A group of young children in white school uniforms are standing in a line, holding up their drawings. They are looking towards the right side of the frame. The background shows a classroom setting with colorful decorations on the wall.

Grade one students from
Chambak Haer Primary School
showing their drawings in class
in Siem Reap, Cambodia.
GPE/Luis Tato

CHAPTER 2

STRENGTHENING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: GENDER-RESPONSIVE PLANNING AND COORDINATED ACTION AND FINANCING



RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Country-level objective 1:

Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for systemwide impact

5.ii.a.

Proportion of countries where gender-responsive planning and monitoring is assessed

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 3.9% (CY2021) | n/a |

5.ii.b.

Proportion of countries making progress against identified challenges in gender-responsive planning and monitoring

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | n/a (CY2021) | n/a |

5.ii.c.

Proportion of countries where gender-responsive planning and monitoring is assessed that have a legislative framework assuring the right to education for all children

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 100% (CY2021) (N=3 PCs) | n/a |

9.i.

Proportion of countries that implement GPE allocation-linked policy reforms in the gender-responsive sector planning and monitoring enabling factor as identified in their partnership compact

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 75% |

9.ii.

Proportion of system capacity grants where activities under the gender-responsive planning and monitoring window are on track

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 80% |

Country-level objective 2:

Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change

4.i.

Volume of domestic finance: Proportion of partner countries with government expenditure on education increasing or 20% or above as a percentage of total government expenditure

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 57.1% (CY2020) | 71.0% (CY2021) | n/a |

4.ii.a.

Proportion of countries where equity, efficiency, and volume of domestic finance for education are assessed

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 3.9% (CY2021) | n/a |

4.ii.b.

Proportion of countries making progress against identified challenges in equity, efficiency, and volume of domestic finance for education

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | n/a (CY2021) | n/a |

8.i.

Proportion of countries reporting at least 10 of 12 key international education indicators to UNESCO Institute for Statistics

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 44.7% (CY2020) | 38.2% (CY2021) | n/a |

8.ii.a.

Proportion of countries where the availability and use of data and evidence is assessed

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 3.9% (CY2021) | n/a |

8.ii.b.

Proportion of countries making progress against identified challenges in the availability and use of data and evidence

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | n/a (CY2021) | n/a |

8.ii.c.

Proportion of countries where the availability and use of data and evidence is assessed that report key education statistics disaggregated by children with disabilities

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 66.7% (CY2021) (N=3 PCs) | n/a |

8.iii.a.

Proportion of countries where sector coordination is assessed

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | 3.9% (CY2021) | n/a |

8.iii.b.

Proportion of countries making progress against identified challenges in sector coordination

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (CY) | n/a (CY2021) | n/a |

8.iii.c.

Proportion of local education groups that include civil society organizations and teacher organization

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 66.2% (CY2020) | 68.6% (CY2021) | n/a |

10.i.

Proportion of countries that implement GPE allocation-linked policy reforms in the sector coordination enabling factor as identified in their Partnership Compact

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 75% |

10.ii.

Proportion of system capacity grants where activities under the mobilize coordinated finance and action window are on track

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 80% |

11.

Proportion of countries that implement GPE allocation-linked policy reforms in the equity, efficiency, and volume of domestic finance enabling factor as identified in their Partnership Compact

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 75% |

12.i.

Proportion of GPE grant funding aligned to national systems

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 48.9% (FY2021) | 54.7% (FY2022) | n/a |

12.ii.

Proportion of GPE grant funding using harmonized funding modalities

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|
| 56.6% (FY2021) | 60.2% (FY2022) | n/a |

13.i.

Proportion of countries that implement GPE allocation-linked policy reforms in the availability and use of data and evidence enabling factor as identified in their Partnership Compact

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 75% |

13.ii.

Proportion of system capacity grants where activities under the adapt and learn for results at scale window are on track

| Baseline | Year | Benchmark |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------|
| n/a (FY) | n/a (FY2022) | 80% |

Note: CY = calendar year; FY = fiscal year (July 1 – June 31); n/a = not applicable; n.e.d = not enough data; PC = partner country. These are sector level indicators: 4i, 4ii, 5ii, 8i, 8ii, 8iii. Indicators are grouped per the analysis in the results report. Please refer to the results framework for details on the groupings based on GPE strategic framework.

KEY FINDINGS

- Three countries completed the Independent Technical Advisory Panel assessment in calendar year 2021: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tajikistan.
- Data and evidence were identified as a high priority area in five of the six countries that completed the Independent Technical Advisory Panel assessment in 2021 and the first half of 2022.
- Data reporting to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics continues to be a challenge in partner countries. The proportion of countries reporting at least 10 out of 12 indicators to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics decreased from 44.7 percent in 2020 to 38.2 percent in 2021. Partner countries face constraints particularly when reporting on service delivery indicators and indicators from household surveys and learning assessments.
- The proportion of implementation grant funding aligned to national systems hovered around 50 percent in 2020–22, whereas the use of pooled or co-financing mechanisms has improved since 2020, especially in partner countries affected by fragility and conflict. The proportion of grant funding using harmonized modalities increased significantly from 43.4 percent in 2020 to 60.2 percent in 2022 and from 23.8 percent to 56.3 percent in partner countries affected by fragility and conflict.
- Inclusiveness of local education groups improved between 2020 and 2021. In 2020, 66.2 percent of local education groups included both a civil society organization and a teachers organization; that share increased to 68.6 percent in 2021. Almost 95.7 percent of local education groups included a civil society organization in 2021, and 70 percent included a teachers organization.
- The share of partner countries with government expenditure on education that increased or that met or exceeded the 20 percent benchmark rose significantly from 57 percent in 2020 to 71 percent in 2021. Seven partner countries increased their share of education spending from below 20 percent in 2020 to above 20 percent in 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The GPE strategic plan, GPE 2025, aims to accelerate access and learning outcomes for all children by supporting countries to transform their education systems³⁵ through strengthening gender-responsive planning and policy development (country-level objective 1) and mobilizing coordinated action and financing to enable transformative changes in partner countries (country-level objective 2). The third country-level objective (strengthen capacity, adapt and learn, to implement and drive results at scale) is discussed in chapter 3.

The identification of transformative reforms starts with an assessment of the countries' situation with respect to (1) data and evidence; (2) gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring; (3) sector coordination; and (4) volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education—the four enabling factors to support transformative reforms. Countries self-assess their performance in those enabling factors. The country self-assessment is subsequently used by the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) to contextualize the ITAP's independent expert review of country status against the enabling factor areas based on its examination of the required supporting documents submitted by the country. The assessments of the enabling factors feed into the preparation of the partnership compacts that are the strategic frameworks for partnership engagement in each country. These two processes align with country-level objectives 1 and 2.

The GPE 2025 results framework includes indicators to measure partner countries' overall progress in the enabling factors areas (Indicators 4i, 8i, 8iic, 12i and 12ii). Another set of indicators (4iia, 5iia, 5iic, 8iia, 8iic and 8iiaa) monitors the assessment of the enabling factors by the ITAP while a third set of indicators (4iib, 5iib, 8iib and 8iibb) measures progress in the challenges identified through the enabling factors assessments. GPE also offers financial incentives, called top-ups, through the system transformation grants to support progress where challenges are identified in the enabling factors. Several indicators (9i, 10i, 11 and 13i) track the implementation of these top-ups. The system capacity grant is another financing tool available to support country capacity for system transformation at any stage of national policy cycles. Several indicators (9ii, 10ii and 13ii) monitor how this grant addresses barriers to system transformation,

some of them being related to the enabling factors areas.

