REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL (ITAP)

ASSESSMENT OF ENABLING FACTORS[1]

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR) | JULY 21, 2023

Background

In line with the GPE 2025 operating model, the government and country partners have analyzed country progress in the four enabling factor areas for system transformation. The *Contextualized Enabling Factors Analysis* completed by the local education group and supporting documentation were shared with the ITAP, tasked by the Board with providing an assessment of country status against the enabling factors.

The ITAP assessment seeks to contribute to country policy dialogue on the partnership compact. The ITAP considers the extent to which challenges in enabling factor areas act as bottlenecks to country education system transformation goals. Based on this assessment, it classifies each area as a low, medium, or high priority for action. A designation of high indicates that identified challenges may act as significant bottlenecks to transformation goals.

The ITAP report is shared with the government and country partners to collectively review for any major factual errors that may have affected the ITAP assessment.

The ITAP report is ultimately shared with the Board and feeds into Board decision-making on the system transformation grant allocation, with special attention given to how challenges in the high priority enabling factors are resolved in the country compact.

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[1] The ITAP operates as an independent advisory body to the GPE Board. The views expressed in this report are solely those of the ITAP country panel. Where ITAP reports lists any suggestions on how to address gaps identified, these should be regarded as illustrative only and there is no expectation from ITAP or GPE that countries follow these specific actions. ITAP country panel members for this report: Susy Ndaruhutse (Chair), Theo Oltheten, Michel Welmond, Hafedh Zaafrane.

Part A: Main Panel Conclusions

Data and Evidence

An Education Management Information System (EMIS) is in place in CAR and Statistical Yearbooks have been produced each year apart from 2019/20 due to the political crisis. Data within the EMIS is disaggregated by sex, level, type of school, School Inspectorate (*Inspection académique*) and School Administrative District (*Circonscription scolaire*) and covers all the main access, efficiency and equity indicators except for data on children with disabilities. While the country has recently piloted an Early Grade Reading Assessment and took part in CONFEMEN's Programme for Education System Analysis (*Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN*) in 2019 and is in the early stages of planning for the 2024 assessment round, the ITAP notes that there is no learning assessment system in place in CAR. In addition to the EMIS and learning data, the country has produced several recent studies on gender as well as a Public Expenditure Review. Despite the availability of this data and evidence, the ITAP notes that CAR is heavily dependent on external financing to produce analytical data reports and there remains weak use of these reports in operational planning decisions. The ITAP recognizes the needs highlighted in various reports for more human (statisticians), technical (information technology) and domestic financial resources to create a more sustainable data-informed culture. However, given the availability of data and evidence, the ITAP does not concur with the country's self-analysis rating of high priority and is instead rating this enabling factor as **MEDIUM priority** to reflect the capacity gaps.

Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy and Monitoring

CAR has elaborated a solid planning framework in the form of the 2020–2029 Education Sector Plan (*Plan sectoriel de l'éducation*) (PSE). The PSE proposes four main reform pillars and is supported by a rigorous analysis of sector issues and a well-developed financial simulation model. Furthermore, there is a clear and important political commitment to education: this was expressed publicly in a May 2020 national commitment letter (*Lettre d'engagement N° 099*), which stated the intention to increase domestic resources for education, and a formal commitment by the President to improve education opportunities made at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit held in New York.

The implementation of the 2020–2029 PSE has faced considerable challenges, mainly due to the ongoing security, climate and health crises. However, the country's self-analysis as well as other documents also point to weakness in operational planning and sector monitoring capacity as contributing to the slow uptake of reforms and key actions. Several problems affect budget tracking that also prevent close monitoring of the many financial commitments that have been made.

Gender issues are treated as a cross-cutting theme in the 2020–2029 PSE. Considerable attention is paid to the issue and gender-based targets are also included. However, CAR lacks a comprehensive policy and plan that specifically focusses on gender and education with targets, monitoring mechanisms and discrete well-funded programs. CAR officially considers education to be a human right. It should be noted, however, that human rights violations that have affected access to quality and safe education environments have been common in the country.

The education planning process has been severely affected by CAR's particular context: security challenges, extreme weather events, and the COVID crisis, as well as low capacity in planning and monitoring. Overall, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority.**

Sector Coordination

Inclusive Sector Dialogue and Coordinated Action:

The Local Education Group (*Groupe local des partenaires de l'éducation*) (GLPE), foreseen under the Partnership Framework (*Cadre partenarial du secteur de l'éducation*), was established in 2014. It has clearly defined roles and responsibilities and has been effective as the main body for sector dialogue and coordinated action. This has occurred in a fragile socio-political context which, at times, has made its proper functioning rather challenging.

