

# GPE Country-level Evaluations - Final Synthesis Report

FINAL REPORT | APRIL 2020





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# Executive Summary

## Evaluation purpose and approach

**Background:** During 2018 - 2019, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) commissioned 28 country-level evaluations (CLE), 20 of them summative and eight prospective.<sup>1</sup> These evaluations aimed to address the following questions: (i) Has GPE support contributed to achieving country-level objectives related to sector planning, sector plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring, and more/better financing for education? If so, then how?; (ii) Has sector plan implementation contributed to making the overall education system in the reviewed country/countries more effective and efficient?; (iii) Have changes at education system level contributed to progress towards impact?;<sup>2</sup> and (iv) What are implications of evaluation findings for GPE? In addressing these questions, the CLE also assessed the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's country-level theory of change and operational model. CLEs were based on a theory-based contribution analysis. The evaluations assessed the functioning of the full partnership at country level, not just the role of the Secretariat or the use of GPE funds. CLE review periods varied by country, depending on the years covered by the latest fully or largely implemented Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG), falling between 2010 and 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Summative evaluations were conducted at or around the time of GPE Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) completion in a country, while prospective evaluations followed GPE's activities and programs from 2017 up until 2019 with the intent to provide a continuous review of the effectiveness of GPE's operational model in the respective countries.

<sup>2</sup> In the context of this assignment, the term 'impact' is aligned with the terminology used by GPE to refer to changes

**The GPE country-level operational model** is composed of (i) national sector planning cycles, (ii) education sector coordination, and (iii) financing, all of which have to work together in ways appropriate and adapted to the respective context. GPE seeks to support all three of these areas through levers that influence development cooperation and financing, and through its financial support. This is reflected in the GPE country-level theory of change developed for the country-level evaluations, which also highlights the central role played by sector plan implementation for progress towards the ultimate goals of improved learning outcomes and equity in education.

**Characteristics of the CLE sample:** The 28 reviewed countries constitute a diverse sample of GPE partner countries. As shown in the table below, they differed by income status, and half were categorized as Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries (FCAC) during the CLE review period. Countries covered by prospective CLEs are marked in *italics*.

in the areas of learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion (reflected in GPE Strategic Goals 1 and 2 described in the GPE 2016-2020 Strategic Plan). While the country evaluations examined progress towards impact in this sense, they did not constitute formal impact evaluations, which usually entail counterfactual analysis based on randomized control trials and aim to make causal claims between interventions and impact.

FCAC or not	Low income	Lower/Upper Middle Income <sup>3</sup>
Categorized as FCAC	<i>Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe</i>	Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan <sup>4</sup>
Not categorized as FCAC	Burkina Faso, Guinea, <i>Malawi</i> , Mozambique, <i>Nepal</i> , Senegal	Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guyana, <i>Kenya</i> , Kyrgyz Republic, Mauritania, Tajikistan, Zambia

Countries also differed in numerous other aspects, including: federal versus unitary structures; population size; degrees and types of ethnic and/or religious diversity; organization of the education sector under one or several ministries; size of the school-age population; structure of the education system in terms of grades and levels; experience and internal capacities of the respective ministry/ministries of education; and the number and types of development partners (DP) supporting the education sector.

**About this final synthesis report:** This report draws upon the summative and prospective evaluation reports for the 28 partner countries in the CLE sample and on a 2019 [desk study](#) on GPE's Support to Sector Plan Development, which reviewed a sample of 16 countries, 11 of which were also covered by CLEs. The synthesis report uses Thematic Analysis to identify trends across countries as well as factors that are likely to have facilitated or hindered the achievement of results

in a given context. In the analysis and in the formulation of overarching findings and conclusions, all CLEs were assigned equal weight.

## Overarching observations

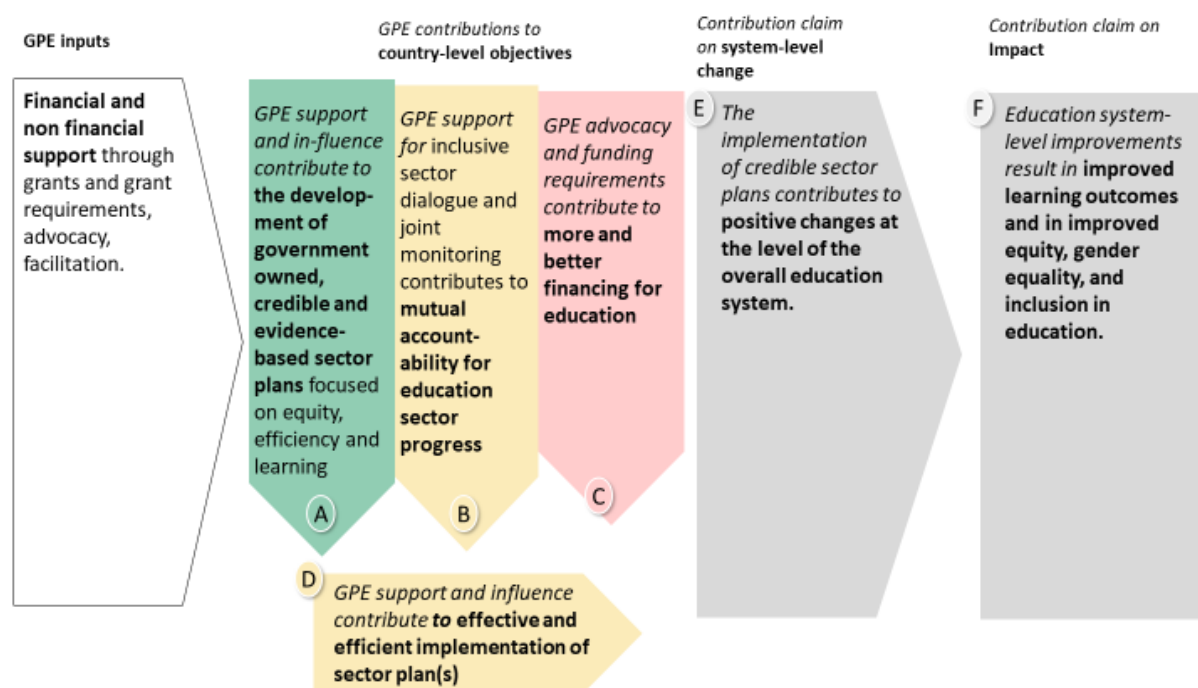
**Direct GPE contributions to country-level changes are:** (i) strongly evident in relation to sector plan development; (ii) generally modest in relation to sector dialogue, monitoring and sector plan implementation; and (iii) generally weak in relation to improving domestic and international sector financing. While GPE support is often adapted to countries' specific needs, funding requirements are not always applied as flexibly as demanded by the diverse contexts in which GPE operates. The evaluation could not reliably assess the extent to which sector plan implementation has driven system-level improvements or to validate the link between system-level changes that occurred during the review periods and impact-level trends related to equity or learning outcomes. This was due to: (a) insufficient evidence and (b) the time required for system-level changes to yield impact-level results.

These high-level observations are reflected in the figure below. It illustrates which elements in the GPE country-level theory of change are more strongly supported by evidence (green), modestly supported by evidence (amber), not or only weakly supported by evidence (red), and elements for which there is insufficient data to assess the validity of the assumed links within the theory of change (grey).

<sup>3</sup> Guyana is the only country in the reviewed sample categorized as an Upper Middle Income country.

<sup>4</sup> In Pakistan, the evaluation focused on the two provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, which had received separate Education Sector Implementation Grants (ESPIGs). Therefore, the evaluation treated the two provinces as two

separate entities, which is reflected throughout the report by referring to a total of '29 countries and provinces'. In Nigeria, while the CLE focused on the five states of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto, evaluation findings were reported in an aggregated way, reflecting that Nigeria had received a single ESPIG rather than separate ones for each of the states.



Most of the assumed conditions required for GPE support to be effective and the envisaged changes to occur were only partially in place. The assumptions for each element of the theory of change were based on conditions such as the existence of relevant capabilities among in-country actors to make the envisaged changes take place, as well as the existence of generally conducive contexts and absence of disrupting or hindering external influences. The extent to which underlying assumptions held true varied by country. No single factor or combination of factors explains the differences across countries with respect to GPE contributions or system-level changes.

**GPE country-level influence primarily derives from the incentives and financial resources provided through the ESPIG** and, to a lesser degree, the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG). Non-financial support and technical assistance, in particular through Secretariat, coordinating agency and grant agent (GA) advocacy, complement these financial incentives, yet with generally weaker effects.

GPE was flexible in its approach and requirements in some countries but not in others where the context demanded more flexibility. Examples of GPE flexibility include swiftly reallocating GPE funding in Zimbabwe to support schools affected by Cyclone Idai and endorsing state-level sector plans in Nigeria despite these not meeting the required number of GPE quality standards, which likely contributed to government buy-in to subsequent sector planning efforts. In other countries (Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan) the GPE operational model had not been adapted to fit the context of federal states and decentralized education sectors. This included the use of a single coordinating agency (CA) and GPE focal point located at the central level, which did not facilitate ongoing CA engagement at the provincial/local level.



## Findings on sector plan development

**There is strong evidence that GPE financial and non-financial support contributed to sector plan development processes and to enhancing the quality of resulting sector plans.** In almost all countries where data on sector plans covered more than one time period, the quality of plans improved, as measured by GPE standards. The ESPDG mechanism and ESPIG funding criteria (calling for a credible plan endorsed by the local education group [LEG]) were the most influential types of GPE support in this regard. These were complemented by GPE quality and assurance review (QAR) mechanisms including an external plan appraisal, and the advocacy and advice provided by coordinating agencies and the Secretariat.

**Education sector plans are often not used by in-country actors to guide implementation, monitoring and reporting, which raises questions about the relevance of the plans.** Likely reasons for this include overambitious and insufficiently prioritized plans, insufficient adaptation of the plans to the needs and capacity of actors at the sub-national level, and the perception that sector plans were linked to funding only for basic education, which sometimes limited the plan's relevance in the eyes of ministries responsible for other education sub-sectors. In addition, especially in some fragile countries, contextual changes sometimes negatively influenced the perceived and actual relevance of the sector plan. Examples include conflict in South Sudan and the Ebola epidemic for the Gambia and Liberia.

**The variable tranche has the potential to strengthen the results focus of sector planning** by requiring countries to translate broad sector plan objectives into concrete strategies supported by explicit theories of change, thereby

'unpacking' how higher-level sectoral objectives will be achieved. This potential was confirmed in the eight countries reviewed that had an active variable tranche (VT) during the review period.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, across these countries agreeing on appropriate strategies and indicators for the VT was largely disconnected from sector plan development. Also, in some countries, e.g., in the DRC and Ethiopia, consulted stakeholders noted that the indicators chosen for the variable tranche were overly ambitious, putting into question whether envisaged targets would be achieved. This likely reflects that (i) the expectation for VT indicators to demonstrate a 'realistic stretch' may be inherently contradictory, i.e. that a stretch target may run the risk of not also being realistic; and (ii) the VT was still relatively new at the time of the evaluations, and in-country GPE actors, including VT grant agents, had to familiarize themselves with GPE requirements.

**GPE support mechanisms such as plan quality criteria and QAR processes do not sufficiently address countries' (implementation) capacity.** At present, there is no shared understanding or approach among GPE actors at global and country levels for how to assess country capacity for sector plan implementation and monitoring, nor for how to address identified capacity gaps. This means that applying the GPE quality standard for a sector plan being 'achievable' does not adequately take into account the existing or missing elements of country capacity.

**Key factors that likely influenced the degree of progress made in sector plan development** included the technical capacities, experience and frequency of staff turnover within the Ministry of Education, all of which varied between countries. In addition, in at least four countries where responsibility for the education sector is split between different ministries (Guinea, Malawi, Senegal, and Togo), participation in sector plan development of those ministries responsible for areas other than basic education was negatively

<sup>5</sup> Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

affected by the perception that the plan was, primarily, a vehicle for accessing GPE funding, and that this funding would benefit basic education only.

**Implications for GPE: GPE support has positively influenced sector planning processes. However, there is a need for GPE to ensure that sector planning processes and resulting sector plans are more closely connected to, and actively support, subsequent implementation and sector monitoring activities of in-country actors than is currently the case.** This includes the need for GPE to pay more attention to the notion of country (implementation) capacity.

## Findings on sector dialogue and monitoring

GPE made contributions to strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring, especially through ESPIG and ESPDG funding as well as through coordinating agency (CA) and Secretariat advocacy. GPE contributed to establishing or strengthening local education groups' inclusiveness, as well as mechanisms for sector monitoring, especially Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). Coordinating agencies helped facilitate dialogue between governments, DPs and CSOs.

**However, most of these contributions did not have lasting effects beyond sector plan development and ESPIG application phases.** The role played by coordinating agencies and their influence on mutual accountability<sup>6</sup> varied by country due to differences at the individual level (e.g., CA representative's experience and personal relationship with stakeholders) and at the institutional level (e.g., the respective

agency's global and in country reputation). Across countries, the absence of GPE financing for the CA role likely limited coordinating agencies' ability and willingness to facilitate sector dialogue and monitoring beyond their responsibilities directly related to GPE-specific processes.

**Across countries, government, donor and civil society stakeholders meant the Secretariat only when referring to GPE.** Uganda was the only exception in that key stakeholders in that country proactively described themselves as 'being' GPE, reflecting the idea that an active country-level partnership with shared responsibility for progress existed beyond sector plan development. In all other countries, stakeholders, especially DPs, tended to focus on their own priorities once plan development was complete.

**The variable tranche (VT) shows potential to positively influence systematic monitoring of sector plan implementation, albeit limited to those strategies and indicators directly addressed under the VT.** In six of the eight countries that had a variable tranche in place at the time of the CLE, the VT constituted an incentive for both the government and other sector stakeholders to strengthen efforts to monitor progress in the areas covered by the VT, and to ensure the availability of reliable data to verify such progress.

**Mechanisms for participatory and inclusive sector dialogue, involving government, donor, civil society and other stakeholders, are in place in all but one (Guyana) of the 29 countries and provinces.** These mechanisms generally work well as forums for information exchange, especially during sector plan development. Local

<sup>6</sup> The notion of 'mutual accountability' for education sector results is based on the understanding that while the main responsibility for improved education outcomes lies with the government, development partners (and private sector partners) are accountable for the provision of financial and technical support, and CSOs and other non-government stakeholders primarily for providing a constructive challenging function and contributing to the realization of

the sector plan. These stakeholders need to hold each other to account – through ongoing sector dialogue and systematic sector monitoring – for adequately fulfilling their respective roles.

Education Groups tend to play a more limited role in relation to ensuring systematic sector plan implementation and monitoring.

**All but two countries<sup>7</sup> developed an education sector monitoring framework linked to their sector plan. The quality, usability and actual use of these frameworks for tracking progress of sector plan implementation varied, however.** Challenges included results frameworks that were either overly complex (e.g., in the DRC, Togo and Uganda) or that did not strike a balance between identifying lower-level process and output indicators as well as higher-level outcome and impact level ones. Consequently, collected data did not permit linking bigger-picture trends to specific activities and short-term achievements, and thereby prevented assessing the effectiveness of sector plan implementation. All but eight countries<sup>8</sup> also developed operational implementation plans to break down their multi-year sector plans into more manageable action plans. However, all of these action plans, except the one in Bangladesh, showed significant weaknesses such as misalignment between the action plan and the sector plan (e.g., Cambodia), addressing only the basic education sub-sector (e.g., in Mauritania), or lacked roles and responsibilities for ESP implementation and monitoring (e.g., Cote d'Ivoire, Balochistan, Liberia, Sindh and Sierra Leone).

**Across countries, sector monitoring activities included Joint Sector Reviews. In at least half of the countries, however, information generated in JSRs was not systematically used to inform sector plan implementation or other decision-making.** Likely reasons for this included that information generated through the JSRs focused on high-level sector trends without linking them to operational questions around sector plan implementation, absence of clear processes and related accountability for implementing recommendations deriving from JSRs, and gaps in

government staff technical capabilities such as in relation to data analysis and synthesis.

**Available evidence does not permit isolating specific factors, or combinations of factors, that would explain observed differences in the degree to which sector dialogue and monitoring evolved** during the review periods, or the extent to which GPE support influenced related changes. One factor that likely influenced processes in some countries was having an established culture of sector dialogue, partner coordination and collaboration, which tended to be stronger in countries that had experience with pooled funding mechanisms. Negative factors included limited coordination or competition between ministries sharing responsibility for the education sector, and development partners being primarily focused on achieving and documenting their own results rather than doing so through the lens of the agreed upon sector plan.

**Implications for GPE: There is a need for GPE to expand and make its approach to strengthening country-level mutual accountability more systematic.** ESPIG funding requirements offer an indirect financial incentive for strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring in the context of sector plan development (by requiring the sector plan to be endorsed by a legitimate Local Education Group and to be based on solid sector data). However, there is room for GPE to consider introducing similar financial incentives that would relate to sector dialogue and monitoring in the context of sector plan implementation. Also, there is a need for GPE to clarify and strengthen coordinating agency and ESPIG grant agent responsibilities for supporting ongoing sector dialogue and monitoring specifically in support of overall sector plan implementation.

<sup>7</sup> The Kyrgyz Republic and Nigeria

<sup>8</sup> The DRC, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Tajikistan and Zambia.



## Findings on sector financing

**GPE made only few contributions to influencing the amounts or quality (e.g., sub-sectoral funding priorities) of domestic education sector financing. However, while GPE support had no direct influence on funding decisions, ESPIG funding criteria sometimes stimulated discussion on domestic financing among sector stakeholders by providing benchmarks against which to measure country progress. Domestic funding decisions were largely driven by countries' overall economic and political factors. The multiplier is likely playing a positive role in the timing of international financing.**

**Domestic education financing increased** in absolute terms in 21 of 29 reviewed countries and provinces, while education as a share of overall developing country partner financing increased in only 12. The overall amounts of **international funding to education increased or remained stable** in all but four of the reviewed countries. However, education as a share of overall ODA declined or fluctuated in two thirds of the countries reviewed, indicating a negative global trend.

**The amount and reliability of ESPIG funding was a valuable source of international funding and often provided a considerable share of international funding and capital investments** for basic education (for example, 39 percent of basic education ODA in Senegal, and 79 percent in Togo). In some cases, GPE funding also acted as a reassurance to other DPs to re-invest in a country. GPE's accelerated funding mechanism allowed beneficiary countries to quickly and flexibly access much-needed bridge funding to compensate for exceptional needs and circumstances.

**Stakeholders in Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Senegal felt that the rigid application of ESPIG funding requirements for domestic financing was not relevant or justified in their countries.** In

Rwanda, for example, stakeholders considered the benchmark of education accounting for 20 percent of total government expenditures was less meaningful in demonstrating government commitment to education than, for example, looking at actual progress made in the sector or at the efficiency of utilizing domestic and international financing.

**In the three countries that had already received a GPE Multiplier at the time of the CLE (Nepal, Senegal and Zimbabwe), the mechanism likely influenced the timing of sector financing provided by other development partners.** In all three countries, the external funds had already been approved for use in the education sector prior to the Multiplier application. Nevertheless, GPE considers external funding 'additional' if it is mobilized or mobilized more quickly due to the Multiplier. In all three countries, consulted stakeholders indicated that the leveraged external funds might not have been made available as quickly had it not been for the Multiplier. As such, the external funding met the Multiplier's additionality criterion.

**There were no significant changes in donor harmonization and alignment during the evaluation review periods.** Pooled funding mechanisms were in place in only six of 28 countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nepal). In other countries, international financing, especially from bilateral donors, was channeled using project modalities.

**The vast majority of ESPIGs in reviewed countries were implemented using project modalities.** This included countries (e.g., Cambodia, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mauritania and Tajikistan) where there were no obvious reasons such as conflict or weak government institutions that would explain why pooled and/or budget support mechanisms might not be appropriate. In these contexts, CLEs did not observe any targeted efforts from GPE<sup>9</sup> neither at the time of ESPIG approval nor

<sup>9</sup> Secretariat, coordinating agency or grant agent.

subsequently (looking ahead to a next ESPIG) to help countries move towards more aligned modalities. In 6 out of 29 countries and provinces where ESPIGs were channeled through pooled funding mechanisms, GPE contributed to maintaining the achieved status quo of donor harmonization and alignment.

**Key factors** that likely influenced international sector financing decisions included development partner trust in country governments to manage funds transparently and efficiently, which influenced decisions on whether to channel resources through pooled and on-budget mechanisms or not; global and regional trends and related shifts in development partner priorities, and Ministry of Education preferences (some preferred project modalities as these gave them maximum control over resources). Domestic financing trends appear to be largely influenced by countries' overall political and macro-economic contexts, which are beyond the direct influence of education sector stakeholders.

**Implications for GPE: GPE needs to strengthen the country-level theory of change to clarify the assumed pathways to influencing international and domestic financing decisions.** GPE's 'toolbox' for influencing financing decisions is limited when compared to the many other factors that likely shape government and development partner choices. Nevertheless, GPE sometimes uses the following promising approaches: (i) catalyzing dialogue among education stakeholders on what constitutes 'sufficient' and 'good' education sector financing (both domestic and international), and (ii) modeling desired behaviors in terms of harmonization and alignment. These could be applied more consistently and formulated as strategies with specific intended results.

## Findings on sector plan implementation

**ESPIG funding constituted GPE's main contribution to sector plan implementation. In addition, the Variable Tranche showed potential to strengthen plan implementation by providing an incentive. On the whole, however, GPE pays comparatively little attention to supporting implementation of sector plans.**

Despite a generally modest grant size of between 1 and 4.3 percent of actual implementation costs, ESPIGs provided important resources for capital investments in contexts where most domestic sector financing was used to cover recurrent costs. In addition, in six of eight countries with a VT (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda and Zimbabwe), the variable tranche made a positive difference to plan implementation by providing an incentive for in-country stakeholders to make efforts to reach the agreed upon targets and monitor related progress on an ongoing basis.

**Sector plan implementation tended to be partial and fragmented** due to, amongst other factors, overly ambitious sector plans paired with a lack of solid operational planning, gaps in available financing, gaps in countries' implementation capacity, and project-driven development partner support. However, the amount and quality of data on education sector plan implementation varied considerably by country, and most CLEs were not able to fully assess the extent to which the plan had been implemented as anticipated.

**Country income levels do not suffice to explain differences in implementation progress**, given that CLEs noted strong and weak progress in both low and lower-middle income countries. Similarly, the classification of a country as Fragile and Conflict Affected (FCAC) alone does not help explain noted differences. For example, plan implementation was found to be comparatively weakest in three FCAC countries (the DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan) while Rwanda, also an

FCAC country, performed relatively well in plan implementation. Other factors that likely affected implementation included overall government effectiveness and political stability,<sup>10</sup> the country's broader political economy, government ownership of and leadership for plan implementation, and the institutional culture in ministry/ministries of education at both central and decentralized levels.

**GPE pays only limited attention to overall sector plan implementation:**

Sector plan implementation is central in GPE's country-level theory of change given that GPE contributions to sector plan development, sector financing and mutual accountability are geared towards facilitating effective plan implementation, and that plan implementation is essential for achieving ultimate objectives in terms of system- and impact-level changes. However, in practice GPE does not devote, and is perceived by stakeholders as not devoting, much attention to supporting overall plan implementation. Illustrations of this include: (i) the GPE Results Framework tracks sector plan quality, but not implementation progress nor national capacity for planning and implementation; (ii) there are no dedicated financial GPE incentives for monitoring sector plan implementation; (iii) as per their terms of reference, ESPIG grant agents are expected to support the government in regularly sharing with the Local Education Group policy related issues from ESPIG implementation relative to sector plan implementation. In practice, grant agents do share information on grant implementation, yet not specifically through the lens of what progress in grant implementation means in relation to specific sector plan objectives and targets. **Together, these factors send the unintended message that GPE, like most other donors, is focused on ensuring that GPE funding achieves its intended narrower results, but that these results are not being placed in the broader context of overall sector plan implementation.**

<sup>10</sup> As measured in terms of World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI).

**Implications for GPE: GPE processes and the actions of GPE actors need to better reflect the central role that sector plan implementation holds within GPE's country-level theory of change.** Areas for GPE to review and potentially strengthen include (i) exploring how GPE can further strengthen country capacity and provide incentives not only for sector plan implementation but also for monitoring and reporting upon implementation and (ii) the extent to which grant agents and coordinating agencies are expected to play an active role in supporting overall sector plan implementation, for example, for the grant agent, by monitoring and reporting upon ESPIG implementation through the lens of how achievements contributed to progress in sector plan implementation.

## Progress towards stronger education systems and links to plan implementation

**Sector plan implementation likely contributed to system-level improvements in several countries, mainly through improvements to school infrastructure and measures aiming to reduce the cost of education to families. In most cases, however, the absence of systematic monitoring, reporting or sector-plan specific evaluation does not permit verifying these links.** This is due to weaknesses in how country governments monitor and report on plan implementation, but also because development partners typically do not monitor or report on the results of their sector investments through the lens of the education sector plan. Furthermore, during the evaluation periods, many of the observed new measures were still in early stages of implementation or were limited in scope.

**All reviewed countries made progress in removing some barriers to equitable education**

access, especially in improving school infrastructure and strengthening access to early childhood education. Half of the countries put in place new, yet often isolated, measures to address the access needs of learners with special needs, and less than half introduced new measures to enhance gender equality in education access. In some cases, however, the latter reflected that gender parity in access had already been achieved.

**Across countries, new or expanded measures were put in place to address barriers to quality education.** These included efforts to strengthen pre-service teacher training (in 19/29 countries and provinces) and in-service teacher training (in 16/29), and measures to improve basic education curricula (in 23/29). However, many of these measures are still in early stages of implementation or limited in scope. As such, it is not yet possible to identify their effects on learning.

**All countries reviewed put in place at least some measures to strengthen elements of education sector management,** including in relation to data collection, analysis and synthesis. These efforts tended to be fragmented, however, and significant weaknesses in sector management capacity and systems remain in most countries, especially at decentralized levels. Learning Assessment Systems that included large-scale learning assessments had been established in 18 of the 28 countries reviewed.<sup>11</sup> However, the assessment systems in three of these countries had not yet produced data for more than a single point in time, therefore measuring changes in learning is not yet possible. While Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) existed in all countries, evaluations frequently noted limitations in data quality and/or in the use of EMIS data for decision-making.

**Implications for GPE: CLEs raise questions about how GPE can strengthen national capacity to**

**monitor and oversee sector plan implementation including development partners' contributions to plan implementation.** Within GPE's country-level theory of change, the key underlying assumption logically linking sector plan implementation to system-level changes is that initiatives that result in system-level improvements were driven or at least guided by the sector plan. The fact that most governments and development partners typically do not explicitly report against sector plan objectives indicates that the assumed link is weak at best.

## Progress towards stronger learning outcomes and equity

**Basic education access improved in all but one of the reviewed countries but learning outcomes varied across the countries for which data were available. Across countries, inequities persist in both access and learning related to factors such as sex, income level and geographic location.**

**Evidence regarding change in learning outcomes was available for only 14 of 29 jurisdictions. In these, outcomes improved modestly in 7, remained the same in 5 and deteriorated in 2.** For the remaining 15 countries, available data were insufficient to identify trends. Absolute levels of learning were low across the 14 countries for which data were available. Evidence on equity of learning was very limited. Where available, data indicated relatively small and, overall, diminishing differences based on learners' sex, sometimes in the favor of boys and sometimes in the favor of girls. At the same time, there were significant discrepancies in learning outcomes based on other factors. Learners in urban areas tended to perform better than those in rural areas (e.g., in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tajikistan), those from families in the wealthiest

<sup>11</sup> Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan (applicable to both Balochistan and Sindh), Rwanda,

Senegal, The Gambia, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



quintile performed better than those from families in the poorest quintile (e.g., in Cambodia, Mozambique, Senegal), and those attending private schools did better than those in public ones (e.g., in Guinea and Senegal).<sup>12</sup>

**Improvements in basic education access** most commonly noted were related to pre-primary enrollment (in 19/29 countries and provinces), lower secondary enrollment (in 16/29), and gender parity indices (GPI) of primary enrollment (in 9/29).<sup>13</sup> Countries with the greatest number of access-related indicators improving during the review periods included both lower-middle income countries (Bangladesh, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Tajikistan) and low-income ones (Nepal, South Sudan, and Togo). Three of these countries, Cote d'Ivoire, South Sudan and Togo, are currently classified as Fragile and Conflict Affected. Comparatively less progress occurred in Senegal (likely reflecting that the country's education sector is already performing relatively well), Nigeria and Zimbabwe (likely reflecting, especially in Nigeria, the countries' challenging political and economic contexts).

**More than half of countries made improvements in relation to more equitable education access** for both boys and girls, and for learners with disabilities. Nevertheless, in the majority of countries there is evidence of persistent inequities in both access and learning based on, among other factors, learners' sex, income level and geographic location.

**An assessment of the links between system-level change and impact was not possible** due to: a) gaps in the data; b) impact-level changes are lagged. Therefore, the effects of the system-level changes captured in the CLEs will only be reflected in the future.

**Implications for GPE: The limited evidence base available for linking impact-level trends to system-level changes and sector plan**

<sup>12</sup> The examples draw on information available from established large-scale learning assessments and also from national examinations and smaller scale sample-based or citizen-led assessments.

**implementation indicates the need for GPE to better help countries strengthen the evidence chain from sector plan implementation activities to subsequent changes in equity and learning outcomes.** A second implication is for GPE to ensure continuous support for large-scale learning assessments that can provide countries and their supporting partners with evidence of learning trends.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The 28 CLEs conducted in 2018 and 2019 illustrated positive contributions of GPE support to countries, especially in relation to sector plan development, yet also raised fundamental questions about the GPE country-level theory of change and operational model. These are reflected in the following conclusions and suggestions for consideration by the GPE Board and Secretariat as the intended primary users of this report.

**Conclusion 1: The central role of sector plan implementation within the country-level theory of change is not sufficiently reflected in GPE's operational model, results framework, or the actions of key GPE actors on the ground. There is a need for GPE to strengthen how it helps countries assess and build their capacity to effectively implement and monitor sector plans.**

### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.1:** The Secretariat, in consultation with the Board, may want to explore how the sector plan quality criterion of being 'achievable' could reflect a country's verified and credible administrative capacity to implement

<sup>13</sup> In an additional six countries, the GPI of primary enrollment had already been high prior to, and remained high during the CLE period.



the sector plan. This will require efforts to further strengthen the assessment of such capacity at both central and sub-national levels in Education Sector Analyses, ideally through a clear evaluation process under government oversight. It will further require reflection on whether all countries can and should be expected to develop plans that are both comprehensive and achievable at the same time, or whether priority should be given – at least in contexts with weak government capacity – to plans being ‘achievable’.<sup>14</sup>

**Recommendation 1.2:** GPE criteria for assessing the quality of sector plans and for reviewing ESPIG applications should take into account to what extent the country was successful in implementing the previous sector plan or equivalent. This will help decide whether adjustments are needed to align the complexity and ambition of a new plan with existing capacity and/or to address key capacity gaps.

**Recommendation 1.3:** The Secretariat, in collaboration with developing country governments, should explore how GPE can further support countries in building useful tools and approaches for good sector management in relation to plan implementation. This could include guidance and/or dedicated financial support, through the ESPDG or the ESPIG mechanisms, for developing user-friendly implementation plans and monitoring frameworks, including clear accountability frameworks for using and reporting upon the use of these tools at regular intervals.

**Recommendation 1.4:** GPE should further clarify its position and strengthen related communication with country-level stakeholders around the intended and permitted uses of GPE funds for different sub-sectors in order to address

the widespread perception of GPE funds being exclusively reserved for basic education.

**Conclusion 2:** GPE’s current approach to strengthening mutual accountability is effective in relation to sector plan development, but less so in relation to development partners, grant agents and coordinating agencies systematically rallying behind and supporting sector plan implementation and monitoring.

#### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 2.1:** The Board should critically review its collective and each member’s individual commitment to the principles of aid effectiveness and frankly discuss to what extent these principles still reflect what the partnership stands for. At the country level, the Secretariat may want to advise ministries of education and LEGs to develop and monitor clear expectations of what endorsing a plan should require in terms of development partners’ aligning and monitoring their own work with the plan.

**Recommendation 2.2:** The Board should put in place additional country-level incentives for effective and meaningful sector (plan) monitoring, for example by introducing a third financing window in the ESPDG mechanism that would be reserved for supporting such monitoring. Given that CAs often act as grant agents for the ESPDG, the new window may also facilitate a stronger CA role in ongoing and meaningful sector plan monitoring.

**Recommendation 2.3:** The Secretariat should identify measures to better adapt the GPE operational model to decentralized education systems. This can include ensuring that ESPDG or ESPIG funds are used to strengthen stakeholder

<sup>14</sup> In reflecting on what ‘achievable’ sector plans are, it may be relevant to also look at the broader global context. In 2019, the education community acknowledged that SDG 4 on education will likely not be reached by 2030 and that the targets outlined under this SDG may have been too complex

and ambitious. In response, the World Bank is introducing a simpler target to guide its own work that focuses on addressing ‘learning poverty’, defined as the number of 10-year-old children unable to read a simple story. See: <https://live.worldbank.org/learning-poverty-tackling-fundamentals>

coordination at both central and decentralized levels, and appointing coordinating agencies and GPE focal points not only at national but also at provincial/state levels where this is not already the case.

**Conclusion 3:** ESPIG supervision and the Variable Tranche hold the potential to contribute to sector-wide monitoring of plan implementation. To date, however, this potential is not consistently realized.

#### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 3.1:** The Secretariat, based on a review of the current Terms of Reference for grant agents and existing GA's organizational capacities, should make suggestions to the Board on whether and how to modify the GA role so as for it to play a stronger role in support of overall sector plan monitoring and implementation beyond ESPIG administration. At a minimum, this could include incorporating reflections on how ESPIG-funded achievements contributed to progress in sector plan implementation and related targets.

**Recommendation 3.2:** In relation to the variable tranche, the Board should consider replacing the notion of 'stretch' indicators with the simpler requirement for countries to demonstrate improvements in the selected areas. Alternatively, the Board could consider focusing the variable tranche on output indicators linked to key bottlenecks, which can be achieved within the variable tranche's relatively limited timeframe. The Secretariat and variable tranche GAs should encourage countries to, wherever possible, select strategies and indicators already included in the sector plan so as to strengthen the VT's potential role in sector plan implementation.

**Conclusion 4:** There is a need for evidence-based and contextually appropriate benchmarks for ESPIG funding requirements related to domestic sector financing.

#### Related recommendation:

**Recommendation 4.1:** The Secretariat should clarify and clearly communicate to stakeholders the existing evidence base underlying the current benchmarks<sup>15</sup> for the ESPIG domestic sector financing funding requirement. If required, these benchmarks should be altered to reflect new/additional evidence. At the same time, the Board should (continue to) explore whether and in what contexts benchmarks could be applied with greater flexibility. This could include allowing countries to propose alternative measures for demonstrating government commitment to education overall and to adequate allocations to primary education if they can demonstrate that the existing GPE benchmarks are problematic in their context.

**Conclusion 5** There is insufficient evidence to validate those elements of the current GPE country-level theory of change that link sector plan implementation to system and impact-level improvements.

#### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 5.1:** The Board should develop a plan outlining how GPE can help countries better monitor country-level changes over longer periods of time to gain better insights into the envisaged links between sector plan implementation and subsequent system- and impact-level changes. Resulting evidence will be relevant not only for the respective countries but may also allow GPE to test and verify these higher-level elements of its theory of change.

<sup>15</sup> Allocating 20 percent of government expenditures to education, and, for countries that have not yet achieved

universal primary education, to allocate 45 percent of their education budgets to primary education.

**Recommendation 5.2:** The Board should develop a plan outlining how GPE can provide continuous support to the regular conduct of large-scale learning assessments so as to provide countries and their supporting partners with evidence of changes in learning outcomes.

# Acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
CA	Coordinating Agency
CFM	Common Funding Mechanism
CLE	Country-level Evaluation
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DCP	Developing Country Partner
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
DP	Development Partner
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EDF	Education Development Fund
EDS	Education Development Strategy
EGMA	Early Grades Math Assessment
EGRA	Early Grades Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Plan Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
EU	European Union
FCAC	Fragile/Conflict Affected Country
FY	Fiscal Year
GA	Grant Agent
GEM	Global Education Monitoring (UNESCO Report)
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GESP	General Education Strategic Plan (South Sudan)
GEQ	Global Evaluation Question

GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRA	Global and Regional Activities Program
IDA	World Bank's International Development Association
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ITRP	Independent Technical Review Panel
JSR	Joint Sector Review
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LAS	Learning Assessment System
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCA	Maximum Country Allocation
MEN	Ministry of National Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MTR	Mid-term Review
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan (Kenya)
NFM	New (GPE) Funding Model
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NSED	National Strategy for Education Development (Tajikistan)
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
QAR	Quality Assurance Review
PAC	Public Advisory Council
PAQUET	Program for Quality, Equity, and Transparency Improvements in Education (Senegal)
PASEC	Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN
PEDP	Primary Education Development Program (Bangladesh)
PIRSEF	Plan Intérimaire de Relance du Secteur de l'Éducation et de la Formation (Mali)
PISA-D	Programme for International Student Assessment - Developing countries
PNDSE	Education System Development Program (Mauritania)
PRIEDE	Primary Education Development Project (Kenya)
PSE	Programme sectoriel pour l'éducation
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results (World Bank)



<b>SACMEQ</b>	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SSDP</b>	School Sector Development Plan (Nepal)
<b>SSEF</b>	Education and Training Sector Strategy (DRC)
<b>SWAp</b>	Sector Wide Approach
<b>TEP</b>	Transitional Education Plan
<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UIS</b>	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>US\$</b>	United States Dollar
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>UTSEP</b>	Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project
<b>VT</b>	Variable Tranche
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WGI</b>	Worldwide Governance Indicators
<b>ZELA</b>	Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment

# Terminology

Alignment	Basing support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures. <sup>16</sup>
Basic education	Pre-primary (before Grade 1), primary (Grades 1-6), lower secondary (Grades 7-9), and adult literacy education in formal and non-formal settings. This corresponds to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 levels 0-2.
Capacity	In the context of this evaluation we understand capacity as the foundation for behavior change in individuals, groups or institutions. Capacity encompasses the three interrelated dimensions of <i>motivation</i> (political will, social norms, habitual processes), <i>opportunity</i> (factors outside of individuals e.g., resources, enabling environment) and <i>capabilities</i> (knowledge, skills). <sup>17</sup>
Education Management and Information System (EMIS)	A system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making, policy-analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system. It is a system of people, technology, models, methods, processes, procedures, rules and regulations that function together to provide education leaders, decision-makers and managers at all levels with a comprehensive and integrated set of relevant, reliable, unambiguous and timely data and information to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities. <sup>18</sup>
Education systems	Collections of institutions, actions and processes that affect the educational status of citizens in the short and long run. <sup>19</sup> Education systems are made up of a large number of actors (teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations) interacting with each other in different institutions (schools, ministry departments) for different reasons (developing curriculums, monitoring school performance, managing teachers). All these interactions are governed by rules, beliefs, and behavioral norms that affect how actors react and adapt to changes in the system. <sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> OECD, Glossary of Aid Effectiveness Terms.

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/aideffectivenessglossary.htm>. GPE understands 'country systems' to relate to a set of seven dimensions: Plan, Budget, Treasury, Procurement, Accounting, Audit and Report. Source: Methodology Sheet for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Indicators. Indicator (29) Proportion of GPE grants aligned to national systems.

<sup>17</sup> Mayne, John. *The COM-B Theory of Change Model*. Working paper. February 2017

<sup>18</sup> GPE 2020 Results Framework Indicator 20 Methodology Sheet.

<sup>19</sup> Moore, Mark. 2015. Creating Efficient, Effective, and Just Educational Systems through Multi-Sector Strategies of Reform. RISE Working Paper 15/004, Research on Improving Systems of Education, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank. 2003. World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People. Washington, DC: World Bank; New York: Oxford University Press.

<b>Equity</b>	In the context of education, equity refers to securing all children's rights to education, and their rights within and through education to realize their potential and aspirations. It requires implementing and institutionalizing arrangements that help ensure all children can achieve these aims. <sup>21</sup>
<b>Financial additionality</b>	This incorporates two not mutually exclusive components: (a) an increase in the total amount of funds available for a given educational purpose, without the substitution or redistribution of existing resources; and (b) positive change in the quality of funding (e.g., predictability of aid, use of pooled funding mechanisms, co-financing, non-traditional financing sources, alignment with national priorities).
<b>Gender equality</b>	The equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys, and equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. It encompasses the narrower concept of gender equity, which primarily concerns fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs. <sup>22</sup>
<b>Harmonization</b>	The degree of coordination between technical and financial partners in how they structure their external assistance (e.g., pooled funds, shared financial or procurement processes), to present a common and simplified interface for developing country partners. The aim of harmonization is to reduce transaction costs and increase the effectiveness of the assistance provided by reducing demands on recipient countries to meet with different donors' reporting processes and procedures, along with uncoordinated country analytic work and missions. <sup>23</sup>
<b>Inclusion</b>	Adequately responding to the diversity of needs among all learners, through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion from and within education. <sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Equity and Inclusion in Education. A guide to support education sector plan preparation, revision and appraisal. GPE 2010; p.3. Available at:

[file:///C:/Users/anett/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge\\_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/2010-04-GPE-Equity-and-Inclusion-Guide.pdf](file:///C:/Users/anett/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/2010-04-GPE-Equity-and-Inclusion-Guide.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> GPE Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020. GPE 2016, p. 5f. Available at:

<http://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2016-06-gpe-gender-equality-policy-strategy.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from OECD, Glossary of Aid Effectiveness Terms

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/aideffectivenessglossary.htm>, and from Methodology Sheet for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Indicators. Indicator (30) Proportion of GPE grants using: (a) co-financed project or (b) sector pooled funding mechanisms.

<sup>24</sup> GPE 2010, p.3.

### Learning Assessment System (LAS)

Learning assessment systems are defined by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) as a group of policies, practices, structures, organizations and tools for generating sound, high quality data on learning and achievement that provide robust evidence for education policy and practice with the ultimate aim to improve education quality and learning outcomes.