This chapter discusses partner countries' progress against country-level objectives 1 and 2. The GPE 2025 operating model began piloting in six countries.³⁶ Three partner countries had gone through the ITAP assessment process by the end of 2021 (Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tajikistan) and are included in the sample of the results framework indicators. Nepal and Uganda completed the ITAP assessment in 2022 and were excluded from the results framework sample. El Salvador was not officially a GPE partner country in 2021 and was also excluded from the results framework indicator data. Data from El Salvador, Nepal, Rwanda and Uganda will be included in next year's results report with data from approximately 15 additional partner countries. None of those partner countries completed a partnership compact or were approved for a GPE grant under the new operating model in 2021; therefore, no data are available about the compacts, the top-ups or the system capacity grants to report in this chapter.

This chapter also presents summaries of the findings from the ITAP assessments in all six pilot partner countries—with examples taken from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tajikistan for illustration purposes. The ITAP assessments provide an understanding of the most pressing issues facing these countries in relation to the enabling factor areas, based on required documents submitted by countries and contextualized by countries' self-analysis of the enabling factors. They also provide an assessment of the priority level for each of the enabling factors (table 2.1).

35 Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *GPE 2025 Strategic Plan*, (Washington, DC: GPE, 2022), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2025-strategic-plan>.

36 The six countries are the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Kenya, Nepal, Tajikistan and Uganda.

TABLE 2.1.**Enabling factors assessments with priority levels**

| Enabling factors | High priority | Medium priority | Low priority |
|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Data and evidence | Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Kenya, Tajikistan, Uganda | | Nepal |
| 2. Gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring | Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador | Kenya, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uganda | |
| 3. Sector coordination | Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Kenya | Nepal, Tajikistan, Uganda | |
| 4. Volume, equity and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education | Democratic Republic of Congo, Tajikistan, Uganda | El Salvador, Kenya, Nepal | |

2.1. GENDER-RESPONSIVE SECTOR PLANNING, POLICY AND MONITORING

(Indicators 5ii, 9i and 9ii)

GPE 2025 commits the partnership to systematically identify and address barriers to education affecting children of all genders (see [box 2.1](#)). Putting gender equality at the heart of education sector plans will help the partnership design targeted policies and strategies that better address the specific challenges facing all children of all genders. The GPE 2025 results framework monitors the extent to which the GPE 2025 operating model is leveraged to support gender-responsive sector planning and reforms.

Indicator 5iia measures the proportion of countries where gender-responsive planning, policy and monitoring are assessed by local education groups and by the ITAP, as part of the partnership compact development process. The ITAP assessment found that gender-responsive planning, policy and monitoring should be assigned a high-priority area in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a medium-priority area in Kenya and Tajikistan relative to the other enabling factors.³⁷

³⁷ Priority levels: "Low: The enabling factor area could benefit from minor tweaks to accelerate progress in one or more of the country's top policy outcomes. Medium: Achieving progress in one or more of the country's policy outcomes will be significantly delayed unless issues in the enabling factor area are addressed. High: Achieving progress in one or more of the country's policy outcomes is deemed impossible or extremely unlikely unless significant reforms are undertaken in the enabling factor area. The ministry(ies) of education and/or development partners are either not actively working in this enabling factor area, or engagement is insufficient to make meaningful improvements." Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) Guidelines and Report Template*, (Washington, DC: GPE, 2022), <https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2022-08-GPE-ITAP-guidelines.pdf?VersionId=Ln23Vowb8Xn0d2eizpl8fRtjja3fLnG6>.

BOX 2.1. Gender equality in GPE 2025

GPE recognizes that unequal gender norms can have negative impacts on the education opportunities of all children—boys and girls—and aims to promote access to education and learning for children of all genders and support the achievement of gender equality in and through education. Therefore, GPE's 2025 strategic plan hardwires a focus on gender equality through key partnership processes and funding: (1) GPE aims to ensure that (a) gender equality is included in all discussions on system transformation and the related choice of priority reforms at the country level, and (b) reform choices are based on evidence regarding gender equality; (2) in recognition of the global crisis regarding school-related gender-based violence, GPE also works with global partners such as Safe to Learn and through dialogue at the country level to help drive action; and (3) through the new Girls' Education Accelerator, GPE provides additional financing to countries where girls are particularly disadvantaged. In addition, GPE endeavors to keep its Board informed of how gender equality is being hardwired throughout its operations and results.

C. McConnell and J. U. C. Pescina, "Hardwiring gender equality in GPE 2025," *Education for All* (blog), March 9, 2022, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/hardwiring-gender-equality-gpe-2025>.

Challenges in this enabling factor area identified by ITAP in all pilot countries include a lack of timely and accurate gender-disaggregated data, limited gender-responsive monitoring mechanisms and a lack of gender training for government officials. In Kenya, of the 14 subsectors outlined in the sector plan, only one includes elements to hardwire gender issues in education and gender training at all levels. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is insufficient monitoring of the relationship between female school retention and learning achievement. In Tajikistan, a broader stakeholder group involvement in joint sector reviews is deemed necessary to strengthen the country's response to inclusion challenges, because some of the barriers to education require a multisectoral approach to interventions.

One way to tackle gender equality issues is to guarantee access to education for all children of all genders by the laws in place in partner countries. In partner countries where the gender-responsive planning and monitoring enabling factor is assessed, indicator 5iic tracks the existence of a legislative framework assuring the right to education for all children. As part of this assessment, the ITAP conducts a review to verify the existence of such a

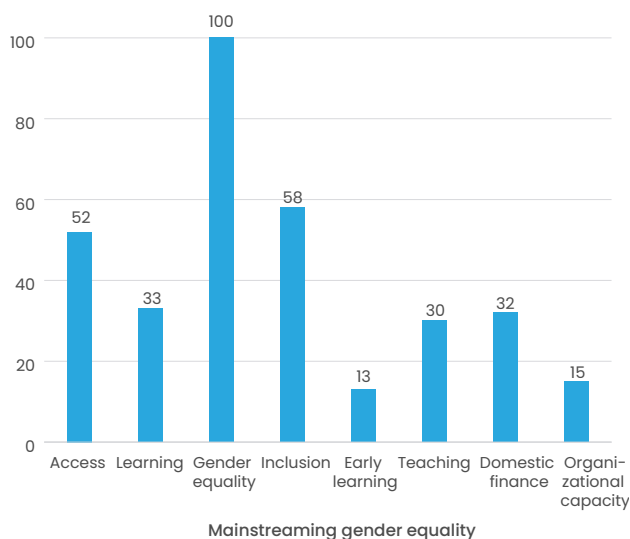
legislative framework. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tajikistan all have a legislative framework that assures the right to education for children of all genders.

GPE's strategy calls for support to partner countries to improve gender equality within and through education, including through grants. Because the new operating model is still being rolled out, this chapter considers grants that were almost all approved under the GPE 2020 operating model to assess their focus on gender equality. Of the 80 GPE implementation grants that were active at some point in fiscal year 2022,³⁸ 66 (83 percent) mainstreamed gender equality in one or more activities. Overall, US\$893 million of grant financing (35 percent of the total amount of grants) was allocated to mainstreaming gender equality activities (see methodology in [box 3.3](#)). The estimated proportion of the financing allocated to mainstreaming gender activities varies across the GPE 2025 priority areas, from 57 percent for inclusion to 13 percent for early learning. More than half (51 percent) of the amount supporting the access priority area and one-third (33 percent) of the amount supporting the learning priority area mainstream gender equality ([figure 2.1](#)).

FIGURE 2.1.

About one-third of the total amount of grants includes gender equality activities.

Gender equality in implementation grants (percent)



Source: GPE Secretariat.