The ITAP recognizes the importance of the political commitment expressed in September 2022 to activate the Interministerial Steering Committee (*Comité de pilotage interministériel*) of the 2020–2029 PSE. However, this important Committee has not been operational since the launch of the PSE two years ago. It is unclear to the ITAP if this Committee is to be replaced by the Education and Training Sector Coordination Committee (*Comité de coordination de secteur de l'éducation et de la formation*) (CCSEF) under the leadership of the Prime Minister. If so, it remains concerning to the ITAP that the CCSEF has not yet held its first meeting although it should have been operational by the end of 2022. The ITAP also notes with concern that the structures charged with monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the 2020–2029 PSE in the past and to date, have not been able to carry out their tasks properly, mainly because of lack of capacity. Therefore, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority**.

Coordinated Financing and Funding:

Joint financing mechanisms have not been set up nor planned, mainly because CAR's public financial management system continues to suffer from weak accountability mechanisms. Critical constraints have been identified for proper tracking of budget allocation and expenditure which inhibit an informed dialogue on accountability and aid

effectiveness. However, under the prevailing conditions, the ITAP considers the current practice of sharing funding information within the GLPE as an adequate and pragmatic approach at this point of time. Therefore, the ITAP does not concur with the country's self-analysis which rated this enabling factor as a high priority and instead rates it as a **MEDIUM priority.**

Volume, Efficiency and Equity of Domestic Financing

The ITAP recognizes that the education sector is extremely affected by the multidimensional crisis that the country has been experiencing for several years. This has had a direct impact on the volume of national resources allocated to the education sector which stands at 7.9 percent of overall public resources and 1.3 percent of GDP. These shares are significantly below the respective GPE benchmarks of 20 percent and 4 percent. The public resources allocated to education in 2021 and 2022 in no way reflect the commitment made by the government in a May 2020 national commitment letter, reiterated at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit, to gradually increase the share devoted to education to reach the threshold of 20 percent in 2026 and 23 percent in 2029. On the contrary, the allocations are decreasing.

As well as constraints to the volume of domestic financing, CAR faces challenges with the equity and efficiency of public spending. There is low access to education and nearly one third of children aged 6-18 are out of school. Households pay a significant proportion of education costs. This private financing accentuates the disparities between different regions. Bangui region attracts most of the (qualified) teachers paid by the government, while more than two-thirds of the teachers in the regions outside Bangui are community teachers (*maître-parents*), unqualified and paid for by households that are among the poorest. Elements of social and regional inequity are also seen in disparities in access and learning. Children from the poorest households and interior regions, especially girls, are the most disadvantaged in the system. The education system shows clear signs of internal inefficiency with more than one child in five repeating a year and completion rates reaching only 50 percent in primary school and 13 percent in secondary school. Inefficiency is also evident in the management and distribution of material and human resources.

The low volume of public funding for education coupled with serious inequities in its distribution and internal inefficiency, creates a major bottleneck for education sector transformation in CAR. As a result, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority.**

Part B: Assessment of Enabling Factors

1. Data and Evidence

Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)

An Education Management Information System (EMIS) exists in CAR and is supported by Edutrac that was put in place during 2019 under the GPE Accelerated Funding Program. Edutrac collects real-time data by SMS message from schools, which are then stored on a web-based platform. Statistical Yearbooks (*Annuaires statistiques*) were produced between 2015/16 and 2018/19 by the Research, Statistics and Planning Directorate (*Direction générale des études, des statistiques et de la planification*) (DGESP) within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (*Ministère de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire*) (MEPS), for all education levels except for higher education which was only included in the 2018/19 Statistical Yearbook. Due to the political crisis and the resultant insecurity, no data were collected in 2019/20. For 2020/21, data were collected for primary, but coverage was low and there were challenges with the quality and reliability. These data were then updated, incorporating some data from the 2018/19 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (*Enquête par grappes à Indicateurs multiples*) (MICS6), and a Statistical Yearbook was published in March 2022 to feed into the 2020–2029 Education Sector Plan (*Plan sectoriel de l'éducation*) (PSE) monitoring framework. For 2021/22, data were collected in three volumes – (i) a synthesis of key indicators plus trend data for all levels of education excluding higher education; (ii) detailed data on pre-primary, primary, non-formal and adult literacy; and (iii) detailed data on lower secondary and general secondary.

Statistical Yearbooks contain data on schools, students and teachers that are disaggregated by level, type of school (public and private with the latter category being broken down by religious body/lay/franco-arabe), School Inspectorate (*Inspection académique*) and School Administrative District (*Circonscription scolaire*). In addition, student data are disaggregated by sex and age and includes data on repetition and on orphans and vulnerable children. Teacher data also includes category and qualifications of teachers. The ITAP notes that there is no consolidated database within MEPS on children with disabilities and dropout data does not seem to be routinely collected. The mandate for collecting these data sits with the Ministry of Social and Human Affairs (*Ministère des affaires sociales et humanitaires*). It was not clear to the ITAP whether these data are routinely collected. While the 2021/22 school questionnaire does contain questions on children with disabilities, these data were not included in the 2021/22 Statistical Yearbook. Some data on children with disabilities is captured in the 2018/19 MICS6.