There are three basic types of assessments:

- *Classroom assessment.* Assessments used to obtain evidence on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of learners for use by teachers to improve learning and teaching.
- *Examinations.* Assessments undertaken to determine an individual student's mastery of specific knowledge and skills for the primary purpose of selection or certification.
- *Large-scale assessments.* These are system-level assessments for monitoring and providing policy makers and practitioners with information on the overall performance levels of education systems, changes in those levels, and related or contributing factors.<sup>25</sup>

Country-level evaluations primarily looked for the existence of large-scale assessment and took national examination results into account where no other learning outcome data were available but did not explore the nature and extent of classroom assessments in reviewed countries.

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<sup>25</sup> Global Partnership for Education (2019): Strengthening Learning Assessment Systems. A knowledge and innovation exchange (KIX) discussion paper, p.6. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-07-kix-las-final-english.pdf>

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Evaluation purpose and approach

1. During 2018 - 2019, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) commissioned 20 summative and eight prospective country-level evaluations (CLE). These evaluations aimed to assess (i) GPE contributions to strengthening national education systems and, ultimately, impact<sup>26</sup> in terms of education results related to learning, equity, equality and inclusion; and hence (ii) the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's theory of change and country-level operational model. CLEs were based on a theory-based, mixed social science research methodology known as contribution analysis.
2. The evaluations assessed the functioning of the full partnership at country level, not just the role of the Secretariat or the use of GPE funds.<sup>27</sup> [Figure 1.1](#) shows the locations of the 28 countries reviewed<sup>28</sup> during the assignment: eight countries where prospective CLEs were implemented are indicated by orange markers,<sup>29</sup> seven countries where summative CLEs were completed in 2018 are indicated by grey markers,<sup>30</sup> and 13 countries where summative CLEs were conducted in 2019 are indicated by blue markers.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> In the context of this assignment, the term 'impact' is aligned with the terminology used by GPE to refer to sector level changes in the areas of learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion (reflected in GPE Strategic Goals 1 and 2 described in the GPE 2016-2020 Strategic Plan). While the country evaluations examine progress towards impact in this sense, they do not constitute formal impact evaluations, which aim to make causal claims between interventions and impact often based on counterfactual analysis through randomized control trials. In contrast, contribution analysis aims to establish plausible

<sup>27</sup> This includes the roles played by developing country governments, organizations acting as coordinating agencies or grant agents, and Local Education Group (LEG) members.

<sup>28</sup> The Pakistan CLE focused on the two provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, which received separate GPE Education Sector Implementation Grants. In this synthesis report, in cases where findings for the two provinces differed, we refer to "29 reviewed countries and provinces" or "29 jurisdictions" instead of 28 countries. In contrast, for Nigeria, the CLE presented its main findings in an aggregated form rather than separately for each of the five federal states currently supported by a GPE ESPIG (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto). This reflected the fact that Nigeria received one single ESPIG at the central level rather than five separate ones. This approach of reporting on Nigeria as a whole rather than on individual states is replicated in this report.

<sup>29</sup> The DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Nigeria, Zimbabwe.

<sup>30</sup> Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guyana, Liberia, Pakistan (Sindh and Balochistan provinces), Sierra Leone, The Gambia.

<sup>31</sup> Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uganda and Zambia.

**Figure 1.1** 28 countries covered through summative and prospective CLEs

3. The 28 countries constitute a diverse sample of GPE partner countries.<sup>32</sup> Fourteen are currently categorized as Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries (FCAC) and several of these were affected by active conflict during the review period (e.g., South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC]). Countries also differ in terms of some critical contextual factors that may affect education sectors: poverty levels and income status;<sup>33</sup> federal versus unitary structures; absence or presence of natural/health disasters or political unrest; geographic location; population size; and degrees and types of ethnic and/or religious diversity. In addition, they are characterized by education sector specific differences, such as the organization of sector management (e.g., whether education is under the authority of one or several ministries); size of the school-age population; structure of the education system in terms of grades/levels; experience and internal capacities of the respective ministry/ministries of education (MoE);<sup>34</sup> and the number and types of development partners (DP) supporting the education sector; to name only a few. Appendix III provides an overview of these and other contextual characteristics across the 28 countries covered by CLEs.

4. A first synthesis report summarizing key findings and conclusions emerging from CLEs conducted during 2018<sup>35</sup> was completed in February 2019. This final synthesis report builds on the insights presented in that report and elaborates on them by presenting findings and conclusions deriving from additional CLE activities conducted during 2019.<sup>36</sup> The purpose of this final synthesis report is to combine, compare and contrast findings deriving from all the individual country evaluations conducted as part of this assignment

<sup>32</sup> Sampling criteria were determined in close collaboration with the Secretariat, and in-country stakeholders were consulted to confirm LEG and government willingness to host an evaluation mission and scheduling.

<sup>33</sup> With 16 categorized as low income, 11 as lower middle income, and one (Guyana) as upper middle-income countries.

<sup>34</sup> Throughout the report, we generically refer to Ministries of Education (MoE) when summarizing related findings across countries, even if the specific ministries in the referenced countries may have slightly different titles.

<sup>35</sup> A first round of country visits, baseline and annual reports for prospective CLEs, and conduct of seven summative CLEs.

<sup>36</sup> A second round of country visits and final reports for prospective CLEs and conduct of 13 summative CLEs.



in order to identify commonalities and differences across countries as well as likely (combinations of) contributing factors.

5. This final synthesis report draws upon the summative and prospective evaluation reports for the 28 partner countries in the CLE sample,<sup>37</sup> each of which is based on and provides references to the various specific data sources on which the respective analysis is based and reflects feedback obtained from the GPE Secretariat, the Independent Technical Review Panel (ITRP) and in-country stakeholders. The report also draws upon a 2019 [desk study](#) constituting the first part of an Evaluation of GPE's Support to Sector Plan Development conducted by Universalia on behalf of the Secretariat, which reviewed sector planning documents from a sample of 16 countries, 11 of which were also covered by either summative or prospective CLEs. This document is hereafter referred to as the 2019 desk study. Finally, the synthesis report has been informed by feedback on the overarching findings deriving from the CLEs provided by GPE Secretariat staff and ITRP members during a learning workshop in November 2019.

6. The guiding frameworks for compilation of the synthesis report were (i) the original and revised evaluation matrices (Appendix I); and (ii) the generic country-level theory of change (ToC) presented in [Section 1.2](#) and further elaborated in Appendix II. The synthesis report uses Thematic Analysis<sup>38</sup> to identify (combinations of) factors that are likely to have been critical to a given outcome in a given context. Due to the complex nature of the issues reviewed in the CLEs and strong variations in data availability and quality, the report does not claim to reliably identify which of the factors tested are necessary or sufficient to obtain envisaged results. Instead, the report points to (combinations of) factors that are *likely* to have facilitated or hindered results achievement. In the analysis and in the formulation of findings, all CLEs were assigned equal weight. A more detailed description of the evaluation background and methodology is provided in Appendix IV.

7. The analysis addressed the four 'Key Questions' (KQs) in the revised evaluation matrix (Appendix I) which were described in the 2018 CLE inception report and its subsequently revised version.

- 1) Has GPE support contributed to achieving country-level objectives related to sector planning, sector plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring, and more/better financing for education? If so, then how? If not, why not?
- 2) Has sector plan implementation contributed to making the overall education system in the reviewed countries more effective and efficient?<sup>39</sup>
- 3) Have changes at education system level contributed to progress towards impact (changes in learning outcomes, equity, gender equality and inclusion)?
- 4) What are implications of evaluation findings for GPE?

<sup>37</sup> Final evaluation reports for summative CLEs, and baseline reports, first annual reports and final reports for prospective CLEs. The synthesis report also reflects discussions of these reports held during a November 2019 learning workshop.

<sup>38</sup> See, Alert J. Mills, Gabrelle Durepos and Elden Weibe. 2010. *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research; Thematic Analysis*. Sage Publications.

<sup>39</sup> The evaluation team understands 'education systems' as collections of institutions, actions and processes that affect the educational status of citizens. Systems are made up of many actors (teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations) interacting with each other in different institutions (schools, ministry departments) for different reasons (developing curriculums, monitoring school performance, managing teachers). All these interactions are governed by rules, beliefs and behavioral norms. (See, for example, Moore, Mark. 2015. *Creating Efficient, Effective, and Just Educational Systems through Multi-Sector Strategies of Reform*. RISE Working Paper 15/004, Research on Improving Systems of Education, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.) Reflecting this broad definition, 'system level changes' in the CLEs refer both to issues addressed under Strategic Goal #3 as outlined in the GPE 2020 results framework, and also to additional country-specific indicators related to removing barriers to education access, quality and sector management.

8. The primary intended users of the report are the GPE Board, Governing Committees and Secretariat. Secondary intended users are Developing Country Partner (DCP) governments and members of local education groups (LEGs) in the sampled countries. Tertiary intended users include the wider education community at global and country levels.
9. To facilitate readability and keep the number of footnotes within a reasonable limit, this synthesis report does not provide original data sources for reported country trends. Readers interested in exploring specific information in more depth are encouraged to consult the CLE report(s) for the respective country, which are published on the [GPE website](#).
10. Some of the main limitations faced in the compilation of this final synthesis report were:
  - The timeframe covered by the prospective CLEs was too short<sup>40</sup> and types of processes in question too long-term and slow moving to allow for observing significant changes between Year 1 and Year 2.
  - Strong variations in the amount and quality of sector data available. While Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) existed in all countries and provinces, only 11/29 countries and provinces met the GPE benchmark of reporting on at least 10 of 12 key indicators to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and only 17 of 29 countries and provinces had established Learning Assessment Systems (LAS) in place that included large-scale learning assessments.<sup>41</sup>
  - Challenges for all CLEs to draw robust conclusions about likely links between sector plan implementation and related system-level improvements on the one hand, and impact-level trends in terms of learning outcomes and equity/gender equality on the other hand. This was due to the time lag between specific interventions and higher-level changes, and the absence of reliable trend data, especially on learning outcomes, in many countries.
  - While all CLEs addressed the same evaluation questions and indicators, evaluation reports slightly varied in the level of detail provided on different issues – sometimes due to differences in the types of data available in the country context. This sometimes made it difficult to synthesize and compare data across countries. To mitigate this limitation, where required, the evaluation team used relatively broad categories to capture information from as many countries as possible.<sup>42</sup> Where applicable, the synthesis report identifies data gaps and differences between countries in the types of available data.

## 1.2 GPE country-level theory of change and operational model

11. The GPE country-level operational model is based on the core levers of (i) education sector planning, (ii) effective and inclusive sector policy dialogue and monitoring, (iii) and results-focused financing, all of which have to work together in ways appropriate and adapted to the respective contexts in order to jointly

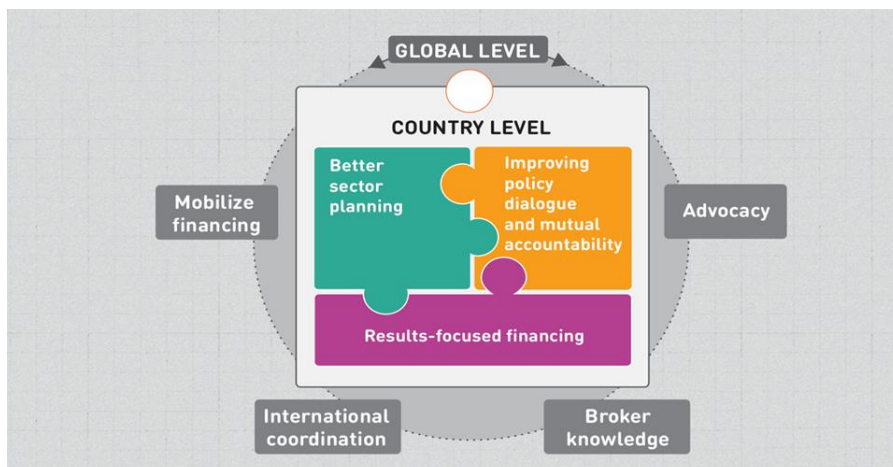
<sup>40</sup> The review period varied by country depending on the years covered by the latest fully or largely implemented ESPIG. In addition, in relation to system- and impact-level data, CLEs often reviewed data from years preceding that period, depending on the years for which data were available. Details on individual country review periods are provided in Appendix III.

<sup>41</sup> For GPE's definition of what constitutes an 'established' LAS, see GPE indicator 15 methodology sheet, available at: [https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological\\_sheet\\_for\\_indicator\\_15.pdf](https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological_sheet_for_indicator_15.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> For example, in Chapter 4 on system level change, the synthesis report deliberately introduced broad categories such as 'changes in MoE capacity' to capture a variety of different improvements observed.

enable and support effective sector plan implementation. Global level efforts related to mobilizing more and better sector financing, advocacy, international coordination and knowledge brokering further aim to support country-level processes.<sup>43</sup> See [Figure 1.2](#).

**Figure 1.2** PE Global Theory of Change

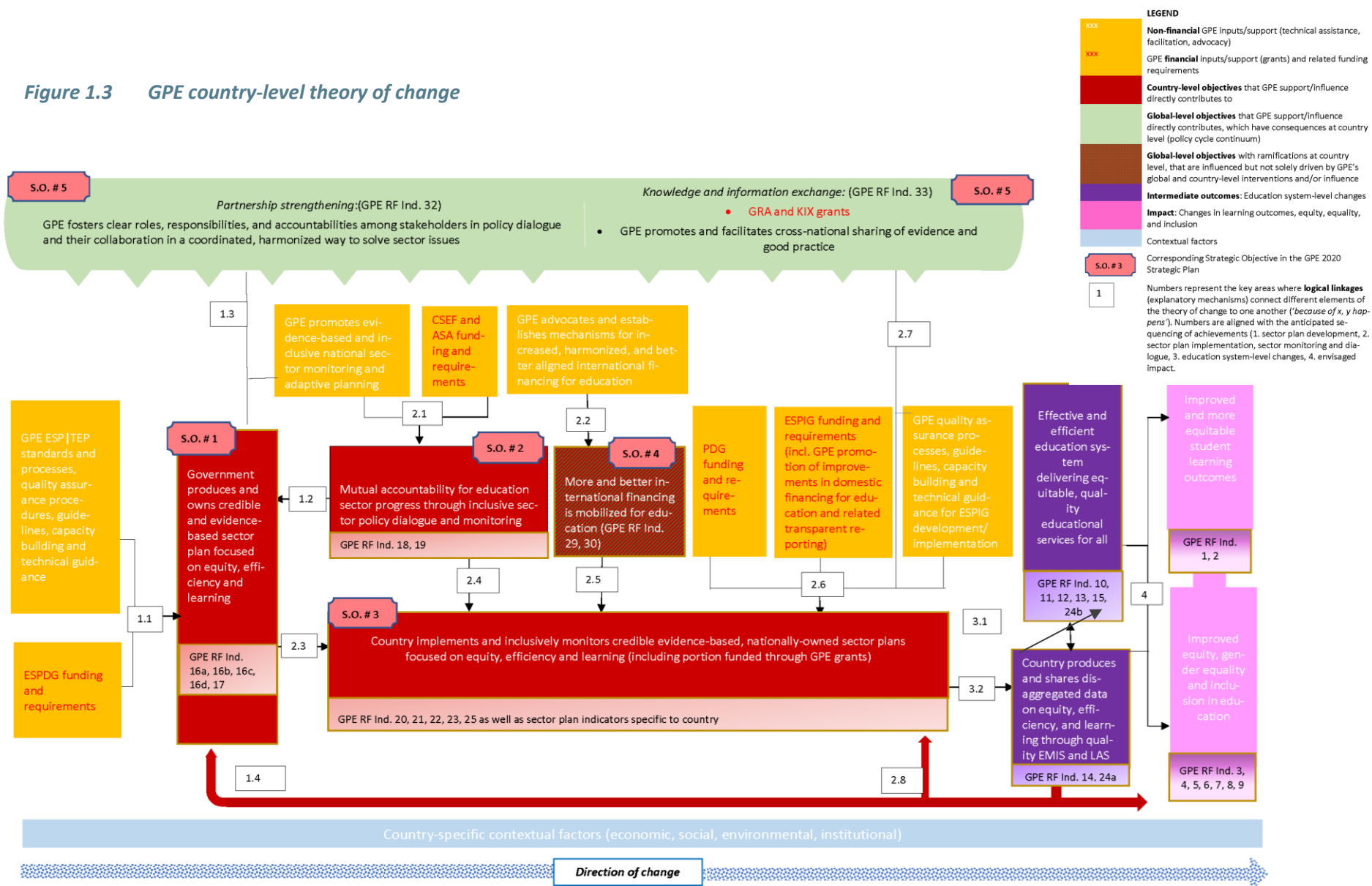


12. The CLEs used a common (generic) GPE country-level theory of change that was developed jointly by the evaluation team and the Secretariat. This ToC, presented in [Figure 1.3](#) below, reflects core elements of the GPE operational model and illustrates how these are envisaged to work together to effect change in partner countries. The ToC highlights the central role of sector plan implementation in furthering progress towards strengthening education systems and, ultimately, learning outcomes and equity.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Sources: (1) GPE (undated): GPE 2020. Power Point Presentation. (2) GPE. *Country-level Process Guide. An overview*. GPE, 2017. (3) GPE 2020 Theory of Change available at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2020-theory-change>.

<sup>44</sup> Due to the date when it was developed, the ToC figure below does not explicitly list the variable results-based component of ESPIGs and the GPE Multiplier. However, both elements were addressed in the evaluation matrix and explored in CLEs as well as in this synthesis report.

Figure 1.3 GPE country-level theory of change



13. The ToC logically implies the following six contribution claims that were tested in each country-level evaluation. See also [Box 1.1](#).

- **Contribution claim A:** GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the *development* of government-owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning.
- **Contribution claim B:** GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contribute to *mutual accountability* for education sector progress.
- **Contribution claim C:** GPE advocacy and funding requirements contribute to more and better financing for education in the country.
- **Contribution claim D:** GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective and efficient *implementation* of sector plans.
- **Contribution claim E:** The implementation of realistic evidence-based sector plans contributes to positive changes at the level of the overall *education system*.
- **Contribution claim F:** Education system-level improvements result in *improved learning outcomes* and in *improved equity, gender equality, and inclusion* in education.

#### Box 1.1: GPE contributions

The 28 CLEs and this report use the term ‘GPE contributions’ to refer to the (likely) effects of GPE country-level inputs (financing, funding requirements, guidelines, advocacy and facilitation through the Secretariat, grant agents and coordinating agencies, etc.) that make up how the partnership functions in practice, and how it aims to affect a country’s education sector progress.

14. Another important element of the ToC is a set of underlying assumptions that form the logical ‘glue’ connecting the ToC’s different elements. These assumptions describe key factors that need to be in place in order for the envisaged change processes to take place. While the underlying assumptions vary by ToC level, for contribution claims A-D they address similar types of factors related to the existence of adequate technical capabilities, motivation (e.g., incentives), and opportunities (e.g., financial resources) that need to be in place to facilitate change. The specific assumptions developed as part of the ToC and tested in the CLEs are presented in Appendix II.

## 1.3 Structure of the report and color-coding scheme

### Structure

15. The report is presented in nine chapters. Following this introduction and context, [Chapter 2](#) summarizes overarching CLE findings. These provide the backdrop for the more detailed findings presented in [Chapters 3 through 6](#), which reflect on GPE contributions to sector planning, mutual accountability through sector dialogue and monitoring, sector financing, and sector plan implementation in the 28 sampled countries respectively. [Chapter 7](#) summarizes CLE findings on system-level changes achieved in countries during the respective review periods and on likely links between these changes and sector plan implementation. [Chapter 8](#) provides an overview of impact-level trends in the reviewed countries and possible links of these trends to the noted changes in the national education systems during the review periods. The final [Chapter 9](#), building on key messages and strategic questions raised in the previous chapters, formulates overarching conclusions and related recommendations for GPE’s consideration.

## Color-coding scheme used throughout the report

16. Throughout the report, we use the same simple color-coding scheme also applied in CLE reports to provide readers with broad overviews of CLE findings on the thematic dimension discussed in each chapter. Its basic logic as a three-level rating scale (plus a fourth category applied in cases of insufficient data) is applied consistently, but, as shown in [Figure 1.4](#), the specific meaning of the colors varies slightly depending on the issue being discussed.

**Figure 1.4** *Color coding*

<b>Green</b> indicates 'strong/high/achieved/ improved' <sup>45</sup>	<b>Amber</b> indicates 'moderate/medium/partly achieved'	<b>Red</b> signifies 'low/weak/not achieved/ worsened'	<b>Grey</b> indicates a lack of data
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17. The coding is intended as a qualitative orientation tool for readers rather than as a quantifiable measure. It is most salient in indicating relative strengths and weaknesses of policy cycles within individual countries (e.g., reflecting stronger progress and related GPE contributions in relation to sector plan preparation than in relation to, for example, sector financing in that particular country). The color coding does not constitute a formal rating and therefore needs to be interpreted with caution, especially when comparing different countries.

<sup>45</sup> Throughout the report, the specific meaning of the chosen color coding is clarified in each instance. Individual CLEs used rubrics to guide the use of the color-coding scheme. While this ensured some consistency in the scheme's application across individual CLEs, in some cases assigned ratings were adjusted in the process of compiling the synthesis report e.g., in cases where very similar types and degrees of progress in different countries had been assigned different color codes in the respective CLEs.



## 2 Overarching observations

### Key messages:

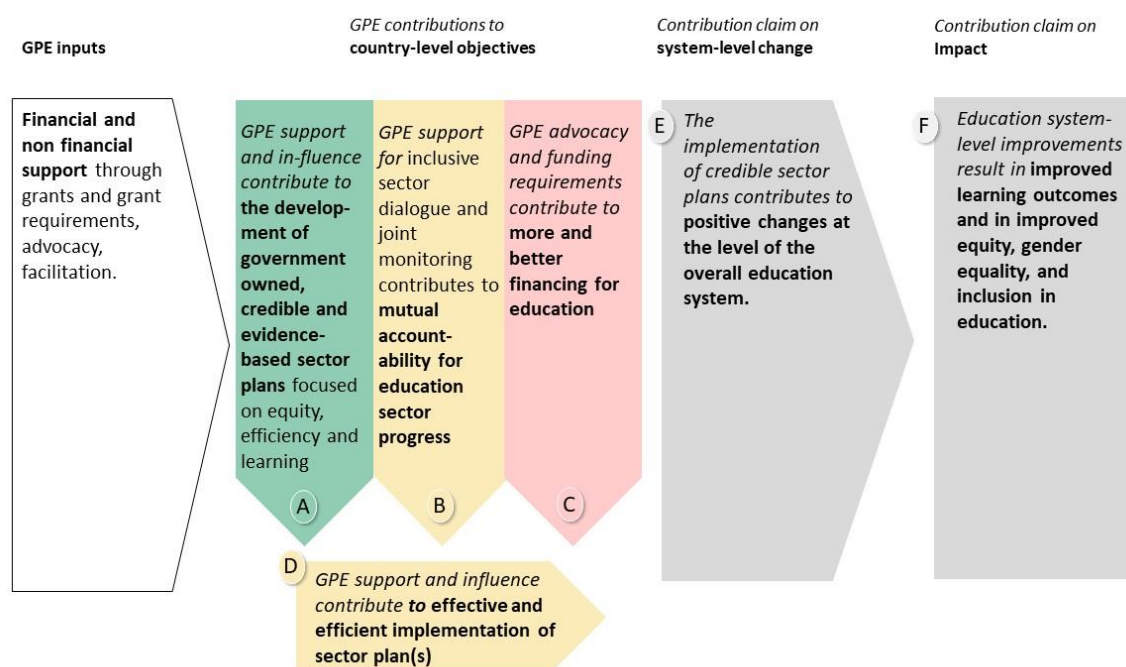
- Across reviewed countries, direct GPE contributions to country-level changes are (i) strongly evident in relation to sector plan development; (ii) generally modest in relation to sector dialogue, monitoring and sector plan implementation; and (iii) weak in relation to improving domestic and international sector financing. There was insufficient evidence to reliably assess the extent to which sector plan implementation has driven system-level improvements. Some ESPIG-funded interventions, such as those related to school construction, constitute likely exceptions. Similarly, there was insufficient data to make evidence-based claims on links between system-level changes that occurred during the review periods and impact-level trends related to equity or learning outcomes.
- Sector plan implementation is central in GPEs country-level Theory of Change given that (i) GPE contributions to sector plan development, sector financing and sector dialogue and monitoring (mutual accountability) are geared towards facilitating effective plan implementation, and (ii) plan implementation is essential for achieving ultimate objectives in terms of system and impact level changes.
- However, in practice GPE pays, and is perceived by stakeholders to pay, comparatively little attention to supporting overall plan implementation. Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) supervision and the variable tranche carry potential to change this, but this potential is not consistently realized in practice.
- Across reviewed countries, most of the assumed conditions required for the envisaged changes to occur, were only partially in place. This reflects the significance of various contextual factors on country-level change. However, there are no single factors or combinations of factors that would explain all or even most of the observed differences in country progress and related GPE contributions.
- Despite Secretariat and other GPE key actors' efforts to adapt GPE support to country-specific needs, CLEs identified several instances where more flexibility in applying GPE funding criteria would have been desirable.

**Finding 1:** GPE contributions to country-level changes are most evident and consistent in relation to sector plan development. GPE has paid comparatively less attention and contributed less to sector plan implementation, despite the central position of plan implementation <sup>46</sup> in GPE's country-level Theory of Change.

18. [Figure 2.1](#) summarizes overarching findings on the likely extent to which individual elements in the GPE country-level theory of change are supported by evidence.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> 'Central' both in the sense that GPE contributions to sector plan development, sector financing and mutual accountability are geared towards facilitating effective plan implementation, and in the sense that plan implementation is essential for achieving ultimate objectives in terms of system and impact (equity, learning outcomes) changes.

<sup>47</sup> Please see [Section 1.3](#) for an explanation of the color-coding scheme used throughout this report.

**Figure 2.1** High-level summary of CLE findingsEducation sector plan (ESP)<sup>48</sup> development (contribution claim A)

19. In almost all countries where data on more than one sector plan were available, the quality of plans improved when measured by GPE standards.

20. There is strong evidence of GPE financial and non-financial support having contributed to sector plan development processes and to enhancing the quality of resulting sector plans in line with GPE quality standards. The Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) mechanism and ESPIG funding criteria (calling for a credible, LEG-endorsed sector plan) were the most influential types of GPE support in this regard, and were complemented by GPE quality assurance review (QAR) mechanisms including an external plan appraisal, and the advocacy and advisory roles played by coordinating agencies and the Secretariat.

21. CLEs raise questions, however, on whether resulting sector plans are truly relevant to the practical needs of in-country actors given that plans are often not used to guide implementation, monitoring and reporting. Likely reasons for this include overambitious and insufficiently prioritized plans, insufficient adaptation of the plan to the needs and capacity of actors at the sub-national level, and the perception that sector plans were linked to funding only for basic education, which sometimes limited the plan's relevance in the eyes of ministries responsible for other education sub-sectors. In addition, especially in some fragile countries, contextual changes sometimes negatively influenced the perceived and actual relevance of the sector plan. This is further discussed in [Chapter 3](#) and [Chapter 6](#).

<sup>48</sup> The only reviewed country that had a Transitional Education Plan (TEP) during part of the review period (until 2019) was Mali. As such, throughout this report, we only refer to Education Sector Plans (ESP) when making generic reference to sector plans.

### Mutual accountability through sector dialogue and monitoring (contribution claim B)

22. One or more mechanisms for participatory and inclusive sector dialogue, involving government, donor, civil society and other stakeholders, are in place in all but one of the 28 sampled countries. These mechanisms generally work well as forums for information exchange especially during sector plan development. They tend to play a more limited role in ensuring systematic sector plan implementation and monitoring.

23. All countries conducted some form of regular sector monitoring including monitoring through Joint Sector Reviews (JSR). In at least half of the countries, however, information in JSRs was not systematically used to inform sector plan implementation or other decision-making.<sup>49</sup> Likely reasons for this include weaknesses in the quality and applicability of sector plan results frameworks, gaps in the availability of high-quality data, and gaps in government staff technical capabilities such as data analysis.

24. Across countries, GPE made modest contributions to strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring, especially through ESPIG and ESPDG funding as well as through coordinating agency (CA) and Secretariat advocacy. Through these mechanisms, GPE contributed to establishing or strengthening local education groups' inclusiveness, as well as mechanisms for sector monitoring, especially JSRs. Coordinating agencies helped facilitate dialogue between governments, DPs and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, most of these contributions did not have lasting effects beyond sector plan development and ESPIG application phases. The variable tranche (VT) shows potential to positively influence more systematic monitoring of sector plan implementation, albeit limited to those strategies and indicators covered by the VT. At present, GPE's approach to strengthening country-level dialogue and monitoring (mutual accountability) is fragmented and not systematic. For a more detailed discussion, see [Chapter 4](#).

### Education sector financing (contribution claim C)

25. Domestic education financing increased in absolute terms in 22 of 29 reviewed countries and provinces, while education financing as share of overall DCP financing increased in only six countries. Domestic financing trends appear to be largely influenced by countries' political and economic contexts beyond the direct influence of education sector stakeholders such as countries' macro-economic situation, political considerations, and evolving global donor priorities. CLEs found evidence of only a few and indirect likely GPE contributions to influencing the amounts or quality (e.g., sub-sectoral funding priorities) of domestic education sector financing. However, while ESPIG funding requirements<sup>50</sup> had no detectable direct influence on domestic funding decisions, they showed the potential to stimulate discussion of sector financing among sector stakeholders.

26. The amount and reliability of ESPIG funding was a valuable source of international funding to governments, with ESPIGS often constituting a considerable share of international funding for basic education.<sup>51</sup> In some countries, GPE funding also acted as reassurance to other DPs to re-invest in the country. GPE's accelerated funding mechanism allowed beneficiary countries to quickly, flexibly access much needed bridge funding to compensate for exceptional needs and circumstances.

<sup>49</sup> Either, depending on the country, because the information generated through the JSRs focused on high-level sector trends without linking them to operational questions around sector plan implementation, or because there was no clear process and related accountability for implementing recommendations deriving from JSRs.

<sup>50</sup> For countries to meet or demonstrate progress towards the benchmark of allocating 20% of government expenditures to education, and to allocate 45% of education sector resources to primary education in countries that have not yet achieved universal primary education (components b and c of the domestic financing requirement).

<sup>51</sup> For example, 39% of basic education ODA in Senegal, and 79% in Togo.

27. The overall amounts of international funding to education increased or at least remained stable in all but four of the reviewed countries, yet declining or fluctuating shares of education funding in relation to overall official development assistance (ODA) amounts in about two thirds of the countries indicate negative global trends for international education financing. In the three countries that had already received a GPE Multiplier at the time of the CLE, the mechanism likely influenced the timing of sector financing provided by other DPs.

28. CLEs observed no significant changes in the quality of international sector financing in terms of donor harmonization and alignment. The vast majority of ESPIGs in reviewed countries were implemented using project modalities and GPE actors did not make visible efforts to assist countries in moving towards more aligned modalities.<sup>52</sup> Pooled funding mechanisms were in place in only six of 29 countries/provinces, with other international financing being channeled using project modalities. For further discussion, see [Chapter 5](#).

#### Sector plan implementation (contribution claim D)

29. The amount and quality of data on education sector plan implementation varied considerably by country, and most CLEs were not able to assess the extent to which the plan had been implemented as anticipated. Where information was available it indicated that implementation tended to be partial and fragmented due to, amongst other factors, gaps in countries' implementation capacity, gaps in available financing, lack of solid operational planning, and project-driven development partner support.

30. ESPIG funding was GPE's main contribution to sector plan implementation. Despite generally modest grant size of between 1 and 4.3 percent of actual sector plan implementation costs, ESPIGs provided invaluable resources for capital investments in contexts where most domestic sector financing was used to cover recurrent costs. In five out of 8 countries, the variable tranche made a positive difference in plan implementation by providing an incentive for in-country stakeholders to make efforts to reach the agreed upon targets and monitor progress on an ongoing basis.

31. With the exception of the six grants channeled through pooled funding mechanisms addressing all of (basic or primary) education, ESPIG funding and grant agent (GA) supervision tended to be limited to the specific basic education issues that the grant was used for. As a result, ESPIG implementation did not generally contribute to sector plan implementation of either all of basic education or education as a whole, though there is potential for this when the variable tranche is used.

32. Overall, despite the central role that sector plan implementation plays in the GPE country-level theory of change, GPE pays (and is perceived by stakeholders to pay) comparatively little attention to supporting plan implementation. Please see [Chapter 6](#) for further discussion.

#### System level changes (contribution claim E) and Impact level changes (contribution claim F)

33. During the review periods, all reviewed countries made some, mostly modest, progress in strengthening their education systems. Slightly more progress was made in improving education access and enhancing education quality and relevance than in strengthening sector management, though specifics vary by country.

34. In relation to impact-level changes, the limited data available on basic education learning outcomes for the 29 jurisdictions indicate modest improvements in six jurisdictions and stagnating or deteriorating results in nine; for the remaining 14 jurisdictions, available data were insufficient to identify trends. Where

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<sup>52</sup> The evaluation team acknowledges, however, that harmonization and alignment cannot be driven solely by GPE, a single actor, but require others to engage.

learning improved, changes started from very low levels of learning and tended to be modest. Some elements of equitable education access improved in more than half of reviewed jurisdictions. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of persistent inequities in both access and learning based on, among other factors, learners' sex, income level and geographic location.

35. Validating the country-level ToC in terms of links between plan implementation and system-level change<sup>53</sup> was difficult for all CLEs due to the noted lack of data on plan implementation and on the extent to which development partners' interventions – which often contributed to observed system-level improvements – were driven or at least guided by the sector plan. Similarly, validating the ToC in relation to the assumed links between system-level change and impact-level trends was not possible in the context of the CLEs, which focused on a relatively short time period, due to the time lag between system-level improvements and impact-level change, and due to frequent data gaps.

36. Implications for GPE are the need (i) to explore how (existing or new) types of GPE support and incentives can be used to strengthen the extent to which in-country actors, especially DPs, implement, monitor and report on their interventions through the lens of the overarching sector plan; (ii) for GPE to systematically monitor (and help countries monitor) country-level progress on a more continuous and longer-term basis than has been the case in the context of the CLEs summarized in this report; and (iii) for GPE to pay more attention to challenges related to country capacity for sector plan implementation and monitoring as likely intermediary links to system- and impact-level change. Chapters 7 and 8 provide further details.

**Finding 2: GPE country-level influence primarily derives from the incentives and financial means provided through the ESPIG and ESPDG mechanisms.**

37. Table 2.1 provides a high-level summary of the relative influence of different types of GPE support and incentives on country-level processes. It illustrates that the financial mechanisms of the ESPIG and, to a lesser extent, the ESPDG are the anchors of GPE's ability to influence the behaviors of country-level actors. Non-financial types of support, in particular through Secretariat and CA advocacy and support, complement these financial incentives, yet with generally weaker and less clearly observable effects.

**Table 2.1 High-level summary of the relative influence of different types of GPE support/incentives**

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT/INCENTIVE	INFLUENCE STRONG(ER) IN RELATION TO...	INFLUENCE WEAK(ER) IN RELATION TO...
ESPIG (fixed tranche)	<p><u>Incentive of obtaining ESPIG:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan development in alignment with GPE quality criteria, using inclusive and participatory processes</li> <li>Sector dialogue (around plan development and ESPIG applications)</li> </ul> <p><u>ESPIG financing:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elements of sector monitoring (e.g., financing JSRs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country ownership of sector plans</li> <li>Domestic sector financing (20% and 45% benchmarks)</li> <li>Overall sector plan implementation unless channeled through pooled fund/sector wide approach (SWAp) (and even then, largely focused on basic education only)<sup>54</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>53</sup> Please see definitions of key terms on page iv for a clarification of the term 'education system'.

<sup>54</sup> Basic education refers to pre-primary (before Grade 1), primary (usually Grades 1-6), lower secondary (Grades 7-9), and adult literacy education in formal and non-formal settings.

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT/INCENTIVE	INFLUENCE STRONG(ER) IN RELATION TO...	INFLUENCE WEAK(ER) IN RELATION TO...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan implementation (elements directly funded by ESPIG)</li> </ul>	
ESPIG (Variable Tranche)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector dialogue (during selection of strategies/indicators for the variable tranche [VT])</li> <li>Monitoring and sector plan implementation (in relation to selected strategies and indicators)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan development</li> <li>Sector dialogue, monitoring and implementation beyond targeted strategies and indicators</li> </ul>
ESPDG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan development and related sector dialogue</li> <li>Elements of sector monitoring, e.g., conduct of Education Sector Analyses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helping countries effectively assess and address gaps in implementation capacity</li> <li>Meaningful and regular monitoring of sector plan implementation</li> </ul>
GPE Multiplier <sup>55</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influencing the timing of external funding for education (resources available more quickly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Influencing the amounts of external financing (more resources allocated to education)</li> </ul>
GPE guidelines, quality standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helpful to countries for meeting ESPIG funding requirements (sector plans, ESPs, having inclusive LEG in place)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Country ownership of guidelines and quality standards i.e., adopting them as inherently meaningful as opposed to 'boxes that need to be ticked'</li> </ul>
Secretariat advocacy and facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan development, ESPIG and ESPDG applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector dialogue/monitoring once plan is finalized</li> <li>Sector financing, sector plan implementation</li> </ul>
Coordinating agency advocacy and facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector dialogue, especially during sector plan development and ESPIG/ESPDG applications</li> <li>(Often) ESPDG management and process of sector plan implementation</li> <li>Elements of sector monitoring (JSRs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector plan implementation and coherent/systematic monitoring of plan implementation</li> <li>Donor harmonization and alignment; DPs 'reporting on plan'</li> </ul>
Grant agent role and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing and supervising ESPIG implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and furthering mutual accountability for sector plan implementation beyond ESPIG</li> </ul>

<sup>55</sup> As further discussed in [Chapter 4](#), the evidence base on the Multiplier is comparatively weak, given that only 3/28 countries had received a Multiplier during the CLE review periods.



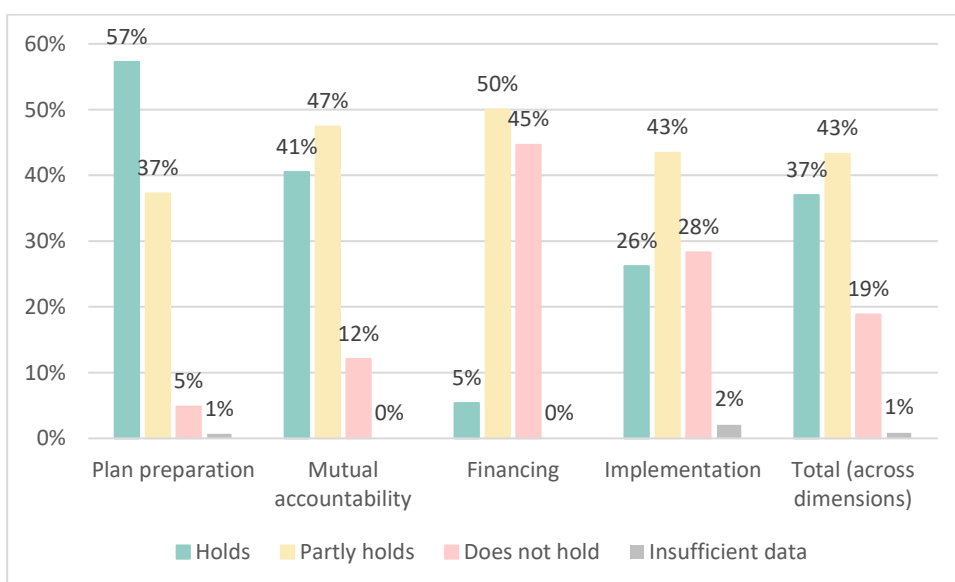
**Finding 3:** Most of the assumed conditions required for the envisaged country-level changes to occur were only partially in place. This includes the overarching assumptions of the GPE ToC that development partners continue to share and apply the values of aid effectiveness.

38. The underlying assumptions tested across the CLEs are the main conditions that, as per the GPE country-level theory of change (ToC), need to be in place for the envisaged changes to take place. The assumptions are the ‘glue’ that explains how one element of the ToC connects to the next.

39. CLEs confirmed, on the one hand, that the assumptions developed for the GPE ToC were appropriate in that they accurately identify key factors influencing changes and the degree of related GPE contributions. On the other hand, CLEs also illustrated that most of the originally formulated assumptions were too broad to be meaningful, with each of the assumptions incorporating various sub-issues that needed to be ‘unpacked’ in the respective context. Throughout this report, in the sub-sections on factors influencing progress, we have tried to unpack the broader assumptions.

40. When assessing the extent to which ToC assumptions held true in the reviewed countries, CLEs found that the proportion of assumptions holding true was highest in sector plan development and lowest in sector financing (see [Figure 2.2](#)).

**Figure 2.2** Percent of assumptions in the ToC holding true in reviewed contexts (n=29 countries/provinces)<sup>56</sup>



41. Overall, CLE findings on ToC assumptions indicate that whether and how countries’ education systems progress is influenced by many factors, some of which are beyond the control of GPE and in-country actors. Especially in relation to sector financing, a dimension for which few of the ToC assumptions held true, CLEs indicate the need for GPE to critically review what types of contributions it can realistically make to ‘more and better’ education sector financing.

<sup>56</sup> The number of underlying assumptions varied by review-dimension: 4 for sector plan preparation and mutual accountability respectively, 2 for sector financing, and 5 for sector plan implementation. The total of 29 jurisdictions derives from the fact that in Pakistan the CLE reviewed two distinct provinces with sometimes differing findings.

42. One overarching transversal assumption that lies at the core of the GPE theory of change is that the core values of aid effectiveness underpinning the Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011) agreements continue to be shared among DPs. CLEs show that this assumption does not consistently hold true in practice. In most countries, development partners align their activities only broadly with the sector plan and take limited, if any, responsibility for monitoring and reporting on their achievements through the lens of plan implementation or for striving for greater harmonization and alignment of sector financing. DPs' country-level decisions seem to be increasingly focused on responding to political pressures requiring governments and multilateral organizations to justify investments to their constituents or governing boards.

