

# Summative Evaluation of GPE's COVID-19 Response

## Evaluation Report (Final Report)

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Prepared by Learn More, Triple Line, and Technopolis

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Submitted: 27 October 2023

## Document Control

Document title	Summative Evaluation of GPE's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Evaluation Report (Final Draft)
Reference no.	WOR-2469J
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Checked by	CMP
Date	27 October 2023

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## List of Abbreviations

AF	Accelerated Funding
CI	Core Indicator
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Program Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
GPE	The Global Partnership for Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KIX	Knowledge and Information Exchange
LEG	Local Education Group
LMS	Learning Management System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
M&R	Mitigation and Response
MoE	Ministry of Education
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OOSC	Out of School Children
PCFC	Partner Country Affected by Fragility and Conflict
R&P	Results and Performance Team within the GPE Secretariat
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD \$	United States Dollar (currency)
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

# Executive Summary

## Background

In Spring 2020, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) mobilized over USD \$500M in planning grant, accelerated funding (AF) grant and global grant support to partner countries in their endeavors to address the learning emergency and educational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A formative evaluation published in November 2021 found GPE's support to be timely, adequately funded, and relevant to country needs. It also uncovered evidence that grants were being spent efficiently and with early signs of effectiveness in sustaining learning outcomes. Following the closure of the final grants in December 2022, this evaluation provides a summative assessment of GPE's COVID-19 support, identifying room for improvement in grant mechanisms and providing insight on which grant-funded interventions worked best and achieved results under different circumstances.

## Methodology

The evaluation builds on a detailed portfolio analysis of all available reporting data and relevant secondary data on the planning grant, global grant, and AF grants. The portfolio analysis was triangulated with insights from case studies conducted on the planning grant and global grant and at the country level, examining the implementation and effects of all three grants in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Federated States of Micronesia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Tonga. To inform these case studies, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and grant documentation was analyzed.

## Limitations

It is important to note several limitations to the data that were used to inform our evaluation, including the lack of overall depth and quality of grant reporting, reliability of the relevance, efficacy and efficiency ratings provided in grant completion reports, and inconsistency of cost and utilization data. A general lack of reporting data on the last mile of delivery of grant-funded activities and lack of data to validate beneficiary reach also limits our insight into effectiveness, but we note that these data issues during the pandemic are not unique to GPE. Furthermore, our case studies encountered recall bias and high rates of staff turnover at the country-level.

## Key Findings

### ***Relevance and Design - How well did GPE's COVID-19 related support meet the needs of partner countries to address the ongoing crisis?***

***Finding 1. The design of the three grants was relevant to the context of the pandemic and country-level needs; however, it is not clear if grant processes ensured continued relevance of activities as the pandemic conditions evolved.***

At the outset of the pandemic, GPE support, and specifically the overall design of the grant mechanisms, was relevant to the needs of partner countries. This was, for example, driven by the speed of the planning grant roll-out and the flexibility in the range of activities that the planning grant mechanism allowed.

The planning grant successfully targeted the countries that required various levels of support, particularly for national and sub-national planning, but also safe school operations, and enhanced knowledge sharing and capacity building.

AF grants were perceived by country stakeholders and grant agents as relevant to country needs by supporting activities that directly addressed learning needs and were aligned with the priorities of ministries of education (MoEs) despite the turbulent pandemic context. At the program design stage, there was flexibility for AF grants to include many different activity types while remaining explicitly linked to pandemic mitigation and recovery. High relevance was also driven by the speed of grant rollout and flexible, swift screening processes.

To ensure the relevance of GPE-supported COVID-19 responses at the country-level, GPE's AF grant screening process required that proposals demonstrate clear links to Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) and be developed in consultation with local education groups (LEGs). However, it is not clear if these processes ensured *continued* relevance as the pandemic conditions evolved. The lack of substantive revisions to AF grant activities, despite evolving pandemic circumstances, suggests that the grants may not have been sufficiently adaptive.

The global grant was designed to support the scale up of distance learning programs, delivery of learning continuity at scale to the most marginalized, and evidence-gathering on education response to COVID-19 to build more resilient education systems in the future. However, it was not explicitly designed with mechanisms to ensure alignment of knowledge products and global public learning goods with the country needs as defined in AF grants, which is a missed opportunity. This limited the overall relevance of the global grant at onset and throughout its lifecycle. There is however some evidence that adaptations to global grant activities took place during the grant's lifecycle, including reallocations of funds between activities.

***Finding 2. The grant screening process ensured AF grants' relevance to education needs but did not consistently ensure that interventions met equity and gender needs, nor appropriateness to technological capabilities.***

All AF grants included activities that addressed some needs of vulnerable groups, including girls. While GPE grants alone cannot address all needs identified in ERPs, it is possible that because of a lack of clear criteria in the grant screening processes, and despite the fact that the screening processes did check for equity, gender, and vulnerable groups, some grants may have missed critical areas of support to these groups.

There was some misalignment between the design of remote learning programs based on technology and countries' technological capabilities, especially in low-income countries. While it is important to note that remote learning was broadly the conventional wisdom at the grant design stage, future granting opportunities might necessitate a better matching of technology-dependent interventions to specific country circumstances.

***Coherence - Did GPE's support fit well within the COVID-19 national and international aid ecosystems?***

***Finding 3. Overall alignment between the three types of GPE COVID-19 grants is unclear. The AF grant was aligned with the planning grant. However, the coherence between global grant and country needs, and therefore with AF grants, is less clear: although global grant activities were aligned with grant agents' capabilities, they were not clearly linked to local knowledge gaps.***

Together, the three grants were only partially coherent; however, the coherence between the planning grant and accelerated funding grant was relatively clear. There is strong evidence that activities planned or started under the planning grant were continued or expanded upon in the AF grants. There is also some evidence that the planning grant allowed country-level stakeholders to rally around national ERPs to optimize their efforts, with countries with the most humanitarian coordination experience benefiting the most.

Conversely, there is limited evidence of how the global grant aligned with AF grant and planning grant activities. While the global grant was not required to be coherent with country-level AF grant interventions, AF grant documents offered insights into the knowledge needs of countries. We did not find any evidence that the global grant built on these insights, which appears to be a missed opportunity to address cross-country needs identified from the AF and planning grants.

## **Efficiency - Was good stewardship of resources ensured in the management of GPE's COVID-19 support?**

**Finding 4. For all three grants, COVID-19 grant proposal submissions and approvals times were unprecedented, despite strained GPE Secretariat capacity; however, some grants were slow to begin implementation.**

Grant submissions and approval times were fast, due to rapid grant screening processes, approval delegation to the Secretariat, and a first-come-first-served approach, but at times constrained by Secretariat capacity gaps during peaks in applications. Grants that were larger in size or in fragile contexts, or those that used pooled funding modalities, or were in countries with limited government engagement experienced slower starts.

**Finding 5. Grant agents rated AF grants as having high efficiency. Grants with multiple objectives tended to have a lower utilization rate.**

GPE's COVID-19 support was viewed by AF grant agents as having been carried out efficiently. Slow approvals, procurement challenges and various pandemic-related factors such as supply chain issues caused implementation issues once the grants were underway. This caused delays in grant utilization, especially among AF grants which had multiple objectives.

**Finding 6. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) guidelines were not consistently implemented and, across all three types of grants, progress and completion reports may not have been quality assured to ensure they addressed the questions appropriately.**

For the first time, GPE used shared grant M&E guidelines, completion reports with core indicators, and regular surveys to report on progress of GPE COVID-19 grants and allowed some degree of flexibility in grantee reporting. However, the implementation of these M&E frameworks and guidelines did not support the generation of reliable monitoring data on grant activity progress and results, mostly due to insufficient quality assurance of completion reports. It is also unclear whether the data contributed to results-based management. Resources for these types of M&E activities are limited and many grantee stakeholders expressed concern about the frequency of reporting. There may be a trade-off between frequency and rigor of reporting. Reporting less frequently may support grant agents to use stronger evidence in reporting, with guidance through Secretariat oversight.

## **Effectiveness - Did the COVID-19 grants meet their objectives and achieve results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?**

**Finding 7. Effectiveness was reported as high overall, although detailed reporting around the AF grants finds that effectiveness varied greatly by activity type. While targets related to protection and well-being were broadly more likely to be met, countries faced greater difficulties reaching targets related to learning and teachers.**

Grant agent assessment of the planning grant's efficacy was high overall. Also, at grant closure, most AF grants reported to have met their targets despite stated procurement, infrastructure, and learning data collection challenges in some countries. AF grants' efficacy ratings were also generally lower than those for efficiency and relevance.

Grant agents for AF grants were asked to set and report against targets across a set of core indicators. Over 77.7 million children were reached through access-related activities of AF grants (mainly distance learning programs). These grants were most successful in activities that supported protection and well-being. These activities were also more likely to reach girls. Countries were also successful in using grants to support students to return to schools after closures through back-to-school campaigns and other initiatives thanks to community-based approaches and innovations such as songs and contests.

On the other hand, targets were met less often in three areas: access to education through distance or home-based learning/tutoring programs during lockdowns (a key focus of the AF grants), teacher training, and the administration of learning assessments after school closures. These challenges are consistent with global results (for instance, in other organizations attempting to tackle the pandemic's learning crisis).

This finding on access to education during lockdowns should be interpreted in context: since these activities were introduced, the global evidence base has consistently highlighted the general challenges of implementing remote learning solutions and sustaining learning outcomes. For instance, global grant outputs and many AF grants served to support learning management systems and portals to enhance remote learning, but their impact has been unclear (there is limited evidence that the global grant's outputs were used by partner countries to inform their COVID-19 responses), with some risk of duplicative efforts. That said, there is evidence that although countries did not achieve their intended targets, activities supported through the AF grants laid the groundwork for future country-level responses by contributing important investments to support digital platforms and skills development.

Once schools reopened, AF grant activities focusing on conducting learning assessments struggled to reach their intended targets, for girls especially (although disaggregated data is not always available). This was possibly due to inadequate institutional capacity, which may reflect broader system-wide bottlenecks that pre-date and are not unique to the pandemic.

***Finding 8. Results related to girls and other disadvantaged groups were not always tracked.***

Results related to girls and other disadvantaged groups were not always reported on, likely due to inadequate quality assurance requirements or capacity constraints to collect sex-disaggregated data. As a result, many AF grants simply did not report data disaggregated by sex and other factors of vulnerability even though it was explicitly required for the reported indicators.

***Potential for Impact - What is the (potential for) impact of the COVID-19 grants?***

***Finding 9. GPE COVID-19 grants have the potential to support countries to 'build back better' through auxiliary uses of remote learning solutions and one-off capital investments to fund infrastructure and pilots. However, there is limited evidence on continued use or further development of remote learning solutions and infrastructure.***

In terms of the potential for impact, while long-term resilience building was an intended aim of the AF grants, the urgency with which grants were designed and rolled out meant this was not always executed. That said, there is evidence that countries used AF grants to experiment with new solutions which, regardless of their use during the pandemic, may have contributed to investments that may prove impactful in the long run.

***Finding 10. Through relevance to country contexts, GPE COVID-19 grants offer partner countries the opportunity to build system resilience by offering the impetus and means to invest in building capacities and translating learnings into policy.***

There is evidence that cooperation and coordination mechanisms were enhanced across the different national and regional- or state-level stakeholders as well as among donors. Strategies and plans adopted and approved for crises management may equip teachers, schools, education managers as well as state and national-level policymakers to implement response plans, and with efficiency, in the future.

## **Recommendations**

1. Given the limited evidence available, and in light of using 'revisions' as a proxy for adaptability, it is difficult to say whether the grants did not adapt sufficiently to changing circumstances during the COVID pandemic. We also consider that not all grants may have needed to adapt. **In future emergencies, mechanisms need to be in place to encourage grant agents to use the flexibility of grant mechanisms to ensure continued relevance of activities to changing contexts and based on emerging evidence.** In emergencies, grantees would also need support and steer in focusing on a small set of manageable objectives, and striking a balance between simpler, evidence-based activities such as protection and well-being, and more experimental interventions such as those regarding remote learning.
2. The requirement to address vulnerable groups could have been linked to a more stringent and quantifiable granting criterion, although this may have been hard to implement in such a short



timeframe. **Future emergency responses could adopt a similar screening process, while creating clearer requirements for targeting vulnerable groups, including girls.**

3. Solutions leveraging existing technological capabilities were not necessarily grounded in what was actually feasible or was not well known at the time. Granting opportunities need to match technological capabilities, perhaps by limiting opportunities to use technology-dependent interventions to specific circumstances where the corresponding technologies are widely accessible or there are feasible plans to make these readily available. A further question is whether GPE should encourage distance learning solutions in the future. There were some instances of success and there is evidence that even grants that did not reach targets laid the groundwork for future response efforts by contributing to digital platforms and skills development. However, emerging global evidence on remote learning suggests that it may be ineffective and exacerbate inequalities even when implemented well. **The GPE Secretariat should formulate an approach based on growing evidence in this area on how technology could be deployed for continued learning given varying technology capacity in countries and their aspirations for leveraging technology.**
4. For all three grants, COVID-19 grant proposal submissions and approvals times were unprecedented, despite strained GPE Secretariat capacity. However, some grants were slow to begin implementation. **GPE could consider developing a “ready to roll” contingency plan and standard operating procedure, should it be needed for future emergencies. This approach should consider a) the need to balance the high speed achieved through the AF grant approval processes with the need for sufficient quality assurance; b) providing additional technical support to countries facing the harshest circumstances.**
5. Available evidence suggests many struggles with guaranteeing continued access to learning that were not unique to GPE’s support. Indeed, the solutions promoted by GPE’s support (in particular in low-/medium-/high-tech remote learning solutions) were the received wisdom at the time and had to be decided on in extreme haste. However, **future grant mechanisms (whether under emergency circumstances or not) should encourage grant agents to track whether interventions are reaching beneficiaries.**
6. The urgency with which grants were designed and rolled out means that long-term resilience building could not be planned deliberately. As stated previously, **GPE should explore how its regular operations can support system resilience in GPE partner countries to prepare for future emergencies.**
7. It is possible that there is a trade-off between frequency and rigor of reporting. Reporting less often might free up more grant agent resources to investigate findings and back them up with stronger secondary and qualitative evidence. A more standardized and thorough reporting process which is less frequent could help to ensure consistency and completeness. **Greater Secretariat oversight of progress and completion reports (in addition to the use of evidence throughout implementation), to ensure that the reports comply with M&E guidelines and the data presented is complete, can help improve the quality of reporting.** On the other hand, less frequent reporting may make it harder to obtain data in a timely fashion to support evidence-based decision making.
8. Grant agent assessment data was found to be broadly unreliable, mainly with regards to the ratings on relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness and utilization data, but the former was still useful as a sense-check and to allow grant agents to express their views. **Improved guiding questions, checklists and definitions could be featured in grant reporting guidelines to ensure a more grounded assessment.**
9. For global/cross-national grants producing knowledge goods, concerns with reporting data might be easily met if **visualization and download data were required for completion reports and regular monitoring.**
10. GPE’s COVID-19 support was the partnership’s first foray into large-scale humanitarian response. An overarching recommendation is therefore to **explore the extent to which this should become an institutionalized, core component of GPE’s work in the context of potential future emergencies.**

## **Moving Forward**

It is important that findings from this evaluation not be interpreted only through an accountability lens, but rather as the emerging results of a truly unprecedented global experiment. Indeed, global evidence suggests that struggles with support to continuous learning during COVID-19 were not unique to GPE's support. To build on lessons learned, future GPE grant mechanisms should first and foremost consider encouraging grant agents to make use of reporting data and leverage the grants' flexibility to adapt activities based on emerging evidence.

# 1 Introduction

With the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the world faced unprecedented uncertainty because of evolving containment and mitigation strategies in changing contexts, such as full societal lockdowns, to manage the spread of the virus. This came with a tremendous cost for global education: at their peak, school closures affected 1.6 billion children around the world.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the global scale of the crisis, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) rapidly mobilized a response to COVID-19, including leveraging funds to support three types of grants made available to partner countries to plan and implement effective education responses to the pandemic. The rapid nature of the response and the emergency context marked a new way of working for GPE.

The GPE Secretariat commissioned a formative evaluation of its response, published in November 2021, which examined the relevance, efficiency and early signs of effectiveness of GPE's response. This evaluation generated evidence to support the GPE Board and Secretariat with ongoing improvement, to provide emerging findings to partner countries and stakeholders, and to generate emerging evidence for a future summative evaluation.

By commissioning a summative evaluation of its COVID-19 response efforts, the GPE Secretariat seeks to build on these results and generate an understanding of the effectiveness of its response to the crisis and of the potential impact in partner countries. This serves the dual purpose of generating learning on promising practices that contributed to education service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic and of drawing lessons from support provision in emergency contexts that will allow further strengthening of GPE's operational capacity and responsiveness in emergencies.

The structure of the summative evaluation report is described below. It roughly follows the lines of enquiry as set out in the inception report's evaluation matrix:

- The **continuing relevance and coherence** of GPE's COVID-19 support to partner countries. This includes how the programs and activities of the three types of grants remain suitable and relevant to the priorities, evolving needs and capacity levels of partner countries (and other end users). It also addresses the internal coherence of the grants and their external coherence with national and international aid systems.
- The **efficiency** of GPE's COVID-19 support and resources provided to partner countries in terms of the timeliness of the support; an examination of implementation efficiency, including the utilization of grant funds and implementation bottlenecks; and the management of grants.
- The **effectiveness** of the three grant types at meeting planned objectives, and the equity of results in terms of reaching end users (particularly with regards to girls and other vulnerable groups) across key priority topics including equity, teaching and learning, systems resilience, and (school) re-opening. These are each examined under both mitigation and response, and recovery.<sup>2</sup>
- The **potential for impact and prospects for sustainability** of GPE's COVID-19 support with respect to 'building back better' and supporting systems resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information and data on school closures and estimates of their impact on the number of students in countries with school closures, see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2020/03/24/world-bank-education-and-covid-19>.

<sup>2</sup> The themes for analysis, based on key priority topics, are derived from the thematic categories used as part of GPE's COVID-19 costing and coding schema and the key priority themes as part of GPE's GPE 2020 strategy.

## 2 Overview of GPE’s COVID-19 Support

On March 25, 2020, GPE announced its provision of USD \$8.8M to UNICEF to support national response planning in 87 countries. By April 1, the GPE Board had approved USD \$250M to provide COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants to support partner countries as well as a grant to enable key partner institutions (UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank) to support a global knowledge sharing and learning response to COVID-19. On June 1, the GPE Board increased its allocation to over USD \$500M in response to the high demand for support, allowing the fund to expand its assistance to additional partner countries.

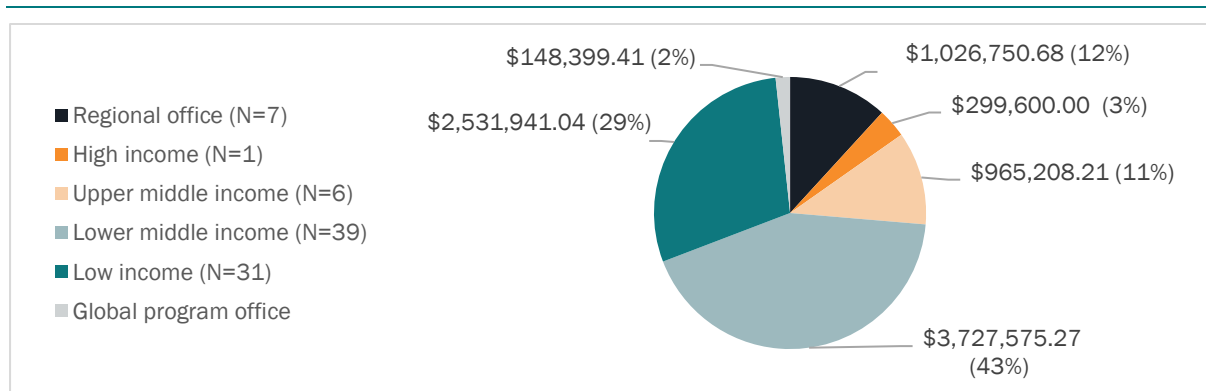
In total, GPE mobilized three types of grants to support partner countries in their endeavors to address the learning emergency and educational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each type of grant is described in greater detail below. In addition to COVID-19-focused grants, GPE provided other types of support, including the generation of knowledge products through initiatives such as GPE’s Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) program.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1 COVID-19 Planning Grant (‘Planning Grant’)

GPE’s first response to the outbreak of COVID-19 was to support partner countries to develop national COVID-19 response plans to facilitate system-wide, scaled-up responses to the COVID-19 crisis. GPE disbursed funds through UNICEF as the grant agent, who worked closely with governments and local education groups (LEGs) to determine activities most relevant to their needs. A total of USD \$8.8M was made available. UNICEF began implementation of the grant in March 2020 for a total of 12 months, closing in March 2021.

**Figure 1** below provides a breakdown of the allocation of funds from the planning grant. A total of USD \$7.7M of planning grant funding was disbursed by UNICEF to support the development of response plans in 87 countries, including 74 partner countries and 13 GPE-eligible countries,<sup>4</sup> with 72% of the planning grant dedicated to low and lower-middle income countries. The remaining funds were used to support UNICEF’s global program office, supporting coordination and management and enabling regional offices to undertake activities including technical support, procurement, knowledge management and capacity development.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1: Planning grant allocations by type of UNICEF office (N=8) and recipient country income group (N=77 countries).<sup>6</sup>



Source: UNICEF donor statement from March 23, 2020, to June 30, 2021, in USD. Summary of expenditures for the planning grant.

The bulk of the planning grant funding was provided to countries through an allocation of USD \$70,000 or USD \$140,000, depending on country size and the level of centralization of the education system. Funding was eligible for activities in three key intervention areas:

<sup>3</sup> While KIX also included responses to COVID-19, it falls outside the scope of this evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> Countries which are eligible to join GPE but are not yet formalized as partners.

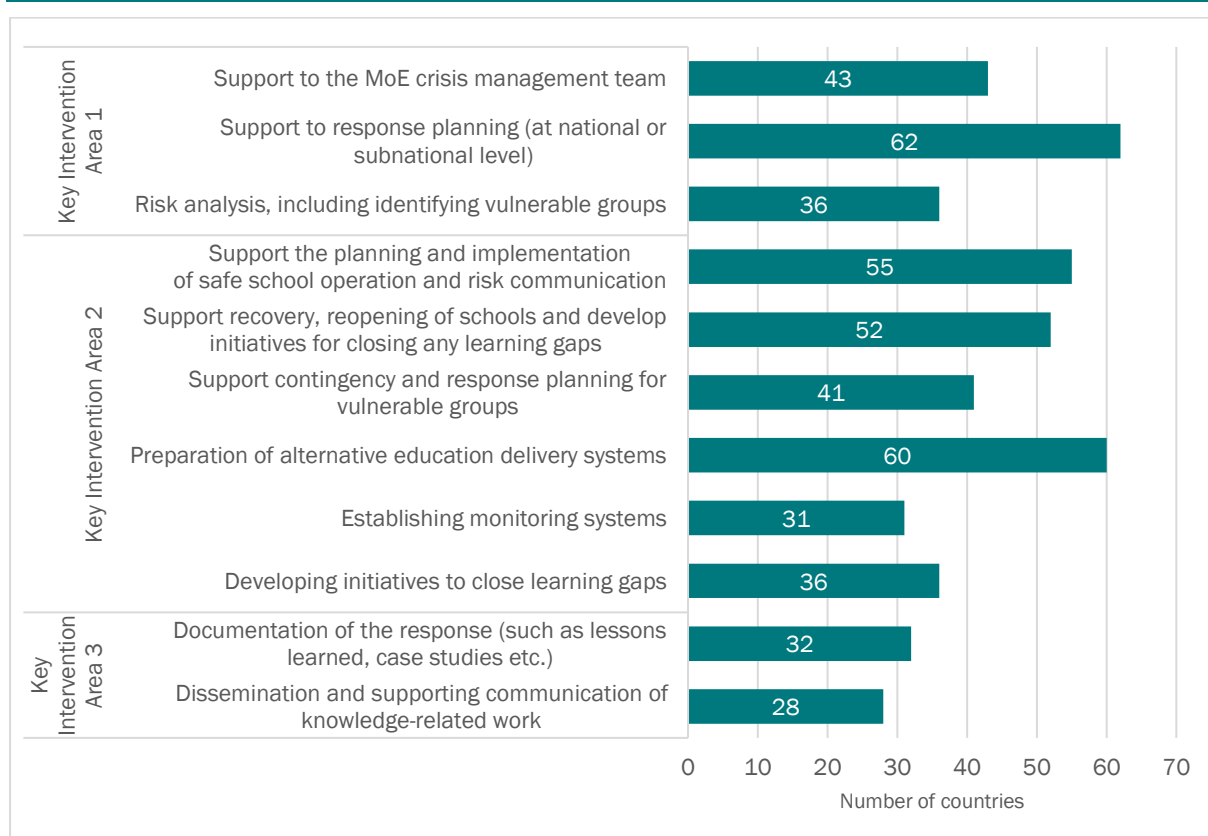
<sup>5</sup> Figures from the planning grant completion report (“Completion Report for Education Sector Plan Development Grant for COVID-19 Planning”) dated June 30, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Donor Statement includes data on 85 beneficiaries (77 countries, seven regional offices and one global program office). The data does not include all 87 country beneficiaries supported by the planning grant and does not provide further explanation for the discrepancy.

- **Area 1: The development of an enhanced education system-level response to the pandemic.** This could include response planning or the development of Emergency Report Plans (ERPs), risk analysis/assessment, or support to ministry of education (MoE) crisis management.
- **Area 2: Support to the planning and implementation of safe school operation and risk communication.** This included support to recovery, reopening of schools and development of initiatives for closing learning gaps; contingency and response planning for vulnerable groups; safe school operations and risk communication; establishment of monitoring systems; and design and preparation of alternative education systems.
- **Area 3: Enhanced knowledge sharing and capacity building for both the current response and future pandemics** (including documentation and dissemination).

The majority of funded activities related to support for response planning (62 countries) and the design and preparation of alternative education delivery systems (60 countries).<sup>7</sup> The breakdown of these key intervention areas can be found in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Number of countries who implemented planning grant activities under three key intervention areas (N=87 countries).



Source: Planning grant completion report, section “Assessment of Grant Implementation”.

## 2.2 COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grant (‘AF Grant’)

The second type of COVID-19-related GPE grant support came through the creation of a temporary accelerated funding window for COVID-19. COVID-19 AF grants were designed to support partner country governments to implement some of the activities set out under their emergency response plan to COVID-19 (many of which were developed with support from the COVID-19 planning grant). AF grants ranged from USD \$0.75M to \$20M; a total of USD \$467M was allocated through 67 grants<sup>8</sup> to assist 66 GPE partner countries to address the immediate effects of the pandemic as well as plan for longer-term recovery.

<sup>7</sup> Note that countries implemented between one and four activities through their planning grant, so the figures will not add to 87.

<sup>8</sup> Two grants were allocated to Sudan under two different grant agents (World Bank and UNICEF).

Grants were allocated using a streamlined grant application and review process to expedite distribution. Funds were intended to target countries with the greatest need, with more than 50% of the funds earmarked for allocation to partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFCs) and more than 50% of funding concentrated in low-income countries. Funding was also intended to align with the previous [GPE strategic goals](#) (GPE 2020) of learning, equity and systems strengthening as well as to target different phases of pandemic response, including mitigation and recovery.<sup>9</sup> As of December 2022, all 66 AF grants had closed with a total of USD \$423.9M funds utilized.<sup>10</sup>

AF grant activities aimed to prevent negative impacts of COVID-19 on education outcomes and support continued learning for all children, including preventing the further spread of COVID-19 in and through schools and focusing on adverse effects on particularly vulnerable groups, especially girls. Most funds were allocated to activities categorized under two main themes: ‘Mitigation and Response’ (M&R) and ‘Recovery’. **Table 1** breaks down the activities under both thematic categories and into the sub-themes of ‘Equity’, ‘Learning’ and ‘System resilience and reopening’.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1: AF grant activities by thematic category and sub-themes.<sup>12</sup>

Thematic category	Sub-theme	Activities
Mitigation and Response	Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginalized children (gender equity and low-income households)</li> <li>• Children with disabilities and special needs</li> <li>• Well-being programs (hygiene programs)</li> <li>• Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)</li> <li>• Addressing gender-specific barriers</li> <li>• Well-being programs (psychological support programs)</li> <li>• Well-being programs (nutritional programs)</li> <li>• Cash transfers and other targeted incentives for children</li> <li>• Access to education for out of school children (OOSC)</li> </ul>
	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards, curriculum, and learning materials</li> <li>• Distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs (low-tech - radio/TV)</li> <li>• Distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs (no-tech - print material)</li> <li>• Teacher development</li> <li>• Distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs (medium/high-tech: tablets, mobile internet, SMS)</li> <li>• Learning assessment systems</li> </ul>
	System resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System resilience and reopening</li> </ul>
Recovery	Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-being programs (hygiene programs)</li> <li>• Marginalized children (gender equity and low-income households):</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> More information on the breakdown of funds according to GPE 2020 strategic goals and country coverage can be found on the GPE website: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/covid-19-response-mitigation-and-recovery-thematic-grant-allocation> and <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/covid-19-accelerated-grants-implementation-progress-may-2022>.

<sup>10</sup> Data received from R&P team on 5 December 2022. The data from this source included utilization totals dating September 2022. As per completion reports database, the total amount disbursed was almost USD \$436.3M.

<sup>11</sup> As per Thematic Code book and methodology. COVID-19 Response: MITIGATION AND RECOVERY THEMATIC CODES.

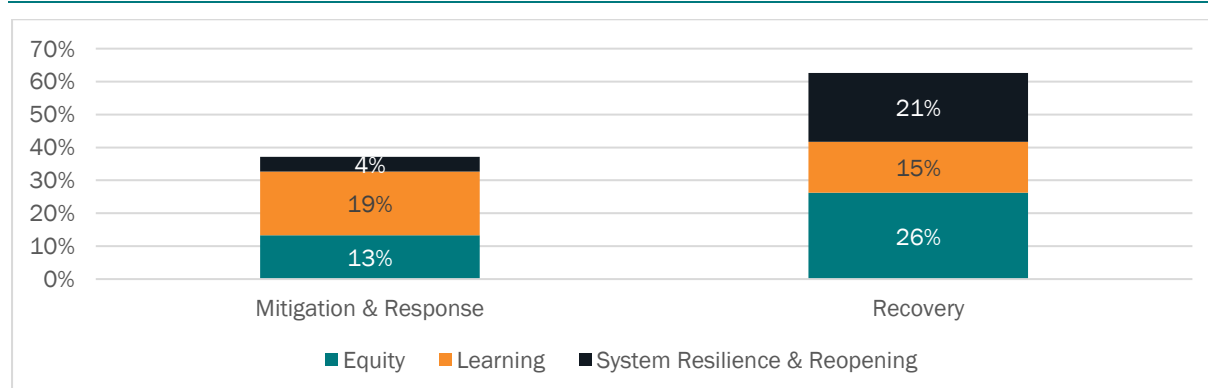
<sup>12</sup> Activities are listed in decreasing order of percentage of grant allocation within sub-theme.

Thematic category	Sub-theme	Activities
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All children return to school (including OOSC)</li> <li>Children with disabilities and special needs</li> <li>Well-being programs (psychological support programs)</li> <li>Well-being programs (nutritional programs)</li> <li>Addressing gender-specific barriers</li> <li>Refugees and IDPs</li> <li>Cash-transfers and other targeted incentives for children</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards, curriculum, and learning materials</li> <li>Accelerated learning programs</li> <li>Teacher development</li> <li>Learning assessment systems</li> </ul>
	<b>System resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education facilities, reopening of schools</li> <li>System resilience and reopening</li> <li>Education Management Information System (EMIS)</li> </ul>

Source: Thematic Code book and methodology. COVID-19 response: Mitigation and Recovery thematic codes.

**Figure 3** below shows the distribution of AF grant funding allocation by theme and sub-theme. Activities under M&R accounted for around 37% of the total value of AF grants amount while activities under Recovery accounted for 63%. Under the Recovery theme, equity-related activities accounted for the most funds (26%) amongst all sub-themes, followed by system resilience and reopening activities, also under Recovery (which were dedicated to activities related to education facilities and reopening of schools). Learning, under M&R, which was allocated mainly to distance learning programs, was the third largest share of all AF grant funding and accounts for over half of the sub-theme focus of the funds under the M&R theme.

**Figure 3: Percentage of funds allocated to the thematic categories of M&R and Recovery and allocation across the sub-themes of equity, learning, and system resilience and reopening (N = 66 grants).<sup>13</sup>**



Source: Coding and costing database.

## 2.3 Continuity of Learning Global Grant ('Global Grant')

GPE provided USD \$25M to a consortium of UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank as grant agents to support knowledge sharing and learning on the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds were intended to support

<sup>13</sup> AF grant for Yemen was removed from the Coding and costing database as this grant was canceled.

the continuity of learning by igniting sector dialogue at the global level and identifying shared solutions and contribute to improved outcomes at the country level.

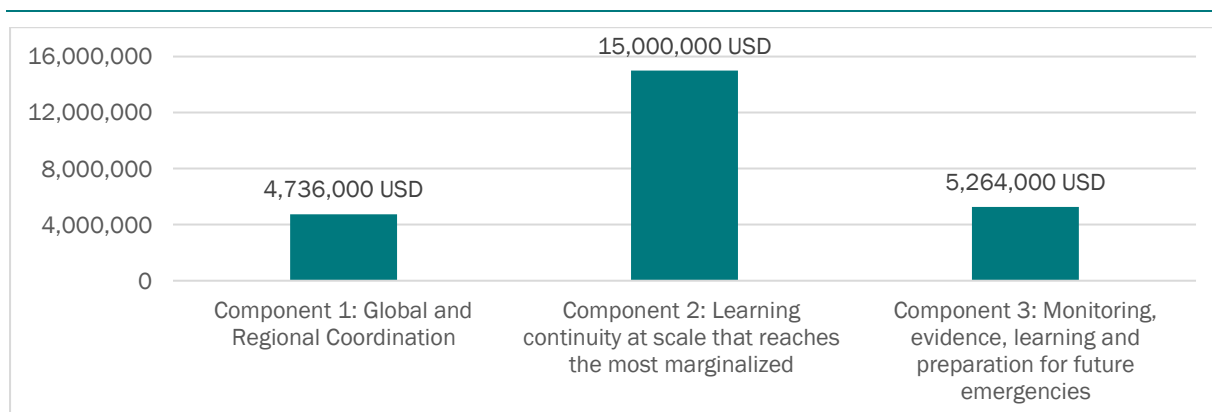
Implementation began in April 2020 and was originally set to run for 18 months. A request for a no-cost extension for the global grant was requested in September 2021 and was subsequently granted in October, allowing an additional four months to complete final monitoring of activities as well as payment of outstanding invoices. The total grant period ran for just under two years, closing in February 2022.

The funding supported activities in 68 countries<sup>14</sup> and was intended to build on and link to existing initiatives to further support learning, evidence generation and other GPE-related initiatives such as KIX. Funding supported the consortium to undertake activities under three key intervention areas, or components:

- **Component One: Global and Regional Coordination** (led by UNESCO) supported capacity development, practical operationalization and the scale up of distance learning programs in four regions.
- **Component Two: Learning Continuity at Scale for the Most Marginalized** (led by UNICEF and World Bank) developed global public goods, piloted and tested the global goods to improve their relevance, and supported capacity building and technical assistance drawing on the global goods and lessons from pilots.
- **Component Three: Monitoring, Evidence, Learning and Preparation for Future Emergencies** (led by UNESCO) generated practical and evidence-based insights into the response and consequences of COVID-19 on education, looking at both the short-term consequences (through global monitoring and rapid assessments) and broader, long-term consequences (such as the impact on learning, the gendered impact of educational disruption and the impact of COVID-19 on education financing).

The allocation of the global grant funds across the three components can be found below in **Figure 4**, with Component 2 comprising of the largest share of the funds.

Figure 4: Global grant funding by component (N=1 grant).



Source: End-of-grant report, section "Budget Utilization as of February 28th, 2022"

**Table 2** below presents a more detailed list of the sub-components within each of the three global grant components.

Table 2: List of Components and Sub-Components of the global grant.

<b>Component One: Global and Regional Coordination</b>	1.1 Francophone West Africa and Sahel countries
	1.2 Anglophone West Africa
	1.3 Pacific Small Island Developing States

<sup>14</sup> Figure is from the Completion Report for the COVID-19 global grant.



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1.4 Asia – meeting the learning needs of children with disabilities

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**Component Two:  
Learning  
continuity at  
scale that  
reaches the most  
marginalized**

- 2.1 Strategic guidance to countries on remote learning delivery models
    - 2.1.1 EdTech toolkit
    - 2.1.2 Remote formative assessment solutions
  - 2.2 Read@Home
  - 2.3 Teacher support for accelerated learning
    - 2.3.1 Compendium of structured lesson plans
    - 2.3.2 Technology for Teaching
  - 2.4 Expansion of the Learning Passport
  - 2.5 Readiness Agenda / Learning Mission
  - 2.6 Remote learning measurement and assessment
  - 2.7 Learning passport for girls
  - 2.8 Girls' education in emergencies toolkit
  - 2.9 Learning strategies for vulnerable groups
  - 2.10 Parental and caregiver support
  - 2.11 Opening up better
  - 2.12 Psychosocial Support and Child Well-being
- 

**Component  
Three:  
Monitoring,  
evidence,  
learning and  
preparation for  
future  
emergencies**

- 3.1 Short-term monitoring, evidence, learning and preparation for future emergencies
    - 3.1.1 Global monitoring the evolution of education system responses
    - 3.1.2 Two regional short term impact assessments of crisis
    - 3.1.3 Documenting national responses on data availability
  - 3.2 Analysis of longer-term impact of COVID-19 on learning, equity and educational financing
    - 3.2.1 Impact on learning
    - 3.2.2 Gendered impact of educational disruption
    - 3.2.3 Study on financing impact and related advocacy
- 

Source: Global grant completion report.

### 3 Evaluation Design

This section provides a brief summary of the design used to undertake this summative evaluation, including on the evaluation questions which guided the evaluation, an overview of the approach (including data sources, analysis and reporting), and the limitations of the study. More details on the design can be found in the evaluation’s [inception report](#).

#### 3.1 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions were developed in conjunction with the Results and Performance (R&P) team of the GPE Secretariat. The questions are structured by OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and impact and are set out below. Each of the five main questions applied to all three grants, as did most of the sub-questions which structured the enquiry.

Table 3: Evaluation question and sub-questions.

OECD-DAC Criteria and Evaluation Question	Sub-Questions
<b>1. Relevance and design:</b> How well did GPE’s COVID-19 related support meet the needs of partner countries to address the ongoing crisis?	<b>1.1 Overall suitability of GPE Support:</b> Did the design of GPE COVID-19 related grants (and the three grant mechanisms themselves) prove to be suitable to countries / end-users’ priorities, needs, and capacity levels to rapidly respond to and recover from the crisis?
	<b>1.2 Continued relevance of response plans:</b> How successful was GPE in ensuring that its instruments of support and mechanisms remain continuously appropriate and valuable with regards to their modality, focus, amount, processes, etc. given changing COVID-19 contexts / emerging needs throughout and beyond the pandemic?
<b>2. Coherence:</b> Did GPE’s support fit well within the COVID-19 national and international aid ecosystems?	<b>2.1 Coordination of efforts:</b> Did GPE support help countries coordinate the overall response and rally and harmonize donors under a common national response plan, especially in weaker environments?
<b>3. Efficiency:</b> Was good stewardship of resources ensured in the management of GPE’s COVID-19 support?	<b>3.1 Overall efficiency:</b> To what extent were grant processes implemented in a timely manner and were the costs reasonable for the outputs/outcomes achieved?
	<b>3.2 Timeliness:</b> How timely was GPE to set up its support at the beginning of the pandemic and to mobilize it throughout?
	<b>3.3 Utilization of grant funds:</b> How timely were disbursed funds utilized by grant agents throughout the implementation of the grant?
	<b>3.4 Implementation issues:</b> Did the grants suffer any bottlenecks in terms of implementation and how well were these remediated?
	<b>3.5 Management:</b> Did GPE’s instruments and grant agent’s COVID-19 practices support sound intervention management to ensure adequate stewardship of resources and successful partnering?
	<b>3.6 Dialogue:</b> Did GPE’s convening power and COVID-19 support help improve inclusive sectoral and cross-sectoral dialogue at country / global levels around pandemic-related needs and strategies?
	<b>3.7 Costs:</b> What were the costs and value-for-money of the interventions that the grants supported?

OECD-DAC Criteria and Evaluation Question	Sub-Questions
<b>4. Effectiveness:</b> Did the COVID-19 grants meet their objectives and achieved results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?	<b>4.1 Overall efficacy:</b> To what extent did the grants meet their planned objectives, including at country level and for gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups?
	<b>4.2</b> Were there any differential effects and results of the grants with respect to vulnerable groups and particularly girls within those groups?
	<b>4.3</b> What was the distribution of grant objectives under each theme “System resilience and reopening”, “Learning”, and “Equity” under Mitigation and Recovery in absolute number and in terms of costs per theme?
	<b>4.4</b> How effective were grants in achieving thematic indicators endline targets under each theme “System resilience and reopening”, “Learning”, and “Equity” under Mitigation and Recovery?
	<b>4.5 Innovation and scaling-up:</b> Which innovative practices were piloted, and with what level of success?
<b>5. Impact (potential for):</b> What is the (potential for) impact of the COVID-19 grants?	<b>5.1 Overall impact on beneficiaries:</b> To what extent are beneficiaries able to face the pandemic / other crises ensuring continuation of their education?
	<b>5.2 Building back better:</b> Did GPE support result in 'building-back-better systems', longer-term technology solutions, addressing learning gaps?
	<b>5.3 Systems resilience:</b> To what extent have systems institutionalized response and preparedness in their planning and sector management?

The evaluation questions informed the development of an evaluation matrix, which was an essential reference point for the evaluation and guided data collection and analysis. The full evaluation matrix, which can be found in **Annex 1**, sets out for each evaluation sub-question the judgement criteria, the applicable method for analysis (portfolio analysis or case study), indicators (both quantitative and qualitative) and data sources.

## 3.2 Overview of Approach

To conduct the summative evaluation, we carried out a **mixed-methods evaluation** which examined all three of the grant types of GPE’s COVID-19 support and how they have contributed to countries’ improved mitigation and response, recovery efforts, and overall resilience.<sup>15</sup> Our mixed-methods approach used **portfolio analysis** to provide a portfolio-level lens of secondary data (including data generated by the GPE Secretariat) and **case studies** (building on primary and secondary data) to examine the planning grant, global grant and 10 country-level cases which examined all three grants at the country-level.

Findings from the case studies and portfolio analysis were triangulated and synthesized to inform the evaluation’s assessment of interventions supported through the COVID-19 grants and the successes and areas of improvement for GPE’s support modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through each of these approaches, we also examined the results achieved against GPE’s key priority areas of Equity, Learning and Teaching, and Systems Resilience; and the results specific to its COVID-19 efforts, each under M&R and Recovery.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Outputs and outcomes are identified in applications and approval letters, reporting documentation (periodic surveys and final reports) for all types of grants. Country-level outputs/outcomes for AF Grant can be found in completion reports; for Global grant – in High Level Matrix; for Planning – in the database on the use of Planning funds.

<sup>16</sup> These key priority areas were defined under GPE’s previous strategy (GPE 2020), which was valid at the time of the design of the COVID-19 support. We applied the coding scheme developed by GPE for these key priorities as part of its coding and costing database to ensure consistency of reporting and alignment with core COVID-19 grant documentation such as grant completion reports.

To conduct the **portfolio analysis**, we constructed a **unified portfolio database** which drew together data generated from a range of GPE processes, including grant quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), with other sources of data collated to further enrich analysis. Grants formed the primary, but not the only, unit of analysis for this database. This database enabled us to quantitatively and qualitatively explore the links between grant inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes for all three grant types, as well as how they were delivered in context. It enabled us to disaggregate findings by several key dimensions of our analysis including theme/sub-theme,<sup>17</sup> geographic region, country typology and grant implementation status. Thus, we could examine the nuances of varied contexts. The role of underlying internal or external conditions and factors in affecting grant results was also explored through available secondary data when feasible. By using completion report data disaggregated by sex and other vulnerability factor variables we were able to assess how gender and inclusion were addressed across the portfolio and see what results were achieved. The coding used for the portfolio analysis is in **Annex 2**.

We also developed 12 **case studies** to provide an in-depth qualitative exploration of GPE's support during COVID-19 through the lens of each of GPE's three grant types.

- **Our 10 country-level case studies** explored the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, potential for sustainability and intended and unintended effects of GPE's COVID-19-related support, both financial and non-financial, in relation to all three grants. We identified a purposively selected sample of 10 countries which encapsulated a range of geographic and socio-economic characteristics and varied experiences of COVID-19's effect on education systems amongst other considerations. The selected sample included **Bangladesh, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Federated States of Micronesia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Tonga**. Data was collected through primary interviews with Secretariat staff and individuals representing key stakeholders in each country, triangulated against a desk review of a range of secondary sources, including data collected by the GPE Secretariat. Two of our country case studies, for **Bangladesh** and **Ghana**, can be found in **Annex 6** and **Annex 7** respectively.
- The **planning grant** and **global grant case studies** looked at both mechanisms through interviews with GPE Secretariat staff (focal points) and the respective grant agents for each grant, documentary review, as well as a drawing together of data from country-level case studies where available.

### 3.2.1 Data sources

Data was collected from multiple sources to allow triangulation of evidence. These comprised a wide range of documentary sources examined through desk research and primary data collected using key informant interviews.

**Desk research:** Documents pertaining to all three grants were used for both the portfolio analysis and case studies.

- Key sources used for the portfolio analysis included existing GPE databases for accelerated funding grants (including on progress and completion reporting, tracking, costing/coding and utilization), progress and completion reports for the global grant, and the completion report, grant agent surveys and expenditure reports for the planning grant.
- Key sources for the case studies included accelerated funding grant applications, completion reports and emergency response plans; and for the global grant and planning grant, proposal and approval documentation, implementation plans and reporting.
- Secretariat general documentation such as board documentation, internal reports and communication, knowledge products and technical papers grounded our understanding of GPE's COVID-19 support and informed design of data collection tools.

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<sup>17</sup> This is possible because the portfolio data has been coded by the GPE Secretariat by type of intervention and theme (response and mitigation vs. recovery, and related sub-themes). For instance, the evaluation is able to report on the percentage of grants and grant expenditure directed towards a given theme at the grant application stage, or the percentage of theme-linked components/objectives meeting indicator targets.

A list of all documents reviewed for the evaluation is available in [Annex 3](#).

**Primary data collection:** Interviews were undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the case studies and provide essential contextual and operational insights from Secretariat level for the overarching analysis. A list of all stakeholders consulted can be found in [Annex 4](#) and is summarized below in [Table 4](#). Data collection tools are in [Annex 5](#).

Table 4: Primary data collection summary.

Category	Description	# of interviewees
<b>Country case studies</b>	<b>GPE Secretariat</b> members who supported each country (including Country Team Leads, Education Specialists and Grant Operations Officers)	15
	<b>In-country stakeholders</b> including representatives from the Ministry of Education (GPE focal point), grant agent for the COVID-19 AF grant, coordinating agency representative, and other key stakeholders involved in COVID-19 planning and support such as from other ministries and development partners.	40
	<b>End-user-level stakeholders</b> , defined as stakeholders to speak on behalf of the reach achieved by COVID-19 grants, including representatives from civil society (NGOs, CSOs) or who represent end users, government institutions or partners involved in the implementation of the grant.	10
		65 interviewees total
<b>Planning grant case study</b>	<b>Lead focal points</b> from the GPE Secretariat and from the grant agent (UNICEF).	3 interviewees total
<b>Global grant case study</b>	<b>Lead focal points</b> from the GPE Secretariat and from the grant agents (UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO).	4 interviewees total
<b>Global stakeholders</b>	<b>GPE Secretariat</b> COVID-19 response leadership team, Regional Managers; Grant Operations Team Lead; and gender Team Lead.	8 interviewees total

### 3.2.2 Analysis

Analysis methods used to extract findings at the **portfolio level** included:

- **Descriptive statistics** to describe data and provide context to the analysis (e.g., grant agent ratings, or number of children reached for each intervention category).
- **Cross-tabulations** to disaggregate portfolio data by breaking down the frequency distribution of given data by two or more variables (e.g., intervention funding broken down by theme and region) to produce more contextualized evidence and compare data points across varied categories.
- **Qualitative analysis** to organize, code and analyze qualitative open response data from various fields within grant monitoring reports at the portfolio level.

The portfolio analysis captures the diversity of interventions and related outcomes. The analysis is presented through key statistics that we visualized and interpreted through the narrative.





For our **case studies analysis**, we triangulated our primary data with secondary data such as government reports, reporting data, data shared by grant agents and other country-level stakeholders on outcomes, and research/studies on how the beneficiaries or end users were reached. We used our case studies to present illustrative examples to respond to the evaluation questions, as well as to conduct comparative case study analysis.

Finally, informed by the evaluation matrix including judgement criteria, we **synthesized** findings from across the portfolio analysis and case studies to triangulate and form judgments to respond to the evaluation questions.

### 3.2.3 Reporting

We present our key findings triangulated across the case studies and portfolio analysis in a narrative form, supported by graphical presentation of portfolio analysis evidence. We include a summary rating of the strength of evidence against each of our key findings. This provides an indication of the level of confidence we have in the finding, based on the completeness of evidence (against expected sources of data), the credibility of the data sources, and the degree to which our analysis has been able to triangulate the findings across case studies and our portfolio analysis. A summary of the ratings can be found in **Table 5** below.

Table 5: Strength of evidence ratings.