While the EMIS is functional, the ITAP notes from the documents reviewed that it needs strengthening with additional human resource capacity (especially statisticians). There is also a need to make budgetary resources available for data analysis and for information

technology infrastructure. To date, there has been heavily reliance on external funding to produce data reports. In addition, the country's analysis stated that more work needs to be done by the country to create a data culture, to integrate different databases and to decentralize them.

Learning Assessment Systems

Statistical Yearbooks include data on numbers of students registered, present and admitted to (passing) the primary leaving certificate (CEF1) and similar categories for the entrance examination to 6ème which are considerably lower. These examinations do not seem to reflect a clear assessment of learning but rather appear to screen for who is able to progress to the very limited number of places in lower secondary. The ITAP remarks that there is a big difference between the CEF1 pass rate (65 percent) and the pass rate of the entrance exam to 6ème (33 percent) showing this rationalizing of places.

CAR participated in CONFEMEN's Programme for Education System Analysis (*Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN*) (PASEC) in 2006 and again in 2019. In 2019, this was carried out in primary grades 2 and 6 as part of a 14 (Francophone) country exercise and is designed for international and temporal statistical comparability and not based on the national curriculum. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CAR was only able to collect data in 2021/22 and the report was released in May 2023. The report showed very low levels of learning, regional variations in test scores and many teachers performing below expected levels. At the end of primary, CAR ranked second to last out of the 14 participating countries for mathematics, and last for reading. A national PASEC team has been created to prepare for CAR's participation in the 2024 PASEC assessment.

The 2018/19 MICS6 includes data on learning which are disaggregated by age, sex, location (urban/rural, region), wealth quintile, ethnic group and disability (a high-level statement on whether or not the child has functional difficulties). In 2018/19 a mini-Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) was carried out in Bangui. This assessment was not shared with the ITAP, but it is reported that it did feed into 2020-2029 PSE preparation.

The ITAP concludes that while CAR is actively participating in external assessments such as PASEC, EGRA and MICS6, there is no learning assessment system in place in the country.

Evidence Production and Use

The most recent Education Sector Analysis (ESA) (*Analyse du secteur de l'éducation de la République Centrafricaine*) was drafted in 2018 and then completed in 2019/20 to include a supplementary analysis that helped frame the 2020–2029 PSE. Only the original draft was shared with the ITAP. The ITAP notes that a new ESA is planned for 2023/24.

In addition to the EMIS and learning data mentioned above, CAR has produced several supplementary studies. These include a 2022 Public Expenditure Review and three studies on gender competed in 2021 – a country gender profile, a study on gender-based violence

(GBV), and an analysis report on gender (*Rapport d'analyse sexo*). These studies outline the root causes and barriers to gender empowerment and girls' education highlighting social norms (for example, in 2018/19, 65 percent of women thought a husband was justified beating his wife) and high levels of GBV and early marriage amongst girls (CAR has the second highest rate of child marriage in the world with 61 percent of women aged 20-24 reporting already being married or cohabiting for the first time before the age of 18). They also mention how in recent years, CAR has produced several policies and launched various initiatives to promote gender equality, but these have not all been implemented. One of the recommendations from these studies is for the government to create a Gender Observatory as only 27.8 percent of the indicators needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals from a gender perspective were available at the end of 2020. The ITAP notes that a specific study on education and disability is planned by UNICEF in 2023/24

These studies have helped to shape the priorities in the 2020–2029 ESP and there are plans for EMIS data to be used to measure progress against key indicators. However, given the weak culture of data within MEPS coupled with scarce analytical capacity, data and evidence is only partially used to inform decision-making in the education sector.

Conclusion: CAR has an EMIS in place and has made progress in producing Statistical Yearbooks containing comprehensive data on access and efficiency that is disaggregated by sex, level, type of school, School Inspectorate and School Administrative District. The main gap noted by the ITAP is data on children with disabilities. The country has piloted an EGRA in Bangui, has recently been part of the 2019 PASEC Francophone regional assessment and is actively planning for the 2024 assessment. Despite this, the ITAP concludes that there is no learning assessment system in place in the country. The ITAP observes that the country is very dependent on external financing to produce data reports and that despite the existence of EMIS and learning data, a public expenditure review and various studies on gender, there is weak use of this data and evidence to inform planning and implementation. The ITAP notes from the package of documents reviewed that there is a need for more human (statisticians), technical (information technology) and budgetary resources in order to create a data culture. Overall, given the availability of data and evidence, the ITAP does not concur with the country's self-analysis rating of high priority and is instead rating this enabling factor as **MEDIUM priority** to reflect the capacity needs.