2.2. DATA AND EVIDENCE

(Indicators 8 and 13)

GPE 2025 places data and evidence at the core of the partnership's strategy to support education system transformation. The availability and use of quality data can help in the design of relevant policy reforms targeting the most pressing issues facing the education sector. Indicator 8i of the GPE 2025 results framework tracks the availability of key education data in partner countries and whether those countries report the data to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).³⁹ It monitors the proportion of partner countries reporting to UIS at least 10 out of 12 key outcomes, service delivery and financing indicators.

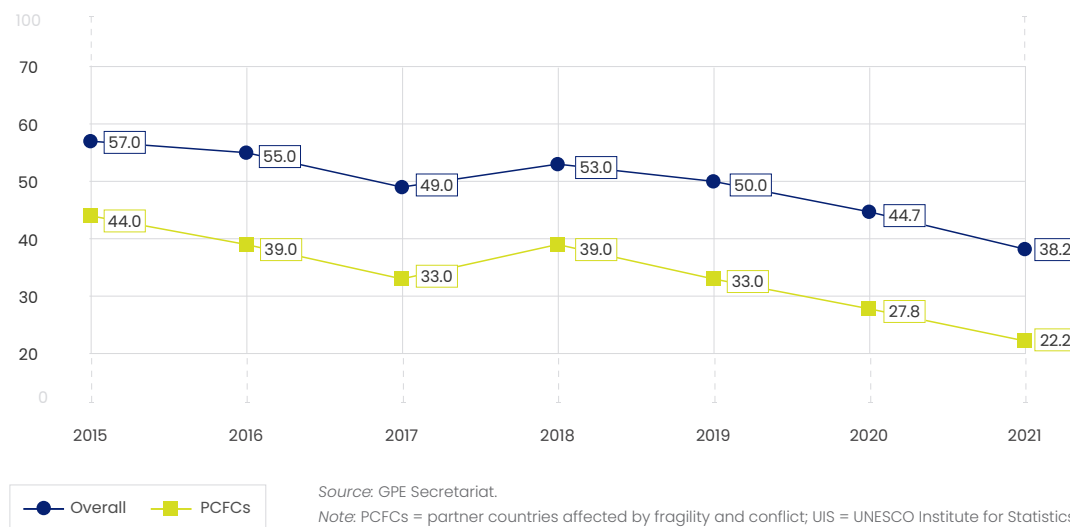
The proportion of countries reporting key data to UIS has been on a declining trend since 2015 ([figure 2.2](#)). In 2020, 44.7 percent of partner countries (34 out of 76) reported at least 10 out of 12 key indicators to UIS ([figure 2.2](#)). Of partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFCs), 27.8 percent (10 out of 36) reported at least

³⁸ Fiscal year 2022 refers to July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022.

³⁹ Indicator 8i may not be a perfect indicator of data availability in partner countries because some countries with key country-level data available may not report to UIS for various reasons.

FIGURE 2.2.**The proportion of partner countries reporting key data to UIS has been declining since 2015.**

Proportion of partner countries reporting at least 10 out of 12 key indicators to UIS (percent)



10 out of 12 key indicators to UIS. The overall value of Indicator 8i declined in 2021 to 38.2 percent overall (29 out of 76) and to 22.2 percent in PCFCs (8 out of 36). This trend illustrates the persistent challenges that partner countries encounter in collecting quality data that meet international standards and in reporting those data to UIS. Partner countries seem to face particular challenges reporting indicators derived from household surveys and learning assessments to UIS. The lack of available data may be one reason for limited data reporting to UIS; however, in some cases, data may exist but not be timely reported to UIS for other reasons.

Indicator 8iia measures the proportion of partner countries where local education groups and the ITAP assess the availability and use of data. The ITAP assessed the data and evidence enabling factor as a high-priority area in all three partner countries in 2021.⁴⁰ Overall, ITAP reports show gaps in the coverage and use of data collected by the education management information systems in the pilot countries, which face issues related to compliance with international standards and do not collect key data necessary for policy, planning and monitoring. Learning assessment systems also face challenges related to the availability and reliability of learning data. It was noted that the education management information system in Tajikistan does not collect and

use critical data to inform resource allocation decisions across regions, districts and educational institutions. Although the system annually collects basic data on access and enrollment, it does not routinely collect data on quality, learning and internal efficiency. Kenya faces issues with data collection at service delivery points (schools and counties) and struggles to meet international data standards. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the lack of data to inform and monitor education policies and interventions has been a major weakness and impediment to systems reform.

Because GPE 2025 aims to improve learning, equity and inclusion for all children, the availability of data on children with disabilities is an important aspect in the design of inclusive education policies. Indicator 8iic measures the proportion of partner countries that went through the assessment of the enabling factors and collected key education statistics on children with disabilities. Indicator 8iic data show that Kenya and Tajikistan reported key education statistics on children with disabilities in 2021. A recent review by the GPE Secretariat shows that at least 48 of 74 GPE partner countries with available information have nationally representative, reliable and comparable survey or census data on disability from 2010 to 2020. Those data could be used for disaggregating education statistics.⁴¹

40 Although only three countries have data for Indicator 8iia, the ITAP assessments are analyzed in all six partner countries where the GPE 2025 operating model was piloted. Examples from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Tajikistan are presented to illustrate some of the issues reported by the ITAP assessments.

41 Global Partnership for Education (GPE), "Household Survey Data on Disability and Education in GPE Partner Countries: A Review of Data Collected during 2010–2020 and Recommendations for Making More and Better Data Available," (Washington, DC: GPE, August 2022), <https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2022-08-Household-survey-data-on-disability-and-education.pdf?VersionId=zB25KSdzX.65zABdrPjztc0IX0oK95EJ>.

The portfolio of GPE active grants, mainly comprising grants approved before GPE 2025, financed activities aimed at supporting data systems. Of 80 GPE implementation grants active between July 2021 and June 2022, 59 included a component addressing data systems. Overall, \$91.7 million (or 3.6 percent of the volume of the grants) was allocated to activities aiming to strengthen data systems. Those activities include strengthening education management information systems (\$51 million), installing or updating hardware/software for data systems (\$12.3 million), issuing school report cards (\$6.7 million), disaggregating data (\$5.8 million), decentralizing data (\$3.8 million), integrating data collected by other government institutions and nongovernmental organizations (\$3 million) and implementing other data-related interventions (\$9.1 million).

2.3. SECTOR COORDINATION

(Indicators 8iii, 10 and 12)

Implementing transformative policy reforms requires effective coordination among partners at the country level. Effective sector coordination improves transparency and mutual accountability between governments and education sector stakeholders and better supports education service delivery.⁴²

GPE 2025 intends to support capacities for coordination and foster inclusive sector dialogue and mutual accountability, thus maximizing partner countries' potential to drive system transformation. It also aims to promote effective sector coordination through better coordinated action and financing by all education stakeholders, including alignment and harmonization of external financing—with a special attention to GPE grants—with country systems. The GPE 2025 results framework monitors how partner countries are able to identify and address the bottlenecks hindering sector coordination.

Indicator 8iiia measures the proportion of countries where the ITAP has assessed sector coordination. The ITAP assessed sector coordination as a high-priority area in the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador and Kenya, and as a medium-priority area in Nepal, Tajikistan and Uganda.

A review of the assessments shows two main sector coordination challenges. First, the lack of alignment and lack of harmonization of donors are important barriers to sector coordination, because they increase the amount of aid (by volume of financing, by number of projects) that is both fragmented and operating on the margins of the national budget and country systems. For instance, in Kenya, coordinating and aligning donor funding to national systems remain a challenge, because major bilateral donors have expressed concerns about government finance systems due to poor financial management from previous grants and thus remain unwilling to increase provision of funding through national systems. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, public financial management and government accountability mechanisms have been weak, which has deterred development partners from providing budget support or aligning their support to national systems.