**Finding 4: The diverse contexts in which GPE operates require more flexibility to adapt support to contextual needs than is currently permitted by GPE rules.**

43. Several CLEs provide examples of GPE rules and regulations being applied with flexibility to meet the specific needs of a DCP: in Zimbabwe, reallocating GPE funding to support schools affected by Cyclone Idai; in Nigeria, endorsing state-level sector plans (despite these not meeting the required number of GPE quality standards), which likely contributed to government buy-in to subsequent sector planning efforts; and in Liberia and Sierra Leone the Secretariat demonstrated flexibility around GPE grant application deadlines and processes.

44. At the same time, CLEs for Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Senegal commented critically on the rigid application of some ESPIG funding requirements around domestic sector financing, which in-country stakeholders found to be lacking relevance and justification in their specific contexts (see [Chapter 5](#)).

45. Other CLEs noted challenges related to the fact that the application of the GPE operational model had not been adapted to the context of federal states and decentralized education sectors. For example:

- In Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan, CLEs raised concerns that the GPE model operated with a single coordinating agency located at the central level, which did not permit for regular engagement or visibility at the provincial/local level. This constituted a significant additional workload for the respective CAs. Unlike grant agents, CAs do not receive any financial inputs or reimbursements from GPE.
- The Nepal CLE noted that the country is no longer a single enabling national environment, but rather a collection of 753 municipalities with varying degrees of political will and skill to manage education sector plan development, plan implementation and monitoring. The most recent ESPIG attempts to work around this by incentivizing local governments to integrate sector plan activities and targets into their annual work plans and budgets, but municipal governments are constitutionally autonomous and cannot be forced to align with the federal sector plan.
- In Kenya, while GPE funding and technical inputs through the GA, CA, LEG and Secretariat only existed at the central level, plan implementation had been moved into the responsibility of local governments.

46. The overarching findings presented in this section are explored in more detail in Chapters 3-6, and their implications for GPE are reflected in the recommendations in [Chapter 9](#).

## 3 GPE contributions to sector plan development<sup>57</sup>

### Key messages:

- In almost all countries where data on more than one sector plan were available, the quality of plans improved when measured by GPE standards.
- In almost all reviewed countries, GPE contributed to improving the quality of final sector plans when measured against GPE criteria – especially through the ESPDG mechanism and the incentive of obtaining ESPIG funding, but also supported by GPE Secretariat guidance, quality assurance, and advice and facilitation through CAs and the Secretariat.
- However, sector plans are frequently not used by in-country stakeholders despite having been rated ‘credible’ in terms of GPE quality criteria. Some CLEs also raised concerns about the achievability of approved sector plans in relation to available implementation capacity, time and financial resources.

### 3.1 Overview

47. [Table 3.1](#) provides an overview of CLE findings on sector plan development.

**Table 3.1** Overall findings on sector plan development<sup>58</sup>

COUNTRY (SECTOR PLAN DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD)	(PROGRESS TOWARDS) <sup>59</sup> GOVERNMENT-OWNED, ROBUST PLAN	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION
Prospective CLEs		
<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b> SSEF <sup>60</sup> 2016-25	Strong	Strong
<b>Ethiopia</b> ESDP <sup>61</sup> V 2016-2020	Strong	Moderate
<b>Kenya</b> KNESSP <sup>62</sup> 2018-2022	Strong	Moderate
<b>Malawi</b> ESP 2008- 2020	Moderate	Strong

<sup>57</sup> Addressing Global Evaluation Questions GEQ 1.1 and 1.3 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim in the country-level ToC was: “GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the development of government owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning”.

<sup>58</sup> Color coding: green = strong; amber = modest; red = weak; grey = insufficient data. An expanded version of this table is provided in Appendix V.

<sup>59</sup> Guinea was the only reviewed country for which more than one sector plans were reviewed in which the more recent sector plan met the same number of GPE quality standards as the previous plan, while in other countries plan quality had improved.

<sup>60</sup> Stratégie Sectorielle de l'Éducation et de la Formation.

<sup>61</sup> Education Sector Development Program.

<sup>62</sup> Kenya National Education Sector Strategic Plan

COUNTRY (SECTOR PLAN DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD)	(PROGRESS TOWARDS) <sup>59</sup> GOVERNMENT-OWNED, ROBUST PLAN	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION
<b>Mali</b> <i>PRODEC</i> <sup>63</sup> II 2019-2018	Strong	Strong
<b>Nigeria</b> 5 State ESPs <sup>64</sup>	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Nepal</b> <i>SSDP</i> <sup>65</sup> 2016-2021	Strong	Strong
<b>Zimbabwe</b> <i>ESSP</i> <sup>66</sup> 2016-2020	Moderate	Strong
Summative CLEs		
<b>Bangladesh</b> <i>PEDP</i> <sup>67</sup> 3 (2011-17) and 4 (2018-23)	Strong	Limited <sup>68</sup>
<b>Burkina Faso</b> <i>ESP</i> 2012-2021	Strong	Strong
<b>Cambodia</b> <i>ESP</i> 2019-2023	Strong	Moderate
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> <i>ESP</i> 2012-2014	Strong	Strong
<b>Guinea</b> <i>PSE-2</i> <sup>69</sup> 2015-17 and <i>PRODEG</i> <sup>70</sup> 2020-30	Strong	Strong
<b>Guyana</b> <i>ESP</i> 2014-2018	Strong	Moderate
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> <i>EDS</i> <sup>71</sup> (2030)	Insufficient data	Limited
<b>Liberia</b> <i>ESP</i> 2010-2020	Strong	Strong
<b>Mauritania</b> <i>PNDSE</i> <sup>72</sup> II 2011-2021	Strong	Strong
<b>Mozambique</b> <i>Operational plan</i> 2015-2018	Strong	Strong
<b>Pakistan (Balochistan)</b> <i>ESP</i> 2013-2018	Strong	Strong
<b>Pakistan (Sindh)</b> <i>ESP</i> 2014-2018	Strong	Strong
<b>Rwanda</b> <i>ESSP</i> 2013-2018	Strong	Strong
<b>Senegal</b> <i>PAQUET</i> <sup>73</sup> 2013-2025	Strong	Strong

<sup>63</sup> Programme Décennal de l'Éducation

<sup>64</sup> Kaduna State ESP 2005-2016, Kano State ESP 2009-2018, Jigawa States ESP 2013-2022, Katsina State ESP 2011-2020 and Sokoto State ESP 2011-2020.

<sup>65</sup> School Sector Development Plan

<sup>66</sup> Education Sector Strategic Plan

<sup>67</sup> Primary Education Development Program

<sup>68</sup> GPE contributions to a planned upcoming (sector wide) Education Sector Plan will likely be strong. At the time of the CLE, however, it was too early to determine the extent to which the new plan would be government owned as compared with previous ones.

<sup>69</sup> Programme Sectoriel de l'Éducation

<sup>70</sup> Programme Décennal de l'Éducation en Guinée

<sup>71</sup> Education Development Strategy.

<sup>72</sup> Programme National de Développement du Secteur Éducatif

<sup>73</sup> Programme d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence

COUNTRY (SECTOR PLAN DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD)	(PROGRESS TOWARDS) <sup>59</sup> GOVERNMENT-OWNED, ROBUST PLAN	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION
Sierra Leone <i>ESP 2014-2018</i>	Strong	Strong
South Sudan <i>GES<sup>74</sup> 2012-17 and 2017-21</i>	Strong	Strong
Tajikistan <i>NS<sup>75</sup> 2012-2020</i>	Strong	Strong
The Gambia <i>ESP 2014-2018</i>	Strong	Strong
Togo <i>PSE 2010-2020 and 2014-2025</i>	Strong	Strong
Uganda <i>ESSP 2017-2020</i>	Moderate	Moderate
Zambia <i>ESSP 2017-2021</i>	Strong	Strong

## 3.2 Characteristics of sector plan development

**Finding 5:** In almost all countries where data were available on more than one sector plan , the quality of plans improved when measured by GPE standards.

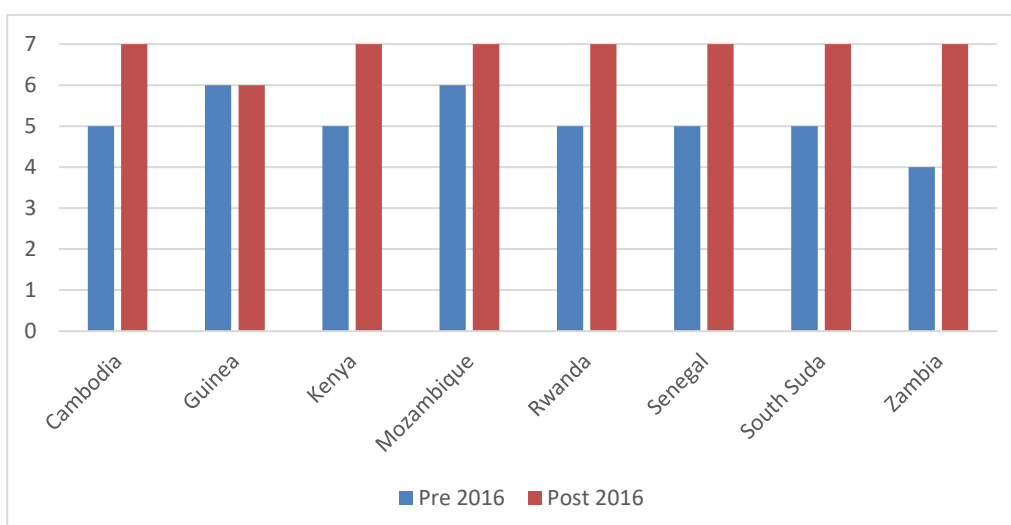
48. In the countries covered by CLEs, sector plans developed post 2016 and for which Secretariat ratings were available met more of the seven GPE quality standards for education sector plans (GPE Results Framework indicator 16a) than previous plans in the same country, as shown in

48. [Figure 3.1](#). For details on plan ratings, see Appendix VI.

<sup>74</sup> General Education Sector Plan

<sup>75</sup> National Strategy for Education Development

**Figure 3.1** Number of GPE RF Indicator 16 standards met by sector plans before and after 2016<sup>76</sup>



49. The 2019 desk study on GPE support to sector planning made similar observations on improving sector plan quality based on the detailed review of 20 ESPs developed in 16 countries, six of which were also covered by CLEs during 2019.<sup>77</sup> Both the desk study and the CLEs found the greatest improvements over time in sector plans meeting the standards of ‘achievable’ and ‘strategic’, which had previously been rated the weakest. Nevertheless, among recent sector plans reviewed by the desk study, ‘achievable’ remains the weakest among the seven standards.

50. Beyond formal ratings, CLEs noted the following types of improvements in sector plan development processes and final plans.

- Plan development processes included previously excluded groups and/or better ensured the meaningful participation of all included groups.** Improvements were primarily noted in relation to (better and/or more) civil society organization engagement (e.g., in the Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Togo) but also in relation to other groups, e.g., implementing agencies (in Rwanda) and using more participatory processes for all stakeholder groups (e.g., in Ethiopia, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe). See also [Box 3.1](#).
- Sector planning was more visibly based on recent sector data,** primarily due to Education Sector Analyses (ESA) conducted beforehand, e.g.,

#### Box 3.1: Sector plan development in Rwanda

Sector plan development in Rwanda has benefited from strong MoE leadership and active cooperation of affiliated agencies, other line ministries and district-level administration. During development of the 2018-23 ESSP, stakeholders observed improved linkages between planning at the sector and subsector levels due to the development of sub-sector plans.

<sup>76</sup> 2016 chosen because this was the year when GPE began to formalize and institutionalize the QA process for sector plans and also introduced changes to the ESPDG mechanism.

<sup>77</sup> Of the 16 countries reviewed by the desk study, five had been covered by summative CLE in FI 2018/2019: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone; five were covered by summative CLE in FI 2019/2020: Cambodia, Guinea, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan; and one was covered by prospective CLE: Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, the desk study covered Chad, Comoros, Eritrea, Lesotho, and Uzbekistan.



in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

- **DCP governments took on stronger leadership for sector plan development than in the past**, e.g., in Cambodia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Togo, and Zimbabwe.<sup>78</sup>
- **Final sector plans visibly addressed recommendations deriving from the independent sector plan appraisal process**, e.g., in Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal.
- **In-country actors made decreasing use of external expertise** for sector planning processes, thereby indicating increasing in-country technical capacity, e.g., in Cambodia, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Rwanda. In Kenya, sector planning has become 'in-house' led, facilitated by the MoE's dedicated directorate for policy and planning that has consistently taken ownership of planning processes.
- **Processes in federal system were more integrated:** In Nigeria, modest improvements took place between the first and the second CLE report in moving from multiple, disconnected plans at federal and state levels to a more cohesive and unified process.

51. While all observed sector plan development processes were participatory,<sup>79</sup> most CLEs noted at least one stakeholder group that was either excluded from or not meaningfully engaged in sector plan development, such as:

- Civil society (e.g., in Mauritania, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan)<sup>80</sup>
- Teachers (e.g., in Cambodia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan)
- Parents/communities (e.g., in Bangladesh, South Sudan)
- Certain donors (e.g., in the Kyrgyz Republic, South Sudan)
- Regions/provinces (e.g., in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal)
- Government actors beyond the basic education sub-sector (e.g., in Bangladesh)
- Private sector (e.g., in Mauritania and Tajikistan).

**Finding 6: Most CLEs<sup>81</sup> raised concerns about the achievability of final sector plans despite their GPE rating as 'credible', and about their operational relevance to in-country stakeholders.**

52. CLE findings reiterate questions raised in the first synthesis report about the extent to which sector plans that were rated 'credible' (according to GPE quality standards) are of operational relevance to the needs of DCP governments and in-country stakeholders. See [Box 3.2](#).

<sup>78</sup> In some other countries, such as Mozambique and Rwanda, government leadership for plan preparation had already been strong prior to and remained strong during the respective CLE review period.

<sup>79</sup> The Mauritania CLE noted that available evidence did not allow determining who had and who had not been consulted during plan preparation. Stakeholder consultations indicated though that at least some consultations had taken place.

<sup>80</sup> Throughout this report, examples are provided of all CLEs that explicitly mention the respective issue. However, we present these as examples ("e.g.,") as the issue may have applied in other countries but was not noted in the CLE.

<sup>81</sup> 21 out of 28 CLEs.

53. While sector plans in six countries (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda) had been rated credible (i.e., meeting at least five of seven GPE quality standards), the CLEs noted that their overambitious objectives and lack of prioritization of objectives posed risks to their (potential and actual) achievability. The sector plans in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Senegal met five quality standards, but did not meet the ‘achievable’ criterion.<sup>82</sup>

54. In the Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Nigeria (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto states) and Tajikistan, sector plans were implemented that met fewer than the required five quality standards and did not meet the ‘achievable’ criterion. The 2019 desk study on GPE support to sector planning found that none of the nine reviewed ESPs developed before 2016 met the ‘achievable’ criterion. Post 2016, six out of 11 sector plans met the criterion, and the remaining five did not.

55. Another risk to the achievability of sector plans is that neither ESAs nor the plans themselves consistently assessed limitations to national governments’ plan implementation capacity or proposed ways to address these.<sup>83</sup> Weaknesses in this capacity –in terms of numbers of staff and existing technical expertise and relevant experience required for leading plan implementation – were noted by CLEs of the Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mauritania, South Sudan, and Togo. In seven countries (Burkina Faso, DRC, Guyana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Zimbabwe) a related challenge was the absence or low quality of operational planning such as actionable implementation plans at national and sub-national levels. The same concerns had been noted in the Year 1 CLE synthesis report.

56. More than half (17/28) of the CLEs noted limitations in the extent to which in-country stakeholder groups displayed ownership of the final plan by using it as a shared reference document (see also [Chapter 6](#)). This was despite the fact that these actors had been actively involved in or had led the process of plan development, and all but one of the plans<sup>84</sup> had been rated ‘credible’ according to GPE quality standards. Likely reasons for the limited use of sector plans by in-country actors vary by context and include, in varying combinations, the following:

- **Perception that the sector plan is linked to funding only for basic education:** In several countries where responsibility for the education sector is split between several ministries, those ministries in charge of sub-sectors other than basic education tended to not consider the sector-wide plan as relevant for their work, e.g., in the DRC, Guinea, Malawi, Senegal, Togo, and Zimbabwe. This is

### Box 3.2: Strategic versus operational relevance

The evaluation team differentiated between two aspects of relevance:

*Strategic relevance* – refers to alignment with organizational priorities, in this case, alignment with the goals and objectives outlined in the GPE strategic plan.

*Operational relevance* – refers to alignment with the practical needs of intended beneficiaries, in this case primarily DCP governments.

<sup>82</sup> In Senegal and Rwanda, this refers to the sector plans in place during most of the period covered by CLEs, e.g., the 2013-2025 PAQUET in Senegal, and the 2013-2018 ESP in Rwanda. In both countries, more recent plans (2018-2030 PAQUET and 2018-2023 ESP) have met the achievable criterion as reflected in [Table 3.1](#) above.

<sup>83</sup> Most ESAs reviewed as part of the 2019 desk study on GPE support to sector planning omitted or only partially analyzed existing capacity, despite the fact that assessing ‘system capacity’ is one of the core areas to be included in ESAs as per GPE/IIEP guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation.

<sup>84</sup> The exception being the EDS 2020 in the Kyrgyz Republic, which had met only four out of seven quality standards.

likely related to GPE providing financial support for plan implementation primarily in relation to basic education.<sup>85</sup>

- **Stronger day-to-day focus of government actors and development partners on sub-sector specific donor-funded projects or pooled funds than on implementation of the overarching sector plan**, e.g., in Ethiopia, Togo and Guinea. In many countries plan implementation that requires capital expenditures is strongly dependent on the financial support of development partners.
- **Insufficient adaptation of the plan to the needs and capacity of actors at the sub-national level**: In some countries where education systems are, or are being, decentralized (e.g., in the DRC, Ethiopia, Nepal and Senegal), CLEs noted that national sector plans had not been sufficiently disseminated among and/or adapted to the specific needs of regions or provinces, despite the fact that the plan must be implemented at this level. In Nigeria, the CLE noted a reverse challenge: sector plan development happens primarily at the state level, without strong mechanisms to ensure cohesion at the federal level.<sup>86</sup>
- **Strong reliance on external consultants to oversee sector plan development** with limited government involvement, e.g., in Zambia. While this may indicate gaps in in-house planning capacity, it also raises the question of whether the government considers the sector plan an inherently valuable endeavor or a ‘tick the box’ exercise that needs to be completed to fulfill GPE funding requirements.
- **Perception that the sector plan content and/or format had been (overly) imposed and influenced by certain development partners**, e.g., in the Kyrgyz Republic, where the World Bank led an initial process of developing a sector plan parallel to a similar process led by the MoE. In Bangladesh the CLE noted a similar potential future risk based on the observation that government stakeholders perceived GPE as the driving force behind promoting the development of an overarching education sector plan to replace traditional sub-sector plans.<sup>87</sup>
- **Contextual changes and related risks, especially in fragile countries**. In South Sudan, the 2012-2017 sector plan was completed in a rush with limited participation from stakeholders so as to complete it prior to the country’s independence. Subsequently, the outbreak of armed conflict rendered the plan (which had been designed in times of peace) somewhat irrelevant, and neither development partners nor actors involved in the humanitarian response through the education cluster adopted it as their guiding framework.

<sup>85</sup> The 2019 GPE ESPIG guidelines, footnote 3 on p.3, note that “GPE financing, including ESPIG funding, continues to focus on basic education, defined as pre-primary, primary, lower secondary education and second-chance learning. (...) where equitable learning outcomes are well advanced at basic education levels, it may be appropriate for GPE to provide additional investments in early childhood care or upper secondary education.” See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-11-Guidelines-education-sector-program-implementation-grants.pdf>.

<sup>86</sup> As noted above, some progress in strengthening cohesion in Nigeria has, however, been made in the recent past.

<sup>87</sup> One of the main reasons that GPE is promoting holistic sector plans relates to the need to understand and influence the distribution of resources within the education sector to ensure that per capita funding is distributed equitably by sub-sector and population groups.

**Finding 7:** Some more recent sector plans paid increased attention to issues of equity, equality and/or inclusion than older ones had done. Several sector plans lacked specificity in this regard, however, despite the fact that they had been rated as meeting the GPE quality standard of being ‘attentive to disparities’.

57. Several CLEs took positive note of final sector plans paying explicit attention, and in some cases increased attention when compared to previous plans, to issues of equity, equality and/or inclusion.

- In the Kyrgyz Republic, the most recent Education Development Strategy (EDS 2030) makes better use of data than its predecessor plan (EDS 2020) to acknowledge that children with disabilities are still out of school and to provide some analysis of geographic disparities and gender parity data.
- In Rwanda, while both the 2013-2018 and 2018-2023 sector plans had a clear focus on equity, the latter has a strengthened emphasis on comprehensively addressing the needs of learners with special needs through complementary measures related to the curriculum, teaching modules, teacher capacities and school infrastructure.
- In Zambia, the 2017-2021 ESSP formulates more explicit objectives in relation to learners with special needs than the previous 2011-2015 plan.
- In Togo, the 2014-2025 sector plan shows improvements over the previous one by providing explicit gender parity targets for all sub-sectors and proposing measures for better serving learners with disabilities.
- In Senegal, different from previous plans, PAQUET 2018-2030 includes an explicit strategy, activities and indicators related to equity and vulnerability of children both inside and outside the formal school system.
- In Zimbabwe, the external appraisal of the ESSP 2016-2020 positively highlighted the inclusion of equity-focused indicators in the plan’s monitoring framework and its adoption of an explicit focus on extending opportunities for children with disabilities with the aim of integrating them into mainstream education.

58. Some sector plans met the GPE quality standard of being ‘attentive to disparities’ while not providing any, or only unspecific, information on disparities that, based on available sector data,<sup>88</sup> existed and posed challenges in the country. For example:

- Disparities between learners in urban and rural areas (e.g., Cambodia ESP 2014-2018; Mauritania PNDSE II 2011-2021; Mozambique 2012-2016 PEE and 2015-2018 OP; South Sudan GESP I (2012/17) and GESP II (2017/22); Zambia ESSP 2017-2021)
- Gender inequality and inequities (e.g., DRC SSEF 2016-2025, Cambodia ESP 2014-2018; Nigeria - Kaduna SESP 2019-2028)
- The needs of learners with special needs (e.g., Cambodia ESP 2019 2023; Mozambique 2012-2016 PEE, Nigeria - Kano SESP 2018-2027 and Kaduna SESP 2019-2028)<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Deriving from sector analysis and/or system and impact-level trends e.g., related to equality of access, inclusion, and discrepancies in learning outcomes.

<sup>89</sup> The 2019 desk study on GPE support to sector planning had also noted that in some cases sector plans had been rated by the Secretariat as having met a particular sub-criterion such as on learners with disabilities, but the actual strategies for addressing related challenges described in the plan were vague and insufficient.

- Education for refugee populations (e.g., Kenya KNESSP 2018-2022)
- Out of school children (e.g., Nigeria - Kaduna SESP 2019-2028).

59. The 'attentive to disparities' criterion assesses whether plans address the dimensions of gender, geographic disparities and disability. As plans only need to address one of these three dimensions to meet the standard, it was successfully met by almost all reviewed countries.<sup>90</sup> GPE standards aim to establish if plans meet a minimum requirement, in this case whether or not they include a strategy for addressing a particular disparity, but are not intended to evaluate the *quality* of that strategy. However, poor quality strategies may explain why some strategies are not used and/or not achievable. See also [Finding 8](#):

### 3.3 GPE contributions to sector plan development

**Finding 8:** GPE financial and non-financial support, especially through Quality Assurance processes, made strong contributions to enhancing plan development processes and improving the quality of sector plans when measured against GPE criteria. CLEs raise questions, however, about the relevance of these criteria to the practical needs and capacity of in-country stakeholders.

60. CLEs rated GPE contributions to sector plan development as 'strong' in 21 out of 29 countries/provinces, 'moderate' in six, and 'limited' in only two countries (see [Table 3.1](#) above).

61. CLEs conducted in 2019 noted some variations in the extent to which different types of GPE support and incentives for sector plan development were perceived as influential in different countries (see [Table 3.2](#)). CLEs conducted in 2018 did not include this type of assessment and are not reflected in the table. In some countries, GPE contributions to sector plan development differed between older and more recent sector plans, which is why some countries appear twice within the same row.

**Table 3.2** Perceived influence of different types of GPE support on sector plan development

GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
Incentive of ESPIG funding - fixed tranche/ funding requirement 1 (a credible plan)	Cambodia, Guinea, Nepal, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tajikistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe	DRC, Kenya, Nepal, Uganda
ESPIG variable tranche (VT)	none	none	Cambodia, DRC, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

<sup>90</sup> The exception being the 2019-2028 sector plan for Nigeria Kaduna province. See Appendix VI, which provides details on how the Secretariat rated recent sector plans in reviewed countries against the seven GPE quality criteria.

GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG)	Cambodia, DRC, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia	Cambodia, Guinea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Kyrgyz Republic, Zimbabwe	none <sup>91</sup>
CSEF funding	Malawi	Mali, Zimbabwe	All other countries <sup>92</sup>
GPE guidelines and quality criteria	DRC, Kenya, Mozambique, Mauritania, Nepal, Tajikistan, Zambia	Malawi, South Sudan, Togo	All others
Revised QAR processes/appraisal	Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Guinea, Mauritania, Nigeria, Uganda	All others
Secretariat advocacy/facilitation	Bangladesh, Mozambique, Uganda, Zambia	Cambodia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Togo	All others
CA advocacy and facilitation	DRC, Mali, Mauritania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia	Cambodia	All others
Global/regional GPE learning events/initiatives <sup>93</sup>	none	Mali	All others

62. As shown in [Table 3.2](#), the ESPDG and the incentive of obtaining ESPIG funding had the most consistent positive influence on sector plan development, provided that a credible sector plan was in place. Other mechanisms, such as QAR processes, CA and Secretariat advocacy and facilitation also played notable but less consistent roles. Compared to GPE contributions to dialogue and monitoring (mutual accountability), sector financing and sector plan implementation, discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, a wider range of types of GPE support were relevant and influential in sector plan development. As also noted in the 2019 desk study, different types of GPE support to sector plan development are mutually complementary.

63. In their combination, different elements of GPE financial and non-financial support help countries address barriers to developing good education sector plans (as measured against GPE quality standards) by:

- **Providing a common language** around and clarity on what constitutes a good sector plan, and how to develop one (through GPE/IIEP guidelines and GPE quality criteria, ESPIG and Multiplier funding requirements, and Secretariat advice and feedback).
- **Providing financial incentives** for developing good sector plans through the prospect of accessing an ESPIG and/or Multiplier (fixed tranche funding requirement 1: a credible, endorsed plan). The

<sup>91</sup> Bangladesh, Mauritania and Kenya did not have ESPDGs and are therefore not mentioned in this row.

<sup>92</sup> Guinea and Guyana were the only reviewed countries that had not received CSEF funding during the respective review period.

<sup>93</sup> Including but not limited to under the Global and Regional Activities Program (GRA) and/or the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) program.



extent to which this acts as an incentive varies, likely depending on country traditions for and government commitment to sector plan development, and how dependent the country is on accessing the ESPIG, based on the number of other donors supporting education, available domestic funding, and the amount of the envisaged ESPIG.

- **Providing financial assistance** for sector plan development processes through ESPDGs as well as, in some cases, existing ESPIGs, especially in compiling a strong(er) evidence base for the plan such as through ESAs, and in using consultative processes for plan development. See [Box 3.3](#).
- **Supporting countries in ensuring that their final plans meet the standards for a ‘good’ sector plan** in particular through CA support for stakeholder coordination during plan development, and through the enhanced quality assurance process including the external appraisal.<sup>95</sup>

#### Box 3.3: 2019 Desk study findings on the ESPDG mechanism

ESPDG funding made clear contributions to the development of robust and credible sector plans. However, it is still unclear how changes to the ESPDG process, such as the requirements to develop a detailed roadmap or the introduction of the new funding window for education sector analyses (ESAs), have affected sector planning processes. The introduction of the detailed roadmap in 2016 has not led to more realistic planning as processes were still considered to be rushed in many DCPs.

64. **Capacity development:** Within the GPE operational model, the concept of capacity development is insufficiently defined.<sup>96</sup> Most stakeholders consulted as well as GPE documents<sup>97</sup> tend to use the term ‘capacity’ synonymously with ‘capabilities’, i.e., the technical ability of individuals or organizations to fulfill specific tasks in order to achieve a particular goal. As such, they tend to address only one of several dimensions of ‘capacity’ (see [Box 3.4](#)).

#### Box 3.4: The notion of ‘capacity’

The evaluation team understands individual or organizational ‘capacity’ as incorporating the three interrelated dimensions of: *capabilities* (knowledge, skills, experience), *motivation* (e.g., incentives, habitual patterns of decision making), and *opportunity* (e.g., funding, conducive external environment).<sup>94</sup>

65. Furthermore, GPE global level and country-specific documents provide no clear indication of what GPE aims to achieve in relation to strengthening country capacity (capabilities) for sector plan development, for example, what types of technical skills government/MoE planners should possess. Similarly, the GPE results framework does not explicitly capture progress made in, or GPE contributions to, country capacity strengthening. While one might argue that all of GPE’s support to sector plan development aims to help strengthen country capacity, available evidence did not permit further ‘unpacking’ this generic statement or provide a clearer sense of how different types of GPE support contributed to strengthening specific elements of national capacity.

<sup>94</sup> Mayne, John. *The COM-B Theory of Change Model*. Working paper. February 2017.

<sup>95</sup> The 2019 desk study noted that sector plans that had undergone the new QA process were of higher quality in terms of GPE quality standards than those that had not. However, appraisal reports did not yet consistently follow GPE appraisal guidelines and were sometimes perceived as a mere ‘check-the-box’ exercises.

<sup>96</sup> This was also noted in in a 2018 examination of GPE key actors’ roles. See: Nicola Ruddle, Kelly Casey, Gabi Elte, Anaïs Loizillon (2018): “Examination of key actors’ roles in GPE’s country-level operational model towards GPE 2020 delivery”. Oxford Policy Management, May 2018, p.64.

<sup>97</sup> Including the terms of reference (ToR) for the country-level evaluations.

**Finding 9:** The variable tranche has the potential to strengthen the results focus of sector planning. However, across the reviewed countries with an active VT, agreeing on appropriate strategies and indicators for the VT was largely disconnected from sector plan development.

66. As noted in the 2019 GPE Guidance Note on GPE Variable Part Financing,<sup>99</sup> introducing a results-based financing component had been envisaged by GPE to play a role in sector planning (see [Box 3.5](#) by incentivizing the development and implementation of sector plan *strategies* that can be considered transformational. A strategy in this context is a plan of action (a program or set of programs) that seeks to address a policy priority or goal that is measured at the outcome level. Strategies are considered transformational if they address key sector plan priorities in equity, efficiency or learning outcomes; are likely to lead to substantial medium-term progress at the system/sector level; are based on a robust theory of change.<sup>100</sup>

**Box 3.5: GPE rationale for introducing the variable tranche<sup>98</sup>**

The introduction of results-based financing at the sector level was expected to:

- Strengthen the results focus of sector policy dialogue and sector planning
- Encourage the development of ambitious yet realistic sector strategies backed by robust theories of change
- Drive sector plan implementation and improvements in equity, efficiency and learning.

67. Eight of the 29 countries and provinces reviewed in 2018 and 2019 had an active VT during (most of) the respective evaluation period.<sup>101</sup> CLE findings on those eight countries confirm the VT's potential to strengthen results-focused sector planning by requiring countries to translate broad sector plan objectives into more concrete strategies supported by explicit theories of change, thereby 'unpacking' how higher-level objectives will be achieved. At the same time, discussions around selecting and agreeing upon specific strategies and related indicators to be supported through the VT usually took place after a sector plan had been developed. In contrast, the 2019 GPE guidance on Variable Part Financing suggests that countries begin identifying VT strategies and indicators while developing the ESP.

68. Furthermore, within the reviewed countries, most of the strategies, indicators and related targets developed for variable tranches are not taken directly from the sector plan, but are new indicators and targets developed specifically for the VT. The DRC was a positive outlier in that selected indicators were taken from the 2016-2025 sector plan, and in Zimbabwe some, but not all of the VT indicators were aligned with sector plan indicators. On the positive side this indicates the VT's potential to correct overly ambitious and unrealistic targets in education sector plans and to drive implementation in the right direction given that the strategies supported through the VT do not introduce completely new types of objectives but reflect priorities described in the sector plan.<sup>102</sup> On the negative side, it confirms above-noted concerns

<sup>98</sup> Source: GPE (2019): Guidance Note on GPE Variable Part Financing; p. 6. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-03-gpe-guidance-note-variable-part.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Cambodia, DRC, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe. This does not include countries that are currently in the process of applying for or setting up processes around a VT.

<sup>102</sup> Secretariat feedback on the draft synthesis report indicates that common GPE practice has been to allow for a second phase of program design during which countries can further elaborate strategies and indicators based on the objectives outlined in the ESP, rather than limiting VT-supported strategies to the indicators written in the ESP. The intention is then to integrate these strategies and indicators in the next update of the ESP. Given that CLEs focused on one grant cycle, they were unable to collect data on whether and how this integration into following iterations of the sector plan occurred in the reviewed countries.

about the actual achievability of sector plans despite them having been rated ‘credible.’ It also raises the question to what extent VTs will be helpful for overall sector plan implementation in terms of encouraging (or discouraging) countries to report against their sector plans and related results frameworks– this is further discussed in [Chapter 4](#) and [Chapter 6](#).

69. In some countries, e.g., the DRC and Ethiopia, consulted stakeholders noted that the indicators chosen for the variable tranche were overly ambitious, and stakeholders were concerned about whether envisaged targets would be achieved. This may link to two interrelated factors that likely challenged indicator selection in several contexts:

- GPE requirements for VT indicators to demonstrate an ‘adequate level of ambition’ i.e., a ‘realistic stretch’. Some stakeholders described this as a paradox by noting that the notion of ‘stretch targets’ ran the risk of contradicting the idea of targets being ‘realistic’ and/or of being disconnected from what has been stated in the overall sector plan.
- The fact that the VT is still relatively new, and that in-country GPE actors (including some CAs and GAs, as well as government actors) had to familiarize themselves with GPE requirements, also given that GPE guidance on the variable part was only issued in 2019. This contributed to difficulties in determining indicators that would be both ‘realistic’ yet also ‘ambitious’.

### Unplanned/unintended effects of GPE support

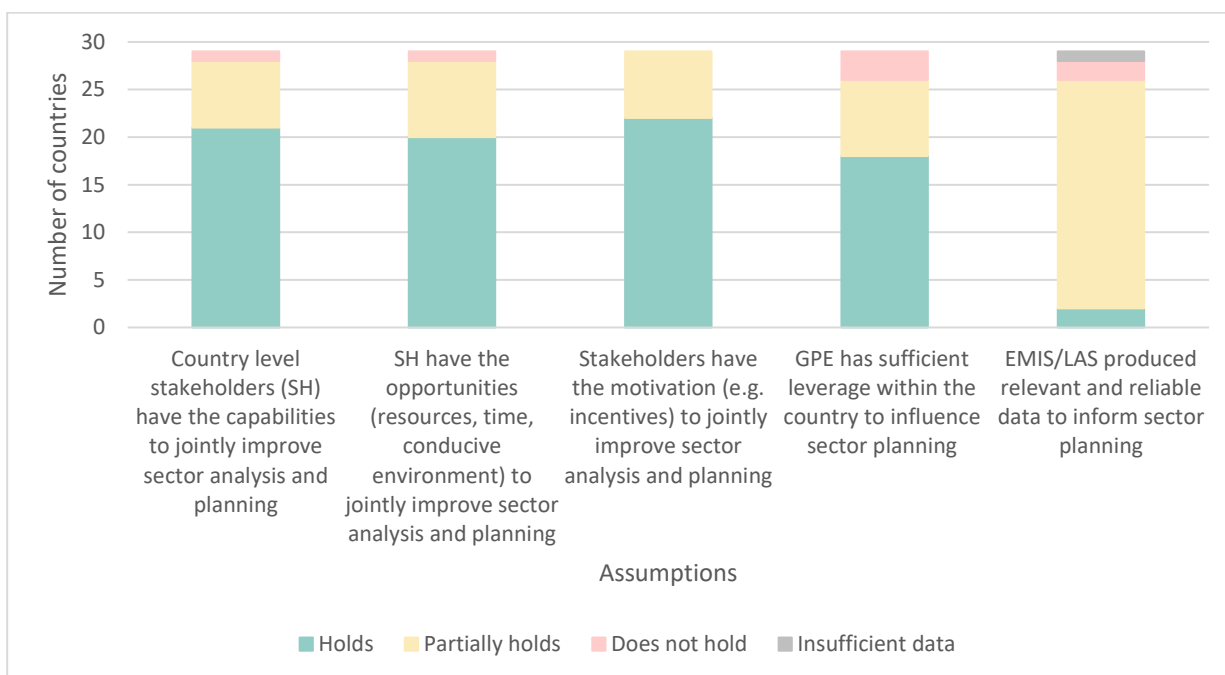
70. Only one CLE noted a possible unintended negative effect of GPE support to sector plan development. In Senegal, GPE financial and technical support in the context of sector plan development primarily benefited the Ministry of National Education (MEN) responsible for basic education. This may have contributed to weak ownership and subsequent use of the sector plan by the other two education sector ministries for higher education and for VET respectively.

## 3.4 Factors influencing sector plan development and related GPE contributions

71. The GPE country-level theory of change included five assumptions that needed to be in place for GPE to contribute to sector plan development. The CLEs assessed the degree to which these assumptions held true in the 29 countries and provinces.

72. As shown in [Figure 3.2](#), the first four assumptions related to sector plan development held true in approximately two-thirds of the countries which explains the overall positive findings on sector plan development and related GPE contributions. At the same time, the first four assumptions only partly held in about one third of the countries, and assumptions related to the production of data for education sector development held or only partially held in very few countries.

**Figure 3.2** *Extent to which ToC assumptions on sector plan development held true (n=29 countries/provinces)<sup>103</sup>*



73. CLEs further noted that the broad assumptions originally developed as part of the country-level ToC incorporate numerous more specific factors that influenced sector plan development which are worth ‘unpacking’, as is done below.

#### Capabilities

74. The extent to which MoEs and other in-country stakeholders possess adequate technical skills and experience in sector plan development varies. This is relevant not only in writing plan, but also in ensuring inclusive and meaningful stakeholder engagement, a process that requires capabilities in both the MoE and the group(s) that wish to be consulted.

75. Some CLEs observed challenges to plan development due to staff turnover in the MoE, (e.g., Bangladesh, the Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe), indicating over-reliance on a few individuals and the absence of processes to ensure training of and handover of responsibilities to successors, thereby risking the loss of corporate memory and technical skills.<sup>104</sup>

#### Motivation

76. One factor likely to have influenced stakeholder motivation to engage in sector plan development has been whether responsibility for the sector is located within one ministry or split between several ministries, and related perceptions of whether the sector plan, and related (GPE) funding, would likely benefit the full sector or only the basic education sub-sector. This was likely a factor negatively influencing stakeholder participation in plan development in Guinea, Malawi, Senegal, and Togo.

<sup>103</sup> 29 instead of 28 (countries) because for Pakistan the CLE reviewed assumptions separately for the two provinces of Sindh and Balochistan.

<sup>104</sup> Measures to strengthen such institutionalization could include, for example, mandatory and deliberate

77. A MoE's willingness and ability to encourage fully inclusive, participatory, transparent sector plan development processes has probably been influenced by the country government's political culture and modus operandi. For example, all of the countries in which CLEs noted exclusion or limited involvement of civil society and/or teachers associations in sector plan development <sup>105</sup>are ranked by CIVICUS as having an either 'closed' or 'repressed' civic space.<sup>106</sup>

### Opportunities

78. Not all gaps and weaknesses in sector plan development are due to the absence of funding. Other contextual factors that fall under the concept of 'opportunities' include the presence or absence of, for example, conflict, and national or regional health or political crises, which influenced sector planning processes in Mali and South Sudan. Also, a country's political economy can be a critical factor influencing sector plan development as it determines the relative priority the government assigns to the education sector overall and to particular issues or sub-sectors within education.

79. The extent to which the above noted factors applied and influenced sector plan development considerably varied within the reviewed sample, and CLEs do not permit drawing overall conclusions related to specific (combinations of) factors that would consistently lead to more or less progress in sector plan development or to more or less related GPE influence. The one exception is the high importance of GPE financial support (through ESPDG and the incentive of obtaining an ESPIG) that was found to be relevant across the diverse country sample.

## 3.5 Implications for GPE

**Finding 10: GPE needs to ensure that sector planning processes and resulting sector plans are more closely connected to, and actively support, subsequent implementation and sector monitoring activities of in-country actors than is currently the case.**

80. GPE guidelines, quality criteria, and facilitation have positively influenced sector planning processes across countries. Among in-country stakeholders, GPE is widely known and generally appreciated for its role in promoting and supporting sector planning and contributing to the development of quality education sector plans. Nevertheless, CLEs indicate a disconnect between the resulting sector plans and subsequent implementation and monitoring activities. Two challenges that countries face in this regard are: (i) translating high-level and longer-term sector plans into operational plans that are linked to medium-term expenditure frameworks and budget cycles; and (ii) establishing effective accountability frameworks for plan implementation.

81. One key factor in this regard appears to be that country capacity for implementation and monitoring is not sufficiently taken into consideration in sector planning processes or in GPE support mechanisms such as ESP quality criteria and QAR processes. There is currently no agreed upon understanding among GPE stakeholders of what such 'implementation capacity' entails, and how it can be measured or strengthened. Another factor may be the widespread perception among national stakeholders that the sector plan is a vehicle to access GPE funding, and that GPE funding supports basic education only, which may negatively influence ownership and subsequent use of sector plans among stakeholders representing other sub-sectors.

<sup>105</sup> Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, and South Sudan.

<sup>106</sup> CIVICUS is a global civil society alliance that maintains a database on the state of civil society freedoms around the world and assigns each country ratings on a five-point scale from 'closed' to 'open'. For more information, see: <https://monitor.civicus.org/about/>. See Appendix VIII for details on CIVICUS ratings for reviewed countries.