	<b>High strength of evidence:</b> This finding includes evidence that is reported from multiple sources (including across portfolio analysis, case studies and where relevant, secondary data sources) where the data is both credible and complete.
	<b>Moderate strength of evidence:</b> This finding is supported by data across multiple sources, but there is some uncertainty about the completeness or credibility of (some of) the data sources, or the data source is complete and credible but is not supported across multiple sources.
	<b>Low strength of evidence:</b> The finding is based on data from a small number of sources, and there is some uncertainty about the completeness or credibility of the data sources. This finding may still be relevant but may require further validation.
	<b>Insufficient evidence:</b> There is insufficient evidence to support a finding in this area, due to the lack of data or data with limited credibility.

## 3.3 Limitations

Overall, covering the full scope of this evaluation was ambitious, as acknowledged in the inception report.

### 3.3.1 Limitations from the portfolio analysis

- **Receipt of completion reports:** Project completion reports are critical sources of data to account for project-level outcomes. The AF grants followed a staggered closure, whereby the last date for closure was December 2022. The cut-off date for the receipt of grant completion reports for this evaluation's portfolio analysis was July 7, 2023. Data from completion reports from ten AF grant recipient countries out of the 67 reports is not included in this analysis as the completion reports were not ready by the cut-off date of the evaluation.<sup>18</sup> These countries are excluded from analysis on most of evaluation questions except timeliness, utilization, and grant activities/allocation by thematic division. Twelve of these AF grants submitted completion reports in a different template to the standard template used by GPE AF grants.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, data against some variables might be missing. Where any other countries are excluded from the analysis, we have indicated this in a footnote.
- **Ratings in the completion report:** An important limitation of this analysis is that the ratings in the completion report are self-reported by grant agents. It is unclear if these ratings were validated by the Secretariat or an independent body.
- **Utilization data:** The interpretation of utilization varied across grant agents, making it difficult to compare across countries.<sup>20</sup> For instance, utilization data was reported with different frequency of

<sup>18</sup> The ten countries excluded from our portfolio analysis, on the basis of late or unsubmitted completion reports, are: Burkina Faso, Chad, Guyana, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan World Bank, Sudan UNICEF, and Yemen. Note that Yemen's grant was cancelled, therefore a completion report was not submitted.

<sup>19</sup> The 12 countries with different reporting templates are: Central African Republic, Djibouti, The Gambia, Haiti, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania-Zanzibar.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank reports the amount it disburses to the government as utilization, while UNICEF reports the amount spent by implementing partners as utilization. This may result in overestimating the amount utilized by World Bank grants.

reporting by grant agents (biannual or quarterly surveys), which limited the extent utilization could be compared across grant agents.

- **Gaps in reporting on core indicators:** Grant agents were asked to report progress on grant objectives (specific to each grant) as well as on applicable global core indicators, which were determined at the outset of the grant. However, although the screening process checked for the matching between the core indicators and planned grant objectives (as included in the CEO matrix), in practice, core indicators did not always align with, or could be mapped to, the AF grants' objectives. Therefore, we were unable to determine at the portfolio level whether grant agents reported on all applicable core indicators per their stated objectives and whether data gaps were the result of intentional non-reporting against core indicators, lack of data to report, or the inapplicability of the indicator to grant objectives. We were only able to triangulate core indicator reporting with reporting on key objectives for case study countries.
- **Data for efficacy and the achievement of grant objectives/activities for planning and global grant:** Efficacy data, as reported in completion reports for the planning and global grant, cannot be disaggregated at the country level. Efficacy reporting provided in the completion report for the planning grant was only presented at an aggregated portfolio level, whereby accompanying qualitative survey responses were an incomplete representation against the full portfolio of countries supported by the planning grant. Furthermore, the global grant was not required to report against core indicators as agreed by the GPE Secretariat and global grant agents. This limited our ability to report on the efficacy of both grants at the country level, whereas we have used a number of sources to assess efficacy at the grant level.
- **Aggregation and disaggregation of the number of beneficiaries reached:** The core indicators provide data to understand the number of beneficiaries reached through a set of common AF grant activities. However, as reporting on core indicators did not systematically cover all activities, the cumulation of core indicators against the number of beneficiaries reached may not show the full picture. Instead, this data can be used to showcase only the number of beneficiaries reached under specific activities or themes. Similarly, for reporting on the number of beneficiaries reached, disaggregation by gender and other categories (geographical area, income level, disability etc.) was not systematic. As a result, it is not possible to systematically triangulate qualitative data on gender from completion reports with quantitative outcomes.
- **Cost data:** Unit costs were only reported in a minority of AF grant completion reports, and in an unstandardized or inconsistent manner (for instance, without the use of benchmarks). As a result, we are unable to evaluate the cost efficiency of grants as we are unable to compare unit costs across grants and provide analysis against evaluation sub-question 3.7.

### 3.3.2 Limitations for the case studies

- **Case study representativeness:** Given the scope of the evaluation (with regards to budget and timelines) it was necessary to limit the number of in-depth country-level case studies. Therefore, while we have purposively sampled 10 country case studies to cover a diversity of country-level characteristics, comparative case study analysis does not cover a fully representative sample of AF grant countries. Therefore, it should be noted that while country case study findings are used to be illustrative and explanatory, they are not intended to be generalizable across the portfolio.
- **Access to respondents and recall bias:** The COVID-19 planning grant concluded in March 2021, the global grant in February 2022 and COVID-19 AF grants had a staggered closure with the final grants closing in December 2022. As a result, many stakeholders – especially those who took part in the planning and initial set-up phases of the grants – were difficult to reach or had moved on to other jobs. Following interviews, evaluators were also conscious of the prevalence of recall bias, due to the lapse of time since grant closure. At times, respondents often reported information and observations already included in completion reports, as they likely reviewed these to refresh their memories ahead of interviews. This meant that even when probed, interview responses sometimes were limited to findings already reported in completion reports.
- **Complexity of contribution claims:** The evaluation was not designed to capture attributable changes as a result of GPE's COVID-19 support. We instead sought to triangulate contribution claims. Even so, we faced challenges in determining contribution claims on the impact of GPE's support, given the complexity of COVID-19 responses at the country level which often involved a

number of other development partners and grants to mobilize emergency support for continued education provision. We were not always able to determine the extent of other funding or support at the country-level. Similarly, as expected, case study interviewees were often unable to distinguish between the sources of grant funding (including between the three GPE COVID-19 grants). Therefore, we note that where we are able to determine contribution claims, we are unable to systematically account for or determine the degree of spillover effects (such as outcomes/impact generated by external factors or actions of other stakeholders).

- **Data on relevance and effectiveness of interventions for beneficiaries/end users:** It was outside of the scope of the evaluation (in budget and approach) to collect data with a representative number of beneficiaries at the country level to verify the relevance and effectiveness of grant interventions (particularly regarding service delivery). Therefore, we used a snowball sampling approach with Secretariat Country Team Leads (CTLs) and grant agents or coordinating agencies to identify suitable respondents who could either speak on behalf of or share further data to evidence whether grant interventions reached their intended targets (for instance, whether services or materials reached their intended beneficiaries). In practice, CTLs, grant agents and coordinating agencies were not always able to identify suitable respondents and there is limited secondary data available to support the validation of service delivery targets. Thus, while we seek to triangulate sources of data to determine whether grants have reached their respective targets, we are unable to provide systematic evidence on the quality of service delivery and outcomes regarding teaching and learning.
- **Country-level data on the reach of global grant outputs:** We note that we have insufficient evidence to capture the extent to which global grant outputs were used at the country level. There is a lack of secondary data as the M&E reporting of the global grant did not systematically capture this. We sought to collect data on this using country-level case study interviews with key stakeholders such as government/ministry officials, but due to difficulties in accessing respondents and recall bias (see above), we are unable to determine whether the lack of awareness of global grant outputs is due to the absence of awareness or a product of recall bias.



## 4 Key Findings

### 4.1 Relevance and Design

This section explores how well GPE's COVID-19-related support met the needs of partner countries to address the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

It addresses the following areas:

- **Overall suitability and continued relevance** of the design of GPE COVID-19 grants and grant mechanisms to the needs of partner countries; and
- **The relevance and continued relevance** of GPE grants to beneficiary needs at the partner country level, given changing COVID-19 contexts and emerging needs.

We first focus on the design of GPE's grant mechanisms and their relevance to the needs of partner countries, looking at the planning, AF and global grants at the outset and as they were being rolled out. We examine the early decisions made by GPE on design and whether the design of GPE's grant mechanisms enabled grant-funded activities to adapt over time.

We then examine whether the activities funded by GPE were relevant to the needs of partner countries, with regards to their populations. In particular, we place an emphasis on whether GPE's support enabled responses focused on vulnerable groups such as girls, which was identified as an early priority for GPE.<sup>21</sup> We also explore whether, as circumstances changed, the activities funded by GPE remained relevant to changing needs of beneficiary groups as the pandemic unfolded.

#### 4.1.1 Meeting the needs of countries

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**Finding 1.** *The design of the three grants was relevant to the context of the pandemic and country-level needs; however, it is not clear if grant processes ensured continued relevance of activities as the pandemic conditions evolved.*

 **High strength of evidence**

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**At the outset of the pandemic, GPE support was relevant to the needs of partner countries, driven by the speed of the planning grant roll-out and the flexibility in the range of activities the planning grant mechanism allowed.**

The early days of the pandemic were marked by a large amount of uncertainty and urgency. GPE's support was designed with unprecedented speed, when there was little evidence on effective interventions to ensure continued learning in a fast evolving and unpredictable context. Looking back, we are able to see that the initial impact of COVID-19 on education systems varied greatly. For example, school closures (either full or partial) ranged from over 600 days in **Bangladesh, Uganda, and Nepal**, to fewer than 30 days in small island states (such as **Samoa, the Marshall Islands, or Kiribati**) or did not occur at all, as in **Burundi**.<sup>22</sup>

The early focus of GPE's support was to enable partner countries to develop emergency response plans, building on GPE's existing education sector plan development grant (ESPDG) mechanism. This formed the basis for the planning grant. Respondents from the GPE Secretariat noted that in the early thinking of how GPE could respond to the pandemic, this was determined to be the quickest mechanism that GPE could mobilize to provide support to partner countries. To further support speed, the planning grant was administered as a single grant through an existing grant agent, UNICEF. UNICEF was purposively selected due to its experience with crises contexts and existing relationships with partner countries. Working through a single grant agent allowed GPE to disburse funds to partner countries quickly.

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<sup>21</sup> GPE. "The effects of the COVID pandemic on girls' education." Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/effects-covid-pandemic-girls-education>.

<sup>22</sup> The average length of school closure was 224 days, the median 167.5 days. (Data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Dashboards on the Global Monitoring of School Closures Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic' <https://covid19.uis.unesco.org/global-monitoring-school-closures-covid19/>).

The planning grant was designed first and foremost to support 87 countries to develop emergency COVID-19 response plans for the education sector, although it contained a certain amount of flexibility to account for scenarios in which countries may have already developed plans or have pre-existing emergency response plans from which to build upon. As such, as part of their allocation of funding through the planning grant, countries were able to use funding to support a range of activities falling under a 'set menu of options'<sup>23</sup> which included the development of system-level responses, support for the planning and implementation of safe school operations and risk communications or enhancing knowledge sharing and capacity building for both the current and future pandemic response. **Figure 2** in **section 2.1** provided a breakdown of the activities as selected by countries (as reported in the planning grant completion report).

Across each of the key intervention areas, on average, 54% (47 out of 87) and 53% (46 out of 87) of countries undertook activities under key intervention areas 1 and 2 respectively, while on average, a smaller number (34%) worked towards activities related to documentation and dissemination of evidence and lessons learned (key intervention area 3).<sup>24</sup> As intended, activities that supported national or sub-national planning were the most popular activity overall supported by the planning grant (selected by 71%, or 62 out of 87 countries). Similarly, the formative COVID-19 evaluation found that the planning grant helped countries develop comprehensive COVID-19 responses with the potential to be financed by AF grants and other donors. Several activities undertaken also related to the design and implementation of mitigation responses, including the preparation of alternative education delivery systems (60 countries), supporting preparations for the reopening of schools (52 countries), and the development of initiatives to close learning gaps (36 countries).

This suggests that countries opted for a wide range of activities and that the range of and flexibility in the selection of activities as part of the grant design was relevant to them. Both the grant agent and GPE Secretariat staff shared that they had expected to see a spread of activities selected by partner countries as they understood that needs would go beyond planning and other types of interventions necessary in this early stage of the pandemic based on varying country contexts. Another important factor which may have influenced the range of activities selected was the short duration of the grant (12 months), which may have encouraged countries to select activities which could be quickly mobilized.

Evidence from case studies suggests that partner countries used planning grant funds in a variety of ways to support sector planning. Six of our case study countries were reported as having used their planning grant funding to support the development of ERPs directly, as was the case for **Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Tonga**.<sup>25</sup> Both **Mozambique** and **Nicaragua** used planning grant funding to hold consultation sessions used to inform their planning processes while also supporting MoE staff to plan by using funds to pay for infrastructure and equipment to support their remote working and connectivity. **Federated States of Micronesia** used the planning grant to support the extension of its standardized operating procedures and to conduct a risk analysis to inform its national COVID-19 plan. Conversely, while **Ghana** did not use the planning grant funding to support the development of its

#### The use of the planning grant to support response planning in Nicaragua and Mozambique

In **Nicaragua**, planning grant funding was used to support consultation with the newly formed local education group as well as with the Education Donors Group, which further supported planning alignment across donors.

In **Mozambique**, planning grant funds supported the ability for development partners to input into the plan as well as sensitization and consultation across the Ministry of Education and Human Development.

In both cases, planning grant funds also supported MoE departments to work remotely, highlighting an important precondition to the planning process.

<sup>23</sup> This wording comes from the planning grant application form submitted by UNICEF.

<sup>24</sup> Key Intervention Area 1: The development of an enhanced education system-level response to the pandemic; Key Intervention Area 2: Support to the planning and implementation of safe school operation and risk communication; Key intervention area 3: Enhanced knowledge sharing and capacity-building both for the current response and future pandemics.

<sup>25</sup> As reported in the planning grant completion report or as part of the open, qualitative responses to the two surveys (one in August 2020 and one in support of the grant's completion report ahead of June 2021) conducted with planning grant recipient countries throughout the grant's lifetime.

ERP (as it rapidly developed its ERP in April 2020), it did use planning grant funding to conduct a rapid risk analysis to inform its subsequent ERP activities.<sup>26</sup>

***AF grant screening processes, which defined relevance to country priorities as alignment with ERPs and endorsement from LEGs, helped to ensure that AF grants were relevant to existing country policy processes and priorities.***

To support the relevance of AF grants to the needs of partner countries, the COVID-19 AF grant guidelines set out that grant proposals were required to be based on government COVID-19 response plans and be endorsed by the local education group (and Education Cluster, where relevant).<sup>27</sup> The question of whether AF grants were relevant in terms of alignment with contextual needs as well as with other national initiatives was explored in the formative evaluation. The formative evaluation concluded that grants supported countries to both address immediate emergency needs and ensure the safe return to school, allowing countries to also work towards longer-term educational goals and indirectly contribute to systems strengthening.

Looking across the portfolio of AF grants at closing, we found that this formative evaluation finding continues to hold true.<sup>28</sup> Across case studies, there is strong evidence that activities under the AF grants were highly aligned with existing country priorities from the onset of the pandemic. Further, all 10 case studies provided examples of how LEGs were engaged as part of proposal development, which attests to the inclusiveness of the programming process.

In some cases, the priorities which countries decided to focus their AF grants on went beyond GPE's remit and concentration on basic (at least one year of pre-primary education, primary and lower secondary) education, but where possible, GPE considered adjustments. At the time of AF grant proposal submission, several case study countries had proposed to conduct activities that went beyond this scope to also target early childhood education (ECE) or upper secondary education.<sup>29</sup> In the case of **Federated States of Micronesia**, activities targeting ECE were funded on the grounds that it had sufficiently achieved universal primary education (95% for girls in G6). In contrast, in **Nicaragua**, the primary completion rate of 82% was too low for grounds for maintaining activities for upper secondary education. In both **Nicaragua** and **Democratic Republic of Congo**, GPE requested that countries remove activities that were targeting upper secondary students. However, in **Nicaragua**, GPE allowed the program to conduct some activities targeting upper secondary students where interventions targeted at the school level included both lower and upper secondary students.

#### **Where planning and AF grants supported inclusive dialogue**

In **Tonga**, prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Tonga Council of Directors of Education Systems carried out the traditional functions of a LEG. With support from Save the Children Australia, the grant agent for Tonga's AF grant, the Ministry of Education and Training was able to draft new terms of reference for a LEG which supported involvement of development partners and, over time, CSOs as part of education policy development.

In **Nicaragua**, a new LEG had been established not long before the outbreak of COVID-19. As part of the design of the AF grant, the LEG was closely consulted, resulting in a risk analysis conducted of the project which the grant agent reflected allowed the project to determine valuable mitigation measures. However, there is less evidence of ongoing engagement with the LEG as part of the grant roll-out.

<sup>26</sup> Information on whether planning grant funds were used for planning purposes was not available for the three remaining case study countries: Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia.

<sup>27</sup> See page 6 and Annex 2 of GPE's 'Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window' (April 2020, with subsequent update).

<sup>28</sup> We were able to confirm that for all case study countries, the CEO/Approval Memos confirmed that AF grants met this requirement. See: "CEO Memo – Annex 1. Program Standards for Assessment of COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Applications (Country Grants). The Eligibility Criteria "Is the proposal based on a publicly available government response plan related to COVID-19, including education?"

<sup>29</sup> Early childhood education was the focus for 58% (39 out of 67) of AF grants while upper secondary education was for 15% (10 out of 67) of AF grants.

*The AF grant mechanism allowed for adaptability and for AF grant programs to correct course frequently; however, because most adaptations were timeline-related and did not significantly change the scope or type of interventions supported, it is unclear whether the relevance of the activities was maintained as the pandemic evolved.*

To examine the continued relevance of GPE support, we mainly focus on the AF grant, for which the most data is available. The planning grant did not require any revisions, largely due to its mandate for rapid disbursement, while the global grant was designed similarly to AF grants in allowing adaptations.

Desk review and interviews with the GPE Secretariat highlighted that AF grants were designed to be flexible in terms of allowing programs to adapt the scope of activities throughout implementation. We were able to explore the extent to which this flexibility was taken up, and the factors that drove adaptation, by examining the frequency and contexts in which AF grants requested revisions to their grant programming across the AF grant portfolio and by examining completion reports.

Grant revisions can be characterized as either ‘minor’ or ‘major’ revisions based on the percentage of total budgeted activities requested for change or the nature of the revision, for example extensions in timelines. Grant guidelines for the AF grants permitted grant agents to modify up to 25% of their budget as a ‘minor’ revision, which did not require prior Secretariat approval, whereas revisions that concerned a reallocation of more than 25% of a grant’s total budget or in which a time extension was requested was considered a ‘major’ revision. Countries were able to request more than one revision, both in terms of type of revision and number of revisions.

Across the AF grant portfolio, a total of 58% (39 out of 67) of AF grants requested at least one type of revision with many grants requesting both minor and major revisions and more than one type of revisions (revision to budget, timeline, activities etc.).<sup>30</sup> Minor revisions were less frequently requested, occurring in 18% (12 out of 67) of AF grants.

Major revisions were requested for 48% (32 out of 67) of AF grants<sup>31</sup> with time extension being the most frequent type of major revision requested. GPE approved a total of 48 extensions across the 30 AF grants, with more than half grants requesting more than one extension (see **Figure 5** below).<sup>32</sup> Across the AF grant portfolio, fragility and conflict appear to be minor contextual drivers for extensions, with PCFCs slightly more likely to request more than one extension (see **Figure 5** below) than non-PCFCs. In addition, the number of extensions requested appears to be positively related to the average length of school closures.<sup>33</sup>

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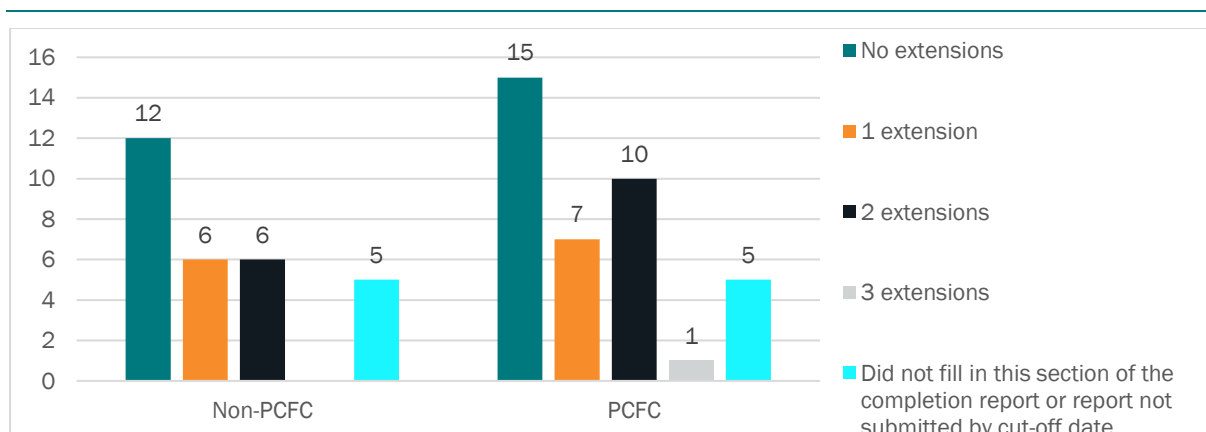
<sup>30</sup> This is as reported in AF grant completion reports. In total, 58% (39 out of 67) of AF grants requested a revision. Of the remaining 28, 18 did not request a revision, while for the remaining 10, we do not have the data of whether they requested a revision as their completion reports were not received ahead of the cut-off date for inclusion for analysis as part of the summative evaluation.

<sup>31</sup> 30 AF grants requested extensions while 20 AF grants – other major revisions (total of 23 major revisions excluding extensions).

<sup>32</sup> Of the 30 grants requesting extensions, 13 grants requested one extension, 16 grants requested extensions twice, and one grant (Timor-Leste) requested three extensions. In comparison 27 AF grants did not request an extension.

<sup>33</sup> The average school closure duration for grants with one extension was 299 days, with two extensions – 151 days, with three extensions – 279 days, grants which did not request any extensions – 237 days.

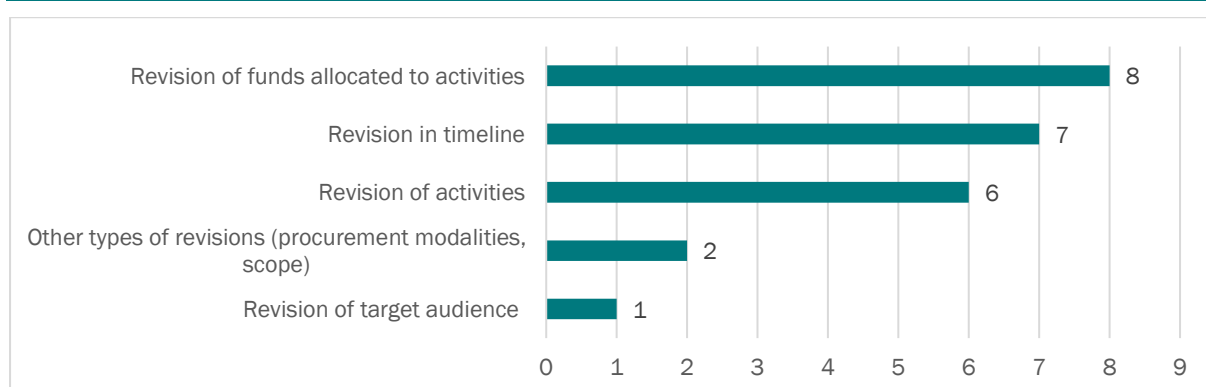
Figure 5: Number of grants with zero, one, two or three extensions by PCFC status (N=35 PCFC, N=28 non-PCFC).<sup>34</sup>



Source: AF grants completion reports database, section “Major revisions” (coded) and GPE definition of PCFC status.

**Figure 6** Error! Reference source not found. shows that other types of major revisions, outside of extensions, were less frequent across the AF grant portfolio, with a total of 24 major revisions. These included revisions to the budget allocated to activities, changes to the types of activities conducted, and changes to timelines (within the existing timeframes, such as changes to the project work plan).<sup>35</sup>

Figure 6: Number of requests by the type of major revisions for AF grants (excluding extensions) (N=24 requests).<sup>36</sup>



Source: AF grants completion reports database, section “Major revisions” (coded).

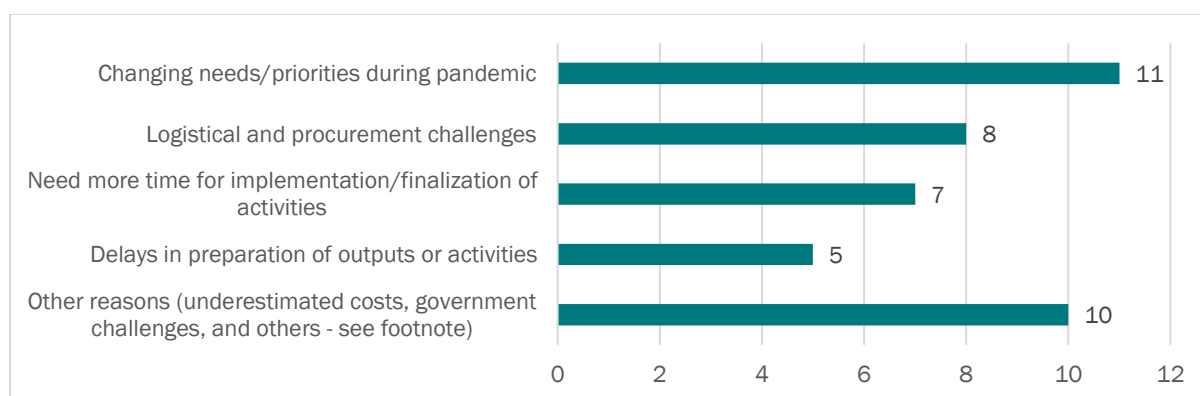
Overall, revisions took place mainly due to the uncertain nature of the pandemic and not due to any fundamental oversights in grant design (see **Figure 7**). Most revisions were requested due to pandemic-related changing priorities as well as logistical and procurement challenges.

<sup>34</sup> It is not possible to analyze the duration of the extensions as the available data was not always consistent between two different sources providing data: duration of the extension provided in the completion reports database; and qualitative evidence from major revision comments from completion reports (coded by the evaluation team). After reviewing both data sources, there are 17 countries who did not report on extensions in major revisions section, but which reported extensions of more than zero in completion report database. Most likely 15 of them are those for which the number of extensions was not reported. Another two completion reports indicated having had one or two extensions in the major revisions comments but report zero in the duration of extension in completion report database. Regardless of the reasons, these averages would be too biased to consider.

<sup>35</sup> Revisions in timelines refers to restructuring of overall timeline (but not to its extension) or revision in the life cycle of specific activity. Revision of funds allocated to different activities included including new activities related to WASH, distance learning, and teacher training. Changes to only four of the seven countries.

<sup>36</sup> The number in the graph refers to the number of requests by each type of major revision, i.e., the number of times grant agents for AF grants requested a specific type of major revision, but one grant could request more than one type of revision per grant. Two other major revisions were requested to modify grant implementation arrangements to allow Ministry procurement and management of selected goods and services (Somalia-Puntland) and the reallocation of funds to the activities not related to the COVID-19 AF grant but responding to other emergencies (Haiti). In Haiti, the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training after consultations with partners and subject-matter experts, reprogrammed and redirected a total amount of USD \$2,835,000 from two projects (USD \$1.955 M from the COVID-19 response project and USD \$880,000 from the socio-political crisis response project) to respond to the emergency caused by the earthquake (August 2021) in the Great South.

Figure 7: Number of mentions of reasons identified for AF grant revisions (N=41 mentions).<sup>37</sup>



Source: AF grants completion reports database, section “Minor and major revisions” (coded).

Regarding extensions specifically, the most common explanations provided by grant agents included contextual factors, such as rapidly changing political context and security concerns (conflicts and natural disasters) as well as capacity issues related to procurement and changes in key personnel at ministries of education.

### Reasons for extensions in Bangladesh and Ethiopia

One aspect that both Ethiopia and Bangladesh had in common during COVID-19 is that they **both experienced some of the longest school closures** across of all GPE-supported partner countries (602 days total for Bangladesh and 433 for Ethiopia), which precipitated the need for extensions.

In the case of **Bangladesh**, a 12-month extension was requested on the basis of an 8-month delay in project start up. This was linked to turnover at the government/leadership level, the government’s internal approval processing, as well as surges in COVID-19 infections, causing unexpected, lengthy lockdowns. However, the extensions didn’t mean a change in scope of activities, potentially due to continued relevance of the grant activities, despite the delays.

Similarly, **Ethiopia** requested two extensions during the course of grant implementation, after facing timeline challenges as a result of both internal capacities at the startup of the project, external factors related to conflict and insecurity, and converse to the situation in Bangladesh, unexpected school reopening. As a result, offline learning packets to support students during school closures were no longer needed with schools re-opening and the grant agent adapted the grant activities to changing focus and was able to instead reallocate up to USD \$4.94M funding to focus on supporting students with the reopening of schools.

The reasons for revisions are consistent with delays and factors hindering implementation reported by AF grant agents. All 21 grants experiencing delays in the approval of activities or production of outputs and the seven grants with delays due to changes in political system/government were those that requested major revisions. Other delays were caused by challenges in procurement and delivery of equipment/devices (14 grants) and lockdowns, school closures and restrictions on gathering (17 grants), while the most common factors hindering implementation were external economic factors (20 grants), most notably consisting of dependence on imports and external supply chains), lockdowns and other restrictions on movement (17 grants) and lack of capacity at the national level for managing activities (13 grants).

<sup>37</sup> The number in the graph refers to the number of mentions, i.e., the number of times AF grants reported specific reason(s) for revision(s), but each grant could report more than one reason. Out of 57 completion reports available by cut-off date for the analysis, 41 AF grants reported on the delays and filled in section “Minor and Major Revisions” but only 28 grants reported on the reasons for requesting revisions (according to the completion reports data).

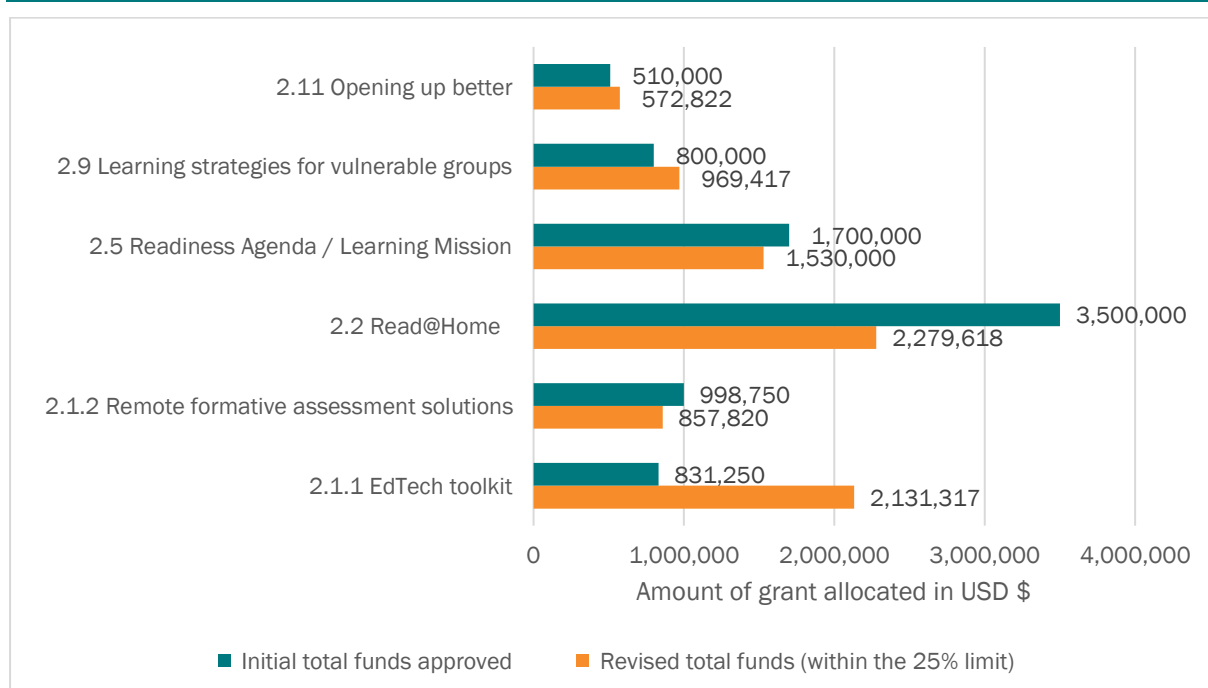
The category “Other reasons” includes reasons for revision that were reported by four countries or less. These reasons include underestimated costs; national government or staff challenges (e.g., turnover at the ministry, changes in the government, shortage of staff, lack of technical capacity at national level); conflict or natural disaster; delays in the government approval processes.

Secretariat staff interviews and desk review showed that most of these revisions – both minor and major – were appropriate and linked to implementation circumstances.<sup>38</sup> Secretariat staff also suggested that extensions were mostly appropriate, given country circumstances at the time of the requests.

The planning grant did not require any extensions or revisions, as the design of the grant prioritized rapid disbursement.

For the global grant, as with the AF grants, flexibility was built into the design in the form of allowing the three grant agents the freedom to undertake minor revisions without requiring GPE Secretariat sign-off. The flexibility of the global grant was one of the aspects highly valued by grant agents, as it allowed it to adapt to changing needs to ensure its ongoing relevance. Adaptations to global grant activities were evident during the course of the grant, for instance with regards to a decreased amount of funding dedicated to Read@Home, where funds were reallocated to the EdTech Toolkit on the basis of the fact that the grant agent (the World Bank) experienced a higher demand for the EdTech Toolkit than originally envisaged, while there were delays in implementing Read@Home due to procurement difficulties (see **Figure 8** below).

Figure 8: Revised budget by Sub-Component under the global grant’s Component 2: Learning Continuity (in US\$) (N=1 grant).



Source: End-of-grant report for the global grant, section “Budget Utilization as of February 28th, 2022”.

Grant agents for the global grant reported that given the rapid pace of the grant proposal process, they found it difficult to know at the time of proposal what evidence or knowledge was in demand at the country level. During implementation, one global grant agent suggested that “the design was completely demand-driven, responding to a series of questions we were getting from the countries’ as well as grant agents’ own learning.” However, the evidence from progress report suggests that the source of the demand for global grant activities was primarily grant agents’ country-level offices and there is limited evidence on country-level uptake to suggest that these demands were indeed based on countries’ needs.

<sup>38</sup> Grant agents’ assessment of relevance does not seem to be related to the number of revisions or extension. Grants assessing relevance as Modest reported no extensions or revisions. Grant agents who assessed relevance higher did not have fewer revisions/extensions on average. There was no correlation between relevance assessment and region, PCFC status, and school closure duration.

## 4.1.2 Meeting the needs of beneficiaries

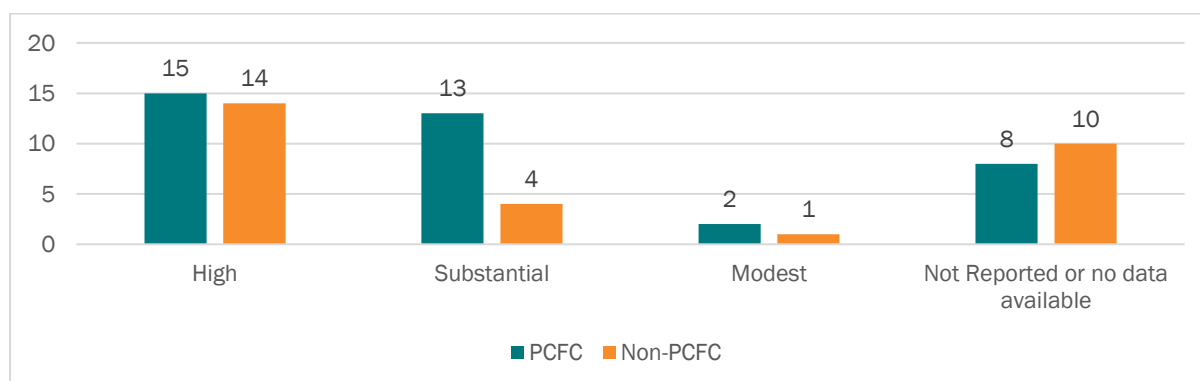
**Finding 2.** *The grant screening process ensured AF grants' relevance to education needs but did not consistently ensure that interventions met equity and gender needs, nor appropriateness to technological capabilities.*

**Moderate strength of evidence**

*At exit, 46 out of 49 AF grants were assessed (by grant agents) to have grant activities that were of 'high' or 'substantial' continued relevance to country needs, with only three grants rated as having 'modest' relevance.<sup>39</sup>*

Overall ratings on relevance can be found in the 'relevance' section of AF grant completion reports, where grant agents were asked to assess the project's performance with regards to the extent to which grant activities continued to be relevant as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded (with a focus on the needs of children). The ratings across the portfolio can be found in **Figure 9**. We also found that PCFC were slightly more likely to report relevance as 'substantial' than 'high', as compared to non-PCFC, although through the portfolio analysis and case studies there are no discernible trends which reveal why this might be the case.

Figure 9: 'Relevance' ratings from AF grant completion reports (N=67).<sup>40</sup>



Source: AF grant completion reports, section "Relevance."

Grant agents who rated the relevance of AF grant-funded projects as 'high' or 'substantial' largely emphasized similar features.<sup>41</sup> Projects that were emphasized as having strong relevance were focused on both mitigation against the ongoing education crisis (through remote learning systems and catch-up programs) and increasing systems preparedness for and resilience to future disruptions. Relevance was also ensured where grant activities were aligned with the priorities of the government, both with regards to existing or ongoing sector planning or ongoing emergency response planning. Finally, relevant projects also

### Features of 'high' relevance

In cases where grant agents suggested that a grant had high relevance, this included descriptions of where a project was closely aligned to not only a country's ERP, but also ongoing sector plans (such as the cases of **Bangladesh, Nicaragua, Ethiopia** and **Ghana**). In each of these cases, a further feature of what was considered relevant was the incorporation of both mitigation and recovery activities, where grant agents also emphasized the prospects for the continuation of outcomes.

<sup>39</sup> As per completion report, 'High' was defined as 'full continued alignment between grant interventions and priorities identified for mitigation and/or recovery' while 'substantial' was used to indicate almost full continued alignment. 'Modest' indicated partial continued alignment while 'negligible' was used to indicate 'very little continued alignment'.

<sup>40</sup> Note that not all AF grants were provided with ratings. For 73% (49 out of 67) of grants, the 'relevance' section of the completion report was completed, while for 18 AF grants this section was not completed (which, in Figure 9, are comprised under the category "Not reported or no data available"). Out of those 18, 10 AF grants were those for which completion report was not received by the evaluation cut-off date and seven AF grants for which the report was submitted in a template different from that of GPE. For one AF grant, in Togo, no 'relevance' rating was indicated as part of the completion report.

<sup>41</sup> In completion report qualifying comments.



explained the way in which they prioritized support for vulnerable and marginalized groups, promoting inclusivity and equity in education.

Three AF grants were rated as having ‘modest’ relevance. In **Afghanistan**, activities were rated as having ‘modest’ relevance when direct support to public education was frozen due to change in leadership in mid-August 2021. Operations for all GPE funding were stalled until Dec 2021, when GPE’s operating principles for work in fragile and conflict-affected states were invoked, allocating responsibility to the Development Partner Group to fulfil the governance and oversight needs for GPE-funded activities. In **Maldives**, COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions and low connectivity (for both internet and telephone services) made it difficult to monitor the situation of the most vulnerable. In **Papua New Guinea**, the main barrier to relevance was the low teacher digital literacy, which created challenges in the roll out and accessibility of information and communication technology (ICT)-based interventions. The intervention was not tested widely across the country, as testing could not cover areas affected by post-election violence.

***Although grant proposals provided sufficient detail on the ways in which AF grant activities would reach vulnerable groups, relevance was often not reported for differentiated vulnerable groups at closing.***

All AF grant proposals were assessed on the basis of how they would reach poor, vulnerable or otherwise disadvantaged children, including girls, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how they identified and addressed specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19 to a sufficient degree.<sup>42</sup> Proposals provided a significant amount of detail on the status of, or potential impacts to, various disaggregated vulnerable groups and the ways in which they were likely to be impacted by COVID-19.

During the quality assurance stage, the grants were also assessed and approved on this basis. GPE’s AF grant screening process included specific questions on the relevance of program design and coordination in the COVID-19 context, in addition to checking for equity and safeguarding considerations. Partner countries were required to consider equity issues and safeguarding as part of the AF grant proposal,<sup>43</sup> which helped to ensure that AF grant-funded activities included reflections on the implications of the activities for equity more broadly. Interviews with Secretariat staff involved in application screening clarified that equity and safeguarding were considered throughout the proposal review process. A dedicated member of the quality assurance review team was tasked with looking at the equity dimension of each proposal. Secretariat interviewees pointed out that this was a robust process given the fast-moving and uncertain nature of the pandemic. This suggests that although AF grants were deemed largely relevant to country needs, the need to develop rapid responses to the unfolding crisis made it difficult to conduct beneficiary assessments to better understand the needs of different beneficiary groups.

When specifically considering gender equity, interviews with Secretariat staff involved in the approval of grants corroborate our understanding of the March 31, 2020 meeting of the Board of Directors<sup>44</sup> that the AF grant application mechanism gave countries ample flexibility as to how to mainstream gender into their applications.<sup>45</sup> Despite signaling the importance of gender in GPE’s overall and M&E-specific guidance, it appears that a combination of haste (due to the pandemic’s rapid onset) and non-stringent grant requirements created the conditions for varied approaches as to whether

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<sup>42</sup> This refers to the CEO Memo – Annex 1 Program Standards for Assessment of COVID-19 AF applications, Eligibility criteria. Question “Does the program, to a sufficient degree, identify and address specific barriers to learning faced by girls due to COVID-19?”.

<sup>43</sup> Guidelines (<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-covid-19-coronavirus-accelerated-funding-window>) specified that proposals must: “c. provide information on targeting and equity, notably how needs of most vulnerable including girls will be addressed;” Program standards for assessment of COVID-19 funding applications asked: “Does the program, to a sufficient degree, reach poor, vulnerable, or otherwise disadvantaged children, including girls, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic? For targeted interventions, the proposal should include the targeting criteria to ensure equity (i.e., that interventions reach vulnerable populations).” Also, one of the questions in relation to risk mitigation was “Are risks related to fiduciary arrangements, including financial management, procurement, governance, and safeguards issues (harm to people or the environment) and adequate mitigation actions are identified?”

<sup>44</sup> Via audio conference for Decision on GPE COVID-19 Response and Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window.

<sup>45</sup> Given the priority of rapid application and approval processes, countries sometimes lacked the opportunity to comprehensively gather data and evidence pertaining to country-specific gender barriers. GPE’s quality assurance process primarily verified the identification of at least some gender-related barriers, along with the inclusion of relevant indicators, given the absence of stringent gender hardwiring or mainstreaming guidance within the Secretariat at that time. Given the unprecedented context of the pandemic, in some cases this might have resulted in addressing at least some issues rather than a precise alignment with the country’s full gender-related needs.

countries included an explicit focus targeting of girls, either at the start or later in the grants' lifetimes by countries. Across our country case studies, cases highlighted how a number of different approaches were used to mitigate the impact of school closures especially for girls, but most described this in terms of the disproportionate impact of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. In the case of **Mozambique**, the AF grant went beyond WASH facilities and included targeted support for girls, such as the distribution of hygiene kits for girls for menstruation. A telephone line was also opened to report cases of abuse at home, something that mostly affects girls. The psychosocial support training for teachers also intended to help teachers give guidance on gender-based violence. Focusing on the loss of learning, the catch-up learning curriculum that was developed was intended to be used for losses of learning in cases of pregnancy and temporary dropouts among girls.

Analysis of the portfolio of AF grants confirms that, of the countries that requested grant revisions, enhanced gender focus<sup>46</sup> was not mentioned as a reason for request. Looking at completion reports, a total of 71% (39 out of 55)<sup>47</sup> of completion reports indicated including a focus on gender for at least one of their grant objectives. Forty-four percent of completion reports (24 out of 55) indicated having a focus on gender for *all* objectives, whereas 29% (16 out of 55) of completion reports indicated that none of their objectives included a focus on gender.<sup>48</sup> Twelve grants from those who reported no focus on gender within all of their objectives were PCFCs.

Drawing on country case studies, partner countries demonstrated consistency for how they approached gender-related barriers to education during the pandemic. Eight of the ten case studies highlighted the potential impacts of sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, early marriage or unwanted pregnancies for girls, for which the main response was the inclusion of awareness-raising and information campaigns targeted at the community and parents. Partner countries supplemented these efforts with the implementation of safeguarding mechanisms (as was the case in the **Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Federated States of Micronesia**) or the targeted provision of psychosocial support, for example in the forms of training provision and information materials disseminated to help equip teachers and staff and with resilient attitudes (for example, in **Bangladesh, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and Nicaragua**).

**Guinea** (which assessed relevance of its activities as 'high') anticipated increased risks of gender-based violence, teen pregnancy, and reduced learning in girls due to COVID-19. Proposed activities included back-to-school and social mobilization campaigns targeting girls and producing guides based on a recently implemented accelerated education program for girls in isolated areas. However, no intervention was proposed to target gender-based violence. While in **Nicaragua**, identified risks for girls and young women included double or even triple burden (such as taking care of the elderly, other children and housework) and the risk of suffering greater domestic and sexual violence as crises tend to increase tensions in households, in turn triggering aggression and structural violence. In its AF grant, component 2 focused on socioemotional support and planned to embed a gender-perspective. This meant parent sessions/meetings for families on how to provide socioemotional support at home and modules designed for school staff and parents with information and materials about gender-associated risks and guidelines to mitigate and address them through an early warning system already in implementation by the MoE.

***Partner countries also used AF grant funds to address other facets of equity, with particular attention to geographic disparities.***

As per the portfolio analysis, a greater proportion of AF grants reported having a focus on other vulnerable groups (82%, 45 out of 55) than those reporting an objective with a focus on gender (71%,

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<sup>46</sup> Including gender related objectives of activities if gender after implementation in cases where gender was not included at design or taking specific measures to ensure gender related objectives or activities were on track to meet their targets in case they were lagging during implementation

<sup>47</sup> Data is available for 55 grants only, as ten completion reports were not submitted by the cut-off date and two of those that were submitted in the wrong format did not report information on the objectives.

<sup>48</sup> Countries might have addressed some gender activities and report them as addressing vulnerable groups though this was a separate question in the completion report. We could not verify it for all the countries, but for instance, Zambia reported not having addressed girls under any of the objectives but in overall efficacy comment it reported that "the programme did not have a specific approach to support girls and gender equality ... but programme paid careful attention to gender during school closures and generated evidence (Continuity of Learning Surveys) that helped highlight gender related issues".

### Equity in the context of the Federated States of Micronesia

Within the context of **Federated States of Micronesia's** culture, equity is viewed differently. The AF grant primarily addressed the issue of remoteness by prioritizing connectivity (satellite connectivity and solar power systems for schools) and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies rather than gender or disability concerns. Therefore, the AF grant focused on the most vulnerable population, i.e., the communities of the remote islands. The investments were aligned with Federated States of Micronesia's education programs, such as the Micronesia Education-Sector-Strategic-Plan-2020-2024, ensuring sustainability and paving the way for a more robust education system in the future.

39 out of 55).<sup>49</sup> A total of 82% of completion reports indicated prioritizing children from remote or hard to reach areas for at least one of their objectives while 56% of completion reports indicated having at least one objective focused on children with disabilities. A smaller proportion of partner countries included an objective with a focus on refugees or migrants (18%), ethnic minorities (15%) or out-of-school children (only one partner country).<sup>50</sup> In all 10 case study countries, the design of AF grants considered marginalized and hard-to-reach regions.

Given the high prevalence of distance or digital learning interventions to support continuity of learning, a large focus for AF grant funds in case study countries was to not only enabling the continued development of distance learning solutions but ensuring their rollout to support hard-to-reach or marginalized regions. This was possible through a diversified approach to distance learning (such as using a combination of high and low-tech options and using paper-based materials where infrastructure

was not sufficient for technological solutions), which was the case in all ten case studies. AF grant funds were also used to support the needs of children with disabilities to access remote learning solutions, such as planned in the cases of **Bangladesh, Tonga, Federated States of Micronesia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Mozambique, and Nicaragua.**

### Targeting of vulnerable households in the Democratic Republic of Congo had mixed success

Similar to other countries, most of the targeted households in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, particularly in rural areas, have to face structural difficulties that prevent them from reaching their full potential (for learners) and providing the children with the best possible support in the event of a pandemic or crisis. Thanks to the AF grant's focus on inclusiveness and equity in education, the project enabled vulnerable children to gain access to education. However, according to the end of project evaluation:

- Many of the students surveyed (69%) felt that the most vulnerable population (low-income individuals and families) had been excluded, as both implementation approaches required basic resources that some families did not have (radio equipment) or literate parents or relatives.
- The reliance on financially capable parents hindered those without means to access remote learning tools like phones or TVs.
- Limited electricity access further prevented many from benefiting fully.

