science, technology, and mathematics.** The GESDP aims to modernize and diversify the national curriculum, and improve students' learning outcomes. It emphasizes science, technology, mathematics, and English education, and promotes 21st century skills (such as teamwork, communication, problem solving, creative thinking, and other transversal skills). It also promotes digital-based teaching and learning.
- (iii) **Strengthening stewardship and service delivery.** The GESDP will strengthen supervision mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel, promote school improvement and school-based management, and strengthen education administration and management at national, provincial, zonal, and divisional levels.

¹ Government of Sri Lanka. 2019. *National Policy Framework: Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*. Colombo.

² Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Education (MOE). 2020. *Sri Lanka: General Education Sector Development Plan 2020–2025*. Colombo.

- (iv) **Enhancing evidence-based education policymaking and planning.** The GESDP commits to strengthening education policy and planning, research, and results-based monitoring and evaluation.

4. The proposed results-based lending (RBL) program of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is based on the GESDP. It builds on the experience of an earlier RBL program in Sri Lanka, the Education Sector Development Program, and takes into account the findings of its completion report.³ Several comprehensive assessments by government and ADB teams informed the design of the new program.⁴

5. **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.** The government was able to contain the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Sri Lanka, with 3,283 confirmed cases (cumulative) and 13 deaths as of 20 September 2020.⁵ But its impact is expected to contract gross domestic product by 5.5% in 2020⁶ and sharply increase poverty.⁷ More than 5.57 million learners were affected by school and university closures, including 2.73 million secondary students.⁸ The government is implementing the Contingency Emergency Response Plan for general education,⁹ including e-learning platforms and classes through television. However, the disparities in access to digital devices, poor internet connectivity, and untrained teachers constrain the implementation.¹⁰ The program incorporates measures to support the response plan, notably in expanding access to digital and distance education for rural schools.

6. **Summary of program interventions.** Responding to the government's NPF and the findings of the education sector assessment, the program will make system-wide changes in curricula, pedagogy, and student assessments. The changes will strengthen students' knowledge of the key subject streams needed for the future, and equip them with non-cognitive and socio-emotional 21st century skills. The program will also build educational leadership to support these reforms and promote evidence-based decision making and planning in the education sector. Overall, it will enable all students—especially poor rural students—to gain a relevant education in school and access multiple pathways to learning and employment. This will reduce regional disparities, increase the returns to education, and contribute to balanced human capital development and growth.

7. **Impact and outcome.** The program impact will be: human resource development enhanced, supporting healthy and productive citizens and a globally competitive knowledge-centered economy; it is aligned with the government's goal, as articulated in the NPF. The main outcome and output targets of the program are derived from the NPF and GESDP. The expected outcome will be: secondary education system transformed and aligned with evolving labor force

³ ADB. 2013. [Sri Lanka: Education Sector Development Program](#). Manila; and ADB. 2020. [Completion Report: Education Sector Development Program in Sri Lanka](#). Manila.

⁴ Education Sector Assessment, Assessment of the Assessment System, Assessment of Teachers and Pedagogy, Assessment of Science Curriculum, and Monitoring and Evaluation System Assessment. June–August 2019.

⁵ World Health Organization. [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) (accessed 20 September 2020).

⁶ ADB. 2020. [Asian Development Outlook Update: Wellness in Worrying Times](#). Manila.

⁷ COVID-19 could push another 2.8% of the population (about 600,000 people) below the poverty line of \$3.20/day in 2020 (ADB estimates). In 2016, 10.1% were below the \$3.20 poverty line ([World Bank estimates](#)).

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. [COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response](#) (accessed 5 May 2020).

⁹ Government of Sri Lanka, MOE. 2020. [Contingency Emergency Response Plan for the School Education Sector in Sri Lanka to Minimize COVID-19 Pandemic Disruptions](#). Colombo.

¹⁰ In 2019, among the population aged 5–69, 43.6% of urban, 29% of rural, and 12.6% of estate residents were computer literate. About 30.3% of the same population (27.5% rural, 12.2% estate) use the internet, largely through smartphones. Government of Sri Lanka, Department of Census and Statistics. 2020. [Bulletin of Computer Literacy Statistics of Sri Lanka - 2019 Annual](#). Colombo.

needs by 2025—21st century skills will be embedded in the new systems (curricula, pedagogy, and assessments) to be institutionalized by the reforms, with a focus on science, technology, mathematics, and commerce (STMC) subjects.