2. Gender-Responsive Sector Planning, Policy and Monitoring

Strategic Planning Frameworks and Practices

CAR's Education Law (Article 6 of the Law 7/0.14 of December 10) stipulates that education is obligatory from the ages of 6 to 15. It guarantees access, regardless of sex, social origin, race, ethnicity or religion. It also states that education is free, though it allows for the contribution of beneficiaries and communities.

The country has a strong planning framework. The 2020–2029 Education Sector Plan (*Plan sectoriel de l'éducation*) (PSE), which was adopted by decree in May 2020, provides a comprehensive legal and technical foundation for the future development of the education system. It lays out the priority reform areas and is based on a comprehensive assessment of the challenges facing the sector involving the participation of different stakeholders. It is a high-quality document that received the full endorsement of the education sector development partners. It was accompanied by a May 2020 commitment letter (*Lettre d'engagement N° 099*) which stated the government's commitment to increase the domestic resource allocation for education to 20 percent of the national budget in 2026 and 23 percent in 2029 in order to implement the reforms stipulated in the plan. In addition, the President of CAR made a formal commitment (*Déclaration nationale d'engagement*) during the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit to the key education policy reforms laid out in the 2020–2029 PSE and to raising expenditures for education in the short, medium and long term.

CAR has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and has committed to several relevant international agreements, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Education for All. These reflect CAR's belief in access to education as a human right. The 2020–2029 PSE mentions children with disabilities and proposes a general approach to addressing their needs based on sensitizing stakeholders to the importance of inclusivity. However, there is no specific plan in place that addresses the needs of this sub-population. UNICEF intends to undertake a study on children with disabilities during the 2023/24 school year. CAR is a country that has been severely affected by conflict and there are many parts of the country that continue to face serious insecurity. According to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, considerable human rights abuses have occurred during the conflict, some of which have affected children's access to safe and quality education.

Operational Planning Instruments and Practices

The 2020–2029 PSE was accompanied by a Three-Year Budgeted Action Plan (*Plan triennal d'actions budgétisés*) (PTAB) and a logical framework, but these have not been adequately used as planning instruments. This is partly the result of COVID-19 and the ongoing security crisis that CAR is experiencing. Although there is a provisional plan for the 2022/23 school year, it is quite cursory and does not provide information regarding costs, inputs, outputs,

outcomes, and targets. No annual planning document was prepared for the last few school years. MEPS is expected to prepare a three-year plan for the implementation of the President's commitment at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit. This plan should present how the budget of 65.6 billion CFA francs will be used and should include a more detailed proposal of actions and targets.

The current GPE program (*Projet d'appui au PSE*), with the World Bank as executing agency, is based on the 2020–2029 PSE. The implementation progress of this project is a telling indicator of the difficulty of operationalizing the 2020–2029 PSE – only 8.2 percent of the funds for this operation were disbursed by May 2023.

Budget Programming and Monitoring

CAR has developed a financial simulation model to accompany the 2020–2029 PSE. It is quite comprehensive and is well described in the 2020–2029 PSE. It presents a "referential" scenario, which provides a pragmatic application of the reform program. It is well anchored in the country's macroeconomic framework and projections provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). CAR does not have a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, which usually serves as a framework for budget programming and helps ensure financing for the sector. However, the ITAP remarks that the data and financial projections in the model (from 2019) are now redundant given that the security and COVID crises have had a negative impact on both the macroeconomic situation and on school attendance. This has reduced the availability of resources for the education sector at a time when the country is in drastic need of additional resources.

The PTAB should allow for budget monitoring. However, as it has not yet been used by the authorities, it will need to be updated if it is to serve as a programming and monitoring guide in the future. It should also be noted that CAR has not increased the overall education budget over the last three years, despite the adoption of the 2020–2029 PSE and the government's public commitments in national and international statements.

Sector Monitoring Mechanisms and Practices

The 2020–2029 PSE proposes an array of monitoring mechanisms. However, as mentioned above, these have not been active, partly due to the crises in the country and partly because of weak institutional capacity. An Interministerial Steering Committee (*Comité de suivi interministérielle*) is supposed to be in place and reinforced to play its role (a similar committee had been set up in the past but has not been operational). However, this committee has not been formally established. DGESP is supposed to coordinate, as well as monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 2020–2029 PSE. Since it is a cross-cutting department serving the four ministries with responsibility for education, it has a global view of the sector. It is tasked with ensuring the synchronization of education projects and the 2020–2029 PSE strategic orientations; coordinating the implementation and monitoring of

activities executed by partners and the ministries; preparing quarterly, semi-annual reports; serving as Secretariat of the Interministerial Steering Committee; ensuring sector reviews take place; and helping mobilize internal and external financing. However, it has not had the technical capacity nor financial resources required to play its role effectively.

The main sector monitoring mechanism that is functioning at this time is the annual joint sector review (JSR), the last of which was held in July 2022. JSRs were not held in 2020 or 2021. These events have provided an opportunity to review progress and make recommendations. The Aide-Mémoire of the 2022 JSR mentions a semi-annual progress report, which was not available at the time of the meeting. It does not appear that this report has yet been produced, although it could serve as a very useful monitoring device.