Therefore, the assessment in terms of ability of the beneficiaries to face the pandemic or other crises ensuring continuation of their education is rather mixed. While the interventions seemed appropriate and aligned with the government priorities, they were not totally relevant and adapted to the various contexts of the provinces in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

There also examples where the GPE Secretariat requested that countries revise their proposed AF grant activities in order to better support equity, such as requesting that **Cameroon** remove an activity focused on the provision of tablets to support an ICT pilot, in favor of other equity-promoting activities, or where GPE requested that **Mozambique's** distribution of textbooks and learning kits prioritize rural, remote and disadvantaged areas first. Finally, there are cases where activities targeting support to vulnerable groups could not be funded by GPE, such as the case where due to the reduction in funds available GPE was unable to fund the provision of radios for the poorest in **Democratic Republic of**

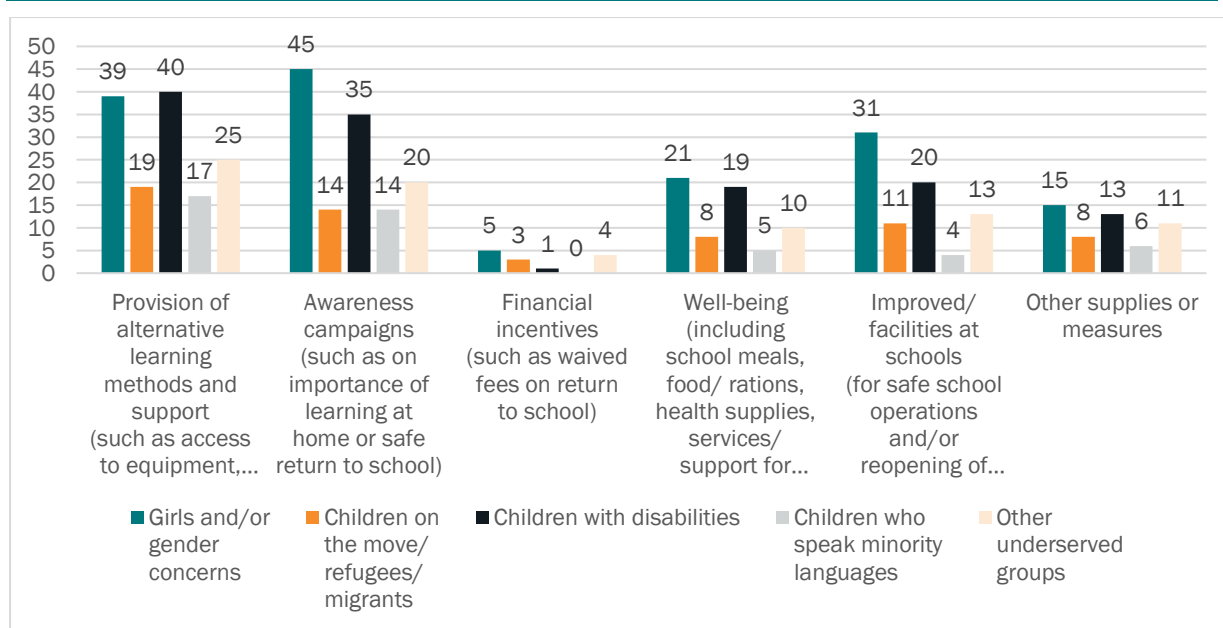
<sup>49</sup> Using completion reports database, we have conducted an analysis of grant objectives and their coverage of Gender and Other vulnerable groups. We have considered AF grant to have a focus on gender/other vulnerable groups if at least one of grant objectives outlined in completion report claimed to cover gender/other vulnerable groups.

<sup>50</sup> It is likely that these were not an explicit focus but still reached through targeting other groups such as refugees.

**Congo.** In **Mozambique, Ethiopia** and **Democratic Republic of Congo**, GPE acknowledged that school feeding programs were proposed as part of ERPs as a means to reach the poorest, but not proposed as part of AF grants; in these cases, GPE highlighted these funding gaps to grant agents and urged country partners to seek other sources of funding for school feeding interventions.

Gender and disability were the likeliest areas of focus among vulnerable children within the planning grant, though not always covered. Portfolio analysis evidence suggests that partner countries focused planning grant funding only partially on vulnerable children, with provision of alternative learning methods and awareness campaigns being the most likely category of activity to do so.

Figure 10: Countries covering vulnerable groups under different planning grant activities (N=87 countries).<sup>51</sup>



Source: Planning grant completion report.

### Many grant activities that relied on technology were not appropriate to countries' technological capabilities.

Supporting distance learning was a priority across most countries facing school closures. Even though the division of overall allocation of total AF grant amounts between 'no tech', 'low tech', and 'medium/high tech' distance learning programs<sup>52</sup> appeared to be coherent with global emerging needs in the early days of pandemic, it likely missed out on the needs of most vulnerable countries. The following section explores GPE's funding of activities under varying levels of technology solutions. It is important to note that this evaluation doesn't look at what other partners were funding in a given partner country or whether or not it was complementary to GPE support in a way that investments in a certain type of technology would be considered reasonable or effective.

Overall, 19% (USD \$83.5M out of a total USD \$435.8M<sup>53</sup> allocated to all AF grants activities) was allocated to all distance learning activities,<sup>54</sup> which includes 11% allocated directly to administrating distance learning, home-based learning and tutoring programs. No tech programs without the use of

<sup>51</sup> The data on the Planning grant made available to the evaluation team was not systematically disaggregated by country, therefore we are unable to match this data against beneficiary targeting as reported in AF grant proposals.

<sup>52</sup> These three activities refer to Use of ICT/distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs under three categories: (1) No tech - print materials; (2) Low tech - radio/TV; (3) Medium/High tech - Tablets/mobile internet/SMS.

<sup>53</sup> Calculated based on the allocation of funds under each type of activity as per Coding and costing database, therefore, it refers only to funds allocated to the actual activities under AF grant, not total amount of all AF grants.

<sup>54</sup> This includes not only No tech, Low tech and Mid/High tech distance learning programs but also allocation to sub-theme Standards, curriculum, and learning materials under M&R including educational content delivery to support home-based school learning such as the distribution of learning kits; digitization of curriculum and other learning materials, well-being learning materials to children (4.46%); and sub-theme Teacher development under M&R with such activities as teacher training in using distance learning methods and/or provided materials to support distance learning (3.64%).

technology received a smaller portion of funding (3.7%) than low and mid/high tech programs using technology (7.3%).

Allocation of funds to distance learning interventions seems coherent with the duration of school closures, with some exceptions. Among AF grants countries, only three (out of 66 countries) did not close schools, but still invested in distance learning programs.<sup>55</sup> Out of those 63 countries with school closures, all but two (61 out of 63) countries invested into distance learning solutions.<sup>56</sup> These 61 AF grants invested mainly into a mix of activities ('no tech', 'low tech', and 'medium/high tech' programs) with some exceptions: six countries investing predominantly into distance learning programs with the use of no tech materials; nine countries invested predominantly into low-tech; and only two countries invested predominantly into mid/high-tech.<sup>57</sup>

A UNICEF report identified that around 70% of students globally had assets at home that would allow them to be reached by remote learning (radio, television, computer/tablets), while at least 30% could not be reached, due to a lack of household assets or policies that address their needs.<sup>58</sup> In low-income countries, UNICEF estimates that only six percent of school-aged children have access to the internet, rising to only 14% in lower-middle income countries.<sup>59</sup> Across AF grants, low-income countries allocated, on average, more than 80% of their AF grants into no-tech and low-tech learning activities. Conversely, lower-middle income countries allocated a lower percentage of their AF funding (between 60% and 70%) into no- and low-tech activities, and this proportion decreased alongside the percentage of the population that has access to the internet (see [Figure 11](#) for more details on fund allocation to distance learning activities). Looking specifically at sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank estimated that only 30% of the poorest African households have a radio, and only 4% have a television.<sup>60</sup> Among AF grants, sub-Saharan African low-income countries allocated on average 32% of the budget for distance learning to no-tech and 49% to low-tech activities. The allocation to low tech (often involving programs using TV and radio) might have been slightly too high given this data on TV and radio access. To sum up, at the aggregate level more funding was invested in solutions requiring no or low technology in lower-income contexts. Whether this distribution made sense at the country level is more difficult to assess.

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<sup>55</sup> Burundi did not have school closures at all, Nicaragua did not close schools fully (but closed partially for 105 days), Marshall Islands had schools fully closed for five days only. The AF grant for the Caribbean is not included into analysis as it covers for countries with diverse duration of school closures.

<sup>56</sup> Afghanistan and Yemen did not invest into distance learning programs at all. Afghanistan invested mainly in educational facilities, teacher development and system resilience. Yemen AF grant was cancelled.

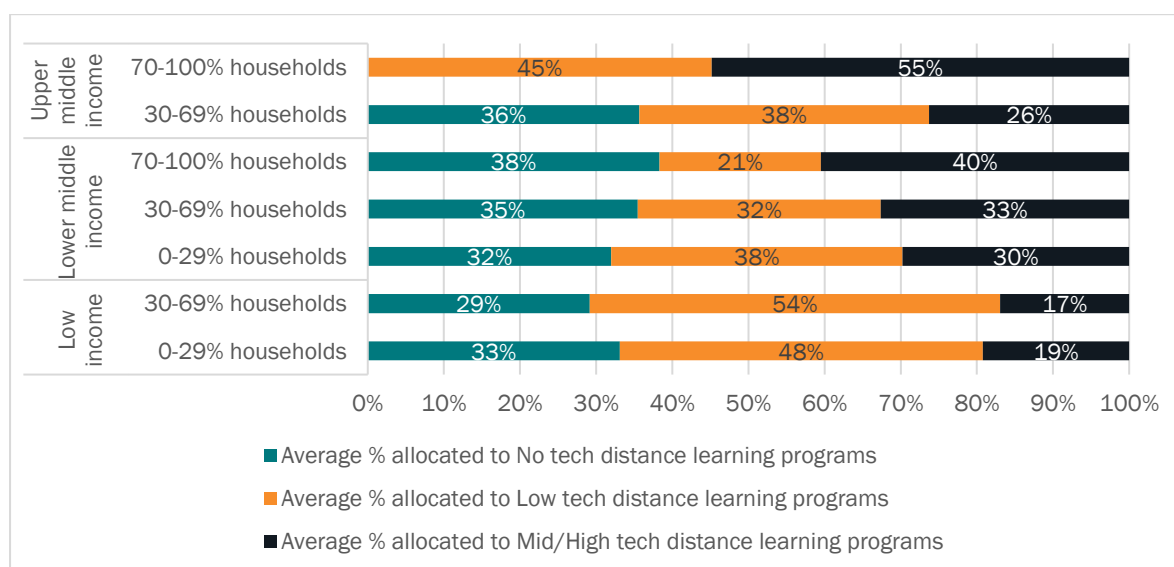
<sup>57</sup> Predominantly invested means allocation of 80-100% of total funds allocated to distance learning programs to one type of distance learning program (no tech, low tech or mid/high tech).

<sup>58</sup> UNICEF. Covid-19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures? A global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies using data from 100 countries.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations Children's Fund and International Telecommunication Union, "How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF, New York, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> UNESCO. 2023. An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19

Figure 11: Average percentage of AF grant allocated to each type of distance learning programs mapped by income level and the percentage of households with access to the internet (N=67 countries).<sup>61</sup>



Source: AF grants coding and costing database, ITU indicator on households with internet access.

The percentage allocation of total grant funds to no-tech, low-tech, and mid/high-tech distance learning programs appears relevant to most middle-income countries, but less relevant for low income GPE partner countries given their expected level of technological capabilities and available infrastructure. Looking across lower and upper middle-income countries, there appears to be a trend of lower investment in no- and low-tech (radio and TV) and greater investment in mid/high tech, as the level of internet connectivity increases. However, this was not always the case. Although countries with a lower percentage of households with internet connectivity still favored no- or low-tech distance learning programs, they still included investments into mid/high-tech solutions despite the lack of connectivity, though these interventions may have targeted areas with broadly more internet access and technology infrastructure.

### Mixed results from high-tech investment in Somaliland

In Somaliland, 90% of its grant funds were invested in high-tech distance programs, despite only 11% households having internet connectivity. The MoES planned to target all school children with access to distance learning through both the online platform and radio/television lessons. MP3 recorded lessons using solar powered radio sets were procured and distributed to 5,000 students in the remote rural areas where regular TV and radio program coverage does not reach. In addition to the MP3 recorded lessons, 4,000 learners also received solar powered and relatively cheaper tablets. MoES piloted the use of tablets as a new initiative using technology for learning purposes. However, in the lessons learnt section for Somaliland’s completion report, the grant agent mentioned that the social distance education program did not work well in the rural areas where the availability of a TV was limited and the accessibility of social media was practically non-existent, whereas the distribution of the solar powered radios with memory cards recorded in the primary education subjects was relatively useful and effective.

<sup>61</sup> Data from International Telecommunication Union (ITU) <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>. Indicator on percentage of households with internet access refers to the proportion of households with Internet access at home. Access can be via a fixed or mobile network. If one member of the household has a mobile phone with connection to the Internet and makes it available for all members, then it is considered that the household has access to the Internet. Data was used for 2019 as most AF grant activities were designed in 2020 when the data on internet access for 2020 was not yet available. Where 2019 data was not available (only in few cases), data from the latest available year was used (mainly 2017).


## 4.2 Coherence

A challenge for the early months of the pandemic was that the scale and urgency of the responses required was unprecedented. The importance of a rapid response was clear to all actors in the education space, resulting in a rush of activities and fund mobilization.<sup>62</sup> Although not always explicitly designed with coordination in mind, each of the three grants had a mandate to support partner countries to undertake activities that would result in greater coordination of activities, at both the global level (through the global grant) and at the national level (through the planning and AF grants). Looking back, we are now able to examine whether, in these circumstances, GPE support was internally coherent across the three grant mechanisms.

Therefore, the focus of this section on coherence is on the alignment across GPE's COVID-19-related support (across the three types of grants). This is a slightly different focus than what was set out in the original evaluation matrix, which asked about whether GPE support helped countries to coordinate an overall response and harmonize donors under a common response plan (especially in weaker environments). Some of this has been explored in the previous section under relevance (to country needs) and in the formative evaluation as well.<sup>63</sup>

### 4.2.1 Coherence of AF, planning and global grants

**Finding 3.** *Overall alignment between the three types of GPE COVID-19 grants is unclear. The AF grant was aligned with the planning grant. However, the coherence between global grant and country needs, and therefore with AF grants, is less clear: although global grant activities were aligned with grant agents' capabilities, they were not clearly linked to local knowledge gaps.*

  
Low strength  
of evidence

*AF grants were designed to be complementary with planning grants by aligning AF grants with emergency response plans. In practice, although there was scope for countries to deviate from this alignment, there is fairly strong case study evidence that there was indeed alignment between planning and AF grant-funded activities.*

The successful application for an AF grant was conditional on the basis that proposed activities built on a country's COVID-19 ERPs, some of which were funded by the planning grant. This was often used as a loose proxy that alignment of AF grant activities with ERPs was evidence for the coherence between AF grant and planning grant activities. However, it was not always the case that partner countries used planning grant funding to develop ERPs (particularly in cases where countries had already developed ERPs prior to access to planning grant funding and used funding instead for activities such as the implementation of alternative education delivery systems, as discussed in [section 4.1.1](#)).

We therefore explored the link between activities for the 10 case study countries. We found strong evidence that the activities started under the planning grant funding continued under the AF grant. In both the cases of [Ghana](#) and [Ethiopia](#), in which ERPs were rapidly developed shortly after school closures, it is unlikely that planning grant funding was used to develop ERPs, but instead, funding was used to launch activities that continued under the AF grant.<sup>64</sup> In [Ethiopia](#), planning grant funding was used to support the early deployment of radio content in three regions, an activity that continued under the AF grant. In [Ghana](#), planning grant funding was used to support a rapid risk assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on education, which included consultation with over 400 stakeholders and

<sup>62</sup> For example, the World Bank committed to fast-tracking financing to help countries strengthen their pandemic response: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2021/01/22/urgent-effective-action-required-to-queell-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-worldwide>; Education Cannot Wait played a crucial role in mobilizing USD \$45M in 2020 in resources and support for continuous learning in conflict and crisis-affected countries during the pandemic: <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/impact-results/covid-19-response#:~:text=Finance%20and%20Speed%20of%20ECW's%20Response&text=In%20all%2C%20ECW%20approved%20%2445.4,to%20the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic>.

<sup>63</sup> The importance of national response plans to coherent response was highlighted in the formative evaluation.

<sup>64</sup> The planning grant was approved on March 25, 2020. By April 3, Ethiopia had published its concept note on for its education sector COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, while Ghana also launched its COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response Plan in April. Both countries subsequently submitted their proposals to GPE for AF grants on 29 April (Ghana) and 7 May (Ethiopia).

was intended to inform the design of a monitoring and evaluation plan to support GES's COVID-19 response activities.

In the remainder of the cases, the planning grant was used to support the completion of a COVID-19 response plan (particularly with regards to bringing together country-level partners for consultation in **Bangladesh, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nicaragua** and **Tonga**, as well as examples from 54 other countries from the planning grant completion report). Where activities from the planning grant were continued under the AF grant, it was not always clear whether this was a function of the AF grant continuing to fund the activity's further implementation, whether the activity was not fully carried out under the planning grant timelines, or whether there was a duplication of the activity.

***There is limited evidence to demonstrate the alignment between the global grant with AF and planning grant activities.***

Firstly, although the global grant was designed to be complementary to the other GPE-supported activities, the global grant was not required to have direct linkages to grant-funded country-level activities, nor were AF grants or the global grant required to monitor where these overlaps existed. Therefore, while it is not possible to assess the extent of alignment between these two, we have looked across our case studies and analysis from the previous section on relevance to determine if there is evidence of an overlap between the AF and global grants, as one way to assess whether the global grant was relevant or useful to country partners.

As AF grant proposals were developed to be closely linked to countries' ERPs and required the endorsement from country LEGs, they offer an opportunity to reflect an understanding of countries' knowledge needs. Where the global grant outputs and global goods were intended to support country-level COVID-19 responses and respond to these knowledge needs, the primary mechanism for this was not necessarily explicit. While information on the location of downloads may provide some indication of this, interviews with grant agents suggest that the mechanism for transmission was meant to be much more informal and involving the close and existing relationships between the country offices of UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO and their government counterparts. As one grant agent reported, they found the value of the global grant was in being able to equip its country offices with evidence and guidance to support their interactions with the government. However, since these practices were not captured in any data, it is difficult to evidence the extent to which these practices occurred.

In cases where the same grant agent was responsible for the delivery of AF grants, as well as where global grant outputs were country-targeted (such as the case of the World Bank's delivery of the Read@Home program and work in **Ethiopia**, the World Bank's piloting of remote formative assessment solutions and AF grant activities in **Ghana**, and UNESCO's support to the Imaginecole platform in West Africa and AF grant activities in **Cameroon**), there is still insufficient evidence to link the activities, which would suggest an application of the global grant goods to activities being undertaken at the country level. **Cameroon** developed an extensive digital learning platform as part of its AF grant work, but it is not clear the extent to which it draws upon (or complements) Imaginecole. In the cases of **Ethiopia** and **Ghana**, AF grant-funded activities were supplements to larger, ongoing World Bank programs. Therefore, it is not always clear whether global grant outputs could have been used to complement AF grant activities or whether they supported other activities as part of the larger World Bank managed programs. In the case of **Ethiopia**, there is evidence of the use of the Read@Home activities in-country, but it did not overlap with the activities supported by the AF grant as the Read@Home activities were targeted towards regions in which AF grant activities were not focused.<sup>65</sup> In the absence of systematic evidence from which to interpret the alignment between the global and AF grants, the examples above taken from country case studies provide a small, but coherent picture of the missed opportunities for alignment between the global grant and AF grants. We also examined the extent to which the global grant focused on themes and activities that were relevant to countries' needs. A large focus of the global grant was on generating tools and guidance to support the provision of contextual distance learning solutions (Component 1) and on developing

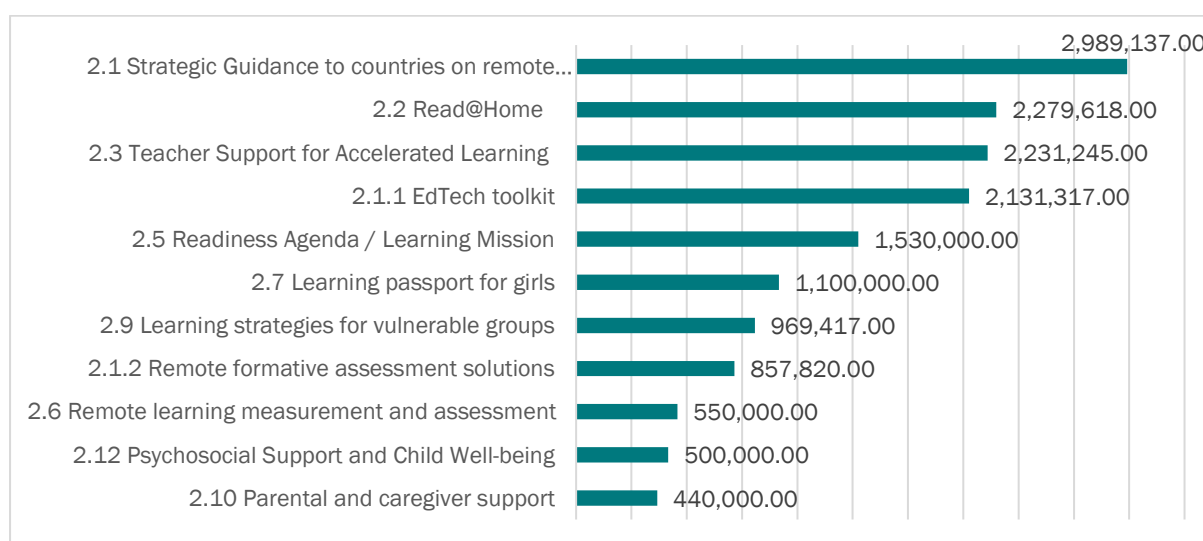
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<sup>65</sup> In Ethiopia, Read@Home was used to support displaced populations; the AF grant did not support these same groups as support to them was already being provided by Education Cannot Wait funding, therefore the AF grant was designed to not duplicate these efforts.



global goods (guidance, toolkits), such as the EdTech Toolkit (Sub-Component 2.1) and Read@Home (Sub-Component 2.2), to support policy makers and educators provide distance learning solutions).

Figure 12: Global grant funding per activity within Component 2: Learning continuity at scale that reaches the most marginalized (USD) (N=1 global grant)

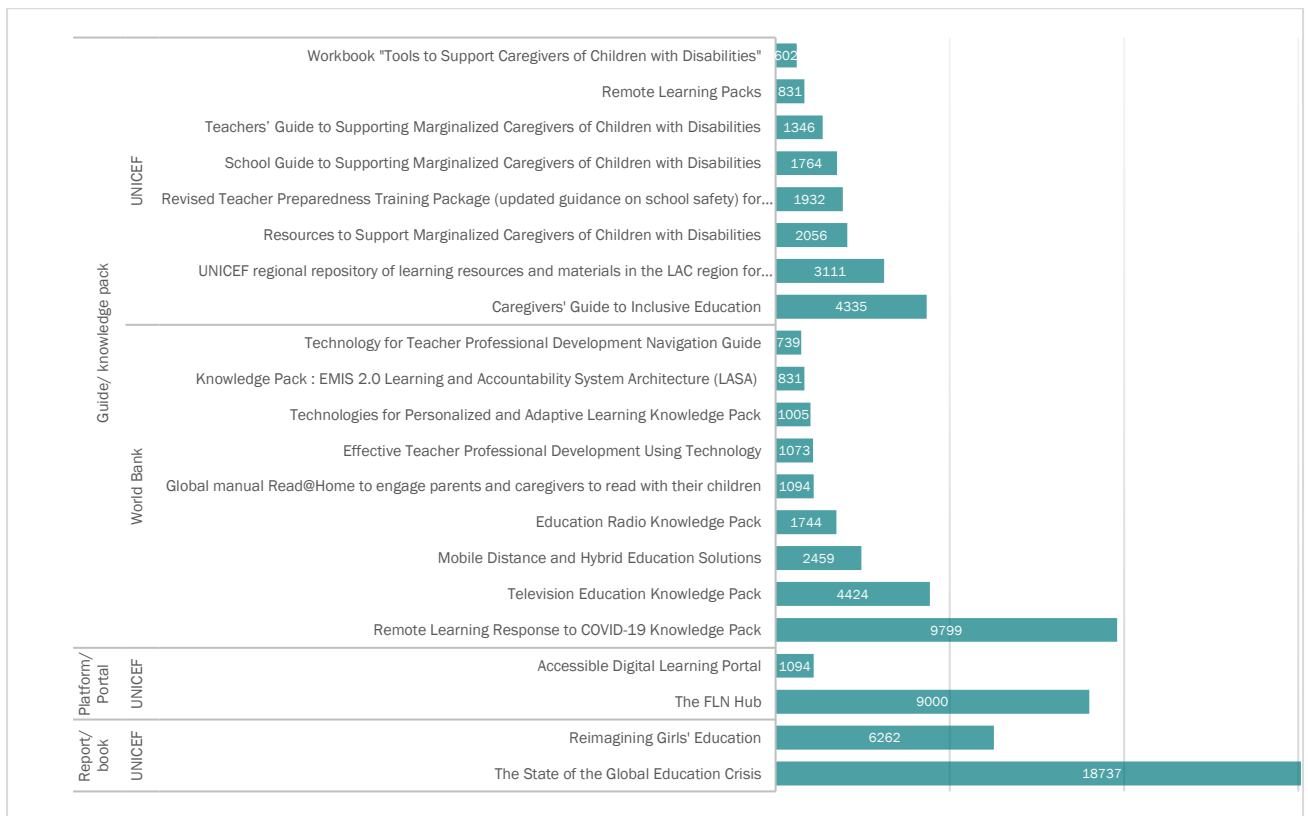


Source: Global grant end-of-grant report, section "Budget Utilization as of February 28th, 2022"

Given the extent to which AF grants were used by countries to support the development and roll out of remote learning solutions (for instance, 61 of 63 countries used AF grants to fund distance learning solutions), as discussed in section 4.1.2, this suggests a strong relevance of global grant outputs to the country-level. However, as discussed in section 4.1.2, despite the guidance, countries still faced challenges in implementing remote learning solutions as a result of broader issues with technological capabilities and infrastructure and learning lessons about the need to pivot to no tech solutions, such as the case of Ghana.

Finally, as demonstrated by downloads and visualization data (Figure 13) (available for a selection of Component 2 outputs), global goods which focused on tracking cross-national data (e.g., length of school closure and types of activities included in COVID responses) were the most popular downloads. Interviews with global grant stakeholders also confirmed that elements such as Component 3 of the global grant, in which the three grant agents collaborated the collection of cross-country data and the development of data dashboards and synthesis reports, were, to those stakeholders, some of the most important value-added contributions to the global evidence-base from the global grant.

Figure 13: Global grant knowledge packs, guides or reports with most downloads and visualization by UNICEF and World Bank



Source: World Bank website and UNICEF internal data

## 4.3 Efficiency

This section asks **whether good stewardship of resources was ensured in the management of GPE's COVID-19 support**. It addresses the following areas which together speak to the efficiency of GPE's COVID-19 pandemic response:

- **Timeliness of GPE grant support and activities** at the beginning of and throughout the pandemic.
- **Grant efficiency** including **utilization of grant funds, timeliness of disbursement and implementation issues and their remediation**.
- **Management** of GPE instruments, stewardship of resources and successful partnering and monitoring.

Given the large volumes of funding requiring allocation in previously unheard-of timeframes, **efficient management of the grants was a paramount focus for GPE**, both across GPE grant management processes and through grant implementation, particularly through the AF grants.

### 4.3.1 Timeliness of approvals and start of grant implementation

**Finding 4.** *For all three grants, COVID-19 grant proposal submissions and approvals times were unprecedented, despite strained GPE Secretariat capacity; however, some grants were slow to begin implementation.*

  
**High strength  
of evidence**

**Grant submissions and approval times were unprecedentedly quick, due to rapid grant screening processes and the delegation of approval authority to the Secretariat.**

Both the planning grant and global grant were set up and launched extremely rapidly. It took five days to approve the planning grant application and as per data shared by its grant agent, UNESCO, the funds started being disbursed in March 2020 – by the end of the month at the latest. The process took no more than seven days from grant approval to fund release.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, it took nine days to approve the global grant application and the grant started immediately after approval. Funds for the global grant were also released in a timely manner: no more than a week for UNESCO, within approximately a month for UNICEF and within two months for the World Bank.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly, AF grant application and approval timeframes were unprecedented. Seventy-five percent of AF grant applications (49 out of 65)<sup>68</sup> were submitted within two months of the GPE Secretariat sharing guidelines for the funding window<sup>69</sup> as illustrated in **Figure 14**. AF grants approval times were faster than with any previous GPE granting process, although fewer than anticipated applications were approved within the first three weeks. While only 22% (14 out of 65) of applications were approved within the recommended maximum of 21 days anticipated,<sup>70</sup> on average, AF grant proposals were approved within 33 calendar days of submission, significantly faster than the average of 54 days taken to approve regular GPE accelerated funding grants.<sup>71</sup> This analysis confirms the formative evaluation's findings that the grant approval phase was managed in a timely manner.

<sup>66</sup> Start date of the planning grant was March 23, 2020, and funds were released in March (the date of release of funds shared by grant agent included only month, not the day).

<sup>67</sup> As per data shared by grant agents, the funds were disbursed in April for UNESCO, in May for UNICEF and in June for World Bank.

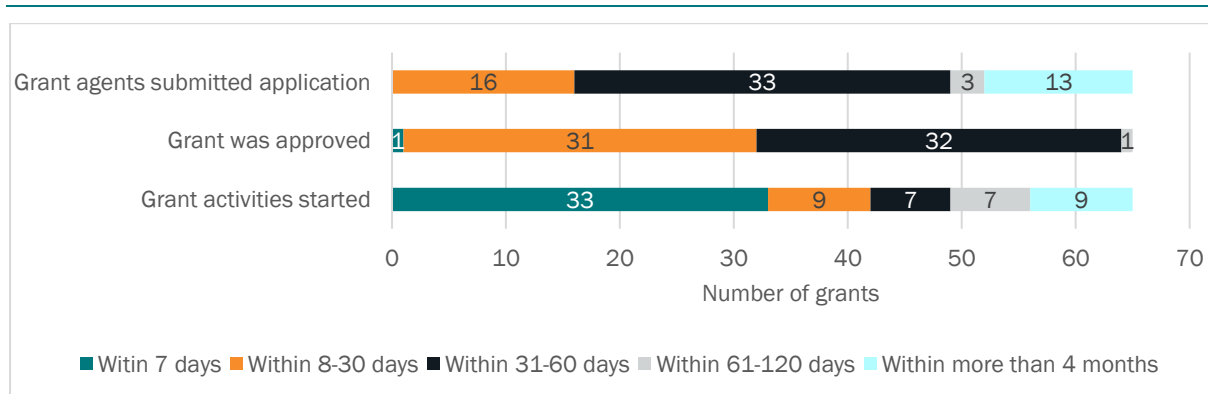
<sup>68</sup> For the analysis of AF grant window, we focused on 65 grants, excluding two AF grants given to Sudan (with UNICEF and World Bank as grant agents)

<sup>69</sup> As per consultations with GPE Secretariat staff, the emails with application guidelines for this funding opportunity were sent between 4 and 9 of April 2020, therefore April 6, 2020 was taken as an average value for the sharing of guidelines. This means 75% applications were submitted by May 2020.

<sup>70</sup> Set out in the Guidelines for COVID-19 AF Grant window April 2020.

<sup>71</sup> GPE. Results Report GPE 2021. Final Results Report on GPE's 2016-2020 Strategy. Special Chapter: Supporting Education Systems to Respond To COVID-19. P. 19.

Figure 14: Number of days taken to submit application; approve the grant; and start grant activities for all AF grants (N=65 countries).



Source: COVID AF Timelines tracker.

Secretariat interviews confirm that extensive staff resources were invested in making sure grantees were supported throughout the process, particularly those from fragile and low-institutional capacity contexts. Quality assurance mechanisms included internal expert review and, where necessary, clarification questions and discussion preceded any grant sign off. Extra effort was needed to address application quality issues, many of which arose from the tight timeframes and unique nature of the pandemic. The time needed to ensure quality, plus the irregular arrival of applications and resulting peaks in workload, resulted in some capacity constraints within the Secretariat, impacting speed of approval.

The ‘first come first served’ approach successfully encouraged rapid submission of AF grant applications. Sixteen countries applied within a month of grant guidelines release, and almost all of these received the funding for which they were eligible.<sup>72</sup> Interviewed Secretariat staff felt the approach was likely decisive in enabling rapid approval of funding at the outset of the response. The formative evaluation highlighted concerns raised by countries that the approach favored those with high institutional capacity which prompted GPE to switch to a needs-based approach. However, portfolio analysis finds that high-institutional capacity countries as measured by the CPIA index were not significantly more likely to apply faster.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, the portfolio analysis does not support concerns expressed by Secretariat staff that Francophone countries were placed at a disadvantage due to guidelines in French being issued late – two days after the English versions were released.<sup>74</sup> The 17 countries in the portfolio with French as an official language required 19 fewer days on average to submit their grant application than the 28 countries with English as an official language.

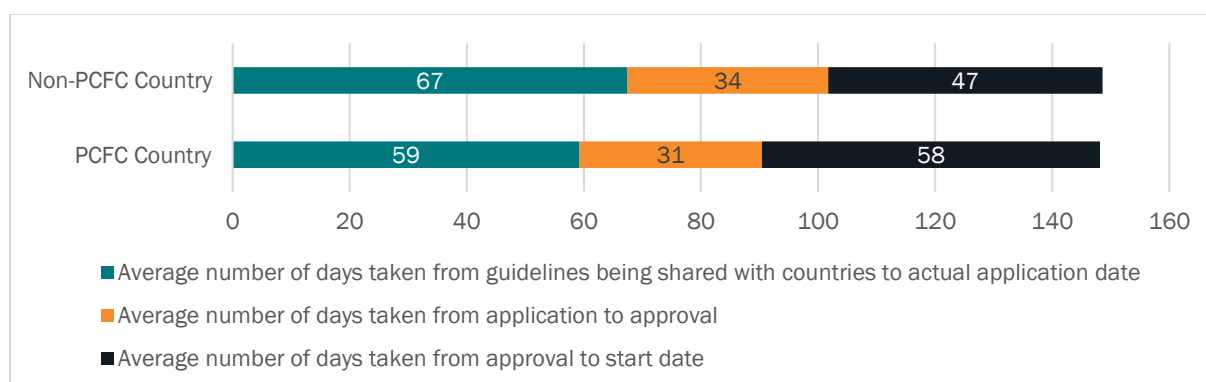
Potentially due to the Secretariat’s support with the application process mentioned above, on average fragile countries applied faster (see [Figure 15](#)).

<sup>72</sup> As per Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window, Annex 1. Country Allocation Amounts Linked to School Aged Population.

<sup>73</sup> Countries with above-median CPIA (3.15 and higher) took on average 59 days to apply, while countries with below-median CPIA (lower than 3.15) took on average 70 days. It is important to note that 30 out of 33 low-income countries applied in the first semester 2020 (vs 22 out of 34 lower and upper middle-income countries). These data exclude countries for which CPIA data was not available at the same level of detail as our analysis, namely Somalia Puntland and Somaliland, Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar, and the Caribbean.

<sup>74</sup> The same two-day lag occurred for program standards, the application cover notes, and FAQ documents as well, although M&E guidance was released on the same day for both languages.

Figure 15: Timeliness of grant application, approval and start date by PCFC status (N=29 non-PCFC, N=36 PCFC).



Source: AF grant completion reports and GPE's definition of PCFC status.

*The start of implementation was timely and fast for almost all AF grants throughout the pandemic, but less so for large ones, with causes of delays being organizational and bureaucratic challenges and, for the slowest starters, grant agent struggles in engaging with government.*

**Pre-existing program conditions in place in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Democratic Republic of Congo enabled early grant start-up.**

**Côte d'Ivoire** started activities within one month of application approval by using existing procedures and frameworks, as well as existing funding for COVID-19 relief. This meant that the country could start preparing engaging partners, suppliers and logistics early, before funding was released.

Similarly, **Ghana**, working with World Bank as its AF grant agent, was able to align its response with existing implementation arrangements on the GPE-funded Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP) program (also managed by the World Bank) and was able to start implementation of GPE-funded activities within one month of approval.

**Democratic Republic of Congo** benefitted from existing UNICEF infrastructure and resources across the country, as well as existing project management staff and Education in Emergencies specialists, and rapid procurement was enabled through use of UNICEF's network of local vendors and its global supply chain. This enabled rapid disbursements of COVID-19 prevention materials, which was further enabled by flexibility in modalities for disbursement from UNICEF.

On average, both PCFC and non-PCFC started implementing grant interventions within 150 days from the release of the grant guidelines (see Figure 15 above), although the time taken from approval to start date was longer for PCFC: 58 days compared to 47 days for non-PCFC. Fifty-one percent of all AF grants (33 out of 65) started implementation within a week of approval (see Figure 14) and 88% (57 out of 65) started faster than the 161-day average of regular implementation grants' start.<sup>75</sup>

Case studies provide evidence that previous experience (e.g., pre-existing operations) was relevant to how quickly implementation could start. As illustrated below, grant agents with programs and operations already in place were able to start up quickly and efficiently: existing management structures, partnerships and funding sources were utilized, avoiding the need to set up structures from scratch. For some, this enabled both preparations ahead of funding approval (for example preparing partner contracts or subgrants) and in other cases it meant that implementation activities could commence even before GPE funding became effective. Experience of responding to humanitarian emergencies was also valuable in designing the program and starting grant implementation, but not necessarily in being more effective in reaching targets for planned activities, which we will delve into later in section 4.4.1 on reaching planned targets). For **Nicaragua**, although there were unexpected delays of about three months in getting approval for the operations manual despite the grant agent having existing infrastructure, the ability to pre-plan activities in advance of formal start-up enabled them to get timelines back on track.

<sup>75</sup> GPE. Results Report GPE 2021. Final Results Report on GPE's 2016-2020 Strategy. Special Chapter: Supporting Education Systems to Respond To COVID-19. P. 19. Average of all grants approved between 2016 and 2020 excluding ones that were pending as of December 2020.

Eight AF grants were slower to start implementation than the regular accelerated funding grants' start time. Those with larger allocations tended to start more slowly on average.<sup>76</sup> Three out of a total of five grants with sector and project-pooled funding modality, which was highlighted by Secretariat interviewees as challenging, had amongst the longest periods from approval to the start of implementation.<sup>77</sup>

The portfolio analysis found that delays to start implementation mostly arose from difficulties with partnership agreements and a myriad of bureaucratic obstacles. Forty-five percent (29 out of 65) of AF grants reported reasons for delays to start implementation, with some reporting more than one reason. Twenty-three of these grants started implementation 30 days after approval or later. For these grants the most common reasons for delay included issues with preparation and sign-off of partnership agreements (five grants); other internal bureaucratic procedures such as search for implementation partners or division and coordination of tasks and responsibilities (five grants); lack of sufficient staff to implement activities (two grants); and challenges in procurement (two grants).<sup>78</sup> Two AF grants with some of the longest delays, requiring 191 days from approval to start of implementation, mentioned difficulties in their governments' internal project approval process; frequent government leadership turnover; the time taken to develop and build consensus across multiple ministries on contents; and severe global supply chain restrictions. For example, **Bangladesh** encountered long delays in start-up attributed in part due to delays in setting up a functional project implementation unit and turnover in leadership. This demonstrates how lack of capacity and slow government approval processes for setting up new units, hindered by the shutdown of government offices, still stalled a fast implementation start despite the grant agent's existing management infrastructure and experience in-country.

### 4.3.2 Grant implementation efficiency

**Finding 5. Grant agents rated AF grants as having high efficiency. Grants with multiple objectives tended to have a lower utilization rate.**

**Moderate strength of evidence**

**Grant agents rated efficiency highly: 86% (43 of 50) reporting AF grants assessed overall efficiency as high or substantial, mostly due to sound management practices (including flexible procurement). Efficiency was most hindered by COVID-induced disruptions and other ongoing supply chain challenges.**

Overall AF grant efficiency,<sup>79</sup> rated at grant closure by the 50 grant agents,<sup>80</sup> was strong for most AF grants: 86% (43 out of 50) AF grants assessed overall efficiency as high or substantial (**Figure 16**). 83% (25 out of 30) of AF grants in PCFC were rated high or substantial compared to 90% (18 out of 20) for non-PCFC. The overall strong assessment of efficiency corroborates evidence from the formative evaluation.

<sup>76</sup> On average, the grants that took more than three months to start implementation had an average grant amount of USD \$11,103,750 (with the highest USD \$20M for Pakistan). Grants which started implementation within one week after approval had average grant amount of USD \$5,780,579 USD and grants which started within one month – USD \$4,944,445.

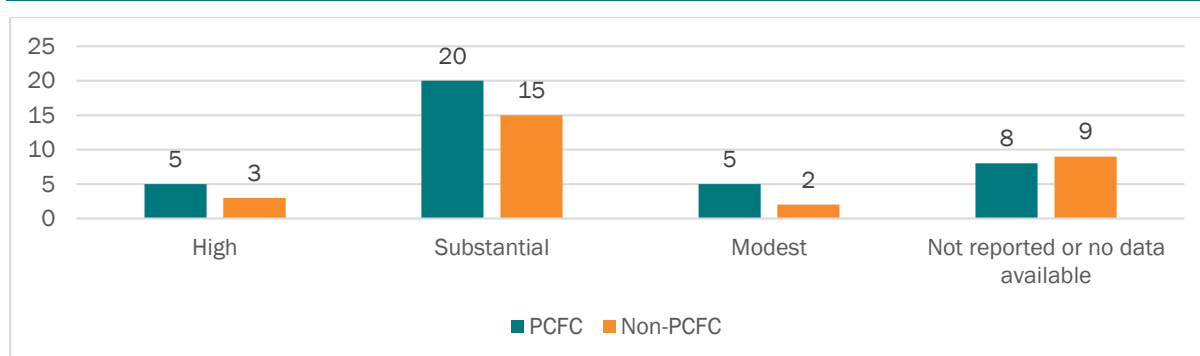
<sup>77</sup> Out of top five AF grants that took the longest to start, Mali had project-pooled funding and took the longest out of all AF grants to start (452 days) while two had sector-pooled funding modality and took 333 (Sierra Leone) and 209 days (Burkina Faso) to start.

<sup>78</sup> Seven grants starting more than 30 days after the approval did not report any reason for delay. Natural disasters and challenge in funding allocation were both reported by one grant as reasons for delay. Note the completion reports for these 3 grants were not submitted by the cutoff date for this evaluation hence we are unable to comment on the specific challenges in these contexts

<sup>79</sup> According to completion reports, efficiency refers to an assessment of 'the extent to which grant processes were implemented in a timely manner and the costs were reasonable for the outputs/outcomes achieved (that is, resources were Economically converted into outputs and outcomes and answers are qualified. Ratings are high (efficiency exceeded expectations); substantial (efficiency was what would be expected), modest (efficiency was below expectations) and negligible (efficiency was very low compared to both the benefits (if any) and with recognized norms in the sector).

<sup>80</sup> Of the 17 AF grants which did not provide a rating on efficiency, 10 did not submit a completion report before the evaluation cut-off date and seven submitted reports in a different and non-comparable template.

Figure 16: Grant agents' assessment of overall grant efficiency (N=67 countries)<sup>81</sup>



Source: AF grants completion reports, section "Overall efficiency".

Good efficiency was linked to sound management practices. Among the 43 grants assessing efficiency as 'high' or 'substantial', qualifying comments and corroborating evidence in completion reports<sup>82</sup> attributed success to factors such as effective coordination (13 grants), rapid and cost-effective procurement (seven grants) and government capacity to implement the activities (six grants).

At the same time, as with other grants' assessment criteria, AF grant agents' assessment of efficiency ratings must be interpreted cautiously. Analysis found that their assessment was not connected to timeliness of grant implementation start or whether utilization of funds during implementation was on-track. They may be more a reflection of varied grant agents' interpretation of reporting guidance than anything else.

#### Efficiency was supported by effective coordination in Mozambique and Côte d'Ivoire

**Mozambique**, in which the efficiency of the AF grant was rated 'high', benefitted from the establishment of a response group involving MINEDH, partners and civil society to facilitate the joint work of carrying out the reporting plan, as well as the existence of a co-ordination mechanism which was well established and functioning and enabled quick decision-making and action. **Côte d'Ivoire** similarly benefitted from the existence of a coordination team for activities, which was chaired by Chief of Staff of the Ministry of National Education and Literacy.

In contrast, the delay in starting activities in **Bangladesh** was largely attributed to slow government approval processes, exacerbated by COVID-19 restrictions, as government offices shut down or operated with restrictions.

Flexible procurement practices were often adopted across the diverse set of countries rating efficiency as high. Several examples of such strategies were cited in completion reports, including competitive bidding procedures, direct procurement from primary suppliers, centralized procurement, exploitation of Long-Term Agreements with UNICEF, co-sharing of costs with other projects, sub-granting for local implementation, coordination with other donors to avoid redundancies, using in-house capacity and expertise, and training teachers to improve their ability to use digital media and education technologies.<sup>83</sup> Yet there is also room for improvement: these countries' completion report 'lessons learned' sections emphasized that procurement needs to be properly planned, localized and ideally assigned to dedicated staff. Some grant agents in these countries emphasized the value of prioritizing careful or

<sup>81</sup> Note that not all AF grants were provided with ratings. For 75% (50 out of 67), the 'efficiency' section of the completion report was completed, while for 17 AF grants the data was no available (which, in Figure 16, are comprised under the category "Not reported or no data available"). Out of those 17, 10 AF grants were those for which completion report was not received by the evaluation cut-off date and seven AF grants for which the report was submitted in a template different from that of GPE.

<sup>82</sup> 36 of the 43 AF grants meaningfully completed the open text qualifying section for overall efficiency in completion reports. It is worth noting that the other seven AF grants provided very little information to explain the reason for the rating, saying mainly that the efficiency exceeded the expectations; referring to achievements under grants' objectives; or simply stating that the efficiency was good given the complex pandemic conditions.

<sup>83</sup> As in case of the Tonga Accelerated Resilience Program, a collaborative program between the Tongan government and Save the Children's Inclusive Education. The goal was to increase capacity with use of digital media and educational technology skills, using in-house capacity to ensure ongoing quality education for early childhood, inclusive education, and primary school students. Around 362 teachers went through training, who were then asked to train three further teachers, creating a multiplier effect and excellent long-term value for money. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) used its staff and support from the beginning to seamlessly integrate remote learning into broader government education initiatives, ensuring sustainability and a smooth handover of management.

direct procurement and value for money for carrying out the designed interventions even if that meant conducting fewer activities.

One example of procurement efficiency is provided by **Bhutan**, where open tendering for the procurement of water filtration system and sanitary pads stimulated competition and resulted in quoted prices for items being less than the estimated cost. This meant that an additional 47 water filters and 97,642 sanitary pads could be supplied, benefitting more schools and students than the initially targeted output. Also, the audio and video equipment needed to develop distance learning materials was directly procured from the primary supplier through special approval from the Prime Minister's Office which assured quality at a minimum price.

Modest efficiency was experienced in countries facing implementation challenges due to the pandemic itself. Among the seven (mostly PCF) countries assessing efficiency as modest, four identified their dependence on imports affected by supply chain disruptions as a key factor hindering implementation and three identified lockdowns or other restrictions on movement, work hours and gatherings. Supply chain issues were identified as an unavoidable efficiency challenge, both in ensuring the timely delivery of materials and for managing costs. These issues were linked to the high rise in demand for handwashing materials and masks, which outstripped supply, and the rising cost of transport, fuel and material, which was attributed to both COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict which began in early 2022. For example, **Côte d'Ivoire** found that the increased demand for handwashing facilities both reduced their availability and drove up costs.

Case study countries provide a number of other examples of non-COVID-19-related supply chain challenges faced while rolling out programs during the pandemic. **Ethiopia** reported supply chain constraints due to internal conflict in Tigray and Oromia and global supply chain disruption attributed to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In **Federated States of Micronesia**, supply chain issues arose due to context – the country's remote location and complex geography – rendering it particularly sensitive to maritime disruption and increased costs as a result of both COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Moreover, state-specific consultations to determine the most relevant interventions also caused some delays. **Nicaragua** noted that volatile markets for goods and services and differences in market prices from proposal to implementation, in addition to general economic insecurity, adversely affected the grant agent's ability to manage costs. Government capacity to act rapidly, connect with existing initiatives and promote coordination between key decision-making stakeholders and implementing partners made a vital difference in ensuring efficient practices.

### **Bangladesh's examples of efficient practices in procurement and coordination**

**Bangladesh** encountered many challenges to implementation and required a 12-month extension but nonetheless provides several notable examples of efficient practices. Remote learning system development was largely led by government technical experts and teachers, which reduced the cost significantly compared to fully outsourcing the work to an external implementing partner. A partnership agreement with government television and radio included free airtime. The grant agent used World Bank Task Team in-house experts on EdTech to support remote learning, providing global expertise and guidance at no additional cost.

Implementation efficiencies included: (i) shifting to a subgrants-based scheme using the government's existing system instead of hiring a specialized agency or service provider, which allowed additional funds to be redirected to increase support to underserved schools; (ii) using virtual meetings, workshops, and remote learning activities to reduce logistical costs, save time, and improve efficiency; (iii) eliminating redundant communication activities to minimize duplication utilizing the government's complementary communication schemes; (iv) combining and rationalizing different project meetings at the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) with all 500 subdistrict officers, reducing transaction and logistical costs; (v) partnering with UNICEF and autonomous government bodies to reduce transaction costs and expedite the procurement process; and (vi) coordinating with donors, such as USAID and JICA, to ensure no redundancies in support to schools.

Some grant agents reported that slow decision-making impacted their efficiency, whilst others benefitted from strong coordinating mechanisms to support speed of implementation. Grant agents ranking efficiency as 'high' described expediting the government approval of activities during project preparation and the procurement process and leveraging existing national capacities for planning and



implementation. Those rating it as ‘substantial’ emphasized synergies with existing initiatives and partner programs and joint funding with government and other donors. Four of the seven grants rating efficiency as modest cited lack of capacity at the national level for managing activities as a factor hindering implementation.

