HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY

USAID's Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA) project is a 5-year, US $19-million partnership between the governments of the United States and Pakistan, select higher education institutions (HEIs) of Pakistan, and other stakeholders. Working closely with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, the project aims to strengthen the country's higher education system by building the capacity of HEIs in a bid to produce employable graduates while fostering improved workplace development.

Awarded in August 2021, the five-year project will increase the employability of the Pakistani workforce through training to improve higher education graduate capacity, relevance, adequacy and inclusivity. HESSA's approach hinges on engaging a wide array of stakeholders to introduce feasible, relevant, viable, and sustainable reforms. The project will encompass baseline studies, strategic plans, international higher education summits, study tours to US universities, and inclusive financial aid system for students, to name a few. HESSA will roll-out its programmatic interventions through three broad, interrelated components listed on the reverse of this sheet.

HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM STRENGTHENING ACTIVITY

COMPONENT A:

ADVANCING LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Interventions and activities under this component will strengthen capacities of HEI leaders for strategic planning and transformative organizational leadership, support collaboration between HEC and HEIs to revise policy frameworks and improve their implementation and broaden academia-industry linkages. The activities envisaged under this component will unfold under three focal areas:

1. Strengthening Strategic Planning Capacities of HEI Leaders
2. Strengthening Capacities of HEC and HEI Leadership and Governance
3. Improving HEI Resource Mobilization through Private Sector Engagement

COMPONENT B:

IMPROVING RELEVANCE, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Activities under this component will focus on strengthening academic departments, quality enhancement cells, faculty, and offices for research, innovation, and commercialization. Efforts will be made to strengthen faculty development programs, promote market-driven curriculum, and applied research. This component will provide training to support institutional development e.g., department policies, operational procedures, and individual capacities. The component comprises three focal areas:

1. Adapt Curriculum to Address Employability Learning Outcomes
2. Improve Teaching of Soft Skills
3. Introduce Innovation Management Connecting HEIs to the Private Sector

COMPONENT C:

ENHANCING SUPPORT SERVICES ACROSS THE STUDENT LIFE CYCLE

Activities under this component seek to improve the soft skills development of students for better employability, improve student access to financial aid and scholarships and other on-campus engagement services, and enhance networks and community engagement with student development activities. The six thematic intervention areas for Component C include:

1. Financial Aid
2. Career Readiness
3. Student Leadership & Co-Curriculars
4. Alumni Engagement & Development
5. Student Entrepreneurship
6. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Improved organizational performance of HEIs based on strategic planning.
- Increased effective private sector partnerships and funding.
- Enhanced curriculum to demonstrably improve graduate employability, including needed soft skills.
- Expanded distance learning, financial aid, scholarships, and career pathway programs improving access for underserved populations and overall student success post-graduation.

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