## 4 GPE contributions to mutual accountability:<sup>107</sup> sector dialogue and monitoring<sup>108</sup>

### Key messages:

- Most mechanisms for sector dialogue are participatory and inclusive and function well as forums for information exchange. LEGs or their equivalents tend to play a comparatively stronger role during sector plan development, and a more limited role in systematic sector plan implementation and monitoring.
- All countries conducted some form of sector monitoring, and some put in place related improvements. However, at least half of the reviewed countries generated information that was not used systematically to monitor sector plan implementation and inform decision-making.
- In all countries, GPE financial incentives and non-financial support, especially through Secretariat and CA advice and facilitation, contributed to improvements in selected elements of sector dialogue (particularly in the context of sector plan development) and monitoring (particularly in relation to Joint Sector Reviews).
- Collaboration and joint decision making among education sector stakeholders tended to be strongest in connection to concrete deliverables (ESPIG grant applications, sector plan development) and financial incentives (ESPDG, ESPIG fixed tranche). CLEs found very limited evidence of country governments and DPs collecting data on, and reporting against, sector plans and related results frameworks.
- GPE does not yet have a comprehensive approach to strengthening dialogue and monitoring (mutual accountability) for sector progress. It has had limited influence on country governments, development partners, grant agents and coordinating agencies systematically rallying behind sector dialogue and effective (sector plan) monitoring.

### 4.1 Overview

82. [Table 4.1](#) provides a high-level overview of CLE findings on progress made in strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring during the review periods and on the degree of (likely) related GPE contributions. Please note that CLEs assessed relative progress made during the review period within each reviewed country. Therefore, the ratings shown here do not constitute an assessment that would be comparable across countries.

<sup>107</sup> The notion of 'mutual accountability' for education sector results is based on the understanding that while the main responsibility for improved education outcomes lies with the government, development partners (and private sector partners) are accountable for the provision of financial and technical support, and CSOs and other non-government stakeholders primarily for providing a constructive challenging function and contributing to the realization of the sector plan. These stakeholders need to hold each other to account – through ongoing sector dialogue and systematic sector monitoring - for adequately fulfilling their respective roles. For more information see: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/key-takeaways-effective-joint-sector-reviews-mutual-accountability-platforms>.

<sup>108</sup> Addressing Global Evaluation Questions GEQ 1.2 and 1.3 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim as outlined in the country-level ToC was: "GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contribute to mutual accountability for education sector progress". (Contribution claim B).

*Table 4.1 Overall CLE findings on sector dialogue and monitoring<sup>109</sup>*

COUNTRY (CLE REVIEW PERIOD)	DEGREE OF POSITIVE CHANGES IN SECTOR DIALOGUE <sup>110</sup>	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION TO SECTOR DIALOGUE CHANGES	DEGREE OF POSITIVE CHANGES IN SECTOR MONITORING	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION TO SECTOR MONITORING CHANGES
<b>Prospective CLE</b>				
<b>DRC</b> (2017-19)	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2017-19)	Moderate	Limited	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Kenya</b> (2017-19)	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Malawi</b> (2017-19)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Mali</b> (2017-19)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Nigeria</b> (2017-19)	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
<b>Nepal</b> (2017-19)	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2017-19)	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Summative CLEs</b>				
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2010-20)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Limited
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2012-17)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-19)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2012-17)	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Guyana</b> (2014-18)	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
<b>Kyrgyz Rep.</b> (2010-20)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Limited
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-17)	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong
<b>Mauritania</b> (2012-18)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-19)	Moderate	Limited	Strong	Moderate

<sup>109</sup> See Appendix V for an expanded version of this overview table.

<sup>110</sup> This table needs to be read with caution in terms of cross-country comparisons, given that during the respective review periods some countries started from higher levels than others. As such, 'moderate' ratings were applied both to countries where strong existing mechanisms were stable but where existing areas for improvement remained unaddressed throughout the review period (such as in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mozambique and Rwanda), as well as to countries that started from weaker levels and made several changes during the review period, but where these changes did not yet suffice to make a significant difference to the effectiveness, efficiency or inclusiveness of sector dialogue (e.g., in Zambia).



COUNTRY (CLE REVIEW PERIOD)	DEGREE OF POSITIVE CHANGES IN SECTOR DIALOGUE <sup>110</sup>	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION TO SECTOR DIALOGUE CHANGES	DEGREE OF POSITIVE CHANGES IN SECTOR MONITORING	LIKELY DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION TO SECTOR MONITORING CHANGES
Pakistan (2014-18) <sup>111</sup>	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong
Rwanda (2013-18)	Moderate	Limited	Strong	Moderate
Senegal (2012-18)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Sierra Leone (2014-18)	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong
South Sudan (2012-18)	Limited	Moderate <sup>112</sup>	Moderate	Strong
Tajikistan (2012-19)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong
The Gambia (2014-18)	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Togo (2014-19)	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
Uganda (2011-19)	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Moderate
Zambia (2011-19)	Limited	Strong	Moderate	Moderate

## 4.2 Characteristics of sector dialogue

**Finding 11:** Most existing mechanisms for sector dialogue are participatory and inclusive and function well as forums for information exchange. LEGs or their equivalents tend to play a comparatively stronger role during sector plan development, but a more limited role in systematic sector plan implementation and monitoring.

83. All but one of the countries reviewed have one or more formalized mechanisms for sector dialogue in place, with one of these mechanisms assigned to function as Local Education Group in the context of GPE processes.<sup>113</sup>

84. In 25 of the 28 countries, CLEs observed modest or strong improvements in sector dialogue mechanisms, including the following:

- **Increased participation of non-government actors**, e.g., in Cote d'Ivoire, the Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Tajikistan, Zimbabwe
- **More government participation in and leadership of dialogue bodies**, e.g., in Bangladesh and the Kyrgyz Republic

<sup>111</sup> Overall CLE findings for Sindh and Balochistan provinces were the same.

<sup>112</sup> In-country actors appreciated the Secretariat's continued efforts to support and strengthen sector coordination in the challenging context.

<sup>113</sup> In South Sudan, however, the CLE noted that it was unclear which, if any, of the existing mechanisms constituted the LEG. Among the countries reviewed during 2018, Guyana was the only one that did not have any formal dialogue mechanisms.

- **Improved management of existing dialogue bodies** or forums, for example by merging previously overlapping groups (e.g., in the Kyrgyz Republic, Uganda), managing LEG meetings more efficiently (e.g., in Togo and Rwanda), holding LEG meetings more regularly and in a more structured fashion (e.g., in Cote d'Ivoire), reducing the size of the LEG while maintaining its inclusivity (e.g., in Guinea), and through strengthening MoE capacity for stakeholder coordination (e.g., in South Sudan and Zambia).
- **Strengthened sector dialogue mechanisms at the provincial level**, e.g., in Kenya and the DRC.

85. In most countries, observed improvements were modest and did not substantially change the nature or function of sector dialogue mechanisms.

- LEG engagement in and influence on sector-wide decision making were most evident during sector plan development and in compiling the GPE ESPIG application, two processes that tend to occur around the same time.
- Once the plan was finalized and/or the ESPIG application completed, LEGs and equivalents in almost two thirds of the reviewed countries<sup>114</sup> worked relatively well as forums for information exchange but had limited or no observable influence on rallying different actors behind supporting ongoing sector plan implementation<sup>115</sup> and monitoring. This likely contributed to the often-fragmented sector plan implementation (see section 3.5). See [Box 4.1](#) for a contrasting positive example.

#### **Box 4.1: Sector dialogue in Tajikistan is making a difference**

Consulted LEG members commented that MoE priorities have shifted as a result of development partner advocacy during LEG meetings, such as in relation to placing stronger emphasis on early childhood education (ECE). Also, dialogue within the LEG is widely credited to have helped strengthen DP coordination, reducing duplication and strengthening synergies between donor-funded interventions. This is evidenced, for example, in the GPE-funded project's focus on ECE, which built on sub-sector studies led by the World Bank and ECE models piloted by UNICEF and the Aga Khan Foundation.

86. In several countries, there is more than one official or unofficial education sector dialogue body, in addition to donor-only groups. Reasons for having several dialogue bodies are not always evident but may involve pragmatic considerations, such as the desire to have specialized groups that focus on specific sub-sectoral issues in more depth<sup>116</sup> (e.g., in Bangladesh) as well as political and other contextual reasons. In South Sudan, for instance, simultaneous development and humanitarian interventions each come with their own coordination needs and related structures.

87. Having several sector dialogue bodies is not necessarily better or worse than having only one. On the positive side, having several bodies allows tailoring each group to specific needs and increases the efficiency of decision making. On the negative side, having several dialogue forums sometimes runs the risk of duplicating efforts and excluding certain actors (usually civil society) from key decision-making processes.

<sup>114</sup> 17 out of 28 countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, DRC, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Togo, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>115</sup> E.g., by explicitly framing their respective projects/initiatives and reporting on related achievements in terms of the sector plan's objectives, indicators and targets or by actively seeking to reduce overlap/duplication between different donor-supported initiatives and making use of synergies.

<sup>116</sup> This is different from thematic working groups within or closely linked to LEGs, which exist in some countries and whose task it is to provide topic-specific inputs to the broader LEG.

This likely contributes to the often-expressed perception that LEGs or equivalents merely serve as forums for information exchange but lack the ability to truly influence decision making. See [Box 4.2](#) for examples of both positive and negative effects of having several dialogue bodies.

88. Despite positive trends in making LEGs more inclusive and participatory, many CLEs also noted that certain groups are still either excluded or not meaningfully engaged in dialogue bodies. These include civil society organizations and teachers associations (e.g., in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Kyrgyz Republic, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Zimbabwe) and other groups such as non-DAC donors (e.g., in Guinea, Mauritania, South Sudan) and private sector representatives (e.g., in Kenya). The exclusion of these groups runs the risk of governments failing to address the needs of key stakeholder groups and missing out on the support and capacity that these groups might contribute.

89. About half of CLEs noted the absence of sector dialogue at the sub-national level (or not including actors from the sub-national level in central mechanisms), despite the fact that these actors were expected to play key roles in sector plan implementation, e.g., in Cambodia, Ethiopia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, South

#### **Box 4.2: Examples of positive and negative effects of having several parallel sector dialogue mechanisms**

In the [Kyrgyz Republic](#), the Development Partners Coordination Council Education Working Group is the primary forum for MOES - donor partner interaction, while the education sector Public Advisory Council (PAC) is a separate forum for regular MoE - NGO/CSO interaction. While the PAC is positive in terms of formalizing government interactions with civil society, its creation also raises concerns over limited transparency and information-sharing across the whole education sector, inefficiencies, and exclusion of civil society from decisions discussed between government and DPs.

In [Nepal](#), the Local Education Development Partners Group, composed of joint-financing partners (including GPE), non-joint financing partners<sup>117</sup> and civil society, meets monthly, and plays an instrumental role in supporting education sector planning, implementation and monitoring. The more broadly-based LEG participates in Budget Review Meetings and Joint Sector Meeting and gathers for ad-hoc meetings as needs arise. Consulted stakeholders mostly noted benefits of this model, although some raised concerns over the potential of it limiting the influence of CSO and other non-donor stakeholders.

In [Uganda](#), DPs no longer consider the broader Education Sector Consultative Committee as an effective forum to advance sector dialogue on key issues of concern. As a result, at the urging of DPs, the government instituted “bilateral meetings” with donors in 2018 – not including civil society – to increase the frequency and quality of sector dialogue between these actors. While effective for government and DPs, this arrangement further limits the extent to which civil society and other stakeholders feel (and are) included in discussions that influence decision making and priority setting.<sup>118</sup>

In [Senegal](#), the large size of the current LEG makes it challenging to foster meaningful dialogue, facilitate coordination or timely decision-making. As a result, several development partners no longer attend, and actual decision-making and strategic dialogue take place within the Comité de directeurs which includes only a modest number of government and donor representatives.

In [South Sudan](#), sector dialogue happens through a multiplicity of forums, with partly overlapping composition and mandates. The relative activity and prominence of these forums has fluctuated over time, without, however, a trend towards consolidation. As a result, it is unclear which body constitutes (for GPE and sector-purposes) the LEG. Similarly, civil society coordination faces duplication, as two NGO/CSO coalitions with largely identical membership exist.

<sup>117</sup> DPs that support implementation of the SSDP through off-budget support, including USAID, WFP and UNESCO.

<sup>118</sup> Similarly, in Kenya, policy decisions appear to be primarily informed by a small sub-set of LEG members, the so-called troika group constituted by the largest sector donors.

Sudan, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. This likely contributed to weaknesses in sector plan implementation (see [Chapter 6](#)).

90. Likely reasons contributing to the observed strengths and weaknesses of sector dialogue mechanisms and processes are explored in [Section 4.5](#).

## 4.3 Characteristics of sector monitoring

**Finding 12:** During the CLE review periods, all countries conducted some form of sector monitoring, and some countries put in place related improvements. However, at least half of the reviewed countries generated information that was not used systematically to monitor sector plan implementation or inform other decision-making.

91. In relation to sector (plan) monitoring, CLEs reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of (i) results frameworks and related tools (including annual implementation plans) developed for monitoring and reporting on sector plan implementation; (ii) joint sector reviews (JSR) or equivalents and their associated annual implementation reports; and (iii) countries' EMIS, and the extent to which evidence generated through these mechanisms was to inform sector plan implementation. These three dimensions are discussed below.

### Frameworks for monitoring and reporting on sector plan implementation

92. All but eight countries<sup>119</sup> developed operational implementation plans to break down their multi-year sector plans into more manageable action plans, usually covering between one and three years. Bangladesh was the only country, however, that developed a solid package of sector plan implementation guidelines, including financial simulation models, capacity building strategies and a monitoring framework. In all other countries, operational plans were either not implemented and updated (e.g., Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan and Togo), had significant flaws, such as misalignment between the action plan and the sector plan (e.g., Cambodia), they addressed only the basic education sub-sector (e.g., in Mauritania), or lacked information on roles and responsibilities for ESP implementation and monitoring (e.g., Cote d'Ivoire, Balochistan, Liberia, Sindh and Sierra Leone).

93. The Kyrgyz Republic and Nigeria were the only countries that lacked an education sector monitoring framework linked to the sector plan.<sup>120</sup> All other countries had a monitoring framework, but their quality, usability and actual use for tracking progress of sector plan implementation varied.

- Several countries developed overly complex results frameworks that, while reflecting the strategic plan's objectives, entailed too many indicators to be useful in practical application (e.g., the DRC, Togo, and Uganda). In contrast, the Tajikistan CLE noted that the new 2018-2020 sector plan is accompanied by an explicit monitoring and evaluation plan that clearly outlines expected results and articulates measurable performance indicators and targets.
- Results frameworks often did not strike a balance between identifying both lower-level process and output level indicators as well higher-level outcome and impact level ones. In Bangladesh, the DRC, Mauritania, Rwanda, Senegal, and Togo, for example, the results frameworks and subsequent

<sup>119</sup> The DRC, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Guinea, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Tajikistan and Zambia.

<sup>120</sup> Or, in case of Nigeria, solid monitoring frameworks at the provincial level.

data collection focused on relatively high-level sector indicators only while neglecting the output level. Consequently, collected data did not permit linking bigger-picture trends to specific activities and short-term achievements, and thereby prevented assessing the effectiveness of sector plan implementation. In other countries (e.g., Uganda), data collection was overly focused on short-term output level indicators without linking related insights to bigger-picture trends, again posing challenges to assessing the overall effectiveness of plan implementation.

- Results frameworks were not used consistently by MoE and other sector actors to guide data collection and reporting. This was both a factor in and a symptom of annual or multi-year implementation plans not assigning clear responsibilities and/or not holding actors to account in applying and reporting against sector plan indicators and targets. This sometimes led to either no or inconsistent reporting with indicators and targets used varying by year (e.g., Sierra Leone).

94. Reviewed countries varied in the extent to which they formally reported on sector plan implementation outside of, or in addition to, JSRs. Some countries<sup>121</sup> introduced annual or quarterly sectoral performance reports, but in several cases (e.g., Guinea, Mozambique, Togo and Tajikistan), these reported on what was *done* but did not compare this to what had been *planned* or explain any variances. As noted earlier, sector plans and their accompanying action plans and results frameworks were often not used consistently to guide actors' implementation work. For good practice examples, see [Box 4.3](#).

#### Box 4.3: Sector plan monitoring – good practice

In [Kenya](#), monitoring instruments put forward in the KNESSP (2018-2022) include quarterly reports on budget and activities/program implementation; county level reports and bi-annual reviews; bi-annual joint sector reviews (one with a small group focusing on budget and formative evaluation and one comprehensive review with a large audience to develop the annual report), as well as annual financial external audits.

In [Nepal](#), the MoE produces Annual Strategic Implementation Plans and Annual Work Plan and Budgets as part of the Joint Sector Review process. These reports provide detail on progress towards annual targets and activities based on the sector plan's results framework.

95. About a third of reviewed countries and provinces (10/29)<sup>122</sup> conducted mid-term evaluations or equivalents of their sector plans, and another two countries had, in the past, carried out final reviews of their plans.<sup>123</sup> Both types of evaluations were used to inform the development of the next sector plan, primarily in identifying progress made and remaining gaps in key education sector indicators. They included little, if any, reflection on the process of plan implementation or related lessons, and the 'mid-term' reviews did not play a significant role in improving implementation of the current sector plan.

96. Overall, CLEs found very limited evidence of countries collecting data and regularly reporting against their sector plans and results frameworks.<sup>124</sup> One important factor contributing to this practice was that the majority of interventions constituting 'sector plan implementation' were individual donor-funded

<sup>121</sup> E.g., Cambodia, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Tajikistan and Togo.

<sup>122</sup> Burkina Faso, Cambodia, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritania, Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zambia.

<sup>123</sup> Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal. Both mid-term and final ESP evaluations reviewed by CLEs usually related to sector plans in place before the core review period.

<sup>124</sup> One positive 'outlier' in this regard is Cote d'Ivoire, which was subject to a summative CLE in 2018. Monitoring the country's 2016-2025 sector plan has been systematic and thorough, based on a comprehensive results framework with indicators, milestones, and identified sources of data for most indicators, and established baseline data.

projects that were not monitored and reported on through the lens of plan implementation. The absence of comprehensive ‘on plan’ reporting makes it difficult to link sector plans’ objectives to activities undertaken, budgets released, outputs delivered, and outcome indicator targets achieved.

### Joint sector reviews

97. Most countries reviewed<sup>125</sup> conducted regular joint sector reviews or equivalents, with South Sudan and Zimbabwe introducing JSRs for the first time during the CLE review period. In some countries, CLEs noted improvements in the quality of some JSR dimensions, e.g., becoming more comprehensive (in Cambodia and Zambia), more participatory (in Mali and Rwanda), and more evidence based (in Mali and Togo). See [Box 4.4](#). However, GPE results framework ratings of JSR quality across the reviewed countries show a mixed picture, with some dimensions improving in certain countries, but other dimensions stagnating or declining without clear overall trends for most countries (see Appendix VII).

#### **Box 4.4: Improving joint sector reviews in Togo**

In 2017, an international consultant was hired with financial support from UNICEF to support the MoE in designing a new JSR meeting format, producing timely reports for JSR meeting discussions, and coordinating the JSR process.

98. JSRs are now held annually and timed to inform the education planning and budgeting cycles. Annual PSE implementation reports are disseminated before JSR meetings. Templates for JSR data collection and report preparation have been revised and now require additional information on progress and bottlenecks associated with key reforms by sub-sector. JSR meetings now include plenary and small group discussions around key education themes, which has helped deepen discussions and make them more participatory. The number of annual JSR recommendations has been narrowed, with associated timelines, tasks and responsibilities identified after the meeting. Consulted stakeholders across countries tend to regard JSRs as useful forums for dialogue and, to varying degrees, for holding governments to account by requiring them to explicitly state and explain education-sector achievements and challenges. In most countries, however, JSRs are not specifically linked to progress made in sector plan implementation but apply, more generically, to the state of the overall education system.

99. JSRs do not consistently fulfill their potential meta-evaluation function of reviewing the quality of the evidence base and, through iterative processes, taking measures to improve monitoring practices and reporting year by year. As a result, JSRs’ ability to accurately assess progress, including in sector plan implementation, is often hampered by limitations in available data due to weaknesses in existing EMIS. Other frequently hindering factors include a lack of clarity over which, if any, framework the JSR will use to measure progress,<sup>126</sup> related roles and responsibilities (who will be held to account for what?), and the above-noted characteristics of existing sector plan monitoring frameworks and annual reporting.<sup>127</sup>

100. JSRs in most reviewed countries either did not result in actionable recommendations on how to improve sector plan implementation, or, where such recommendations were made, there was limited

<sup>125</sup> All except the Kyrgyz Republic, Nigeria and Kenya. Ethiopia has conducted only one JSR (2019) within the last three years.

<sup>126</sup> As noted in the 2018 GPE guidance on Joint Sector Reviews, relevant policy frameworks could be the respective sector plan’s results framework, or, alternatively, either multiyear or annual operational plans. See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-11-29-gpe-jsr-guidelines-final-web-v2.pdf>

<sup>127</sup> The Uganda CLEs, for example, noted that JSRs tended to focus on reviewing high-level outcome or impact-level indicators without systematically linking them to specific efforts and shorter-term progress made as part of sector plan implementation.



evidence of these recommendations having been implemented during the subsequent JSR.<sup>128</sup> Overall, CLEs found that JSRs foster information exchange and dialogue among stakeholders, but that most often they are not used to track and improve sector plan implementation. This is reflected in GPE JSR quality ratings (Appendix VI).<sup>129</sup>

### EMIS and data

101. All 29 countries and provinces have EMIS in place that track a variety of education indicators. However, CLEs observed limitations across countries in the amount or quality of data produced, as well as in countries' ability to use existing data. The main types of challenges are outlined in [Table 4.2](#), which is structured by the four dimensions of the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) rubric for EMIS.<sup>130</sup> Noted weaknesses in EMIS limited the extent to which countries were able to draw upon and/or use reliable data to track and assess the effects of sector plan implementation over time. Several CLEs noted country efforts to strengthen their existing EMIS; examples are provided in the table below.

**Table 4.2** *EMIS weaknesses/gaps and strengths/improvements*<sup>131</sup>

SABER ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS	OBSERVED WEAKNESSES/GAPS	STRENGTHS/IMPROVEMENTS DURING CLE REVIEW PERIODS
<b>Enabling Environment</b> (E.g., policies and resources for a sustainable infrastructure, human resources that can handle data collection, management and access)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of financial resources and/or of a supportive legislative framework to expand existing data collection and create a functioning EMIS, e.g., in the DRC, Ethiopia, Kyrgyz Republic, Mali, Togo, Zambia</li> <li>Lack of coordination between different parallel data collection mechanisms or actors, e.g., in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia, resulting in duplication and inefficiencies</li> <li>High institutional complexity due to federal nature of the country, e.g., in Nigeria and Nepal</li> <li>Lack of systems to disseminate and share data, e.g., in Senegal, Togo, Uganda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant government commitment to and investments in improving results-based management and public financial management and developing required capacities, e.g., in Senegal</li> </ul>

<sup>128</sup> This was not the case in all countries, however, for example, in Nepal, JSRs were found to play a strong positive role in relation to sector (plan) monitoring and as an instrument for change.

<sup>129</sup> Especially related to the criteria of JSRs being used as 'a monitoring tool' and as an 'instrument for change anchored in an effective policy cycle'.

<sup>130</sup> Available at:

[http://wbfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting\\_doc/Background/EMIS/SABER\\_EMIS\\_Rubric.pdf](http://wbfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/Background/EMIS/SABER_EMIS_Rubric.pdf)

<sup>131</sup> CLEs did not formally assess countries' EMIS in terms of the SABER rubric's assessment levels from 'latent' to 'advanced' but used the rubric's four dimensions to capture the main strengths and weaknesses indicated by available data.

SABER ASSESSMENT DIMENSIONS	OBSERVED WEAKNESSES/GAPS	STRENGTHS/IMPROVEMENTS DURING CLE REVIEW PERIODS
<b>System Soundness</b> (Degree to which processes and structure support the components of a comprehensive system)	Limited data coverage, e.g., 12 of the 29 jurisdictions <sup>132</sup> did not have fully established Learning Assessment Systems (LAS) in place during the CLE review period. <sup>133</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanding data coverage to more schools across subsectors, e.g., in Bangladesh</li> <li>Efforts to better harmonize multiple existing data collection and data storage systems and the school data management system, e.g., in Rwanda</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Data</b> (Degree to which EMIS accurately collects, securely saves, and produces high-quality, timely information)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limitations in data accuracy and reliability e.g., in Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Uganda</li> <li>Lack of timeliness of data collection such as in the DRC, Ethiopia, Togo, Kyrgyz Republic, Zambia</li> <li>Lack of data transparency, e.g., in Cambodia, data on children with disabilities is not publicly available</li> <li>Data on vulnerable groups of learners not, or only insufficiently collected (e.g., data on learners with special needs in Senegal); certain sub-sectors only partially covered (e.g., TVET in Ethiopia)</li> <li>Limited geographic coverage of data, e.g., in Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, South Sudan, Zimbabwe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Nepal, the EMIS was characterized by good disaggregation of data by sex, population sub-groups, geography and disability, issues on which many countries do not systematically collect data</li> <li>MoE staff at regional and national levels trained in data entry and database management, e.g., in Togo</li> <li>Introducing a web-based EMIS to improve the timeliness and transparency of data collection, e.g., in Cambodia and Nepal</li> </ul>
<b>Data Use for Decision-making</b> (System implementation and utilization of EMIS information in decision making)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of technical capabilities among MoE staff at central or local levels to collect and analyze data, e.g., in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe</li> <li>No evidence that EMIS data is analyzed and used to inform MoE or other government decision making, e.g., in the DRC, Kyrgyz Republic, Senegal, Uganda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Cambodia, EMIS data is utilized by Congress meetings and reports</li> <li>In Tajikistan, the MoE uses EMIS data to calculate the allocation of financial resources to district authorities and schools, and to plan teacher allocation and training.</li> </ul>

102. In only a few reviewed countries (Cambodia and Senegal), data produced by EMIS are cited in government meetings and reports to underpin findings or decisions. In at least half of the reviewed countries, however, data are often not analyzed or interpreted (e.g., by discussing trends over time and likely causes explaining improvements or persistent weaknesses), which is limiting the potential use of data for informing decision making. Lack of internal technical capabilities and organizational traditions that, until now, have not required this kind of analysis are among the factors likely underlying these shortcomings (see discussion on influencing factors in [Section 4.5](#)). Also, given the above-noted absence of output-level information that would allow tracking shorter-term achievements, most reviewed countries face challenges

<sup>132</sup> The DRC, Guyana, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tajikistan, and Togo.

<sup>133</sup> See Chapter 7 for details.

with systematically tracking why higher-level indicators related to learning outcomes are, or are not, changing over time.

## 4.4 GPE contributions to sector dialogue and monitoring

**Finding 13:** Across reviewed countries, GPE made contributions to strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring, especially through ESPIG and ESPDG funding, as well as through CA and Secretariat advocacy. However, these contributions did not have lasting effects beyond sector plan development and ESPIG application phases. The variable tranche has potential to encourage more systematic monitoring of sector plan implementation, but only for a few indicators.

103. CLEs observed notable GPE contributions to establishing or strengthening Local Education Groups (especially in the context of sector plan development and ESPIG application periods) and mechanisms or tools for sector monitoring (especially JSRs and, where applicable, in the context of the variable tranche). This is reflected in [Table 4.3](#), which summarizes findings on the relative effectiveness of different financial and non-financial types of GPE support. While GPE helped strengthen specific elements of sector dialogue and/or monitoring, it had only limited effects on ensuring that these mechanisms contributed to sector progress beyond sector plan development and endorsement.

**Table 4.3** Perceived influence of different types of GPE support on sector dialogue and monitoring<sup>134</sup>

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE
(Prospect of) ESPIG funding: requirements 1 and 3 <sup>135</sup>	Cambodia, Bangladesh, Mauritania, Tajikistan, Uganda	South Sudan, Rwanda	All others
Variable tranche	Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe	none	DRC, Malawi
ESPIG funding	Guinea, Mauritania, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo	Cambodia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mali	All others
ESPDG funding	Guinea, Nepal, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda	Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda	DRC, Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tajikistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe

<sup>134</sup> This table reflects the 21 CLEs conducted in 2019 only, as the seven summative CLEs completed in 2018 did not systematically assess the relative influence of different types of GPE support or incentives.

<sup>135</sup> Requirement 1: an independently appraised and endorsed quality ESP/TEP – which implies the existence and functioning of a LEG with adequate stakeholder representation, and Requirement 3: availability of critical data and evidence.

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE
CSEF funding	Nepal, Senegal, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe	Cambodia, Malawi, Mali, South Sudan	Bangladesh, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Uganda
Secretariat advocacy/facilitation <sup>136</sup>	Nepal, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda <sup>137</sup>	Cambodia, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Zimbabwe	Bangladesh, DRC, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Nigeria (federal level), Zambia
Coordinating agency advocacy/facilitation	Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Mali, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uganda, Zambia	Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo, Zimbabwe	DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan

104. Selected examples of how different types of GPE support helped strengthen sector dialogue and/or monitoring are outlined below:

- **Prospect of ESPIG (fixed tranche) funding** –e.g., in Mauritania, in-country stakeholders widely credited GPE ESPIG funding criteria with having provided an incentive for the establishment of a local education group and the regular conduct of joint sector reviews. See also [Box 4.5](#). In addition, ESPIG funding criteria #3 that requires the availability of critical data and evidence very likely contributed to countries conducting ESAs in preparation for or as part of sector plan development processes (see also ESPDG funding below).
- **ESPIG funding** was used in several countries to help strengthen various aspects of sector monitoring including JSRs (e.g., in Guinea, South Sudan, Togo and Zimbabwe), and improvements to EMIS (e.g., in Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Tajikistan, Uganda and South Sudan).

#### Box 4.5: The ESPIG as a catalyst for revitalization of sector dialogue in Uganda

Grounded in its history of an education SWAp and sector budget support, Uganda has a long tradition of regular and effective sector dialogue between the MoE and development partners. Since the end of the SWAp in 2012, however, dialogue had weakened.

The 2014-2020 ESPIG, which, different from other international financing at the time, was provided as on-budget support, proved to work as a catalyst for revitalizing sector dialogue by providing the MoE and DPs with a new opportunity to jointly rally behind agreed-upon common goals and monitor related progress.

<sup>136</sup> The Mozambique CLE was the only one to comment on GPE guidelines for JSRs having had 'modest influence'. No other CLE commented on whether these guidelines were widely known among in-country actors and how they were used and by whom.

<sup>137</sup> The Uganda CLE noted significant Secretariat contributions to strengthening sector dialogue, only moderate in relation to influencing sector monitoring.

- **ESPDG funding** was typically used to fund Education Sector Analyses, which became useful reference documents for sector plan development and subsequent tracking of progress against established baselines on key (system and impact level) indicators.<sup>138</sup>
- **Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF)** : In Togo, the CSEF recipient, the Coalition nationale du Togo pour l'éducation pour tous, used the funds to prepare annual alternative (shadow) JSR reports, thereby contributing to holding government and development partners to account for progress made in achieving envisaged results. In other countries, CSEF recipients noted that the funding had helped them strengthen their organization's internal capacity but provided no examples of how this translated into their more active or effective participation in sector dialogue or monitoring.
- **Secretariat advocacy and facilitation**: Secretariat country leads played a strong role in advocating for (more) inclusive and participatory sector dialogue. Some CLs, e.g., in South Sudan and Togo, contributed to maintaining (or revitalizing) and enhancing sector dialogue by proactively coordinating conversations between key actors and taking on a mediating go-between role when

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<sup>138</sup> The 2019 desk study on GPE support to sector planning noted that since FY16, roughly 50% of ESPDG funding has been allocated to ESAs, compared to around 27% and 32% for FY13-14 and FY15, respectively. This likely reflects the introduction of a dedicated ESPDG window for ESAs in 2014.

communication between partners broke down. In Zimbabwe, Secretariat advocacy and guidance led to the introduction and continuous strengthening of Joint Sector Reviews.<sup>139</sup>

#### Box 4.6: Positive effects of the Variable Tranche

In Rwanda, the variable tranche of the 2015-2018 ESPIG was based on three requirements, two of which implied a need to improve data availability in relation to (i) education statistics disaggregated at district-level and (ii) learning assessments conducted at P2 and P5 levels by 2016. This fostered a more focused dialogue on data availability in the LEG and likely provided an (additional) incentive for the government to introduce learning assessments during the review period.

In Malawi, discussions around the VT indicators highlighted the need to improve data credibility overall, given that VT payments were linked to reliable evidence on progress.<sup>140</sup>

In Mozambique, the chosen indicators of the VT helped shift LEG discussions from procedural to technical issues and redirect the group's focus to specific outputs and outcomes and required targeted efforts to actually monitor progress against the selected indicators.

In Zimbabwe, the linking of key ESSP targets to funding constituted a significant incentive for strengthening accountability and transparency. It also provided ECOZI, the civil society organization receiving GPE CSEF funding, with an entry point for formally monitoring education sector progress, thereby strengthening civil society's role in holding the government to account.

■ **Coordinating agency advocacy and facilitation:** In Zambia, the CA (UNICEF) provided stability during a period of transition and facilitated government, DPs and CSOs coming together around sector plan development and GPE grant applications. In Tajikistan, stakeholders credited the CA (UNICEF) with having facilitated stronger MoE engagement in LEG meetings. Overall, most CLEs noted positive CA contributions to ensuring regular and organized LEG meetings, especially during sector plan development and ESPIG application, and helping countries navigate GPE funding requirements. In contrast, CA contributions to ongoing sector dialogue, monitoring and DP coordination beyond GPE-specific processes varied considerably and were in most cases modest. Factors affecting CA performance and influence are discussed in [Section 4.5](#).

■ **Variable Tranche:** While noting some unintended negative effects (see following sub-section), several CLEs found that the variable tranche constituted an effective incentive for both the government and other sector stakeholders to strengthen their efforts around monitoring progress made in

the areas covered by the chosen strategies and indicators under the VT, and ensuring the availability of reliable data to verify such progress. See [Box 4.6](#)).

## Unplanned/unintended effects of GPE support

105. Two CLEs noted unintended negative effects of GPE support on sector dialogue processes. They both relate to GPE procedural steps and conditions for accessing grants.

- In Senegal, stakeholders noted that the process of selecting a partner agency for the Multiplier initially generated tensions among development partners and with government as it was, at the start, perceived as lacking rigor and transparency. While this was resolved by the Secretariat clarifying related processes, several consulted stakeholders noted that, overall, Multiplier-related issues had consumed a disproportionate amount of discussion time in sector dialogue forums

<sup>139</sup> CLEs provide no obvious reasons why Secretariat (country lead) influence on sector dialogue and monitoring varied by country. Likely reasons include the relative strength of the CA (i.e., where the CA was strong, there was less need for the CL to play an active role in relation to mutual accountability), the types and depth of relationship that the CL had formed with in-country actors (partly depending on the time that the CL had been responsible for that country), as well as contextual factors (e.g., willingness/ability of different types of in-country actors to follow CL advice or change sector dialogue and monitoring practices).

<sup>140</sup> The CLE did not obtain information on whether, and how, this insight led stakeholders to take action to improve data credibility.



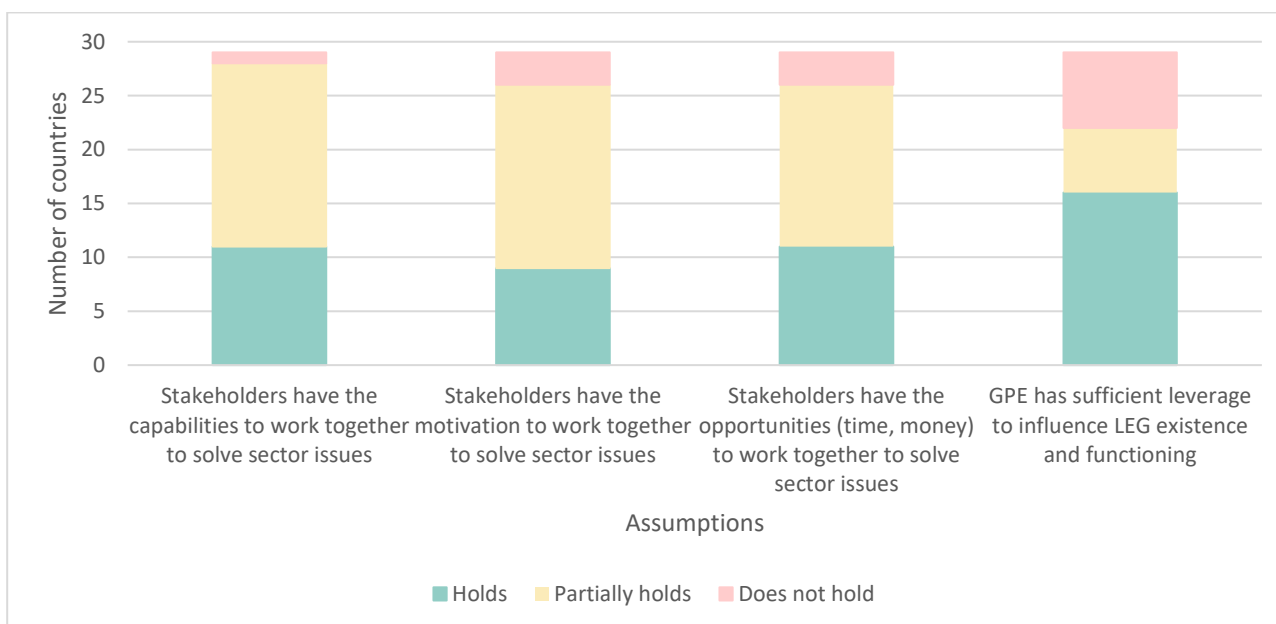
throughout 2018, creating the impression that these forums were taken over by GPE-related (rather than country-relevant) issues.

- In Cambodia, stakeholders found that negotiations over the variable tranche indicators took up too much room in sector dialogue, especially given that the VT only triggered US\$6.2 million out of US\$20.6 million ESPIG. The process of deciding upon VT indicators was prolonged because in-country actors were new to the mechanisms and several draft indicators had to be revised. Also, using two-grant agents (one for the fixed and one for variable ESPIG tranche, because no agency was willing or able to take responsibility for both elements at the same time) added another layer of complexity to sector coordination given that the government and other actors had to engage with two agencies, each with its own rules and procedures.

## 4.5 Factors influencing mutual accountability and related GPE contributions

106. CLEs explored four underlying assumptions in the GPE country-level theory of change for GPE's effective contributions to sector dialogue and monitoring (mutual accountability). As shown in [Figure 4.1](#) all four assumptions either held or partially held true in most countries. However, instances of them not holding were higher than was the case for sector plan development (especially in relation to GPE leverage), as was the share of 'partially holds' compared to 'holds' assessments.

**Figure 4.1** Extent to which ToC assumptions on mutual accountability held true (n=29 jurisdictions)



107. CLE insights allow further 'unpacking' of these broad assumptions and provide examples of how various factors either supported or posed challenges to mutual accountability and related GPE contributions.

### Capabilities:

108. **Insufficient numbers of staff with adequate technical expertise and experience** limited country capacity to collect and, especially, conduct meaningful analyses of available data to inform decision making. This was noted in about one-quarter of CLEs (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). It also influenced these countries' ability to link sector monitoring and sector dialogue and to use these to strengthen mutual accountability for results. A related challenge in some contexts was a lack of clear roles and responsibilities of MoE units and/or individuals for sector plan monitoring, e.g., in Tajikistan.

109. **Limited international language and technical skills within civil society organizations** restricted their ability to engage in and make a difference in ongoing sector dialogue. For example, in Nepal and Tajikistan, NGO representatives noted that LEG meetings and JSRs tended to be held in English for the benefit of DPs, which made NGO engagement difficult even though translation had been introduced to JSRs. Also, some NGO representatives noted that they were lacking know-how and experience to meaningfully engage in some technical aspects of sector dialogue.

Motivation:

110. **A country's history and culture for sector dialogue, partner coordination and collaboration** influenced changes during the review periods: In several countries, especially in countries that used to have or still have SWApS or pooled funds involving a large number of DPs, stakeholders appeared to have positive experiences with and, in consequence, high expectations of what constitutes 'good' sector dialogue. In Nepal, for example, this likely contributes to continuously strong dialogue, while in Uganda, the country's past experience may contribute to actors' willingness to rekindle sector dialogue back to the levels experienced under the (now dissolved) education SWAp.

111. **Sector dialogue in some LEGs largely focused on basic education**, such as in Cambodia, Ethiopia Mozambique and Senegal, resulting in actors representing other sub-sectors either discontinuing their participation (e.g., in Cambodia, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank), or demonstrating limited engagement. In Bangladesh, the country's history of sector dialogue and monitoring structured by sub-sectors likely contributes to limited (government) interest in driving changes towards the entire sector.

112. **Limited coordination between, and/or competition among, ministries sharing responsibility for the education sector**, e.g., in Guinea and Mauritania, resulted in limited initiative from each of the ministries for strengthening sector-wide dialogue and/or monitoring, especially where ministries other than that for basic education do not feel strong ownership of the overarching sector plan (see [Chapter 3](#));

113. **Development partners were primarily concerned with achieving and documenting their own (contribution to) results.** DPs did not consistently prioritize discussing overall sector plan implementation but were often focused on the sub-sector or project-specific issues that they supported. Related concerns were noted by CLEs in Cambodia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Bangladesh and Uganda CLEs found that the respective MoE's increasing tendency to engage bilaterally with development partners is further reducing opportunities for CSOs to meaningfully contribute to ongoing sector dialogue beyond sector plan development.

114. **A small number of development partners** in a country sometimes limited individual organization's interest in formalized dialogue structures (in Guyana).

### Opportunities:

115. **Crises or conflict:** In some fragile and conflict-affected countries (e.g., Ethiopia and South Sudan), the dual presence of humanitarian and development actors led to an increase in parallel and not always well aligned mechanisms for stakeholder dialogue and coordination, sometimes resulting in duplication of roles and a relative weakening of each group's relevance. There are also examples, however, of crises that – ironically – contributed to *strengthening* dialogue and coordination within the education sector and across sectors (see [Box 4.7](#)).

In Sierra Leone and Liberia, similar positive effects had been noted as a result of the regional Ebola epidemic.