Coordination of stakeholder effort was among the most frequently cited success factors among countries rating efficiency as high. Those assessing efficiency as modest highlighted the need for country level coordination staff, especially in federated states, and underlined the importance of greater coordination and dialogue with national authorities and relevant actors outside the education system in the lessons learned sections of their completion reports. Case study evidence in **Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tonga, and Federated States of Micronesia** demonstrates how the strength and credibility of partnerships improved implementation efficiency, with grant agents describing the support of the role of coordinating agencies in supporting GPE grant processes.

#### **Where coordination and partnerships support efficiency**

**Bangladesh** benefitted in several ways from being able to leverage the strength of specialized partner agencies, including UNICEF and well-renowned public agencies. Benefits included improved implementation quality, achieved by using strong technical partners with on the ground presence; strengthened capacity of the implementing agency; and consensus built across ministries and education departments thanks to the support of credible partners such as UNICEF who was supporting this process.

In **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the involvement of the MEPST and the effective presence of UNICEF throughout the country was reported as having supported monitoring, implementation and financial management.

**Tonga** considered support from the coordinating agency, the Australian High Commission and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), to be crucial in facilitating partnerships, advocating for the project and ensuring best practice in grant management.

In **Federated States of Micronesia**, the complex country context and federated nature of government meant that coordination between states and national agencies was time consuming but essential to ensure that interventions meet the needs of quite different contexts – i.e., the outer islands.

#### **Utilization of AF grants was unclear due to inconsistent reporting and differing approaches to measurement. Utilization delays were most prevalent among grants focusing on many goals.**

GPE funds are considered ‘utilized’ when they are spent on the program, after they are disbursed from GPE to a grant agent and then from the grant agent to the implementing partner.<sup>84</sup> We can use this as a proxy for grant implementation progress by using utilization to determine whether a grant is on- or off-track at various points during the grant’s implementation.<sup>85</sup> However, a caveat to this approach is that that grant agents have different definitions<sup>86</sup> and reporting timeframes<sup>87</sup> for utilization. As a result, reporting on utilization can be found to lag, as spending can take place simultaneously to implementation or on a reimbursement basis. Secretariat staff interviewees noted these reporting inconsistencies caused confusion, as when grants that closed in early 2021 were analyzed, the Secretariat found that many programs it had thought to be off-track were in fact on-track.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> As per Note for Utilization database. Time-series data for COVID-19 accelerated funding grants’ fund utilization. Utilization data was available for 66 of the 67 AF grants (AF grant given to Sudan with UNICEF as grant agent was missing from Utilization database).

<sup>85</sup> We considered a grant to be on-track at three months and at the mid-point if fund utilization was consistent with grant implementation timelines or varied by 10 percentage points in either direction (e.g., at mid-point grant is considered on-track if it reported to have utilized 40-60% of funds). At completion, on-track grants were those that reported to have utilized 95-100% of funds.

<sup>86</sup> The term “utilization” is understood differently across grant agents. For example, World Bank reports the amount it disburses to the government as utilization, while UNICEF reports the amount spent by implementing partners as utilization. This may result in overestimating the amount utilized by World Bank grants.

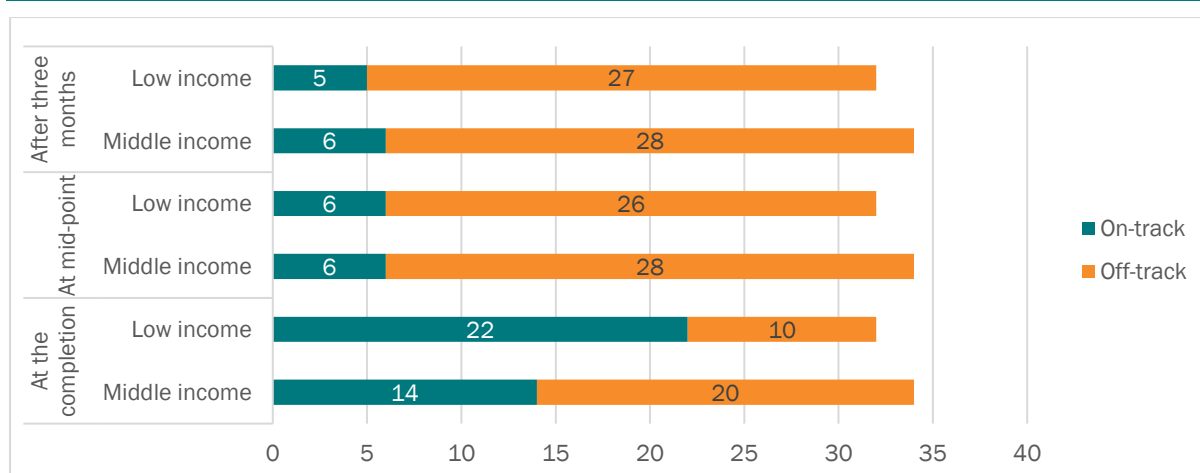
<sup>87</sup> Grant agents only report utilization data to GPE Secretariat quarterly or biannually. So, grant funds utilized in-between the reporting months are not captured in this database. Even if grant funds are utilized every month in the field, it may not be reflected in this database. The Secretariat did not compile utilization data for some months that did not receive many fund utilization reports from grant agents. In these cases, GPE used the last reported cumulative amount utilized until they had new figure in this database.

<sup>88</sup> Three grants with grant closing date in 2021 were off-track at the completion, but two of them only by 1% (have spent 94% of funds).

Planning grant utilization was slightly off-track at grant onset but recovered; funding was fully utilized by the planned end date.<sup>89</sup> Global grant fund utilization was mostly on track with minor delays in the first half of grant implementation, but then mostly caught up (having utilized 96% of funding by grant closure date). Global grant activities which were most off-track with grant utilization fell under Component 1, including activities to support distance learning programs for Pacific Small Island Developing States (Sub-Component 1.3) and for Francophone West Africa and Sahel countries (Sub-Component 1.1), and under Component 3, where none of the allocated amount was used for evaluation (Sub-Component 3.3).<sup>90</sup>

As **Figure 17** demonstrates, most AF grant recipients, both low and middle-income, struggled to utilize their grant funding at the start and mid-point of the grants, although many had caught up by the end. Three months after the grant start, only 17% (11 out of 66) of grants were on-track with utilization.<sup>91</sup> At mid-point, 82% (54 out of 66) of grants were off-track, and the extent of off-track fund utilization was the highest.<sup>92</sup>

Figure 17: AF grants on- and off-track utilization pattern after three months, at mid-point and at the completion<sup>93</sup> among low- and middle-income countries (N=66 countries).<sup>94</sup>



Source: Utilization database.

Off-track grants' utilization delays were related to number of extensions requested: 60% of grants off-track at the completion requested extensions and for reasons related to implementation issues.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Utilization trends across the regions or 87 countries benefitting could not be analyzed. Although utilization data is disaggregated by country, there is no data on timelines of anticipated/actual start and end of the activities in each country.

<sup>90</sup> For Pacific SIDS, only 77% were spent at completion, and for Subregion Francophone West Africa and Sahel countries only 86%.

<sup>91</sup> Our analysis considered a grant to be on-track at three months if fund utilization was consistent with grant implementation timelines or varied by 10 percentage points in either direction. All the 11 countries had spent slightly less than they were supposed to: eight countries had spent no funds but were not supposed to spend more than 10%, other three countries had spent some funds but less than expected. By the 3rd month of grant implementation, only 10 grants had reported to have spent any funds.

<sup>92</sup> Our analysis considered a grant to be on-track at mid-point if fund utilization was consistent with grant implementation timelines or varied by 10 percentage points in either direction. Twelve countries were on-track at mid-point of grant implementation, with eight of them in Sub-Saharan Africa. Twenty-one (21) countries were off-track by 11-30 percentage points, 13 countries – by 31-40 percentage points, 20 countries – by 41-50%, six countries spend 0% of grant funds while five countries spent already more than 95% of total funds.

<sup>93</sup> The latest available data in the utilization database was of December 2022 which was used as the data for completion. For some grants, it coincided with the grant closure date. However, other grants might have reported utilization of funds even after the grant closure date and in these cases the data reported even after official grant closing date up until December 2022 was considered.

<sup>94</sup> Utilization data was available for 66 of the 67 AF grants (AF grant given to Sudan with UNICEF as GA was missing from Utilization database). The category middle income in the figure includes both lower and upper middle-income countries.

<sup>95</sup> To test the hypothesis of utilization delays as a proxy for implementation delays, we have compared how utilization patterns associate with frequency and number of extensions, as well as reasons for extensions. We found a relationship at completion: 60% of off-track AF grants (18 out of 30) requested extensions while only 33% of on-track AF grants (12 out of 36) requested them. Eleven off-track grants requested two extensions and one off-track grant ended up requesting three extensions. Out of 18 off-track grants that requested revisions, 11 grants requested them due to implementation delays – logistical and procurement delays (5 grants), delays in the timeline of activities implementation (4 grants), delays in preparation of outputs for activity (1 grant), delays in government approval process (1 grant). Other seven grants requested for other reasons not related to implementation delays directly – changing priorities/needs during pandemic (5 grants), conflict (2 grants).

However, off-track utilization delays did not appear to be negatively associated with performance on other efficiency and effectiveness metrics.<sup>96</sup>

There were differences in fund utilization between different grant agents. No grants other than those with World Bank and UNICEF as grant agents were on-track at the three months. World Bank grants were less likely to be on-track at the beginning with 11% (two out of 18) of grants on-track at three months compared to 23% (eight out of 35) of grants with UNICEF as the grant agent. This aligns with observations from stakeholder interviews where respondents suggested that the World Bank prioritizes careful preparation for grant implementation while UNICEF prioritizes the speed of reaction. The situation was similar at mid-point with one grant from Save the Children being on-track, but most of the grants caught up by the end (discussed later in this section).

It is a reasonable working assumption that utilization delays are closely linked to hindrances in implementation, so our analysis uses it as a proxy. The most frequently reported factors hindering AF grant implementation for off-track grants, for both PCFC and non-PCFC,<sup>97</sup> were:

- Lack of capacity at the national level for managing activities (67%, 12 out of 18 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track). For instance, **Bangladesh** (off-track at mid-point) struggled with slow government approval processes, exacerbated as government offices shut down or operated with restrictions, compounded with high government staff turnover. Examples included in completion reports from other countries included continuous redefinition and clarification of project objectives and procedures leading to extensive discussions on beneficiary targeting and approaches; capacity gaps in school leadership affecting the oversight of construction projects; and frequent changes in government leadership causing delays in decision-making and approvals.
- External economic factors including dependence on imports and external supply chains for required education and WASH materials (54%, 13 out of 24 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track). For example, **Côte d'Ivoire** (off-track at mid-point) experienced a shortage of local raw materials for handwashing equipment due to high local demand; a reliance on outside sources due to lack of local mask production was also an issue, as was delays in acquiring audiovisual equipment.
- The impact of lockdowns and restrictions on movement, working hours and gatherings (55%, 11 out of 20 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track). **Bangladesh** experienced acute implementation difficulties throughout 2020, with very long school closures, and both **Democratic Republic of Congo** (off-track at mid-point) and **Côte d'Ivoire** cited lockdowns and movement restrictions as reasons for implementation delays.
- Low or limited overall technological infrastructure at the national level (33%, 3 out of 9 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track). From case study examples, in **Tonga**, despite 85% connectivity overall, teachers reported poor or non-existent connectivity in targeted schools, as well as limited access to laptop devices. In **Ghana**, inaccessible internet access and availability of ICT equipment in some cities limited the extent to which personalized remote learning could be rolled out.

Some other hindering factors mentioned by off-track grants were insufficient number or lack of professional staff for implementation of activities, changes in the political system and government, delays in requesting/approving of extensions, lack of capacity for procurement.<sup>98</sup>

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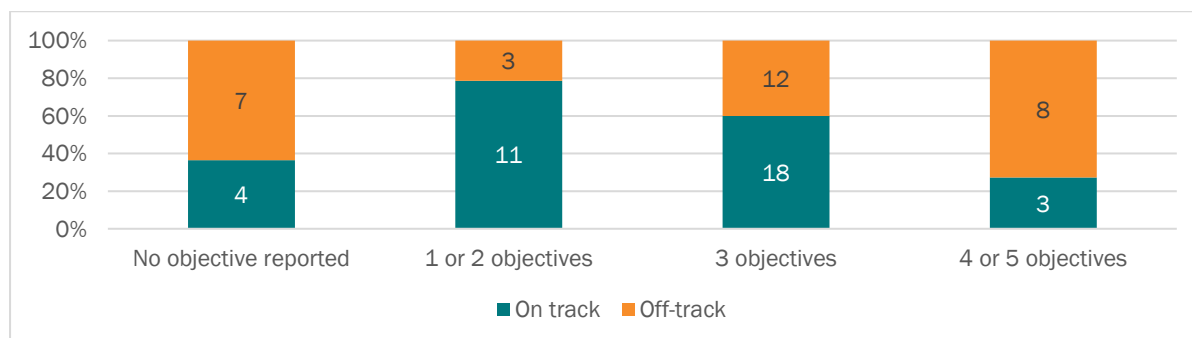
<sup>96</sup> Other efficiency and effectiveness metrics are efficiency and efficacy ratings in completion reports, achievement of core indicator targets, time taken to start implementation. It's important to exercise caution when interpreting this finding due to a potential caveat. It is possible that grant funds were still in use or reported utilized in surveys submitted after the December 2022, which is the latest available date in utilization database and closing date for some grants. Additionally, the total utilization, which could corroborate this information, was not reported in the completion reports.

<sup>97</sup> Overall, 15 different categories of factors hindering implementation (mentioned a total of 136 times by AF grants) were coded. External economic factors were cited 24 times, lockdowns etc. 20 times, lack of capacity 18 times and low technological development 12 times.

<sup>98</sup> Most common mentions of the following hindering factors by off-track grants at the completion: insufficient number or lack of professional staff for implementation of activities (80%, 4 out of 5 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track), changes in political system and government (67%, 4 out of 6 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track), delays in requesting/approving of extensions (71%, 5 out of 7 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track), lack of capacity for procurement (67%, 4 out of 6 grants reporting this bottleneck were off-track).

Crucially, AF grants that focused on many goals also tended to have slower utilization (see **Figure 18**). Grants having four or five objectives<sup>99</sup> were more likely to be off-track at endline than those reporting three objectives or fewer.<sup>100</sup> This raises the possibility that pursuing multiple goals made it harder to spend the funds.

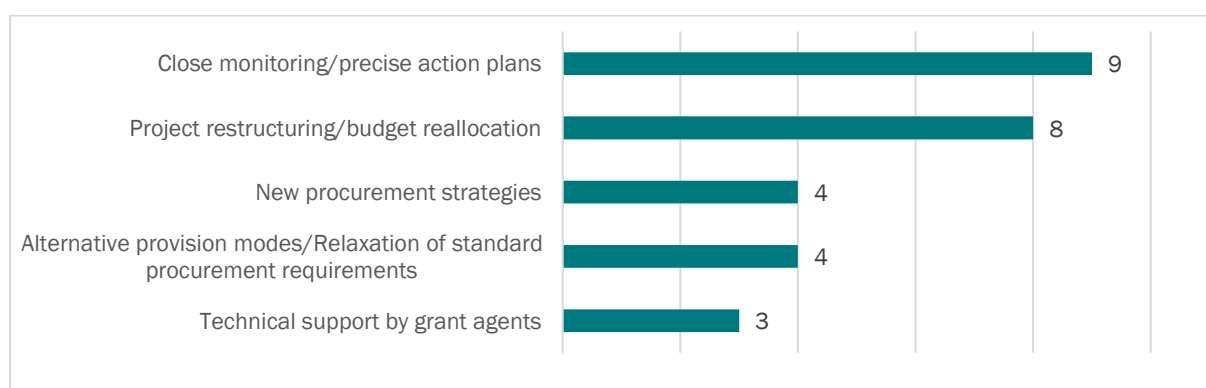
**Figure 18: Number of AF grant objectives reported compared to the on-track status of fund utilization at grant completion (N=66 countries).**



Source: AF grant completion reports.

Data from completion reports suggests that implementation bottlenecks were mostly addressed by replanning activities and rethinking procurement. The most common strategies were the development of clear action plans and monitoring, restructuring of activities and changes to procurement and provision models (see **Figure 19**).

**Figure 19: Number of mentions of different mitigation strategies/solutions for the reported delays.<sup>101</sup>**



Source: Completion reports section “Delays during implementation” (coded).

**By close, AF grant utilization had mostly caught up, in part thanks to Secretariat staff advice and an emphasis on the no-extensions policy past December 2022.**

After a slow start, most grants eventually caught up (see **Figure 20**). At completion, 55% of grants (36 out of 66) were on-track as having spent 95% or more funds. The extent of off-track utilization was not significant as over 75% of grants (45 out of 66) had utilized 90% or more of their AF grant funding and only 13% of grants (9 out of 66) had spent less than 50% of funds.<sup>102</sup> The most significantly off-track

<sup>99</sup> It is important to note that countries less likely to report on indicators are also those countries reporting less on grant objectives. Of the 17 low-reporting countries, only five (29%) reported on at least two objectives and only two on at least three. Among all grants, 53 (79%) reported on at least two objectives and 41 (61%) on at least three. Only Tonga reported on just one objective. The grants in Tonga reported two M&R indicators and no Recovery Indicator.

<sup>100</sup> Twelve grants did not report any objectives (five on-track, seven off-track).

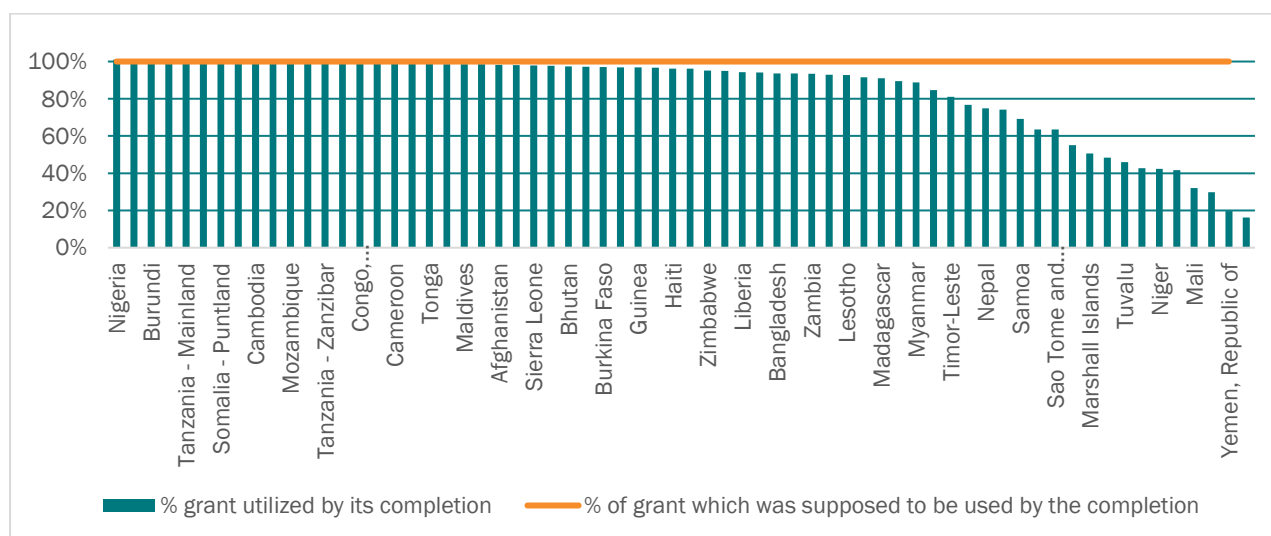
<sup>101</sup> Number in the graph refers to the number of mentions, not the number of AF grants reporting specific mitigation strategy or solution, as one grant could report more than one mitigation strategy. Out of 57 completion reports available by cut-off date for the analysis, 45 AF grants reported on the delays and filled in section “Delays during implementation”. Out of those 45, 20 grants mentioned types of delays experienced and how those were resolved/mitigated with most grants deploying more than one mitigation strategy or solution. 25 grants mentioned only the type of delays but no mitigation strategy/solution for them.

<sup>102</sup> Throughout the report, we considered as grant “on-track at completion”, those grants who utilized at least the 95% of the funds by December 2022. 9 countries utilized 90-94%, seven countries - 70-89%, five countries - 50-69%, five countries 40-49%, only four countries (Comoros, Mali, Micronesia, Yemen) used less than 40%.

at completion – and indeed at all points in time – was **Yemen**, which spent only 19.7% of its AF grant, but was also the only one to be cancelled. Low-income countries were more likely to be on-track at completion: 69% of low-income countries (22 out of 32), as compared to 41% (14 out of 34) of middle-income countries. (See **Figure 17** above). Grants with World Bank as grant agent were more likely to have caught up at completion, which is consistent with World Bank’s working practices in which funds provided to the government are reimbursed rather than paid up front.<sup>103</sup>

Low utilization early on was not a predictor of low utilization at completion; whilst several grants that were off-track at three months and at mid-point had overall low level of spending at completion, others were able to catch up. For example, with **Nicaragua**, only 8% of the grant was spent at mid-point, but 97% had been spent at completion.

Figure 20: Fund utilization at grant completion for each country (N=66 countries).



Source: Utilization database.

Three countries underlined the importance of grant agents in mitigating delays, while Secretariat staff were also attributed to play a role in mitigating delays. Upon identifying trends in delayed utilization, Secretariat staff worked with grant agents to work towards implementing solutions. This was particularly the case for grants closing later, with utilization issues being more complex. Secretariat staff reinforced the message that there would not be extensions beyond December 2022, as it was possible some countries were under the impression that the grants were for long-term development financing.

### 4.3.3 Management of GPE resources

**Finding 6.** *The M&E guidelines were not consistently implemented and, across all three types of grants, progress and completion reports may not have been quality assured to ensure they addressed the questions appropriately.*

**Moderate strength of evidence**

**Monitoring and reporting processes were flexible. However, novel tools and approaches did not yield the necessary level of quality data to ensure accountability.**

Grant agents for AF grants were required to complete quarterly and six-monthly surveys requesting information on implementation progress and reporting on core indicators, although in practice

<sup>103</sup> 67% of AF grants (12 of the 18) with World Bank as grant agent were on-track at the completion, while only 49% (17 of the 35) with UNICEF as GA were on-track. On average, grants with World Bank as GA spent 87% of funds (the results are largely driven by two outlier grants that utilized less than 50% of funds); while grants with UNICEF as GA spent 84% of funds on average (with five outliers spending 50% or less).

reporting was much more flexible.<sup>104</sup> The formative evaluation notes that, according to GPE Secretariat staff, the M&E requirements for this grant mechanism were a ‘real step up’ in that they aimed to provide more regular data on implementation progress. The AF grant was the first for which GPE put in place a shared standard for monitoring and reporting across all grant agents.

All 57 AF grant completion reports analyzed except one (from **Central African Republic**) included data in a core indicators annex.<sup>105</sup> Thus, essential monitoring data for accountability purposes was collected across the portfolio. However, there were limitations in terms of data quality (as noted in other sections of this report) such as inconsistent disaggregation of reported data by different characteristics, including by sex and other vulnerable groups,<sup>106</sup> reliance on grant agents’ assessment of grant implementation (through relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness ratings), and inconsistent reporting on unit costs.

While there was a requirement for data disaggregation for the reported core indicators, this did not always occur. Often, data was disaggregated by education level and region. For each of these variables, on average 36% reported disaggregated data<sup>107</sup>(household income level, disability and ethnicity) was even less frequent. This underlines the need for more systematic data collection and more complete completion reports). Furthermore, 31% (18 out of 57) completion reports recommended strengthening data collection and monitoring and evaluation activities, which was seen as crucial to responding in a more agile way to changes on the ground.<sup>108</sup> This suggests that the Secretariat’s quality assurance did not adequately ensure that grant agents appropriately answered reporting questions.

Grants do not explicitly mention any specific challenges in data disaggregation but rather focus on data collection challenges.<sup>109</sup> Challenges in data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic were exacerbated by the focus shifting towards implementing preventive activities or recovery activities like school disinfection, which, while critical, could have impacted data collection. Other challenges included security concerns, posing risks to monitoring teams and hindering data collection in certain regions, and potential delays in M&E activities and data collection due to school closures and uncertain nature of pandemic.

The coordination and decision-making capacity developed in previous crises, such as the Ebola outbreak, as well as utilization of digital tools and development of ICT capacity played a role in effectively managing data collection. Data collection tools and online platforms, like KoboToolBox and Google Drive, are mentioned as facilitating data collection. In **Niger**, deployment of RapidPro as an innovative and effective alternative to traditional paper-based data collection methods helped to provide real-time information. RapidPro also strengthened partnerships with mobile telephone operators, suggesting the potential for collaboration and data collection in various sectors, particularly in the context of distance education and other projects.

***It is not clear how data collected contributed to stronger results-based management, although there is some evidence that some countries used M&E data to strengthen programming – as well as reflecting on how this could have been done better.***

Independent evaluation of grants was not required by the M&E guidance<sup>110</sup> although the GPE Secretariat assessed AF grant applications for costed plans and activities to support learning from evidence at the application stage. The formative evaluation found that all grants included plans for

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<sup>104</sup> The evaluation team agreed with GPE not to analyze the level of completeness of periodic survey submissions. There is no unified source for the exact number of surveys that were expected to be submitted versus those that were submitted because the delayed survey was combined with the following survey. It is challenging to track expected and actual number of surveys as the frequency of the monitoring survey submission was also changed. There are also different reasons for lack of submission of surveys, for instance, interruption of quarterly surveys administration that were applied for at different times for countries.

<sup>105</sup> Based on the sample of 57 completion reports submitted by the cut-off date for the evaluation analysis, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. All 12 completion reports which were submitted in the format different from GPE included a Core Indicator annex (though they often lacked other information not related to indicators due to differences in the templates).

<sup>106</sup> Disaggregation of the data was required in the core indicators template if the grant was reporting on the specific indicator. GPE categories for disaggregation of data are gender, education level, household income, ethnicity, disability and geographic zones.

<sup>107</sup> This should be interpreted as follows: out of all the AF grants reporting on all ten indicators (M&R CI 1-4 and Recovery CI 1-6), only 36% of reported data on average was disaggregated by geographical zone, and 36% on average by the education level.

<sup>108</sup> Note that this analysis was carried out considering grants that were off-track at midpoint and/or at completion.

<sup>109</sup> Analysis of different coded parts of completion reports: recommendations, lessons learned, factors hindering implementation and others.

<sup>110</sup> GPE guidance on monitoring and evaluation of grants.

learning, including how the evidence generated would be used, but we found that in practice, looking at completion reports, it is not always clear how reported data and evidence was used by grant agents to strengthen implementation. Case studies provide some examples of how monitoring data and specific studies were used to generate evidence to inform programming. This was confirmed for the case study countries for this evaluation – and in the one case out of the 10 which did not have this at application stage (**Bangladesh**), the requirement to develop one was made clear. Case study evidence provides some examples of how countries learnt from this evidence generation, including in relation to beneficiary perspectives on implementation and useful lessons for the future.

### Examples of how case study countries used M&E to support implementation and learning

In the **Bangladesh** completion report, the grant agent noted that progress reporting helped to make missions more effective by providing useful information in advance. Subgrant compliance reports verified that schools had received funds and detailed how school leaders were applying appropriate fiduciary safeguards. The first report identified a few cases where there were gaps in knowledge and prompted the project to provide refresher training. Results from Bangladesh's student assessment were used by DPE officials to develop policies for learning recovery.

**Nicaragua** undertook a learning diagnostic assessment, applied to 421,000 students at the national level, to analyze the content and results achieved by students in the first semester of 2020 and input this analysis into the design of a strategy for learning continuity for 2020 and the following year.

**Democratic Republic of Congo** conducted an evaluation which provided beneficiary feedback on project outputs, which was used to assess the quality of these products. The evaluation also provided beneficiary insights on the inclusiveness of distance learning through different channels. The main lesson in the completion report was the need to have baseline assessments from which to understand progress, and the usefulness of feasibility studies to understand the effectiveness of different interventions in context.

**Tonga** conducted a survey on their intervention which revealed the importance of aligning lesson formats to the accessibility of television, internet and particular devices. While radio was the most accessible, TV and internet was more highly valued by parents and caregivers, where access was possible.

In other cases, grant agents reported lessons learned on how M&E could have been better planned and used from the outset, suggesting that the implementation of monitoring plans was not as robust as suggested in initial plans. For instance, **Federated States of Micronesia** undertook consultations with states which proved to be extremely useful and informed programme adjustment although this delayed implementation. They did not undertake beneficiary assessment. As a result, their completion report recommended that 'future grants should take into account extensive consultations' and that 'a well-considered and contextually relevant monitoring system also helps to address bottlenecks and accelerate implementation. **Tonga's** lessons learned section of their completion report suggested that more could have been done with regards to M&E, including both case studies and large-scale surveys, in order to understand the enabling factors and barriers to different remote learning methods.

**AF grant completion reports rarely reported concerns about stewardship of resources and financial management and no misuse of funds were reported for the planning and global grants. One country reported an incident of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse (SEAH).**

Only three completion reports indicated challenges in managing AF grant funding at the national level, and only one, **Afghanistan**, reported misuse of funds.<sup>111</sup> Specific challenges reported included prolonged cash crisis due to the takeover by the Taliban in Afghanistan which severely limited the capacity of education partners to deliver essential services. This crisis had cascading effects on project implementation. In **Ethiopia**, procurement complications arose due to inadequate documentation of activities under retroactive financing, forcing the government to reallocate funds initially earmarked for other activities to purchase face masks. This, however, significantly contributed

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<sup>111</sup> This is explained in the completion report. One Implementing Partner (IP) failed to meet UNICEF's standards with regards to construction of bore wells in Farah province. The programmatic visits conducted by UNICEF Education and WASH team revealed that drilled water wells done by the IP through a sub-contracted firm were unacceptable. The issue has been discussed with the IP and it has been agreed that the IP would redo all the works from scratch under supervision of UNICEF. As mitigating measures were taken without any disturbance in the project implementation, this was not communicated formally to the GPE Secretariat.

to schools reopening. In **Liberia**, a lack of understanding of fiduciary roles and difficulties in complying with financial management standards resulted in delays, particularly in liquidation processes, causing months of setbacks as the system cleared late liquidations. No misuse of funds was reported for planning and global grants.

Sixty-seven percent (45 out of 67) of AF grants discussed SEAH in their completion reports. Forty-four countries stated that they were not aware of any incidences of SEAH, while one country reported that they were. **Democratic Republic of Congo** identified 129 cases of violence in the schools in which AF grant programming occurred, which included 124 cases of physical violence and economic exploitation of children in schools and five cases of rape. In this case the grant agent has also reported on the roll out of awareness sessions on the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation as well as the installation of suggestion and complaint boxes in schools.



## 4.4 Effectiveness

This section asks whether the COVID-19 grants met their objectives and achieved results, with particular attention to whether the end users (such as teachers and learners) were reached and whether there were differential results for vulnerable groups. In this section, we examine the following areas:

- **Assessment of overall efficacy and performance of grants**, with regards to reaching planned targets.
- **End users reached** by grants.

The formative evaluation did not focus on effectiveness as it was conducted too early to detect results. However, it identified some early evidence of effectiveness, including innovative practices and examples of good practice, which was emerging across key areas of focus (learning outcomes, access to education, gender equality, teachers and the quality of teaching and partnerships/collaborations). Learning assessments were also a key area of focus in the AF grants.

In this section, noting the rapid and uncertain context in which grant activities were deployed, we mainly focus on assessing whether grants achieved their planned targets and with what evidence we can validate whether the activities did reach their targeted end users (teachers, government officials, or learners) and whether they were considered useful. Where possible, we also identify and explore grants' success drivers. We look at beneficiary assessments, although they were only available in 39% (26 out of 67) of AF grants completion reports,<sup>112</sup> and it is not possible to compare them across countries due to the variety of topics covered and the diversity of beneficiaries assessed (teachers, children, caregivers, schools).

### 4.4.1 Reaching planned targets

**Finding 7.** *Effectiveness was reported as high overall although detailed reporting around the AF grants finds that effectiveness varied greatly by activity type. While targets related to protection and well-being were broadly more likely to be met, partner countries faced more difficulties reaching targets related to learning and teachers.*

  
**Moderate  
strength of  
evidence**

This section provides a summary assessment of the overall effectiveness of the three types of GPE COVID-19 grants. To examine the effectiveness across the portfolio of grants (including planning and global grants), we use the summary ratings provided in grant completion reports, which also include information on barriers and enablers to overall effectiveness.

The data available for reporting on effectiveness includes assessments provided by grant agents as part of completion reports, which use high-level reporting on whether intended activities fully, partially, or did not meet their intended objectives.

As part of AF grants, grant agents were also asked to report against a set of 10 core indicators, where the grant included exact or similar activities corresponding to these indicators, providing both the actual number of beneficiaries reached and as a percentage of the total number of planned beneficiaries, both figures disaggregated by sex. The core indicators were intended to provide a common framework from which to examine and aggregate results, including against the categories of Mitigation and Response (M&R) and Recovery (see [Annex 6](#) for the ways in which the core indicators are mapped against both the sub-themes of M&R and Recovery used for mapping of grant activities allocation of funds). M&R and Recovery were further classified under the following themes: 1) Access, 2) Teachers, 3) Learning, 4) Enabling Environment, 5) Protection & Well-being and 6) Facilities and Services. We use analysis of the core indicators at the portfolio level to disaggregate effectiveness across thematic areas of focus and to explore whether efficacy varied by contextual variables, such as

<sup>112</sup> Nine AF grants reported not having performed beneficiary assessments and another 32 AF grants did not fill in the relevant section of the completion report ("Activities linkage with outputs: Stakeholder Comments").

PCFC status and COVID-19 school closure duration, and the extent to which grants met their intended objectives.

We supplemented our quantitative analysis on effectiveness using evidence from the case studies. These helped explore how intrinsic grant contexts drove successful implementation, promoted access, and ultimately supported learning, highlighting explanatory cases of both what success did or did not look like and based on what evidence. It is important to note that due to the way in which reporting occurred for AF grants, there are different ways in which analysis on effectiveness can be conducted. The first way considers self-reported effectiveness ratings that grant agents were asked to include, against each objective defined with a grant program, as part of grant completion reports. Grant agents were also asked to indicate whether gender/vulnerable groups were addressed as part of these objectives. Secondly, grant agents were also required to select a set of core indicators for which they would set targets and report on progress throughout the grant period. Lastly, the GPE Secretariat also tracked and analyzed distinct activities (costing and coding of grant applications), which allowed the Secretariat to better understand how grant funds were used across the portfolio.

Each approach has different limitations, but throughout this section, we primarily rely on the results against core indicators (which allow us to examine whether a core indicator target was reached, such as number of beneficiaries reached, as a proxy for effectiveness), although, in some instances, we include findings evidence from completion report effectiveness ratings and Secretariat's costing and coding analysis wherever they are relevant.<sup>113</sup>

We also note that these challenges are consistent with the broader limitations faced by other agencies during COVID-19, with regard to assessing the effectiveness or evidencing aspects such as 'last mile' delivery of services to support children with learning, including through secondary sources of information (such as evaluations or impact studies). We discuss this in [section 3.3](#); but where available, we have tried to use these sources to corroborate our assessment of the effectiveness of grant activities particularly through our country-level and global grant case studies. Finally, the global-level challenge of assessing the impact of activities on learning outcomes is perhaps already highlighted by the number of planned activities, such as within the global grant, to develop ways or means for measurement.

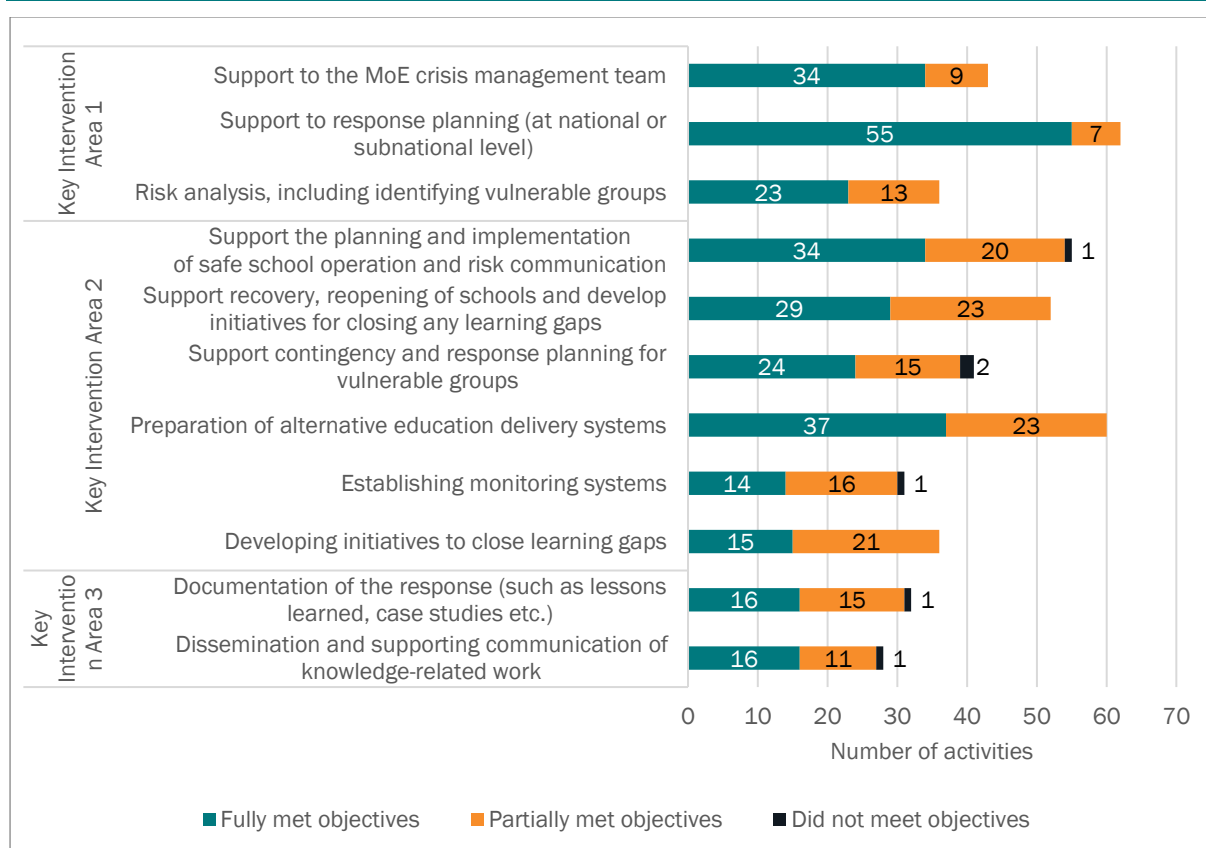
***On the whole, GPE COVID-19 grants were largely successful in achieving their intended objectives; grants which fell short in achieving their intended objectives largely attributed this to implementation challenges common throughout the pandemic, such as with procurement of materials or with the series of lockdowns.***

Looking first at the planning grant, results were reported by the grant agent (UNICEF) for activities at the country level. [Figure 21](#) below presents the efficacy of planning grant activities, as categorized by the types of activities according to the three key intervention areas as set out in the grant design.

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<sup>113</sup> Further information can be found in Annex 2. For instance, objectives were not categorized into themes and therefore the effectiveness ratings in completion reports cannot be used to determine the overall effectiveness of the grant portfolio by theme. Furthermore, only core indicators can be used to determine number of beneficiaries reached. This suggests that either some grants did not include activities that could then be mapped to core indicators or that grant agents struggled to collect data to support reporting against core indicators. Therefore, as countries did not need to capture all their activities under core indicators, it is not possible to use core indicators to determine the total number of beneficiaries reached by a particular grant program, or to represent the full extent of portfolio activities, as there may be activities that fall outside of the core indicators on which grant agents have not reported on beneficiaries reached. For example, for 16 AF grants, reporting was completed for only one or none of the core indicators, although we did not find any patterns to suggest why these 16 grants reported on fewer Core Indicators. For instance, 9 of these 16 grants (56%) were in PCFC, which corresponds with the overall percentage share (57%) of PCFC reflected across the portfolio of AF grants. Eleven out of 16 (67%) were from low-income countries, which is higher than the across the portfolio (fewer than 50%). We also found that a greater number of these grants were found to be off-track at the completion (56% off-track, as compared to the portfolio average of 47%), but the differences are small. There was no further discernible trend across grant agents.

Figure 21: Planning grant efficacy by activities.



Source: Planning grant completion report.

Out of a cumulative total of 476 planning grant activities planned across the 87 countries, objectives were met for 62% of activities (297 out of 476). Activities under Key Intervention Area 1, which was mostly focused on supporting emergency response planning at the country level, were largely successful. This included activities to support response planning (at national or sub-national level) or MoE crisis management teams. This essentially speaks to the success of the grant in supporting countries with emergency response planning in the earliest stages of the pandemic.

Objectives were not met for only 1% (6 out of 476) of the planning grant activities, with 36% (173 out of 476) of the activities reported as having partially met their objectives. Greater challenges were faced in achieving objectives in the areas of Key Intervention Area 2, where fewer than 50% of countries working in these areas fully met their objectives (and particularly in establishing monitoring systems and development initiatives to close learning gaps). In the planning grant completion report, the grant agent highlighted procurement (such as acquiring learning materials or WASH equipment), the lack of requisite infrastructure (such as electricity or connectivity for delivering a distance-learning programme), and issues with data collection as the main challenges faced by countries which noted activities where objectives were not met.

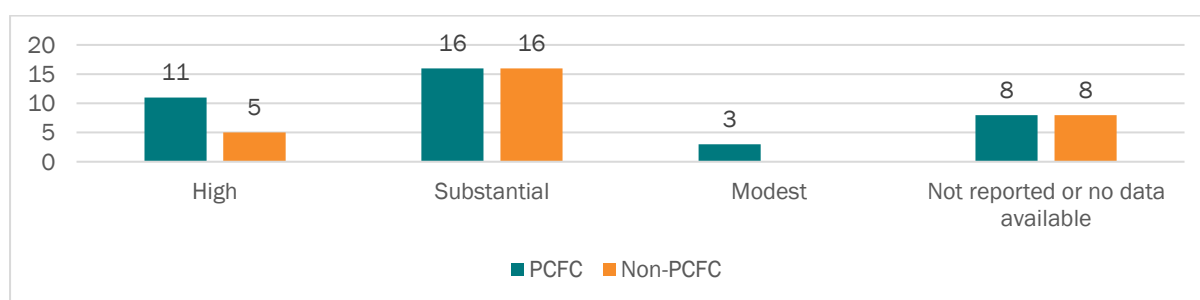
Key stakeholders involved in the conceptualization and design of the planning grant (including at the GPE Secretariat and at UNICEF) noted that a menu of activities would be considered for funding, recognizing that countries required different types of support and should be allowed the flexibility to address the most urgent needs. The results above suggest that planning grant beneficiary countries were more likely to meet targets in activities that were related to planning activities, as compared to those such as the delivery of learning activities, the development of monitoring systems, or activities related to disseminating evidence or lessons learned.

No specific targets were reported for the regional and global-level activities for the planning grant, which were focused on knowledge management, developing regionally-relevant guidance documents, evidence-generation, support to monitoring access to education and learning outcomes, developing digital learning solutions, and support to safe school operations and reopening, which largely cover the activities under Key Intervention Areas 2 and 3. However, the completion report provides details

of the successful completion of activities related to support and outputs relevant at regional levels, including for instance translation of materials to relevant regional languages or commissioning regionally-specific situational analyses.

Similarly, at the AF portfolio level, AF grants were also largely successful in achieving their objectives. Using grant agent efficacy assessments reported in grant completion reports<sup>114</sup>, 94% (48 out of 51) of grants were rated as having either 'high' or 'substantial' efficacy, while only 6% (3 out of 51) of grants were rated as having 'modest' levels of efficacy (see **Figure 22**). We note that the overall efficacy ratings across the portfolio were lower than those reported for efficiency and relevance, which may suggest that the ratings are based on some critical reflection rather than a product of reporting bias and are based on the grant achievements reported against their results framework indicators.

Figure 22: Overall efficacy ratings for AF grants (N=67 countries).<sup>115</sup>



Source: AF grant completion reports, section "Efficacy".

Fragility did not appear to play a role in efficacy. A greater proportion of PCFC reporting 'high' efficacy at closeout (29%, 11 out of 38 PCFC) as compared to non-PCFC (17%, 5 out of 29 non-PCFC), while 42% (16 out of 38) PCFC and 55% (16 out of 29) non-PCFC reported substantial levels of efficacy at closeout.

Grants rating efficacy as high appeared to be tied to more holistic strategies. This was often attributed to situations in which initiatives exceeded their original goals. Success factors cited in qualifying comments from completion reports included multifaceted planning of remote learning solutions, inclusion and equity initiatives, and provision of psychosocial support. For example, school feeding and provision of school materials in **Rwanda** where efficacy was rated as 'high', were targeted at the poorest districts in the country, supporting the return to school and thus mitigating the impact of the pandemic on equity. **Bhutan**, where efficacy was also rated as 'high', trained school counsellors on online counselling, teachers on how to facilitate the return to school, and focal teachers in schools where no counsellor was present to identify vulnerable children and refer them to specialized services.

Robust stakeholder engagement was also a key supporting factor for efficacy. According to grant agents in 29% (14 out of 48) of grants assessing efficacy as high or substantial, involving relevant actors, such as the MoE, local NGOs, the LEG and education clusters, contributed to efficacy. Eleven grants also recommended<sup>116</sup> closer engagement with actors outside of ministries of education such as other line ministries, CSOs, and private companies. Additionally, grants reporting only 'modest' efficacy pointed out that weak communication and stakeholder collaboration often acted as a bottleneck, underscoring the importance of continuous dialogue.

Main factors tied to modest efficacy ratings appear to be mostly related to lockdowns and other logistical disruptions related to the pandemic. These included prolonged school closures, difficulties in implementing alternative learning plans during lockdowns, disruptions on the overall organizational functioning of education systems, shifts in the operating environment affecting project effectiveness,

<sup>114</sup> As per completion reports, overall 'Efficacy' rating should be based on grants assessment of each of the objectives. Efficacy is considered High when operation exceeded or fully achieved its objectives; Substantial – the operation almost fully achieved its objectives; Modest – the operation partly achieved its objectives; Negligible – when the operation barely achieved or did not achieve (minimal achievement, if any) its objectives.

<sup>115</sup> Note that not all AF grants were provided with ratings. For 76% (51 out of 67), the 'efficacy' section of the completion report was completed, while for 16 AF grants this section was not completed (which, in Figure 22, are comprised under the category "Not reported or no data available"). Out of those 16, 10 AF grants were those for which the completion report was not received by the evaluation cut-off date and six AF grants for which the report was submitted in a template different from that of GPE.

<sup>116</sup> As described in the 'lessons learned' section of completion reports.

or logistical hurdles in distributing materials to remote areas during the pandemic. For example, in **Papua New Guinea** (where efficacy was assessed as 'modest'), the closing of businesses and logistics services impacted the distribution of learning materials, even more so in remote areas.

Equally, in its completion report, the global grant was also rated as 'highly satisfactory' with regards to the achievement of objectives against all three key intervention areas. This rating is primarily related to the successful completion of activities, and in particular, the generation of related outputs (for example, reports, guidelines, teaching and learning materials, knowledge packs, etc.). More details on the targets achieved and through the global grant can be found in the next section.

***Across the AF grant portfolio, core indicator baseline targets were largely met, although results varied across various themes under 'Mitigation & Response' (M&R) and 'Recovery'. While targets related to protection and well-being were broadly more likely to be met, grants faced more difficulties reaching targets related to learning assessment and teacher training.***

We used reporting on core indicators as a proxy for achievements under the sub-themes in which partner countries conducted AF grant activities (see table on mapping of indicators and activities in sub-themes in **Annex 2**).

The activities on which the highest number of grants worked on were the following:

- 67% (45 out of 67) of grants reported results on access, including supporting children with distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs (M&R CI 1 Access)
- 61% (41 out of 67) of grants reported results on protection and well-being, including equipping schools with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 (Recovery CI 3 Protection and Well-Being).

The activities on which the fewest grants worked were the following:

- 21% (14 out of 67) of grants reported results on supporting teachers, including supporting the return of officials/teachers to school once the school system is reopened (Recovery CI 4 Teachers).
- 24% (16 out of 67) of grants reported results on training teachers to provide accelerated programs to mitigate learning loss during school closure (Recovery CI 5 Teacher Training).
- 25% (17 out of 67) of grants reported results on learning assessment of children to evaluate learning loss during school closure (Recovery CI 6 Learning).

Targets were largely met across most core indicators, with the exception of the following:

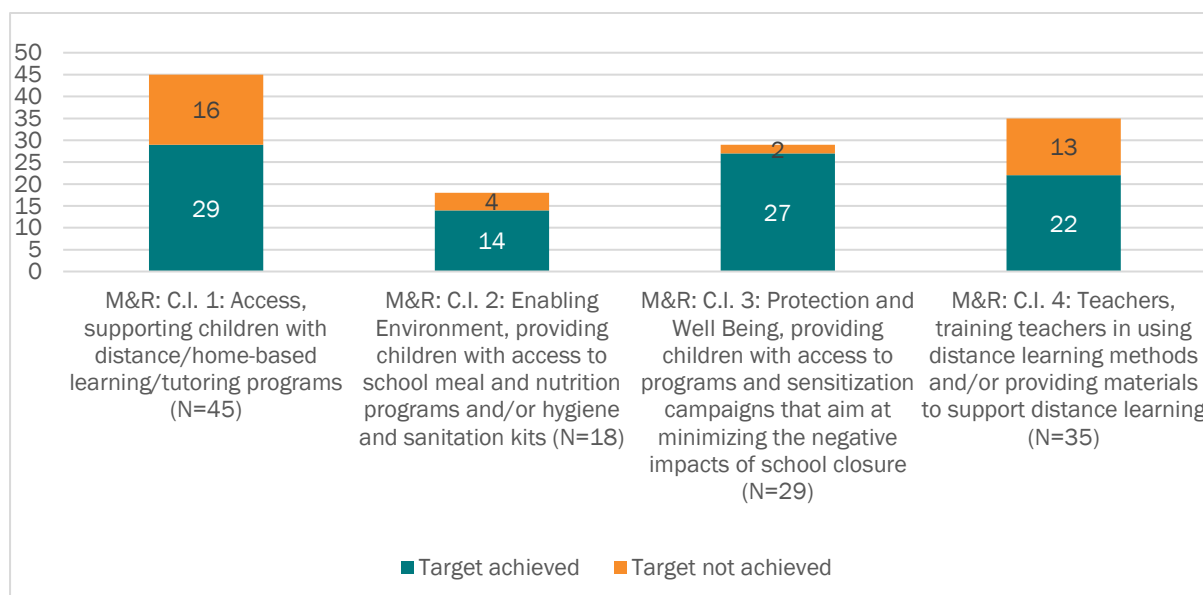
- Only 41% (seven out of 17) of grants met targets related to the number and percentage of children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure (Recovery CI 6 Learning).
- Only 56% (nine out of 16) of grants met targets related to the number and percentage of teachers trained to provide accelerated programs to mitigate loss of learning during school closure (Recovery CI 5 Teachers, training).
- Targets related to access (M&R CI 1) and teacher training (M&R CI4) were also difficult to meet, with only 64% (29 out of 45) and 63% (22 out of 35) of grants respectively meeting targets (see **Figure 23**).