Second, overlapping and sometimes competing mandates among government agencies and the weak engagement of multiple key stakeholders in the local education group (including religious, parent and minority or marginalized communities) hinder effective sector coordination. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is weak engagement of provincial governments in sector plan implementation and limited participation of key groups, such as religious organizations, in the monitoring and implementation of the plan.

Inclusive Sector Dialogue

Inclusive sector dialogue is an important aspect of sector coordination and is carried out by a local education group. A local education group is “a collaborative forum for education sector policy dialogue under government leadership, where the primary consultation on education sector development takes place between a government and its partners.”⁴³ Led by the government, these groups include many stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, donors, private education providers and teachers organizations. The inclusion of civil society and teachers organizations helps ensure an inclusive policy dialogue at the country level so that citizens' and educators' concerns are heard. GPE assesses inclusion in these groups through Indicator 8iiic, which measures the proportion of local education groups that include civil society organizations and teachers organizations. This indicator assesses whether these organizations have

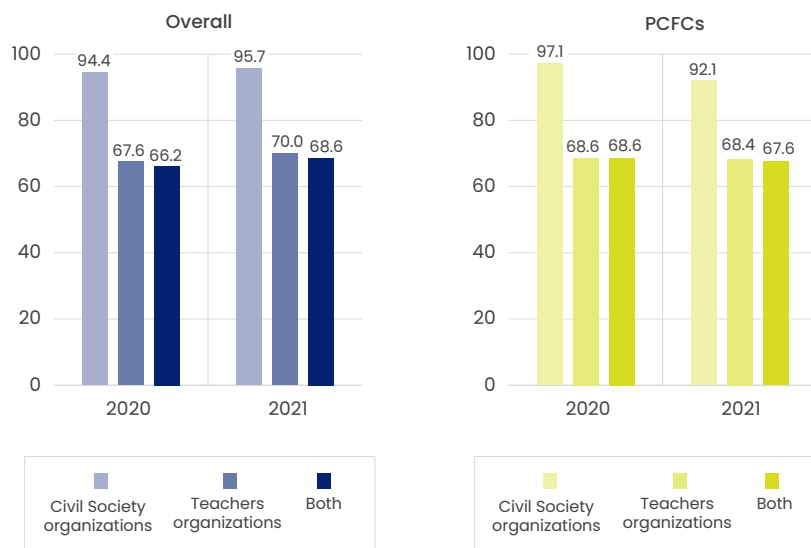
⁴² European Union, “Practical Guidance Note 5: Sector Coordination and Policy Dialogue,” *Tools and Methods Series: Reference Document No. 27* (Luxembourg: European Union, July 2020), <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/t-and-m-series/documents/practical-guidance-notes-5-sector-coordination-and-policy-dialogue>.

⁴³ Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *Principles toward Effective Local Education Groups*, (Washington, DC: GPE, October 2019), https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2019-10-GPE-principles-effective-local-education-groups.pdf?VersionId=otebl6Dgwz6LmuzlBoXTMRWR7k7r_2DK.

FIGURE 2.3.

The proportion of local education groups with teacher organization representation has shown some improvement, but progress in civil society representation has been slower.

Proportion of local education groups with civil society and teacher representation (percent)



Source: GPE Secretariat data, calendar years 2020–2021.

Note: PCFCs = partner countries affected by fragility and conflict.

representation in local education groups and opportunities to engage in all the functions undertaken by those groups.⁴⁴

In 2020, the proportion of local education groups that included both civil society organizations and teachers organizations was 66.2 percent; that proportion increased by more than 2 percentage points in 2021. Representation of civil society increased from 94.4 percent in 2020 to 95.7 percent in 2021, whereas representation of teachers saw an improvement of slightly more than 2 percentage points (from 67.6 percent to 70.0 percent) over the same period (figure 2.3). Three countries improved in 2021: Nepal and Vanuatu added teachers organizations in their local education groups, and Nicaragua added both a national civil society organization and a teachers organization.⁴⁵

PCFCs saw a 2.4 percentage-point decrease between 2020 and 2021 in the proportion of local education groups with civil society and teacher representation. This decrease occurred mainly because of the addition of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to the list of PCFCs. In PCFCs, representation of civil society organizations decreased in 2021 by 5 percentage points from 2020, and participation

of teachers organizations remained almost the same (figure 2.3).

Coordinated Financing and Funding (Alignment of GPE Grants with Country Systems, Joint Financing Arrangements)

Another measure of sector coordination is the alignment of external financing with national systems. The purpose of alignment is to use partner countries’ institutions, human resources, procedures and tools as the mainstays for implementing aid to education. Because of their structural proximity with national systems, aligned modalities can provide unique opportunities to support the capacity strengthening and transformation of those systems in partner countries. They can improve transparency and accountability around the national budget and systems, enhance the relevance and quality of joint sector dialogue, provide increased absorption of external financing contributing to impact at scale and leverage cross-cutting reforms that have a critical impact on education. A GPE factsheet, “Aligning Funding with National Systems,” lays out GPE’s approach to the challenge and opportunities offered through greater use of country systems.⁴⁶

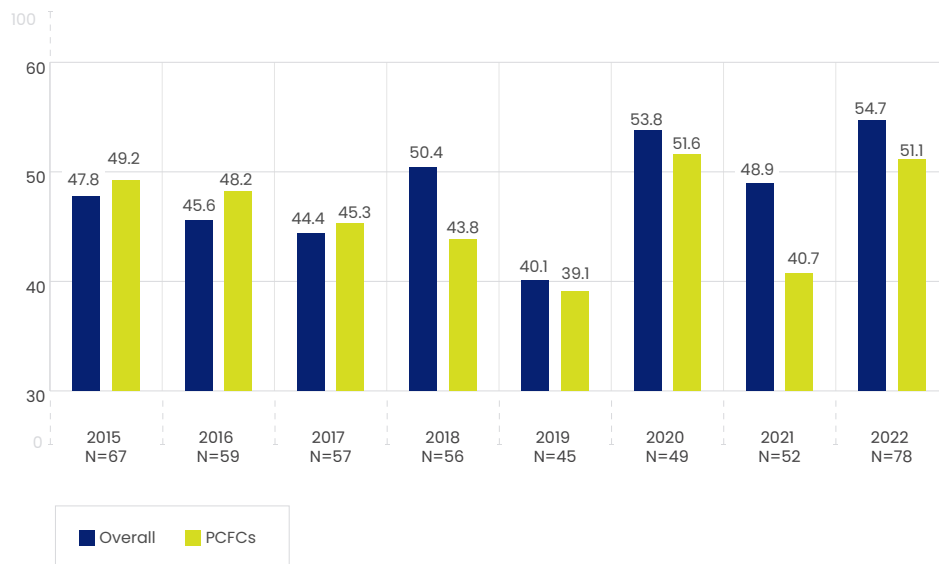
⁴⁴ Indicator 8iic, unlike Indicator 19 in the previous results framework, includes only national civil society organizations.

⁴⁵ Myanmar reported the existence of a local education group in calendar year 2020; however, after the coup d’état in 2021, no local education group is reported. Nevertheless, there is a development partner group (and several other coordination groups) in the country.

⁴⁶ Global Partnership for Education (GPE), “Aligning Funding with National Systems,” (Washington, DC: GPE, August 2021) <https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2021-08-gpe-factsheet-aligning-funding-national-systems.pdf?VersionId=MTqT6v4Q4XICP.y2DirUf9L9B6AxAuAik>.