The Local Education Group (*Groupe local des partenaires de l'éducation*) (GLPE) meets every six weeks and provides an opportunity to discuss progress and follow up on different commitments. However, since no organized monitoring has been undertaken, it is difficult to track progress in a systematic manner.

Gender Mainstreaming Across the Policy Continuum

Much of the documentation provided shows that gender inequality is a serious issue in the education sector in CAR. The 2020–2029 PSE addresses gender in a cross-cutting manner. CAR does not have a standalone policy and program to meet gender-specific targets in education, but inclusivity is one of the principal pillars of the reform effort. The 2020–2029 PSE lists interventions and approaches that aim to render education more accessible for girls directly (distribution of "dignity kits", construction of separate latrines, and sensitization campaigns) and indirectly (reducing distances to schools). In addition, it includes enrolment and completion targets for girls. However, as was indicated by the development partners in their endorsement of the 2020–2029 PSE, the strategy is not complete or sufficiently articulated.

The 2020 National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity (*Politique nationale de promotion de l'égalité et de l'équité du genre en République Centrafricaine*) (PNEEG) represents a commitment to address gender inequality writ large. Education is included in the policy document as its first strategy. However, the strategy presented is insufficiently focused on the specific constraints to girls' education.

Conclusion: CAR's legal framework, policy documents and political pronouncements reflect a commitment to free basic education for all and set the stage for inclusive strategies. The 2020–2029 PSE, and its accompanying financial simulation model and three-year planning instrument are state of the art. The May 2020 commitment letter (*Lettre d'engagement N° 099*) coupled with the President's declaration at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit signaled a clear political commitment to education. All the planning and monitoring instruments clearly refer to and include

activities to address gender imbalance in the education sector, but the country lacks a more in-depth and standalone policy statement and program. However, the weaknesses of operational planning, monitoring and budget programming clearly need to be addressed to ensure the 2020–2029 PSE is more than just a well-written document. The implementation weaknesses have been and can be expected to continue to constitute an important brake on CAR's capacity to honor its commitments to improve the education sector's performance. Consequently, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority**.

3. Sector Coordination: Inclusive Sector Dialogue and Coordinated Action and Coordinated Financing and Funding

3.1 Inclusive Dialogue and Coordinated Action

Coordination Functions and Practices

The basic architecture for sector coordination was established in 2014 in support of the 2014–2017 Education Sector Transition Plan (*Plan de* transition). The GLPE was established in 2014 by Interministerial Decree of the then four ministries of education with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. According to Article 3, it includes the other relevant ministries (Ministries of Economy, Planning and Cooperation, Finance and Budget), civil society groups, associations and unions, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and bilateral partners. The GLPE meets, according to Article 4, once or twice every three months. Security, social/political unrest and COVID-19 have hindered its proper functioning in recent years, but since 2022 the group has met on a regular basis as confirmed by the respective minutes. This has included supporting National Consultations on education with a broad range of stakeholders during 2022. The Interministerial Decree was signed in conjunction with the Partnership Framework (*Cadre partenarial du secteur de l'éducation*) which was agreed between the then Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Literacy (*Ministère de l'enseignement primaire, secondaire et de l'alphabétisation*) (MEPSA) and the GLPE. It outlines mutual commitments, responsibilities, principles such as harmonization and alignment, composition, representation and procedures.

Education sector coordination is complicated in CAR as there are four ministries having some responsibility for education – the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (*Ministère de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire*) (MEPS), the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Adult Literacy (*Ministère de l'enseignement technique et de l'alphabétisation*) (META), the Ministry of Higher Education (*Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur*) (MES) and the Ministry of Scientific Research and Technological Innovation (*Ministère de la recherche scientifique et de l'innovation technologique*) (MRSIT). The Interministerial Steering Committee (*Comité de pilotage interministériel*) is formally in charge of the strategic steering of the 2020–2029 PSE. It includes representatives from the four ministries in charge of education, as well as from the Ministries of Economy, Planning and Cooperation, Finance and Budget, and Public Affairs. In addition, representatives from civil society, non-governmental organizations and development partners are to be invited to its biannual meetings. DGESP is supposed to serve as the Secretariat of the Committee. The ITAP did not find evidence that this Committee is operational but notes the political statement made at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit that it would be activated before the end of 2022. It also remarks that the relevant provisions are to be put in place for the Education and Training Sector Coordination Committee (*Comité de*

coordination de secteur de l'éducation et de la formation) (CCSEF) established by Prime Ministerial Decree, to strengthen intra- and inter-sectoral dialogue. It was unclear to the ITAP how these two mechanisms relate to each other or what the added value of the CCSEF would be. The most likely scenario seems to be that the CCSEF will replace the Steering Committee, but the ITAP was not able to confirm this.