Relatively speaking, the more successful activities seem to be those related to protection and well-being under both M&R and Recovery:

- 93% (27 out of 29) of grants met their core indicator targets related to children accessing sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts, gender-based violence, and issues related to unequal social norms (M&R CI 3 Protection and Well-Being)) (see **Figure 23**). Similarly, 88% (36 out of 41) of grants met their core indicator targets related to ensuring grant-supported schools were equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19 (Recovery CI 3 Protection and Well-Being).

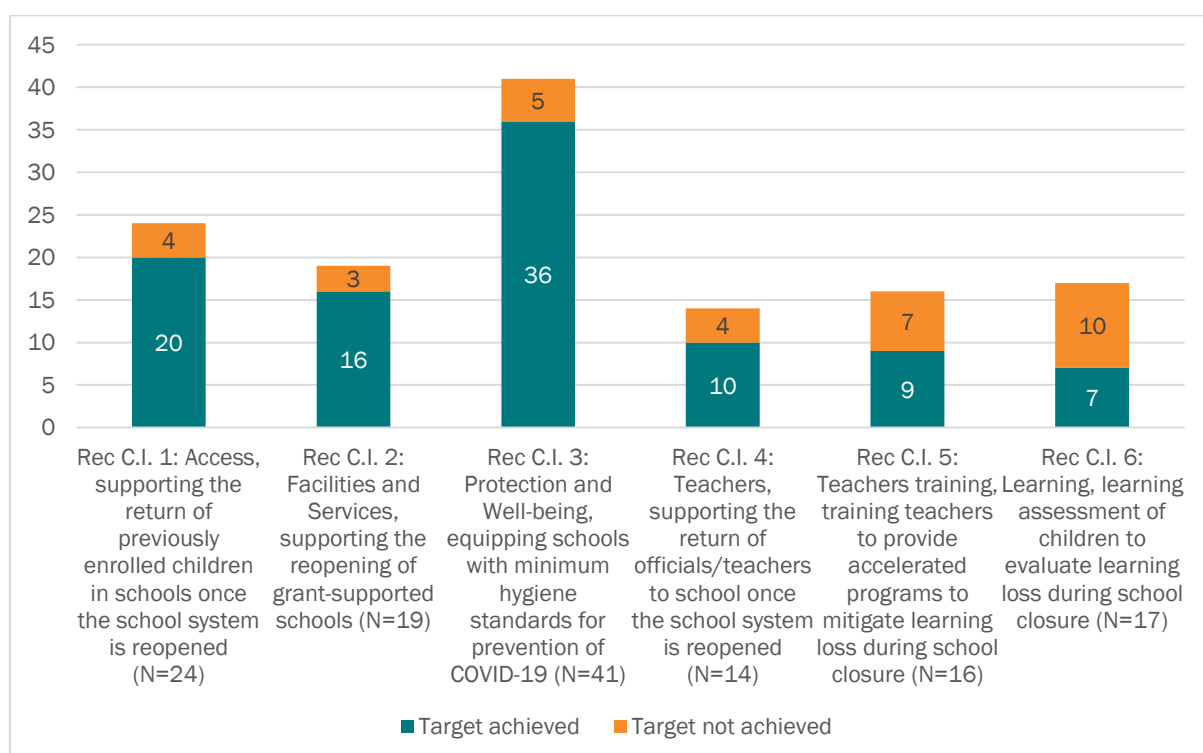
- Finally, 84% (16 out of 19) of grants met their targets on facilities and services, which mostly included activities related to schools reopening (Recovery CI 2 Facilities and Services) (see [Figure 24](#)).

Figure 23: AF grants achieving targets for Mitigation and Response core indicators (among those that reported on the following core indicators), by N of grants.<sup>117</sup>



Source: AF grant completion reports database, section “Core Indicators”.

Figure 24: AF grants achieving targets for Recovery core indicators (among those that reported on the following core indicators), by N of grants.



Source: AF grant completion reports database, section “Core Indicators”.

<sup>117</sup> For more details on the indicators and the list of activities under each of them, see Annex 2.

*Many grants included activities focused on the provision of distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs to mitigate the pandemic's effect on students during school closures. These were less likely to meet the core indicator targets.<sup>118</sup>*

As noted above, the majority of AF grants included activities related to supporting children's access to distance learning (M&R CI 1 Access – included by 67% of AF grants, 45 out of 67) and training teachers to use distance learning methods or provide materials to support distance learning (M&R CI 4 Teachers – included by 52% of AF grants, 35 out of 67), yet these were two areas in which over one third of grants failed to achieve their target and were the M&R core indicators in which grants were least likely to reach their target.<sup>119</sup>

In our case studies countries, 90% (nine of the 10) grants met their targets out of those reporting against M&R CI 1 and 71% (five out of seven out of those reporting) reported meeting targets against M&R CI 3. We observed that irrespective of whether countries had previous experience of school closures or not they faced challenges in rolling out distance learning programs. For instance, in **Mozambique**, in which objective 3 (on ensuring the continuity of learning) was rated 'satisfactory' but did achieve its target for M&R CI 1, the use of TV and radio as a learning tool was used the first time for primary education during the pandemic, which required both building the capacity of primary students to learn at home and the need to train teachers on the use of the materials.

In **Ghana**, the efficacy of objective 1 (strengthening remote education service delivery) was rated as 'highly satisfactory' and met its targets for both M&R CI 1 and CI 4, remote learning was rolled out through both TV and radio programs as well as through the digital Edmodo Learning Management System (LMS); this multi-faceted approach was informed by the country's previous experience during Ebola and an understanding that while access to devices (such as computers or mobiles) is low, there is relatively high penetration of radio and TV throughout the country. A survey was conducted as part of the National Radio Reading Programme on the level of access from students to radio programming, of which 88% of respondents reported having accessed lessons using the radio. However, despite this survey, two country-level interview respondents reported uncertainty on the actual uptake of TV and radio programming and shared equity concerns, with an understanding that the uptake of both modes of remote learning were higher in urban than rural areas, and that the Edmodo system had a higher uptake in private schools as compared to public. The information included in the completion report further confirms the assumption that the roll out of digital solutions was lower than anticipated, as it states, "inaccessibility to the internet and ICT equipment such as laptops and tablets in many households did not allow for 'personalized remote learning.'"

There are several factors that hindered implementation of these activities and unpredictable school closures meant timing was an issue. The **Ghana** case study found that teaching materials produced were satisfactory but were distributed towards the end of school closures. Similarly, in **Ethiopia**, the timing of school reopening happened earlier than anticipated, meaning that the planned development of student learning materials under the grant became redundant and was cancelled.

Short, reduced-scope trainings were found to be the most ineffective forms of teacher training. Digital methods were particularly challenging, where countries relied on internet to disseminate teacher training, such as in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, or where there was a lack of hardware (laptops) accessible to teachers, such as in **Tonga**. Teacher training initiatives were mostly short and many focused on remote learning. However, global evidence suggests that teacher training needs to last for six months to a year in order to be impactful.<sup>120</sup>

Countries relying on portals or LMS to support teachers' practices needed more help, which is a finding consistent with global trends. Factors included low digital literacy, connectivity issues, and technical issues with the portals themselves. There were some results in terms of students being reached via these digital learning platforms. Again, this is not specific to GPE support: in 2022,

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<sup>118</sup> This includes both core indicators M&R CI 1 and M&R CI 4.

<sup>119</sup> 35% of AF grants reporting on M&R CI 1 (16 out of 45) did not reach their targets with an average of 59% of the endline target reached. Among 16 AF grants, two grants reached 0% of the endline target, while three grants reached over 90% of the target. 37% of AF grants reporting M&R CI 4 Teachers (13 out of 35) did not reach their targets with an average of 60% of the endline target reached. Among these 13 grants, one country reached 0% of endline target, while two countries reached more than 90% of the target.

<sup>120</sup> Stanford Graduate School of Education. 2022. Learning, design, and technology (LDT) MS degree. <https://online.stanford.edu/programs/learning-design-and-technology-ldt-ms-degree> (Accessed 1 December 2022.)

UNICEF reported that over a third of nationally developed digital learning platforms during COVID-19 in 184 countries were not functional.<sup>121</sup>

From the case study data, we see that in **Ghana** the Edmodo LMS has been developed and activated, but its current functionality is not known.<sup>122</sup> The first version was developed in November 2020, but the operational version of LMS was launched in 2021, after school re-opening launched. Key users, including teachers, learners, parents, school administrators of the LMS can register for access to its content. It was, however, observed that the initial uptake and utilization of this LMS was relatively low among students and teachers. This is partly because teachers and students may not be fully digitally trained or may lack adequate ICT equipment (i.e., computers, laptops, tablets), or simply do not have sufficient funds to pay for internet data. In addition, the functionality of this LMS presents a challenge. It is still under development and will require substantial future support in terms of maintenance, continuous updating of content, enhancing user functions, general connectivity of the platform, internet access for users online and offline, as well as connections in schools, and improving general awareness among the intended users of the platform.

Across the remaining case studies, **Côte d'Ivoire's Mon École à la Maison** is considered to be non-functional (not working nor regularly updated), while Bangladesh's **digital content**, **Mozambique's Instituto de Educação Aberta e à Distância**, **Federated States of Micronesia's Education Distance Learning** and **Tonga's Hama e-Learning Platform** are functional but not regularly updated, while the platforms developed in **Nicaragua (Educa)**, **Cameroon (My School at Home)**, **Ethiopia (E-learning & D-Library)** and **Democratic Republic of Congo (Ma classe)** are active.

Despite the functionality of the platform, in **Democratic Republic of Congo**, there is evidence that distance learning and new approaches developed through the AF grant were not used or adopted equally across the country, which limits its ability to influence or change the way of delivering education and learning services at a systems level. In **Ethiopia**, despite the accuracy of the AF grant's focus on re-enrolment and investment in remote learning (such as and the use of digital technology and digital learning platforms), in the completion report the grant agent expresses concern that due to the limited penetration of connectivity, there is a danger of the use of digital platforms exacerbating learning inequalities.

The mixed findings on the roll out of distance learning programs in practice is not unique to the activities supported by GPE grants and is largely consistent with the recent literature on global efforts to promote learning during the pandemic. A comprehensive report from UNESCO<sup>123</sup> on the effectiveness of remote learning solutions detailed evidence that suggests a consistent and systematic ineffectiveness of remote learning solutions, many similar to the ones supported by AF grants, in low- and middle-income countries. This is largely due to a number of factors which resonate with challenges experienced by the AF grants, including poor connectivity and unreliable electricity, as well as a lack of access to devices (device ownership)<sup>124</sup> and a lack of experience with technologies or a lack of digital skills. Another report looking back on the experience of using remote learning during COVID-19 by the World Bank also found mixed evidence on the effectiveness of remote learning.<sup>125</sup>

### ***During lockdowns, AF grants were successful in reaching protection and well-being-focused targets and reached more girls than expected.***

Forty-three percent (29 out of 67) of AF grants reported on the number of children that accessed programs and sensitization campaigns that aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts, gender-based violence, and issues related to unequal social norms. Across these M&R activities, a total of 56,953,118 children were provided access to

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<sup>121</sup> UNICEF. 2022, December 12. 1 in 3 digital learning platforms developed during COVID-19 no longer functional. Press release. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/1-3-digital-learning-platforms-developed-during-covid-19-no-longer-functional>.

<sup>122</sup> Appraisal of the functionality of Edmodo, and the platforms for the other case studies, comes from EdTech Hub. 2023. 'Mapping National Digital Learning Platforms. Available at: <https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/HPWRQP7M> (Accessed 18 October 2023).

<sup>123</sup> UNESCO. 2023. An ed-tech tragedy? Educational technologies and school closures in the time of COVID-19.

<sup>124</sup> Only 30% of the poorest households in Africa have a working radio, 4% cent have a television, fewer than 1% have a computer. (Del Ninno, C. & Mills, B. 2015. Safety Nets in Africa: Effective Mechanisms to Reach the Poor and Most Vulnerable. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/978-1-4648-0435-9>).

<sup>125</sup> Munoz-Najar, Alberto; Gilberto Sanzana, Alison Grace; Hasan, Amer; Cobo Romani, Juan Cristobal; Azevedo, Joao Pedro Wagner De; Akmal, Maryam. Remote Learning During COVID-19: Lessons from Today, Principles for Tomorrow (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/160271637074230077/Remote-Learning-During-COVID-19-Lessons-from-Today-Principles-for-Tomorrow>. Note that this report was produced through activities supported by the Global Grant.



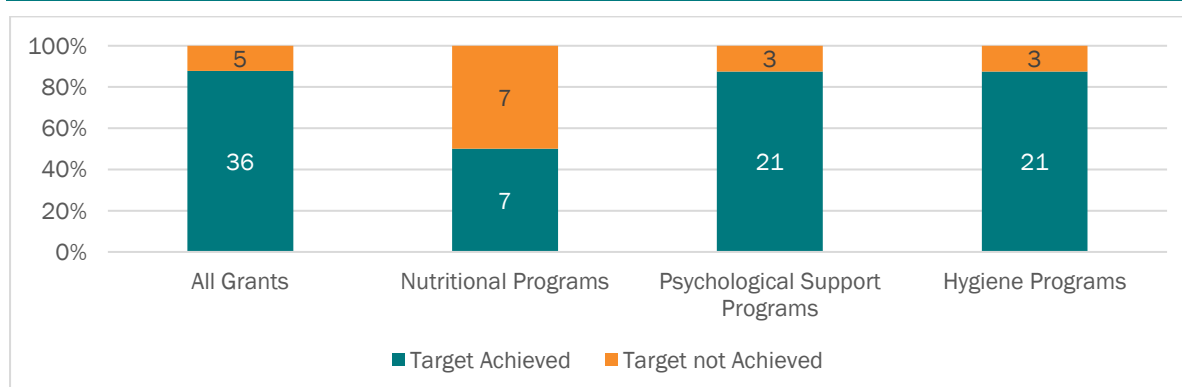
sensitization campaigns, more than the double the endline target,<sup>126</sup> with the aggregate target for girls being surpassed by 20%.

Longer school closures possibly increased demand for protection and well-being activities, driving up achievement of indicator targets. Countries with above-the-median school closure durations (167.5 days and more)<sup>127</sup> provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns to more children compared to countries with below-the-median school closures<sup>128</sup> and reached more than twice the number of children prescribed in their endline target (in countries with below-the-median (less than 167.5 days) school closures grants reached 25% more children than the endline target).

Protection and well-being efforts were successful at the recovery stage as well (Recovery CI 3 on Protection and Well-being referring to equipping schools with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19), although those with nutritional programs components were less so: only 50% (seven out of 14) of grants with nutritional programs reporting on this indicator met their targets.

This was the most common and successfully reported indicator under Recovery, regardless of country context: 61% (41 out of 67) of AF grants reported data under this Protection and well-being indicator, more than any other category. Under Recovery, this was the core indicator with targets most likely to be achieved (only 12%, five out of 41, did not), suggesting efforts were directed to the most effective activities or that these activities were more relevant. The attainment of targets for this indicator did not significantly change across PCFC status, grant agent type and school closure duration.<sup>129</sup> Case studies do not offer clarifying evidence.

Figure 25: Achievement of Recovery Indicators on Well-Being by relevant thematic grant activities (N=41 grants).



Source: AF completion reports database, section "Core Indicators".

**Although AF grants struggled to reach targets related to the provision of access to remote learning, they were more successful in supporting students to return to schools in person.<sup>130</sup>**

Endline targets for the Recovery core indicator related to Access (i.e., the number of children previously enrolled in grant-supported schools who returned to school once the school system reopened) were largely met. Only 17% (four out of 24) of the grants failed to achieve their individual end-targets. Results remained the same across fragility status and grant agent type.

Innovative back-to school campaigns described in case studies may have been effective. **Cameroon** used songs, contests, and posters to successfully encourage 4,395,466 students to return.<sup>131</sup> In **Ethiopia**, the use of decentralized and community-based approaches was noted as a success factor in

<sup>126</sup> Some AF grants reported a very high number of children reached: Pakistan reported having reached 35 million children (the endline target was 10 million); Papua Nuova Guinea, Bhutan, and Tanzania – Zanzibar reported having reached four times the children in their endline targets.

<sup>127</sup> The median number of total days of school closure was 167.5 days in our sample.

<sup>128</sup> In countries with above-the-median school closures grants reached on average around 3.5 million children, compared to an average of around 900,000 in countries with below-the-median school closures.

<sup>129</sup> Analyzing the lessons learned and recommendation sections of the completion report, as well as countries comments on efficacy, did not provide any insights on the reasons why this happened.

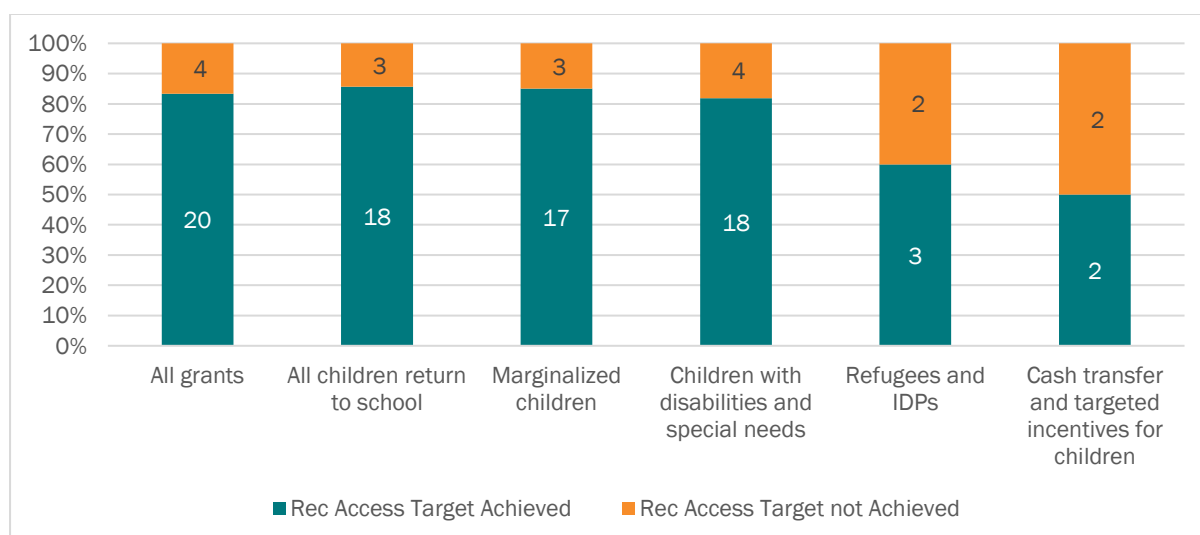
<sup>130</sup> It refers to Recovery CI 1 'Access'.

<sup>131</sup> As reported by Cameroon under Recovery CI 1.

ensuring that 100% of its targeted students returned.<sup>132</sup> Ghana was able to achieve a 98% return rate, supporting 5,806,083 students to re-enroll through grant-funded activities.<sup>133</sup>

Access-related activities seemed to be equally successful with reinforcing equity among different groups such as marginalized children<sup>134</sup> and children with disabilities, with fewer grants targeting refugees and IDPs. Case studies could not help in clarifying why.

Figure 25: Achievement of Recovery core indicators on access by relevant thematic grant activities conducted (N=24 grants).



Source: AF completion reports database, section "Core Indicators".

### AF grants struggled to reach their targets related to supporting teacher training in recovery-focused activities.<sup>135</sup>

Return of teachers and officials were likely the most challenging part of reopening along with the resuming of learning activities. Portfolio analysis finds that among core indicators related to Recovery and the reopening of schools, those on teacher training for accelerated programs to mitigate loss of learning were the least likely to be reached.

Teacher training to provide accelerated programs appeared to be less challenging in countries with longer school closures. Overall, 56% (nine out of 16) of grants reporting this indicator achieved their endline target. Longer school closures may have made it easier to implement these activities. In countries with above-the-median school closures (i.e., more than 167.5 days), the average number of teachers trained to provide accelerated programs was much higher than in countries with lower school closures.<sup>136</sup> Grants in countries with longer school closures also were more likely to achieve more teachers than expected; they reached 17% more teachers than their endline target, whereas in countries with shorter school closures, grants reached on average 2% more teachers. Case studies do not provide evidence as to why this might be the case. Secondary literature suggests that low achievement on teacher training targets is not unique to GPE's support. During COVID-19, teacher training in Africa especially severely lacked dedicated financing, for which it was competing with the public health sector, and the disproportionate burden of household care placed on female teachers may have caused some of them to quit their jobs (hence the non-return to school of some teachers).<sup>137</sup>

<sup>132</sup> Ethiopia did not report on Recovery CI 1 but had this target as part of its grant results framework.

<sup>133</sup> As reported under Recovery CI 1.

<sup>134</sup> According to the thematic coding, these refer to both gender equity (girls and boys) as well as supporting the least developed regions of the country and children in the poorest districts.

<sup>135</sup> Teacher training in distance learning methods (M&R CI4 Teachers) and in accelerated programs to mitigate learning loss (Recovery CI 5) under Mitigation and Response and Recovery.

<sup>136</sup> In countries with above-the-median school closures, the number of teachers trained were around 24,000 on average, while in countries with below-the-median school closures around 15,000 teachers on average.

<sup>137</sup> ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, & APHRC (2022). Teacher Training and Support in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Abidjan, Ouagadougou, Nairobi: ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, APHRC.

The few initiatives supporting teachers in returning to school also had mixed results (Recovery CI 4 - supporting the return of officials/teachers to school once the school system is reopened). Among the AF grants reporting on this indicator, 29% (four out of 14) did not meet their targets.<sup>138</sup>

Despite mixed results, all the case study countries valued the benefits of teacher training in terms of long-term capacity strengthening. In **Bangladesh**, a key achievement was the training provided to the teachers and education administrators. There, stakeholders highlighted that these training opportunities strengthened the education system's capacity to continue delivering education during potential future school closures. In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the AF grant has made it possible to formalize and implement a priority intervention for the education sector's strategy, the development of the distance education program for students. The overall success of the implementation has convinced the government to mainstream distance learning tools within the system and to include distance learning techniques into teacher training and in-service capacity building. Evidence of the effective implementation of these mainstreaming initiatives has yet to be documented, but the initiative is commendable. In **Côte d'Ivoire** "tecno-pédagogues" training was as much about recovering from the pandemic as an investment in long-term digital literacy. In **Ghana**, the AF grant has contributed to the initial development and institutionalization of digital learning for students, and, relatedly, teacher training using digital tools:

- Through the Edmodo LMS platform – which is envisaged to function as a platform providing pre-service and in-service teacher training modules, thereby expanding the options for teacher training, and effectively enhancing available capacities and skills of teachers, and for upgrading of teacher competences in the future.<sup>139</sup>
- The establishment of a Ghana National Knowledge and Skills Bank (NKSB) - not yet completed, since only ToRs were developed during the project – that, once developed, has the potential to function as a repository of all developed remote learning content incl. online learning materials, videos, audio, and digital content.

The project trained 40,042 teachers between October and November 2021 (i.e., after school reopening) in basic digital skills<sup>140</sup> that enabled them to interact with digital learning platforms.

***Conducting learning assessments (Recovery CI 6) was an unsuccessful area of reopening activities, possibly due to poor institutional capacity, and for girls especially.***

Out of the grants reporting on the corresponding indicator, only 41% (7 out of 17) reached their endline targets. Even when the grants invested specifically in learning assessment systems, they did not perform better on this indicator (see **Figure 26**). Grants performed particularly poorly when targeting girls with only two of nine AF grants having reached their endline targets related to girls.

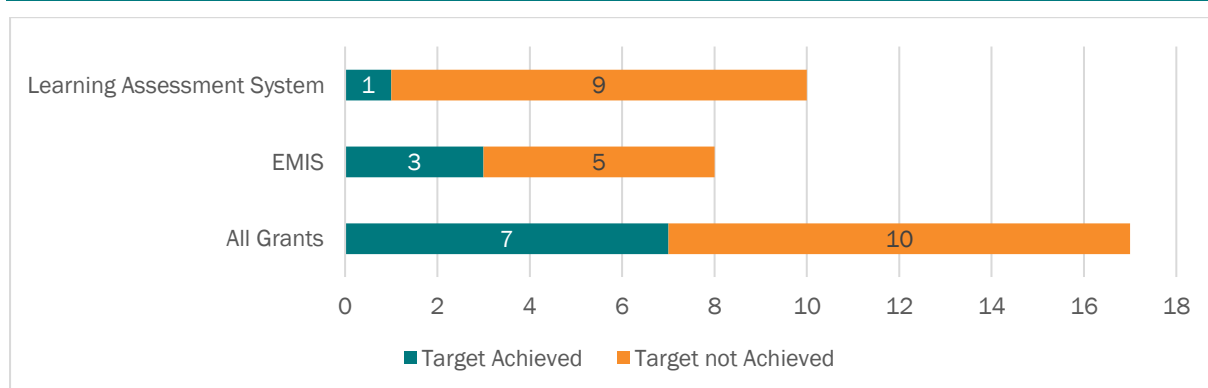
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<sup>138</sup> Recommendations, lessons learnt, and other sections of completion reports do not provide insights about the reasons for not achieving targets.

<sup>139</sup> Presently, teachers can receive professional development points when they complete specific online training modules through the LMS, which in turn can be used for career advancement. The full deployment of the LMS (full integration into teacher education and training) is yet to be further operationalized together with campaigns to motivate teachers to use the LMS as a key resource to support their teaching efforts and their professional development as teacher.

<sup>140</sup> Teachers could participate in five integrated digital literacy courses available on the LMS, i.e., Computer Basics; Word Processing; Spreadsheet; Presentation; Basic Internet Tutorial.

Figure 26: Achievement of Recovery Indicator on Learning Assessment and EMIS by relevant thematic grant activities (N= 17 grants).



Source: AF completion reports database, section “Core Indicators”.

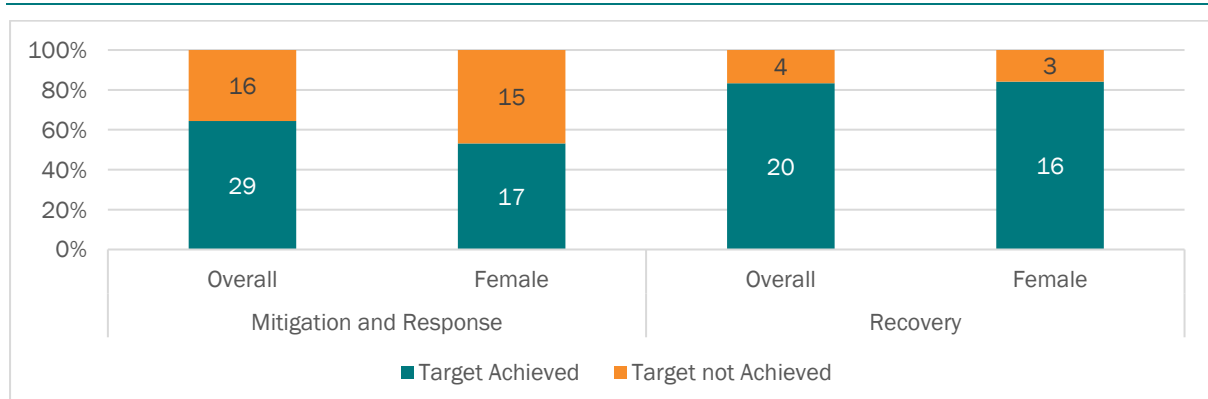
#### 4.4.2 Reaching end users

**Finding 8. Results related to girls and other disadvantaged groups were not always tracked.**

**Low strength of evidence**

Overall, 64% (42 out of 66) of AF grants addressed gender-specific barriers through M&R activities, and 77% (51 out of 66) through Recovery activities.<sup>141</sup> Access activities for supporting children with distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs were not very successful in covering girls with only 32 grants explicitly targeting girls through distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs, moreover, they were also less likely to reach their target for girls than overall (Figure 27). As for access activities under recovery, 19 grants explicitly targeting girls measuring support to the return of previously enrolled children in schools once school systems reopened.

Figure 27: Grants’ Achievement of Access CI targets (N=45 grants for Mitigation and Response, N=24 grants for Recovery).



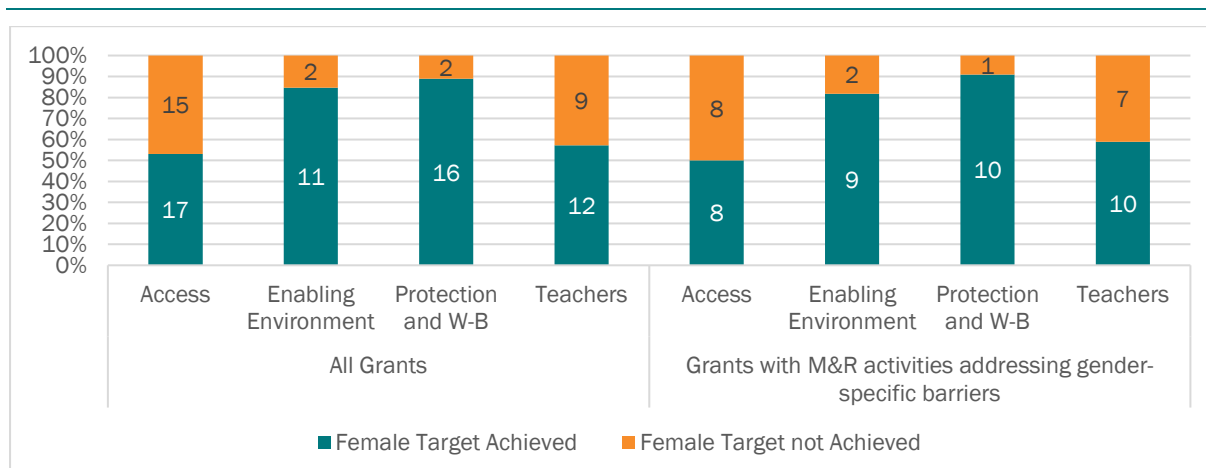
Source: AF grant completion reports database, section “Core Indicators”.

However, even when grants reported intentionally addressing gender specific barriers<sup>142</sup>, girls-related targets were not more likely to be met. For instance, on M&R CI 1 on Access, 53% (17 out of 32) of grants met their gender target while among AF grants reporting on this indicator and collecting data disaggregated by gender, 50% (eight out of 16) grants met their endline target.

<sup>141</sup> Coding and costing database detailing the division of activities and funds allocation under AF grants included dummy variable indicating grants that addressed gender-specific barriers.

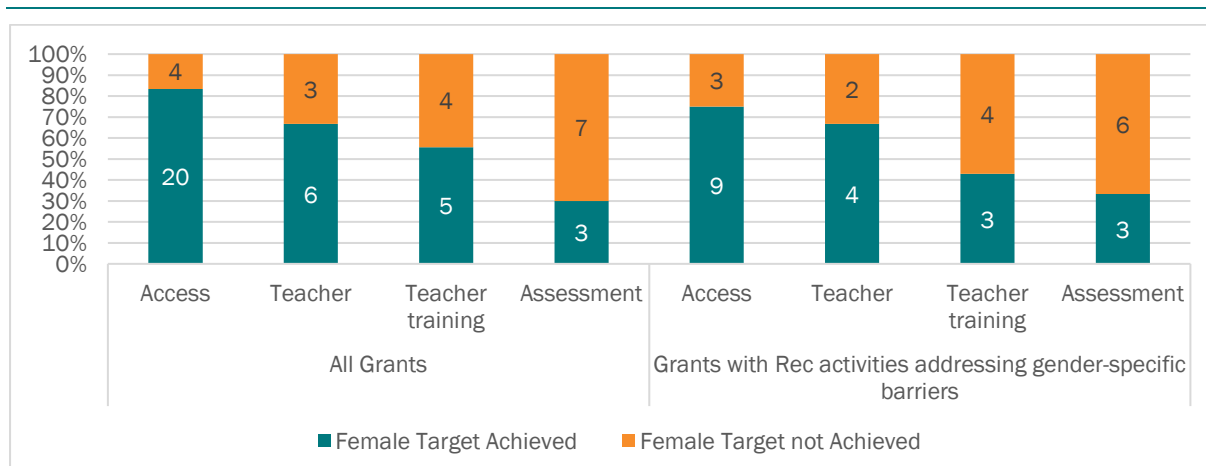
<sup>142</sup> As explained before according to Coding and Costing database dummy variable indicating if grant addressed gender-specific barrier under M&R and Recovery area.

Figure 28: Achievement of M&R indicators gender-specific endline targets overall and among AF grants with activities addressing gender barriers.<sup>143</sup>



Source: AF completion reports database, section "Core Indicators".

Figure 29: Achievement of Recovery indicators gender-specific endline targets overall and among AF grants with activities addressing gender barriers.<sup>144</sup>



Source: AF completion reports database, section "Core Indicators".

Data on effectiveness of activities was reported very poorly for vulnerable groups. Three indicators under M&R (CI 1, CI 2, CI 3) and two indicators under Recovery (CI 1 and CI 6) asked for the disaggregated data by household income groups, ethnicity, and disability. However, 15 to 27% of AF grants reporting on the above-mentioned indicators disaggregated data by disability, 0% to 7% by ethnicity, and 0 to 5% by household income.

We have explored and reported on potential challenges in data collection and disaggregation in the previous [section 4.3.3](#).

<sup>143</sup> The graph refers to all four core indicators under Mitigation and Response thematic areas which are the following: CI 1. Access – supporting children with distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs; CI 2 Enabling environment - providing children with access to school meal and nutrition programs and/or hygiene and sanitation kits; CI 3 Protection and well-being- providing children with access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure; CI 4 Teachers - training teachers in using distance learning methods and/or providing materials to support distance learning.

<sup>144</sup> The graph refers to four core indicators under Recovery thematic area which are the following: CI 1. Access – supporting the return of previously enrolled children in schools once the school system is reopened; CI 4 Teachers - Supporting the return of officials/teachers to school once the school system is reopened; CI 5 Teacher training - Training teachers to provide accelerated programs to mitigate learning loss during school closure; CI 6 Assessment - Learning assessment of children to evaluate learning loss during school closure.

***More information on the impact on the end users could be available if AF grants had conducted beneficiary assessments (on needs and results achieved) systematically.***

In theory, grants are more likely to have an impact if they are targeting the correct end users and if these end-users are asked for their views on potential activities/objectives at grant design stage, as well as their opinion on the results achieved. In practice, a total of 39% (26 out of 67) of AF grants conducted beneficiary assessments or investigated the potential for impact/requested opinion of the stakeholders about the performed activities through surveys.<sup>145</sup> Among grant agents reporting high levels of relevance, 53% (15 out of 28) had conducted beneficiary assessments, which suggests that grant agents were able to make the assessment based to some degree on beneficiary feedback, or that conducting assessments had improved grant activities' relevance.<sup>146</sup>

These beneficiary assessments generally focused on remote learning and training activities and on WASH interventions. Unfortunately, having a cross-country perspective between different topics of beneficiary assessment is challenging since the topic and the type of activities assessed as well as the respondents/surveyed people (students, schools, teachers, parents) varied greatly.

In 14 countries (out of 26) mixed feedback was reported from beneficiary assessments on remote learning activities, including learning programs diffused through radio, TV, internet, or pre-loaded devices. Feedback highlighted the usefulness, relevance, and high quality of the materials, with some caveats. For example, parents and caregivers in **Tonga** reported that the parent guide that they received was useful to support their children's home learning. Conversely, students in **Ghana** noted that TV and radio-diffused lessons were useful, but not personalized, while students in the **Maldives** found remote classes not engaging. In **Kiribati**, there were some discrepancies between the feedback of students, who reported high rates of satisfaction for radio lessons in terms of interest and usefulness, and their parents, who instead reported satisfaction to a much smaller extent (84% vs 51% for interest, 74% vs 40% for usefulness). Other common feedback, which has also been reported for printed materials, is that it might be hard to go through some of the materials without teacher support.

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<sup>145</sup> Nine AF grants reported not having performed beneficiary assessments, another 32 AF grants did not fill in this section of the completion reports "Activities linkage with outputs: Stakeholder Comments".

<sup>146</sup> It should be noted that 61% (41 out of 67) of countries either did not conduct beneficiary assessments or did not report on this section of relevant reports. Given that more than half of countries (16 out of 26) which conducted beneficiary assessment completed their AF Grant at the end Q3 /Q4 of 2022, it is possible that they had a longer period to include beneficiary assessments than the grants which closed earlier (e.g., in 2021 or Q1/Q2 of 2022). Across countries with an earlier closing date (2021 or Q1/Q2 of 2022), 20 countries did not conduct beneficiary assessment while 14 countries did.

## 4.5 Potential for Impact

This section explores whether GPE's COVID-19 grants supported the development of longer-term solutions and resilience building. We consider the following questions:

- **Building back better:** Did GPE support results in 'building-back-better' systems, such as longer-term technology solutions, to address learning gaps?
- **Systems resilience:** Did GPE support results in supporting systems to institutionalize response and preparedness in their planning and sector management?

In this section, we draw upon data from our country case studies, where possible looking across all three grants, with the addition of portfolio analysis to look at the most common types of activities planned to improve government capacity for resilience building.

### 4.5.1 Building back better

**Finding 9.** *GPE COVID-19 grants have the potential to support countries to 'build back better' through auxiliary uses of remote learning solutions and one-off capital investments to fund infrastructure and pilots. However, there is limited evidence on continued use or further development of remote learning solutions and infrastructure.*

 Moderate strength of evidence

**Remote learning solutions supported by GPE could have a positive legacy impact on access to and quality of learning after the pandemic.**

The AF grants enabled countries to invest in new remote learning materials and systems that could continue to provide children with access to education in the future. AF grant countries developed a range of digital and non-digital remote learning resources which included lessons delivered via television, radio or the internet; distribution of physical booklets and educational kits; and in some cases, the establishment of new integrated digital learning platforms. While these materials and systems were designed to cope with the COVID-19-related school closures, in many cases they remain available in the event of future disruptions to education.

In countries vulnerable to climatic disasters, governments report that the new learning materials and systems have supplemented and improved their disaster preparedness. **Tonga's** new multi-modal distance learning resources include a 'Home Schools Guide', audio and visual lessons, and home-based learning and support materials. They were developed to be reusable which, alongside training of teachers, means that the time and up-front cost to develop new material in response to future natural disasters is reduced, according to KfIs and the completion report. This has already been tested during an eruption of the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha'apai volcano and subsequent tsunamis in January 2022, where following damage to an undersea communications cable it was found that learning resources that didn't rely on digital connectivity were essential for a resilient schooling system. In **Federated States of Micronesia**, another state prone to natural disasters, the AF grant has enabled investment to support more resilient systems and processes to combat future emergencies, including satellite-based connectivity and improved disaster response plans.

In addition to preparedness for future disasters, improved remote learning materials also have the potential to help address chronic lack of access to education in some recipient countries. Satellite-based connectivity in the remote islands of **Federated States of Micronesia**, accompanied by the provision of laptops and installation of solar energy systems, could enable continued learning in the schools challenged by teacher shortages, remote location and shortage of resources. Meanwhile, **Côte d'Ivoire** reports that some students often miss out on learning due to non-emergency factors such as teacher absence, strikes or missing school infrastructure, or due to a lack of materials catering to their disability. This chronic lack of equitable access could begin to be addressed by their newly developed digital platform and the availability of learning materials in video or braille form. However, this depends on countries having and carrying out plans to update, keep producing and encourage the use of these learning materials. **Ethiopia**, for example, cancelled the distribution of home learning kits once in-school learning resumed, meaning that the long-term impact from those kits is uncertain.

In some countries, the digital platforms developed with AF grant funding could also provide valuable sources of data to inform future educational policy and investment. Where these platforms are funded and operated well, they should ensure that actionable insights are available for the effective governance of educational institutions. In an interview, a **Federated States of Micronesia** ministry of education official foresaw useful data collection from digital devices it distributed to its remote schools, helping governments identify areas for improvement. Elsewhere, in its completion report, **Ghana** envisages that the newly developed Edmodo LMS could offer “real-time data collection on key indicators like student attendance, teacher attendance, and availability of teaching and learning resources,” helping the government target support to learning. However, case study analysis revealed that a fully functional Edmodo is still under development, requiring substantial future funding, maintenance and awareness-raising activities. Initial uptake and utilization of Edmodo in Ghana was also relatively low, due to lack of ICT equipment and affordable connectivity. These challenges must be addressed in each relevant country for the potential of data on learning from these platforms to have any meaningful future impact.

***The training of teachers and administrators, enabled by the AF grant, has increased the institutional capacity of educators. In some cases, this improved capacity will have longer-term gains through spillover effects through the development of digital learning platforms or training manuals which can be applied to train further teachers.***

Several countries responded to the pandemic by training teachers in new resilience-focused pedagogical methods, such as curriculum design and lesson delivery via video or digital platform or providing children with socioemotional support. Better-trained teachers could provide more resilient and higher-quality teaching, and consequently remote learning could be delivered more effectively in the context of future disasters. Completion reports provide evidence that in **Ethiopia**, 300 staff were trained to use radios to support students’ remote learning, while in **Nicaragua**, school directors and teachers were trained to help deliver digital learning, alternative learning, and socioemotional programs. In **Bangladesh**, almost 2000 primary teachers were trained to conduct learning assessments and provide remedial education in the first ever such efforts in the country.

There is evidence to suggest these efforts could lead to long-term gains, through better trained teachers in the short-term or by supporting widespread training efforts in the future, enabled by new digital learning platforms established during the pandemic. As documented in completion reports, with the development of digital learning platforms, **Tonga**, **Ghana** and **Côte d’Ivoire** now plan to deliver targeted training of teachers and envisage a continuous improvement of education delivery. The training-the-trainers model used in **Ghana** has the potential to allow newly trained teachers to continue disseminating new knowledge to more colleagues. In **Bangladesh**, teacher training was accompanied by the development of new training manuals, which has further long-term impact for the system.

#### **Potential sustainable gains in teacher capacity in the Tonga**

As reported in the completion report, Tonga offered important reflections about the value of its HAMA eLearning Platform that goes beyond supporting the continuity of learning. HAMA also offers an opportunity to support teacher training to “develop more capable and flexible teachers who will have enhanced skills, enabling them to leapfrog, by using a range of technologies, towards modern pedagogies.” This work could be critical to support ongoing teacher development by empowering teachers to embrace and have better access to continuous professional development. Although the effects of this are yet to be seen, the additional purpose or use of the digital platform offers greater opportunities for sustainable outcomes.

Training was delivered to administrators as well as teachers, increasing the overall capacity of the education system to respond to crises. In **Democratic Republic of Congo**, for example, the capacity was built of over 500 provincial executives on several aspects of emergency education, including maintaining education standards, assessing humanitarian needs, risk-based planning and mainstreaming protection.

***The AF grant enabled countries to make one-off capital investments that could continue to benefit children and improve learning in the long term.***

The AF grants provided governments with new working capital for their education systems. This enabled governments to invest in new infrastructure or in the piloting of new projects that they had



not previously managed to prioritize. These investments (in the case of infrastructure) were one-off payments with minimal future running costs, except for the required maintenance, or (in the case of piloted projects) have the potential to scale up and provide significant benefit to student outcomes. They, therefore, could continue to positively impact learning in the long term, even though there is limited evidence on their current effectiveness.

The AF grants helped countries pilot new and innovative learning resources that have the potential to improve children's learning outcomes during non-remote classroom teaching. In some cases, these resources are being scaled up following positive feedback. In **Bangladesh**, physical learning packages consisting of play-based materials, exercise books and teacher guides were for the first time created and piloted, aiming to help deliver remote learning in hard-to-reach government primary schools that lacked connectivity. Positive feedback from schools documented in KIIIs and the completion report has led to the government looking into scaling up their provision for use as supplementary learning aids in classroom lessons. Television and radio lessons also continue to be broadcast to help post-COVID learning recovery, which interviewees stated could improve learning outcomes, suggesting lasting benefits from new methods. **Nicaragua's** completion report describes how the country developed and piloted a [digital tablet-based platform](#) for adaptive learning, targeted at vulnerable schools and providing pupils with individualized content to help them catch up on missed lessons, alongside new didactic workbooks. These have both played a role in increasing quality of education for students. Survey results indicate that the workbooks have significantly facilitated learning for students who attended classes irregularly during the pandemic.

One-off investments in WASH infrastructure could have a lasting impact on health and learning. With COVID-19 comprising a major health risk, countries invested in WASH. This comprised both consumable materials (e.g., masks and hand gel) and facilities and infrastructure (e.g., boreholes, water tanks and handwash stations). The latter are substantial investments that, especially if maintained, could have a lasting positive impact on the health of children, and consequently their learning, granted the necessary upkeep and maintenance are ensured for these physical assets. **Ethiopia**, for example, installed water tanks and handwashing facilities, reducing the cost of clean water in the long term and (according to one interviewee) already reducing absences of students due to common cold. Another interviewee commented that the WASH facilities and tanks will last for a long time with minimal maintenance. **Ghana** and **Côte d'Ivoire** likewise provided long-lasting WASH facilities to schools including boreholes and Veronica buckets to help with handwashing, with a Ghanaian ministry of education interviewee commenting that they are still in use in schools, a situation echoed in **Mozambique** where interviewees (both government and beneficiaries) said that WASH facilities were still present and in use. The **Federated States of Micronesia's** completion report documents its provision of 432 water drums and 13 water tanks to the remote island schools on Chhuk and Yap, meaning they could collect enough rainwater to make handwashing and other hygiene practices viable. The targeting of these supplies to remote islands also addresses equity imbalances.

#### 4.5.2 System resilience

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**Finding 10.** *Through relevance to country contexts, GPE COVID-19 grants offer partner countries the opportunity to build system resilience by offering the impetus and means to invest in building capacities and translating learnings into policy.*

  
**Moderate  
strength of  
evidence**

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**Governments are building from their experience of COVID-19 to institutionalize new policies and strategies, meaning lessons can be taken forward and used in future emergencies.**

Effective emergency remote learning has the potential to be implemented more quickly in the future because governments have learned from their experience of remote learning during COVID-19. One key theme is that several governments found that their early attempts to provide remote learning were limited in their reach, typically because of a mismatch between the level of tech required and the technical constraints that users experienced, often due to children not having internet access, internet-enabled devices or televisions. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, for example, radio-based learning was found to be far less popular than television, and both had low uptake in rural areas. The government therefore cancelled a plan to provide radios in rural areas, instead focusing on exercise booklets.

**Democratic Republic of Congo** noted that a lack of electrification and devices in some areas restricted the grant's ability to meet its electricity-reliant remote learning targets. On the other hand, the grant agent in **Ethiopia** reported that the new methods of radio- and television-based learning had proved highly useful, and follow-up research on **Bangladesh**'s system of sub-grants to local schools found that it had a great positive impact. This knowledge could lead to better remote learning provision in future crises. System-level changes can also be observed through institutionalized policies and strategies adopted at the national level. These include the design and adoption of education plans that comprise digital strategies and distance learning plans, such as in **Côte d'Ivoire**.

In the most positive cases, countries have used lessons learned from their COVID-19 emergency response and integrated them into new strategies and policies, meaning those lessons are more likely to have a long-term impact. **Democratic Republic of Congo** has taken evidence and learning from several aspects of its COVID-19 response (enabled by the AF grant) to feed into the development of a national education strategy for distance education. **Ghana**, meanwhile, is reviewing its 'ICT in Education' policy to support a framework for the further deployment of ICT in teaching and learning in Ghana. This should support the provision of digital devices for students, including data and child protection online. Similarly, **Côte d'Ivoire** is taking its lessons on remote learning to develop a National Distance Learning Strategy. In **Bangladesh**, it is anticipated that the use of remote learning in basic education will be included in the sustainability plan as part of its 'Primary Education Development Program IV', while a separate 'National Policy Framework for Blended Learning' is also being prepared.

## 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides conclusions and recommendations for each of the evaluation criteria, as well as a focus on gender and reporting processes, which emerged across our analysis.

### Relevance and Design - How well did GPE's COVID-19 related support meet the needs of partner countries to address the ongoing crisis?

GPE's COVID-19 support was viewed as relevant by country-level stakeholders and grant agents and corroborated through interviews with country-level stakeholders.

At the outset, all three GPE grant mechanisms were specially designed to address the pandemic and were appropriate to the fast-evolving pandemic conditions. The facilities were rolled out swiftly by leaning on GPE's existing accelerated funding approach, which combines support for rapid planning for crisis response with implementation funding aligned to the response plans. Grants were flexible and adaptable to countries' needs by allowing for many different activity types.

AF grants were perceived as supporting activities that directly addressed learning needs and were often able to align with MoE priorities despite the turbulent pandemic context. The grant screening process ensured relevance to ERPs and planning grant outputs and required LEG consultation on grant proposals. The emphasis on mitigation and recovery ensured that most activities proposed were explicitly linked to the pandemic rather than broader development interventions.