FIGURE 2.4.**Alignment has hovered around 50 percent since 2018.**

Proportion of GPE grant funding aligned to national systems (percent)



Source: GPE Secretariat data, fiscal years 2015–2021.

Note: PCFCs = partner countries affected by fragility and conflict.

Indicator 12i monitors GPE alignment, measuring the proportion of core GPE grant funding aligned with national systems.⁴⁷ An “aligned” grant meets at least seven of 10 criteria of alignment (across seven dimensions) with national systems. The proportion of aligned core grants by volume of financing fluctuated over the period 2015–22, from a low of 40.1 percent in 2019 to a high of 54.7 percent in 2022 (figure 2.4).⁴⁸ The proportion of aligned grant funding hovered around 50 percent in 2020–22, which was not the case before 2018. This proportion is confirmed by corroborating information that shows the emergence of new aligned modalities—or GPE’s participation in aligned modalities for the first time—in several countries, including Guinea, Maldives, Niger, Pakistan (Punjab), Senegal and Tanzania.

In 2015, active GPE grants met, on average, 5.1 out of 10 criteria; in 2022, that average had improved to 5.7 criteria.⁴⁹ The aligned grants included not only budget support modalities in countries perceived to have stronger public financial management systems but also

aligned modalities that allow more targeted oversight and risk management (aid-on-budget modalities, also known as ringfenced or earmarked budget support). This flexibility in addressing fiduciary oversight needs according to context is critical.

Indicator 12i has limitations because it considers only grants active in a given fiscal year, with an arbitrary cutoff point for inclusion (active between July 1 of one year and June 30 of the following year).⁵⁰ That restriction means that a gap year in financing to specific countries can affect the data; for example, the closure of six aligned grants in fiscal year 2020 created a sudden dip in the proportion of aligned grant funding in fiscal year 2021.⁵¹ For that reason, longer-term trends are more relevant than any annual changes.

Alignment remains an area of focus during GPE 2025 because using the system itself to implement a program is potentially one of the most direct ways to sustainably contribute to education system transformation. The

47 Core GPE funding includes education sector program implementation grants and Multiplier grants; it excludes accelerated funding, COVID-19 accelerated funding, education sector plan development grants and program development grants. Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *GPE Results Framework 2025: Methodological Technical Guidelines*, (Washington, DC: GPE, 2022), 45, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-results-framework-2025-methodological-technical-guidelines>.

48 Indicator 12 looks at implementation grants active at any point during the fiscal year. The numbers here differ from the ones published in previous reports because of a change in methodology for calculating Indicator 12i. Changes with regard to fiscal year 2020, GPE 2020 results framework Indicators 29 and 30: for Tanzania and Zanzibar, grant 1338 was merged with grant 350 (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency reported one grant instead of two). Also, dimension 2.2 was switched to dimension 1 and dimension 5 to dimension 0.

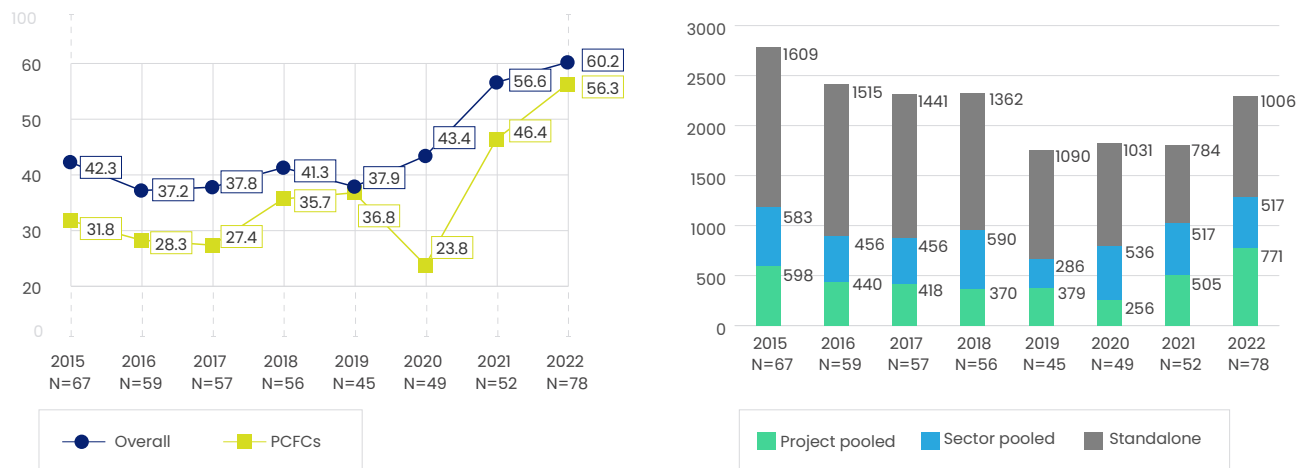
49 The average number of criteria met has remained at six since fiscal year 2020; from fiscal year 2015 up to fiscal year 2020, it was five.

50 This limitation also applied to Indicator 12ii.

51 In 2020, six grants with aligned modalities (worth \$588 million) closed; in 2021, two other grants with aligned modalities (worth \$170 million) became active. No aligned grants closed in 2021, and 10 grants (worth \$268 million) became active in 2022, which explains the decline in the proportion of grant funding using aligned modalities in 2021 and the significant increase in 2022. A longer-term look at the alignment criteria shows some improvements.

FIGURE 2.5.**More than half of grant funding was through harmonized modalities in 2021, an improvement since 2015.**

Proportion of GPE grant funding using harmonized funding modalities (left) and volume of grants by funding modality (right)



Source: GPE Secretariat data, fiscal years 2015–2022.

Note: PCFCs = partner countries affected by fragility and conflict.

Secretariat has implemented an alignment roadmap since 2017 to promote the use of aligned modalities.⁵² The reinforced integration of alignment in the operating model, together with the continued effort, is expected to drive progress in alignment during GPE 2025.⁵³

To avoid high transaction costs associated with stand-alone grants and to further strengthen sector coordination, GPE promotes the use of harmonized funding modalities. Indicator 12ii measures the proportion of GPE grant funding using co-financing modalities, namely project- or sector-pooled mechanisms. In a project-pooled grant, funding from more than one partner supports one common project. In a sector-pooled grant, multiple partners deliver funds in a coordinated manner to provide funding at scale.⁵⁴

PCFCs made significant progress in the use of harmonized funding modalities. In 2021, 56.6 percent of grant funding used harmonized funding modalities, and in PCFCs the proportion was 46.4 percent (figure 2.5). In 2022, the overall value of Indicator 12ii increased to 60.2 percent, and PCFCs increasing to 56.3 percent, with seven grants using harmonized funding modalities becoming active in 2022, four of them Multiplier grants.

There was a \$248 million net gain of harmonized funding modality between 2021 and 2022. One grant using harmonized funding modalities (worth nearly \$17 million) closed in 2021, and nine grants (worth \$265 million) became active in 2022, signifying GPE's continuous engagement and support for country partners' use of harmonized funding modalities.

Between 2015 and 2019, the proportion of implementation grant funding using harmonized modalities remained at about 40 percent, but that proportion increased dramatically in 2020, 2021 and 2022. For PCFCs, the proportion remained at about 30 percent through 2018, with a large decrease from 36.8 percent in 2019 to 23.8 percent in 2020. The share of sector-pooled funding has remained slightly higher than that of project-pooled funding throughout the years; however, the share of funding channeled through both types of harmonized modalities has steadily increased since 2019.

52 Global Partnership for Education (GPE), *Portfolio Review 2017* (Washington, DC: GPE, 2017), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/2017-gpe-portfolio-review>.