116. **Turnover in MoE:** In Togo, frequent changes in education ministers created instability and shifting government priorities. In Kenya, turnover in senior ministry staff attending the LEG negatively influenced stakeholders' ability to maintain personal relationships relevant for regular and open dialogue.

117. **Relative priority accorded to education by the country government:** The extent to which education sector stakeholders are able to regularly engage with and, potentially, influence high-level political decision makers (including in the Ministry of Finance) is a function of the relative priority the government gives to education. The Uganda CLE, for example, indicated challenges for dialogue due to education having decreased in priority.

118. **Civic space:** The degree to which government actors are willing and able to seek participatory and inclusive sector dialogue, and ensure transparent sector monitoring, is likely influenced also by countries' civic space available to citizens and civil society. See Appendix VIII for CIVICUS ratings of the reviewed countries.

119. The above-noted factors also influenced the extent to which GPE support for strengthening mutual accountability was needed and/or desired by country governments, and the extent to which GPE was able to influence related mechanisms and processes.

### GPE Leverage:

120. Countries differed in the extent to which governments (MoEs) were looking to GPE (though the CA and/or country lead) for support in strengthening mutual accountability.<sup>141</sup> In, for example, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Rwanda and Uganda, existing bodies and mechanisms for mutual accountability were already relatively strong and well established, limiting the need for GPE (in particular through the CA) to play a very active role in this regard. In these contexts, limited CA influence does not

#### **Box 4.7: Bangladesh: strong coordination during the Rohingya emergency response since 2016**

The GoB and the humanitarian community have engaged in close consultations resulting in the annual Joint Response Plans to the crisis. The Cox's Bazar Inter-Sector Coordination Group is the main body for operational and strategic coordination and dialogue across sectors. In addition, monthly meetings are held specific to the education sector, including a wide range of actors from local and international NGOs, multi-lateral organizations and humanitarian agencies.

These meetings provide updates on overall progress on the education response, current challenges in implementation (e.g., natural emergencies), and forward-looking planning. In 2018, the Education Sector Coordinator proposed to make the Rohingya response a standing agenda item for the Education Local Consultative Group (ELCG) and has been regularly invited to provide updates.

<sup>141</sup> The reasons for this likely varied and combined, to varying degrees, political considerations with degrees of technical capabilities around effective DP management.

indicate a lack of CA engagement but simply the absence of a related need. In contrast, in some countries with relatively weak MoE capacity, such as in Sierra Leone and Togo, there was both a need and government interest in having the CA support stakeholder coordination, which they did.

121. Country contexts varied in the extent to which DPs were visibly committed to (strengthening) coordination and alignment amongst themselves, thereby either creating or limiting the space in which GPE (through the CA and the Secretariat) operated. In humanitarian settings, such as in South Sudan, the existence of a humanitarian education cluster as a separate coordination mechanism limited the influence of the (development-focused) LEG and thus also of the CA and Secretariat on sector-wide mutual accountability for results.

122. CA capacity varied at both the individual level (e.g., technical capabilities, knowledge of and commitment to GPE values of the individuals representing the agency, personal relationships with key government and DP stakeholders), and the institutional level (e.g., the respective agency's global and in-country reputation, relationship to government, and its own education sector priorities). See [Box 4.8](#).

123. Overall, CLE findings indicate that GPE had the strongest leverage and was able to make the most significant contributions in countries where: (i) relative stability allowed for progress to happen; (ii) bodies/processes for sector dialogue and monitoring were either non-existent or comparatively weak, providing room for improvement, e.g., in Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Pakistan and Zambia; (iii) the incentive of accessing GPE funding was particularly strong due to GPE being one of only few DPs and the ESPIG representing a significant share of anticipated international sector funding, e.g., in Togo and Zimbabwe; and (iv) there was an appetite among stakeholders to revitalize sector dialogue but where there had been a lack of concrete reasons and 'neutral' opportunities to do so, e.g., in Uganda.<sup>144</sup> In Kenya, GPE has relatively strong leverage, likely due to the fact that the country represents Anglophone Africa on the GPE Board, which has contributed to a deeper sense of involvement in GPE affairs, which the government is keen to maintain.

#### Box 4.8: CA capacity – financial incentives

One dimension of CA capacity noted across CLEs<sup>142</sup> was that the absence of financing for the CA role posed a risk to limiting the respective organizations' ability and willingness to facilitate sector dialogue and/or monitoring beyond its responsibilities directly related to GPE-specific processes.

Where CAs were also the grant agent for ESPDGs, this lack of dedicated resources was mitigated, i.e., the CA could use some grant resources to facilitate tasks around stakeholder coordination during ESAs or sector plan development. Similar incentives were absent, however, for processes around sector (plan) monitoring.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> E.g., in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Kyrgyz Republic, Mauritania, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo and Uganda.

<sup>143</sup> The Secretariat is currently working on a pilot initiative to test modalities of CA financing to cover costs connected to GPE related processes with the intention to liberate resources for the CAs role in supporting sector dialogue.

<sup>144</sup> In Togo, the 2015-2019 ESPIG constituted 16.3% of ESP implementation costs and 70% of ODA to basic education.

## 4.6 Implications for GPE

**Finding 14:** There is a need for GPE to expand and make its approach to strengthening country-level mutual accountability more systematic.

124. Stakeholders at the country level do not consistently behave as if they consider themselves responsible for putting GPE objectives around mutual accountability for sector progress into practice. Collaboration and joint decision making among education sector stakeholders tends to be strongest in sector plan development and ESPIG applications, and thus in connection to concrete and time-bound elements and (GPE) financial incentives.<sup>145</sup> Box 4.9 summarizes some promising new Secretariat-led initiatives, however, that may strengthen country-level mutual accountability.

125. The importance of financial incentives<sup>148</sup> is further highlighted by the fact that the use of pooled funding mechanisms positively influenced development partner willingness and ability to engage in joint (sub)sector monitoring and to rally behind jointly agreed (sub-) sector objectives. In contexts where DP funding was not directly tied to such joint objectives, DPs tended to focus their monitoring and reporting activities primarily on their own agencies' priorities and needs. At present, some elements of GPE's approach to strengthening country capacity for mutual accountability are represented through different types of incentives. For sector plan development, GPE is offering both the prospect of ESPIG funding and the ESPDG. For sector dialogue and monitoring, there is no similarly significant incentive.<sup>149</sup> While it is up to countries whether they use ESPIG funds and domestic resources to invest in sector plan monitoring, this often does not happen given the many other priorities that need to be addressed.

126. Gaps exist in assigning clear responsibility for supporting overall plan implementation and monitoring to one or more GPE actors. Besides the LEG, the CA would be the most likely candidate for this role.<sup>150</sup>

### Box 4.9: New/upcoming Secretariat tools for strengthening mutual accountability

The GPE Secretariat, based on its 'Principles toward effective LEGs'<sup>146</sup> is currently piloting two tools designed to help strengthen LEGs and country-level partnerships by facilitating LEG self-reflection and discussions on how country-level partners can work together more effectively to achieve shared sector goals:

A LEG Self-Assessment Tool is designed to stimulate a collective reflection on LEG priorities and actions that need to be taken to improve LEG effectiveness.<sup>147</sup>

A Performance Feedback Instrument designed to facilitate assessment of individual (i.e., by stakeholder/institution) LEG members' performance and adherence to their accountabilities for course correction, through dialogue.

<sup>145</sup> ESPDG and ESPIG.

<sup>146</sup> Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/principles-toward-effective-local-education-groups>.

<sup>147</sup> See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/leg-self-assessment-and-performance-feedback-tools>

<sup>148</sup> Including but also beyond those offered by GPE.

<sup>149</sup> One may argue, however, that the variable tranche constitutes an incentive for improved sector dialogue and monitoring. To date, however, the VT is not (yet) in place in all countries, it varies in the extent to which it releases significant amounts of money and runs the risk of focusing dialogue and monitoring on only selected strategies and/or indicators. See section 3.3.

<sup>150</sup> The updated ToR for Coordinating Agencies (May 2019) assign responsibility to CAs for facilitating "inclusive, evidence-based sector monitoring mechanisms", including through JSRs, as well as for ensuring that the LEG is updated regularly on aspects of GPE

However, when consulted stakeholders requested “stronger GPE visibility” during plan implementation, this largely referred to more Secretariat rather than more CA involvement. This indicates that the CA’s potential role beyond GPE grant-specific processes is not widely understood. As for the LEG, only in Uganda did LEG members explicitly describe themselves as ‘being’ GPE. In all other countries, in-country stakeholders tended to equate GPE with the Secretariat.<sup>151</sup>

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grant implementation that “impact achievement of the overarching ESP policies and strategies that the ESPIG supports.” See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-terms-of-reference-coordinating-agencies.pdf>

<sup>151</sup> The Secretariat is currently working on an engagement strategy that looks into strengthening the roles of all key actors in the GPE model to address this issue.



## 5 GPE contributions to sector financing<sup>152</sup>

### Key messages:

- Domestic education financing increased in absolute terms in 21 of 29 reviewed countries and provinces, while education as share of overall DCP financing increased or remained stable high in only 12 countries.
- International funding to education increased in 14 of the 27 countries for which data were available and declined in four. In nine countries, education ODA was stable during the review period. The share of education in international financing declined or fluctuated in about two thirds of the sampled countries and suggests negative global trends in international education financing. There were no significant changes in the quality of international sector financing in terms of donor harmonization and alignment.
- ESPIG funding requirements for countries to meet or demonstrate progress towards the benchmark of allocating 20% of government expenditures to education, and for countries that have not yet achieved universal primary education to allocate 45% of their education budgets to primary education, have not directly influenced government funding decisions. However, in several countries these benchmark catalyzed advocacy and discussions among education sector stakeholders around what constituted appropriate (sub-)sector funding.<sup>153</sup>
- The GPE Multiplier may have had some effects on the timing, foci, and/or amounts of international resource mobilization. Given that only three countries had received a Multiplier at the time of the CLE, evidence is limited.
- The majority of ESPIGs in reviewed countries were channeled through project-type modalities. ESPIGs contributed to existing pooled mechanisms in only six out of 29 countries and provinces.

<sup>152</sup> Addressing Global Evaluation Question 1.3 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim as outlined in the country-level ToC for this assignment was: “GPE advocacy and funding requirements contribute to more and better financing for education in the country.” (Contribution claim C)

<sup>153</sup> This more indirect nature of GPE’s potential influence on sector financing was also noted in a 2019 GPE paper for the Grants and Performance Committee reflecting on country experiences with the ESPIG domestic financing requirement. See: GPE (2019): ESPIG Domestic Financing Requirement: A review of country experience. GPC/2019/1; Grants and Performance Committee Meeting, London, January 29, 2019.

## 5.1 Overview

127. [Table 5.1](#) summarizes CLE findings on changes in education sector financing and the likelihood of related GPE contributions.<sup>154</sup>

**Table 5.1** Overall findings on sector financing<sup>155</sup>

COUNTRY (Review period)	PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE/BETTER EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING					LIKELIHOOD OF GPE CONTRIBUTIONS <sup>156</sup> TO		
	RELATIVE CHANGE IN TOTAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURE <sup>157</sup>	EDUCATION SHARE OF GOV. EXPENDITURE	MET OR APPROACHED 20%? <sup>158</sup>	TOTAL INTL. EDUCATION FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. FINANCING <sup>159</sup>	SHARE OF GOV. FINANCING	AMOUNT OF INTL. FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. SECTOR FINANCING
<b>Prospective CLE</b>								
<b>DRC</b> (2016-2019)	Increase by 243% (2015-19)	Increase from 18.2% to 20.8% (2015-19)	Yes	Fluctuating (2015-19)	Decline	Modest	Low	Low
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2014-2019)	Increase by 23.5% (2014/15 - 2018/19)	Fluctuating from 24.2% to 25.2% (2014/15-18/19)	Yes	Increase (2015-19)	Stable, high (pooled fund)	Low	Strong	Strong

<sup>154</sup> While similar tables in previous chapters aim to provide an overall assessment of the degree of GPE contributions, the columns on GPE contributions deliberately focus on the ‘likelihood’ of such contributions, reflecting that the nature of the change processes in question makes it difficult to identify whether and to what extent GPE support has or has not influenced observed changes in sector financing.

<sup>155</sup> In a few cases, the color coding in this table differs from the color coding applied in the respective CLE report to ensure consistency of ratings across countries.

<sup>156</sup> During the respective review periods – see ‘country/core review period’ column on the left-hand side of the table.

<sup>157</sup> Within countries, the periods for which information on domestic and international sector financing sometimes varied from the core review period. Years indicated in individual cells indicate that respective timeframe.

<sup>158</sup> During the respective CLE review period as per UIS data where available. To visually separate ‘met’ from ‘approached’ ratings, the former is coded green in this column while the latter is shown in amber. However, both ratings indicate that the respective country is meeting GPE benchmarks.

<sup>159</sup> Issues taken into consideration in relation to ‘quality of international financing’ were the predictability of financing, and its alignment with government systems, with a focus on the extent to which DPs used pooled funding and sector or budget support mechanisms.

COUNTRY (Review period)	PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE/BETTER EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING					LIKELIHOOD OF GPE CONTRIBUTIONS <sup>156</sup> TO		
	RELATIVE CHANGE IN TOTAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURE <sup>157</sup>	EDUCATION SHARE OF GOV. EXPENDITURE	MET OR APPROACHED 20%? <sup>158</sup>	TOTAL INTL. EDUCATION FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. FINANCING <sup>159</sup>	SHARE OF GOV. FINANCING	AMOUNT OF INTL. FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. SECTOR FINANCING
<b>Kenya</b> (2011-2019)	Increase by 159% (2011-17)	Decrease from 19.3% to 17.6% (2011-17) <sup>160</sup>	No <sup>161</sup>	Increase (2011-17)	Minor improvements	Modest	Modest	High
<b>Malawi</b> (2014-2019)	Decrease by 12.8% (2013-17)	Decrease from 20.42% to estimated 14.3%	No <sup>162</sup>	Increase (2013-17)	Improved	Strong	Strong	Modest
<b>Mali</b> (2012-2019)	Increase by 127% (2012-15)	Decrease from 22.4% to 18.2% (2012-15)	No	Fluctuating but overall increase (2-12-15)	Improved	Low	Low	Low
<b>Nepal</b> (2015-2019)	Increase by 7.3% (2016-19)	Decrease from 20.4% to 13.9% (2016-18)	No	Increase (2016-18)	Stable, high (pooled fund)	Modest	Low	Modest
<b>Nigeria</b> (2013-2019)	Decrease by 44.3% (2012-18)	Decrease from 9.86% to 7.04% (2012-18)	No <sup>163</sup>	Increase (2012-18)	Minor improvements	Low	Low	Modest
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2014-2018)	Fluctuating (2014-16) <sup>164</sup>	Based on UIS estimates, likely decrease from 30% to 19.04% (2014-2018) <sup>165</sup>	Based on estimate: No	Fluctuating	Improved	Modest	Strong	Modest
<b>Summative CLE</b>								
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2015-2019)	Increase by 170% (2011/12-2018/19)	Insufficient data, estimates vary from 10.7%	Based on estimate: No	Increase overall, but shift from	Stable, high at primary level (pooled fund)	Low	Low	Low

<sup>160</sup> UIS data. However, according to Kenya's recent ESPIG application, education's share of total government expenditures decreased from 21.6% in 2014 to 20.5% in 2018

<sup>161</sup> According to UIS data, the benchmark has not been met. However, according to Kenya's recent ESPIG application, which takes into account education-related spending by all ministries, the benchmark has been met.

<sup>162</sup> As per UIS data. However, GPE Results Framework data showed a share of 22.6% for 2018, which would indicate that the country met, or was at least planning to meet, the 20% benchmark that year. UIS data for that year were, however, not yet available at the time of the CLE.

<sup>163</sup> The Nigeria CLE noted that while federal allocations are well below 20%, there is no exact data on total spending.

<sup>164</sup> Total domestic expenditures for education data are only available for 2014-16 and indicate mild fluctuations. Expenditures of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) increased by 27% in the 2014-2018 period.

<sup>165</sup> However, as per GPE indicator 10, Zimbabwe maintained its public expenditure at 20% or greater at least up to 2017 (last year for which RF data on this indicator are available).

COUNTRY (Review period)	PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE/BETTER EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING					LIKELIHOOD OF GPE CONTRIBUTIONS <sup>156</sup> TO		
	RELATIVE CHANGE IN TOTAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURE <sup>157</sup>	EDUCATION SHARE OF GOV. EXPENDITURE	MET OR APPROACHED 20%? <sup>158</sup>	TOTAL INTL. EDUCATION FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. FINANCING <sup>159</sup>	SHARE OF GOV. FINANCING	AMOUNT OF INTL. FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. SECTOR FINANCING
		to 17.2% (2011/12-2018/19)		grants to loans 2011/12-18/19)				
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2012-2017)	Increase by 86% (2010-15)	Increase from 16.2% to 18% (2010-15)	Approached	Decrease	Improved, high (pooled fund)	Low	Low	Strong
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2019)	Increase by 273% (2014-19)	Increase from 9.9% in 2014 to 14.2% in 2019	Approached	Increase	No change	Low	Modest	Low
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2012-2017)	Increase by 85% (2010/11-2015/16)	Increase from 21.7% to 23.6% (2010/11-2015/16)	Met	Increase on average but net decline (2010-16)	No change	Modest	Low	Low
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)	Increase by approx. 7.5% (2015–18)	Increase from 11.6% (2015) to 13.4% (2017)	Approached	Increase (2015-18)	No change	Low	Modest	Modest
<b>Guyana</b> (2014-2018)	Increase by 17% (2010-16)	Stable around 20% (2010-16)	Met	Increase (2014-2016)	No change	Low	Low	Low
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-2017)	Increase by 64% (2010-16)	Increase from 13% to 15% <sup>166</sup> (2010-16)	Approached	Increase (2010-16) <sup>167</sup>	No change	Modest	Low	Low
<b>Mauritania</b> (2014-2018)	Decrease by 20% (2010-16)	Decrease from 16% to 9.3% (2010-16)	No	Decrease (2010-16)	No change	Low	Modest	Low
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-2019)	Decrease by 6.7% (2012-16)	Stable around 20% (2012-16)	Yes	Decrease (2012-16)	Stable, high (pooled fund)	Low	Modest	Modest

<sup>166</sup> With temporary drop to 10.6% in 2014/15 during the Ebola crisis.

<sup>167</sup> Declined from 2010 until 2014 but rose strongly in 2015 and again in 2016.

COUNTRY (Review period)	PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE/BETTER EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING					LIKELIHOOD OF GPE CONTRIBUTIONS <sup>156</sup> TO		
	RELATIVE CHANGE IN TOTAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURE <sup>157</sup>	EDUCATION SHARE OF GOV. EXPENDITURE	MET OR APPROACHED 20%? <sup>158</sup>	TOTAL INTL. EDUCATION FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. FINANCING <sup>159</sup>	SHARE OF GOV. FINANCING	AMOUNT OF INTL. FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. SECTOR FINANCING
<b>Pakistan</b> (Sindh) (2014-2018)	Increase by 42% (2010/2011-16)	Remained stable at 20.1% (2010/2011-16)	Met	No data <sup>168</sup>	No change	Low	No data	Modest
<b>Pakistan</b> (Balochistan) (2014-2018)	Increase by 125% (2010/2011-16)	Decrease from 18.8% to 16.8% (2010/2011-16) <sup>169</sup>	No	No data	No change	Low	No data	Modest
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2012-2019)	Increase by 18% (2012-16)	Stable around 20% (2012-2016)	Yes	Fluctuation (2012-16) <sup>170</sup>	No change	Modest	Strong	Modest
<b>Rwanda</b> (2013-2018)	Increase by 26% (2011-17)	Decrease from 15.3% to 12.9% (2011-17)	No	Stable (2011-17)	Slight decline	Low	Modest	Low
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2018)	Increase by 40.7% (2012-18)	Decrease but stable above 20% (25.7% in 2013, 21.4% in 2016)	Yes	Stable (2012-18)	No change	Low	Modest	Low
<b>Sierra Leone</b> (2014-2018)	Decrease by 8% (2010-16)	Decrease from 14.9% to 12.5% (2010-16)	No	Increase <sup>171</sup> (2012-16)	No change	Low	Modest	Low
<b>South Sudan</b> (2012-2018)	Decrease by 57% (2011-17)	Decrease from 4% to 1% (2011-17)	No	Increase (2011-17)	Decline	Low	Modest	Low
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2019)	Increased by 85% (2010-17)	Increase from 15.3% to 16.4 % (2010-15)	Approached	Fluctuation (2010-17)	Improved	Low	Modest	Strong

<sup>168</sup> Increase in education ODA to Pakistan overall but no data on provincial level.

<sup>169</sup> This decrease seems surprising given that total education expenditures had increased by 125%. It derives from the fact, however, that the devolution of federal authority over social services increased provincial revenues to many provincial ministries, including, but not limited to, education. The net impact of these transfers was not directly proportionate across all ministries.

<sup>170</sup> Decline in 2013, increasing since

<sup>171</sup> Education-specific and overall ODA fell dramatically in 2014 and 2015 but recovered in 2016 (last year of OECD data), and the CLE identified a positive trend post-2016 based on projections of donor commitments.

COUNTRY (Review period)	PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE/BETTER EDUCATION SECTOR FINANCING					LIKELIHOOD OF GPE CONTRIBUTIONS <sup>156</sup> TO		
	RELATIVE CHANGE IN TOTAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURE <sup>157</sup>	EDUCATION SHARE OF GOV. EXPENDITURE	MET OR APPROACHED 20%? <sup>158</sup>	TOTAL INTL. EDUCATION FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. FINANCING <sup>159</sup>	SHARE OF GOV. FINANCING	AMOUNT OF INTL. FINANCING	QUALITY OF INTL. SECTOR FINANCING
<b>The Gambia</b> (2014-2018)	Increase by 7% (2010-16)	Fluctuating around 15% (2010-16) <sup>172</sup>	Not met	Increase (2016-16) <sup>173</sup>	Improved	Modest	Strong (indirectly)	Modest
<b>Togo</b> (2014-2019)	Increase by 69% (2009-17)	Increase from 17.5% (2009) to 19% (2017) but overall decrease from 22.7% (2010)	Approached	Fluctuation with some increase (2014-18)	No change	Modest	Strong	Low
<b>Uganda</b> (2011-2019)	Increase by 67% (2011-19)	Decrease from 16.8% to 10.3% (2011-19)	No	Stable (2011-19)	Decline	Low	Low	Modest
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2019)	Fluctuating (2011-17) <sup>174</sup>	Fluctuating: 15.3% in 2011; 20.1% in 2014, 16.5 % in 2017	No <sup>175</sup>	Decrease (2011-2017)	Decline	Low	Low	Low

<sup>172</sup> However, the government projected a 17% decrease in 2018.

<sup>173</sup> Fluctuated, particularly low in 2015, but overall highest education ODA of entire 2010-2016 period in 2016, and 2014-2016 average above 2010-2013 average.

<sup>174</sup> US\$566.6 million in 2011 to US\$1,129 million in 2015, to US\$1,007 million in 2017.

<sup>175</sup> Target met only in 2014, decreased thereafter.



## 5.2 Characteristics of domestic sector financing

**Finding 15:** Domestic education financing increased in absolute terms in 21 of 29 reviewed countries and provinces, while education as a share of overall DCP financing increased in only 11 countries. Domestic financing for education is largely influenced by political and economic contexts that are beyond the direct influence of education sector stakeholders.

128. As shown in [Table 5.2](#) below, during the review periods, absolute amounts of domestic education spending increased in 21 out of 29 reviewed jurisdictions, fluctuated or stagnated in two, and decreased in six.<sup>176</sup> In at least six countries<sup>177</sup> that experienced a rise in overall education expenditures, expenditures per child also increased (Bangladesh, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Senegal and Uganda). In several of these (e.g., Bangladesh and Nepal) expenditures per child remain far below the estimated cost of educating a child in a low-income country.<sup>178</sup>

129. The education sector's share of overall government expenditures increased in 12 out of 27 countries/provinces where data were available,<sup>179</sup> decreased in 11, and was stable or fluctuated in four. Slightly over half (14) of these 27 countries and provinces met the GPE-endorsed benchmark of governments allocating 20 percent of their total expenditures to education, while the other half (13/27) neither met nor approached the benchmark despite having made commitments in their ESPIG funding applications and/or the most recent GPE replenishment.<sup>180</sup>

130. During the review periods, more than half (15/25) of countries for which data were available<sup>181</sup> met or exceeded the GPE-recommended benchmark of allocating at least 45 percent of education budgets to primary education and three countries almost met the benchmark (Bangladesh, Cambodia and Mozambique).

<sup>176</sup> Falling in Malawi, Nigeria, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

<sup>177</sup> Trend data on education expenditures per capita are not available for all reviewed countries.

<sup>178</sup> Estimated by GPE to be US\$211 per year for primary and US\$321 per year for secondary students. Source: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/funding/education-costs-per-child>

<sup>179</sup> No reliable data were available for Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

<sup>180</sup> Note that data for Kenya are disputed: UIS data state that country does not meet the 20% benchmark, whereas domestic sources state that it does.

<sup>181</sup> No data were available in the DRC, Guyana and Nigeria. For Pakistan, data were only available at the federal level (31.05% of total education budget allocated to primary education in 2015), however, the CLE noted that both reviewed provinces (Sindh and Balochistan) allocated over 80% of education resources to basic education (i.e., including up to lower secondary education), making it likely that expenditures for primary education were above 45%.

**Table 5.2** *Share of national education budgets allocated to primary education in 24 countries with budget data*

13 COUNTRIES ALLOCATING AT LEAST 45% TO PRIMARY EDUCATION	11 COUNTRIES ALLOCATING LESS THAN 45% TO PRIMARY EDUCATION <sup>182</sup>
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (57.87% in 2015)	<b>Bangladesh</b> (42% in 2018/2019)
<b>Ethiopia</b> (45.5% in 2017/2018)	<b>Cambodia</b> (44.6% in 2015) <sup>183</sup>
<b>Kenya</b> (63.8% in 2015)	<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (37.8 % in 2015)
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (56% in 2017)	<b>Guinea</b> (41.3% in 2018)
<b>Malawi</b> (47.8% in 2018/2019)	<b>Liberia</b> (around 40% in 2017)
<b>Mauritania</b> (55.9% in 2016)	<b>Mali</b> (39.6% in 2016))
<b>Nepal</b> (54.7% of SSDP 2016-21)	<b>Mozambique</b> (44.1% in 2014)
<b>South Sudan</b> (2011-2017 average 58%)	<b>Rwanda</b> (40.1% between 2011-2017)
<b>Tajikistan</b> (58% in 2017)	<b>Senegal</b> (33.6% in 2018)
<b>The Gambia</b> (around 75% in 2015)	<b>Sierra Leone</b> (38.9% in 2016)
<b>Togo</b> (51.1% in 2017)	<b>Zimbabwe</b> <sup>184</sup>
<b>Uganda</b> (51.3% 2017/18)	
<b>Zambia</b> (67.3% in 2017)	

131. Across countries, domestic funds were dedicated almost exclusively to covering recurrent costs, primarily for (teacher) salaries, with recurrent costs constituting between 75 percent (Bangladesh) and 100 percent (South Sudan) of government expenditures. Only a few CLEs noted positive changes in this regard, e.g., in Cambodia recurrent expenditure allocations decreased from 97.8 to 78.7 percent between 2015 and 2019 but the CLE did not identify obvious reasons for this change.

132. Budget execution rates, where data on this were available, varied considerably. For example, in Rwanda, the disbursement rate for total domestic education budgets was consistently high, between 95 and 99 percent for 2012-2017, reflecting the country's robust institutional framework for financial management. Similar findings were made, for example, in Senegal. In other countries, however, CLEs noted considerable disparities between the rates of salary expenditure and that of other domestic expenditures. In Zimbabwe, for example, the 2018 execution rate for salary expenditure was 111 percent, while the release rates for non-salary expenditures, including capital investments, was 23.5 percent. Similarly, in Togo execution rates for capital expenditure for the sector plan averaged 37.5 percent from 2013-2015, while rates for recurrent expenditure exceeded 100 percent. In these and other countries, such as the DRC, bureaucratic inefficiencies mean that what little allocation there is for non-salary expenditure is either not released by the respective finance ministry or is released but not fully utilized.

133. Most decisions around domestic education sector financing appeared to be driven by factors beyond the direct influence of education sector actors, including the respective MoE, and in some cases by factors

<sup>182</sup> None of the countries listed in this column had reached universal primary education during the CLE review period, although some (e.g., Rwanda) were close to doing so.

<sup>183</sup> No data on actual allocations available for 2016-2019. Projected allocations envisaged primary education receiving 49.8% of education resources in 2018.

<sup>184</sup> Exact figures are difficult to determine as Zimbabwe does not separate primary and junior secondary expenditures. Overall funding for basic education including pre-primary education have remained constant at around 60% of allocations.

even beyond the control of the country government. [Table 5.3](#) summarizes the main likely factors in this regard.

**Table 5.3** *Factors likely influencing domestic sector financing in CLE sampled countries*

TYPE OF FACTOR	EXAMPLES
<b>Factors partially within the control of the MoE</b>	<p><b>Competing sub-sector priorities:</b> Countries allocating decreasing proportions of their overall education budgets to basic education to the benefit of other sub-sectors indicates competing priorities within the education sector. This can reflect demographic pressures on higher levels of the education system deriving from countries having provided (nominally) free access to basic education but can also be due to political pressure, such as to strengthen prestige-rich higher education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Senegal, a shift towards increased funding to higher education happened in the context of substantial growth in university enrollment during the review period, which necessitated increased spending to improve infrastructure, hire additional teachers and provide bursaries/scholarships to more students.</li> <li>• In Guinea, basic education's share of expenditures fell due to increasing investments in higher education, which were at least partly caused by a government policy on the provision of publicly funded scholarships for students studying in private universities.</li> <li>• In Uganda, the education sector budget does not include any dedicated allocations to pre-primary education, which remains completely reliant on private financing, signaling that the government assigns limited priority to the sub-sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Factors beyond the control/ direct influence of the MoE</b>	<p><b>Competing sector priorities:</b> Cases where education allocations as a share of total government resources are declining indicate competing sector priorities that the respective DCP government is trying to address. The Uganda CLE noted, for example, that the government has recently focused more on energy and infrastructure provision, particularly power supply and roads, and less on the social sectors including education. As such, difficulties in obtaining additional funding for education from the respective Ministry of Finance are in most cases driven by political considerations.<sup>185</sup></p>
<b>Factors beyond the control/ direct influence of the MoE, MoF and/or overall DCP government</b>	<p><b>Country's macroeconomic environments</b> were noted by CLEs both as a positive factor allowing for increases in education expenditures (such as in Bangladesh, the Kyrgyz Republic, Senegal and Togo), as well as a hindering factor in countries experiencing related difficulties, such as Mozambique (economic and financial crisis post 2016), Nigeria (decrease in oil revenues and rising debt servicing) and South Sudan (oil revenue collapse and hyperinflation).</p> <p><b>Contextual shocks or unrest, e.g., due to political changes, crises or natural disasters</b> likely affect decisions around the amounts and quality of domestic (as well as international) education sector financing (for example in the DRC, Mali, Nepal, and South Sudan).</p>

<sup>185</sup> A recent GPE-commissioned study notes that “Any attempt to mobilize additional resources from the national budget (via Ministry of Finance) must recognize that budgeting is mainly a political process, not a technical one.” See: Oxford Policy Management Group (2018): The Education Sector Investment Approach. Unpublished Draft for deliberation and recommendation to the GPE Board. September 2018, p.15.

## 5.3 Characteristics of international sector funding

**Finding 16:** Overall international funding to education increased in 14 of the 27 countries for which data were available and declined in four. In nine countries, education ODA was stable or fluctuated. However, education as a share of overall ODA fluctuated or declined in about two thirds of the sampled countries, suggesting negative global trends in international education financing during the CLE review periods.

134. As per UNESCO, the share of education in total official development assistance, excluding debt relief, largely declined in the 2010s, from 10 percent in 2010 to 7 percent in 2017, indicating that during that period education declined as a priority among donors. As shown in [Table 5.1](#) above, during the CLE review periods, total amounts of international education sector financing increased in over half (14/27) of the sampled countries for which data were available, fluctuated or were stable in nine, and decreased in four.<sup>188</sup>

### Box 5.1: Global trends in aid for education

UNESCO, citing the 2015 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, notes that there is an annual funding gap for basic education of at least US\$39 billion per year between 2015 and 2030 in low- and lower-middle-income countries. To make up the shortfall, aid to education would need to increase six-fold from its 2010 levels (US\$13.4 billion).<sup>186</sup> This has not happened, although most recent OECD data indicate a slight positive trend, with total aid to education, which had stagnated since 2010, increasing to US\$14.8 billion in 2017 and US\$15 billion in 2018.<sup>187</sup>

135. Education as a share of overall ODA decreased in eight,<sup>189</sup> fluctuated or remained stable in nine,<sup>190</sup> and increased in ten countries<sup>191</sup> indicating that, globally, education is not growing as a priority among donors. See [Box 5.1](#). Cambodia, Guyana, Liberia, The Gambia and Sierra Leone are the only reviewed countries in which both the amount of international education financing and education's share of total ODA increased during the CLE review period, while in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Zambia both figures decreased.

136. In most countries, the number of development partners investing in education remained largely stable, albeit with fluctuations, while their number declined in Mauritania. Non-traditional (non-DAC) donors are in most cases not included (or choose not to participate) in sector dialogue and monitoring mechanisms. This indicates fragmentation of education aid.

<sup>186</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Global Education Monitoring Report Team (2019). Meeting commitments: are countries on track to achieve SDG 4? Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369009>.

<sup>187</sup> Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS), accessed February 27, 2020.

<sup>188</sup> No data were available for the two Pakistani provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, as international financing data were available only for Pakistan overall. Countries where international sector financing decreased during the review period were Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mozambique, and Zambia.

<sup>189</sup> Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia.

<sup>190</sup> Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, South Sudan and Tajikistan.

<sup>191</sup> Cambodia, Guinea, Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Togo and Zimbabwe.

**Finding 17:** There were no significant changes in the quality of international sector financing in terms of donor harmonization and alignment. Pooled funding mechanisms were in place in only six of 29 countries/provinces, with other international financing being channeled using project modalities.

137. CLEs reported mixed findings on the types of funding modalities used in the reviewed countries to channel education ODA.

- Pooled funding mechanisms were in place in only six of 29 countries/provinces reviewed (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nepal). Of these pooled mechanisms, only two (Mozambique and Nepal) were sector-wide, while others addressed only primary education (Bangladesh), basic education<sup>192</sup> (Burkina Faso), or general education<sup>193</sup> (Ethiopia). In Cambodia, the pooled fund cuts across sub-sectors by focusing on MoE capacity development. Where pooled (sub-)sector funds existed, they were widely appreciated for strengthening donor coordination and harmonization, reducing transaction costs and limiting demands on the government to meet individual DPs' reporting requirements.
- In all other countries, international sector financing was predominantly channeled through project modalities, sometimes with two or three donors combining their resources in a larger joint project,<sup>194</sup> but without a broader pooled fund or sector wide approach. As discussed in [Chapter 6](#), this likely contributed to fragmented sector plan implementation and limited mutual accountability for sector results.

138. Slight improvements in the quality of international sector funding during the review periods were noted in six countries.<sup>195</sup> Likely reasons for these improvements include renewed donor trust in the government (Malawi and Zimbabwe), and a well-established self-critical partnership between the government and DPs (Burkina Faso). See [Box 5.2](#). In Tajikistan, the positive CLE rating reflected the fact of new donors having entered the scene during the review period.

<sup>192</sup> Pre-primary up to, including, lower secondary education. In Burkina Faso, the pooled fund has since been expanded to benefit all levels of the education sector.

<sup>193</sup> Pre-primary up to, including, secondary education but excluding higher and vocational/technical education.

<sup>194</sup> Such as in Guinea and Zimbabwe.

<sup>195</sup> Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mali, Tajikistan, The Gambia, and Zimbabwe.

139. Several other countries experienced an increase in the use of project and off-budget modalities when compared to earlier periods, i.e., a move away from pooled and/or on-budget financing. Reasons for these shifts included DP reactions to cases of financial impropriety under a previously existing SWAp (in Kenya) and political instability (in Mali and South Sudan). In other countries (the Kyrgyz Republic, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia) specific reasons for the change were not evident but may include increasing DP preferences for modalities that provide individual donors with stronger levers to influence governments and demonstrate their respective contributions to results.

#### Box 5.2: Positive changes in donor harmonization and alignment

In Malawi, ODA support to education moved from using pooled funding under an education SWAp prior to 2013 to off-budget and largely project-based support following the discovery of large-scale financial mismanagement in that year. In 2017, however, a Common Funding Mechanism (CFM) for education was established and has since been signed on by several DPs, increasing donor harmonization and reducing transaction costs. GPE support and advocacy was one of the main factors contributing to this change.

In Zimbabwe, the proportion of reported aid going to budget support, pooled funds and donor managed or co-financed projects increased from 6% in 2012 to 6% in 2017, while project funding and technical assistance fell from 90% to 30% in the same period. This indicates that despite the political and economic upheaval in the past eight years, donor investments in education have become more harmonized.

In Burkina Faso, a mid-term evaluation of the pooled funding mechanism noted ongoing improvements in terms of its (already strong) alignment with national procedures and institutions. In-country stakeholders widely agreed that the mechanism contributed to reducing transaction costs and limited demands on the government to meet individual DPs' reporting requirements.

## 5.4 GPE contributions to education sector financing

**Finding 18:** CLEs found little evidence of GPE contributions to influencing the amounts or quality (e.g., sub-sectoral funding priorities) of domestic education sector financing.

140. CLEs noted only minimal evidence of GPE support having influenced trends in domestic education sector financing. This is not surprising given, as noted above, related decisions appear to be primarily influenced by factors beyond the control of education sector stakeholders or even the broader DCP government.

141. [Table 5.4](#) summarizes CLE 2019 findings on the relative effectiveness of different types of GPE support on elements of domestic sector financing.



**Table 5.4** *Perceived influence of different types of GPE support on domestic sector financing*<sup>196</sup>

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
ESPIG funding requirements (domestic financing)	none	DRC, Mali, Malawi, Tajikistan, Uganda, Zambia	All others
ESPIG variable tranche	none	Ethiopia	Cambodia, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Zimbabwe
ESPIG triggering additional funding from government	Kyrgyz Republic	none	All others
CSEF funding	none	Zambia	All others
GPE global advocacy	none	Cambodia, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo	All others
Secretariat advocacy	none	Uganda	All others
GPE support to sector planning (existence of credible sector plan)	none	none	All 28 countries

142. Outlined below are **selected examples** illustrating why and how the noted types of GPE support were found to have influenced domestic education financing decisions.

- **ESPIG funding requirement on domestic financing:** CLEs found no evidence that government funding decisions were directly influenced by the ESPIG funding requirement<sup>197</sup> for countries to meet or demonstrate progress towards the benchmark of allocating 20 percent of government expenditures to education. However, several CLEs noted that the benchmark catalyzed discussions among education sector stakeholders and provided a valuable foundation for advocacy around appropriate sector funding (e.g., in Malawi and the DRC). The same applies to the requirement under the new funding model for countries to allocate 45 percent of education sector resources to primary education in contexts that have not yet achieved universal primary education.<sup>198</sup> See also discussion on unintended effects of GPE support below.
- **ESPIG variable tranche:** Only one CLE noted a (likely) positive effect of the VT on domestic sector financing. In Ethiopia, the program to be funded under the VT included actions related to training and appointing female primary school principals and a financial commitment from the government to provide salaries to these newly appointed leaders.

<sup>196</sup> The table reflects findings from only the 21 CLEs completed in 2019, as the seven summative CLE conducted in 2018 did not include the same assessment by type of GPE support/incentive.

<sup>197</sup> Component (b) of the domestic financing requirement under the new funding model.

<sup>198</sup> Component (c) of the domestic financing requirement.

- **ESPIG triggering (additional) funding from DCP government:** In the Kyrgyz Republic, the MoE committed to funding teacher salaries and pay for the maintenance of new Kindergartens and pre-schools established through the ESPIG-funded project. This arrangement had been agreed as part of the ESPIG application.<sup>199</sup>
- **CSEF funding:** In Zambia, CSEF funding allowed the Zambia National Education Coalition to increase its advocacy for increased education sector budgets, including submitting position papers to the national parliament. These efforts likely contributed to the growth of education share of the national budget, which reached 20.2 percent in 2014 (but has declined since). No other CLEs noted similar concrete efforts to influence domestic sector financing linked to CSEF funding.
- **GPE global and country-level advocacy:** At the 2018 GPE replenishment conference, numerous DCP governments pledged to maintain or increase their relative education financing towards the 20 percent benchmark. CLEs in Cambodia, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan and Togo noted that some consulted stakeholders considered these commitments as useful for internal advocacy with the respective Ministry of Finance, but that this view was not shared by all consulted individuals. Overall, it remains difficult to attribute actual changes in domestic allocations specifically to GPE advocacy. The same applies to country-level advocacy through the CA and/or the GPE Secretariat as noted, for example, in the Uganda CLE. While country leads tried to regularly engage government partners in discussions of domestic sector financing,<sup>200</sup> there is no available evidence of a causal link between these efforts and subsequent changes in funding decisions.
- **GPE support to sector planning:** CLEs found no strong evidence to support the assumption that having a credible sector plan would facilitate MoE negotiations for education sector funds with the respective Ministry of Finance.

143. Dynamics and factors likely affecting the nature and degree of GPE contributions to sector financing are discussed in [Section 5.6](#).

**Finding 19:** The vast majority of ESPIGs in reviewed countries were implemented using project modalities. Where ESPIGs were channeled through – largely already existing - pooled funding mechanisms (in only six out of 29 countries/provinces), GPE contributed to maintaining the achieved status quo. Overall, GPE is not, and is not perceived as, a strong force driving improvements in aid effectiveness.

144. As shown in [Table 5.5](#), GPE support made more contributions to influencing international education sector financing than to domestic financing. On the other hand, GPE contributions were modest overall and limited to relatively few countries. Examples of how different types of GPE support or incentives influenced international sector financing are discussed below the table. As noted for similar tables above, this overview captures insights only from the 21 CLEs conducted in 2019 as the initial seven CLEs in 2018 did not include similar assessments of individual types of GPE support.