However, it is not clear if these processes ensured continued relevance of AF grant activities as the pandemic conditions evolved. Fifty-eight percent (39 out of 67) AF grants were granted major revisions, which mostly involved timelines and budget extensions. But only six revisions were for activity scope, despite the flexibility offered for the AF grants, and mostly due to changing MoE priorities rather than to substantive changes to conditions on the ground. This suggests that the grant activities may not have been sufficiently adapted to rapidly changing conditions in-country, including unanticipated lockdowns or early ends to school closures.

The grant screening process ensured AF grants' relevance to education needs but did not consistently ensure they were appropriate to countries' technological capabilities. Similarly, even though the screening process checked for equity, gender, and vulnerable groups, it is not clear whether all AF grants strategically responded to the most urgent needs of these groups at the design stage and during implementation.

For instance, some grants only partially addressed the needs of vulnerable groups, including girls, even when needs, such as the increasing risk of gender-based violence, were identified in response plans, possibly because grant screening processes did not consistently ensure that these needs were addressed.

The planning grant quickly and successfully targeted the countries that needed support to address the onset of the pandemic and helped countries develop comprehensive COVID-19 responses with the potential to be financed by AF grants and other donors. This menu of activities offered by the grant ensured that it was relevant and flexible to a range of contexts and country needs.

The global grant was not explicitly designed with mechanisms to ensure coherence with country-level needs, although reallocations took place during implementation for certain grant outputs (e.g., edtech toolkits) to meet increasing demand from countries for such public goods.

At the time of the design and initial roll-out of GPE's support, most GPE partner countries were either beginning lockdowns and school closures or contemplating them. The conventional wisdom at that time was to attempt to sustain schooling through remote learning solutions. However, some AF grant activities that leaned on technology were not appropriate to countries' technological capabilities, especially for low-income countries.

#### Lessons and recommendations

1. Given the limited evidence available, and in light of using 'revisions' as a proxy for adaptability, it is difficult to say whether the grants did not adapt sufficiently to changing circumstances during the COVID pandemic. We also consider that not all grants may have needed to adapt. **In future emergencies, mechanisms need to be in place to encourage grant agents to use the flexibility of**

**grant mechanisms to ensure continued relevance of activities to changing contexts and based on emerging evidence.** In emergencies, grantees would also need support and steer in focusing on a small set of manageable objectives, and striking a balance between simpler, evidence-based activities such as protection and well-being, and more experimental interventions such as those regarding remote learning.

2. The requirement to address vulnerable groups could have been linked to a more stringent and quantifiable granting criterion, although this may have been hard to implement in such a short timeframe. **Future emergency responses could adopt a similar screening process, while creating clearer requirements for targeting vulnerable groups, including girls.**
3. Solutions leveraging existing technological capabilities were not necessarily grounded in what was actually feasible or was not well known at the time. Granting opportunities need to match technological capabilities, perhaps by limiting opportunities to use technology-dependent interventions to specific circumstances where the corresponding technologies are widely accessible or there are feasible plans to make these readily available. A further question is whether GPE should encourage distance learning solutions in the future. There were some instances of success and there is evidence that even grants that did not reach targets laid the groundwork for future response efforts by contributing to digital platforms and skills development. However, emerging global evidence on remote learning suggests that it may be ineffective and exacerbate inequalities even when implemented well. **The GPE Secretariat should formulate an approach based on growing evidence in this area on how technology could be deployed for continued learning given varying technology capacity in countries and their aspirations for leveraging technology.**

### **Coherence - Did GPE's support fit well within the COVID-19 national and international aid ecosystems?**

The scale and urgency of the responses required at the start of the pandemic was such that there was a risk of duplication across actors supporting the response to the learning crisis and, at the same time, an opportunity for synergies. There was also a risk of lack of coordination between GPE's grant mechanisms, which covered different priorities and were managed by different grant agents.

The three grants fed into each other only partially and with some flexibility. The AF grants were to be based on the response plan, which was supported by the planning grant. The global grant was to generate knowledge to fill knowledge gaps at the country level but was not necessarily aligned with the AF grants per se. For instance, in both Ghana and Ethiopia, where ERPs had already been developed shortly after school closures, planning grant funding was used to launch activities under the AF grant instead.

At the start of the pandemic, it was clear that country-level stakeholders needed to rally around national ERPs to optimize their efforts. There is some evidence that the planning grant allowed countries to do so, with countries with the most humanitarian coordination experience benefiting the most.

There is some evidence that the global grant did not build on the AF grant and the planning grant. While the global grant was not required to be coherent with country-level AF grant interventions, AF grant documents offered insights into the knowledge needs of countries. We did not find any evidence that the global grant built on these insights. This was a significant missed opportunity to address cross-country needs identified from the AF and planning grants through the global grant.

### **Efficiency - Was good stewardship of resources ensured in the management of GPE's COVID-19 support?**

GPE's COVID-19 support was viewed by AF grant agents as having been carried out efficiently, despite the very unusual pandemic circumstances and the novelty of the unfamiliar granting application, management, and reporting procedures.

Grant submissions and approvals times were fast, due to rapid grant screening processes and the delegation of approval authority to the Secretariat. Speed was further enabled by innovative processes, including the decision to adopt a first-come-first-served approach in the early months, but constrained by Secretariat capacity gaps during peaks in applications.

Stakeholders interviewed at the country level often highlighted how having previous humanitarian response experience allowed them to mobilize swiftly. The start of implementation was timely and fast for almost all AF grants, and AF grants that started slower tended to be larger, pooled and in fragile contexts, with many of them struggling with a lack of government engagement. Causes of grant start delays included organizational and bureaucratic challenges and, for the slowest starters, grant agent struggles in engaging with government. The challenges then came once the grants were underway, but the Secretariat was generally able to provide support through continuous engagement at the country level.

Grants tended to underutilize funds when they were focusing on more goals, suggesting that level of ambition at design stage may have been an issue.

Many countries, fragile ones in particular, struggled with implementation issues including slow approvals and procurement and various pandemic circumstances. There is limited systematic evidence on how these were addressed, though most solutions appear to have adopted stronger and more flexible management practices around planning and procurement. Shortcomings in managing the grants were driven by capacity issues and lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities among grant agents and relevant government bodies. Financial management was fundamentally sound, however.

This was the first time GPE grant agents reported using a shared standard. Despite this noteworthy attempt at formalizing reporting and the fact that indeed, progress data were reported by grant agents during implementation and some beneficiary assessments were conducted, grant monitoring faced several shortcomings. The M&E guidelines were not consistently implemented, and AF grant reports may not have been sufficiently quality assured to ensure they addressed the questions appropriately. There were several issues including inconsistent efficiency, effectiveness and relevance ratings, few evaluations and beneficiary assessments, and varying interpretations of reporting terminology. More importantly, it is not clear whether reporting contributed to results-based management being implemented by grant agents or greater accountability.

### **Lessons and recommendations**

4. For all three grants, COVID-19 grant proposal submissions and approvals times were unprecedented, despite strained GPE Secretariat capacity. However, some grants were slow to begin implementation. **GPE could consider developing a “ready to roll” contingency plan and standard operating procedure, should it be needed for future emergencies. This approach should consider a) the need to balance the high speed achieved through the AF grant approval processes with the need for sufficient quality assurance; b) providing additional technical support to countries facing the harshest circumstances.**

### **Effectiveness - Did the COVID-19 grants meet their objectives and achieve results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?**

Grantees’ assessments of the planning grant’s efficacy were high overall, despite reported procurement, infrastructure, and data collection challenges in some countries. However, for the AF grant, effectiveness ratings were lower than those for efficiency and relevance, with success driven by holistic activity planning and successful stakeholder engagement, and with increased challenges encountered in fragile contexts.

Although most grants’ end targets were met, some activities were more effective in reaching their targets than others. That said, learnings on effectiveness are hampered by the lack of data on the last mile of delivery. This is mostly limited to poor quality evidence in completion reports, which appear to have been only lightly quality assured.

There were some well-documented successes during lockdowns, with AF grants highly successful in reaching protection and well-being-focused targets and reaching more girls than expected. Targets with respect to protection and well-being, both under mitigation and response as well as recovery, were more likely to be met. Similarly, grants also had greater success ensuring students returned to schools after closures, during the recovery phase, thanks to back-to-school campaigns and other initiatives. Once schools reopened, however, reporting data indicates that grants struggled to support schools in conducting learning assessments, for girls especially, possibly due to inadequate institutional capacity.

Certain activities suffered many of the same setbacks as other organizations attempting to tackle the pandemic's learning crisis. Activities related to teacher training and learning assessments after school closures were the least likely to meet their targets compared to other the more successful activities mentioned above. Although guaranteeing access to education through distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs was the key focus of the AF grants, endline targets related to access to education during lockdowns were met in 65% (29 out of 45) of grants focusing on activities related to distance or home-based learning programs, irrespective of previous experience of school closures. Since these activities were introduced, the global evidence base has consistently highlighted how challenging it is to implement this work and how ineffective it is in improving or maintaining learning outcomes. Most partner countries' lack of experience with school closures and remote learning on this scale was an obvious challenge as well, with the few countries who had similar experiences already because of the Ebola crisis struggling the least. Ease in implementation did not necessarily mean equitable outcomes though. For example, in Ghana, the uptake of newly launched remote learning modalities was higher in urban areas and in private school settings. This points more broadly to the well-documented unequitable effects of remote learning.

The success of AF grants seeking to support learning during school closures seemed to depend on the unpredictable duration of school closures themselves. In countries with longer school closures, grants were likelier to meet targets in terms of training teachers on remote learning methods and providing learning materials. However, case study evidence does not clearly explain how this ultimately impacted learning outcomes.

Many AF grants served to support learning management systems and portals aiming to facilitate remote learning. Learning platforms and portals were also an important part of the global grant, but their impact in this area was unclear at best. While case study evidence is thin in this regard, the global evidence base is consistent on how hard these cross-national interventions are to be carried out in practice in low-income countries especially.

A goal for the AF grants was that interventions reach and be useful to end users. Whether this was the case is hard to say, as only one-third of grants included beneficiary assessments (on needs and results). In the few cases when they did, assessments suggested relevance of the remote learning activities but also that these could have been tackled more effectively.

The grants appear to have supported deployment of some mostly digital innovative practices to ensure continued learning during the pandemic, though their reach is unclear, and none appeared to explicitly target vulnerable groups including girls. While case study analysis uncovered some evidence of innovative digitization (including the *development* of learning portals) among AF and global grants and successful development of self-powered learning appliances, evidence that these were effectively delivered and contributed to learning is anecdotal.

### **Lessons and recommendations**

5. Available evidence suggests many struggles with guaranteeing continued access to learning that were not unique to GPE's support. Indeed, the solutions promoted by GPE's support (in particular in low-/medium-/high-tech remote learning solutions) were the received wisdom at the time and had to be decided on in extreme haste. However, **future grant mechanisms (whether under emergency circumstances or not) should encourage grant agents to track whether interventions are reaching beneficiaries.**

Generally, given the uniqueness of the circumstances, it is important that findings on effectiveness not be interpreted only through an accountability lens but also as the emerging results of a truly unprecedented global experiment.

### **Potential for Impact - What is the (potential for) impact of the COVID-19 grants?**

The experimental nature of pandemic interventions may enhance their potential for impact: countries explored new solutions which, regardless of their use during the pandemic, may have contributed to new ideas that may prove impactful in the long run. For instance, in Federated States of Micronesia, the AF grant investment was used to enhance satellite-based connectivity for future disaster response. Countries adopted some best-practice solutions to remediate learning losses. They demonstrated potential to help countries build back better through the auxiliary use of remote learning solutions and one-off capital investments to fund infrastructure and pilots.

Case studies indicate that cooperation and coordination mechanisms were enhanced across the different national and regional/state-level stakeholders as well as among donors. Strategies and plans adopted and approved for crises management may equip teachers, schools, education managers as well as state and national-level policymakers to deploy the necessary response fast and efficiently in future. The infrastructure developed could enable implementing response plans in the future more efficiently.

However, there is not enough evidence to say whether the AF grants generated a potential for future learning or built system resilience. The long-term impact of the global grant is also unclear, given the lack of evidence.

### **Lessons and recommendations**

6. The urgency with which grants were designed and rolled out means that long-term resilience building could not be planned deliberately. **GPE should explore how its regular operations can support system resilience in GPE partner countries to prepare for future emergencies.**

### **Gender and vulnerable groups**

The quality assurance checklist included a requirement for countries to identify and address gender-specific barriers to education. Thus, during the design phase, all grants included some level of activity that addressed the needs of girls and other vulnerable groups.

However, during grant implementation, results related to girls and other disadvantaged groups were not always tracked, AF grants did not always report on gender-specific targets, and beneficiary assessments for these groups were rarely conducted. When grants did report on gender targets, however, these were equally likely to be met as other non-gender related targets, apart from some exceptions on poor performance on distance learning access, teacher training on distance learning, and learning assessment activities.

Data indicating the effectiveness of activities for other vulnerable groups besides girls was severely lacking. When it comes to disability disaggregation, only 15 to 27% of AF grants provided this data. Unfortunately, for ethnicity and household income, data disaggregation was even more scarce.

### **Reporting**

The monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes emphasized flexibility, which was essential to ensuring timely roll-out and visibility over a very diverse set of activities but may have been at the expense of accountability and learning.

The implementation of M&E frameworks and guidelines did not yield sufficiently complete and reliable data (mainly with regards to the utilization data and self-assessment ratings for relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness), likely due to insufficient quality assurance of completion reports (not only in terms of the quantitative data provided, but also the completeness and depth of the accompanying narratives, especially, the provision of explanations of successes and bottlenecks experienced during implementation). Several countries did not submit completion reports in GPE format which significantly decreased and made sample size vary for different indicators and other types of analysis (relevance, efficiency and effectiveness ratings, beneficiary assessment, costs etc.).

Similarly, there was no clear definition of fund utilization, so grant agents used their own definitions when reporting these data to the GPE Secretariat. There was also no clear definition of the activities that could be considered “innovation”, which made it difficult to gather consistent data on this question.

At the same time, if on the one hand, more rigorous reporting is needed, it is important to note that many stakeholders expressed concern about the frequency of reporting. This highlights the delicate balance needed between thorough, quality reports and usefulness/actual use of the evidence collected, especially when the resources for these types of M&E activities are limited.

### **Lessons and recommendations**

7. It is possible that there is a trade-off between frequency and rigor of reporting. Reporting less often might free up more grant agent resources to investigate findings and back them up with

stronger secondary and qualitative evidence. A more standardized and thorough reporting process which is less frequent could help to ensure consistency and completeness. **Greater Secretariat oversight of progress and completion reports (in addition to the use of evidence throughout implementation), to ensure that the reports comply with M&E guidelines and the data presented is complete, can help improve the quality of reporting.** On the other hand, less frequent reporting may make it harder to obtain data in a timely fashion to support evidence-based decision making.

8. Grant agent assessment data was found to be broadly unreliable, mainly with regards to the ratings on relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness and utilization data, but the former was still useful as a sense-check and to allow grant agents to express their views. **Improved guiding questions, checklists and definitions could be featured in grant reporting guidelines to ensure a more grounded assessment.**
9. For global/cross-national grants producing knowledge goods, concerns with reporting data might be easily met if **visualization and download data were required for completion reports and regular monitoring.**

### **Cross-cutting recommendation**

10. GPE's COVID-19 support was the partnership's first foray into large-scale humanitarian response. An overarching recommendation is therefore to **explore the extent to which this should become an institutionalized, core component of GPE's work in the context of potential future emergencies.**



# Annexes

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## Annex 1. Detailed Evaluation Matrix

Notes:

- For each sub-question, country examples and quotes from partners will be provided as illustrations, applicable to AF grants (AFG), global grants (GG), and planning grants (PG).
- Qualitative evidence from grant completion reports’ lessons learned and recommendations; delays at the start and during implementation; factors that facilitated and hindered implementation (applicable to AFG, GG); and challenges during implementation (PG) will be harvested and presented consistently in the report.
- Underlying causes for specific patterns and events (the “why”) will be systematically explained in the report.

	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
1. Relevance & Design	1.1 How well did GPE’s COVID-19-related support meet the needs of partner countries to address the ongoing crisis?	<b>Overall suitability of GPE support</b> 1.1a: Did the <u>design</u> of GPE COVID-19-related grants (and the three grant mechanisms themselves) prove to be suitable to countries/end users’ priorities, needs, and capacity levels to rapidly respond to and recover from the crisis? (AFG, GG, PG)	The design of COVID-19-related grants addressed partner countries’ priorities (AFG, GG, PG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence of GPE support from desk review and KIIs helping address country priorities, including the ones related to gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups (AFG, GG, PG)  Qualitative evidence from grant applications referring to priorities outlined in emergency plans (aligned with emergency plans), including priorities related to gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups (AFG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS KIIs with CTL, GA, CA, MoE</li> <li>• Grant applications (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Emergency plans (for each country)</li> </ul>
			The design of COVID-19 related grants addressed partner countries’ needs in developing emergency response plans and interventions/solutions, especially those related to gender quality/girls and vulnerable groups (AFG, GG, PG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIIs of GPE support helping address country needs, including the ones related to gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups (AFG, GG, PG)  Qualitative evidence from grant applications referring to emergency plans (aligned with emergency plans), including countries’ needs, especially those needs related to gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups (AFG, GG, PG)  Consistent qualitative evidence from CS grant design documentation and KIIs that COVID-19 response interventions intentionally identified and addressed intersectional, pre-existing power structures, gender roles and stereotypes (AFG, GG, PG)  Consistent case study evidence that GG support tools encouraged the development of knowledge outputs addressing issues related to gender or vulnerable groups (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIIs with CTL, GA, CA, MoE</li> <li>• Grant applications (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Emergency plans (for each country)</li> <li>• GPE grant design documentation (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
			PA	<p>% of grants where stakeholders stated that the activities and outputs funded by the grant met their needs as coded by qualitative evidence from completion reports (AFG)</p> <p>% of countries taking measures to address targeted needs of girls, boys and vulnerable groups in specific activities supported by the planning grant (PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion reports (AFG, PG)</li> <li>• Completion report database (AFG)</li> </ul>
		The design of COVID-19-related grants addressed partner countries' capacity levels (AFG, PG)	CS	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from CS desk review and KIs that proposals included assessment of country capacities and that proposed grant interventions were tailored to varied levels of capacity at country level (AFG, PG)</p> <p>Consistent qualitative evidence from grant proposals that the design of activities was aligned with countries' capacity levels (AFG)</p> <p>Consistent qualitative evidence of countries with equal or improved capacity of designing and managing COVID response, including gender response (AFG, PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIs with GPE Secretariat, CTLs, GA, CA</li> <li>• Desk review of Board documentation on COVID-19 support and other documentation assessing country capacity to a certain extent (such as guidelines for COVID-19 AFG window) to determine to what extent country capacity was factored into GPE's support design and implementation (AFG, PG)</li> <li>• Grant applications (AFG, PG)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Continued relevance of GPE support</b></p> <p>1.1b: How successful was GPE in ensuring that its <u>instruments of support and mechanisms remain continuously appropriate</u> and valuable with regards to their modality, focus, amount, processes, etc. given changing COVID-19 contexts/emerging needs throughout and beyond the pandemic? (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	Adaptive capacity of GPE instruments and mechanisms ensured continued relevance of support throughout the pandemic (AFG, GG, PG)	CS	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from CS documentation and KIs of GPE support (financial and non-financial) being flexible enough to meet emerging needs, especially of girls and vulnerable groups/in terms of gender equality (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Consistent qualitative evidence based on a review of grant revisions and variations in the timeline, workplan, budgeting and scope (including addressing gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups) (AFG, GG, PG) to assess GPE's adaptability to ensure continued relevance</p> <p>Qualitative evidence on the level of relevance of the activities supported by PG (PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIs with GPE Secretariat, CTLs, GAs, CAs, MoE</li> <li>• Grant applications (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Requests for extensions and related Secretariat checklists (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Completion reports (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
			PA	<p>Most common types of minor/major revisions as coded per descriptive section on revision from completion reports (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Average number of revisions per grant (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of grants which assessed continued relevance of grant activities to country needs as "High", "Substantial", "Modest" or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion reports (sections on relevance and its qualifying comment, delays and revisions) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>• Requests for extensions where relevant (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Completion report (section I.2 Regional initiatives to benefit all countries, i.e., levels of relevance of supported initiatives) (PG)</li> </ul>

	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
					“Negligible” compared to weighted assessment of corresponding qualifying comments (AFG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison with KIIs will inform as to whether adaptation mechanisms were put in place and sustained during the implementation and the level of satisfaction with these mechanisms</li> </ul>
2. Coherence	2.1 Did GPE’s support fit well within the COVID national and international aid ecosystems?	<b>Coordination of efforts</b> 2.1a: Did GPE support help countries coordinate the overall response and rally and harmonize donors under a common national response plan, especially in weaker environments? (AFG, GG, PG)	GPE support rallied partners around national emergency plans (AFG, GG, PG)  GPE grant interventions were harmonized with other agencies/donors’ COVID-19 support and activities at country level (and regional/global levels where relevant) (AFG, GG, PG)  GG leveraged complementary support from global and regional partner ecosystems (GG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence from CS documentation and KIIs on COVID-19 grants and other support (i) rallying partners around the emergency plans and (ii) being harmonized with other COVID-19 support at country level or regional/global ecosystems and leveraging complementary support (if relevant) (AFG, GG, PG)  Consistent qualitative evidence from CS documentation and KIIs and evidence of collaboration between partners in grant completion report, including in areas addressing the learning crisis of girls and vulnerable groups (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIIs with GPE Secretariat, GA, CA, MoE</li> <li>Secondary literature review on other ongoing programs to determine level of alignment and non-duplication of efforts (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
				PA	% of grants with evidence on mobilization of complementary support from other sources (AFG, GG, PG)  Qualitative evidence of activities for/in which complementary support was applied (AFG, GG, PG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion reports relevant sections (partnerships, private sector, foundations, financial/in-kind) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>Completion report (section on Funding) (PG)</li> </ul>
3. Efficiency	3.1 Was good stewardship of resources ensured in the management of GPE’s COVID-19 support?	<b>Overall efficiency</b> 3.1a: To what extent were grant processes implemented in a timely manner and were the costs reasonable for the outputs/outcomes achieved? (AFG, GG)	Grant processes were implemented in a timely manner (AFG, GG)  Grant resources (inputs) translated into outputs or intermediate results (AFG, GG)	PA	% of grants which assessed overall efficiency as “High”, “Substantial”, “Modest” or “Negligible” compared to weighted assessment of corresponding qualifying comments (AFG, GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion reports (overall efficiency sections and their qualifying comments) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>Completion reports database (AFG)</li> </ul>
		<b>Timeliness</b> 3.1b: How timely was GPE to set up its support at the beginning of the pandemic and to mobilize	GPE response (design, set up, allocation and approval for grants) to the pandemic was timely (AFG, GG, PG)	PA	Number of days taken from:  Application to approval (AFG, GG, PG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report of the meeting of the Board of Directors on GPE COVID-19 response (Timeline of implementation, ANNEX A: Next Phase of GPE’s COVID-19 Response) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>COVID-19 AF Grant Timeline Tracker (expected application date, date application was</li> </ul>

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
	it throughout? (AFG, GG, PG)	Release of GPE grant funds was timely throughout the pandemic (AFG)		<p>Expected application date (set by GPE) and actual application date (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Grant approval and the release of funds to designated grant throughout the pandemic (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Grant approval to the start of implementation of activities (AFG)</p> <p>(To be benchmarked against typical timing for other GPE grants)</p>	<p>received, reviewed, days from application review to submitted to CEO, days from application to approval etc.) (AFG, GG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GPE Grant Implementation database (detailing delay in approval and signing of the grant application; estimated and actual grant start date; original, expected and actual grand closing date) (AFG)</li> <li>Grant application (if data is not available in the databases, mainly for PG) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Use of grant funds</b></p> <p>3.1c: How timely were disbursed funds used by grant agents throughout the implementation of the grant? (AFG, GG)</p>	<p>Disbursed funds were used consistently with the timeline of grant implementation</p> <p>("grant implementation on/off track"), with minimal effects on eventual achievements by grant close (AFG, GG)</p> <p>Off-track grants outlined and addressed the reasons for delays and factors that hindered implementation (AFG)</p>	PA	<p>% of grants on and off track in terms of fund use halfway through implementation and at its final stage (disaggregated by region, income, fragility status, grant agents and others if relevant) (AFG)</p> <p>% of off-track grants in terms of fund use requesting revisions, and/or with unspent funds by grant close (AFG)</p> <p>Variance in fund use timing throughout GG grant implementation (GG)</p> <p>For off-track grants, the above indicators will be cross tabulated with the frequency of revisions, reasons for delays and efficacy ratings, as coded by the evaluation team (AFG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historical use data for COVID-19 AFGs (AFG)</li> <li>Completion reports (factors that hindered implementation, delays at start and during implementation) (AFG)</li> <li>Periodic surveys (budget use) (GG)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Implementation issues</b></p> <p>3.1d: Did the grants suffer any bottlenecks in terms of implementation and how well were these remediated? (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>Grant implementation bottlenecks were identified (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Grant implementation bottlenecks were adequately and successfully addressed (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>PA</p>	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from Secretariat documentation and KIIs on existing or emerged bottlenecks during implementation that are being addressed, the adequacy of actions deployed to remediate inhibiting factors, and their relative degree of success (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of grants that requested extensions, restructuring and average number of extensions/restructurings requested – comprised under "major and minor" revisions (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIIs with GPE Secretariat GAs, CAs, MoE</li> <li>Report meeting of the Board of Directors on GPE COVID-19 response (Timeline of implementation, ANNEX A: Next Phase of GPE's COVID-19 Response), lessons learned, and situation reports (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>PA evidence of the emerged bottlenecks will be used to analyze the ways of dealing with them through KII (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>Completion reports (section on delays, factors that hindered/facilitated implementation, lessons learned, recommendations) (AFG, GG), challenges encountered during implementation (PG)</li> <li>Monitoring surveys (GG)_</li> </ul>

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion report database (AFG)</li> <li>• Data from R&amp;P team on grant delays/progress</li> <li>• Extension requests (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Management</b></p> <p>3.1e: Did GPE's instruments and grant agent's COVID-19 practices support sound intervention management to ensure adequate stewardship of resources and successful partnering? (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>Division of roles and responsibilities at country level was well defined (AFG, PG, GG case studies)</p> <p>GAs and country-level actors managed GPE's financial support efficiently (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Grant interventions were steered through results-based management and monitoring (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>PA</p>	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs that: (i) set-up reporting procedures have improved countries' ability to mobilize/manage GPE's support; (ii) roles and responsibilities at country level were well defined and contributed to smooth implementation of activities; (iii) completion report and Core Indicators templates have allowed reflection and unfolding of main grants results; and (iv) learning from monitoring evidence took place and contributed to implementation success (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of countries that reported misuse of funds, and, among those, % misused funds to the total grant amount (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of countries filling in/submitting all periodic surveys (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of countries submitting full completion reports with the Annex of Results Framework and Core Indicators table (AFG)</p> <p>Qualitative evidence from progress surveys and completion reports that stakeholders used monitoring evidence for course correction (AFG, GG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIs with CTLs, GAs, CAs, MoE and implementing partners</li> <li>• Templates for completion reports and Core Indicators templates for all types of grants to identify if they allowed for grants results to unfold well and clearly (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>• Completion reports database (sections on misuse of funds) (AFG)</li> <li>• Completion reports (sections on misuse of funds) (AFG, PG, GG)</li> <li>• COVID-19 AFG Grant Tracker on Progress Surveys (AFG)</li> <li>• Overview of GPE questions from tracker survey (based on the data submitted from UNICEF country offices between April 27 and August 25, 2020) (PG)</li> <li>• Periodic surveys (AFG, GG)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Dialogue</b></p> <p>3.1f: Did GPE's convening power and COVID-19 support help improve inclusive sectoral and cross-sectoral dialogue at country/global levels around pandemic-related</p>	<p>GPE's global and country-level responses to COVID-19 were convened through an inclusive consultative process (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>CS</p>	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs with GA on increased, improved stakeholder engagement thanks to GPE support, especially across sectors, with ministry of finance, decentralized entities, local communities and lesser-included and vulnerable groups (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Qualitative evidence on how inclusive dialogue over planning/response process improved crises response and country ownership (PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KIs/FGDs with CTLs, GA, CA, MoE, implementing partners and end-user representatives</li> <li>• Completion reports (private sector engagement) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>• Completion report (I.3. Strategic collaboration and partnerships leveraged) (PG)</li> </ul>

	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
		needs and strategies? (AFG, GG, PG)  <i>(Country governments, national/subnational, local education groups, emergency clusters, civil society organizations, teacher associations)</i>		PA	% of grants which indicated use of the private sector partnership for planning and design of grant activities (not only for implementation of activities) (AFG)  % of knowledge products planned/designed in consultations with country stakeholders (GG)  % of countries that reported consultations with private sector or cross-sectoral country-level stakeholders (PG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion reports (private sector engagement) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>Completion report (I.3. Strategic collaboration and partnerships leveraged) (PG)</li> </ul>
		<b>Costs</b> 3.1g: What were the costs and value for money of the interventions that the grants supported? (AFG, GG)  NB. Not relevant for PG as there is no cost per output defined	Reasonable unit costs for interventions and services delivered (AFG)  Cost sharing between GPE and GG consortium was efficient (GG)	PA	A range, an average of dollar value cost for interventions, disaggregated by themes (AFG)  % unit costs meeting or exceeding relevant benchmarks, disaggregated across intervention types/themes and contexts (AFG, GG)  Number of end users reached per dollar spent under each theme disaggregated by gender (AFG, GG)  Qualitative assessment of the extent to which costs sharing was efficient for the outputs/outcomes achieved (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion report database (II.2 Efficiency, core indicators) (AFG)</li> <li>Coding and costing database (activities and their costs under different themes of mitigation and recovery) compared with results framework or core indicators endline targets (AFG)</li> <li>Grant completion reports (II.2 Efficiency) and end-of-grant budget use (GG)</li> </ul>
4. Effectiveness	4.1 Did the COVID-19 grants meet their objectives and achieved results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?	<b>Overall efficacy</b> 4.1a: To what extent did the grants meet their planned objectives, including at country level and for gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups? (AFG, GG, PG)	COVID-19 grants achieved their planned objectives (AFG, GG, PG)  Mitigation and recovery-focused core indicators achieved their endline targets (AFG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIIs (including secondary data and end-user consultations) of service delivery outputs achieved and country-level results achieved, particularly on gender equality or reaching girls and other vulnerable groups – and whether these were expected or unexpected (AFG, GG, PG)  Consolidated high-level results matrix for GG outputs (objectives and activities targeting girls and vulnerable groups) (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIIs/FGDs with CTL, GA, CA, MoE, implementing partners and end-user representatives</li> <li>Periodic surveys and grant completion reports (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
		4.1b: Were there any differential effects and results of the grants with respect to vulnerable groups and particularly girls within those groups? (AFG, GG, PG)  4.1c: What was the distribution of grant objectives under each	Outputs from the GG were made available to countries (GG)	PA	% of grants which assessed overall efficacy of the grant as “High”, “Substantial”, “Modest” or “Negligible” compared to weighted assessment of corresponding qualifying comments (AFG, GG)  % of grants with planned components on “System resilience and reopening”, “Learning” and “Equity” under mitigation and recovery + absolute/% grant costs per theme (AFG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coding/costing database (AFG)</li> <li>Completion reports database (AFG)</li> <li>Completion reports (different sections depending on the grant – results frameworks, core indicators, sections on factors that hindered/facilitated implementation, challenges during implementation, objectives and activities targeting girls and vulnerable groups, section on gender-responsive and equity-focused country COVID-19 response</li> </ul>

	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
		<p>theme (“System resilience and reopening”, “Learning” and “Equity”) under mitigation and recovery in absolute number and in terms of costs per theme? (AFG)</p> <p>4.1d: How effective were grants in achieving thematic indicators endline targets under each theme (“System resilience and reopening”, “Learning” and “Equity”) under mitigation and recovery? (AFG)</p>			<p>% of grants with core indicators on “System resilience and reopening”, “Learning” and “Equity” etc. under mitigation and recovery which achieved their endline targets (AFG)</p> <p>% differences in grant indicator actuals data vs baseline targets, disaggregated by thematic areas, delays incurred during implementation, etc. (AFG)</p> <p>% of countries which fully met, partially met or did not meet their objective for the specific activities (PG)</p>	<p>plans, and grant implementation assessment) (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Periodic surveys if relevant (GG)</li> </ul>
		<p><b>Innovation and scaling-up</b></p> <p>4.1e: Which innovative practices were piloted, and with what level of success? (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>COVID-19 grant supported deployment of innovative practices to ensure continued learning during the pandemic, especially those specifically beneficial for vulnerable groups, girls and gender equality (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Innovative practices piloted have the potential for scaling-up (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>PA</p>	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs of innovative practices (in context) for continuing learning during the pandemic (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs on the level of success and the potential for scaling-up of the piloted innovative practices (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>% of grants that have mentioned innovative practices adopted/implemented/used with GPE’s support, especially those that benefited gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups in their completion reports (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons learned and success stories (AFG)</li> <li>• External evaluation reports (AFG)</li> <li>• KIs with CTLs, GA, CA, implementing partners, MoEs and end users</li> <li>• Completion reports (lessons learned section on innovations) (AFG, GG)</li> <li>• Completion reports database objectives and core indicators (AFG)</li> <li>• Completion report (any mention of innovation) (PG)</li> </ul>
	5. Impact (potential)	5.1 What is the (potential for) impact of the COVID-19 grants?	<p><b>Overall impact on beneficiaries</b></p> <p>5.1a: To what extent are end users able to face</p>	<p>End users, including girls and vulnerable groups, are better equipped to continue</p>	CS	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs that end users make use of new learning methods and innovations to ensure continuation of their education (AFG, GG, PG)</p>



Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
	the pandemic/other crises ensuring continuation of their education? (AFG, GG, PG)	their education (AFG, GG, PG)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary literature review (country-level policy documentation, sector plans and organizational establishment) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
		GG outputs are being used by relevant stakeholders beyond the pandemic (GG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs that MoEs and other institutions use outputs at country and regional level (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIs with GPE Secretariat, GA, MoE</li> </ul>
			PA	Number of end users accessing outputs (disaggregated data) (GG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion report (GG)</li> <li>Download and visualization data for GG learning outputs (to be provided by GAs) to determine if and how GG outputs were embedded in emergency response (GG)</li> <li>Periodic surveys if relevant (GG)</li> </ul>
	<b>Building back better</b> 5.1b: Did GPE support result in “building-back-better systems”, longer-term technology solutions, addressing learning gaps? (AFG, GG, PG)	<p>Countries have changed their approach to delivering education and learning services (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Countries have adopted best-practice solutions to remediate learning loss (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	CS	<p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review, completion reports and KIs of countries planning and implementing build-back-better solutions as a result of GPE’s support and their level of success (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs of expected and unexpected outcomes on the creation of solutions/strategies to build back better systems after pandemic component (AFG, GG, PG)</p> <p>Examples of countries that have improved education system resilience thanks to GPE-supported COVID-19 interventions (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIs with CTL, GA, CA and MoE</li> <li>Relevant secondary documentation referenced by consulted stakeholders (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>Completion reports (sections on extent of government capacity development) (AFG, GG)</li> </ul>
	<b>Systems resilience</b> 5.1c: To what extent have systems institutionalized response and preparedness in their planning and sector management? (AFG, GG, PG)  (For example, integrating preparedness into sector plans or establishing capacities in the ministry)	The education system is more resilient in terms of preparedness and prevention, and has updated plans and strategies with integrated emergency response components (AFG, GG, PG)	CS	Consistent qualitative evidence from desk review and KIs that education systems (i) institutionalized learning from the responses in their planning and sector management, and (ii) further integrated a preparedness and prevention focus on their planning processes (AFG, GG, PG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIs with GPE Secretariat, CTLs, GA, CA, MoE, teacher associations, teacher training and local education groups</li> <li>Completion reports (relevant sections) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>Secondary literature review (country-level policy documentation, sector plans and organizational establishment) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>Meeting of the Board of Directors on GPE COVID-19 response (mention of use of existing national capacities/assets) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> </ul>
			PA	Most common type of grant activities planned to improve government capacity for resilience building and the actual activities which improved government capacities in this area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion report database (AFG)</li> <li>Completion reports (relevant sections) (AFG, GG, PG)</li> <li>Periodic surveys if relevant (GG)</li> </ul>

	Evaluation Question	Sub-Question	Judgment Criteria	CS/PA	Indicators	Data Sources
		to manage crisis response in the future)			<p>coded as per descriptive section "Extent of government capacity development" in completion reports (AFG, GG)</p> <p>Most common ways in which government capacities for resilience building was improved (AFG, GG, PG)</p>	

## Annex 2. Portfolio Analysis Coding

### Completion report coding

Coded sections of the completion reports:

- Objectives 1-5: if gender and other vulnerable groups were covered; coded section on the type of vulnerable groups covered.
- Factors that facilitated implementation
- Factors that hindered implementation
- Grant delays (1) at start and (2) during implementation
- Types of minor and major revisions
- Type of partnership created – type of stakeholders who the partnership was created with
- Government capacity: Type of activities where government capacity was developed
- Types of Recommendations
- Types of Lessons learnt

### List of core indicators reported by AF grants, mapped to themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Core indicator #	Core indicator description	Sub-themes from Coding and Costing database relevant to the core indicator
Mitigation and Response (M&R)	Access	Core indicator 1	Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) in the program area supported with distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs	Access to education for OOSC - Equity Marginalized Children- Equity Children with Disabilities and Special Needs - Equity Refugees and IDPs - Equity Cash transfers and other targeted incentives for children - Equity Distance/home-based learning/tutoring programs (no/low/high tech) - Learning
	Enabling environment	Core indicator 2	Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) provided access to school meal and nutrition programs and/or hygiene and sanitation kits (including menstrual health management)	Well-being programs (Nutritional Programs) - Equity Well-being programs (Psychological support Programs) - Equity Well-being programs (Hygiene Programs) - Equity
	Protection & well-being	Core indicator 3	Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts, gender-based violence, and	Well-being programs (Nutritional Programs) Well-being programs (Psychological support Programs) Well-being programs (Hygiene Programs)

Theme	Sub-theme	Core indicator #	Core indicator description	Sub-themes from Coding and Costing database relevant to the core indicator
			issues related to unequal social norms	
	Teachers	Core indicator 4	Number of teachers (and % of teachers in the program area) trained in using distance learning methods and/or provided materials to support distance learning	Teacher Development Standards, Curriculum, and Learning Materials
Recovery (Rec)	Access	Core indicator 1	Number (and %) of children previously enrolled in grant-supported schools who return to school once the school system is reopened	All children return to school (including OOSC) Marginalized Children Children with Disabilities and Special Needs Refugees and IDPs Cash transfers and other targeted incentives for children
	Facilities and services	Core indicator 2	Number (and % of schools in program area) of grant-supported schools reopened	Education facilities, reopening of schools
	Protection & well-being	Core indicator 3	Number (and % of schools in program area) of grant-supported schools equipped with minimum hygiene standards for prevention of COVID-19	Well-being programs (Nutritional Programs) Well-being programs (Psychological support Programs) Well-being programs (Hygiene Programs)
	Teachers	Core indicator 4	Number (and %) of officials and teachers in grant-supported schools who return to school once the school system is reopened	Teacher Development Standards, Curriculum, and Learning Materials Accelerated learning programs
	Teachers	Core indicator 5	Number (and % of teachers in program area) of teachers trained to provide accelerated programs to mitigate loss of learning during school closure	Teacher Development Standards, Curriculum, and Learning Materials Accelerated learning programs
	Learning	Core indicator 6	Number (and % of children in program area) of children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure	Learning Assessment Systems EMIS

Source: Grant completion report for COVID-19 AF grants core indicators template

### Reporting on Mitigation and Response and Recovery core indicators, by AF grant

Country	Mitigation and Response (M&R) Core Indicators				Recovery (Rec) Core Indicators						Total # of M&R CI reported	Total # of Rec CI reported
	CI 1	CI 2	CI 3	CI 4	CI 1	CI 2	CI 3	CI 4	CI 5	CI 6		
AFG		✓					✓		✓	✓	1	3
BGD	✓			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	2	4
BEN			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	2	3
BTN	✓	✓	✓								3	0
BFA											0	0
BDI	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				4	1
CPV	✓			✓		✓	✓				2	2
KHM	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓		2	3
CMR	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				3	2
CSS	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓					4	1
CAF											0	0
TCD											0	0
COM							✓				0	1
COD	✓	✓		✓			✓				3	1
COG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	6
CIV	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	6
DJI	✓			✓							2	0
ETH						✓	✓		✓		0	3
GMB	✓					✓	✓		✓		1	3
GHA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	4	4
GIN	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			1	4
GNB	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		3	5
GUY											0	0
HTI	✓						✓	✓			1	2
KEN		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	3	2
KIR	✓		✓	✓			✓				3	1
LAO	✓		✓	✓			✓				3	1
LSO	✓		✓								2	0
LBR			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			2	4
MDG											0	0
MWI	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		3	5
MDV				✓							1	0
MLI											0	0
MHL	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				4	1
MRT	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓		2	3
FSM	✓						✓				1	1
MOZ	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				4	1
MMR	✓		✓	✓							3	0
NPL	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	2	3
NIC	✓		✓						✓	✓	2	2

NER	✓				✓		✓				1	2
NGA	✓		✓	✓			✓			✓	3	2
PAK	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓	2	3
PNG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4	6
RWA				✓							1	0
WSM	✓			✓			✓			✓	2	2
STP	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓				3	2
SEN											0	0
SLE											0	0
SLB	✓						✓				1	1
SOM											0	0
SOM-P	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓				3	2
SOM-S	✓	✓			✓		✓				2	2
SSD	✓			✓			✓				2	1
SDN- UNICEF											0	0
SDN-WB											0	0
TZA-M					✓	✓	✓	✓			0	4
TZA-Z	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	3	5
TLS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	4	4
TGO			✓	✓			✓				2	1
TON	✓			✓							2	0
TUV	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	3	3
UGA	✓				✓		✓	✓		✓	1	4
VUT	✓										1	0
YEM											0	0
ZMB	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		3	5
ZWE	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>131</b>

Source: AF grants completion reports.

## Annex 3. List of Documents Reviewed

### Programme Documentation

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
<b>GPE Secretariat documentation related to all grants</b>		
<b>Board documentation on COVID-19 support</b>		
Meeting of the Board of Directors on GPE COVID-19 response	Meeting of the Board of Directors March 31, 2020, to approve a new accelerated grant window in response to COVID-19. Discussion of background and next steps of GPE's COVID-19 response.	To inform data collection tools design, ground our understanding of GPE's COVID-19 support and serve to address evaluation questions on relevance and some aspects of efficiency
Meeting of the Board of Directors on GPE COVID-19 additional financing	Meeting of the Board of Directors May 29, 2020, to discuss additional financing (background and rationale, proposed allocation of resources) to the COVID-19 AGs window, along with a revised allocation approach.	
GPE and COVID-19 factsheet, December 2020	Brief factsheet with response timeline, funding for education response and recovery, and examples of the support.	
<b>Analysis and review documentation on the GPE COVID-19 support by GPE Secretariat</b>		
GPE Grant Implementation database	Grants database listing all types of grants open and closed, including COVID-19 AGs and GGs (sorting out by ESPIG (COVID-19-AFG) in column E "Grant type"). Information on grant operations officer, funding modality, grant amount, grant approval/start/closing, etc.	To ground our understanding of GPE's COVID-19 support and feed into case studies, and address evaluation questions on effectiveness (innovation and scaling-up)
GPE periodic situation reports	Secretariat's weekly situation reports, starting on 1 April 2020, to share critical information on the impact on the countries' education and GPE's responses to the evolving pandemic. The content of the reports is different and has changed over time. In general, early timeline reports covered the situation of countries, implications for GPE's ongoing grants and plan of GPE's response. Later reports summarized GPE's COVID-19-related grants' performance, particularly COVID-19 AGs and GGs to a certain extent.	
GPE Brief Evidence Note: Approaches to Ensuring Learning Continuity during COVID-19 Crisis	Note as a starting point for thinking about COVID-19 response planning and programming, with the following sections: continue learning, protect children and the education workforce, assessment and monitoring of student learning, and include the most marginalized.	
<b>Reporting documentation by GPE</b>		
Lessons learned and success stories Presentation on initial lessons learned, August 25, 2020	Lessons learned on what worked/could be improved on the partnership, with common themes across approved grants (such as distance learning, girls' education, children with disabilities, psychosocial support, teacher support and others), lessons learned on the grant process and stories of the countries.	To ground our understanding of GPE's COVID-19 support and feed into case studies, and address evaluation questions on

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
Stories of Resilience during the COVID-19 Pandemic	Success stories on how children continued learning with GPE support in Eastern Caribbean, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, Tanzania, Tonga and Zambia.	effectiveness (innovation and scaling-up)
Grant status reports Grant status reports 2020 and annex	Overall report on all GPE grants in 2020 including GPE COVID-19 support grants (sections 4 and 5). Annexes with the list of the grants, grant performance analyses and list of KIX GG recipients.	
Grant status reports 2021 and annex	Overall report on all GPE grants in 2021 including GPE's COVID-19 response, gender equality, learning partnership work.	
Formative evaluation of GPE's support for response to the COVID-19 crisis	Formative evaluation (final version as of November 2021) with sections on impacts of COVID-19 on the education sector, methodology and tools, finding and analysis, potential areas of focus for the proposed summative evaluation of GPE's COVID-19 AFG response, conclusions and recommendations.	
<b>GPE's publication related to COVID-19</b>		
Simulating the impact of COVID-19 on education systems by 2023	Report from October 2020 on potential impact of COVID-19 on education systems by 2023 with the recommendation for GPE support (sharing good practices, upstream, delivery and financial support).	To inform data collection tool design, ground our understanding of the context and GPE's COVID-19 support
Effects of COVID-19 on GPE's education sector program implementation grants	Rapid review from September 2021 of the effects of COVID-19 on GPE's education sector program implementation with sections on progress toward results, grant flexibility, grant coordination and management, discussion and actions to consider.	
<b>Other relevant documentation:</b>		
Country-level guide. Recommended education sector and GPE grants processes	This guide provides a general overview of the GPE country-level operational model and processes. It can be used as a tool to navigate GPE processes at different stages of the sector-planning and grant-level cycles. This overview primarily targets local education groups including developing country partners, development partners and CSOs.	To inform data collection tool design, ground our understanding of the context and GPE's COVID-19 support
Policy on education sector program implementation grants, May 2020	Management and administration of education sector program implementation grants (ESPIGs) including program implementation period, reporting requirements and revisions to programs.	
GPE's evaluation policy	Principles of evaluation in GPE, evaluation criteria, minimum standards for commissioning and funding evaluations, roles and responsibilities.	
<b>COVID-19 Accelerated Grants</b>		
<b>Grant information and implementation documentation</b>		



Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
Guidelines for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants window and frequently asked questions	COVID-19 accelerated grants guidelines from August 2020 with information on: Eligibility criteria, implementation period and funding, and activities eligible for funding. Procedures for application and approval. Reporting and revisions. Annexes (Annex 1. Country allocation amounts linked to school aged population; Annex 2. Program standards for assessment of COVID-19 accelerated grant applications (country grants)).	To feed into CS and serve to address all evaluation questions for AFG evaluation.
Guidance on monitoring and evaluation of grants financed through the GPE COVID-19 AF grants window	Monitoring and evaluation guidelines. Core indicators for mitigation and response, indicators for recovery. Annex I: Incorporating a gender lens in monitoring and evaluation. Annex II: Illustrative indicators for grant results frameworks. Annex III: Implementation progress surveys.	
Thematic grant allocation: COVID-19 AF grants response: Mitigation and recovery thematic grant allocation (data)	2-page brief with grant allocation by thematic areas.	
Codebook and methodology	COVID-19 Response: Mitigation and Recovery Thematic Codes. This codebook shows the types of activities coded under each theme discussed in the coding chapter. Thematic categories have been harmonized with those found in the latest World Bank theme taxonomy for most categories. Some categories not found in the World Bank taxonomy are specific to GPE's focus on equity.	
Re-coding and costing database with the themes/components for each country	Excel database on AFG activities with costing, coding master sheets and a sheet for each country. Costing master sheet with the list of activities and the amount of grant allocated to each of the themes for each country (mitigation/recovery, equity/learning, other components for each country, admin costs, private sector partnership). Coding master sheet with the description of components/activities within each theme for each country.	
Database with AF grants for sampling	Database with the main information on each AF grant recipient country:  Country profile and COVID-19 AFG information. Mapped with GG component 1: Regional and global learning platform (UNESCO); mapped with GG component 2: Learning continuity at scale. Implementation progress/completion, overlap with samples of other evaluations (data source: evaluation reports), progress in GPE2025.	
GPE's COVID-19 emergency funding: Application highlights	Main activities that the grant will be spent on for each AF grant recipient country and description of the activities that will take place in each applicant country and within each identified theme.	
<b>Administrative and country-level data</b>		
Countries' COVID-19 response plans for education	Education sector response plans to COVID-19. The format and the content of the plan is different for each country and can be found in each country's folder.	