53 A brief published in 2021 presents GPE's conceptual approach to the use of country systems through the experience of five partner countries (Burkina Faso, Nepal, Niger, Senegal and Tanzania). It shows the variation and contextualization in the rollout of aligned modalities, as well as different approaches to maximizing their potential and managing associated opportunities and risk. Global Partnership for Education (GPE), "Aligning Aid for Education with National Systems: Supporting System Transformation and Better Education Outcomes," (Washington, DC: GPE, 2021), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/aligning-aid-education-national-systems-transformation-better-outcomes>.

54 GPE, *GPE Results Framework 2025: Methodological Technical Guidelines*, 48.

2.4. DOMESTIC FINANCING

(Indicators 4i and 1i)

Transforming education systems in partner countries requires financial resources, and government expenditure is the most important source of funds for the education sector.⁵⁵ In addition to mobilizing domestic resources, GPE 2025 seeks to support the efficiency of spending and ensure that the most vulnerable children benefit equitably from government expenditure on education.

Indicator 4i tracks the share of partner countries that increased spending on education or that met or exceeded the 20 percent benchmark.⁵⁶ In 2021, 71 percent (44 of 62) of the partner countries with data available achieved the 20 percent benchmark or increased their share of education spending from 2020 (figure 2.6).⁵⁷ PCFCs recorded some progress in domestic financing, with 75.9 percent of them (22 of 29) spending at least 20 percent on education in 2021 or increasing their share of education expenditure from the previous year. Overall, the value of Indicator 4i increased by 14 percentage

points between 2020 and 2021.⁵⁸ Seven partner countries increased their share of education spending from below 20 percent in 2020 to above the 20 percent benchmark in 2021.⁵⁹

The trends of the share of education spending show that domestic financing has not yet recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic's shocks. Forty-three partner countries have data available for the entire period 2015–21. Figure 2.7 shows an unsteady increase in the average share of education expenditure between 2015 and 2019, followed by a significant drop in 2020, and then a slight increase of 0.2 percentage point in 2021. In 2020, the average share of education spending decreased by 1.3 percentage points, reaching its lowest level since 2015. This decline in education spending is combined with a contraction of partner countries' gross domestic product, following the economic slowdown caused by the COVID-19 disruptions,⁶⁰ and can be associated with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education financing. A study by the World Bank and UNESCO shows that two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have reduced their public education budgets

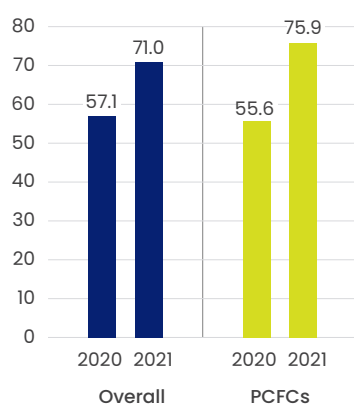
55 According to the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, government spending accounts for four out of five dollars spent on education. See UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report 2019 – Migration, Displacement and Education: Building Bridges, Not Walls, (Paris: UNESCO, 2019), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265866>.

56 Data for Indicator 4i (previously called Indicator 10 in the GPE 2020 results framework) are collected by the GPE Secretariat, using publicly available budget documents.

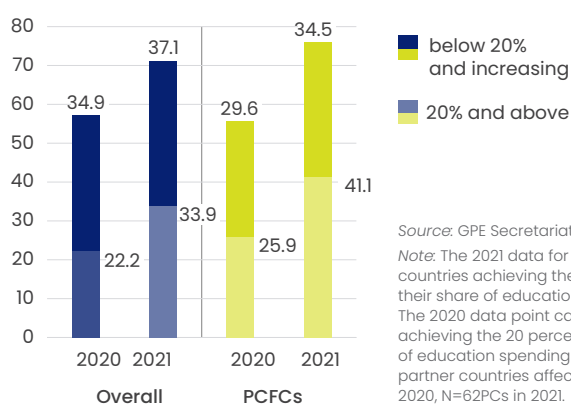
FIGURE 2.6.

Partner countries achieved some progress in domestic education financing between 2020 and 2021.

Proportion of countries that achieved the 20 percent benchmark (percent)



Proportion of countries that increased the share of education spending (percent)



Source: GPE Secretariat.

Note: The 2021 data for Indicator 4i capture the proportion of countries achieving the 20 percent benchmark or increasing their share of education expenditure between 2020 and 2021. The 2020 data point captures the proportion of countries achieving the 20 percent benchmark or increasing their share of education spending between 2019 and 2020. PCFCs = partner countries affected by fragility and conflict. N=63PCs in 2020, N=62PCs in 2021.

57 In 2021, 21 partner countries had a share of education spending at 20 percent or above and 23 countries had a share of spending below the 20 percent benchmark but improved from the previous year.

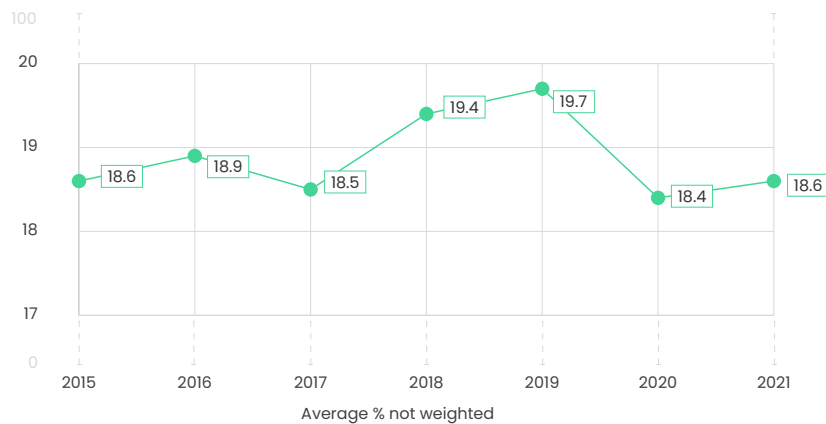
58 The 2020 baseline data for Indicator 4i show the proportion of partner countries with a share of education expenditure at 20 percent or above in 2020 or with progress between 2019 and 2020.

59 Those countries are Benin, The Gambia, Kiribati, Mali, São Tomé and Príncipe, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Zambia.

60 International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook, April 2020: The Great Lockdown*, (Washington, DC: IMF, 2020), <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>.

FIGURE 2.7.**The share of education expenditure declined in 2020.**

Average share of government expenditure on education excluding debt service in 43 partner countries with data available (percent)



Source: GPE Secretariat.

since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶¹ A more recent World Bank and UNESCO report released as part of the Transforming Education Pre-Summit highlights that the share of education spending in low- and lower-middle-income countries fell in 2020, recovered somewhat in 2021, but fell again in 2022 and remains below 2019 levels.⁶²

A longer-term look at the volume of education expenditure, however, shows positive trends over the last decade in the 76 GPE partner countries, but the pace of progress is declining. Estimations based on UIS data show that government education spending in GPE partner countries increased by \$19.4 billion from 2010 to 2015 and by \$14.4 billion from 2015 to 2020.⁶³ Despite the school-age population growth driven by demographic pressures in partner countries, the average annual spending per child increased from \$96 in 2010 to \$129 in 2015 and to \$159 in 2020.⁶⁴

Partner countries' ability to finance the education sector may be affected by various challenges. According to UNESCO estimates, assuming that the budget share dedicated to education remains stable, the volume of

spending could drop in the future because of governments' reduced capacity to raise revenues and maintain overall expenditure.⁶⁵ The anticipated COVID-19-related debt crisis could worsen challenges to education financing. Because pandemic recovery policies were often financed by increased debt, many low- and lower-middle-income countries currently face higher risks of debt distress.⁶⁶ Rising debt levels, associated with increased pressures on government finance, could potentially reduce the resources available to finance education (box 2.2).