The Education Cluster was activated in December 2013. UNICEF coordinates it in partnership with the government represented by MEPS, to strengthen the humanitarian response coordination mechanisms. The Cluster has played – and continues to play – a pivotal role in addressing the multi-faceted humanitarian crises facing the education sector.

Capacities for Coordination

The Aide-Mémoire of the JSR, minutes of the GLPE meetings as well as the country's self-analysis confirm that the institutional capacity and conditions for effective coordination remain a serious challenge. One of the key bottlenecks is lack of information due to insufficient analytical capacity. The 2020–2029 PSE states that an Education Sector Unit of the Permanent Technical Secretariat (*Secrétariat technique permanent – Cellule du secteur éducation*) (STP-CSE) was set up over a decade ago to support the implementation of the 2008 National Education Sector Strategy (*Stratégie nationale du secteur de l'éducation*). It goes on to say that "the unit has not been able to fulfill its role, in particular due to a lack of qualified human resources" and that it should be replaced by (strengthening of) the DGESP playing a cross-cutting role across the four ministries having responsibility for education. This arrangement would strengthen its coordination role in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2020–2029 PSE.

Since the STP-CSE has not fulfilled what was expected of it, the PSE Monitoring Unit (*Cellule de suivi*) was established in 2022, attached to the Minister's Office, to fulfil this function. So far, its performance has not been impressive. As noted in the country's self-analysis it "is beginning to get its bearings to start undertaking this PSE monitoring work". This demonstrates the urgent need for capacity strengthening of the members of this critically important unit. This has been identified by the GLPE as one of the proposed reform priorities.

Conclusion on 3.1: The GLPE has proven to be a functional, productive and quite effective mechanism for inclusive dialogue and coordinated action, despite the prolonged fragile socio-political context that has made its functioning rather challenging. The 2022 JSR and the National Consultations have paved the way for greater inclusivity. However, as noted in the country's self-analysis, more concerted efforts are needed to involve all the key stakeholders, in particular civil society organizations and actors at the decentralized levels in the regions and provinces. The overall national framework for sector coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the 2020–2029 PSE has not been applied. It is unclear if the still dormant Interministerial Steering Committee is to be replaced by the CCSEF under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the 2020–2029 PSE

remains a critical weakness. The ITAP notes with concern that the PSE Monitoring Unit under the Minister's Office, has not been able to carry out its mandate since it was established in 2022. Overall, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority**.

3.2 Coordinated Financing and Funding

Availability of Aid Alignment and Joint Financing Mechanisms

Substantial external financial project support is provided by the development partners within the framework of the 2020–2029 PSE.[2] The GLPE serves as a platform for feedback on new initiatives and ongoing programs, and to agree on follow-up actions, aligning expected strategic results with government's policy priorities.

Since budget support was suspended in 2001 for various reasons, no initiatives have been taken to pursue joint financing mechanisms even though the establishment of a Common Fund for Education (*Fonds de développement de l'éducation*) was recommendation 6d of the 2022 sector review. The ITAP has not been able to confirm if this recommendation is still valid. As also noted in the country's self-analysis, joint funding and/or budget support are at this moment not realistic modalities in CAR in spite of the country's progress in improving its public financial management.[3] The country still struggles with improving budget credibility mainly because key institutional capabilities in revenue forecasting are lacking at the budget-formulation stage.[4] In addition, the ITAP notes that CAR is facing serious financial challenges in terms of its balance of payments, which triggered Article IV Consultations with the IMF and a 38-month arrangement under the Extended Credit Facility of around US$ 191.4 million.[5]

Accountability and Dialogue Around Aid Effectiveness

Accountability and dialogue around aid effectiveness are emerging on the agenda of the GLPE. Information about current and pipeline external funding levels, allocation and modalities is being shared at the GLPE meetings, but a consolidated database is still to be developed. However, as for domestic funding, reliable and useful information on budget

[2] See page 167 of the 2022 World Bank report Central African Republic: Public Expenditure Review in Key Human Development Sector which was not part of the original package of documents shared with the ITAP.
[3] See the 2020 Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative paper Building Public Financial Capabilities in a Post-Conflict Environment: the case of the Central African Republic which was not part of the original package of documents shared with the ITAP.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] See: IMF Country Report No. 23/155, May 2023 which was not part of the original package of documents shared with the ITAP.

allocation and expenditure is a critical issue[6] which is part of the earlier mentioned public financial management challenges.

Commitment Towards Greater Aid Effectiveness Practices

The ITAP has not been able to assess the extent to which CAR is committed to greater aid effectiveness practices. At project level, the GLPE's efforts to demonstrate this commitment are laudable. However, a broader framework that would enhance this agenda, such as a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, is lacking.