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
AF grants applications and grant approval letters for each country	Application and grant approval letter for each country is located in each country's folder and includes: Application (differs depending on the grant agent/country): overview of the proposal (duration, dates, donor, project outcomes, focus population, implementing partners and policy partners), situation analysis, project description, implementation plan/schedule, strategic/implementation partners, risks management/sustainability, performance monitoring/reporting, external threats and results framework. Approval letter: official decision of Chief Executive Officer, requests for report-back, reporting and reprogramming conditions.	To feed into case studies and address evaluation question on relevance for AFG case studies
COVID-19 AF grants timeline tracker	Tracking of dates and time for the application processing: dates for receiving, reviewing, submission to Executive Officer and approval; number of days from the approval to the start of grant implementation.	
Historical use of AF grants	Database with the amount of grant used each month by each AFG recipient country.	
Gender database for AF grants	Gender-specific information for AFG activities in each country: identified challenges and proposed interventions for girls' education/gender in program documents for each country; and comments on whether the program addresses girls education/gender issues according to the internal review's matrix and proposed intervention.	
<b>Reporting documentation</b>		
Databases tracking reporting process, quarterly, six-monthly and completion reports: COVID-19 AF grant tracker on progress surveys	Database tracking dates of submission and reporting periods, comments for first and second quarterly surveys, first and second six-monthly surveys.	To feed into portfolio analysis, case studies and address all evaluation questions related to accelerated grants.
AF grant monitoring survey summary	Database tracking surveys with latest survey period submission, number of surveys received and expected.	
Completion reports aggregate database	Database tracking completion report processes: Links to the reports and dates for submission. Availability/unavailability with the comments for reporting on each objective. Overall rating for some evaluation criteria. Comments on grant delays, partnership, SEAH cases, major lessons learned and recommendations. Reporting on core indicators (% and number) for baseline, actual and end target.	
Quarterly reports: Quarterly report template Completed quarterly reports	The number of completed quarterly reports is different for each country and can be found in each country's folder. Reports contain information on ratings from previous and current reporting period, reporting per component, impact stories and the reporting on core indicators as relevant.	
Six-monthly reports: Six-monthly report template	The number of completed six-monthly reports is different for each country and can be found in each country's folder. Reports contain background information, disbursement, implementation progress, reporting per component, impact stories and the reporting on core indicators as relevant.	

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
Completed six-monthly reports		
Completion reports	<p>Completion reports are available for some countries and are expected to be sent to other ones. They can be found in each country's folder. Reports contain:</p> <p>Overview of the grant and background and instructions.  Assessment of grant implementation (efficacy, efficiency, relevance, private sector engagement, safeguarding, lessons and recommendations).  Use of funds (reprogramming and extension, misuse of funds, unspent funds).  Monitoring and evaluation data (results framework per objectives and outputs, core indicators endline reporting).</p>	
External evaluation reports	<p>External UNICEF country-level evaluation available only for some countries:</p> <p>Democratic Republic of Congo – evaluation of the project, “Providing alternative ways to continue learning in a safe and protective environment for 13.9 million children and adolescents aged 3–15 years affected by COVID-19 in DRC”.  Côte d'Ivoire – evaluation of distance course and reopening of schools in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.  Djibouti – structured sectoral response based primarily on its existing experience in distance learning.  Tanzania – parent survey, “What Did Children Do During School Closure?”</p>	
<b>Continuity of Learning Global Grant</b>		
<b>Grant information and implementation documentation</b>		
Brief for the GPE COVID-19 global grant to UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank and frequently asked questions (October 7, 2020) on the grant	<p>Brief information on the objective, scope and key activities.  FAQ on global grant, relationship with other initiatives, reporting and indicators, budgeting, pilot countries, application of subcomponents and their activities, and knowledge dissemination.</p>	To feed into GG case study and address evaluation questions related to the GG
GPE's education response to COVID-19: UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank Joint Proposal for a Consortium of grant agents	<p>Background and problem identification, objectives, response and strategies.  Management structure, partnerships and reporting.  Main key intervention areas and activities (global and regional coordination, learning continuity at scale that reaches the most marginalized, monitoring, evidence, learning and preparation for future emergencies).  Work plan and monitoring plan, indicative implementation plan.  Summary budget disaggregated by components, subcomponents and years.  List of indicators.</p>	
Database mapping of activities for global grant	Memo for mapping global grant by components/subcomponents, sources, countries and activities.	
Detailed budget for global grant	Budget template disaggregated by grant agents, component/sub-component/activity and years.	
<b>Administrative documentation</b>		
Application	<p>Meeting participants and date, grant summary and information.  Decision language, detailed implementation plan, updated results framework and detailed budget.</p>	To feed into case studies and address evaluation questions on

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
CEO approval letters Approval of accelerated grants to strengthen GPE's global and regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, April 22, 2020	Approval of initial allocation for a COVID-19 accelerated grant request for the amount of \$7,500,000, representing 30% of the proposal amount. Division of allocation between grant agents, decision language, detailed implementation plan, updated results framework and detailed budget.	relevance, to feed into portfolio analysis to address some sub-questions on efficiency (requests for extension)
Approval of accelerated grants to strengthen GPE's global and regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, June 16, 2020	Approval of the second allocation for a COVID-19 accelerated grants request for the amount of US\$12,500,000, representing 50% of the proposal amount. Division of allocation between grant agents, decision language, relevance and likelihood of impact, program design, implementation arrangements and readiness, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and risk assessment.	
Approval of accelerated grants to strengthen GPE's global and regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, September 30, 2020	Approval of third and final allocation for a COVID-19 accelerated grants request for the amount of US\$5,000,000, representing 20% of the proposal amount. Division of allocation between grant agents.	
Third tranche funds request	Third tranche funds request with the description of dates, activities and outputs with the description of key developments in the first and second phases.	
Request for no-cost extension Request No objection Closing date extension	Official letter request for no-cost extension by the consortium of UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank. Notification of no objection to the no-cost extension request by GPE Secretariat. Information on the date of extension for grant extension from October 31, 2021, to February 28, 2022.	
<b>Reporting documentation</b>		
Bimonthly reports	Reports with a simple traffic light-style assessment of progress against the components, outputs, activities and sub-activities in the detailed implementation plan for each grant agent, with the status and comments regarding the progress.	To feed into portfolio analysis and address all evaluation questions related to the GG
First bimonthly report, May–June 2020 Related documentation (flow of funds for UNICEF and UNESCO)	The first bimonthly report with the standard structure described above for May and June 2020. The date of the report is July 31, 2020. Explanation of flow of funds for UNESCO and UNICEF.	
Second bimonthly report, July–September 2020 Consolidated budget execution through September 15	The second bimonthly report with the standard structure described above for July–September 2020. Date of the report is October 2, 2020 Additional sections: Section V – updated results framework to report against core indicators for July–September (including baseline, end target of October 2021 and supporting documentation); Section VI – budget use as of September 30, 2020. Consolidated budget execution for first and second phases by components.	
Third bimonthly report, November–December 2020 Budget use as of January 31, 2021	The third bimonthly report with the standard structure described above for November–December 2020. The date of the report is January 29, 2021. Includes plan for upcoming impact stories and a summary of private sector engagement in country-level activities.	

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
	Additional sections: Section V – updated results framework to report against core indicators for July–September (including baseline, previous and current values, end target of October 2021 and supporting documentation); Section VI – budget use updated and provided by the end of February.	
Six-monthly reports	Reports include SECTION I–III (first part) survey questions with a simple traffic light-style assessment of progress at the subcomponent level, and status; SECTION III (second part)-V – changes to the program (if any), financial management, procurement, safeguards and other fiduciary issues, status of progress on previously raised issues, lessons learned, regional and country collaboration, private sector engagement in country-level activities, and risks and risk mitigation; SECTION VI – an updated results framework to report against core indicators (including baseline, current value and supporting information); SECTION VII – budget use.	
First six-monthly report May–October 2020 Related documentation	First report with all the sections in standard survey format for the period from May to October 2020. Five annexes: Annex 1 Proposal; Annex 2 Implementation plan by components, activities etc. and the timeline for them; Annex 3 Budget; Annex 4 Six-Monthly report template; Annex 5 Detailed assessment of GG six-monthly report by Consortium (general progress, assessment of reporting accuracy and comments on reporting).	
Second six-monthly report November 2020–April 2021 Related documentation	Second report with all the sections as in standard survey format for the period November 2020 to April 2021. Status and dissemination of Global Public Goods developed by the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO as of May 21, 2021, with information on events, blog/impact stories, webinars, social media campaigns, and capacity building events for each product, component and activity.	
Third six-monthly report May–October 2021	Third report with all the sections as in standard survey format for the period from May to October 2021.	
Quarterly Implementation progress survey, May–July 2021	Report that comprises SECTIONS I-IV survey questions with a simple traffic light-style assessment of progress at the subcomponent level, to report on major progress during the period of May–July 2021, provide the plan for upcoming blogs and stories, and a summary of private sector engagement in country-level activities; SECTION V – an updated results framework to report against core indicators for the period of May–July 2021 (including baseline, previous values, current values, target of October 2021, and supporting information); SECTION VI – updated budget use as of end of July.	
End-of-grant report End-of-grant report and budget	Comments on the status of implementation of activities by components/subcomponents as of February 28, 2022. Report on and learn from progress in the implementation of GG. Budget use as of February 28, 2022. Information on the grant, contact details of grant agent staff, background, assessment of grant implementation (efficacy, efficiency, relevance, private sector engagements, safeguarding, lessons and recommendations), use of funds (reprogramming and extension, reporting on misuse of funds, unspent funds), monitoring and evaluation data.	
High-level results matrix	Overall outputs and corresponding performance indicators for each component and output.	
<b>Documentation on global grant deliverables</b>		
Database with information, documentation and links to global grant deliverables	List of all the components, subcomponents and activities within global grant Description of subcomponent, each activity and the lead agency for it Corresponding key deliverable and relevant document/information (with link if applicable)	To feed into GG case study and address evaluation questions on efficacy, effectiveness and impact

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
<b>Planning Grant</b>		
<b>Grant information and implementation documentation</b>		
<a href="#">UNICEF's operational guidance for the planning COVID-19 grant</a>	List of the menu of activities in three key intervention areas.	To feed into PG case study and address evaluation questions on relevance
<a href="#">Database on</a> use of GPE planning funds	Qualitative description of the activities that GPE PG funds were used on by response categories (response planning/support to MoE; risk analysis/assessment; safe school operations; design and preparation of alternative education delivery systems; establishing monitoring systems; planning for recovery and reopening of schools) and by countries.	
<b>Administrative documentation</b>		
UNICEF's proposal for the multi-country planning COVID-19 grant	General information on the PGs with the list of planned activities. UNICEF proposed response and strategies, UNICEF vision, objectives, key intervention areas, planned geographic focus, budget and roadmap, and outline of reporting.	To feed into PG case study and address evaluation questions on relevance
Secretariat's approval of the planning grant	Participants of the approval meeting, grant information, summary of the request, decision of the GPE Secretariat; discussion points; revised parts of the proposal (financial, programmatic and technical aspects, knowledge sharing and reporting, and timeline).	
<b>Reporting documentation</b>		
Survey UNICEF Global Tracker: COVID-19 National Responses in Education	Questions of UNICEF survey on high-level overview of how countries are responding to the COVID-19 emergency in education (request to be updated weekly).	To feed into the portfolio analysis, PG case study and address all evaluation questions related to the PG
Overview of GPE questions from tracker survey (based on the data submitted from UNICEF country offices between April 27 and August 25, 2020)	Track of responses to the UNICEF Global Tracker and response rate by countries and intervention types between April 27 and August 25, 2020.	
Completion report for education sector plan development grant (planning) for COVID-19 planning June 30, 2021	Overview of the grant. Assessment of grant completion by three key intervention areas, description of activities supported at the level of UNICEF regional offices, strategic collaboration and partnership leveraged, interactions between countries' COVID-19 response plans and ongoing sectoral activities, and gender-responsive and equity-focused country COVID-19 response plans). Use of funds (overall assessment, reprogramming and extension, reporting on misuse of funds, unspent funds and additional funding leveraged).	
<b>Non-financial support</b>		

Type of documentation	Relevant information	Analysis
<b>Created knowledge products</b>		
Joint education sector monitoring in the context of COVID-19, November 2021	Guidance is a part of GPE efforts to support governments and partners in monitoring education delivery. Guidelines regard four types of content which offer diverse types of support from high level to technical, practical support.	To inform data collection tool design, ground our understanding of the context and GPE's COVID-19 support
Pivoting to inclusion leveraging lessons from the COVID-19 crisis for learners with disabilities	Report on leveraging lessons from the COVID-19 crisis for learners with disabilities.	
<b>Documents related to GPE KIX Observatory on COVID-19 responses in Africa's educational systems</b>		
Teacher training and support in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic	The report synthesizes available evidence on the policies and practices of GPE's 40 sub-Saharan African partner countries with respect to teacher training and support during the COVID-19 pandemic.	To feed into CS for countries in Africa.
Learning assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa	The report aims to provide decision-makers, donors and education practitioners with emerging evidence on education policy and practice responses to the pandemic in Africa.	
School reopening in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic	The report synthesizes available policy and practice evidence on school reopening in 40 African partner countries of GPE.	
Financing education in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic	The report identifies education financing gaps and challenges, emerging evidence on what education systems in these countries are experiencing as a result of COVID-19, and persistent funding constraints. The report concludes with five recommendations for GPE partner countries and development actors.	
Teaching and learner well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic	The brief examines issues and provides success stories, as well as key interventions and recommendations, focused on two major areas: (i) teachers and teaching during COVID-19 and (ii) learner well-being during COVID-19.	

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## Annex 4. List of Stakeholders Consulted

### Total Global Stakeholders Interviewed, by type

Type of Respondent	Total
GPE Secretariat	10
Grant Agent	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>15</b>

### List of Global Stakeholders Interviewed

Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Margarita Focas Licht	GPE Secretariat	Manager, Partnerships Team	July 19, 2023
Rudraksh Mitra	GPE Secretariat	Economist, R&P	July 26, 2023
Matthew Smith	GPE Secretariat	Team Lead Risk & Compliance, FGO	July 26, 2023
Sven Baeten	GPE Secretariat	Team Lead Grant Operations, FGO	July 26, 2023
Anthony Bentil	GPE Secretariat	Senior Finance Officer, FGO	July 14, 2023
David Balwanz	GPE Secretariat	Senior Education Specialist Quality Assurance, FGO	July 14, 2023
Helena Murseli	GPE Secretariat (former)	Former Senior Gender Lead	October 30, 2023
Hoa Tran Ringrose	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	July 19, 2023
Ian Macpherson	GPE Secretariat	Team Lead, KIX, Global grant focal point	September 25, 2023
Peter de Vries	UNICEF	Senior Education Advisor, Management, Advocacy and Partnerships (Former) (Grant agent, global grant)	August 15, 2023
Alex Twinomugisha	World Bank	Senior Education Specialist (Grant agent, global grant)	August 15, 2023
Astrid Gillet	UNESCO	Chief, Executive Office, Education Sector (Grant agent, global grant)	August 17, 2023
Anna-Maria Tammi	GPE Secretariat	Education Specialist, Planning grant focal point	August 23, 2023
Saadhna Panday-Soobrayan	UNICEF	GPE Focal Point (Grant agent, planning grant)	August 28, 2023
Pragya Dewan	UNICEF	M&E Officer (Grant agent, planning grant)	August 28, 2023

## Total Country-Level Interviews, by type

Category	Type of Respondent	Total
<b>In-Country Stakeholder</b>	Coordinating Agency	9
	Grant Agent	13
	Ministry of Education	16
	LEG Member	2
<b>End-user level stakeholder</b>	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	8
	Implementing Agency	2
<b>GPE Secretariat</b>	GPE Secretariat	15
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>65</b>

## List of Country-Level Stakeholders Interviewed

Country	Type	Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Bangladesh	Grant Agent	Tashmina Rahman	World Bank	Task Team Leader	July 3, 2023
Bangladesh	GPE Secretariat	Daisuke Kanazawa	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 20, 2023
Bangladesh	Ministry of Education	Dr. Nurul Amin Chowdhury	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME)	Deputy Director (Planning) of Directorate of Primary Education	July 5, 2023
Bangladesh	Ministry of Education	Muhamamd Fazie Elahi	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME)	Program Officer, Directorate of Primary Education	July 5, 2023
Bangladesh	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Rasheda K. Choudhury	Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	Executive Director	July 10, 2023
Bangladesh	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Dr. Mostafizur Rahman	Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)	Deputy Director	July 10, 2023
Cameroon	GPE Secretariat	Adrien Boucher	GPE Secretariat	Education Specialist	May 19, 2023
Cameroon	GPE Secretariat	Ludovic Signarbieux	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	June 19, 2023
Cameroon	Grant Agent	Paul Coustere	UNESCO		July 12, 2023
Cameroon	Grant Agent	Hilaire Mputu	UNESCO		July 12, 2023
Cameroon	Grant Agent	Apollinaire Tchameni	UNESCO		July 12, 2023
Cameroon	Grant Agent	Antoine Bieteke	UNESCO		July 12, 2023

Country	Type	Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Cameroon	Ministry of Education	Ms Lisette Elobo	Ministry of (Basic) Education	GPE Focal Point / Technical Secretariat MinEdu	July 14, 2023
Cameroon	Implementing Agency	Arsene Azandossessi	UNICEF		July 13, 2023
Cameroon	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Olivier Tankeu	Cameroon Education For All (EFA) Network		July 13, 2023
Cameroon	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Josué Baloma	Cameroon Education For All (EFA) Network	National Coordinator	July 13, 2023
Côte d'Ivoire	GPE Secretariat	Christophe Deconinck	GPE Secretariat	Acting Country Team Lead; Education Specialist	April 25, 2023
Côte d'Ivoire	Ministry of Education	Francis Biney	Ministry of Education	GPE Focal Point, Inspecteur Général de l'Education Nationale	August 18, 2023
Côte d'Ivoire	Coordinating Agency	Sabine Vigani	Jacobs Foundation	Country Director	July 17, 2023
Côte d'Ivoire	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	M. Gnelou Paul	Ivorian Network for the Promotion of Education for All (RIT-EPT)	Chairman of the Board of Directors	July 17, 2023
Democratic Republic of Congo	GPE Secretariat	Ines Gabrielle Boumaiza	GPE Secretariat	Education Specialist	April 19, 2023
Democratic Republic of Congo	GPE Secretariat	Blandine Ledoux	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 19, 2023
Democratic Republic of Congo	Coordinating Agency	Helena Murseli	UNICEF	Education Section Chief	July 4, 2023
Democratic Republic of Congo	Coordinating Agency	Felana Aliderson	UNICEF	Education Specialist	July 4, 2023
Democratic Republic of Congo	LEG Member	Parry Laurence	French Embassy	Attachée de Coopération, Development Partner Group Lead	July 6, 2023
Ethiopia	GPE Secretariat	Subrata S. Dhar	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 18, 2023
Ethiopia	GPE Secretariat	Nooruddin Gulbahar Shah	GPE Secretariat	Education Specialist	April 18, 2023
Ethiopia	Grant Agent	Salman Asim	World Bank	Senior Economist in Education	August 30, 2023



Country	Type	Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Ethiopia	Coordinating Agency	Fredi Merhatsidk	USAID		July 6, 2023
Ethiopia	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Alebachew Mekonnen	Basic Education Network (BEN) Ethiopia	Executive Director	August 25, 2023
Ethiopia	Ministry of Education	Mezgebu Biazen	Ministry of Education, Ethiopia	GPE Focal Point, Executive for Strategic Affairs	August 29, 2023
Ghana	Grant Agent	Eunice Yaa Brimfah Ackwerh	World Bank	Task Team Lead	July 4, 2023
Ghana	Coordinating Agency	Tara O'Connell	UNICEF	Chief of Education	July 5, 2023
Ghana	Coordinating Agency	Grace Wood	DFID / FCDO UK	DPE Lead	July 21, 2023
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Inusah Shirazu	Ministry of Education, Ghana	GPE Focal Point, MoE Principal Development Planning Officer	July 12, 2023
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Angela Affran	Ministry of Education, Ghana	MoE GALOP Project Coordinator, Technical Advisor to the Minister of Education	July 12, 2023
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Aminu Sulemana	Ministry of Education, Ghana	MoE Assistant Director / Head of M&E. MoE Policy Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PBME) Directorate	July 12, 2023
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Cynthia Lawson-Heyman	Ministry of Education, Ghana	MoE GALOP Project Administrator	July 12, 2023
Ghana	Ministry of Education	Nana Hagan	Ministry of Education, Ghana	MoE Policy Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, and Evaluation (PBME) Directorate	July 12, 2023
Ghana	LEG Member	Prosper Nyavor	UNESCO	Development Partner Group Lead, Education Working Group Chair	July 12, 2023
Ghana	Implementing Agency	Lawrence Sarpong	National Teaching Council of Ghana	Deputy Registrar Operations	July 13, 2023
Ghana	GPE Secretariat	Plamen Danchev	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	May 19, 2023

Country	Type	Name	Organization	Role	Interview Date
Ghana	GPE Secretariat	Laura Anne Ivey	GPE Secretariat	Education Specialist	May 11, 2023
Tonga	GPE Secretariat	Daisuke Kanazawa	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 20, 2023
Micronesia, Federated States	Grant Agent	Sandipan Paul	UNICEF Pacific		July 5, 2023
Micronesia, Federated States	Coordinating Agency	Paul Hadik	Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL)		July 4, 2023
Micronesia, Federated States	Ministry of Education	Wayne Mendiola	National Department of Education (NDOE)		July 6, 2023
Micronesia, Federated States	Grant Agent	Dionisialynn Bernard	UNICEF Pacific		July 5, 2023
Mozambique	GPE Secretariat	Lucinda Elena Ramos Alcantra	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 19, 2023
Mozambique	GPE Secretariat	Dan Zhang	GPE Secretariat	Grant Operations Officer	April 19, 2023
Mozambique	Grant Agent	Tomoko Shibuya	UNICEF		July 6, 2023
Mozambique	Coordinating Agency	Karen Hauff	GIZ		July 11, 2023
Mozambique	Ministry of Education	Dr. Arlinda Chaquisse.	Ministry of Education and Human Development	Director of Nutrition and School Health	July 6, 2023
Mozambique	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Isabel Da Silva	Movimento de Educação para Todos (Mozambique National Education Coalition)		July 11, 2023
Mozambique	End User Representative / CSO / NGO	Dr. Teodoro Muidumbe	Organização Nacional dos Professores (Teachers Union)	Secretary General	July 14, 2023
Nicaragua	GPE Secretariat	Javier Luque	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 25, 2023
Nicaragua	Grant Agent	Marcelo Becerra	World Bank		April 7, 2023
Nicaragua	Coordinating Agency	Rosa E. Romero	UNFPA		June 30, 2023
Nicaragua	Ministry of Education	Carla Cuadran	Ministry of Education	Head of Planning	August 22, 2023
Nicaragua	Ministry of Education	Nora López	Ministry of Education	GPE Focal Point	August 22, 2023
Tonga	GPE Secretariat	Daisuke Kanazawa	GPE Secretariat	Country Team Lead	April 20, 2023

<b>Country</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Tonga	Grant Agent	Kristian Fromyhr	Save the Children Australia	Senior International Programs Manager (GPE Lead)	July 4, 2023
Tonga	Grant Agent	Anna Smeby	UNICEF	Education Chief	August 28, 2023
Tonga	Ministry of Education	Tangikina Moimoi Steen	Ministry of Education and Training (MET)	Chief Executive Officer (Former)	June 29, 2023
Tonga	Ministry of Education	Isikeli Oko	Ministry of Education and Training (MET)	Acting CEO	June 29, 2023

## Annex 5. Data Collection Tools

### Topic Guide: Country-Level Interviews

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Country:

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Stakeholder / informant:

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Contact (email):

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Date:

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This interview is part of the **Summative Evaluation of GPE's COVID-19 Support**, as mandated by the Board. It follows from an external formative evaluation which was released in 2021. This external summative evaluation is conducted by a consortium of education and evaluation specialists including Triple Line (lead), Learn More, and Technopolis. The GPE R&P team is managing this evaluation.

The Summative Evaluation seeks to:

- Understand how continuously relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, and impactful GPE's support to partner countries has been throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and what are the prospects for sustainability of outputs/outcomes financed and strategies developed, which will allow the GPE Secretariat to communicate on the level of success of GPE's COVID-related efforts.
- Identify promising practices during COVID-19 and explain their underlying success factors.
- Formulate lessons to improve its operations for crisis response.

As part of the evaluation, **Country X** has been selected as one of ten country case studies. To this end the evaluation team will conduct interviews with key country level stakeholders who have been involved in the grant process, and who can speak to service delivery.

Please note that my questions relate to the COVID-19 planning grant, the accelerated funding (AF) grant, as well as the global grant.

### Key topics for discussion

#### Brief introduction

- a. Brief recap of your role in relation to the GPE COVID-19 AF grant proposal development process.
- b. Brief recap of country level stakeholder landscape and dynamics, especially with regards to the division of roles during application development (planning grant and AF grant) and during implementation process (relationships and dialogue).

#### Relevance and design of GPE COVID-19 grants provided to partner country

- a. What were the specific needs and priorities the partner country was seeking support on at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- b. In general, were the **planning grant** and/or **AF grant** suitable to the needs and priorities of the partner country during the COVID-19 pandemic (incl. facilitating quick turnaround / response for support that could be mobilized with the grant)?
- c. To what extent was the **planning grant** instrumental in supporting the development of emergency response plans?
- d. To what extent were the **planning and AF grants** instrumental in supporting the development of interventions / solutions specifically targeting gender equity, position of girls, and vulnerable groups?

- e. To what extent did **planning and AF grants** address available capacity in partner country to develop, manage, and implement specific response interventions, and assist in capacity development (at sector level)?
- f. Was it necessary to adapt the activities supported by **planning and AF grants** (incl. modality, focus, funding, process) during the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic? Did any specific country needs emerge during the pandemic that required revisions to the grants?
- g. Were activities supported by the **planning and AF grants** flexible and adaptable to emerging needs during the pandemic (especially of girls and vulnerable groups)?

### Coherence and alignment of GPE COVID-19 grants with national / international aid ecosystems

- a. To what extent did GPE COVID-19 grant enable the partner country to coordinate a joint response (with other Development Partners, incl. multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, private sector, private foundations, and key education sector stakeholders) to the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g., under the umbrella of a national response plan / national emergency response strategy?
- b. Was the design of the GPE COVID-19 grant intervention harmonized with activities funded / implemented by other Development Partners (e.g., multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, private sector, private foundations, etc.)?
- c. Did the GPE support leverage complementary support from other Development Partners / sector stakeholders (global, regional, national)?

### Efficiency in implementation of GPE COVID-19 AF grant supported interventions

- a. To what extent was the **AF grant** convened through an inclusive consultative process, supported by an efficient dialogue process at country level?
- b. To what extent did the **AF grant** encounter any implementation bottlenecks (or factors that hindered implementation) after support was mobilized? If so, how adequately were these implementation bottlenecks resolved?
- c. Did **AF grant**-supported interventions provide a clear division of roles and responsibilities between key stakeholders in implementing activities?
- d. Were the financial resources made available through the **AF grant** adequate for mobilizing support to address identified challenges? From your perspective, were deployed financial resources managed efficiently by Grant Agent and country-level actors.
- e. To what extent was the **AF grant** steered through results-based management and MEL? Were available M&E instruments used for learning purposes and for steering interventions in the right direction?

### Key results achieved through GPE COVID-19 AF grant-supported interventions

- a. To what extent did the **AF grant** reach the expected objectives (as included in the approved application)?
- b. To what extent did the **AF grant** effectively support gender equity, position of girls, and vulnerable groups? Any examples or stories of change?
- c. To what extent did the **AF grant** effectively reach the targeted end-user groups? And have you observed any differential effects to this end (between groups of targeted beneficiaries)?
- d. To what extent was the **AF grant** instrumental in addressing pandemic related education service delivery challenges, pertaining to:
  - o Continuation of education and (school) reopening
  - o Learning loss
  - o Reaching the hardest to reach / vulnerable groups.

- Recovery and mitigation.
- e. Did any of the activities supported by the **AF grant** include innovative practices to ensure continuation of learning during the pandemic? In what ways were these practices innovative? Any sharing of best practices and learnings with other countries to this end? (nationally, or in international context)?

**Reflections on observed (or potential) impact of GPE COVID-19 grants and supported interventions implemented (based on your observations, feedback received, impressions):**

- a. To what extent did GPE's COVID-19 support increase readiness / adaptive capacity of targeted end-user groups to face pandemic / other crises, ensuring continuation of their learning & education?
- b. To what extent did GPE's COVID-19 support institutionalize emergency response and preparedness in country education system planning and sector management (updated plans, capacity, funding)?
- c. To what extent did GPE's COVID-19 support result in education systems transformation? Any stories of change / impact at this level that we can learn from?

**Do you have any key reflections considering the COVID-19 grants provided to the partner country, any lessons that can be learned from the process (application to implementation during the pandemic)?**

**Do you have any recommendations on specific stakeholders to be included for KIIs, and other sources of information to consider (e.g., secondary literature, databases, country documentation) for the Summative Evaluation?**

**Do you have any other remarks that can be useful for the Summative Evaluation to consider?**

## Topic Guide: Planning Grant Interviews

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**Respondent Name:**

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Organization:

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Contact (email):

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Date:

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This interview is part of the **Summative Evaluation of GPE's COVID-19 Support**, as mandated by the Board. It follows from an external formative evaluation which was released in 2021. This external summative evaluation is conducted by a consortium of education and evaluation specialists including Triple Line (lead), Learn More, and Technopolis. The GPE R&P team is managing this evaluation.

The Summative Evaluation seeks to:

- Understand how continuously relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, and impactful GPE's support to partner countries has been throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and what are the prospects for sustainability of outputs/outcomes financed and strategies developed, which will allow the GPE Secretariat to communicate on the level of success of GPE's COVID-related efforts.
- Identify promising practices during COVID-19 and explain their underlying success factors.
- Formulate lessons to improve its operations for crisis response.

### Key topics for discussion

- 1. Could you share some information about your role, in relation to the GPE COVID-19 planning grant? For instance, were you involved in its design? Implementation?**
  - a. What was your role with the planning grant – were you involved in its design? Implementation?
- 2. My next set of questions is related to the relevance and design, and continued relevance and design, of the planning grant.**
  - a. **Application process and timeliness:** Recognizing the urgency of the planning grant, was the process of applying for the grant/securing funds from GPE suitable for UNICEF's needs? What about the process of disbursing funds from UNICEF to partner countries?
  - b. **Country priorities:** At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, what would you say were the needs and priorities of partner countries? How did this inform the design of the planning grant? What was the motivation? Were there previous events that inspired the design?
    - a. To what extent was the planning grant instrumental in supporting the development of emergency response plans? How did countries take up these funds to develop emergency response plans? Were there varied results in the ways in which countries used funds to develop emergency plans?
  - c. **Beneficiary needs:** To what extent did the planning grant meet the needs of beneficiaries, such as vulnerable groups, in partner countries? Was the planning grant able to support partner countries to target vulnerable groups, such as girls or children with disabilities?
  - d. **Capacities:** Was the planning grant able to account for or support the capacities of partner countries to develop emergency response plans? To implement emergency-response interventions?
  - e. **Continued relevance /flexibility:** To what extent was it necessary to adapt the grant design (incl. modality, focus, funding, process) during the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic? Did any specific country needs emerge during the pandemic that required revisions to the grant?

- a. To what extent was the design of the planning grant considered as flexible and adaptable to emerging needs during the pandemic (especially of girls and vulnerable groups)?

### **3. I'd now like to ask a few questions about the coherence and alignment of the planning grant.**

- a. To what extent did the planning grant enable partner countries to coordinate a joint response (with other Development Partners, incl. multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, private sector, private foundations, and key education sector stakeholders) to the COVID-19 pandemic, e.g., under the umbrella of a national response plan / national emergency response strategy?
- b. Was the design of planning grant harmonized with activities funded / implemented by other Development Partners?
- c. Did the GPE support leverage complementary support from other Development Partners / sector stakeholders (global, regional, national)?

### **4. My next questions are on the efficiency of the implementation of the planning grant.**

- a. To what extent was the planning grant convened through an inclusive consultative process, supported by an efficient dialogue process at country level?
- b. To what extent did the planning grant encounter any implementation bottlenecks (or factors that hindered implementation) after support was mobilized? If so, how adequately were these implementation bottlenecks resolved?
- c. Did planning grant-supported interventions provide a clear division of roles and responsibilities between key stakeholders in implementing activities?
- d. Were the financial resources made available through the planning grant adequate for mobilizing support to address identified challenges? From your perspective, were deployed financial resources managed efficiently by Grant Agent and country-level actors.
- e. To what extent were planning grant interventions steered through results-based management and MEL? Were available M&E instruments used for learning purposes and for steering interventions in the right direction?

### **5. What were the key results achieved through the interventions supported by the planning grant?**

- a. To what extent did the planning grant reach the expected objectives (as included in the approved application)?
- b. To what extent did the planning grant reach effectively support gender equity, position of girls, and vulnerable groups? Any examples or stories of change?
- c. To what extent did the planning grant reach effectively reach the targeted end-user groups? And have you observed any differential effects to this end (between groups of targeted beneficiaries)?
- d. To what extent was the planning grant reach instrumental in addressing pandemic related education service delivery challenges, pertaining to :
  - a. Continuation of education and (school) reopening
  - b. Learning loss
  - c. Reaching the hardest to reach / vulnerable groups.
  - d. Recovery and mitigation.
- e. Did any of the activities supported by the planning grant include innovative practices to ensure continuation of learning during the pandemic? In what ways were these practices innovative? Any sharing of best practices and learnings with other countries to this end? (nationally, or in international context)?



- 6. Reflections on observed (or potential) impact of GPE COVID-19 grants and supported interventions implemented (based on your observations, feedback received, impressions):**
  - a. To what extent did the planning grant support increase readiness / adaptive capacity of targeted end-user groups to face pandemic / other crises, ensuring continuation of their learning & education?
  - b. To what extent did the planning grant support institutionalize emergency response and preparedness in country education system planning and sector management (updated plans, capacity, funding)?
  - c. To what extent did the planning grant support result in education systems transformation? Any stories of change / impact at this level that we can learn from?
  
- 7. Do you have any key reflections on the planning grant or any lessons that can be learned from the planning grant process (application to implementation during the pandemic)?**
  - a. Do you have any lessons that can be learned from the process (from grant application to grant implementation during the pandemic)?
  - b. Do you have any recommendations for improving the grant (design, relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability) for future consideration?
  
- 8. Do you have any recommendations on specific stakeholders to be included for KIIs, and other sources of information to consider (e.g., secondary literature, databases, country documentation) for the Summative Evaluation?**
  - a. Do you have any further recommendations on key sources of information that you could share with us?
  - b. Are there any specific stakeholders or potential interviewees with relevant information on key results, experiences that we should consult?
  
- 9. Do you have any other remarks that can be useful for the Summative Evaluation to consider?**
  
- 10. Do you have any final reflections about the effectiveness of the PG, or the C19 grants as whole, for how GPE should support PCFC going forward?**

## Topic Guide: Global Grant Interviews

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**Country:**

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Stakeholder / informant:

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Contact (email):

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Date:

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This interview is part of the **Summative Evaluation of GPE's COVID-19 Support**, as mandated by the Board. It follows from an external formative evaluation which was released in 2021. This external summative evaluation is conducted by a consortium of education and evaluation specialists including Triple Line (lead), Learn More, and Technopolis. The GPE R&P team is managing this evaluation.

The Summative Evaluation seeks to:

- Understand how continuously relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, and impactful GPE's support to partner countries has been throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and what are the prospects for sustainability of outputs/outcomes financed and strategies developed, which will allow the GPE Secretariat to communicate on the level of success of GPE's COVID-related efforts.
- Identify promising practices during COVID-19 and explain their underlying success factors.
- Formulate lessons to improve its operations for crisis response.

### Key topics for discussion

**1. Could you share some information about your role, in relation to the GPE COVID-19 global grant? For instance, were you involved in its design? Implementation?**

- a. Brief recap of your role in relation to the global grant – and in particular, any involvement in the global grant application development process.
- b. Brief recap of the different roles and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the global grant.

**2. My next set of questions is related to the relevance and design, and continued relevance and design, of the global grant.**

- a. What were the impressions of the general needs and priorities of partner countries (and regions) at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with regards to knowledge on best practices, information sharing, and multi-country initiatives?
  - a. How or in what ways was the global grant designed to address these needs?
  - b. (For instance - how did the global grant assess the learning needs of partner countries?)
- b. Looking back, do you think that did the design of the global grant met these needs?
- c. In what ways did the global grant support evidence generation or knowledge exchange specifically targeted to help vulnerable groups, including related to gender equality?
  - a. Which groups and how?
- d. How well did the design of the global grant consider the available capacities in partner countries to uptake evidence and knowledge sharing?

- e. Was it necessary to adapt the grant design (incl. modality, focus, funding, process) during the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic? Did any specific needs emerge during the pandemic that required revisions to the grant and its activities? Was the grant flexible and adaptable to respond to any emerging needs?

### 3. I'd now like to ask a few questions about the coherence and alignment of the global grant.

- a. Did the activities of the global grant contribute to coordinated or harmonized activities with other development partners?
  - a. Did it help to leverage complementary support from other development partners?
  - b. (e.g., development partners could include multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, private sector, private foundations, etc.). Probe for global, regional (and if possible - national) levels"
- b. Did the global grant contribute to wider or global stakeholder engagement and collaboration? Cross-sectoral learning ?
  - a. If so - how/ in what ways?
  - b. Was there increased and improved stakeholder engagement thanks to the global grant?

### 4. My next questions are on the efficiency of the implementation of the global grant.

- a. Were there any implementation bottlenecks (or factors that hindered implementation) after support was mobilized? If so, how adequately were these implementation bottlenecks resolved?
  - a. (Consider: speed of disbursement to country-level; clear roles and responsibilities for the implementation of grant-supported activities)"
- b. Were the financial resources made available through the global grant adequate to achieve its objectives? From your perspective, were the financial resources managed or deployed efficiently?
- c. Are there any lessons learned from the monitoring processes set up for the global grant at the global level? Were you able to use monitoring evidence for learning? If so, how and on what? Did monitoring processes or evidence contribute to implementation success? Is there anything that should be done differently?

### 5. What were the key results achieved through the interventions supported by the global grant?

- a. Overall, did the global grant reach its expected objectives, as initially planned?
  - a. If not, what was it unable to achieve and why?
  - b. Were there any unanticipated or unexpected results achieved? Or not achieved?
- b. Did the global grant contribute to differentiated outcomes with regards to targeted groups?
  - a. Did it contribute to gender equality or inclusion?
  - b. If so, how and where?
- c. Did global grant contribute to any innovative practices to support continuation of learning during the pandemic?
  - a. What innovative practices took place?
  - b. In what ways were these practices innovative?
  - c. How might these innovative practices be shared as learnings?

**6. What are your reflections on observed (or potential) impact of the global grant and its supported interventions implemented (based on your observations, feedback received, impressions):**

- a. **Building back better:** Do you think that the global grant contributed to a change in how education services are delivered?
  - a. Are there any examples of how global grant outputs were consumed by partner countries to support the continuation of learning and delivery of education services?"
- b. **Systems resilience:** Do you think that the global grant support had any impact on partner countries' ability to prepare for or plan emergency responses?
  - a. Are there any examples of how global grant outputs were consumed by partner countries to support changes to the ways in which partner countries plan emergency responses or are prepared for emergencies? With regards to capacities? Funding?
- c. Is there any evidence that MoE and other institutions have used any global grant outputs at the country level? At the regional level?
- d. We are curious to know how the global grant, and GPE's COVID-19 support more broadly, might have interacted with GPE's current efforts to support systems transformation through its 2025 strategy and operating model.
  - a. Do you think that the global grant (and perhaps its process) has any implications for education systems transformation?
  - b. Were there any lessons from global grant that has implications for designing transformative reforms?
- e. Are there any stories of change / impact from the global grant that we can learn from?

**7. Do you have any key reflections on how the global grant provided support to partner countries, or any lessons that can be learned from the process of the global grant (from its proposal phase to implementation during the pandemic)?**

- a. Do you have any lessons that can be learned from the process (from grant application to grant implementation during the pandemic)?
- b. Do you have any recommendations for improving the grant (design, relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability) for future consideration?

**8. Do you have any recommendations on specific stakeholders to be included for KIIs, and other sources of information to consider (e.g., secondary literature, databases, country documentation) for the Summative Evaluation?**

- a. Do you have any further recommendations on key sources of information that you could share with us?
- b. Are there any specific stakeholders or potential interviewees with relevant information on key results, experiences that we should consult?

**9. Do you have any other remarks that can be useful for the Summative Evaluation to consider?**

## Annex 6. Bangladesh Case Study

### Background

#### Context

Bangladesh is one of the world's most populous countries and home to approximately 169 million people. Over the past few decades, Bangladesh has achieved noteworthy advancements in terms of economic growth and human development:

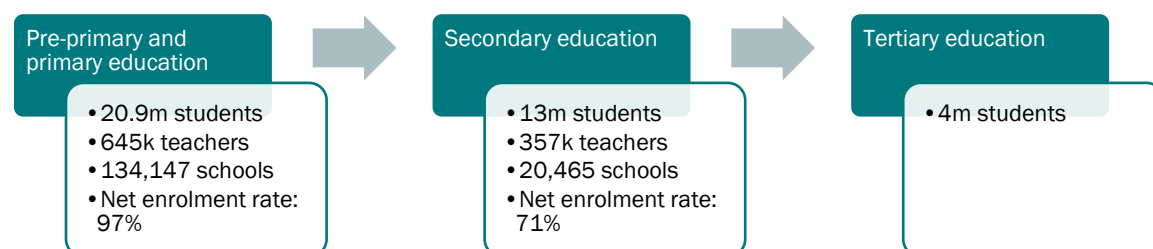
- In 2018, the per capita Gross National Income (GNI) stood at USD \$2,020,<sup>147</sup> thus surpassing the threshold for lower-middle-income countries.
- The economy has witnessed steady improvement with an average annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 6.4% between 2010-2021.
- The poverty rate has declined from 33.3% in 2000 to 13.5% in 2016, based on the international poverty line of USD \$2.15 a day.<sup>148</sup>

However, from 2017, the pace of poverty reduction began to slow despite accelerated economic growth. Similarly, the advancements in shared prosperity experienced a slowdown between 2010 and 2016, after a decade of improvement. During this period, the annual consumption growth of the bottom 40% lagged that of the general population, with a growth rate of 1.2% compared to 1.6%.<sup>149</sup>

Bangladesh has a large and complex education system. There are two ministries managing education:

- The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) covers one of the largest primary education systems of the world (pre-primary and grades 1–5), as well as non-formal education and literacy.
- The Ministry of Education (MoE) oversees secondary education (grades 6–12), as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), higher education, and religious education.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system had around 38.6 million students with 3.7 million in pre-primary education, around 17.3 million in primary school and 13 million in secondary school.<sup>150</sup>



Source: Technopolis based on World Bank data<sup>151</sup>

Bangladesh has made impressive gains in ensuring equitable access to basic education and gender parity. By 2020, Bangladesh had attained near-universal access to primary education. At the secondary school level, with nearly 6.9 million girls in secondary schools (Grades 6-10) in 2021, Bangladesh is among a few countries to achieve gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment and has more girls than boys in secondary schools.<sup>152</sup> Disparity in access across income groups also declined. However, Bangladesh still faces significant challenges concerning out-of-school

<sup>147</sup> World Bank, GNI per capita, Atlas method (current USD\$) – Bangladesh. Available at:

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD?locations=BD> [accessed 04-07-2023]

<sup>148</sup> Using 2017 Purchasing Power Parity exchange rate. See: World Bank, Country Data Bangladesh. Available at:

<https://data.worldbank.org/country/BD> [accessed 20-06-2023]

<sup>149</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

<sup>150</sup> COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Request, Bangladesh: COVID-19 School Sector Response Project (CSSR-GPE), May 11, 2020

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*

<sup>152</sup> World Bank, The World Bank in Bangladesh, Overview. Available at:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview#3> [accessed 20-06-2023]

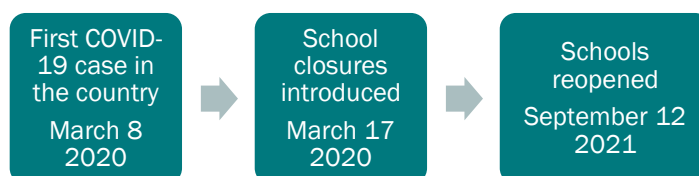
children (OOSC) and inadequate and unequal learning outcomes.<sup>153</sup> Around seven million children and adolescents (80% in rural areas) aged 6 to 16 years old were out-of-school in 2016. Furthermore, a majority of school children are not reaching their grade level competencies. There are also large differences amongst sub-populations, where students from well-off and urban areas perform better than those from poorer families and rural areas.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, Bangladesh is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and ranked the seventh extreme climate disaster risk-prone country in the world<sup>155</sup>. Unpredictable rainfall, floods and cyclones cause school closures every year, disrupting the continuity of education for Bangladesh's children.<sup>156</sup>

## Bangladesh's experience with COVID-19

Bangladesh detected its first COVID-19 case on March 8, 2020, and the government declared a nationwide shutdown, except for emergency services, starting March 26, 2020. The implementation of multiple shutdowns and subsequent lockdowns brought about drastic changes to people's lives and economic situations. According to an analysis conducted by the World Bank, household consumption experienced an 11% decline in 2020, leading to a rise in poverty with an estimated 19 million people being affected. In addition, in 2020, GDP was predicted to grow between 1.0% and 1.6%; however, as pandemic-related restrictions were gradually lifted in 2021, real GDP growth rebounded and accelerated to an estimated 7.2% in 2022, driven by strengthened private consumption and investment growth.<sup>157</sup>

Education for around 38.6 million students in Bangladesh came to a halt with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with nationwide closure of all schools. The nation-wide school closures lasted for 18 months, making Bangladesh one of the countries with the longest school closures in the world.<sup>158</sup>



The school closures had several effects on the education sector:

- Equity issues were exacerbated, particularly affecting OOSC in hard-to-reach areas, such as urban slums, hill tracts, sandbars, and wetlands
- During the school closures, the dropout rate in primary and secondary levels increased, especially among girls and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Closures further deepened the learning crisis and learning inequities: children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, children with disabilities, girls, and pre-primary-aged children were less likely to have access to technology, therefore less access to remote learning offerings - It is estimated that the share of children living in learning poverty in Bangladesh could potentially increase from 57% pre- pandemic to 76%
- Students' mental health suffered because of isolation due to social distancing and the increased levels of stress associated with the pandemic<sup>159</sup>

## Formation of the COVID-19 emergency response plan

The Bangladesh COVID-19 Response Plan for Education Sector, published in May 2020, provided a framework of strategies and interventions for the school education system to cope with the adverse impacts of COVID-19. The plan was developed through a rapid consultative process with the

<sup>153</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

<sup>154</sup> COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Request, Bangladesh: COVID-19 School Sector Response Project (CSSR-GPE), May 11, 2020

<sup>155</sup> According to the Global Climate Risk Index (2021).

<sup>156</sup> GPE, Against the odds: How Bangladesh strengthened its education system during COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/stories-of-change/against-odds-how-bangladesh-strengthened-its-education-system-during> [accessed 11-07-2023]

<sup>157</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

<sup>158</sup> ibid

<sup>159</sup> ibid

leadership of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF. The MoPME also consulted the plan with government line agencies involved in education and the local education group (LEG). The development of the plan also benefited from a desk review of a wide range of existing guidelines and global best practices.

The plan was to be treated as a living document with subsequent elaborations capturing responses and best practices from within the country and outside as implementation progressed. Existing national-level response and coordination structures were to be involved in revisions of the plan through a consultative and inclusive process involving other Ministries, line departments, development partners, academia and civil society. It also called for a more iterative planning and implementation approach with feedback loops to continuously adapt to changing circumstances.<sup>160</sup>

### Summary of the COVID-19 AF grant in Bangladesh

**Size of the grant:** USD \$14.01M

**Duration:** 26 months (October 2020 to December 2022)

#### Role and division of tasks:

- The World Bank acted as grant agent
- FCDO was the coordinating agency, and
- The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education as implementing agency

#### Main objectives/result areas/activities of the program:

The objectives of the COVID-19 School Sector Response (CSSR) Project were to:

1. Strengthen the basic school system's institutional capacity to respond to the COVID-19 crisis
2. Strengthen the basic school system's institutional capacity to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, and
3. Build resilience to face future crises from pre-primary to secondary levels.

#### Areas of emphasis of the COVID-19 grant under Mitigation and Recovery (by % grant allocation)

- Engaging in Systemic Response: 30%
- Education Systems Recovery: 31.5%
- Building System Resilience 25%
- Project Management, Results Monitoring and Communication: 12.5%

## Key Findings

### Did Bangladesh meet its AF grant objectives and achieve results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?

#### *To what extent did Bangladesh meet its planned AF grant objectives, including at country level and for gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups?*

The Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (CSSR) project enhanced the Bangladesh school system's institutional capacity to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis and build resilience to face future crises from pre-primary to secondary levels.

According to the Completion Report, the CSSR project supported around 3.26 million children (about 10% of the total number of students in pre-primary, primary and secondary education), including 1.69 million girls, continue education through distance learning programs, thus overachieving the targets.

Furthermore, at the closing of the project in December 2022, a fully functional and unified remote learning system, including the 35 grade-subject programs with complete contents through four

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<sup>160</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education & the Ministry of Education, COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan for Education Sector, May 2020

mediums – television, radio, online, and mobile – for preprimary to grade 10 and covering the curriculum for the whole academic year, had been developed. The Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) under MoPME has made the necessary provisions to integrate the remote learning system in primary education delivery offerings. However, although the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) under MoE has met the technical commitments, the necessary budget approvals are still under process. This means that the remote learning system is not yet integrated in secondary education. Nonetheless, this is expected to be achieved in the next fiscal year.<sup>161</sup>

In addition, over 150,000 hard-to-reach children without access to digital platforms were provided with physical learning packages designed for marginalized students. The government and development partners are currently exploring the potential scaling up of these physical learning packages to all government primary schools under the next primary education development operation.<sup>162</sup> According to a couple of interviewees, this is to support recovery efforts, as the packages have been used by teachers to support students' learning recovery, and to build resilience to face future crises.