8. **Outputs.** The lessons from previous education projects in Sri Lanka underscore the urgent need for critical reforms to bring about the desired improvements in the government's four thrust areas. The three outputs of the new program reflect these critical reforms, and aim to fill the gaps that the sector assessment found.¹¹ The results chain (impact, outcome, outputs, indicators, and key actions) is summarized in the design and monitoring framework for the program.¹²

9. **Output 1: Quality and relevance of secondary science, technology, mathematics, and commerce programs enhanced.** Output 1 targets the subject areas of STMC. These are in greatest demand by the labor market and will have the greatest impact on the country's economic growth. Secondary schools must build the foundational competencies and attributes for a diversified, flexible, and productive workforce—the key to achieving the desired quality of economic growth. Output 1 addresses these quality concerns through reforms to the curricula, student assessments, and pedagogical approaches. Curricula reform will change the current content-heavy curricula into a more relevant one, incorporating blended learning approaches (combination of online learning, educational television and radio programs, remote learning, and classroom-based face-to-face approaches). New modalities of teacher training will promote an inquiry-based and interactive approach to strengthen analytical thinking and practical application among students. The new system of assessments will measure a range of competencies and talents, including knowledge application and critical thinking, rather than just theoretical knowledge and memory recall. Remedial lessons will bridge gaps in student learning caused by school closures. Information and communication technology will be embedded as a teaching and learning tool across the secondary curriculum. A national media campaign will create demand for STMC studies and raise awareness about the reforms, including the benefits of blended learning, the prevention of communicable diseases, and post-secondary pathways.

10. **Output 2: Provincial and school capacity to implement education reforms strengthened.** Equity in education provision can only be accomplished by reducing the disparities between the national schools and the less-resourced provincial schools. Building on the government's 1,000 Schools Initiative supported by the former RBL program, the new program will support provincial schools by equipping facilities such as laboratories. It will also ensure equity by deploying sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, particularly in the STMC subjects, in provincial schools. To motivate teachers to serve in rural areas, various incentive systems will be reviewed and enhanced based on evidence of what works in other countries and what would work in Sri Lanka.

11. The capacity of school leaders, such as principals and deputy principals, will be strengthened to guide and support teachers, and support blended learning approaches based on appropriate technologies (currently available and planned ones) in the local context. School development plans will help improve learning outcomes in STMC subjects, attract more girls to STMC subjects, and reduce dropouts among boys. Output 2 will also ensure that provincial education authorities are managing the sector in line with the reforms, and that both national and

¹¹ Summary Sector Assessment: Education (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the report and recommendation of the President [RRP]).

¹² Design and Monitoring Framework (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the RRP).

provincial authorities direct the necessary resources to all schools equitably. The national–provincial partnership agreements will address priority issues such as deployment of teachers, infrastructure, learning resources, and learning outcomes in the STMC subjects, and provide targeted support to lagging schools.

12. **Output 3: Sector management capacity strengthened.** This output has four components: (i) integration of the currently fragmented monitoring and evaluation systems into the national education management information system, which will produce consolidated data on education sector indicators and performance reports,¹³ ensure gender mainstreaming of activities, and disaggregate data by sex; (ii) improvement of fiduciary management, compliance with the government’s financial regulations, and program-based budgeting to improve central and provincial forecasting and planning; (iii) strengthening of capacity for social and environmental safeguards; and (iv) improvement of procurement transparency, management, and efficiency.

13. **Indicators.** Consultations with the government led to the selection of indicators for tracking progress toward results. These indicators fit the SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) criteria of good monitoring and evaluation practice, and transparency criteria. Data for the indicators are largely available from current information systems at the Ministry of Education (MOE), the National Institute of Education, and the Department of Examinations, although some systems will need adapting to produce the specific data required (section B).

14. **Financing modality.** The RBL modality is appropriate to support the government’s reform program because it focuses on critical results from well-defined system reforms, rather than specific transactions and expenditures as in the case of a project modality. The RBL modality will leverage resources to strengthen and sustain key education reforms and catalyze increased government and development partner resources around a set of common program results.