The ITAP assessments suggested that domestic financing should be a high priority in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tajikistan, and a medium priority in Kenya. An examination of ITAP assessments in the pilot countries shows that partner countries face a variety of challenges related to domestic education financing, including low shares of education spending in total government expenditures, low execution rates of the education budget and high reliance on debt to finance government spending. The combination of low budgetary allocations and low execution rates leads to an insufficient volume of education financing. As a result, the sector relies heavily

61 World Bank and UNESCO, *Education Finance Watch 2021*, (Washington, DC, and Paris: World Bank and UNESCO, 2021), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/226481614027788096/pdf/Education-Finance-Watch-2021.pdf>.

62 World Bank and UNESCO, *Education Finance Watch 2022*, (Washington, DC, and Paris: World Bank and UNESCO, 2022), <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/related/EFW-2022-Jul.pdf>.

63 These numbers are expressed in constant 2015 US dollars.

64 There are important differences in the spending per child across income groups. In 2020, the average spending per child was \$66, \$218 and \$944 in low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income partner countries, respectively.

65 UNESCO, "Why the world must urgently strengthen learning and protect finance for education," News release, October 16, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/why-world-must-urgently-strengthen-learning-and-protect-finance-education>.

66 M. A. Kose et al., "What Has Been the Impact of COVID-19 on Debt? Turning a Wave into a Tsunami." Policy Research Working Paper 9871, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021).

BOX 2.2. Debt and education financing

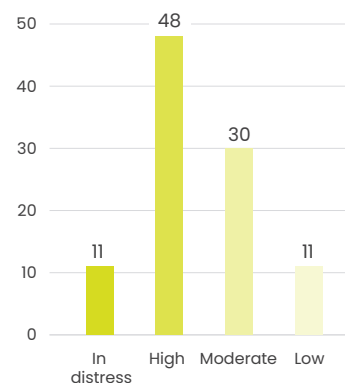
The Debt Sustainability Framework, developed by the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund, assesses risks to debt sustainability. It classifies countries on the basis of their assessed debt-carrying capacity and uses a set of indicators to assign risk ratings of debt distress.

The most recent analysis of debt sustainability shows that half of GPE partner and eligible partner countries are either in debt distress or are experiencing a high risk of debt distress.^a A recent study suggests that increased external debt is associated with a higher risk of budget cuts, which could, in turn, be associated with a decline in education spending.^b

a. The debt sustainability analyses were conducted in each country and published between 2018 and 2022. For the latest listing, see the International Monetary Fund's "List of LIC DSAs for PRGT-Eligible Countries, as of August 29, 2022," <https://www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/dsa/DSAlist.pdf>. The Debt Justice (formerly Jubilee Debt Campaign) provides an alternative indicator of debt risk, <https://data.debtjustice.org.uk/>.

b. E. Miningou, "External Debt, Fiscal Consolidation, and Government Expenditure on Education." Working Paper 22-02. Groupe de Recherche en Économie et Développement International, 2022

Risk of overall debt distress in 64 partner and eligible partner countries with data available (percent)



Source: World Bank, Debt & Fiscal Risks Toolkit, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/debt-toolkit/dsa>.

on households to finance education, which poses an affordability issue for the poorest households, and on high-cost loans, which poses sustainability issues, especially in countries already facing high debt service levels. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya, the high level of household spending on education generates equity issues, as poorer households may not be able to afford the cost of education. Because of the government's weak revenue mobilization, the Democratic Republic of Congo faces challenges in ensuring full execution of the approved education budget.

Other challenges facing the equity of government education expenditure include inequitable distribution of education resources across geographical areas and issues with pro-poor spending. The main efficiency-related issues in the pilot countries include high internal inefficiencies driven by high dropout and repetition rates, inadequate teacher deployment policies and the poor quality of education system governance. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, public spending on education is not pro-poor and there is no policy for targeting more disadvantaged provinces with a higher proportion of funds. In Kenya, uneven deployment of

teachers across different counties and high levels of repetition and dropouts result in inefficiencies in the use of funding.

Addressing the gender gap in access and learning outcomes requires that gender equality be integrated in the education budget process (see box 2.3). GPE 2025 aims to use various incentives to further support the volume, efficiency and equity of domestic financing for education and to contribute toward addressing the issues facing gender equality in access and learning outcomes. With the rollout of the new funding model, data will become available in the future to assess the effectiveness of those incentives.

2.5. LEARNING FROM PILOTS

As part of the operating model rollout, GPE instituted an agile learning approach—the learning framework—to provide continuous and ongoing evidence-based learning to better understand the functioning of the

BOX 2.3. Accounting for gender equality in domestic financing

Education financing is fundamental to advancing gender equality, and gender equality is a key consideration for the analysis and policy development of education financing. Gender-responsive public expenditure management is an approach to assess the budget cycle and the different effects of education spending on children of all genders, and it reorients spending to redress imbalance, thus improving gender responsiveness in how funds are allocated and accounted for.^a The analysis of previous expenditure can also shed light on important disparities—for example, through the analysis of the access to education by level of education for children of different genders and the relative budget allocation. This analysis is called a gender-based benefit incidence.^b

a. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and Malala Fund, "Spending Better for Gender Equality in Education: How Can Financing Be Targeted to Improve Gender Equality in Education?" (New York: United Nations, January 2021), <https://www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Spending-Better-for-Gender-Equality-In-Education-Research-Report-2021-eng.pdf>; B. Welham et al., "Gender-Responsive Public Expenditure Management: A Public Finance Management Introductory Guide," (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2018), <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/i2188.pdf>.
 b. P. Chakraborty, L. Chakraborty, and A. Mukherjee, *Social Sector in a Decentralized Economy: India in the Era of Globalization*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, September 2017), chapter 7, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/social-sector-in-a-decentralized-economy/measuring-benefit-incidence-health-and-education/F5872DFCCEEB53DC7DD2D623203C95>.

different parts of the operating model (gender hard-wiring, enabling factors assessments, ITAP, compact and others). The findings are shared with the partnership on an ongoing basis, as part of the learning and adaptations process (see box 2.4). The framework captures some initial lessons learned from pilot country surveys, focus group discussions with Secretariat staff and formal and informal feedback from partners, particularly at the country level.⁶⁷ Figure 2.8 shows key themes that emerged from these data.

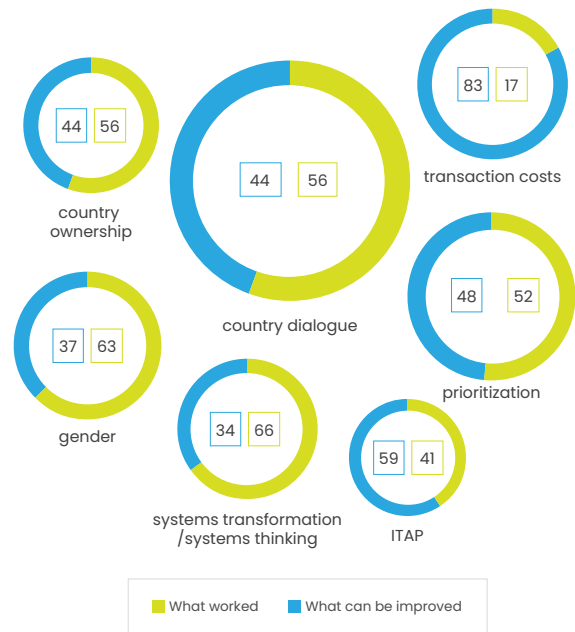
Decreasing transaction costs for partner countries was identified as a key area for improvement in the new operating model, with pre-grant processes taking longer than expected (see figure 2.9). Reasons for delays include (1) data required to fill GPE templates took longer than expected due to insufficient technical capacity in countries, (2) challenges with compiling the data needed for the enabling factors analysis, (3) issues with domestic finance data because of varying fiscal calendars and how country-level budgets are presented, and (4) local context (for example, COVID-19 lockdowns, focusing on other priorities, simultaneously working on education sector plan, issues with coordinating agency leadership, political signoff and others).