As part of the recovery component of the project, subgrants were distributed to hard-to-reach government primary schools in subdistricts that are disaster-prone, remote, and have relatively higher poverty rates to enable:

- The purchase of health and safety materials to reduce infections as schools reopened - the students in these schools were less likely to re-enroll or more likely to eventually dropout of school
- School management from all recipient schools to take part in training on planning, financial management, and creating a safe learning environment<sup>163</sup>
- Education district officers, headteachers, and teachers to receive training on responding to future disaster-related school closures.

The decentralized subgrant scheme gave the schools the autonomy and resources to manage the grant in accordance with their own needs.

Altogether, through the CSSR project almost 3,000 teachers were trained on remedial education, formative and summative assessments, distance learning and mental health interventions.<sup>164</sup> The project contributed to form a pool of master trainers who are equipped to train their colleagues in these essential skills, which are critical for the system's recovery. Overall, the project thus played a significant role in supporting the professional development needs of teachers in managing post-pandemic classrooms and contributed to the recovery efforts of the education system.<sup>165</sup>

The project also conducted assessments to evaluate the foundational language and math skills of over 60,000 students with the aim to support recovery efforts. The assessment results have been used by the Directorate of Primary Education officials to develop policies tailored to students' learning needs and thus promote faster recovery.<sup>166</sup>

Finally, the CSSR project contributed to longer-term emergency planning:

- The development of a Sustainability Plan for the Remote Learning System and its inclusion in the Primary Education Development Program IV (PEDP4)
- The drafting of Standard Emergency Operation Procedures (SEOP) for the junior secondary school system. The SEOP outlines the procedures, roles, and responsibilities of various stakeholders in

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<sup>161</sup> Grant Implementation Completion Report for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants, Bangladesh COVID 19 School Sector Response project, June 30, 2023

<sup>162</sup> *ibid*

<sup>163</sup> *ibid*

<sup>164</sup> GPE, *Against the odds: How Bangladesh strengthened its education system during COVID-19*. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/stories-of-change/against-odds-how-bangladesh-strengthened-its-education-system-during> [accessed 11-07-2023]

<sup>165</sup> Grant Implementation Completion Report for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants, Bangladesh COVID 19 School Sector Response project, June 30, 2023

<sup>166</sup> *ibid*



responding to emergency situations in education. The SEOP is currently undergoing internal review and approval processes under the DSHE's management<sup>167</sup>

### Achievement of Key Objectives

#### Objective 1: Indicators and Achieved Outcomes

Indicator	End Target	Achievement
Number (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) of children supported with inclusive distance learning programs (disaggregated by gender)	Total: 2,500,000 (9%) Boys: 1,205,000 (9%) Girls: 1,295,000 (9%)	Total: 3,259,281 (12%) Boys: 1,572,120 (12%) Girls: 1,687,162 (12%)
Number of grade-subject programs with complete and appropriate digital contents supported for the whole academic year for Grade 1-10	35	35
Number of hard-to-reach children provided with learning materials/packages	150,000	150,933

#### Objective 2: Indicators and Achieved Outcomes

Indicator	End Target	Achievement
Number (and %) of children who were enrolled in grant-supported preprimary and primary level government schools before the COVID-19 pandemic have returned to schools	Total: 3,240,000 (31%) Boys: 1,590,000 (31%) Girls: 1,650,000 (31%)	Total: 4,113,296 (39.4%) Boys: 2,080,840 (40.6%) Girls: 2,032,455 (38.2%)
Number (and %) of primary schools reopened following implementation of Safe School Reopening Plan	20,000 (31%)	19,965 (31%)
Number (and %) of children in program area of children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure	60,000 (1.5%)	62,703 (1.6%)
Number (and %) of teachers in program area of teachers trained on remedial education, distance learning strategies, and formative and summative assessment practices	2,000 (0.6%)	2,950 (0.9%)

#### Objective 3: Indicators and Achieved Outcomes

Indicator	End Target	Achievement
Remote learning system integrated into the basic education school system	Remote learning System fully functional and integrated into the basic school system	Remote Learning System is fully functional and partially integrated into the basic school system

<sup>167</sup> ibid

<b>Total number of Beneficiaries<sup>168</sup> (disaggregated by gender) supported by the grant</b>	Total: 35,900,000 Boys: 17,300,000 Girls: 18,600,000	Total: 34,939,822 Boys: 16,747,355 Girls: 18,192,467
<b>Sustainability Plan for the Remote Learning System in place for basic school system</b>	Sustainability Plan for the Remote Learning System developed and included in Government's regular program	Sustainability Plan for the Remote Learning System developed, and remote learning activities are included in primary program PEDP4
<b>Standard Emergency Operation Procedures for junior secondary school system prepared</b>	Standard Emergency Operation Procedures for junior secondary school system prepared	Standard Emergency Operation Procedures for junior secondary system prepared

### Mitigation and recovery-focused components:

- To enable teachers to effectively instruct and teach according to their students' specific needs, the project provided training to 1,993 primary teachers on how to conduct formative and summative assessments and remedial education, as well as how to analyze assessment data.
- A total of 1,993 primary teachers received training on mental health and stress management. This kind of training can translate into a healthy learning environment for students and thus positively affect learning outcomes, increase resilience, and improve students' ability to succeed in school and life.
- 957 government primary and secondary teachers received training on distance learning, including how to facilitate online classes and use open access tools.
- The project trained 277 primary and secondary level teachers on lesson content mapping, script development, and content preparation and delivery skills.

### ***Were there any differential effects and results of the AF grant with respect to vulnerable groups and particularly girls within those groups?***

No differential effects and results with respect to vulnerable groups and girls were noted.

### ***Which innovative practices were piloted, and with what level of success?***

Prior to the project, pre-recorded lessons were only broadcasted on television and operated on a small scale by the Bangladesh government. Other mediums such as radio, online, and mobile were not developed at that time. Furthermore, these initial lessons lacked structure and were not aligned with the curriculum. The project addressed these shortcomings by supporting the development of 35 grade subjects spanning from pre-primary to Grade 10. To provide comprehensive coverage of the academic year, each grade subject was delivered through four mediums: television, radio, online, and mobile. This multimodal approach represented a significant achievement, considering the previous absence of remote learning materials and the processes to create them.<sup>169</sup>

In addition, the CSSR project created physical learning packages for pre-primary and primary students in hard-to-reach areas without access to digital platforms. These materials, designed for marginalized students, improved the government's crisis response by ensuring inclusivity through a medium that had not been used previously. As highlighted by several interviewees, this was the first time such

<sup>168</sup> The beneficiaries the CSSR project were students of pre-primary (around 3.7 million), primary level (around 17.3 million) and secondary students (13 million), schoolteachers (around 685,400 pre-primary and primary teachers and 357,000 secondary teachers)

<sup>169</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

packages were developed and distributed in Bangladesh, marking a significant achievement for the CSSR project that will provide long-term support for learning recovery in primary education.<sup>170</sup>

## What will be sustained and what is the (potential for) impact resulting from the AF grant?

### ***To what extent are beneficiaries able to face future crises and ensure the continuation of their education?***

According to the AF grant completion reports, two rounds of a sample-based compliance monitoring surveys were conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) in 1,006 and 1,032 CSSR grant recipient government primary schools respectively. Among the sampled schools, the surveys found that:

- The surveyed subgrant recipient schools were able to maintain more than 90% of enrollment compared to pre-pandemic levels
- Around 99% of surveyed personnel revealed that the support was helpful for maintaining health safety protocols, and
- 70% emphasized that the financial support was sufficient
- 99.8% of school management found the subgrant and training received critical in maintaining health and safety protocols

Additionally, a tracking survey of 32,724 primary and 18,147 secondary (total 50,871) students in 1,604 schools (1,050 primary and 554 secondary) to assess the impact and gather feedback on the remote learning materials developed under the CSSR was conducted in 2023 by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). The survey revealed that 57.2% of students found the CSSR content broadcasted on television to be useful. There is also evidence that the materials are of higher quality than the remote learning materials available prior to the CSSR project. For example, when students were asked to share their experience of remote learning by comparing the quality of the CSSR content with the quality of the content from a year ago, most students<sup>171</sup> expressed that the newly broadcasted content was more engaging and resourceful.<sup>172</sup>

There are ongoing efforts to disseminate remote learning content effectively as part of the learning recovery process. For example, the capacity to create and disseminate digital content is currently being applied and expanded through the government's initiatives. The television and radio content is broadcasted six times a week for all grades, strengthening the basic school system's institutional capacity to respond to future crises and positioning them to develop more content as needed.<sup>173</sup> In addition, a couple of interviewees indicated that the broadcasting of contents could positively impact learning outcomes and support in addressing learning loss.

Despite these positive aspects, the uptake of the remote learning content was reported to be low. For example, when schools were closed, 75% of the surveyed students reported not watching educational television. When schools reopened, this increased to 88%. The findings are similar for the online/digital platforms. Furthermore, 20% of students reported that the quality of remote learning was much lower than learning in the classroom.<sup>174</sup> According to a report from the World Bank about the global effects of COVID-19 on human capital, which included data from Bangladesh, there are several explanations for student disengagement from learning during COVID-19 related school closures, such as a lack of engagement between students and teachers through remote learning. Furthermore, parents generally lacked the time and/or skills to compensate for this loss of engagement. In addition, decline in student mental health could also be an important factor for student disengagement from learning. It is worth noting that these issues were not just confined to

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<sup>170</sup> *ibid*

<sup>171</sup> Results of the Tracking and Assessment of Remote Learning System (BIDS 2023) survey is not publicly available, and the completion reports do not provide a figure for this response.

<sup>172</sup> Grant Implementation Completion Report for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants, Bangladesh COVID 19 School Sector Response project, June 30, 2023

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>174</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

low- and middle-income countries but also affected high-income countries with relatively well-functioning remote learning systems.<sup>175</sup>

### ***Did GPE support result in 'building-back-better systems', longer-term solutions addressing learning gaps?***

COVID-19 profoundly disrupted education in Bangladesh, but it also opened an opportunity to build back a better education system. While the CSSR project supported Bangladesh in enhancing the school system's institutional capacity to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, it also played a crucial role in building long-term resilience. This was achieved by equipping teachers and schools with the necessary resources to navigate future emergencies.

A key achievement that resulted in building back a better system was the training provided to the teachers and education administrators. Stakeholder consultations carried out for the preparation of this case study highlighted that these training opportunities strengthened the education system's capacity to continue delivering education during potential future school closures:

- Primary and secondary-level teachers were trained in lesson content mapping, script development, and content preparation and delivery skills and now have the competence to independently develop content and train others on the development process.
- Training on mental health and stress management has the potential to be translated into a healthy learning environment for students, thus positively impacting learning outcomes and addressing learning loss.
- The training of primary teachers on how to conduct formative and summative assessments was the first time such trainings took place in Bangladesh. As a result, a new training program and complementary training manuals have been developed and will be of use to future recovery efforts.<sup>176</sup>

Interviewees also highlighted that the physical learning packages, created for students without access to digital platforms have been used by other government primary schools to support students' learning recovery. This has prompted the government and development partners to explore the possibilities of scaling up the learning packages to all government primary schools to be used as supplementary materials. Several interviewees indicated that the most pressing issue is securing the funding needed to realize this commitment.

#### ***5.1.1.1 To what extent have systems institutionalized response and preparedness in their planning and sector management?***

Through the project, the government's capacity to rebound from future crises improved, as both the processes for creating remote learning materials and the materials themselves have been developed and are readily available for deployment in response to potential future crises. As emphasized by several interviewees, one of the main achievements of the CSSR project is the development of a fully functional and unified remote learning system, including the 35 grade-subject programs with complete content for Grade 1–10 and covering the curriculum for the whole academic year. This means that the remote learning system can be deployed in response to emergencies at any time. This was the case, according to an interviewee, when some areas were recently expected to be severely affected by a cyclone, and the government was ready to use the contents in shelters to ensure the continuation of education for affected groups.

Importantly, most of the CSSR project activities - especially the digital and printed learning packages and teacher training materials - were conducted or expanded under the sector program of the Government of Bangladesh, PEDP4.

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<sup>175</sup> Schady, Norbert, Alaka Holla, Shwetlena Sabarwal, Joana Silva, and Andres Yi Chang. 2023. Collapse and Recovery: How the COVID-19 Pandemic Eroded Human Capital and What to Do about It. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1901-8. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/6fb17cf5-1fad-4147-b7bb-691f63c29541/content> [accessed 14-08-2023]

<sup>176</sup> *ibid*

Building on the advancements achieved, the government has also prepared the "National Policy Framework for Blended Learning", which is currently under approval, indicating that remote learning will be an integral part of both primary and secondary education sectors.<sup>177</sup>

## Lessons Learned

The CSSR project has been an example of successful collaboration for the first time between the two education ministries, development partners and civil society working together, in tackling the pandemic's impact on education in a holistic manner.<sup>178</sup> Several interviewees stated that the close involvement of government stakeholders in the implementation of the CSSR project facilitated ownership and thus sustainability of these efforts, with content delivery continuing even after project closure. Furthermore, as other development partners were involved in the process, this has ensured greater visibility and awareness of the project activities which has strengthened the commitment among development partners in supporting the sustainability of the outputs.

According to an interviewee, another lesson learned was that decentralizing support services through a subgrant scheme helped to advance implementation by giving schools the autonomy and resources to manage the grant in accordance with their own needs. The decentralized subgrant scheme enabled schools to purchase the products needed, such as health and safety materials, rather than having it dictated centrally. It also equipped school management and teachers with the necessary skills to independently manage fiduciary and procurement issues. This ensured ownership at the school-level and resulted in more efficient implementation.<sup>179</sup>

## Stories of Change

The CSSR project created physical learning packages for pre-primary and primary students in hard-to-reach areas without access to digital platforms. These materials, designed for marginalized students, improved the government's crisis response by ensuring inclusivity through a new medium. An unintended outcome of this activity was the increased demand for and uptake of physical learning packages by headteachers and teachers from other government primary schools to support students' learning recovery, as highlighted by several interviewees. The positive feedback from schools and headteachers has prompted the government and development partners to explore the potential scaling up of the learning packages to all schools under the next primary education development operation.

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<sup>177</sup> World Bank, Implementation Completion and Results Report for the Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE), June 21, 2023

<sup>178</sup> World Bank, Feature Story June 9, 2023, How schools in Bangladesh emerged as more resilient after the COVID-19 pandemic, 2023. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/06/09/how-schools-in-bangladesh-emerged-as-more-resilient-after-the-covid-19-pandemic> [accessed 26-06-2023]

<sup>179</sup> Grant Implementation Completion Report for COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Grants, Bangladesh COVID-19 School Sector Response project, June 30, 2023

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# Annex 7. Ghana Case Study

## Background

### Context

Since 2000, Ghana experienced rapid economic growth and the country was considered the fastest growing economy in sub-Saharan Africa in 2011. As a result, from 2011 Ghana was re-classified as a lower middle-income country,<sup>180</sup> implying a graduation in economic development status. The change in status had implications for development aid provided by several donors. For example, it affected Ghana's eligibility for concessional finance from the World Bank's International Development Association, as well as triggered a shift in the thematic focus of support from development partners away from traditional sectors of support. Presently, Ghana has a population reaching almost 31 million<sup>181</sup>, with a Gross National Income of USD \$71.5B (2022)<sup>182</sup> and ranked 118<sup>th</sup> on the World Bank's Doing Business ranking.<sup>183</sup>

Despite the significant economic growth and reaching middle-income status, Ghana continues to face persistent issues such as high unemployment rates, income inequality, and an over-reliance on commodity exports. In terms of income inequality, a significant wealth gap between urban and rural areas remains, particularly between northern Ghana and the more urbanized regions in the south. Access to social services, such as healthcare and education, varies across regions, with rural communities often having limited resources and social services infrastructure at their disposal. The government's reform agenda includes plans to diversify the economy, reduce poverty, and tackle corruption, but implementation progress is stalled. Furthermore, Ghana's growth has been significantly impacted by external factors, including the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has disrupted sectors like tourism, trade, transport and energy with inflated prices for oil and gasoline.

In terms of information and communication technology (ICT), Ghana had made progress in expanding access. Mobile phone usage is widespread, particularly in urban areas, and the country witnessed an increase in internet penetration. However, challenges remain, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to ICT infrastructure is limited and digital literacy is stalled. Prior to COVID-19, the Ghana Statistical Service carried out a survey in 2017/2018<sup>184</sup> which established that only 22% of households in Ghana have access to internet at home, while only 15% of households have access to a computer. Households have greater access to radio (coverage 57.2%) and television (coverage 60.4%), with radio coverage more widespread in areas with higher levels of economic deprivation.

Overall, efforts are being made to improve access to social services and bridge gaps. Since 2010, Ghana has made substantial progress in advancing children's access to basic education. The number of primary schools increased significantly, improving access to education. Overall enrolment at the kindergarten (KG) and primary levels have increased to over 100%, with gender parity achieved at all levels of basic and secondary education.<sup>185</sup> Ghana has a nearly 100% primary school completion rate. Between 2017 to 2021, the average annual number of teachers employed in public schools (KG, primary and junior secondary together) amounted to approximately 240,000 (see table below).

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<sup>180</sup> As per the World Bank's country classification system. See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2011/07/18/ghana-looks-to-retool-its-economy-as-it-reaches-middle-income-status>

<sup>181</sup> As per the Ghana's 2021 Population and Housing Census.

<sup>182</sup> Compared to 2000 (USD \$4.8B) and 2010 (USD \$31.7B), this marks an impressive growth. See also: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.CD?locations=GH>

<sup>183</sup> According to the World Bank's Doing Business (2020) ranking

<sup>184</sup> Ghana Statistical Service (2018). *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2017/18)*. Survey Findings Report. Accra, Ghana: GSS.

<sup>185</sup> Ministry of Education, Ghana (2018). *Education Sector Analysis 2018*. Preceding the Education Sector Plan 2018-2030.

## Enrolment in education programs in Ghana during the COVID-19 pandemic

Enrolment & GER	2019			2020 <sup>186</sup>			2021 <sup>187</sup>		
	Total	GER	NER	Total	GER	NER	Total	GER	NER
Pre-Primary	1,852,028	-	-	1,867,929	-	-	1,820,443	-	-
Primary Education	4,549,875	105%	93%	4,584,381	103%	88%	4,729,514	105%	74%
Lower Secondary Education	1,678,132	85%	84%	1,751,901	88%	87%	1,819,213	89%	91%
Upper Secondary Education	1,173,028	63%	69%	1,266,343	67%	71%	1,344,261	70%	66%
Tertiary Education	496,148	-	-	547,045	-	-	580,751	-	-
Total Learners <sup>188</sup> :	9,751,230	-	-	10,017,599	-	-	10,294,182	-	-

Source: UNESCO UIS Database (<http://data.uis.unesco.org>)

However, while access to education has improved, providing quality education remains a challenge and many children fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills at the end of primary school according to a recent UNICEF study:<sup>189</sup>

- Approximately 83% of all Ghanaians in the age group 15-24 years old are literate. Of those whose highest level of education is primary, only 14% are literate.
- Furthermore, only 12% of all 15- to 24-year-old reported engagement in a form of ICT activity, with wide disparities between rich and poor learners.
- Youth ICT skills are driven by educational attainment, with the share of youth performing any ICT-related activity increasing from 6% per cent in lower secondary education to 23% in upper secondary education, and to 61% for students attending tertiary education.

In an effort to improve the quality and outcomes of education, in 2019/2020, the Ministry of Education (MoE) started the implementation of a national curriculum reform program, aligned with the education reform agenda “Empowering the Next Generation”, as outlined in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) for 2018-2030.

The reforms outlined in the ESP are expected to enhance progress in attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and in particular, to support the improvement of learning outcomes, especially at the pre-tertiary levels. The three main priorities of the education reforms included in the ESP are improved learning outcomes, enhanced accountability, and improved equity at all levels of the education sector. MoE is leading the reforms in the sector, through its various executive agencies, such as the Ghana Education Service (GES), National Teaching Council (NTC), National Council for Tertiary Education, and the National Accreditation Board among others.

### Ghana's experience with COVID-19

The first two cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Ghana on March 12, 2020. The severity of the situation gradually became evident when COVID-19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of National Concern, which effectively triggered the activation of emergency response protocols from government and development partners, aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating the impact of the disease on health systems.

<sup>186</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic schools were closed for 10 months between March 2020 until January 2021.

<sup>187</sup> Schools re-opened (with a new Academic year) from January 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Not including early childhood education and development programs.

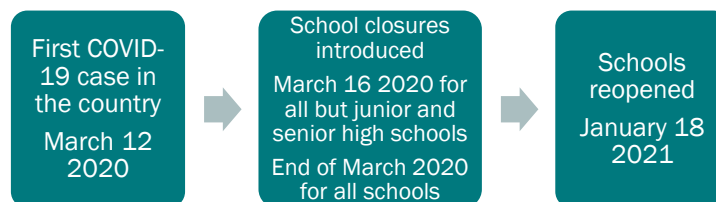
<sup>189</sup> UNICEF (2020). MICS-EAGLE (Education Analysis for Global Learning and Equity) Initiative - 2020 MICS-EAGLE Ghana Education Fact Sheets. Supported by GPE KIX.



Initial response actions deployed included launch of public health awareness campaigns, enhanced surveillance, case detection and case management, contact tracing, closure of international borders and the suspension of international flights, a ban on social gatherings and events, and the immediate closure of all education institutions.<sup>190</sup>

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana has reported 171,653 cases of COVID-19 infections and a total of 1,462 COVID-19 deaths.<sup>191</sup> In Ghana, COVID-19 disproportionately impacted poor and vulnerable populations, further exacerbating poverty. Overall, a staggering 77% of the population reported a decline in household income during the first three months of the pandemic.<sup>192</sup>

With the unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic, general progress in implementing education reforms stalled and achievements experienced a set-back. One of the responses to slow down the spread of COVID-19 included the closure of all schools in



Ghana, effective from March 12, 2020, onwards. The initial school closure directive allowed final year students in both Junior High School (JHS3) and Senior High School (SHS3) to continue attending school to prepare for their exams with schools ensuring that social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols were observed. However, by end of March 2020, the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) decided to indefinitely postpone the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), upon which GES sent home all JHS3 and SHS3 students until further notice.

School closures fully disrupted the delivery of teaching and learning, impacting 10 million learners and students, which included approximately 9.2 million learners in basic education, including kindergarten, primary schools, and secondary schools; and approximately 500,000 students in tertiary education.<sup>193</sup>

Schools remained closed for a period of 10 months. It is estimated that approximately 4.5 million Ghanaian students from different levels engaged in different forms of remote learning (reflecting approximately 45% of total school going population). Although schools reopened and in-person learning resumed in January 2021, after back-to-school campaigns and taking safety precautions, the COVID-19 pandemic and the school closures had an impact on overall education progress, with significant learning losses observed among all students.

### Formation of Ghana's COVID-19 emergency response plan

With support from UNICEF and GPE's planning grant, the Government of Ghana developed and activated the COVID-19 emergency response relatively early in April 2020 and established an Inter-Ministerial Presidential Taskforce. This included re-purposing preparedness and response protocols<sup>194</sup> that were developed in response to the Ebola crisis in 2014, implementing these at national, regional, district and community levels.

The President ordered the closure of all schools in Ghana and requested the MoE and the Ministry of Communication to develop and roll-out distance and remote learning programs for all learners. In response, a joint team was established, comprised of representatives from:

- MoE
- GES
- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA)

<sup>190</sup> Sarkodie et al., 2021

<sup>191</sup> Officially reported cases since 3 January 2020, until 5 July 2023. See also: World Health Organisation (WHO): <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gh>

<sup>192</sup> World Bank, see also Ghana COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/07/06/covid-19-in-ghana-raising-awareness-promoting-safety-and-protecting-essential-services>

<sup>193</sup> Ministry of Education, Ghana (2020). COVID19 Coordinated Education Response Plan for Ghana.

<sup>194</sup> Mainly health related protocols, including public awareness campaigns.

- The Ghana Library Authority (GhLA)
- The Center for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS)
- The National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE), and
- The University of Ghana (UoG).

Furthermore, the MoE and GES coordinated their response with key players in the education sector including the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) and development partners to prevent duplication of efforts in responding to the pandemic. The ESWG together with development partners conducted a mapping study to assess the range of possible responses and gaps towards mitigating the expected impact of COVID-19 on education and how development partners could mobilize their support in a coordinated way, including division of labor.

For the COVID-19 accelerated funding (AF) grant, the nominated grant agent (World Bank) developed the grant application in collaboration with the MoE. The COVID-19 AF grant application was prepared and discussed in early April 2020 and a draft proposal was presented by the World Bank Task Team Leader to a joint meeting of the ESWG, including the MoE, GES, GhLA, CENDLOS, the Reform Secretariat, and all development partners and approved by the ESWG and LEG in late April, ahead of submission through the co-coordinating agency (the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)) for appraisal by the GPE Secretariat.

### Summary of the COVID-19 AF grant in Ghana

**Program Title AF Grant:** Additional Financing to Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project (GALOP)

**Size of grant:** USD \$15M (including USD \$262,500 Agency Fees; 1.75% of Grant),

**Duration:** 15 Months (July 2020 to November 2021)

**Role and division of tasks between grant agent / coordinating agency / implementing agent:** World Bank was nominated as preferred grant agent, as it was already in charge of implementing an ongoing education program supported through GPE funding. The COVID-19 AF grant was included as part of GALOP195, which was restructured to include an additional COVID-19 response component (Component 5). Both UNICEF and FCDO played the role of coordinating agency during the COVID-19 pandemic. The activities under GALOP were implemented by the MoE and GES with support from other actors and local partners.

### Main objectives/result areas/activities of the project:

GALOP Component 5: Supporting the Education Response Plan to COVID-19 in Ghana for continued learning, recovery and resilience in basic schools

#### Sub-Component 5.1: Strengthening remote education service delivery (USD \$6.7M):

- Support to content reform and delivery including the development and deployment of accessible and inclusive tutorials through TV and radio (including subtitles, sign language, captions); establishment of an online and offline (toll-free) helpdesk for teacher and student remote assistance; deployment of pre-loaded content devices (targeting 10,000 students with special education needs); and uploading of all education content on enhanced Digital Library linked to the Learning Management System (LMS).

<sup>195</sup> GALOP is co-financed by a GPE Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) of USD \$24.4M and an IDA credit of USD \$150M. GALOP was restructured to incorporate an Education Outcomes Fund Additional Financing of a USD \$25.5M grant from the Global Partnership for Results-Based Approaches (GPRBA) Trust Fund and USD \$4.5M financing from the Government of Ghana. The COVID-19 Education Response AF grant was included in GALOP (Component 5) supplementary to the ongoing education sector response, making use of the established financing mechanism of the performance based GALOP, allowing the accelerated disbursement of critical funds to the Government of Ghana (i.e., a form of budget support, conditional on performance within the project).

- Support to in-service teacher training to improve teacher capacity in digital literacy and the delivery of lessons through innovative platforms.

### Sub-Component 5.2: Support to safe schools reopening and re-entry (USD \$4.1M):

- Support to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions, including a situational analysis of WASH facilities in schools, sanitization of schools for re-opening, the provision of hand washing facilities (e.g., Veronica Buckets, soap) or latrines in 10,000 basic education schools by supplementing school grants, the minor rehabilitation of WASH facilities, and the provision of boreholes in select schools (up to 100 schools).
- Public awareness and communications campaign on public health and safety targeting students currently out of school, engaging communities on safeguards against gender-based violence and adolescent pregnancy during the intermittent school closures, and provide psychosocial support for students, parents and communities. Organization of enrolment drives and back to school campaigns once schools re-open, with emphasis on preventing the dropout of girls, children with disabilities and children from low-income households.
- Provision of remedial and accelerated learning support for at-risk and poor performing students once schools reopen, with the rollout of remedial education in 5,000 schools (on top of the 10,000 schools already targeted by GALOP).

### Sub-Component 5.3: Strengthening management for education sector resilience (USD \$4M):

- Support for the development of a first phase of a state-of-the-art Learning Management System LMS (GES in coordination with GhLA) to enable teachers to create supplementary content and deliver online instruction. The enablement of online capacity development and collaboration through professional learning communities. The enablement of remote student assessment, monitoring, and tracking. Engagement of parents and communities in student learning.
- Support for the establishment of a National Knowledge and Skills Bank (NKSB) to enable the curation of all education content linked to the new curriculum (incl. e-textbooks, interactive lessons, video lessons and audio content). Capacity building for the CENDLOS and GhLA to adapt, curate and develop learning content and teacher training materials.
- Alignment of policies around technology usage in schools to facilitate teaching and learning, including: a) review of the draft GES Policies on Technology Use in Schools, Data and Child Protection Policy, Bring Your Own Device Policy, and Policy on Digital Intelligence and Digital Quotient for staff and students; b) implementation of a rapid survey on teacher and student accessibility to mobile SMS, internet, TV, radio, social media and other digital technology; and c) development of an operational plan to expand internet connectivity to all basic education schools and coordinate with telecommunications companies to zero rate educational materials, incl. access to the LMS and the NKSB.

### Alignment of the grant against the themes of Mitigation and Recovery during COVID-19<sup>196</sup>

	Mitigation	Recovery	Total
Equity	USD \$650,000 (54%)	USD \$550,000 (46%)	USD \$1.2 (8%)
Learning	USD \$6.1M (92%)	USD \$500,000 (08%)	USD \$6.6 (45%)
System Resilience and Re-opening	USD \$2M (29%)	USD \$5M (71%)	USD \$7M (47%)
<b>Total:</b>	<b>USD \$8.75 (59%)</b>	<b>USD \$6.05 (41%)</b>	<b>USD \$14.8 (100%)</b>

### Subsectors targeted and key thematic areas addressed within grant:

- GALOP primarily targeted **basic education schools (pre-primary, primary and junior high school)** focusing on the 10,000 least performing schools in the country. The COVID-19 AF grant was used for GALOP Component 5, which was focused on **developing, delivering and curating remote learning content** (through TV, radio, pre-loaded content devices) including corresponding teaching methods and alternative approaches to education delivery (**in-service teacher training in digital literacy and digital delivery of classes**).

<sup>196</sup> Following classification as per the GPE COVID-19 AF grant costing coding database.

- Upon school re-opening, a program for **remedial and accelerated learning support** for at-risk and poor performing students was rolled out to 5,000 schools.

## Key Findings

### Did Ghana meet its AF grant objectives and achieve results, especially in terms of gender equality and for girls and vulnerable children?

#### ***To what extent did Ghana meet its planned AF grant objectives, including at country-level and for gender equality/girls and vulnerable groups?***

Overall, the targets set in the GALOP results framework tied to Component 5 were met. The activities were geared towards improving basic education (pre-primary to JHS3) and targeted 10,000 low-performing<sup>197</sup> public basic schools across Ghana, which include large population of children from vulnerable backgrounds. The schools were selected based on a composite ranking of basic education certificate examination (BECE) score, district level poverty index, the percentage of trained teachers, and average class size. In addition, interventions were also provided for vulnerable children for inclusive education outcomes, specifically targeted at students with special education needs, through the provision of 3,000 pre-loaded content devices to 28 special schools reaching a total of 7,070 students. Apart from the above targeting of interventions (GALOP-based school status and for special schools), interventions were considered as rather generic and not targeted to specific needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable children.<sup>198</sup>

To supplement the radio and TV broadcasts and online learning content, additional provision was made for children from rural and remote areas as well as for those from poor economic backgrounds with limited access to the internet, TV or radio or other technologies. Approximately 2.9 million sets of printed learning material packages were distributed to schools between December 2020 and February 2021. However, as schools re-opened in January 2021, this suggests that during the bulk of the school closure period (March to December 2020), some of the intended targets of the program had limited access to its remote learning interventions, as there is little data on the actual reach of the broadcasted school programmes on TV and radio and the printed materials only arrived just before schools reopened.

The safe school reopening and the back-to-school campaign were considered a success by interviewed MoE and key sector stakeholders. The back-to-school campaign included key messages on the importance of continuity of education with a specific focus on girls and children with disabilities, and prevention of gender-based violence and early pregnancy. The campaigns were broadcasted for at least 15 days across TV and radio platforms in all 16 regions in Ghana, within 60 days of government reopening schools. The project reported that over 98% of learners returned<sup>199</sup> to school after organizing back-to-school campaigns and enrolment drives, and after deploying measures at schools to enable the safe return to school (including WASH interventions in schools).

However, in some project components, progress was slower and set objectives were not fully achieved, particularly under sub-component 5.3 (Strengthening management for education sector resilience). The development of the Ghana NKSBS was not completed. A Terms of Reference (ToR) was prepared for the development of the infrastructure for the NKSBS and the platform will be further developed under the IDA funded Ghana e-Transform Project implemented by the Ministry of Communications and Digitalization. Furthermore, the review of the draft GES policies on Technology Use in Schools, Data and Child Protection Policy, Bring-Your-Own-Device Policy, and Policy on Digital Intelligence and Digital Quotient for staff and students was not completed within the grant period as envisaged. The MoE established a program to extend internet connectivity to all schools in Ghana; presently, internet connectivity has been extended to all senior high schools and the next phase of the program will cover all secondary-level technical and vocational institutions. Although the MoE is

<sup>197</sup> Out of the approximately 25,000 basic schools in Ghana.

<sup>198</sup> As noted in the Project Completion Report.

<sup>199</sup> Several interviewees indicated that despite the high rate of children returning back to school reported by policy makers, it appears that when talking to teachers, principals, and district administrators, it was observed in the classroom that a substantial numbers of children, predominantly boys, did not return to school especially in rural areas, as they continued to work in activities found during COVID pandemic to supplement household income.

committed to expanding connectivity to basic schools and is having discussions with telecom providers, the roll-out / expansion of internet connectivity to all basic schools is still a pending issue.

### Achievement of Key Objectives

The main objectives of the COVID-19 AF grant were met, with the exception of Sub-Component 5.3 (establishment of Ghana National Knowledge and Skills Bank, and review of ICT in Education policy components not completed). Both the mitigation and recovery-focused components achieved their targets, all equal to or surpassing 100% of their set targets (see above indicators).

#### Standard indicators' aggregate targets met as part of the AF grant:

No.	Indicator	End Target	Achievement
<b>Remote Education</b>			
1	Number of lesson modules developed for radio, TV or online dissemination for basic education (disaggregated by grade and subject)	100	1,641
2	Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) supported with distance or homebased learning (disaggregated by gender and children with disabilities)	3,500,000	4,446,000
3	Number of teachers trained in using distance learning methods (disaggregated by gender)	40,000	40,042
<b>Safe school reopening and re-entry</b>			
4	Number of children (and % of children in the relevant age-group in the program area) provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts, gender-based violence, and issues related to unequal social norms (disaggregated by gender and children with disabilities)	60%	74%
5	Number of teachers (and % of teachers in program area) trained to provide accelerated programs to mitigate loss of learning during school closure (disaggregated by gender)	40,000	70,607 (74%)
6	Percentage of children previously enrolled who return to school once schools reopen (disaggregated by gender and children with disabilities) (Recovery Core Indicator 1)	80%	100%
7	Number of children in targeted schools provided access to functional handwashing facilities (cumulative)	1,500,000 (19%)	5,806,803 (74%)
8	Percentage of teachers who return to school once schools reopen (disaggregated by gender)	85%	85%
9	Number of children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure (disaggregated by gender and children with disabilities)	500,000	5,806,803
<b>Management for education sector resilience</b>			
10	Establishment of functional Learning Management System	Yes	Yes
11	Government policy on Technology Use in Schools and Bring Your Own Device reviewed and endorsed	Yes	No

#### Were there any differential effects and results of the AF grants with respect to vulnerable groups and particularly girls within those groups?

No substantial differential effects have been observed within achieved results by the project. According to the project completion report (*Table 3: Targets and achievements by gender*), interventions equally reached girls and boys (approximately 50/50% balanced distribution). The back-to-school campaigns included dissemination of gender-targeted messages on importance of continuity of education focusing on girls, and prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) and early pregnancy. Furthermore, the project reached children with disabilities

(hearing impaired and visually impaired children) by providing 3,000 pre-loaded content devices to 28 special schools reaching a total of 7,070 vulnerable students.<sup>200</sup>

### **Which innovative practices were piloted and with what level of success?**

The planned LMS system, Edmodo (<https://www.edmodo.com.gh>), was developed and activated. The first version was developed in November 2020, but the operational version was launched during 2021 i.e., after school re-opening launched. Key users, including teachers, learners, parents, school administrators of the LMS, are able to register for access to its content. However, interviewed stakeholders involved in the development and operationalization of the LMS observed that the initial uptake and utilization of the LMS was relatively low among students and teachers, partly since teachers and students may not be fully digitally adapted, lack adequate ICT equipment (i.e., computers, laptops, tablets), or simply do not have sufficient funds to pay for internet data. To resolve teacher access to ICT equipment, the government decided to provide all teachers with a laptop<sup>201</sup> (not free of charge, as teachers had to contribute to the cost of purchase). However, some of the functionality of the LMS was still under development and will require substantial future support in terms of maintenance, continuous updating of content, enhancing user functions, general connectivity of the platform, internet access for users online and offline, as well as connections in basic schools, and improving general awareness among the intended users of the platform. To stimulate the utilization of the LMS, NTC provided training of trainers courses to a selection of teachers who already possessed ICT skills, who in turn each provided training to 50 other teachers (totaling 2,500 teachers to induce training on the LMS). Furthermore, professional development points (required for promotion) are awarded to teachers who complete training through the LMS.

Another key feature of the COVID-19 AF grant included the organization of back-to-school campaigns and enrolment drives. Although not considered as a “technological innovation,” this activity has been “re-invented” and is now used beyond the pandemic on a regular basis to ensure parents enroll and send their children to school. It is seen as an effective tool in returning (out-of-school) children to school and ensuring higher levels of enrolment in education, as evidenced by the higher enrolment seen in 2021 as compared to 2020 (see table above).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government developed remote learning content and broadcasted school classes via TV and radio. The actual attendance and number of learners reached through these alternative channels for education delivery remained ambiguous throughout the pandemic. It was difficult to monitor the extent to which learners actually had access and whether children were actively participating (i.e., knew how to participate or received guidance on how to utilize the broadcasted programmes for learning purposes). Similarly, ICT penetration (household connectivity and access to devices) remains limited in Ghana, especially for children attending basic education levels. Therefore, the utilization of ICT tools by these children to support learning is also questionable. Once schools re-opened in January 2021, learners went back to school to attend in-person education. Pre-loaded content devices were provided to approximately 7,000 children with special education needs e.g., hearing and visually impaired children

### **Innovative Practices Piloted and Levels of Success**

**The AF grant supported the deployment of innovative practices to ensure continued learning during the pandemic,** especially those specifically beneficial for vulnerable groups, girls, and gender equality. It included a provision to reach physically impaired children (hearing and visually impaired) during COVID-19, through the provision of 3,000 pre-loaded content devices to 28 special schools reaching a total of 7,070 students.

The **innovative Edmodo LMS has the potential to be scaled up** and become an essential education platform and major learning resource for all grade levels in the Ghana education system once fully

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<sup>200</sup> The actual utilization of the pre-loaded content devices by hearing (devices with pre-loaded speech content and material packs with braille) remains unclear, as children would require instructions and guidance on how to use the devices, which was not monitored through the project.

<sup>201</sup> The laptops distributed to teachers unfortunately did not have pre-loaded teaching support software, teaching guidelines and instructions for blended teaching and learning purposes (mix classroom and online), or a library with digital teaching and learning materials, nor was guidance provided on how to use the laptop, which was a missed opportunity to boost digitalization in the classroom.

operationalized and all users (teachers, students, parents, school administrators) are able to make effective use of the platform.

For continuing learning during the pandemic, it appeared that **the best way of reaching learners consisted of a mix of hybrid learning solutions** ranging from online, radio and TV broadcasts, and printed learning materials, as well as continuation of socially distanced physical classes (for hardest to reach out-of-school children), making use of established community structures and networks.

## What will be sustained and what is the (potential for) impact resulting from the AF grant?

### ***To what extent are beneficiaries able to face future crises and ensure the continuation of their education?***

The impact of the pandemic crisis on the education system, and especially on students' capabilities to continue learning during school closures, has increased general awareness of households and school communities on the importance of ICT access and reliance on available community support structures. However, access to ICT remains a challenge and is based on available household income levels and local connectivity to internet services, as well as general skills of learners in using available technologies.

### ***Did GPE support result in 'building-back-better systems', longer-term solutions (including innovations, technology, methodologies, systems, processes, etc.), addressing learning gaps?***

The COVID-19 AF grant contributed to the initial development and institutionalization of the digital learning through:

- The Edmodo LMS platform, which was envisaged to function as a platform providing pre-service and in-service teacher training modules, thereby expanding the options for teacher training, and effectively enhancing available capacities and skills of teachers, and for upgrading of teacher competences in the future<sup>202</sup> and
- The establishment of the NKSB which, once developed, has the potential to function as a repository of all developed remote learning content including online learning materials, videos, audio and digital content. However, this was not completed during the grant lifetime. Only ToRs were developed during the grant lifetime.

The project trained 40,042 teachers<sup>203</sup> between October and November 2021 (i.e., after school re-opening) in basic digital skills<sup>204</sup> that enable them to interact with digital learning platforms. Potentially, once operational, the LMS and the NKSB<sup>205</sup> could offer long-term benefits stretching beyond COVID-19 emergency response and could be integrated as a key pillar in the Ghana education system. This would require adequate resourcing, maintenance, updating, and improvements in the coming years. GES, GhLA, and the National Teaching Council are in charge of maintaining and updating the content of the LMS.

Furthermore, sub-component 5.2 included the provision of remedial and accelerated learning support for at-risk and poor performing students after re-opening of schools, targeting 5,000 schools, in addition to the 10,000 schools already included in GALOP. Remedial and recovery learning lessons were implemented over a period of 8-12 weeks in all schools after schools reopened in January 2021. The project supported the training of 70,607 teachers across GALOP beneficiary schools providing a basis for the intervention on differentiated learning. School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) were trained in coaching and mentoring. Over the 8–12-week accelerated learning period after the

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<sup>202</sup> Presently, teachers can receive Professional Development Points when they complete specific online training modules through the LMS, which in turn can be used for career advancement. The full deployment of the LMS (full integration into teacher education and training) is yet to be further operationalized together with campaigns to motivate teachers to actually use the LMS as a key resource to support their teaching efforts and their professional development as teacher.

<sup>203</sup> According to the NTC, there are more than 450,000 teachers in Ghana (in public / private schools).

<sup>204</sup> Teachers could participate in five integrated digital literacy courses available on the LMS, i.e., Computer Basics; Word Processing; Spreadsheet; Presentation; Basic Internet Tutorial.

<sup>205</sup> The Ghana National Knowledge and Skills Bank will be further developed under the IDA funded Ghana e-Transform Project implemented by the Ministry of Communications and Digitalization.

school reopening, remedial education was provided three days a week, two hours a day on English and Math. Extensive materials were produced for the purpose of targeted instruction which were differentiated by age group and learning ability. An assessment methodology tool was devised and deployed nationally to assess changes in ability over and after the accelerated learning period and covered a total of 5,806,803 students against the target of 500,000 to evaluate loss of learning during school closure.

***To what extent have systems institutionalized response and preparedness in their planning and sector management?***

Ghana has learned from previous health-related crises, including the 2014 Ebola pandemic that severely impacted neighboring countries in West Africa. Although Ghana did not record any Ebola cases at that time, the country did participate in a series of Ebola preparedness trainings for health sector workers and crisis workers, and established protocols and worked on strengthening of public health emergency response infrastructure. When COVID-19 was spreading globally, Ghana's Ebola preparedness and response plans were re-activated with adjustments to respond to COVID-19 specifics for implementation at the national, regional, district and community levels.<sup>206</sup> Due to the existing structures and protocols developed during Ebola, it was relatively easy and faster to utilize and repurpose these, instead of setting up a whole new structure. This included the set-up of the Inter-Ministerial Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19 (chaired by the President himself) and the activation of a network of community health agents who were deployed for contact tracing and community sensitization. As a result, the MoE prepared a response plan for the education sector and could provide an immediate response (right after identification of the first COVID-19 cases in the country), launching activities and closing schools. Key activities that benefited from previous experience mainly relate to public health awareness campaigns, community sensitization, distribution of health packages, upgrading of WASH facilities at schools.

With the set-up of the Presidential Task Force, the COVID-19 response actions in Ghana saw high-level political commitment, including early engagement from the MoE, resulting in a timely response (and relatively early closure of education institutions nationwide).

## **Lessons Learned**

The channeling of funding through the already existing GALOP structures and disbursement mechanisms has enabled development partners and the Government of Ghana to quickly mobilize support to address COVID-19 impact on the education system, including the set-up of school lessons broadcasted through radio and TV, and the initialization of online learning management platform. Furthermore, GALOP was already focused on supporting disadvantaged basic education-level schools in Ghana, so channeling AF grant activities through GALOP ensured a natural catchment of marginalized and vulnerable children.

The results framework for the COVID-19 AF grant was quantity- and process-oriented and linked to disbursement of funds. As a result, it lacked qualitative indicators, which limits the ability to gain an objective view on actual utility and value for money of a selection of deployed measures and activities, the quality and relevance of developed content, as well as the general effect on teaching and learning progress.

A key lesson learned includes the use of ICT solutions and remote learning options to ensure continuity in education requires mixed-modes programs employing different types of media, including a mix between online channels, radio, TV, and printed learning materials (disbursed to learners). Particularly in the context of Ghana, it became evident that there is a significant divide in access to ICT and alternative forms of media (online, TV, radio), depending on household income and location (urban, rural, remote). In addition, learners' attendance in broadcasted education lessons via TV or radio was affected by the timing of the broadcast, as it was found that TVs and radios were subject to competing interests from other family or community members (especially if there is only one radio or TV available in a household), limiting the benefits of remote education broadcasts.

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<sup>206</sup> Sarkodie et al., 2021



Another key lesson learned from the implementation of interventions, or rather resulting from an overall realization of weaknesses in education delivery during crisis situations, is that the role of ICT in education is recognized as key catalyst in improving the quality of education at all levels of the country's education system within and beyond the COVID-19 era. Ghana has an ICT in Education Policy dating from 2015, in which it already identified the integration of ICT in the teaching-learning process as a key strategy to improve learning outcomes at all levels of the education system.

However, the operationalization of the policy was not effectively completed, with a lack of clear directives regarding its implementation and lack of adequate coordination within the sector to effectuate the policy including for teachers. This became more evident during the COVID-19 related school closure, when many teachers were not able to support their learners to ensure continuity of learning, partly due to weak capacity and a lack of skills of teachers in employing the digital teaching and learning solutions.

The lack of proper engagement of teachers during school closure i.e., to involve teachers more in education and learning provision in their communities, and connectivity with their students during school closures was identified as a missed opportunity by several interviewees. It appeared that many teachers were disengaged from the teaching process and working a second job during school closures. After school re-opening in January 2021, only 85% of teachers returned to duty.

In terms of establishing remote learning and online learning platforms, the development of the Edmodo LMS to support learning continuity was highlighted by several country-level stakeholders as example of an initiative that has the potential for long-term capacity strengthening at systems-level, beyond the pandemic. However, while funding for maintenance and developing content for the platform is available for the short-term, the long-term sustainability and actual utilization of the platform as an embedded function for teacher training and student support remains uncertain. Furthermore, the Ghana NKSB is still "under development" and its status remains unclear after grant closure.

In terms of monitoring the progress of deployed interventions, it is noted that measuring actual utilization by learners of deployed remote learning options remains ambiguous, as it is difficult to ascertain whether during the pandemic children actually were able to access TV and radio learning services, and whether during school closures children did actually learn anything in case they were able to access these services. Furthermore, country stakeholders noted that actual learning progress, educational attainment, and loss of learning resulting from the pandemic was not measured or monitored to track the impact of the pandemic or the effectiveness of the deployment of alternative learning methods. It was suggested by an interviewee that it would have been useful to select a number of schools under GALOP to establish a baseline and control group to measure actual impact.

Another stakeholder commented that the lack of independent monitoring of interventions could have been resolved by the inclusion of civil society organizations in the development and roll-out of the AF grant. It was suggested that CSOs in Ghana are experienced in governance and accountability, often have more local traction and are well connected to communities, have access to local networks. Therefore, they could provide key inputs to planned interventions and assess whether value for money is provided through deployment of various resources. They could also be used to gather important feedback coming grass-root level about user experiences, and appropriateness of technological interventions and remote learning services.

Attribution of key achievements and impact specifically to GPE COVID-19 AF funding remains difficult, especially since the GALOP was already addressing education attainment challenges and focusing on 10,000 least performing basic education schools, with the COVID-19 AF grant represented a minor share of total available GALOP funding which amounts to more than USD \$220M including additional financing. Furthermore, other development partners (e.g., FCDO, UNICEF, USAID) provided complementary COVID-19 education response support in similar fields of work, and the Government of Ghana also deployed activities for all other (non-GALOP) public schools, as well as organized socially distanced classes with community-based facilitators for approximately 21,000 out-of-school children in rural and remote areas. However, the COVID-19 AF grant has enabled GES to expand its reach to target 5,000 additional schools for remedial teaching and learning, and 75,000 additional out-of-school children for participation in socially distanced classes.

## Stories of Change

All stakeholders interviewed commented that a major success of COVID-19 response was the continuation of the safe school re-opening and the back-to school campaigns, focusing on getting children to return to school, including ensuring girls returned (particularly raising awareness on the importance of continuity of education, prevention of SEAH and early pregnancy due to girls staying at home during school closures). Almost all children returned to school (reported 98% of learners), which was considered such an achievement that it was decided to continue the organization of back-to-school campaigns during important periods of the academic year, to stimulate parents to enroll their children in school, and ensuring learners are aware of school openings.

The intensified back-to-school and active enrolment campaigns have resulted in an increase in enrolments (absolute numbers) in Ghana in 2021 and cross-facilitated a decrease in the number of previously out-of-school children. The enrolment drives gained widespread traction and have resulted in increasing enrolment rates in schools. Presently the MoE has established and deployed teams in all districts to continue the campaigns in the future.

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