Conclusion on 3.2: Information about external project funding levels, allocation and modalities is up to date. Domestic and external financing is a recurrent item on the agenda of the GLPE. Under the recently approved Extended Credit Facility by the IMF, priority spending on education will be safeguarded which confirms CAR's political commitment. CAR's public financial management track record is not conducive for joint external funding arrangements. The current practice of sharing information seems to be an effective and pragmatic approach at this point of time. Therefore, the ITAP does not concur with the country's self-analysis of this enabling factor as a high priority and instead rates it as a **MEDIUM priority**.

[6] See pages 15-16 of the 2022 World Bank report Central African Republic: Public Expenditure Review in Key Human Development Sector where it states: "Furthermore, the current budget nomenclature does not allow tracking of the budget allocation at the regional level and cannot be disaggregated, for example, by level of education".

4. Volume, Equity, and Efficiency of Domestic Public Expenditure on Education

Volume

The strains on public finances due to the security crisis, and CAR being on the brink of a humanitarian crisis with acute food insecurity, are preventing the government from delivering basic public services to an already afflicted population. As a result, the ITAP notes that the volume of public financing for education in CAR remains far from the GPE benchmarks of 4 percent of GDP or 20 percent of total public expenditure. Between 2020 and 2022, public financing of education has fallen from 2.0 percent to 1.3 percent of GDP and from 8.3 percent to 7.9 percent of total expenditure (excluding debt service). The 2023 Finance Law data and the projections for the next few years do not demonstrate significant changes. Regarding the 2024-2026 projections, it should be noted that the figures of the financing matrix should be interpreted with great caution due to the strictly indicative nature of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, which also renders obsolete the projections of the simulation model.

The National Declaration of Commitment (*Déclaration nationale d'engagement*) signed by the President of the Republic at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit recalls the country's commitment made in 2020 to devote more resources to education, reaching 20 percent of the national budget by 2026 and 23 percent by 2029. However, the ITAP notes that the country's continued security, humanitarian and economic challenges severely undermine this political commitment.

Table 1: Share of education expenditure in GDP and in total government expenditure (%)

	2020	2021	2022	2023*	2024	2025
	Act.	Act.	Act.	Budget	Proj.	Proj.
Education as a percentage of GDP	2.0%	1.6%	1.3%	1.6%	2.3%	2.4%
Education as a percentage of government expenditure (excluding debt service)	8.3%	8.6%	7.9%	9.8%	14.2%	14.2%
Recurrent education expenditure as a percentage of public recurrent expenditure (excluding debt service)	11.9%	12.9%	10.6%	12.1%	17.8%	19.0%

Source: Computed from "Domestic financing matrix" completed by the country
(*) The domestic financing matrix includes data from the 2023-2025 MTEF for 2023. These data have been replaced by those of the 2023 Finance Law and the data for 2024 and 2025 have been maintained (MTEF 2023-2024).

According to the IMF, CAR's medium-term outlook is highly uncertain. Baseline projections assume a recovery in growth from 0.5 percent in 2022 to 2.3 percent in 2023 and an average of 3.6 percent between 2024 and 2027. These projections will result in a primary domestic fiscal deficit of 1.4 percent of GDP in 2027. However, this scenario remains extremely fragile

and vulnerable due to the multiple risks relating to the deterioration of the security situation, the social crisis and the very limited capacity to mobilize resources.

Equity

The ITAP notes public spending on education in CAR is inequitable in terms of gender, geography and socioeconomic status. Girls lag behind boys in both enrolment and academic performance. While there is broad gender parity in pre-school, a gap starts at primary and continues so that girls only constitute 37 percent of all secondary school enrolments and are more likely to drop out of school: the dropout rate for girls at lower secondary and upper secondary levels is 15 percent and 18 percent respectively, compared with 10 percent and 11 percent for boys. Regarding socioeconomic and geographical inequity, more than a quarter of children aged 6 to 11 do not attend primary school. This proportion reaches 41.6 percent for the poorest quintile against 7.5 percent for the richest quintile and is a low of 6.1 percent in Bangui compared to 40.8 percent in other regions. At secondary level, almost two thirds of girls are not enrolled in school compared to less than a third for boys. This proportion reaches 70.8 percent for the poorest quintile against 21.5 percent for the richest quintile.

Socioeconomic and geographical inequities are aggravated by disparities in the allocation of human resources. Children living outside of Bangui, particularly in rural areas, are disadvantaged both in terms of the availability of government-paid teachers and adequate classrooms. Households in these regions, which are among the poorest, find themselves obliged to finance unqualified community teachers (*maître-parents*) working in rudimentary conditions, while the richest households in large towns contribute less to the financing of schools, which are better equipped and with better qualified civil servant teachers paid by the government. Inequities are not confined to access but are also reflected in learning outcomes. MICS6 revealed that only 4.7 percent of children reached the minimum proficiency level for learning which decreased to a mere 0.5 percent for the poorest quintile compared to 13.3 percent for the richest quintile.