<sup>199</sup> Similar agreements likely exist in other countries where ESPIGs fund school construction, but the noted CLE was the only one to explicitly raise this as a GPE contribution specifically noted by in-country stakeholders.

<sup>200</sup> This is also noted in the GPE 2019 Results Report, p.58, which states that 83% of Secretariat country missions addressed issues of domestic financing. The report is available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/results-report-2019>.

**Table 5.5** *Perceived influence of different types of GPE support on the quality of international financing*

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
ESPIG (consistency of funding and modality)	Kenya, Rwanda, Tajikistan	Bangladesh, Cambodia (VT), Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Senegal, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia	Ethiopia, DRC, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Kyrgyz Republic, Togo, Zimbabwe
GPE advocacy for donor harmonization	none	Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda	All others
Accelerated Funding Mechanism <sup>201</sup>	Bangladesh, South Sudan	none	n.a
Multiplier <sup>202</sup>	Ethiopia, Tajikistan, Mauritania	Senegal, Zimbabwe	Nepal

**145. ESPIG (consistency of funding and funding modality):** As shown in [Table 5.6](#) below, in most reviewed countries, ESPIGs were relatively modest in size, constituting between 1 and 4.3 percent of sector plan implementation costs,<sup>203</sup> and, on average, 12.4 percent of education ODA.<sup>204</sup> In some countries, however, ESPIGs constituted a considerable share of international (sub)-sector funding, such as in Senegal and Togo where they covered 39 and 79 percent respectively of ODA to basic education. The amount and consistency of ESPIG funding was an important source of international funding to DCP

**Box 5.3: Effects of ESPIG consistency and/or modality on other DPs**

In [Tajikistan](#), stakeholders noted that the consistency of GPE financial support over time contributed to the ESPIG's perceived relevance. While other donors had left the country in times of crisis, GPE support had been steadfast and was seen as carrying the potential to rebuild the trust of other DPs in the country.

In [Mali](#), the ESPIG provided a much-needed investment in the country's education sector following a donor fund freeze after the coup d'état. Several stakeholders indicated that the ESPIG set an example and likely influenced other donors to re-initiate their activities.

In [Kenya](#), the ESPIG-funded PRIEDE program was the first major on-budget support program since a misappropriation of donor funds had been revealed in 2010. The ESPIG provided the government with the opportunity to demonstrate its trustworthiness and competence, the basis for regaining the confidence of other donors.

In [Zambia](#), while the previous ESPIG had been channeled through an existing pooled fund, the 2013-2018 ESPIG was not, which was widely perceived to (further) weaken the already struggling pooled fund. Stakeholder views varied, however, on whether this effect was negative or whether it allowed for a much-needed fresh start.

<sup>201</sup> Only applicable in the referenced countries.

<sup>202</sup> Discussed separately under finding 20.

<sup>203</sup> Togo is an exception, where the 2015-2019 ESPIGs constituted 16.3% of ESP costs.

<sup>204</sup> The ESPIG's share of overall education ODA varies considerably between countries, however, from 1.8% in Nepal to 32% to (in some years) in Zimbabwe.

governments, and, in some cases, also reassured other DPs to re-invest in a country. Where ESPIGs were channeled through pooled (sub)-sector and on-budget funding mechanisms, such as in Cambodia and Mozambique, other DPs tended to perceive this a deliberate message of support for harmonization and alignment to other education stakeholders. See [Box 5.3](#) above.

146. However, ESPIGs contributed to pooled funding mechanisms in only four reviewed countries,<sup>205</sup> and were channeled through (sector) budget support in another four. In the remaining 21/29 jurisdictions they used project modalities.<sup>206</sup> Pooled and/or budget support mechanisms may not be appropriate in all contexts, especially fragile and conflict affected countries and countries with weak government institutions. However, these characteristics do not apply to several countries where ESPIGs are being implemented as single donor projects (e.g., Cambodia, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mauritania and Tajikistan).

147. ESPIGs were aligned with national procedures in only half (14 of 29) countries/provinces (see Table 5.6), including in all those countries where they were channeled through pooled funding mechanisms.

**Table 5.6** *Characteristics of ESPIGs in sampled countries*

COUNTRY (ESPIG PERIOD)	ESPIG AMOUNT DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD IN US\$	ESPIG AS PERCENTAGE OF ESP IMPLEMENTATION COSTS <sup>207</sup>	ESPIG AS SHARE OF TOTAL ODA TO (BASIC) EDUCATION DURING REVIEW PERIOD <sup>208</sup>	ESPIG FIXED TRANCHE MODALITY	ALIGNED WITH NATIONAL PROCEDURES? <sup>209</sup>
<b>Prospective CLE</b>					
<b>DRC</b> (2017-2021)	100 million	1.2% of estimated costs	No data	Project	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2017-2019)	99.5 million	2%	37.4% of int. funding for GEQIP <sup>210</sup>	Pooled fund	Yes (met 9 of 10 criteria)
<b>Kenya</b> (2015-2019)	88.4 million	0.54% of estimated costs	5% for 2011-2017 <sup>211</sup>	Project	Yes (met 9 of 10 criteria)
<b>Malawi</b> (2016-2020)	44.9 million	No data	7.89%	Project	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Mali</b> (2013-2017)	41.7 million	No data	11.4%	Project	No (met 3 of 10 criteria)
<b>Nigeria</b> (2015-2019)	100 million	No data	Average 8% in 2016/2017	Project	Yes (met 7 of 10 criteria)

<sup>205</sup> And a fifth, Senegal, up to 2018.

<sup>206</sup> Single donor projects in 16/29 jurisdictions, and 5/29 co-funded projects together with one or several other DPs.

<sup>207</sup> Actual implementation costs where data are available, otherwise estimated costs as per ESP projections.

<sup>208</sup> As per OECD CRS. Availability of data and review periods vary by CLE.

<sup>209</sup> 10 GPE alignment criteria as described in the GPE Results Framework, indicator 29. For GPE, for a grant to be considered 'aligned', it needs to meet 7 of the 10 criteria.

<sup>210</sup> General Education Quality Improvement Program

<sup>211</sup> But with variations by year, e.g., in 2017, ESPIG disbursements constituted 19% of education ODA.

COUNTRY (ESPIG PERIOD)	ESPIG AMOUNT DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD IN US\$	ESPIG AS PERCENTAGE OF ESP IMPLEMENTATION COSTS <sup>207</sup>	ESPIG AS SHARE OF TOTAL ODA TO (BASIC) EDUCATION DURING REVIEW PERIOD <sup>208</sup>	ESPIG FIXED TRANCHE MODALITY	ALIGNED WITH NATIONAL PROCEDURES? <sup>209</sup>
<b>Nepal</b> (2016-2019)	59.3 million	0.13% of estimated costs	1.8% <sup>212</sup>	Pooled fund	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2017-2019)	20.56 million	No data <sup>213</sup>	Between 12% and 32%	Project	No (met 1 of 10 criteria)
<b>Summative CLE</b>					
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2015-2017)	100 million	1%	5.6%	Sector budget support	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2013-2017)	78.2 million	Estimated 2.9% of ESP costs 2013-16 <sup>214</sup>	21%	Pooled fund	Yes (met 9 of 10 criteria)
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2017)	38.5 million	1.2%	7.5% to total education (31.9% of basic ed. ODA)	Project	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2013-2017)	41.4 million	16.8% of estimated costs	16%	Project	No (met 3 of 10 criteria)
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)	37.8 million	4.3%	16% of all education (39.9% of basic education ODA)	Project (co-funded with ADF, UNICEF, WB)	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)
<b>Guyana</b> (2015-2018)	1.7 million	0.16% of estimated costs	6%	Project	No (met 1 of 10 criteria)
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-2016)	40.0 million	5.6% of estimated costs <sup>215</sup>	13%	Project	No (met 4 of 10 criteria)
<b>Mauritania</b> (2014-2018)	12.4 million	No data	12.4%	Project	Yes (met 7 of 10 criteria)
<b>Mozambique</b> (2015-2019)	57.9 million	No data	16.4%	Pooled fund	Yes (met 10 of 10 criteria)

<sup>212</sup> 4.7% including GPE Multiplier.

<sup>213</sup> No reliable data on ESP implementation costs. The CLE notes, however, that ESPIG funding constituted between 0.79% and 1.47% of total MoE spending since 2014.

<sup>214</sup> This estimate is based on the ESP's expectation that 74.6% (862 billion CFA) of the estimated total 1,115 billion CFA for the 2013-15 period would be for basic education and that the GPE ESPIG contributed 3.88% of PDSEB (primary education project) costs. However, calculating the ESPIG's relative size is difficult as the ESP provided estimates only for the 2013-15 period, while the ESPIG covered 2013-16. Also, while the ESP provided cost estimates for non-basic education, actual implementation efforts were, in fact, directed to basic education with no significant expenditures made for other sub-sectors.

<sup>215</sup> While the ESPIG was originally intended to support the first three years of the 2010-2020 ESP, it was implemented over a 6-year period. The total estimated ESP costs for this period were US\$714 million.

COUNTRY (ESPIG PERIOD)	ESPIG AMOUNT DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD IN US\$	ESPIG AS PERCENTAGE OF ESP IMPLEMENTATION COSTS <sup>207</sup>	ESPIG AS SHARE OF TOTAL ODA TO (BASIC) EDUCATION DURING REVIEW PERIOD <sup>208</sup>	ESPIG FIXED TRANCHE MODALITY	ALIGNED WITH NATIONAL PROCEDURES? <sup>209</sup>
<b>Pakistan</b> (Balochistan) (2014-2018)	33 million	6.7% of estimated costs	No data	Project (co-funded with EU and UNICEF)	No (met 2 of 10 criteria)
<b>Pakistan</b> (Sindh) (2014-2018)	66 million	0.9% of estimated costs	No data	Project	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2014-2018)	12.7 million	No data	13%	Project	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)
<b>Rwanda</b> (2015-2018)	25.2 million	3.2%	10.5% of total education (16% of basic education ODA)	Sector budget support	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Senegal</b> (2014-2018)	46.9 million	1.3%	9.8% of total education ODA (39% of ODA to basic education)	Pooled fund with 2 other donors 2013-18. General budget support 2018-22.	Yes (met 7 of 10 criteria)
<b>Sierra Leone</b> (2014-2017)	17.9 million	3% of estimated costs	18%	Project (co-funded with DFID)	No (met 1 of 10 criteria)
<b>South Sudan</b> (2013-2018)	36.1 million	No data	7% of total education ODA (17% of basic education ODA)	Project (co-funded with USAID) <sup>216</sup>	No (met 2 of 10 criteria)
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2013-2017)	16.2 million	No data	18.8 %of total education ODA (35.9% of basic education ODA) <sup>217</sup>	Project	No (met 4 of 10 criteria)
<b>The Gambia</b> (2014-2018)	6.9 million	3.2% of estimated costs <sup>218</sup>	17%	Project (co-funded with the WB)	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)

<sup>216</sup> USAID withdrew funding partway.

<sup>217</sup> Calculation based on two most recent GPE ESPIGs, covering the period 2010-2017.

<sup>218</sup> For implementation of the 2014-2017 Medium Term Education Sector Plan.



COUNTRY (ESPIG PERIOD)	ESPIG AMOUNT DURING CORE REVIEW PERIOD IN US\$	ESPIG AS PERCENTAGE OF ESP IMPLEMENTATION COSTS <sup>207</sup>	ESPIG AS SHARE OF TOTAL ODA TO (BASIC) EDUCATION DURING REVIEW PERIOD <sup>208</sup>	ESPIG FIXED TRANCHE MODALITY	ALIGNED WITH NATIONAL PROCEDURES? <sup>209</sup>
<b>Togo</b> (2015-2019)	27.8 million	16.3%	28% of total education ODA (79% of basic educ. ODA)	Project	No (met 5 of 10 criteria)
<b>Uganda</b> (2014-2019)	100 million	1.08%	12% of all education ODA (32% of basic education ODA)	Project	Yes (met all 10 criteria)
<b>Zambia</b> (2013-2018)	35.2 million	0.65%	6.5%	Sector Budget Support <sup>219</sup>	Yes (met all 10 criteria)

#### 148. GPE advocacy for donor harmonization:

Concrete results influenced by GPE advocacy were noted in only two countries (Malawi and Uganda). See [Box 5.4](#). In some other countries (Kenya, Mali, Nigeria), DP's acknowledged GPE (CA and Secretariat) efforts around advocating for more donor harmonization, yet CLEs did not detect specific positive changes that this advocacy likely contributed to.

**149. Accelerated funding mechanism:**<sup>220</sup> This mechanism, which allows countries to quickly access up to 20 percent of their maximum country allocation (MCA) with a streamlined application, allowed South Sudan to access much-needed bridge funding to compensate for delays in its upcoming ESPIG application. In Bangladesh, accelerated funding of US\$8.3 million in 2018 provided a much-needed contribution to international efforts to meet the educational needs of Rohingya refugees.

#### Box 5.4: Positive effects of GPE advocacy on donor harmonization in Malawi

The Common Financing Mechanism (CFM) for the education sector in Malawi, established in 2017 and supported by Norway, Germany, the World Bank, UNICEF and the UK (DfID), is designed to provide earmarked support to some priorities of the education sector as outlined in the country's education sector plan. One factor explicitly noted by signing DPs as having influenced the creation of the CFM was the Government of Malawi's commitment – through the ESPIG-funded Malawi Education Sector Improvement Plan Project – to target 20% of its national budget to the education sector. As such, consulted DPs credited GPE's global and country level advocacy (and domestic funding requirement) for reaching the 20% benchmark as one factor contributing to their decision to sign on to the CFM.

<sup>219</sup> However, the CLE notes that this modality behaved more like a project.

<sup>220</sup> See GPE. "Guidelines for Accelerated Support in Emergencies and Early Recovery Situations", 2015.

**Finding 20:** In the three countries that had received a GPE Multiplier grant during the review period, the Multiplier likely influenced the timing of education sector financing provided by other development partners.

150. Only three of the 28 reviewed countries received Multiplier grant during the CLE evaluation period, and another three countries had submitted a grant application (see [Box 5.5](#)).<sup>221</sup> CLEs provided only limited and inconclusive evidence on the effectiveness of the Multiplier in mobilizing funding.

151. Expressions of interest for the Multiplier are assessed by the Secretariat for their likelihood to achieve the funding model requirements<sup>222</sup> as well as on the additionality of the co-funding. GPE regards resources as ‘additional’ if the US\$3 in external funding mobilized for each US\$1 provided from the Multiplier is “*unlikely to have been mobilized or mobilized as quickly*” for education if Multiplier funding were not available.<sup>223</sup>

152. In all three countries that had received a Multiplier at the time of the CLE ([Nepal](#), [Senegal](#) and [Zimbabwe](#)), the mechanism likely influenced the timing but not the amount of other DP’s contributions. In all three cases, the external funds had already been approved for use in the education sector prior to the Multiplier application being completed. According to consulted stakeholders,<sup>224</sup> the amounts had not been influenced by the prospect of leveraging GPE funds. However, the contributions were ‘additional’ in that the external funding might not have been made available as quickly as it was had it not been for the Multiplier.

**Box 5.5: Countries reviewed that had received or applied for a Multiplier grant**

Countries that had already received a Multiplier:

Nepal: Received US\$15 million Multiplier, US\$163.86 million from Asian Development Bank and US\$3.5 million from USAID

Senegal: Received US\$10 million Multiplier; US\$39 million (35 million EURO) from Agence Française de Développement (AFD)- of these, EUR 25 million in form of a concessional loan rather than a grant

Zimbabwe: Received US\$10 million Multiplier; US\$52 million from DfID and KfW

Countries that had applied for a Multiplier

Ethiopia: Applied for US\$20 million Multiplier; US\$60 million from the WB

Mauritania: Applied for US\$5 million Multiplier; US\$25 million from WB

Tajikistan: Applied for US\$10 million Multiplier; US\$30 million from Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and US\$0.75 million from UNICEF (in-kind contribution)

<sup>221</sup> The remaining reviewed countries that are eligible for a Multiplier had not yet taken concrete steps towards submitting an application at the time of the respective CLE.

<sup>222</sup> Identification of at least one indicator in each of the dimensions of Equity, Efficiency and Learning Outcomes.

<sup>223</sup> Because there is no clear counterfactual (“What would have happened if the GPE Multiplier were not available”), the evaluation of additionality is based on a negative definition: an instrument is not additional if it is announced, agreed, committed, or disbursed strictly independently of the GPE Multiplier. If there is a clear and reasonable narrative relating increased resource mobilization to the Multiplier, the new external resources should be regarded as additional. See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-11-gpe-Multiplier-education-sector-program-implementation-grant-applications-guidelines.pdf>

<sup>224</sup> Beyond Multiplier grant applications, the CLEs had to rely on stakeholder views to assess the extent to which DP’s funding commitments truly had been influenced by the Multiplier.

153. In the three countries that had applied for a Multiplier at the time of the CLE (Ethiopia, Mauritania and Tajikistan) the mechanism showed potential to influence both the timing and the amount of other development partners' financial contributions. In Mauritania, for example, prior to the announcement of the Multiplier, the WB had already intended to invest additional resources in basic education but had not yet determined a specific amount. The decision to provide US\$25 million may have been influenced by the prospect of allowing the country to access an additional US\$5 million from the GPE fund.<sup>225</sup> In Kenya, while the country had not yet submitted a grant application at the time of the CLE, the MoE and DPs were discussing how to best leverage the 3:1 ratio needed to access the Multiplier. At the time, discussions were leaning towards re-allocating resources from the cross-sectoral World Bank International Development Association (IDA) pipeline, indicating that the Multiplier might, indeed, contribute to increasing the total amount allocated to the education sector.

154. While influencing dialogue around education sector financing is not an objective of the Multiplier, the mechanism has some potential in this regard as it requires *co-financing*, meaning financing that is either delivered through the same modality as GPE funding in a single program and with a single grant agent, or that is delivered through a common funding mechanism such as a pooled fund.<sup>227</sup> The Tajikistan CLE illustrates this. The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) had initially planned to allocate its US\$30 million sector investment solely to school construction. Following IsDB's selection as grant agent for the ESPIG and discussions with the government of Tajikistan and the Secretariat, however, the Bank announced that its contribution would support additional areas, including education sector policy, planning and evidence-based resource allocation through strengthening EMIS.

#### **Box 5.6: Perceptions of GPE domestic funding requirements as arbitrary (donor) requirements**

In Rwanda, while overall sector financing had increased in nominal terms and average annual spending per student, education financing relative to total government expenditures had declined and, at 12.4% in 2017) remained far off the 20% benchmark. Government and development partners alike noted, however, that education has clearly remained a key domestic priority, and they questioned the appropriateness of the 20% benchmark as the only benchmark used by GPE for measuring domestic commitment to education, while ignoring other possible indicators such as actual progress made in the education sector or the efficiency of utilizing existing domestic or international sector financing. Based on this, stakeholders perceived the 20% benchmark as arbitrary and not based on hard evidence.

In Senegal, the government rejected the Secretariat's recommendation to increase its budget allocation to primary education so as to meet the 45% benchmark. Consulted stakeholders widely questioned the contextual relevance of the 45% benchmark considering (i) the large volume of overall public financing in Senegal, (ii) national education priorities focusing on investing in alternative education (including in Islamic and community schools) and (iii) the fact that the LEG had endorsed the 2018-2025 sector plan as it was, i.e., without meeting the 45% benchmark. Similar concerns around the 45% benchmark had been noted in Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>226</sup>

<sup>225</sup> However, the CLE did not obtain any further evidence to support or refute this hypothesis, or to explain why the WB would invest not only the US\$15 million required to meet the 1:3 ratio, but the larger amount of US\$25 million.

<sup>226</sup> In both Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, GPE advocacy for increasing allocations to primary education aims to address relatively high per capita investments in higher education, which run the risk of underfunding other sub-sectors and benefiting fewer and likely only more privileged population groups.

<sup>227</sup> See GPE Multiplier education sector program implementation grant. Application Guidelines, p. 16. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-11-gpe-Multiplier-education-sector-program-implementation-grant-applications-guidelines.pdf>

## Unplanned/unintended effects of GPE support

155. A few evaluations noted two unintended negative effects of GPE support in the context of sector financing. The first relates to the risk of GPE processes and funding criteria furthering an asymmetric relationship between DPs and developing country actors by forcing the latter to apply indicators of success that they do not consider relevant or appropriate in their contexts. This contradicts and actively undermines the GPE principle of (equal footed) *partnership*.

156. In Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Senegal, in-country stakeholders, including government representatives and DPs, questioned GPE's financial benchmarks included under the new funding model (NFM) domestic financing requirement. They perceived these i.e., benchmarks as mere 'hoops' for developing countries to 'jump through' to satisfy donor (GPE) requirements, rather than as meaningful benchmarks suited to trigger an open-ended discussion among equals. See [Box 5.6](#).

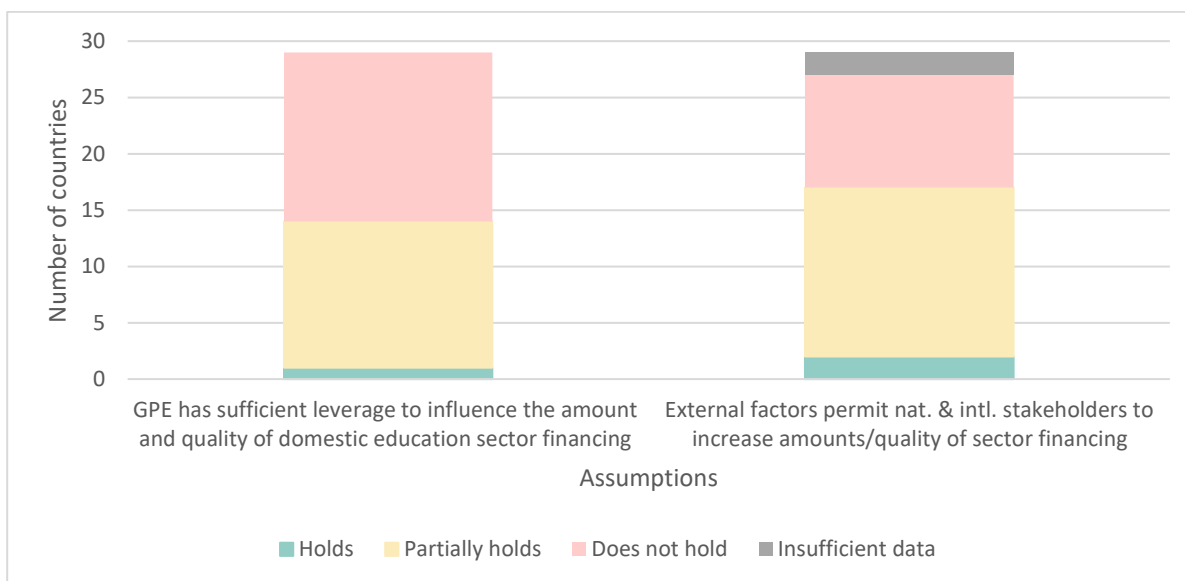
157. In Nepal, informants noted that while the variable tranche helped stakeholders focus collectively on results against key performance indicators it also placed a significant reporting and administrative burden on the MoE. Furthermore, they observed that the VT felt punitive in that, on the one hand, DPs helped to construct the sector plan and related results framework, but then withheld funds if results – possibly related to overambitious targets – were not achieved.

158. Another unintended effect of GPE processes was observed in Guinea, where the grant agent selection process for the upcoming GPE ESPIG generated strong tensions between stakeholders. The selection of AFD over the WB may have contributed to the WB not pooling its latest funds with the upcoming ESPIG, thereby negatively affecting donor harmonization.

## 5.5 Factors influencing sector financing and related GPE contributions

159. All CLEs explored two assumptions underlying the GPE country-level theory of change that would need to be in place for 'more and better' education sector financing to occur and for GPE to make related contributions. [Figure 5.1](#) summarizes CLE findings on the extent to which these assumptions held true across the 29 countries and provinces. Unlike assumptions on sector plan development and mutual accountability, both assumptions about sector financing did not hold true or only partially held true in most countries.

**Figure 5.1** Extent to which ToC assumptions on sector financing held true (n=29)



160. Evidence in the CLEs allows exploring some nuances of these relatively broad assumptions as outlined below.

#### External (contextual) factors

161. As discussed above, government and MoE decisions around domestic education (sub)-sector financing appear to be largely driven by macro-level political and/or economic considerations, including considerations over the relative priority of education compared to other pressing needs.

162. For decisions concerning the amounts and chosen modalities of international sector financing, CLEs indicate a variety of likely factors the combination of which varied by context. These included:

- DP trust in DCP government to manage funds transparently and efficiently – this was noted as a factor explaining some of the shifts towards project funding (e.g., in Senegal) or away from pooled and/or sector or budget support modalities (e.g., previously in Kenya).
- Preference of the MoE for DPs to channel funds using *project* modalities, , e.g., in Cambodia and the Kyrgyz Republic, given that this allowed the ministry greater control over resources than general or sector budget support, which the ministry of finance might seek to influence.
- Global or regional trends and related shifts in DP priorities – in Mauritania, for example, several donor agencies shifted resources away from basic education towards other education sub-sectors including TVET. This was influenced by trends such as growing youth unemployment and the need to address migration to Europe.
- Conflict or other crises influence DP's priority setting in terms of sub-sectors to focus on, chosen funding modality, and degree of harmonization with other DPs (e.g., in Bangladesh, DRC and South Sudan).

### GPE leverage

163. The above-noted factors, many of which are beyond the direct influence of in-country education sector actors, likely contributed to GPE having had relatively little, if any, leverage to influence financing decisions. One additional possible explanation for the limited influence of ESPIG domestic funding requirements is that ESPIG amounts, while often representing considerable shares of international sector financing, constitute only a fraction of developing country governments' education expenditures and overall (estimated) costs for ESP implementation. At the same time, stakeholders frequently noted relatively high transaction costs of accessing GPE grant funding See [Box 5.7](#).

#### Box 5.7: High GPE transaction costs

In Bangladesh, Kenya, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Nepal and Senegal, government actors and DPs noted that transaction costs for accessing GPE grants are high for comparatively small, and in some cases shrinking, amounts of funds. For example, stakeholders in Kenya were unsure whether the administrative effort required to apply for the variable tranche was justified given that – in light of a much-reduced MCA – the VT would amount to only US\$3.2 million, a 'drop in the bucket' when compared to the amounts likely required for implementation of the 2018-22 sector plan. Similar observations were made by stakeholders in Nepal, where GPE ESPIGs have continuously decreased.

## 5.6 Implications for GPE

**Finding 21: GPE needs to strengthen the country-level theory of change to clarify the assumed pathways to influencing international and domestic financing decisions.**

164. GPE's 'toolbox' for influencing financing decisions is limited when compared to the many other factors that likely shape government and development partner choices. Nevertheless, GPE sometimes uses the promising approaches of (i) catalyzing dialogue among education stakeholders on what constitutes 'sufficient' and 'good' education sector financing (both domestic and international), and (ii) modeling desired behaviors in terms of harmonization and alignment. These could be applied more consistently and formulated as strategies with specific intended results. At present, the theory of change underlying GPE's approach is insufficiently clear in terms of the assumed pathways to influencing international and domestic financing decisions and GPE's role in facilitating these.

165. While CLEs indicate that GPE's domestic funding requirements have little, if any, direct influence on DCP government decision making, they also show that these benchmarks can lead to in-country stakeholders engaging in focused discussion over whether these benchmarks can and will be achieved and why, and, in some cases, what alternative benchmarks might be more meaningful in various contexts.<sup>228</sup> This primarily indirect nature of GPE's potential influence on sector financing was noted in a 2019 GPE paper for the Grants and Performance Committee on country experiences with the ESPIG domestic financing

<sup>228</sup> For example, in Rwanda, some stakeholders suggested that instead of the 20% benchmark, a more suitable approach to assessing a country's commitment to education could be to compare its domestic spending on specific education budget lines with those of other countries in the same region (in particular countries with similar or higher scores in human development).



requirement.<sup>229</sup> At the same time, the country experience gained in Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Rwanda<sup>230</sup> indicates that domestic financing benchmarks tend to be used as absolute and non-negotiable benchmarks rather than as invitations for focused dialogue. This enforces the already wide-spread perception among many developing country stakeholders of GPE as a donor whose requirements need to be satisfied, rather than a 'partnership'.

166. With regard to influencing other DPs in improving harmonization and alignment of financing with national systems, GPE's main tools are global and country-level advocacy and setting a good example when it comes to ESPIG modalities and management. CLEs indicate that both tools are utilized inconsistently. While there are positive examples of GPE contributing to pooled funding mechanisms, most ESPIGs constitute stand-alone projects that perpetuate the fragmentation of sector support and sector plan implementation. Similarly, GPE advocacy does not yet visibly extend to holding its donor members to account for the extent to which their global commitment to aid effectiveness principles are reflected in their country level operations.

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<sup>229</sup> GPE (2019): ESPIG Domestic Financing Requirement: A review of country experience. GPC/2019/1; Grants and Performance Committee Meeting, London, January 29, 2019.

<sup>230</sup> The Rwanda CLE noted another issue for which GPE has not yet developed clear guidance, namely whether domestic financing commitments should be calculated including or excluding funds received from international aid. Until now, countries have not been required to report on this issue, making it impossible to systematically assess whether and to what extent ESPIG applications reflect funding including or excluding international aid. In Rwanda and some other low-income contexts, the capital budget tends to be driven primarily by international aid, resulting in the possibility of total budget figures being artificially inflated, which may make it more difficult for countries to meet the 20% benchmark.

## 6 GPE contributions to sector plan implementation<sup>231</sup>

### Key messages:

- The available, often incomplete, data on plan implementation draw a picture of very modest success, with plan implementation considered strong in only four out of 29 countries and provinces reviewed.
- Political instability and conflict, limited government effectiveness and gaps in MoE capacity, and overambitious sector plans are key factors likely explaining weak implementation progress in some countries. Reasons for comparatively strong performance are more difficult to identify, although political stability, government/MoE capacity, and a conducive political environment likely contribute. The existence of a (sector or sub-sector wide) pooled fund may positively influence but does not guarantee sector plan implementation.
- GPE contributions to plan implementation primarily consisted of ESPIG-funded (parts of) projects or programs and therefore largely focused on basic education. Across countries, ESPIGs achieved most or all of their intended goals and made appreciated contributions, notably in school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials.
- Overall, GPE's operational model, results framework and the actions of key GPE actors on the ground need to better reflect the central role that sector plan implementation holds in GPE's country-level theory of change.

### 6.1 Overview

168. In most countries, information on sector plan implementation was incomplete or missing altogether. In many countries, no one inside or outside the MoE systematically monitored sector plan implementation. In addition, the quality of results frameworks and reporting mechanisms varied considerably between countries. In the majority of countries, this resulted in fragmented and incomplete data which did not permit systematic comparisons of planned to actual activities or assessing whether implementation progress has been stronger in some thematic areas than in others. This kind of detailed data were available only for specific donor-funded projects that, while usually broadly aligned with the overall objectives of the sector plan, were not based on the same targets.

169. A high-level overview of CLE findings on sector plan implementation and the degree of GPE contributions is shown in [Table 6.1](#). Details are provided in the subsequent findings. The assessment of GPE contributions to plan implementation considered various lines of evidence, including: the size of GPE's financial support in relation to overall plan implementation costs, reported ESPIG-funded thematic contributions to progress, and stakeholder perceptions of the relevance and influence of GPE support on sector plan implementation.

<sup>231</sup> Addressing GEQ 1.1 and 1.3 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim as outlined in the country-level ToC for this assignment was: "GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective and efficient implementation of sector plans." (Contribution claim D).

**Table 6.1** Overview of CLE findings on sector plan implementation<sup>232</sup>

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	PROGRESS IN SECTOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION
<b>Prospective CLE</b>		
<b>DRC - SSEF (2016-2019)</b>	Minimal	Minimal
<b>Ethiopia - ESDP V (2014/15-2019/20)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Kenya - NESP (2013-2018)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Malawi - ESP (2008- 2020)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Mali - PIRSEF (2015-2018)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Nigeria - 2013-2019</b>	Minimal	Modest
<b>Nepal - SSDP (2016-2018)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Zimbabwe - ESSP (2016-2019)</b>	Modest	Strong
<b>Summative CLEs</b>		
<b>Bangladesh - PEDP-3 (2011-2017)</b>	Strong	Modest
<b>Burkina Faso - ESP (2012-2021)</b>	Modest	Strong
<b>Cambodia - ESP 2014-2018</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Cote d'Ivoire - ESP (2012-2014)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Guinea - PSE-2 (2015-2017)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Guyana - ESP (2014-2018)</b>	Insufficient data	Modest <sup>233</sup>
<b>Liberia - ESP (2010-2020)</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Mauritania - PNDSE II (2011-2021)-</b>	Modest	Modest
<b>Mozambique - 2015-2018 Operational plan</b>	Strong	Modest
<b>Pakistan (Balochistan) ESP (2013-2018)</b>	Minimal	Modest
<b>Pakistan (Sindh) ESP (2014-2018)</b>	Minimal	Modest
<b>Kyrgyz Republic – EDS (2012-2020)</b>	Strong	Strong
<b>Rwanda - ESSP (2013-2018)</b>	Strong	Strong
<b>Senegal - PAQUET 2013-2025</b>	Modest	Strong
<b>Sierra Leone - ESP (2014-2018)</b>	Minimal	Modest

<sup>232</sup> An expanded version of this overview table is included in Appendix V.

<sup>233</sup> Modest for sector plan implementation overall, but considerable contributions in relation to strengthening early childhood education.

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	PROGRESS IN SECTOR PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION
South Sudan - GESP (2012-17 & 2017-21)	Minimal	Minimal
Tajikistan - NSED (2012-2020)	Modest	Modest
The Gambia - ESP (2014-2022)	Insufficient data <sup>234</sup>	Modest <sup>235</sup>
Togo - PSE 2010-2020 and 2014-2025	Modest	Strong
Uganda - ESSP 2017-2020	Modest	Strong
Zambia - ESSP 2017-2021	Modest	Minimal

## 6.2 Characteristics of sector plan implementation

**Finding 22:** The available, often fragmented, data on sector plan implementation draw a picture of overall modest success.

170. In most countries reviewed, due to the noted shortcomings in systematic monitoring and reporting, information available on sector plan implementation was incomplete or missing altogether. This prevented precisely assessing the extent to which planned interventions had been implemented and with what results or assessing whether implementation progress has been stronger in some thematic areas than in others. This kind of detailed data was available only in the context of specific donor-funded projects, which, while usually broadly aligned with the overall objectives of the respective sector plan, were not based on the same targets as that plan.

171. Based on the available, albeit often fragmented, data, CLEs rated overall plan implementation as (relatively) strong in only four countries (Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, and Rwanda), 'modest' in 17 countries, and weak in six jurisdictions.<sup>236</sup> For The Gambia and Guyana there was insufficient data to make any assessment of progress made.

172. Likely factors influencing progress in plan implementation are easier to identify in cases where plan implementation has been weak than in those where it was strong.

- Countries' income levels do not explain differences in implementation progress, given that CLEs noted strong and weak progress in both low and lower middle income countries. Similarly, the classification of a country as Fragile and Conflict Affected (FCAC) alone does not help explain noted differences. While all countries where implementation was found to be weak are classified as FCAC (DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan), so is Rwanda, where plan implementation progress was strong.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Likely considerable progress, but available data limited to stakeholder perceptions.

<sup>235</sup> Unclear for overall sector plan, but positive contributions under ESPIG-financed components.

<sup>236</sup> DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan's Balochistan and Sindh provinces, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.

<sup>237</sup> One may argue, however, that this could reflect the inaccuracy of the FCAC classification rather than showing that fragility or conflict did not constrain implementation – which clearly was the case, for example, in the DRC and South Sudan.

- However, countries that made little progress in plan implementation share other characteristics. When applying the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) shown in Appendix VII, the DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan rank lowest of all reviewed countries in two dimensions: (i) overall governance effectiveness and (ii) political stability/absence of violence.<sup>238</sup> In contrast, while also categorized as a FCAC, Rwanda is ranked highest of all 28 countries reviewed in terms of governance effectiveness, and second highest (behind Zambia) in terms of political stability.

173. WGI rankings, income levels, the categorization as FCAC do not provide plausible explanations, however, for why implementation was considered relatively strong in three other countries (Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic and Mozambique). For example, in terms of WGI rankings all three countries are squarely placed in the middle of the reviewed sample. The same applies to other characteristics such the presence or absence of pooled (sub-) sector funding mechanisms<sup>239</sup> or whether the education sector was governed by one or more ministries. As such, other factors are likely to have played a role, including those related to the broader political economy, government ownership of and leadership for plan implementation, and elements of institutional culture. These dimensions are discussed in [Section 6.4](#).

## 6.3 GPE contributions to sector plan implementation

**Finding 23: ESPIG funding constituted GPE's main contribution to sector plan implementation.**

174. [Table 6.2](#) summarizes CLE findings on the relative (perceived) relevance and effectiveness of different forms of GPE support in the context of sector plan implementation. Each type of support is further discussed below.

**Table 6.2** *Perceived influence of different types of GPE support on plan implementation*<sup>240</sup>

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
<b>ESPIG-funded project/program/components and funding modality</b>	Cambodia, DRC, Guinea, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, South Sudan, Senegal, Tajikistan, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe	Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Nepal, Nigeria, Zambia	none
<b>Variable tranche</b>	Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, Zimbabwe	Mozambique, Rwanda	Cambodia, DRC
<b>Secretariat (Country Lead) advice/assistance</b>	none	Mali, Rwanda, Uganda	All others

<sup>238</sup> Details on the WGI project, methodology and available data sets are available at: <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>.

<sup>239</sup> In only one of six countries with pooled funding mechanisms, namely in Mozambique, overall progress in plan implementation was rated strong. The existence of a sector wide, rather than a sub-sector specific pooled fund may have facilitated progress. However, in Nepal, which also has a sector wide mechanism, overall progress was only modest.

<sup>240</sup> As for similar tables in previous chapters, this table reflects findings from the 21 CLEs conducted in 2019 but not the seven CLEs completed in 2018.

TYPE OF GPE SUPPORT	STRONG INFLUENCE	MODEST INFLUENCE	LIMITED OR NO INFLUENCE OR LACK OF EVIDENCE
<b>Grant agent activities</b> beyond ESPIG supervision, e.g. technical assistance/capacity strengthening	none	Kyrgyz Republic, Senegal, Tajikistan, Uganda, Zambia	All others
<b>LEG</b>	none	Uganda, Tajikistan	All others
<b>CSEF funding</b>	Zimbabwe	none	All others with CSEF funding <sup>241</sup>

175. **ESPIG funding:** Seven CLEs conducted in FY 2019 rated GPE's overall contributions to sector plan implementation as 'strong'. In all cases, the reasons underlying this assessment were related to the ESPIG, albeit in varying ways, indicating that the grant's absolute and relative size was not the sole factor determining actual and perceived ESPIG relevance.

- **ESPIG modality:** In Rwanda, the 2015-2018 US\$25.2 million ESPIG was provided as direct budget support, which allowed the government of Rwanda to use the resources flexibly to finance plan components not covered by other DPs, including for classroom construction and purchasing textbooks. This was perceived as facilitating MoE ownership and leadership for overall plan implementation.
- **Contribution to a sub-sector:** In the Kyrgyz Republic, the ESPIG-funded project was instrumental in strengthening the pre-primary education subsector, an area receiving limited attention from other DPs or government.<sup>242</sup>
- **Relative size of ESPIG and meaningful contributions:** In Togo, the 2015-2019 ESPIG financed a relatively substantial 16.3 percent of overall ESP costs, and spearheaded several key achievements in ESP 2014-2025 implementation, including community-led school construction and primary curriculum reform.
- **Relevant activities/innovations put in place despite relatively modest ESPIG size:** In most cases, ESPIG (co-)funded projects or programs contributed modestly to the costs of plan implementation (usually

#### Box 6.1: Relevant ESPIG contributions despite modest grant size

In Senegal, the 2013-2018 ESPIG constituted only 1.3% of total sector financing for 2012-17 but 52.2% of financing for the dedicated basic education project, which spearheaded key interventions for sector plan implementation. These included activities to strengthen sector governance (e.g., introduction of performance contracts, training of school-based management committees), education quality (e.g., constructing teacher training centers, reforming pre-service curricula), and efforts to harmonize EMIS systems and institutionalize results reporting at all levels.

In Uganda, the ESPIG-funded Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project implemented several key initiatives under the sector plan, including school construction, implementation of the primary curriculum and in-service teacher training, despite representing only 1.08% of total ESSP costs.

<sup>241</sup> All countries except Guinea and Guyana.

<sup>242</sup> In the Kyrgyz Republic, the CLE was not able to identify the share of the ESPIG as part of total, actual or estimated, sector plan implementation costs.

between 1 and 4.3 percent - see [Chapter 5](#)). However, sometimes, the relevance of these grants was disproportionately higher given that they provided resources available for capital investments in contexts where the vast majority of domestic sector financing was used to cover recurrent costs, which made up between 75 percent (Bangladesh) and 100 percent (South Sudan) of domestic financing. See examples in [Box 6.1](#).

- **Reliance on GPE as one of the few donors to fund interventions:** In Zimbabwe, donor funding and initiative are essential for sector plan implementation, and activities related to key issues such as curriculum implementation and sector policy reform have been entirely financed by the ESPIG and the Education Development Fund (EDF), a mechanism co-funded by DfID and the Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau.

176. The thematic issues most commonly addressed through ESPIG resources were infrastructure (school construction) and teaching/learning materials (each in 11 out of 18 countries),<sup>243</sup> followed by in-service teacher training (8/18) and EMIS strengthening (6/18). Only a few ESPIGs specifically addressed gender equity/equality (3/18), learners with special needs (2/18) or LAS (2/18). See Appendix IX for details. CLEs did not find evidence that ESPIGs should have targeted other thematic areas where a need existed and was not addressed through the government or other donors. ESPIG-funded projects made contributions to strengthening government implementation capacity in only a few countries. In Senegal and Togo, ESPIG funds were used for training and equipment for key government (and, in Togo, also non-government) units responsible for plan implementation at central and decentralized levels.<sup>244</sup> In Cambodia, the variable tranche was channeled through the pooled Capacity Development Partnership Fund, the creation of which had been prompted by the need to provide the MoE with up-front programming resources they would need to meet the VT targets.