B. Disbursement-Linked Indicators

15. Seven disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) were selected. The DLIs are designed to address the challenges in the secondary education sector (footnote 11) and capture the key elements of the RBL program. The DLIs embody sufficient flexibility to accommodate adjustments in response to the evolving situation on the ground.

16. **Outcome indicators.** The establishment of an assessment system for improving student learning outcomes in General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (‘O’ Level) will be used as an indicator for measuring the outcome (**DLI 1**). This is considered achieved when ‘O’ Level exams based on the new curricula and assessment system are held for at least two cohorts of students. Two additional indicators are not linked to disbursement; one assesses the readiness of the new systems to boost learning outcomes while the other targets improvement in student learning outcomes in ‘O’ Level mathematics and science subjects based on the new assessment.

17. **Output 1 indicators.** **DLI 2** will monitor the implementation of new ‘O’ Level and General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (‘A’ Level) gender-sensitive blended learning curricula in program-targeted subjects, and a national media campaign to promote demand for STMC subjects, and educate communities and children on the prevention of communicable diseases. **DLI 3** will ensure that at least 65% of trained teachers of grades 10–12 implement inquiry-based

¹³ Program Monitoring and Evaluation System Assessment (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the RRP).

and interactive teaching practices in program-targeted subjects. To ensure that teachers implement inquiry-based teaching, the program supports (i) mentoring, classroom observations, and feedback by principals and peer teachers within school clusters; (ii) supervisory visits by central and zonal officials; and (iii) a school-level performance reward strategy, which will be embedded in school development plans and be a key criteria for securing school grants.

18. **Output 2 indicators.** This output is tracked by 3 DLIs. **DLI 4** will ensure that at least 70% of teachers of 'O' and 'A' Level program-targeted subjects and subject streams are deployed in schools in accordance with MOE's Circular on Determination of Teacher Cadres. **DLI 5** aims to strengthen educational leadership to support the education reforms, through (i) training of principals and deputies in program schools (at least 40% of them women); and training of provincial, divisional, zonal education officers in program areas (at least 60% of them women); and (ii) school development plans with strategies to improve learning outcomes in STMC subjects, attract more girls to STMC subjects, and reduce dropout rates among boys. **DLI 6** will ensure that all performance-based partnership agreements between central and provincial governments emphasize mutual accountability and alignment between education reforms and local needs, including adequate resource allocation, especially for poorer schools.

19. **Output 3 indicators.** **DLI 7** will ensure that all key sector indicators from MOE, the National Institute of Education, and the Department of Examinations are publicly available on the new national education management information system website and published as annual education sector performance reports by 2025, disaggregated by sex and other criteria. Other priorities under output 3 (para. 12) are captured in the program action plan.¹⁴ An indicator not linked to disbursement supports the introduction and use of a program-based budgeting approach that is compliant with MOE's sector targets.

C. Managing Risks and Improving Capacity

20. This is the second RBL program with MOE in Sri Lanka. Counterparts are already familiar with the modality, which mitigates risks. The overall results-related risks, rated substantial before the mitigation measures, are as follows:¹⁵

- (i) Poor coordination in implementation and administrative arrangements between different entities could lead to delays in DLI achievement and results.
- (ii) The timely implementation of new assessments is contingent on the rollout of teacher training and new curricula, which in turn could be delayed by inefficiency in planning. The sequencing of some interdependent DLIs should therefore be closely monitored to avoid any slippage.
- (iii) Factors outside the education sector, such as home environments, may affect learning outcomes, access and demand, and teacher deployment.

21. Such risks will be managed by strengthening capacities and systems. With the mitigation measures in place, the results-related risks are rated *low*. The main actions to address these concerns are set out in the program action plan (footnote 14). For results monitoring, the risk mitigation measure is a quarterly review of the DLI status by key decision makers, with the implementation of corrective actions as required.¹⁶

¹⁴ Program Action Plan (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the RRP).

¹⁵ Integrated Risk Assessment and Mitigating Measures (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the RRP).

¹⁶ Program Monitoring and Evaluation System Assessment (accessible from the list of linked documents in Appendix 2 of the RRP).