

## SRI LANKA

# Education Sector Development Program



Sri Lanka has made commendable progress in basic education, achieving universal primary enrollment and high literacy rates, placing the country far ahead of its neighbors. Gender parity is 1.01, indicating a slightly higher number of girls than boys in school. On average, students attend school for about 10 years, compared to 6 years in neighboring South Asian countries. This success has been the result of the government's sustained strong commitment to education, including a free education policy backed by interventions such as free textbooks and uniforms, scholarships, and adequate provision of schools and teachers.

However, Sri Lanka must now improve the quality, relevance, and equity of secondary education. The secondary education net enrollment rate in grades 10–13 is still only 65%.

Passing rates for the grade 11 ordinary level examination improved from 50% in 2005 to 64% in 2013, but are still lower than lower-middle income country average of 71%. Passing rates for the grade 13 advanced level examination have stagnated for the last 5 years, and are significantly lower in science, mathematics, and English than in other subjects. Only about 6% of students entering grade 1 each year go on to enroll in university; as many as 33% enter the labor market without proper academic qualifications or skills training, leading to a high unemployment rate for the 15–24 age group.

To address these challenges, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the Education Sector Development Program on 27 June 2013. The program will support the government's Education Sector Development

## PROJECT FEATURES

**Improved student learning.** A national student assessment framework that integrates school-based assessment with external examinations will be developed to change the landscape of student learning and lead to improved passing rates for general certificate of education examinations. A technology stream in secondary schools will be introduced to offer diverse pathways from secondary education to higher education, vocational training, and job markets. Computer-aided learning will be introduced as part of the curriculum.

**Improved equity and efficiency of the school system.** Facilities in secondary schools will be upgraded based on the 1,000 Secondary Schools Development Program. Teachers with relevant qualifications will be recruited, trained, and deployed based on detailed teacher recruitment and deployment planning.

**Strengthened school leadership.** The capacity of central educational institutions such as the National Institute for Education and the Center for Leadership and Development will be strengthened, and school principals trained by implementing a gender-inclusive human resource training program for enhancing school quality and leadership. A financing facility to support sustainable school infrastructure maintenance will be introduced as part of the Program for School Improvement.

**Strengthened capacity for effective program planning and implementation.** Performance-based partnership agreements between the Ministry of Education and provincial education authorities will be developed to improve alignment of the provincial education sector plans with the ESDFP, and ensure better funds allocation and flow.



Facilities in secondary schools will be upgraded across Sri Lanka.



A technology stream in secondary schools will be introduced to offer diverse pathways from secondary education to higher education, vocational training, and job markets.

Framework and Program (ESDFP), which seeks to transform the school education system to create a human capital foundation for a knowledge economy, contributing to the objectives of the human capital development goals of the country. The program builds on the extensive experience of ADB in Sri Lanka's education sector. Building on the progress made in basic education, Sri Lanka aims to transform secondary education by shifting to higher cognitive skill and job-relevant competencies.

The program is in line with the strategic directions of ADB's South Asia Department. The strategy focuses on sustainable infrastructure, climate change mitigation and adaptation, human development, regional cooperation and integration, public-private partnership, and good governance.

**A modern and more relevant secondary education sector prepares youths to meet the challenges of the changing labor market, and can fuel a knowledge economy**

## PROJECT AT A GLANCE

**Cost and financing:** Asian Development Fund, \$100 million; Ordinary capital resources, \$100 million; Counterpart, \$4.6 billion

**Project approval date:** 27 June 2013

**Project themes:** Social development

**Status of project implementation:** Ongoing

**Executing agency:** Ministry of Education

## FOR INFORMATION

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Link to South Asia Project Briefs:  
<http://www.adb.org/publications/series/south-asia-project-briefs>

Sources: Project Data Sheet. <http://www.adb.org/projects/39293-037/main>; ADB. 2013. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Loan for the Education Sector Development Program in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka*. Manila. <http://www.adb.org/projects/documents/education-sector-development-program-rfp>



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