

## **Management Response to IED's Sector-Wide Evaluation on ADB's Support for Education in Asia and the Pacific**

On 21 February 2025, the Director General, Independent Evaluation Department, received the following response from the Director General, Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships Department on behalf of Management:

### **I. General Comments**

1. Management welcomes the sector-wide evaluation of the Independent Evaluation Department on ADB's support for education in Asia and the Pacific (the report). ADB has significantly increased financing for education sector operations during the evaluation period of 2011–2023, although the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the scope of recent operations. Following the introduction of the new operating model (NOM), this evaluation provides valuable insights for ADB's education sector operations, and perspectives for the future to help developing member countries (DMCs) address learning losses due to the pandemic as well as learning gaps, to further improve access to and quality and relevance of education.

### **II. Management Response to the Recommendations**

#### **2. Recommendation 1: Update ADB's education policy framework to better clarify ADB's strategic approach and objectives and guide operations**

**Management agrees.** Management agrees that the current policy framework, comprising the education sector policy and other guidance documents, needs to be updated in line with ADB's new policy architecture. The principles in the ADB policy on education approved by the Board of Directors in 2002 remain broadly relevant. Some recommendations in the policy such as preparing ADB's education sector strategies and roadmaps for all DMCs are no longer valid in the current circumstances where governments are more in the lead for preparing nationwide sector plans by themselves. ADB's education sector operations need to be more agile in responding to transformational changes happening in economies and societies, such as the rise of disruptive technologies, impact of climate change, and aging populations, which call for more frequent and strategic updates. While Strategy 2030 Education Sector Directional Guide (ESDG2030) in November 2022 is still in the early stages of implementation, ADB will review and update ESDG2030 and other guidance documents as required.

#### **3. Recommendation 2: Enhance the effectiveness of sector diagnostic work and strategic planning for education at the country level**

**Management agrees.** The effectiveness of sector diagnostic work and strategic planning for education sector operations in DMCs can be further enhanced. ADB has led sector-wide approaches in education in some DMCs, such as Nepal and Bangladesh, underpinned by its own and other development partners' sector diagnostic work. DMCs have also increased capacity for strategic planning and may request ADB's diagnostic support in some specific areas such as transformation roadmaps for selected industries in Cambodia. The education sector group will promote more targeted and purpose-driven diagnostic analysis and strategic planning, both for country partnership strategies and project designs. Given that ADB

is increasingly supporting state and provincial level projects, upstream analytical work needs to be fit-for-purpose. ADB's education sector operations will build on the principles of NOM, which has expanded opportunities for more upstream work towards enhancing development impact at country and regional levels.

4. **Recommendation 3: Strengthen outcome framework; indicators; and monitoring and evaluation for greater institutional learning**

**Management agrees.** There is a need to further strengthen design and monitoring framework in ADB's education sector operations building on sector diagnostics work. While outcomes in the education and skills development projects are subject to factors beyond the project or program scope, such as labor demands for graduates from skills development projects, it is important to aim for ambitious but realistic intermediate outcomes based on diagnostic work. The education sector is the most frequent user of the results-based lending modality, which aims to support system and institutional reforms. ADB staff working in the education sector are contributing to the ongoing results-based lending policy review to strengthen the outputs and outcome framework. Several education projects have also incorporated randomized controlled trials to understand the effectiveness of specific interventions. In addition to improved sector diagnostics, enhanced monitoring and evaluation framework, and utilizing lessons learnt from project completion reports, education sector operations will use available rigorous impact evaluation evidence for designing better education sector operations.

5. **Recommendation 4: Better align ADB's human resources and skills with its strategic positioning in the education sector**

**Management agrees.** The NOM provides opportunities to strengthen strategic positioning in the education sector. ADB education sector operations are expected to incorporate solutions to improve education using emerging technologies by collaborating across departments and offices, such as the Digital Sector Office, the Office of Business Intelligence and Operations Coordination, the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Department, Private Sector Operations Department, and Office of Market Development and Public Private Partnerships. The education sector operations have been leveraging the staff training budget and secondment arrangements through the Budget, People, and Management Systems Department to enhance alignment of human resources and skills mix to address DMC's needs in the education sector. The outposting of education sector staff is promoted to strengthen sector expertise in the field and have policy dialogue and project discussions closer to the needs of clients. More will be done to strengthen these connected actions to draw on the collective experience and domain knowledge of ADB specialists across different sector departments and resident missions, particularly in the sectors of urban, agriculture, energy and transport, where feasible. The education practice team will continue with the organization of professional development programs for education specialists and DMC leaders in emerging areas, such as artificial intelligence in education.