Regarding country dialogue, the enabling factors and partnership compact process have led to a consultative

FIGURE 2.8.

The operating model incentivizes country dialogue, prioritization and gender equality, among others.

Key themes from country-level and Secretariat discussions



Source: GPE Secretariat.

Note: The size of the bubble presents the total number of times a theme was coded. ITAP = Independent Technical Advisory Panel.

67 Government focal points, coordinating agents, civil society organizations and other stakeholders at the country level.

BOX 2.4. The Secretariat's webinar with the pilot countries

GPE organized a two-day webinar on June 21–22, 2022 to hear from stakeholders in partner countries that piloted the new model: the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Kenya, Nepal, Tajikistan and Uganda. Marcellus Albertin, head of the Human and Social Development Cluster at the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, moderated the discussions.

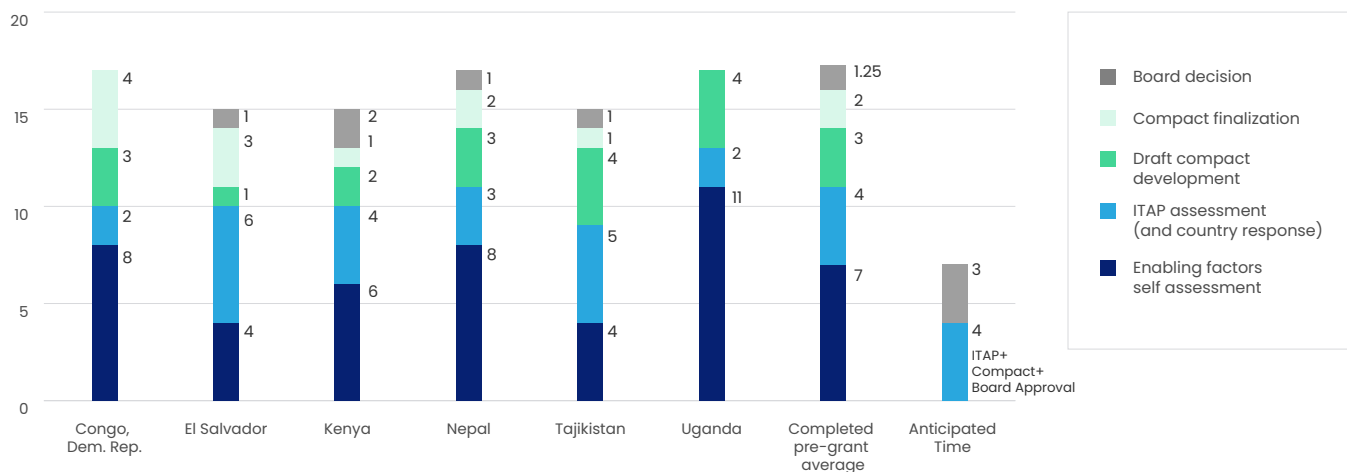
The webinar provided a partnership learning moment, with more than 100 participants each day, allowing exchanges among countries on lessons learned from their respective experiences. The discussions provided insight into various aspects of GPE's new model for other partner countries that will subsequently engage with it, and more broadly for the whole partnership.^a

a. GPE Secretariat, "Learning from the partner countries piloting the GPE 2025 approach," Education for All (blog), July 14, 2022. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/learning-partner-countries-piloting-gpe-2025-approach>.

FIGURE 2.9.

The average time to complete pre-grant processes is 18 months, with most time spent during the enabling factors self-assessment.

Breakdown of time taken to complete pre-grant processes (in months)



Source: GPE Secretariat.

Note: ITAP = Independent Technical Advisory Panel.

dialogue. The country owns that dialogue, especially when the country has active ministry leadership in place. Some lessons learned point to areas of improvement, which include ensuring that (1) the technical aspects of the dialogue do not deemphasize the political aspects of reform, (2) an inclusive technical working group for enabling factors and partnership compact development leads the process, with participation from civil society organizations and teachers unions, and (3) policy

prioritization is informed by identification of system bottlenecks and potential for system transformation and not just by availability of funding and political willingness to work in the priority reform.

Initial lessons regarding gender show that including gender-responsive planning and monitoring as one of the enabling factors ensured the topic's inclusion during the planning process and development of partnership

compacts. Examples from pilot countries include the following: (1) active involvement of government gender experts (the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador), (2) establishment of a stand-alone gender priority (Nepal), and (3) ensuring the use of sex-disaggregated data (El Salvador and Tajikistan). Despite those improvements, lessons learned suggest the need to devote more attention to the intersection of gender with other factors such as poverty and ethnic background. Many of the documents shared by partner countries include gender analyses that explain the gender dynamics in those countries; however, weak links exist between the gender analyses and the education sector in identifying key bottlenecks. The lessons also suggest a need for a common approach to monitoring progress on gender equality.

A Need to Sustain Partner Countries' Progress in Domestic Financing, Alignment and Harmonization, and to Strengthen Data Systems

This chapter has discussed the partnership's progress in country-level objectives 1 and 2, focusing on GPE 2025 enabling factors and sharing preliminary findings from the pilot implementation of the initial phases of the operating model. Designed to track overall progress in data and evidence, sector coordination, domestic financing and gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring, the results framework indicators also monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the GPE 2025 instruments deployed at different stages of the operating model (ITAP assessment, partnership compact and grant implementation) to drive progress in those areas.

Assessment of enabling factors identified several priority areas to be addressed in order to facilitate education system transformation. The data and evidence enabling factor was assessed as a high-priority area in all three partner countries that went through the ITAP assessment in 2021. Sector coordination and domestic financing were assessed as high-priority areas in two countries and gender-responsive sector planning and monitoring as a high-priority area in one country.

Overall, partner countries recorded some progress in the volume of government expenditure on education but have not yet recovered from shocks related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, 71 percent (44 out of 62) of partner countries with data available achieved the 20 percent benchmark or increased their share of education spending from 2020. The average share of government expenditure on education improved in 2021 after an important decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this rebound in 2021, education expenditure is still below the prepandemic level and remains vulnerable to the debt crisis that GPE partner countries currently face.

Progress varied in other areas. GPE saw progress in alignment and harmonization of its grant funding, and inclusiveness of local education groups slightly improved in 2021. Data reporting to UIS, however, remains an issue for GPE partner countries, with the proportion of countries reporting key education data to UIS declining in 2021. Although that decline may not fully demonstrate a lack of data at the country level, the result signals a need to strengthen data systems to ensure that partner countries can collect and disseminate quality data that meet international standards.

As of December 2021, only three partner countries had gone through the early stages of the system transformation grant process and no country was approved for a system capacity grant. The GPE 2025 operating model is being implemented in additional countries, and more data will be available in the future to discuss the GPE 2025 enabling factors. Preliminary data show that the ITAP process identified key barriers to gender-responsive sector planning, policy and monitoring; data and evidence; sector coordination and domestic financing. Partnership compacts will likely reflect those challenges, and the incentives provided by the GPE 2025 operating model should eventually contribute to addressing the issues. A learning framework was put in place to learn from the implementation of the operating model in the pilot countries and is helping to identify potential adjustments to the operating model.