177. **Secretariat (country lead) advice and assistance:** Overall, CLEs showed that in-country stakeholders were not clear about what type and level of engagement in sector plan implementation to expect from the Secretariat. In some countries, the country lead played a role during implementation. In Uganda, for example, the Secretariat played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue between the GA and the MoE during the restructuring of the GPE project in 2016-17, thereby contributing to ensuring that Uganda Teacher and School Effectiveness Project (UTSEP) implementation could continue.<sup>245</sup> In Rwanda, country lead visits contributed to monitoring ESPIG implementation, especially of the variable tranche and domestic financing trends. In all noted cases, however, country lead interventions were centered on the (basic-education or sub-sector focused) ESPIG and thus only indirectly concerned with overall plan implementation. This may reflect that country leads' workload, given that they are responsible for several and often diverse countries, tends to allow for little engagement with partner countries beyond grant-related processes.

178. **Grant agent activities:** Across countries, CLEs found that grant agents had effectively overseen ESPIG implementation regardless of which organization or agency fulfilled the GA role. GAs participated in ongoing

<sup>243</sup> The seven CLEs completed in 2018 are not listed in the table as they had used a slightly different approach to categorizing thematic issues covered by ESPIGs. Also, the table does not include Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Nepal where ESPIGs were channeled through pooled funding arrangements.

<sup>244</sup> The Togo CLE noted, however, that the sustainability of these measures was in question given their reliance on donor projects and lack of sustainable institutional capacity development.

<sup>245</sup> Following a Financial Management Review and Mid-Term Review (MTR) of UTSEP in 2016, several financial irregularities were identified while significant delays were documented in the school construction component of the project. Positions were polarized before project restructuring was considered, with the World Bank as grant agent (GA) pushing to cancel up to US\$35 million of the GPE grant on the one hand, and MoEs with other members of the LEG (development partners and civil society) in favor of setting new milestones and timelines for the Ministry to achieve.



sector dialogue and provided on-demand technical assistance and capacity strengthening support to the government to ensure effective ESPIG implementation, e.g., in Burkina Faso, Guyana, Liberia and Mali. While CLE findings were generally positive about the GAs' role in ESPIG implementation, stakeholders in several countries (e.g., the DRC, Mozambique, Togo and Senegal), critically noted that GAs had applied their own procedures and rules to the ESPIG,<sup>246</sup> which led to slow and cumbersome implementation progress as well as delays.<sup>247</sup> CLEs for Cote d'Ivoire and the DRC noted that there were limited mechanisms in place for the governments to hold grant agents to account during their management of ESPIG-funded projects.<sup>248</sup>

- In both the DRC and Cote d'Ivoire, some government stakeholders perceived that GAs made unilateral decisions on where and how project funds could be used without consulting the government.<sup>249</sup>
- In Cote d'Ivoire, a francophone country, the GA prepared monitoring reports for the ESPIG-funded project in English only and submitted them to the Secretariat but not to the Cote d'Ivoire government.

179. **Coordinating agency activities:** As discussed in [Chapter 4](#), while CAs support sector monitoring through JSRs, this role is not widely perceived or executed in a way that would indicate specific CA responsibilities for and contributions to sector plan implementation.

180. **Variable Tranche:** CLEs in Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda and Zimbabwe noted that the VT made a positive difference to sector plan implementation by providing an incentive for in-country stakeholders to make efforts to reach the agreed upon targets and monitor progress on an ongoing basis. Stakeholders indicated that implementation of strategies covered by the VT would likely not have been prioritized to the same extent had they not been included in funding requirements for the variable part. There is no indication, however, that this contributed to applying a stronger focus on results across different elements of the sector plan. As noted in [Chapter 4](#), some stakeholders noted, instead, that the VT ran the risk of focusing stakeholder attention almost solely on the few selected indicators. The CLE sample is too small, however, to draw strong conclusions in this regard.

181. **LEG:** LEGs and their individual members in almost all countries played no observable role in ensuring coherent and systematic implementation and monitoring of the sector plan. Uganda was an exception, as the LEG played a role in sector plan implementation through ongoing and engaged monitoring and dialogue that were not related to a variable tranche. This reflects observations in [Chapter 4](#) that Uganda is a positive outlier in the extent to which stakeholders perceive themselves and act as 'partners'.<sup>250</sup>

<sup>246</sup> Such as for procurement or fund approval and disbursement.

<sup>247</sup> Related criticism was noted mostly but not exclusively in countries where the World Bank was the GA. This may merely reflect that the WB plays the GA role more frequently than other organizations. However, the 2018 *Examination of key actors' roles in GPE's country-level operational model towards GPE 2020 delivery* (p.53) had noted that while the WB acknowledged that using government systems was desirable in theory, it would often forgo this ideal in an effort to maintain high standards. In comparison, the study found UNICEF to be more willing to make compromises to use existing systems even at the expense of quality in some instances.

<sup>248</sup> Countries can respond to (actual or perceived) weak GA performance by not selecting the same agency for the next grant, but, in the view of in-country stakeholders, have no strong mechanisms to hold GAs to account during ongoing grant implementation.

<sup>249</sup> The CLEs found no evidence that would allow either validating or refuting this perception.

<sup>250</sup> The Tajikistan CLE acknowledged positive LEG engagement in terms of individual DPs coordinating their work to avoid duplication and overlap but did not indicate a similarly strong role played by the LEG in terms of 'owning' progress in sector plan implementation. This does not mean that LEG members, in particular DPs, did not play any role in furthering sector progress. To the contrary, all CLEs highlighted the strong role played by internationally funded initiatives in testing and implementing various innovations and improvements. However, these efforts were not consistently clearly conceptualized as parts of sector plan implementation – a key assumption in the GPE ToC.

182. **CSEF:** Only one CLE noted a tangible likely contribution to sector plan implementation facilitated through CSEF funding. In Zimbabwe, the CSEF grant recipient organization ECOZI has been key, both through coordination of its membership and through its thematic leads, in the development of District Operational Plans, an important tool for enabling sector plan implementation on the ground.

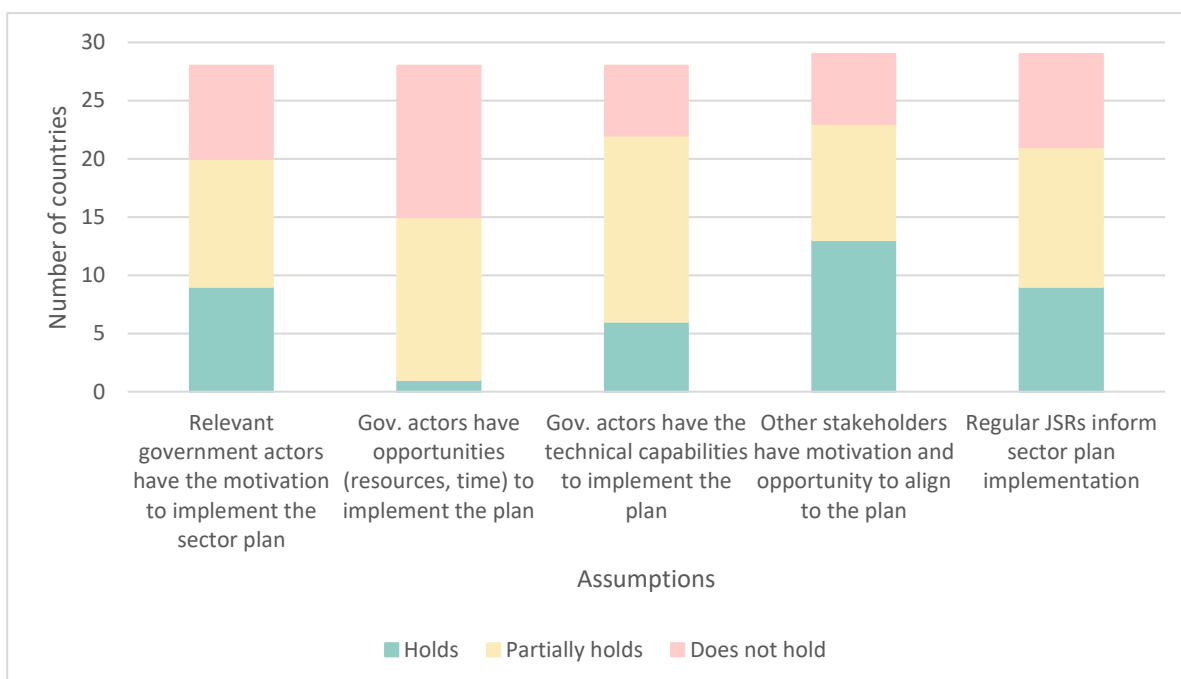
### Unplanned/unintended effects of GPE support

183. CLEs did not identify unplanned positive or unintended negative effects that specifically derived from GPE support to sector plan implementation.

## 6.4 Factors influencing sector plan implementation and related GPE contributions

184. The GPE country-level ToC included five underlying assumptions related to key factors that likely needed to be in place for effective sector plan implementation and for GPE to make contributions. [Figure 6.1](#) summarizes CLE findings on the extent to which these assumptions held true in the countries reviewed.

**Figure 6.1** Extent to which ToC assumptions on sector plan implementation held true (n= 29)



185. As shown in [Figure 6.1](#), there were considerable variations in the degree to which these assumptions were found to hold in the reviewed countries. While having adequate opportunities (including funding) was relatively weakest, gaps were noted in other assumptions, suggesting that progress in plan implementation is influenced by a combination of factors. Outlined below is a summary of insights deriving from CLEs on some specific factors in the broad categories covered by the ToC assumptions.

#### Government (MoE) Motivation

186. While governments across the reviewed countries have generally demonstrated the will to support improvements in the education sector, the degree to which this has translated into motivation to lead and foster systematic implementation of sector plans has varied. One key factor likely influencing motivation is

the degree to which involved government actors consider the sector plan relevant to their mandate. As noted in [Chapter 3](#), challenges were noted in some countries where responsibility for the education sector is shared between several ministries (e.g., in Bangladesh, DRC, Mali) and the sector plan was seen to primarily benefit basic education but lack relevance for ministries in charge of other sub-sectors.

187. Challenges related to the actual and perceived relevance of sector plans were noted in some federal states, such as in Nigeria. The country does not have a country-wide plan, and state-level education sector plans lack coherence and common oversight. On the positive side, CLEs in Bangladesh and Rwanda noted strong and unified government ownership of the sector plan across different entities and at both central and decentralized levels as a likely factor contributing to relatively strong plan implementation.

#### Government (MoE) Opportunities

188. The extent to which governments had access to adequate sector plan funding varied considerably between reviewed countries, with actual sector plan funding gaps ranging from 0 percent (Cambodia and Senegal), to 32 percent (Zambia) to over 70 percent (South Sudan).<sup>251</sup> Significant funding shortfalls, which negatively affected countries' ability to implement planned interventions and contributed to fragmented plan implementation, were also noted in Mozambique, the Kyrgyz Republic, Togo, Uganda and Zambia, for a variety of reasons. For example:

- In Zambia, the funding shortfall was caused principally by a reduced domestic education budget and lower than anticipated disbursement of domestic funds but was also affected by the suspension of financing from donors.
- In Togo, the 2014-2016 three-year action plan was underfinanced as neither the government nor development partners met their initial financing commitments.
- In Guinea, while sufficient resources had been allocated to meet the estimated costs of plan implementation, a shortfall occurred due to the government spending resources on items that it considered politically desirable but that had not been included in the actual sector plan.

189. Various other contextual changes likely negatively affected sector plan implementation. Examples include changes in government in Mozambique and Zimbabwe; recurrent teacher strikes in Senegal; cash shortages and reduced spending power due to a deteriorating economic situation, resulting in a lack of funding and a threat of education employee strikes in Zimbabwe; armed conflict such as in South Sudan, and political instability paired with health crises in the DRC.

#### Government (MoE) Capabilities

190. In the Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique and Rwanda, comparatively strong progress in plan implementation has likely been influenced by relatively strong MoE coordination capacity at the central level. Only in Rwanda, however, this appears to be a reflection of strong overall governance effectiveness as indicated by (government-wide) World Bank WGI rankings (see Appendix VIII).<sup>252</sup>

191. Gaps in existing government capabilities –related to technical knowledge and experience as well as to having the right number of qualified staff in place –likely impeded effective plan implementation in several other countries. Specific challenges included:

<sup>251</sup> Information on funding gaps was not available in all CLEs.

<sup>252</sup> As discussed in Chapter 5, DP (perceptions) of MoE and overall government capacity likely influence donor decisions around funding amounts and funding modalities.

- Turnover in senior MoE staff responsible for leading certain elements of sector plan implementation (e.g., in Zambia)
- Gaps in technical capabilities of central level MoE staff, for example related to statistical analysis (in Cambodia) or procurement (in Malawi and Mauritania), which led to delays in plan implementation and low absorption rates of available funding
- Lack of technical capabilities at the sub-national level, e.g., in Ethiopia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zimbabwe
- Lack of coordination between ministries sharing responsibility for plan implementation (e.g., in Zimbabwe),<sup>253</sup> or lack of clear definition of responsibilities within the MoE for ESP implementation and monitoring (e.g., in the DRC)
- The absence of realistic and user-friendly results frameworks to facilitate action and allow monitoring of progress in plan implementation, e.g., in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

#### Other stakeholders having the opportunity and motivation to align behind the plan

192. A few CLEs observed that in-country stakeholders generally rallied behind the sector plan and made targeted efforts to support its implementation (e.g., in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Kyrgyz Republic, Uganda and Zambia), possibly contributing to the relatively strong progress made in implementation in some of these countries. Most CLEs, however, found that while stakeholders, in particular DPs, generally stated their support of the sector plan, this had no visible influence on the priorities addressed through donor-funded projects, the targets or indicators that these projects aimed to achieve, or related progress reporting. This contributed to fragmented sector plan implementation and incomplete progress monitoring. CLEs found no evidence of DPs (including GPE) using the respective DCP government's own reports on sector plan implementation progress to serve their internal accountability requirements.

#### JSRs providing regular information to inform plan implementation

193. While the first part of this assumption (JSRs provide regular information) held true in most countries, the second part did not, i.e., with few exceptions, JSR data were not used systematically to inform sector plan implementation.<sup>254</sup> Please also see [Chapter 4](#) and Appendix VII. CLEs in Cambodia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, and Togo noted that the absence of effective monitoring paired, in some cases, with overly ambitious plans negatively influenced sector plan implementation.

<sup>253</sup> Such coordination would be important to ensure systematic and coherent implementation of a sector plan that cuts across education sub-sectors and should thus be the shared responsibility of the various ministries responsible for education.

<sup>254</sup> CLE assessments of this underlying assumption, as reflected in [Figure 6.1](#), were in some cases overly positive and focused on the fact that JSRs were in place, rather than assessing their use in informing implementation.

## 6.5 Implications for GPE

**Finding 24:** GPE's operational model, results framework and the actions of key GPE actors on the ground need to better reflect the assumed central role that sector plan implementation holds within GPE's country-level theory of change.

194. The GPE theory of change is centered on the hypothesis that sector plan implementation is key for bringing about desired changes at the system and, ultimately, the impact level. Findings from CLEs, however, show that, in practice, GPE pays (and, importantly, is perceived by in-country stakeholders to pay) comparatively little attention to actual plan implementation. Several factors contribute to this impression, which clearly contradicts what GPE wishes to stand for. These factors relate to various dimensions and key actors in GPE's distributed operational model.<sup>255</sup>

- The GPE Results Framework tracks sector plan quality, but not implementation progress nor national capacity for planning and implementation. While, as per ESPIG Policy, countries are required to submit annual implementation reports, these are not systematically assessed to examine the extent to which they report on the indicators and targets in the sector plan. Similarly, neither GPE's ESP Quality Assurance process nor ESPIG funding approval take into account information on the extent to which previous sector plans were implemented and monitored, and why.
- While the ESPDG mechanism provides both an incentive and resources for engaging in deliberate and systematic sector plan development, GPE does not offer similar support for ensuring regular and meaningful monitoring of plan implementation.<sup>256</sup> The VT is an improvement in this regard as it incentivizes efforts to monitor selected strategies and indicators but it does not cover monitoring of overall sector plan implementation and is not applicable in all countries.
- The Year 1 synthesis report noted uncertainty about the role of Secretariat country leads during plan implementation. The Secretariat has since issued explicit ToR for country leads (May 2019),<sup>257</sup> which clarify that the CLs' room for influencing sector plan implementation beyond the ESPIG is largely through advising the LEG and the DCP government. The extent to which such influence occurred in reviewed countries varied, depending on the respective CL.<sup>258</sup>
- Coordinating agencies, while broadly engaged in sector monitoring, do not usually play a distinct role in supporting overall sector plan implementation beyond, in collaboration with the GA, keeping LEG members informed about progress in ESPIG implementation.<sup>259</sup>

<sup>255</sup> A 'distributed' operational model reflects the fact that responsibilities for achieving GPE results are shared among various actors, including, though not limited to, the Secretariat, grant agents and coordinating agencies.

<sup>256</sup> While ESPIGs sometimes fund the conduct of JSRs, CLEs indicate that the use of these for monitoring plan implementation is mixed at best.

<sup>257</sup> Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/terms-reference-gpe-secretariats-country-level-engagement>. The TORs outline CL roles in relation to relationship management; support to sector coordination, analysis, planning and monitoring; and support to GPE grant program development, monitoring and implementation.

<sup>258</sup> The ToR for CLs were issued too recently to have made a change in reviewed countries by the time the CLEs were conducted. However, some CLEs noted that CLs already exercised their role in sector plan implementation according to how this role was described in the recent ToR.

<sup>259</sup> According to their Terms of Reference, CAs are expected to work "with the government and GA to ensure the LEG is updated regularly (at least twice a year) about aspects of grant implementation that impact achievement of the overarching ESP policies and

- According to their Terms of Reference, the grant agent's responsibilities for program implementation and monitoring include for ESPIG implementation to be *"in line with the endorsed ESP and endorsed program document."*<sup>260</sup> In addition, GAs are expected to support the government in regularly sharing with the Local Education Group policy related issues from ESPIG implementation relative to sector plan implementation. In practice, grant agents do share information on progress grant implementation, yet not specifically through the lens of what this progress means in relation to achieving specific sector plan objectives and targets.

195. The above-noted elements combined send the unintended message that when it comes to implementation, GPE is just like other donors in that it is primarily focused on ensuring that "GPE money" achieves its intended results, rather than adopting responsibility for supporting national capacity to ensure overall plan implementation monitoring, reporting and – through these – effective plan implementation.

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strategies that the ESPIG supports." See: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-terms-of-reference-coordinating-agencies.pdf>

<sup>260</sup> Terms of Reference for Grant Agents of the GPE Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG), p.3. Available at : [https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-08-gpe-grant-agent-standards-implementation-grant\\_1.pdf](https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2019-08-gpe-grant-agent-standards-implementation-grant_1.pdf)

## 7 Progress towards stronger education systems and links to ESP implementation<sup>261</sup>

### Key messages

- During the review periods, all reviewed countries made some, albeit modest, progress in strengthening their education systems. Slightly more progress was made in improving education access, and slightly less in strengthening sector management, though specifics vary by country.
- In several cases, sector plan implementation probably contributed to system level improvements, especially through improvements to school infrastructure and measures aiming to reduce the cost of education to families. In most cases, however, the absence of systematic monitoring, reporting or sector-plan specific evaluation does not permit verifying these links.

### 7.1 Overview

196. In the CLEs, the term ‘education system’ refers to the collection of and interactions between institutions (such as schools, ministry departments), actors (such as teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations), processes, policies and norms (explicit and implicit) that affect the educational status of citizens in the short and long run.<sup>262</sup> The GPE country-level theory of change (see [Section 1.2](#) and Appendix II) assumes that system-level change emerges as a result of effective and efficient sector plan implementation. As such, it is beyond the direct influence of GPE activities.<sup>263</sup>

197. When describing system-level change, the CLEs took into account changes in relevant system-level performance indicators (such as pupil/teacher ratios), as well as the introduction (or absence) of new/improved measures suited to systematically remove barriers to education access, equity, quality/relevance or sector management.<sup>264</sup>

198. [Table 7.1](#) provides a high-level summary of summative CLE findings about system-level changes during the review periods. It illustrates that, overall, reviewed countries made modest gains in strengthening their education systems, with slightly more progress documented in removing barriers to

<sup>261</sup> Addressing GEQ 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim as outlined in the country-level ToC for this assignment was: “*The implementation of realistic evidence-based sector plans contributes to positive changes at the level of the overall education system.*” (Contribution claim E).

<sup>262</sup> Moore, Mark. 2015. Creating Efficient, Effective, and Just Educational Systems through Multi-Sector Strategies of Reform. RISE Working Paper 15/004, Research on Improving Systems of Education, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>263</sup> Please refer to the Theory of Change presented in Section 1.2, which identifies system-level changes as a dimension expected to be achieved through effective sector plan implementation. GPE support activities (related to sector planning, mutual accountability and sector financing) are geared towards facilitating sector plan implementation, and, through this, *indirectly* contribute to subsequent system- and impact-level change.

<sup>264</sup> Interventions were considered relevant for strengthening the education system if they were likely to contribute to fostering institutional change, i.e., if they changed, or had the potential to change, ‘the rules of the game’. For example, while conducting of a certain number of teacher training workshops would not be considered as system relevant, the development of a comprehensive in-service training framework would be.



education access and in enhancing education quality and relevance than in relation to equity/inclusion and strengthening education sector management. The high-level assessment is based on the discussion of various specific indicators provided in [Section 7.2](#).

**Table 7.1** *Overview: degree of observed system-level changes<sup>265</sup>*

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	ACCESS	EQUITY AND INCLUSION	QUALITY AND RELEVANCE	SECTOR MANAGEMENT
<b>Prospective CLE</b>				
<b>DRC</b> (2016-2019)	Low	Low	Modest	Modest
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2014-2019)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Kenya</b> (2011-2019)	Considerable	Considerable	Modest	Modest
<b>Malawi</b> (2014-2019)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Mali</b> (2012-2019)	Low	Low	Low	Low
<b>Nepal</b> (2015-2019)	Considerable	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Nigeria</b> (2013-2019)	Modest	Modest	Low <sup>266</sup>	Modest
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2014-2019)	Modest	Modest	Considerable	Modest
<b>Summative CLE</b>				
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2015-2019)	Considerable	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2019)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)	Modest	Low	Modest	Modest
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2012-2019)	Modest	Modest	Considerable	Modest
<b>Mauritania</b> (2014-2018)	Considerable	Modest	Considerable	Modest
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-2019)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Rwanda</b> (2013-2018)	Considerable	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2018)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Considerable
<b>South Sudan</b> (2012-2018)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Modest
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2019)	Modest	Low	Considerable	Modest
<b>Togo</b> (2014-2019)	Considerable	Modest	Modest	Low
<b>Uganda</b> (2011-2019)	Low	Modest	Modest	Low
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2019)	Modest	Modest	Modest	Low

<sup>265</sup> The table does not include the seven summative CLEs completed in 2018 as these did not include the same high-level overview assessments as were included in the more recent CLE reports.

<sup>266</sup> For Nigeria and South Sudan, the CLE reports provided an assessment of 'modest' for changes in quality and relevance. The evaluation team adjusted these ratings to 'low' to align with assessments of other countries and to better reflect the detailed assessment discussed under finding 25.

## 7.2 Progress in strengthening education systems

### Progress in removing barriers to equitable education access and inclusion<sup>267</sup>

**Finding 25:** All reviewed countries made progress in removing some barriers to equitable education access, especially in improving school infrastructure and strengthening access to early childhood education. Only half of the countries put in place new measures (often isolated) to address the needs of learners with special needs, and less than half introduced measures to enhance gender equality in education access.

199. [Table 7.2](#) provides an overview of CLE findings on measures put in place by countries for removing barriers to equitable access to education, thereby combining the dimensions of ‘access’ and ‘equity’ given their close interrelation. The table does not reflect whether plan targets set by a country were achieved, given that such information was not available consistently across the reviewed countries. Reflecting the above noted understanding of systems as relating to ‘institutions, actors, processes, policies and norms’, changes in any of these (or combinations thereof) were considered in the CLEs.

200. The degree of progress made in certain parts of the education system is relative to the respective national context, which made it difficult to apply labels such as ‘significant’ or modest’ progress to the different types of changes in different countries. Therefore, in [Table 7.2](#) and [Table 7.3](#), green shading indicates that the country made at least some progress in the area during the review period, amber means that available data indicate the absence of improvements, red ([Table 7.3](#) only) marks worsening, while grey indicates a lack of data on the issue.

**Table 7.2** *New or expanded measures put in place during review period in relation to...*

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	ACCESS			EQUITY IN ACCESS AND INCLUSION		
	INCREASE THE # OF SCHOOLS RELATIVE TO # OF CHILDREN	IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	LOWER THE COST OF EDUCATION TO FAMILIES	MEET NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	ENHANCE GENDER EQUITY IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION <sup>268</sup>	MEET THE NEEDS OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN
<b>Prospective CLE</b>						
<b>DRC (2016-19)</b>	Amber	Green	Green	Grey	Amber	Amber
<b>Ethiopia (2014-19)</b>	Green	Green	Grey	Green	Amber	Grey
<b>Kenya (2011-19)</b>	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Green

<sup>267</sup> This sub-section deliberately combines the dimensions of ‘access’ and ‘equity and inclusion’ as they are closely intertwined, meaning that often system level changes relevant for the one, are also relevant for the other.

<sup>268</sup> While most of the actual measures put in place by countries focused on increasing girls’ access to education, the notion of gender equity in access encompasses both boys and girls.

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	ACCESS			EQUITY IN ACCESS AND INCLUSION		
	INCREASE THE # OF SCHOOLS RELATIVE TO # OF CHILDREN	IMPROVE ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	LOWER THE COST OF EDUCATION TO FAMILIES	MEET NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	ENHANCE GENDER EQUITY IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION <sup>268</sup>	MEET THE NEEDS OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN
Malawi (2014-19)						
Mali (2012-19)						
Nepal (2015-19)						
Nigeria (2013-19)						
Zimbabwe (2014-19)						
Summative CLE						
Bangladesh (2015-19)						
Burkina Faso (2012-17)						
Cambodia (2014-19)						
Cote d'Ivoire (2012-17)						
Guinea (2015-19)						
Guyana (2014-18)						
Kyrgyz Rep. (2012-19)						
Liberia (2010-17)						
Mauritania (2014-18)						
Mozambique (2012-19)						
Pakistan B. (2014-18)						
Pakistan S. (2014-18)						
Rwanda (2013-18)						
Senegal (2012-18)						
Sierra Leone (2014-18)						
South Sudan (2012-18)						
Tajikistan (2012-19)						
The Gambia (2014-18)						
Togo (2014-19)						
Uganda (2011-19)						
Zambia (2011-19)						

201. In the 29 countries/provinces reviewed, CLEs found that:

- **23 made some progress in increasing the number of schools relative to the number of children.** School construction often included, or specifically targeted, building new schools in previously underserved geographic areas.
- **19 introduced or expanded measures to improve access to early childhood education** and thereby enhance children's readiness for formal schooling, primarily through the construction of early childhood education centers/preschool classrooms (e.g., in Cambodia, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tajikistan and Zambia).
- **13 introduced targeted measures to reduce the cost of education to families; these included** introducing a school feeding program (e.g., Rwanda, Sierra Leone), expanding government funding of the school feeding program (e.g., Bangladesh, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Cambodia) and adopting a national school feeding policy (e.g., Bangladesh, Guinea, Togo). Other notable measures aimed at reducing the costs of education included: (i) a government-funded stipend program for primary and secondary students in Bangladesh; (ii) the continuation and expansion of scholarships for primary and lower secondary students, which was previously DP-led, by the MoE of Cambodia; (iii) the abolition of school fees and levies combined with school grants in The Gambia.
- **15 made modest progress in addressing the needs of learners with special needs.** While all reviewed sector plans indicated at least a basic commitment to ensuring equitable access to education, most new measures put in place were relatively modest. Some laid the foundation for further change (e.g., policies/strategies for inclusive education for students with disabilities in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Kyrgyz Republic, Rwanda) but, so far, with no or limited related action; others were pilot interventions<sup>269</sup> with no information on whether and how these might be sustained and scaled up. See [Box 7.1](#), however, for an example of a policy that was part of a more comprehensive 'package' of changes.
- **12 introduced measures to strengthen gender equity in education.**<sup>270</sup> Please note that CLEs focused on detecting *new or expanded* measures, not existing provisions to address gender equality and equality.<sup>271</sup> Some countries introduced pilot projects to improve education access for girls (e.g., in Mauritania) which have yet to be scaled up, while in other countries activities aimed at improving gender equality were underfunded and limited in scope (e.g., in Mozambique). New measures which were introduced included a plan to mainstream gender across plan initiatives in Bangladesh, nationwide cash transfers for girls' education in South Sudan, scholarships for female students in Nigeria, the adoption of the National Strategic Plan on Violence Against Children in Uganda, which utilizes a gender-responsive approach to emphasize the specific impact of sexual violence on girls, and the appointment of a gender equity and social inclusion focal person in Nepal.

#### Box 7.1: Better addressing the needs of learners with special needs

In Zimbabwe, the introduction of a new policy for children with disabilities and strengthening of the learner welfare services division in the MoE has led to more facilities being available for in-school screening of children with visual or hearing impairments, better provision of assistive devices, and more efforts to mainstream children with special needs into educational services.

<sup>269</sup> E.g., program for raising awareness on disability education undertaken in two regions in Togo.

<sup>270</sup> The identified examples all focused on ensuring gender equity in access to education. The CLEs did not observe specific measures put in place to enhance gender equality, e.g., adapting education content or learning strategies to the varying needs of girls and boys.

<sup>271</sup> As discussed in chapter 5, several countries have already achieved gender parity in access, completion and/or learning.

- **11 made modest progress in meeting the needs of out-of-school children.** CLEs obtained very limited data on new measures put in place to meet the needs of these children. In Mauritania, efforts centered on a pilot project introducing science and mathematics in the curriculum taught in mahadras (religious schools), and training mahadra teachers in these disciplines. In Bangladesh, the government passed a Non-Formal Education Act in 2014 and a National Skills Development Policy in 2011, and launched a flagship initiative, Second Chance Education, all aimed at reducing the number of out-of-school children in the country.

202. While some of these observed measures are promising ways of addressing barriers to education access and equity, efforts have often been rolled out on a relatively small (pilot) scale and largely through external funding. They will likely require substantial further investment to have sustainable effects. Some of the remaining barriers to equitable education access are rooted in socio-economic factors (e.g., poverty, religious beliefs, cultural norms, conflict) that can be addressed only partially through education-specific efforts.

### Progress in removing barriers to quality education

**Finding 26:** Across countries, new or expanded measures have been put in place to address barriers to quality education. However, many of these are still in early stages of implementation and/or limited in scope. As such, it is not yet possible to identify their effects on learning.

203. [Table 7.3](#) provides an overview of CLE findings on measures put in place by countries to enhance the quality of education. Again, given data limitations, the table does not indicate whether sector plan targets set by the country were achieved, nor does it assess the extent of improvements made in each country as either ‘strong’ or ‘modest’.

204. Within the reviewed sample, the DRC, Mali, Nigeria and South Sudan made the least progress in introducing new measures to remove barriers to quality education. Except for Mali, these countries had also made the least progress in sector plan implementation. All four countries are categorized as FCAC and score low on WGI indicators related to governance effectiveness and political stability/absence of violence.

**Table 7.3** Progress in removing barriers to quality education during review periods<sup>272</sup>

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING <sup>273</sup>	IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING <sup>274</sup>	AVAIL- ABILITY OF TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS	BASIC EDU. CURRI- CULA <sup>275</sup>	RECRUIT- MENT OF (TRAINED) TEACHERS	MORE EQUITABLE DEPLOY- MENT OF TEACHERS
<b>Prospective CLE</b>						
<b>DRC (2016-2019)</b>	Unclear <sup>276</sup>					

<sup>272</sup> The indicators in the table reflect key measures for education quality outlined in the evaluation matrix, which was informed by key indicators in the GPE 2020 results framework. The existence or absence of Learning Assessment systems is also of importance in this context but is discussed under finding 24 below.

<sup>273</sup> Including changes made to related policies, guidelines, curricula, capacity of training institutions etc.

<sup>274</sup> Ditto

<sup>275</sup> E.g., review/revisions to ensure curriculum relevance.

<sup>276</sup> Measures planned, but implementation status is unclear.

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING <sup>273</sup>	IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING <sup>274</sup>	AVAIL- ABILITY OF TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS	BASIC EDU. CURRI- CULA <sup>275</sup>	RECRUIT- MENT OF (TRAINED) TEACHERS	MORE EQUITABLE DEPLOY- MENT OF TEACHERS
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2014-2019)						
<b>Kenya</b> (2011-2019)	Unclear <sup>277</sup>					
<b>Malawi</b> (2014-2019)						
<b>Mali</b> (2012-2019)						
<b>Nepal</b> (2015-2019)						
<b>Nigeria</b> (2013-2019)						
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2014-2019)						
<b>Summative CLEs</b>						
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2015-2019)						
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2012-2017)						
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2019)						
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2012-2017)						
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)						
<b>Kyrgyz Rep.</b> (2012-2019)						
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-2017)						
<b>Mauritania</b> (2014-2018)						
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-2019)						
<b>Pakistan Bal.</b> (2014-2018)						
<b>Pakistan Sindh</b> (2014-2018)						
<b>Rwanda</b> (2013-2018)						
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2018)						
<b>Sierra Leone</b> (2014-2018)	<sup>278</sup>					
<b>South Sudan</b> (2012-2018)						
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2019)						
<b>The Gambia</b> (2014-2018)						
<b>Togo</b> (2014-2019)			Unclear <sup>279</sup>			
<b>Uganda</b> (2011-2019)						
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2019)						

<sup>277</sup> Measures planned, but implementation status is unclear.

<sup>278</sup> Early Childhood Development (ECD) only.

<sup>279</sup> Due to conflicting data on student-to-textbook ratios at the primary level, it is not clear whether and how the availability of learning materials changed.

205. In the 29 countries/provinces reviewed, CLEs found that:

- **19 put measures in place to enhance pre-service teacher training.** These included the construction of more teacher training institutions (e.g., in Cote d'Ivoire, Guyana, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Togo, Uganda), revisions to teacher training programs to incorporate changes in parts of the curriculum (e.g., in Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zambia), the addition of new teacher training programs (e.g., program for pre-primary teacher training in Guinea, and a BA fast-track program for teachers in Cambodia to earn bachelor's degrees), and an expansion in the number of teachers being graduated from relevant courses (in Ethiopia).
- **16 made improvements to in-service teacher training.** Examples of significant improvements include the adoption of policies on Teacher Career Pathways and Continuous Professional Development in Cambodia, which provided a framework for the delivery of in-service training; the introduction of a program and curriculum allowing teachers to obtain formal qualifications through in-service training in Rwanda; and the rolling out of a national in-service teacher training schemes in the Kyrgyz Republic and in Pakistan's Balochistan and Sindh provinces. In several countries (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Zambia), efforts to improve in-service training were fragmented, limited in scope, and with questionable sustainability.
- **19 made progress in improving the availability of teaching and learning materials,** although ensuring adequate, equitable and consistent access to such materials remains a challenge across countries. A substantial number of textbooks were produced and distributed as planned in several countries (e.g., in Cambodia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda), and new processes for the regulation of, or procurement of services for, textbook printing were put in place in some others (e.g., in Kyrgyz Republic and Mozambique). In several countries, however, the availability of textbooks worsened (Guinea, The Gambia), or remained stagnant (e.g., Ethiopia, South Sudan and Zambia). Likely reasons for shortfalls included delays in acquisition of textbooks due to changes in procurement practices (e.g. in Zambia) and insufficient storage facilities within schools (e.g., in Ethiopia).
- **23 took steps to improve parts of basic education curricula, but implementation progress has varied.** In Cambodia and South Sudan, curricula for all education levels from pre-primary to upper secondary were revised, while in other countries curricula were revised for specific levels or years (e.g., for grades 1-5 in Bangladesh, grade 1 and secondary level in Mozambique, and pre-primary and primary education in Togo and Uganda). Of note, several countries developed new competency-based curricula for various levels of education (e.g., in Bangladesh, Rwanda, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uganda), which prioritize developing skills and capabilities to support shifts towards technology-led economies. Consulted stakeholders across countries indicated high interest in reforming curricula, and as is to be expected, they also had varying views on what such reforms should strive to achieve.<sup>280</sup>
- **14 put in place or continued efforts to increase the recruitment of trained teachers.** Notable examples include: a new teacher development framework in the Kyrgyz Republic, entitled "The New Teacher," aimed at improving the attractiveness of teaching as a profession, raising training requirements to become a teacher coupled with the strengthening the framework for in-service teacher training in Senegal, and the introduction of programs in Cambodia and Rwanda for

<sup>280</sup> Differing and sometimes competing priorities in this regard included the aim to ensure employability of school graduates, the intent to overcome reflections of colonial traditions and values in national curricula, as well as better tailoring learning content to the specific needs of different socio-cultural groups and/or learners with special needs.



unqualified teachers to obtain formal qualifications. At the same time, in Tajikistan, the MoE lowered the qualifications for early childhood and secondary teachers in order to keep up with demand. In several visited countries (e.g., Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, The Gambia) stakeholders noted that having a formal teaching degree does not guarantee that the individual knows how to teach (well).

- **5 made efforts to ensure more equitable deployment of teachers** (Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania and Mali). In Mauritania, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) started to recruit teachers on a contractual basis, allowing the Regional Education Directors (DREN) to recruit teachers based on the needs of their regions. As a result, DREN are more easily able to recruit qualified teachers in mathematics and science in regions where these qualifications are lacking. In Guinea, the marginal increase in equitable allocation of teachers in public primary schools was likely due to the ongoing implementation of a “transfer scale” aimed at providing a formula for equitable teacher deployment, though stakeholders noted ongoing issues with implementation of the scale. In The Gambia, the government (with GPE/WB support) introduced stipends for teacher trainees, with additional incentives for those studying to teach mathematics, in order to fill related capacity gaps in the system. Those receiving the stipends commit themselves to teaching for at least two years following their graduation.

206. CLEs indicate that teachers across the reviewed countries often face challenging working environments in terms of having adequate tools (teaching and learning materials, relevant curricula and teaching guides) to help them provide good quality education. Efforts to improve conditions were usually dependent on external funding and varied in their geographic and/or thematic scope, duration, and sustainability. This was especially the case for in-service training efforts, which, across countries, tended to be fragmented and ad-hoc (e.g., one-time trainings) rather than coherent systems for ongoing professional development. Changes in education quality are likely to take longer than improvements in education access given that they require changes in human behavior and social norms. Also, agreeing on what good quality education constitutes in a particular context is a more complex and potentially contentious issue than ensuring physical access, given that related needs, priorities and demands are highly diverse across and within jurisdictions.

### Progress in strengthening education sector management

**Finding 27:** All countries put in place measures to strengthen elements of education sector management, including in relation to data collection, analysis and synthesis. These efforts tended to be fragmented and significant weaknesses in sector management capacity and systems remain in most countries.

207. [Table 7.4](#) summarizes relevant insights deriving from the CLEs.

**Table 7.4** *State of, and progress in, sector management during the CLE review periods*<sup>281</sup>

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN PLACE? <sup>282</sup>	EMIS EXISTS AND FUNCTIONS? <sup>283</sup>	IMPROVE- MENTS IN MOE STAFF CAPACITY TO COLLECT, ANALYZE, SYNTHESIZE DATA?	OTHER CHANGES IN MOE/OTHER KEY AGENCIES' INST. CAPACITY?	CHANGES IN EMPOWER- ING ACTORS AT REGIONAL OR SCHOOL LEVELS?
<b>Prospective CLE</b>					
<b>DRC</b> (2016-2019)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	No	No	No
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2014-2019)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	No	No	No
<b>Kenya</b> (2011-2019)	Established	Yes	Yes, but limitations	No	Yes
<b>Malawi</b> (2014-2019)	Established	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Mali</b> (2012-2018)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	Yes	No	No
<b>Nepal</b> (2015-2019)	Established	Yes	Yes, but limitations	No data	Yes, but limitations
<b>Nigeria</b> (2013-2019)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	No	No	Yes
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2014-2019)	Established	Yes	Yes, but limitations	Yes	No
<b>Summative CLE</b>					
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2015-2019)	Established	Yes, but limitations	No data	No	No
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2012-2017)	Established	Yes	Yes	No data	Yes
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2019)	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	Yes
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2012-2017)	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	Yes
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2019)	Established	Yes, but limitations	Yes, but limitations	Yes, isolated	Yes, isolated

<sup>281</sup> Sector management encompasses a wide range of issues, some of which varied by country. The issues summarized in the table are a combination of key indicators in the GPE 2020 Results Framework (e.g., existence of EMIS and LAS) and issues that had been identified as requiring improvement in several of the CLEs.

<sup>282</sup> As per GPE results framework indicator 15 (2018 data). The ratings are based on the existence of both examinations and large-scale assessments that meet quality standards. For the methodology used by the Secretariat to assess the existence and quality of LAS, see: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/methodology-sheet-gpe-result-indicator-15>. For additional country-specific details please see Appendix XI. In countries where a LAS was rated as 'under development', some learning data may be collected but are not publicly accessible, as was the case, for example, in Mauritania.

<sup>283</sup> Ratings based on CLE findings and on GPE indicator 14, which measures the proportion of countries reporting on at least 10 out of 12 key indicators to UIS. Countries coded green meet this benchmark (as per 2018 RF data), whereas countries coded amber do not. Comments about limitations derive from gaps/weaknesses reflected in EMIS functioning and/or use observed by CLEs.

COUNTRY (REVIEW PERIOD)	LEARNING ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN PLACE? <sup>282</sup>	EMIS EXISTS AND FUNCTIONS? <sup>283</sup>	IMPROVE- MENTS IN MOE STAFF CAPACITY TO COLLECT, ANALYZE, SYNTHESIZE DATA?	OTHER CHANGES IN MOE/OTHER KEY AGENCIES' INST. CAPACITY?	CHANGES IN EMPOWER- ING ACTORS AT REGIONAL OR SCHOOL LEVELS?
<b>Guyana</b> (2014-2018)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	Yes	No data	No data
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2012-2019)	Nascent	Yes, but limitations	No	Yes	No
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-2017)	Nascent	Yes, but limitations	Yes	Yes, isolated	Yes, isolated
<b>Mauritania</b> (2014-2018)	Under development	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	Yes, isolated
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-2019)	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	Yes
<b>Pakistan Balochistan</b> (2014-2018)	Established <sup>284</sup>	Yes, but limitations	Yes	No data	Yes
<b>Pakistan Sindh</b> (2014-2018)	Established <sup>285</sup>	Yes, but limitations	Yes	No data	Yes
<b>Rwanda</b> (2013-2018)	Established	Yes, but limitations	No data	Yes	Yes
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2018)	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Sierra Leone</b> (2014-2018)	Under development	Yes, but limitations	Yes	Yes, isolated	No
<b>South Sudan</b> (2012-2018)	Nascent	Yes, but limitations	No data	Yes, isolated	No
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2019)	Nascent	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	No
<b>The Gambia</b> (2014-2018)	Established	Yes	Yes	Yes, isolated	No data
<b>Togo</b> (2014-2019)	Established	Yes, but limitations	Yes, but limitations	No	Yes, isolated
<b>Uganda</b> (2011-2019)	Established	Yes, but limitations	No	No	Yes, isolated
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2019)	Established	Yes, but limitations	No	No	Yes, isolated

<sup>284</sup> At the federal level through the National Education Assessment System.

<sup>285</sup> At the federal level through the National Education Assessment System, as well as through the Sindh Standardized Achievement Test.

208. Key observations on the five indicators summarized in the table are outlined below. Overall, these confirm insights presented in the Year 1 synthesis report. CLEs found that, out of the 29 countries and provinces reviewed:

- **18 have an established Learning Assessment System (LAS)** in place that includes both examinations and large-scale learning assessments<sup>286</sup> for different levels. For example, during the review periods, several countries participated in international or regional learning assessments such as PISA-D (e.g., Cambodia), PASEC (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo) and SACMEQ (e.g., Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Some also administered EGRA and/or EGMA (e.g., Cambodia, Guinea, Rwanda, Kyrgyz Republic and Zambia). In several countries (e.g., Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda) citizen-led assessments of student learning complement government-led LAS, or fill data gaps where a formal LAS has not yet been established, such as in Mali. Despite the formal existence of LAS, several CLEs had difficulty finding data on changes in learning outcomes during the core periods reviewed. Reasons for this are discussed in Chapter 8.
- **All 29 had Education Management Information Systems in place, but only 11 met the GPE benchmark of reporting on at least 10 of 12 key indicators to UIS.** During the CLE review periods, some countries put in place efforts to strengthen their EMIS, including Rwanda, by harmonizing different existing data collection and data storage systems and by upgrading the school data management system; and Cambodia and Nepal, by introducing web-based EMIS to improve the timeliness and transparency of data collection. At least 16 countries also faced limitations in their EMIS due to: lack of financial resources for wider or more frequent data collection (e.g., in Guinea and Togo), lack of credibility of national census data (e.g., in Guinea), lack of staff at various organizational levels to ensure consistent data collection (e.g., in Bangladesh), and the physical challenges related to collecting reliable data in remote regions and/or areas without electricity and internet (e.g., in Ethiopia). Also, as already noted in [Chapter 5](#), the utilization of EMIS data for decision making was limited in most countries.
- **19 made improvements in the Ministry of Education's ability to collect and/or analyze sector data.** These included the publishing of educational statistics annually (e.g., Cambodia, Guinea) and increased use of ICT or digital modes of data collection/entry (e.g., in Guinea, Mozambique), as well as strengthening monitoring capacity at district level in Malawi. As noted in the Year 1 synthesis report, staff turnover is one of the main factors continuously threatening the sustainability of achievements: trained staff often move from the MoE to other, more senior government positions, or are recruited by higher-paying donors or international non-governmental organizations.
- **15 made other changes in institutional capacities of MoEs<sup>287</sup>** that were often sporadic and not visibly derived from overarching and longer-term strategies for organizational strengthening. This

<sup>286</sup> National or international large-scale assessments. As per GPE indicator 15 methodology, Examinations are categorized as 'established' if they are offered annually or more frequently and to all eligible individuals; if the assessment is offered for at least one subject and for at least one level of basic education; if a permanent agency, institution or office conducts the assessment; and if there is a publicly available methodology/technical document on the assessment or if the assessment results are made available to the public within 12 months. Large-scale assessments are categorized as 'established' if the assessment has been carried out at least twice at the basic education level; most recently between 2011 and 2015; the assessment is offered for at least one subject and for at least one level of basic education; the assessment is based on official learning standards/curriculum; a permanent agency, institution or office conducts the assessment, and if its methodology/technical document or the assessment results are (made) available to the public.

<sup>287</sup> The evaluation team understands the notion of institutional capacity to encompass organizational structures, processes, policies, frameworks, as well as individual and collective capabilities of leadership and staff.

corresponds to the observation in [Chapter 3](#) that sector plans usually provide for limited, if any, analysis of existing MoE capacity gaps (in terms of structures, resources and technical capabilities required for effective plan implementation) and of suitable strategies to address them. Notable examples of longer-term strategies included the Master Plan for Capacity Development 2014-2018 in Cambodia and the Education Leadership and Management program in Zambia.

- **17 made progress in strengthening the ownership of education reforms as well as related capabilities of stakeholders at regional, local/community levels.** Examples include the delivery of training to teachers and school directors in school management (e.g., in Cambodia, Guinea, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda), and delivery of training to subnational government actors (i.e., at the district or provincial level) on school supervision (e.g., Mozambique), financial and personnel management (e.g., Senegal), and training of School Based Management Committees (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria). In Nepal, the ongoing process of federalization has the potential to improve education sector dialogue, monitoring and accountability by devolving authority to the local level, closer to the schools, students and communities, yet also poses challenges in terms of ensuring consistency of available services.

### 7.3 Likely links to sector plan implementation

**Finding 28:** There is insufficient evidence to reliably assess the extent to which sector plan implementation has driven system-level improvements. Some ESPIG-funded interventions, such as related to school construction, constitute likely exceptions.

209. All CLEs identified varying degrees of system-level change that reflected priorities outlined in the education sector plans implemented during the review period. Almost all the observed changes had been obtained with financial and technical support from development partners including, or in some cases solely, through GPE ESPIG-funded components. ESPIGs are explicitly intended to support sector plan implementation. As such, system-level changes such as increases in the number of classrooms compared to the number of children can in several cases (e.g., in Guinea, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Sudan) be at least partly linked to ESPIG-funded elements of sector plan implementation. Similarly, sector plan implementation through ESPIG-funded interventions led to curriculum improvements, e.g., in Mozambique.

210. For other development partners in the reviewed countries, however, it was impossible to assess whether and to what extent their support – which led to many other of the noted system-level improvements – had been driven or even informed by the sector plan, and, therefore, whether they constituted plan implementation. This links back to the observations that DPs (and ESPIG grant agents) do not report ‘on plan’. As such, while CLEs do not indicate that there is *no* link between plan implementation and system-level change, available evidence does not neither permit verifying assumed such links based on actual evidence, nor elaborating on the specific degree to which, or on key factors determining when and why, this is the case.

## 7.4 Implications for GPE

**Finding 29:** GPE needs to review how it can help strengthen national capacity to monitor and oversee sector plan implementation including development partners' contributions to plan implementation.

211. In the country-level ToC, the key underlying assumption logically linking sector plan implementation to system-level changes is that initiatives which result in system-level improvements were driven (or at least guided) by the sector plan and planning process.<sup>288</sup> Evidence collected in CLEs does not prove or disprove this assumption. However, the fact that governments and development partners typically do not report against sector plan objectives is one indication that the assumed link is weak at best. This raises questions about (i) how GPE can strengthen national capacity to monitor and oversee sector plan implementation including DPs' contributions to this implementation, and (ii) whether and how GPE can influence DPs to put more effort into implementing, monitoring and reporting on their contributions through the lens of the sector plan.

212. In the context of how to facilitate system-level change, one other observation may be relevant for GPE: The Mali CLE noted a keen interest among government stakeholders to learn more about innovative approaches in other countries to remove barriers to education access, equity, quality and sector management. This points to the potential role of South-South learning and exchange in facilitating change. However, this potential vehicle for exchange is not yet reflected in sector plan preparation, dialogue, monitoring or plan implementation, and CLEs found no examples of existing GPE mechanisms<sup>289</sup> having influenced system level improvements.

<sup>288</sup> The country-level ToC had formulated four assumptions as underlying the contribution claim linking sector plan implementation to system level change. These were that sector plan implementation would lead to improvements in (i) sector management; (ii) learning and (iii) equity, as well as (iv) that there is sufficient national capacity to analyze and report on system level data. However, in compiling the synthesis report the evaluation team realized that these statements did not actually constitute *assumptions* in the sense of identifying key factors that needed to be in place for the different elements in the ToC to link to each other, but that, instead, they were merely reformulations of the envisaged *contribution claim*. As such, the original 'assumptions' formulated in the ToC are not further elaborated on here.

<sup>289</sup> The Global and Regional Activities program (GRA), given that the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) is too recent to have made a contribution during the review periods.

## 8 Progress towards stronger learning outcomes and equity<sup>290</sup>

### Key messages

- The limited data available on basic education learning outcomes in 29 countries and provinces during the review periods indicate modest improvements in seven, stagnating results in five, and deterioration in two. For the remaining 15 countries available data were insufficient to identify trends. Where learning improved, changes started from very low levels and tended to be modest.
- Different dimensions of equity in education, including gender parity indices of access, completion and out-of-school rates, improved in more than half of reviewed countries. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of persistent inequities in both access and learning based on, among other factors, learners' sex, income level and geographic location.
- There is insufficient data across the reviewed countries to make systematic evidence-based claims on links between system-level changes that occurred during the review periods and impact-level trends.

### 8.1 Observed changes in learning outcomes and equity of learning

#### Data limitations

**Finding 30:** Missing, incomplete and sometimes unreliable data make it difficult to identify and compare progress in learning outcomes overall, and in relation to meeting the education needs of learners with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

213. Varying degrees of data limitations in the reviewed countries made it difficult for CLEs to compile reliable information on trends in learning outcomes and various aspects of equity for the periods covered by the evaluations. Data limitations included absence of data on certain indicators, incomplete time series data, poor data quality, non-comparable data due to different methodologies and studies and lack of public access to existing data. See also [Box 8.1](#).

#### Box 8.1: UNESCO (2019) on global data limitations

"SDG 4 has presented a unique opportunity to expand the scope of education monitoring, since SDG 4 places a distinct emphasis on outcomes, disaggregation by individual demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and the content of education. However, the methodologies and measurement tools for several of these indicators are still under development. [...]"

To date, data availability – in terms of both country coverage and time series – is a major constraint. The lack of effective international cooperation is a key factor that has held back progress. Fewer than half of countries report data on flagship indicators, such as learning outcomes in primary and secondary education."<sup>291</sup>

<sup>290</sup> Addressing GEQ 3.1 and 3.2 in the evaluation matrix. The related contribution claim as outlined in the country-level ToC was: "Education system-level improvements result in *improved learning outcomes* and in *improved equity, gender equality, and inclusion* in education". (Contribution claim F).

<sup>291</sup> UNESCO (2019): Meeting Commitments. Are countries on track to achieve SDG 4? (Page 12). Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369009>.



214. An additional challenge is that impact-level data typically become available only after a time lag of up to five years (especially for learning outcomes). In most cases, CLEs had access to data for only part of the review period, and these data likely reflected the effects of improvements that had taken place before the core review period. As a result, available information did not permit drawing verifiable conclusions related to likely linkages between ESP implementation and resulting system-level improvements on the one hand and impact-level trends on the other. This is further discussed in [Section 8.3](#).<sup>292</sup>

## Learning outcomes

**Finding 31:** The available data on basic education learning outcomes during the review periods indicate modest improvements in seven countries, stagnating results in five, and deteriorating results in two out of 29 countries and provinces. For the remaining 15 countries, there was insufficient data to reliably identify trends.

215. [Table 8.1](#) provides a high-level overview of trends in learning outcomes in the countries reviewed. The information comes from national or international large-scale assessments carried out in the reviewed countries. Individual country data are provided in Appendix XI. Please note the table summarizes findings on progress made relative to in-country baselines, and does not assess objective and comparable levels of learning outcomes across countries. These absolute levels of learning are low across the reviewed countries.

**Table 8.1** Overview: Trends in learning outcomes and likely links to observed system-level changes

DEGREE OF IMPROVEMENT MADE DURING REVIEW PERIOD <sup>293</sup>	LIKELIHOOD THAT CHANGES WERE INFLUENCED BY SYSTEM CHANGES DURING THE CLE REVIEW PERIOD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable: None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable: None</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modest: Guinea, Kenya, Pakistan (both Balochistan and Sindh), The Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modest: Kenya</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None (stagnating): Bangladesh, Mozambique, Nepal, Senegal,<sup>294</sup> Uganda</li> <li>Deterioration: Burkina Faso, Rwanda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low: Bangladesh, Guinea, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, The Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient data: Cambodia,<sup>295</sup> Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Guyana, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable/insufficient data: Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Ethiopia, Guyana, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Tajikistan, The Gambia, Togo, Uganda</li> </ul>

<sup>292</sup> See also limitations to the evaluation addressed in Chapter 1.2.

<sup>293</sup> Please see Appendix XI for information on the specific large-scale assessments that the reported trend in learning outcomes is based on.

<sup>294</sup> Results of the annual national learning assessments are inconclusive in terms of trends, with the proportion of students scoring at or above expected levels fluctuating for every level between 2013 and 2017.

<sup>295</sup> While Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, Malawi and Togo do have 'established' LAS as per GPE indicator 15, at the time of the CLEs these had not yet produced several comparable data points that would have allowed identifying changes during the review periods. For example, in Malawi the LAS had produced a baseline assessment (2017) for standard 2 students, but not yet any follow-up assessments that would identify trends.

216. The number of countries with minimally improving, stagnating or worsening learning outcomes gives cause for concern. CLE findings mirror UNESCO's global level observation that "of those who are in school, fewer than one in two reach a minimum level of proficiency in reading and mathematics by the end of primary; in sub-Saharan Africa, only one in ten do so."<sup>297</sup> Even when learning outcomes are progressing, they are typically improving from such low levels that even with improvements levels remain low, and/or they apply to only some education levels or groups of learners. See [Box 8.2](#) for examples.

217. The available evidence base on equity of learning is very limited. Where data were available, they indicated relatively small and, overall, diminishing differences based on learners' sex albeit with variations<sup>298</sup> and sometimes in the favor of boys and sometimes in the favor of girls, while showing significant discrepancies based on other factors. The examples below draw on information available not only from established large-scale assessments but also national examinations and citizen-led assessments.

- Learners in urban areas performed better than those in rural ones, for example in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tajikistan.
- Children from families in the poorest quintile performed worse than those from the wealthiest quintile, e.g., in Cambodia, Mozambique, Senegal.
- Lower learning outcomes among children in refugee communities as compared to host communities were observed in Uganda.
- Children in private schools tended to outperform those in public schools, e.g., in Guinea and Senegal.

#### Box 8.2: Improvements in learning outcomes

In Guinea, early grade reading scores improved from an average score of 23.85 in 2014 to 31.81 in 2016 and 41.66 in 2019. Despite the improvement, mean scores remain low.

In The Gambia, National Assessment Tests for Grade 3 and 5 students indicate improving scores in average reading fluency in the 2007-2016 period, though overall levels remain low. Results for reading comprehension either stagnated (grade 1) or deteriorated (grades 2 and 3) but grade 5 results improved for all subjects.

In Zambia, National Learning Assessment results for Grade 5 for 2012-2016 show slight improvements in Zambian language, marginal gain in English, but slight decrease in Mathematics.

In Zimbabwe, early learning assessment scores<sup>296</sup> for 2015-2018 show a steady increase in English reading scores achieved by Grade 2 students, but a decrease in the scores achieved in math over the same period.

In Kenya, Uwezo scores for 2011 to 2014 show minimally improved results in reading and mathematics, with overall scores remaining low.

<sup>296</sup> Through the Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA).

<sup>297</sup> UNESCO 2019.

<sup>298</sup> Sometimes in the favor of boys and sometimes in the favor of girls, varying by country but also by education level.

## 8.2 Observed changes in access, and equity and inclusion in access

**Finding 32:** Access to basic education improved in all but one of the reviewed countries. More than half of countries made improvements in providing more equitable education access. At the same time, there is evidence of persistent inequities in access for learners with special needs and based on individuals' gender, income level and geographic location.

218. [Table 8.2](#) illustrates country progress during the review periods in relation to selected indicators (where data were available). See Appendix XII for additional information.

**Table 8.2** *Changes in selected indicators related to access, and equity in access*

COUNTRY (PERIOD)	PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT RATE (GER AND NER)	PRIMARY ENROLLMENT (GER AND NER)	LOWER SECONDARY ENROLLMENT (GER/NER)	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY ENROLLMENT	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) COMPLETION RATES <sup>299</sup>	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY COMPLETION	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) <sup>300</sup> OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES	GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY OUT- OF-SCHOOL RATES
<b>Prospective CLE</b>								
<b>DRC</b> (2014-2018)	GER improved	GER worsened	GER improved	Stagnated	PCR worsened	Improved	Improved	No data
<b>Ethiopia</b> (2014-2019)	GER improved	GER improved	GER improved	Worsened	PCR improved	No data	No data	No data
<b>Kenya</b> (2013-2017)	GER improved	Stable (high)	GER improved	Stable (high)	PCR stable (high)	No data	No data	No data
<b>Malawi</b> (2017-2019)	No data	GER and NER improved	GER stagnated	Stagnated	PCR stagnated	Improved	Worsened	No data
<b>Mali</b> (2013-2017)	GER improved	GER improved	GER Worsened	Stagnated	PCR worsened	No data	Worsened for primary, improved for lower- secondary	No data
<b>Nepal</b> (2012-2019)	GER improved	GER improved	GER improved	Improved	PCR improved	Improved	Worsened	No data
<b>Nigeria</b> (2011-2017)	GER worsened nationally and improved in NIPEP states	GER worsened nationally	GER worsened	Improved nationally	PCR worsened nationally and improved in NIPEP states	No data	No data	No data
<b>Zimbabwe</b> (2012-2017)	GER Improved	GER and NER worsened	GER stagnated	Stagnated	PCR stagnated	Stagnated	No data (though dropout rates increased)	No data

<sup>299</sup> Primary Completion Rates (PCR) measured as gross intake ratio to the last grade of basic education and Lower Secondary Completion Rate (LSCR) where data were available.<sup>300</sup> Where data were available.

COUNTRY (PERIOD)	PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT RATE (GER AND NER)	PRIMARY ENROLLMENT (GER AND NER)	LOWER SECONDARY ENROLLMENT (GER/NER)	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY ENROLLMENT	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) COMPLETION RATES <sup>299</sup>	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY COMPLETION	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) <sup>300</sup> OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES	GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY OUT- OF-SCHOOL RATES
<b>Summative CLE</b>								
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2011-2018)	NER and GER improved	GER worsened, NER improved	GER and NER improved <sup>301</sup>	Stable (high) <sup>302</sup>	PCR improved	Improved	No data <sup>303</sup>	Worsening more for girls than for boys
<b>Burkina Faso</b> (2010-2017)	GER worsened	GER and NER improved	GER and NER improved	Improved	PCR and LSCR improved	No data	Improved	Stagnating
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2018)	GER and NER improved	GER and NER improved	GER and NER improved	Improved	PCR decreased, LSCR increased	Widening disparities in favor of girls	No data	No data
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b> (2012-2017)	GER improved	GER and NER improved	GER and NER improved	Stagnating	PCR and LSCR Improved	No data	Improved	Worsening, girls more likely to be OOS
<b>Guinea</b> (2015-2018)	GER stagnating	GER and NER improved	GER improved (no data on NER)	Improved	PCR decreased, LSCR increased	No data	Improved	No data
<b>Guyana</b> (2014-2018)	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
<b>Liberia</b> (2010-2017)	GER improved <sup>304</sup>	GER and NER slightly worsened	GER and NER slightly worsened	No data	No data <sup>305</sup>	No data	Worsened <sup>306</sup>	Stable (equal for boys and girls)

<sup>301</sup> No separate data on lower secondary available.

<sup>302</sup> At around 1.07 (2018).

<sup>303</sup> Decreasing total number, but contradicting evidence on changes in relative share of OOSC.

<sup>304</sup> Data only available up to 2015.

<sup>305</sup> Improved before review period (2007-2013); no later data available.

<sup>306</sup> Up until review period (2011-2015). No later data available.

COUNTRY (PERIOD)	PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT RATE (GER AND NER)	PRIMARY ENROLLMENT (GER AND NER)	LOWER SECONDARY ENROLLMENT (GER/NER)	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY ENROLLMENT	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) COMPLETION RATES <sup>299</sup>	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY COMPLETION	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) <sup>300</sup> OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES	GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY OUT- OF-SCHOOL RATES
<b>Mauritania</b> (2012-2017)	No data	Stagnating	GER improved (no data on NER)	Improved	PCR stagnating, small increase of LSCR	Improved	Improved	Stagnating
<b>Mozambique</b> (2012-2018)	No data	NER slightly improved, GER remained stable	GER and NER improved	Improved	PCR stagnating, small increase of LSCR	Improved <sup>307</sup>	Improved for primary, worsened for lower secondary	Stagnating
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2012-2017)	GER improved	GER improved, NER decreased slightly	GER and NER improved	Stable (high) <sup>308</sup>	PCR stagnating, decreasing LSCR	No data	Share slightly decreased but increasing #	No data
<b>Pakistan Bal.</b> (2014-2018)	No provincial data	No provincial data	No provincial data	No provincial data	Improved	No data	No data	No data
<b>Pakistan Sindh</b> (2014-2018)	No provincial data	No provincial data	No provincial data	No provincial data	Worsened	No data	Worsened	No data
<b>Rwanda</b> (2012-2017)	NER and GER improved	GER worsened, NER improved	GER worsened, NER improved	Improved	PCR improved	Widening disparities in favor of girls <sup>309</sup>	No data	No data
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2017)	NER and GER improved	GER stagnating, NER improved	GER decreased (no data on NER)	Widening gender disparities in favor of girls	PCR stable, LSCR improved	Shift from favoring boys to favoring girls	Share slightly decreased but increasing #	No data
<b>Sierra Leone</b> (2014-2018)	GER improved	GER worsened, NER improved	GER stagnating, NER improved	Stable (high)	PCR modestly improved	No data	Worsened	Worsened

<sup>307</sup> Primary and lower secondary.<sup>308</sup> At 0.98 (2017)<sup>309</sup> Primary and lower secondary

COUNTRY (PERIOD)	PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT RATE (GER AND NER)	PRIMARY ENROLLMENT (GER AND NER)	LOWER SECONDARY ENROLLMENT (GER/NER)	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY ENROLLMENT	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) COMPLETION RATES <sup>299</sup>	GENDER PARITY OF PRIMARY COMPLETION	PRIMARY (AND LOWER SECONDARY) <sup>300</sup> OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES	GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY OUT- OF-SCHOOL RATES
<b>South Sudan</b> (2011-2018)	NER improved 2011-15. No data post 2015	GER improved. No data on GER or post 2015	GER improved, (no data on NER)	No data	PCR stable (low at 12%), decline in LSCR	No data	Improved (but still more children out of than in school)	Improved
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2017)	GER and NER improved	GER stable (high), NER slightly improved	NER increased, no data on GER	Slight improvement	Decreased PCR, increased LSCR	Improved	Improved	No data
<b>The Gambia</b> (2014-2018)	GER improved	GER and NER improved	GER slightly worsened, NER stagnating	Stable (high)	Mixed <sup>310</sup>	No data	Improved but still very high	Marginally improved, boys more likely OOS
<b>Togo</b> (2010-2018)	GER improved, no data on NER	GER and NER improved	GER improved, no data on NER	Fluctuating (0.9- 1.01)	PCR improved	Improved	Stagnating	No data
<b>Uganda</b> (2011-2017)	GER and NER improved	GER improved, NER declined	GER and NER declined	Shifting to disadvantage of boys	PCR stagnating	Improved	Improved at primary, worsened at secondary level	No data
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2017)	No data	GER improved, NER declined	GER and NER improved	Stable (high)	PCR improved	Stagnating (in favor of boys)	Worsened	Gap in favor of girls

<sup>310</sup> Improvement in lower basic education (grades 1-6), but deterioration and recent stagnation at upper basic education level (grades 7-9)



219. Improvements most commonly noted in the reviewed countries related to pre-primary enrollment, secondary enrollment, and gender parity indices (GPI) of primary enrollment. Countries with the greatest number of indicators improving during the review periods included lower-middle income countries (Bangladesh, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Tajikistan) as well as low income countries (Nepal, South Sudan, and Togo).<sup>311</sup> Comparatively less progress<sup>312</sup> occurred in Senegal (likely reflecting that the country's education sector is already performing relatively well), Nigeria and Zimbabwe (likely reflecting, especially in Nigeria, the challenging overall contexts).

220. Despite noted improvements, inequities in education access and completion persist across countries. These pose a considerable challenge to achieving SDG 4, which calls for all children to complete free, quality primary and secondary education by 2030.<sup>313</sup>

- While disparities in enrollment between children in rural areas and those from urban areas narrowed in some countries (e.g., Mauritania, Kyrgyz Republic), they widened or remained stagnant in others (e.g., Togo, Uganda and Zambia). Disparities in enrollment according to income narrowed in Bangladesh and the Kyrgyz Republic, but widened in Uganda.
- In several countries, including the DRC and Zimbabwe, overt or hidden costs of education to families (such as for school uniforms, stationery, transport and lunches) continue to bar children from attending school.
- Across countries, there is a dearth of data on learners with disabilities and other special needs. Where data exist, e.g., in Bangladesh, Rwanda and Zambia, they are likely incomplete, capturing only a fraction of the actual population of learners requiring targeted education, and tend to focus on enrollment only, without any information on other issues such as completion. The same challenge applies, in some countries, to learners from specific population groups, such as non-Tajik nationalities in Tajikistan.

## 8.3 Likely links to system-level change

**Finding 33:** There is insufficient data across the reviewed countries to make evidence-based claims on links between system-level changes that occurred during the review periods and impact-level trends.

221. The country-level theory of change assumes that system-level improvements brought about by sector plan implementation contribute to positive changes in learning outcomes and equity. As also noted in the Year 1 synthesis report, available data allowed formulating hypotheses about possible or even likely links in some countries, but confirming such links across all reviewed countries was not possible for four reasons:

- **Time-lag between system-level change and improvements in learning outcomes and/or equity.** This is especially the case for measures aiming to enhance education quality (e.g., reforms of pre- and in-service teacher training, curriculum revisions) which may need years to translate into

<sup>311</sup> Three of these countries, Cote d'Ivoire, South Sudan and Togo, are currently classified as FCAC.

<sup>312</sup> Again, measured merely in terms of the number of reviewed indicators for which CLEs noted improving trends, and not taking into account objective levels that countries started from or arrived at.

<sup>313</sup> This concern is confirmed by recent UNESCO predictions (2019), which, as noted earlier, stated that progress towards SDG 4 is far off track.

measurable changes in learning outcomes. The periods covered by the summative and prospective CLEs are too short to follow system-level improvements over extended periods. In addition, impact-level data typically become available only after two or three years, making it difficult to clearly link them to improvements that took place at a specific point in the past.

- **The relatively limited scope of some system-level improvements** (e.g., pilot initiatives that covered a limited number of schools or regions) means that related changes are not likely to be reflected in country-wide impact-level trends.
- **Absence of crucial sector data** such as in relation to learning outcomes, and **limitations in the quality of data, especially of historic sector data**, meaning that available information may not fully reflect actual trends.
- **The frequent absence of sector plan evaluations** commissioned by MoEs in country to trace the effects of specific implementation measures over time.

222. Several CLEs identified examples of impact-level trends that may, at least in part, have been influenced by system-level changes brought about during the respective review periods. As is illustrated in Table 8.3, almost all of these examples relate to **improvements in equitable education access**, especially through the construction of new schools. It is likely that the nature of these changes allows for a shorter time between improvements and measurable impact-level effects. Establishing similar likely links between specific system-level improvements and changes in learning outcomes was not possible due to the above-noted reasons.

**Table 8.3** *Selected examples of potential (albeit not verifiable) links between impact-level trends and system-level improvements during review period*

COUNTRY	OBSERVED IMPACT-LEVEL TREND	PLAUSIBLE (AT LEAST PARTIAL) LINK TO SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGE DURING REVIEW PERIOD
<b>Bangladesh</b> (2011-2018)	• Increase in pre- primary enrollment	• Introduction of one-year pre-primary education in almost 100% of primary schools reached a larger population beyond those traditionally covered by private institutions
	• Growth in primary enrollment NER	• Stipend and school feeding programs of nationwide reach, combined with construction of additional schools, including in more remote areas
<b>Cambodia</b> (2014-2018)	• Decreased primary and lower secondary drop-out rates, increased lower secondary completion rates	• Scholarships for primary and lower secondary students, combined with ongoing scholarships provided as part of WFP's school feeding program
	• Increase in primary enrollment rates	• Increase in number of classrooms (including due to community construction model) and decrease in the pupil-classroom ratio
<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b> (2012-2017)	• Increase in pre-primary enrollment, including in rural areas	• Growth in the number of preschool institutions through the Community-based Kindergarten program, including in rural areas
<b>Rwanda</b> (2012-2017)	• Growth in pre-primary GER and NER	• Number of schools increased by 70% from 2012-2017) • Nationwide roll-out of school feeding (though only reaching 15.4% of pre-primary students in 2017)

COUNTRY	OBSERVED IMPACT-LEVEL TREND	PLAUSIBLE (AT LEAST PARTIAL) LINK TO SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGE DURING REVIEW PERIOD
<b>Senegal</b> (2012-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in pre-primary enrollment GER and NER</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of public pre-primary institutions increased by 25.7% from 2012-2017</li> </ul>
<b>South Sudan</b> (2011-2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement in gender equality indices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationwide cash transfers for girls in upper primary and secondary</li> <li>School feeding, which reached 20% of primary pupils between 2014 and 2016, including specific incentives for girls, and awareness and sensitization campaigns on girls' education</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decline in the share of Out of School Children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash transfers and capitation grants of nationwide reach</li> <li>School feeding (though only reached 10-20% of schools)</li> </ul>
<b>Tajikistan</b> (2012-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in pre-primary enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction of state pre-school institutions and ECE centers</li> </ul>
<b>Togo</b> (2010-2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in pre-primary enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of pre-primary classrooms increased 400% from 2011-2018</li> <li>New early childhood policy</li> </ul>
<b>Zambia</b> (2011-2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in pre-primary enrollment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction and annexation of ECE centers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modest increase in primary completion rate and decrease in primary dropout rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of primary teachers and resulting drop in PTR from 52/1 (2011) to 40/1 (2016)</li> <li>Introduction of a national school feeding program and outlawing of marriage for primary-school-aged children</li> </ul>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved enrollment of Children with Disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of an inclusive education policy</li> <li>Increased activities by the learner welfare services directorate, e.g., provision of screening systems for assistive devices, development of braille resources, capacity development for curriculum support officers</li> </ul>

## 8.4 Implications for GPE

**Finding 34:** GPE needs to better help countries strengthen the evidence chain from sector plan implementation activities to subsequent changes in equity and learning outcomes.

223. The limited evidence base available for linking impact-level trends to 'lower levels' in the GPE country-level theory of change indicates the need for GPE to better help countries strengthen the evidence chain from sector plan implementation to changes in equity and learning outcomes. This also links to the previously noted need to have development partners rally more clearly behind the sector plan, and implement, monitor and report on results of DP-led initiatives through the lens of that plan. A second implication is for GPE to ensure continuous support to the regular conduct of large-scale learning assessments to provide countries and their supporting partners with evidence of changes in learning.

## 9 Conclusions and Recommendations

224. The 28 CLEs conducted in 2018 and 2019 illustrated positive contributions of GPE support to countries, especially in relation to sector plan development, yet also raised fundamental questions about the GPE country-level theory of change and operational model.

225. The following conclusions and recommendations build on the overarching findings outlined in [Chapter 2](#) as well as the specific findings, key messages and implications for GPE outlined in Chapters 3 to 8. Most of the recommendations cut across individual elements of the GPE country-level ToC and are relevant, for example, to both sector plan development and plan implementation. Where conclusions result in several recommendations, the first is the recommendation that the evaluation team considers the most pressing for GPE to address. While the issues raised are relevant for all partnership members, the recommendations are addressed to the Board and the Secretariat as the primary intended users of this report.

**Conclusion 1:** The central role of sector plan implementation within the country-level theory of change is not sufficiently reflected in GPE’s operational model, results framework, or the actions of key GPE actors on the ground. There is a need for GPE to strengthen how it helps countries assess and build their capacity to effectively implement and monitor sector plans.

226. Sector plan implementation is ‘central’ in the ToC in that GPE support to sector plan development, sector financing and mutual accountability are all geared towards enabling and supporting effective plan implementation, and in that plan implementation is considered the main driver of system- and subsequent impact-level change. However, GPE does not systematically provide financial and/or non-financial support for countries to translate their usually high-level and aspirational sector plans into operational or implementation plans and related monitoring and reporting frameworks. The GPE criterion for sector plans to be considered ‘achievable’ does not sufficiently consider developing countries’ implementation capacity at both national and sub-national levels. Also, the Secretariat does not assess ESPIG applications in light of whether and to what extent a country implemented its previous sector plan, and whether related shortcomings in implementation capacity have since been addressed.

227. GPE is not yet consistently fostering national ownership of sector plans by helping to ensure that stakeholders across sub-sectors, and at both national and sub-national levels, feel that the sector plan is relevant to them. This is related to the widespread perceptions that the sector plan is a vehicle to access GPE funding, and that funding is largely used for strengthening only basic education.

### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 1.1:** The Secretariat, in consultation with the Board, may want to explore how the sector plan quality criterion of being ‘achievable’ could reflect a country’s verified and credible administrative capacity to implement the sector plan. This will require efforts to further strengthen the assessment of such capacity at both central and sub-national levels in Education Sector Analyses, ideally through a clear evaluation process under government oversight. It will further require reflection on whether all countries can and should be expected to develop plans that are both comprehensive and achievable at the same

time, or whether priority should be given – at least in contexts with weak government capacity – to plans being ‘achievable’.<sup>314</sup>

**Recommendation 1.2:** GPE criteria for assessing the quality of sector plans and for reviewing ESPIG applications should take into account to what extent the country was successful in implementing the previous sector plan or equivalent. This will help decide whether adjustments are needed to align the complexity and ambition of a new plan with existing capacity and/or to address key capacity gaps.

**Recommendation 1.3:** The Secretariat, in collaboration with developing country governments, should explore how GPE can further support countries in building useful tools and approaches for good sector management in relation to plan implementation. This could include guidance and/or dedicated financial support, through the ESPDG or the ESPIG mechanisms, for developing user-friendly implementation plans and monitoring frameworks, including clear accountability frameworks for using and reporting upon the use of these tools at regular intervals.

**Recommendation 1.4:** GPE should further clarify its position and strengthen related communication with country-level stakeholders around the intended and permitted uses of GPE funds for different sub-sectors in order to address the widespread perception of GPE funds being exclusively reserved for basic education.

**Conclusion 2:** GPE’s current approach to strengthening mutual accountability is effective in relation to sector plan development, but less so in relation to development partners, grant agents and coordinating agencies systematically rallying behind and supporting sector plan implementation and monitoring.

228. While the GPE Charter<sup>315</sup> commits partnership members to the principles of aid effectiveness as outlined in the Paris, Accra and Busan agreements, this was not consistently reflected in the actions of development partners at country level. The use of stand-alone donor-funded interventions often contributed to fragmentation in sector plan implementation, monitoring and reporting.

229. At present, in-country stakeholders tend to collaborate most effectively around objectives linked to financial incentives. For sector plan development, GPE is offering both the prospect of ESPIG funding and the ESPDG. For sector plan implementation and related dialogue and monitoring, an incentive now exists through the VT, but this is not yet in place across countries and runs the risk of focusing attention on only a few indicators rather than fostering overall plan implementation and monitoring.

230. The Secretariat is already piloting several tools geared towards strengthening LEGs and country-level partnerships to improve mutual accountability, including a LEG Self-Assessment Tool and a LEG Performance Feedback Instrument. Some additional actions may be needed, however, to broaden GPE’s approach to strengthening mutual accountability at the country level and in a variety of settings, including in the context of federal states.

#### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 2.1:** The Board should critically review its collective and each member’s individual commitment to the principles of aid effectiveness and frankly discuss to what extent these principles still reflect what the partnership stands for. At the country level, the Secretariat may want to advise ministries

<sup>314</sup> In reflecting on what ‘achievable’ sector plans are, it may be relevant to also look at the broader global context. In 2019, the education community acknowledged that SDG 4 on education will likely not be reached by 2030 and that the targets under this SDG may have been too complex and ambitious. In response, the World Bank is introducing a simpler target to guide its own work that focuses on addressing ‘learning poverty’, defined as the number of 10-year-old children unable to read a simple story. See: <https://live.worldbank.org/learning-poverty-tackling-fundamentals>.

<sup>315</sup> See: [https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-gpe-charter\\_0.pdf](https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-gpe-charter_0.pdf), paragraph 1.1.

of education and LEGs to develop and monitor clear expectations of what endorsing a plan should require in terms of development partners' aligning and monitoring their own work with the plan.

**Recommendation 2.2:** The Board should put in place additional country-level incentives for effective and meaningful sector (plan) monitoring, for example by introducing a third financing window in the ESPDG mechanism that would be reserved for supporting such monitoring. Given that CAs often act as grant agents for the ESPDG, the new window may also facilitate a stronger CA role in ongoing and meaningful sector plan monitoring.

**Recommendation 2.3:** The Secretariat should identify measures to better adapt the GPE operational model to decentralized education systems. This can include ensuring that ESPDG or ESPIG funds are used to strengthen stakeholder coordination at both central and decentralized levels, and appointing coordinating agencies and GPE focal points not only at national but also at provincial/state levels where this is not already the case.

**Conclusion 3: ESPIG supervision and the Variable Tranche hold the potential to contribute to sector-wide monitoring of plan implementation. To date, however, this potential is not consistently realized.**

231. Except for the 6 out of 29 ESPIGs channeled through pooled (sub-) sector wide funding mechanisms, most ESPIGs were implemented as stand-alone projects focused on selected elements of basic education. While this in itself is not problematic, CLEs noted that ESPIG supervision did not reflect GPE's declared intent to support overall sector plan implementation, i.e., ESPIG monitoring and reporting were not conducted through the lens of how the specific project fit in with, and contributed to achieving, sector plan objectives for the whole sector, or at least for the whole basic education sub-sector.

232. CLEs confirmed the variable tranche's potential for incentivizing results-focused plan implementation and monitoring. They also showed, however, that the VT runs the risk of promoting an isolated focus on only few metrics and thematic areas. Furthermore, the inadequately defined notion of 'stretch indicators' as triggers for VT release encourages countries to create indicators different from the ones in their sector plans and/or apply unrealistically ambitious indicators.

#### Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 3.1:** The Secretariat, based on a review of the current Terms of Reference for grant agents and existing GA's organizational capacities, should make suggestions to the Board on whether and how to modify the GA role so as for it to play a stronger role in support of overall sector plan monitoring and implementation beyond ESPIG administration. At a minimum, this could include incorporating reflections on how ESPIG-funded achievements contributed to progress in sector plan implementation and related targets.

**Recommendation 3.2:** In relation to the variable tranche, the Board should consider replacing the notion of 'stretch' indicators with the simpler requirement for countries to demonstrate improvements in the selected areas. Alternatively, the Board could consider focusing the variable tranche on output indicators linked to key bottlenecks, which can be achieved within the variable tranche's relatively limited timeframe. The Secretariat and variable tranche GAs should encourage countries to, wherever possible, select strategies and indicators already included in the sector plan so as to strengthen the VT's potential role in sector plan implementation.<sup>316</sup>

<sup>316</sup> Or, alternatively, ensure that the sector plan is updated within a reasonable timeframe to reflect the more specific strategies and indicators developed for the VT.



**Conclusion 4: There is a need for evidence-based and contextually appropriate benchmarks for ESPIG funding requirements related to domestic sector financing.**

233. CLEs found several unintended negative effects deriving from the application of current GPE ESPIG funding requirements for domestic sector financing. Current benchmarks are insufficiently grounded in evidence and not consistently suitable for demonstrating government commitment to (primary) education.

Related recommendation:

**Recommendation 4.1:** The Secretariat should clarify and clearly communicate to stakeholders the existing evidence base underlying the current benchmarks<sup>317</sup> for the ESPIG domestic sector financing funding requirement. If required, these benchmarks should be altered to reflect new/additional evidence. At the same time, the Board should (continue to) explore whether and in what contexts benchmarks could be applied with greater flexibility. This could include allowing countries to propose alternative measures for demonstrating government commitment to education overall and to adequate allocations to primary education if they can demonstrate that the existing GPE benchmarks are problematic in their context.

**Conclusion 5: There is insufficient evidence to validate those elements of the current GPE country-level theory of change that link sector plan implementation to system and impact-level improvements.**

234. The assumed links between ‘lower level’ ToC elements (up to and including sector plan implementation) and ‘higher level’ elements (system- and impact-level change) cannot be verified based on available evidence.<sup>318</sup> This does not mean that such links do not exist, but rather that the ToC is not yet fully grounded in evidence.

Related recommendations:

**Recommendation 5.1:** The Board should develop a plan outlining how GPE can help countries better monitor country-level changes over longer periods of time to gain better insights into the envisaged links between sector plan implementation and subsequent system- and impact-level changes. Resulting evidence will be relevant not only for the respective countries but may also allow GPE to test and verify these higher-level elements of its theory of change.

**Recommendation 5.2:** The Board should develop a plan outlining how GPE can provide continuous support to the regular conduct of large-scale learning assessments so as to provide countries and their supporting partners with evidence of changes in learning outcomes.

<sup>317</sup> Allocating 20 percent of government expenditures to education, and, for countries that have not yet achieved universal primary education, to allocate 45 percent of their education budgets to primary education.

<sup>318</sup> Evidence from CLEs, but also regular GPE results framework monitoring, in-country reports and other sources.