The ITAP notes the presence of financing formulas for resource allocation that explicitly incorporate equity considerations. However, the 2020 PNEEG has not been translated into a detailed action plan and has not impacted budgetary procedures and mechanisms to address gender disparities.

Efficiency

Access to education is limited and few children, especially girls, complete primary and secondary education. In 2022, the gross enrolment rate (GER) was 111 percent in primary, 24 percent in lower secondary, and 10 percent in upper secondary. The high GER in primary education does not reflect universal access to education, but rather late enrolment, relatively high repetition rates and a large proportion of overage children.

Regarding internal efficiency, according to the 2018/19 MICS6 data, the repetition rate exceeds 20 percent at every level and dropout rates are also high, standing respectively at 6 percent, 12 percent and 15 percent at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Completion rates are low at all levels of education, particularly for girls and those living outside Bangui. Data from the 2018/19 MICS6 shows that only 42 percent of students aged 16-18 in CAR had completed primary education (34 percent for girls) and only 6.4 percent of students aged 20-22 had completed secondary education (4.5 percent for girls). Completion rates are even lower among students living outside of Bangui, where only 31 percent of students aged 16-18 complete primary education, compared to 77 percent of students living in Bangui. Administrative data from the 2021–2022 Statistical Yearbook show slight improvements with primary and secondary completion rates of 50 percent and 13 percent respectively, but these figures are still well below the average for sub-Saharan Africa.

2018/19 MICS6 data make it possible to estimate the number of out-of-school children at more than half a million, or 29 percent of children aged 6 to 18. Girls, children living in rural areas and those from the poorest families are more likely to be out of school.

Inefficiency is also evident in the management and distribution of material and human resources. There is a significant deficit of schools and classrooms in several regions of the country and the distribution of teachers suffers from a quantitative and qualitative deficit. At the primary level, more than 60 percent of teachers (only 5 percent in Bangui) are community teachers; the ratio of the number of pupils per civil servant teacher is 271 but this average hides a low of 109 in Bangui and a high of 539 in region 5. The poorest regions do not have qualified teachers and are obliged to recruit and pay community teachers.

Conclusion: The ITAP notes the multiple challenges the country faces both in terms of volume and in terms of efficiency and equity of public spending. The volume of national resources allocated to the education sector is not aligned with the GPE benchmarks either in terms of share of public expenditure (7.5 percent against a benchmark of 20 percent) or in terms of proportion of GDP (1.3 percent against a benchmark of 4 percent). CAR would need to nearly triple the volume of public resources allocated to education to be aligned with the required benchmarks. In addition, CAR faces significant challenges with equitable access and learning outcomes in relation to gender, geography (urban/rural and regions) and socioeconomic status. Finally, with high rates of repetition and dropout, nearly 30 percent of children being out of school, and inefficiencies in the management and distribution of material (schools and classrooms) and human resources (qualified teachers), CAR's scarce education budget is not being used efficiently. This combination of very low public expenditure in an education system that is inequitable and has multiple inefficiencies, is a major bottleneck to education system transformation in CAR. As a result, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **HIGH priority**.

Part C: High-Level Summary of Enabling Factors Assessed as High Priority

Enabling Factor	Challenges and Rationale for High Priority Rating
Gender-Responsive Sector Planning, Policy and Monitoring	**Challenge:** Although CAR has a strong education reform framework in the form of the 2020–2029 Education Sector Plan (*Plan sectoriel de l'éducation*) (PSE) and strong political commitment to its strategies and objectives, the implementation and monitoring capacity is clearly missing. The bodies responsible for coordination and monitoring are either not in place or have severe capacity challenges (financial and technical). **Rationale for high priority:** There has been little progress over the last two years in the implementation of CAR's education reform program. This has been in great part due to weak implementation, coordination and monitoring. Addressing these elements is critical if CAR intends to meet the targets of its ambitious 2020–2029 PSE.
Inclusive Dialogue and Coordinated Action	**Challenge:** The national mechanisms for strategic steering/coordination of the 2020–2029 PSE are not operational and sector monitoring and evaluation remain very weak, inhibiting effective inclusive dialogue and coordinated action. **Rationale for high priority:** The GLPE is the only operational mechanism of the 2020–2029 PSE for information sharing among its members and follow-up on agreed actions during its meetings. However, two indispensable mechanisms for effective and inclusive dialogue and coordinated action are not operational or lack capacity. Due to the 'dormant' status of the Interministerial Steering Committee (*Comité de pilotage interministériel*), strategic governance of the implementation of the 2020–2029 PSE since its start two years ago, does not seem to have taken place based on the documentation reviewed by the ITAP. On several occasions high-level intentions and commitments

	have been expressed for corrective actions. However, so far these intentions have not been translated into concrete actions. In addition, the PSE Monitoring Unit (*Cellule de suivi*) has proven to lack the capacity to generate and validate data on sector performance. Both weaknesses need urgent attention and action to create the minimum conditions for effective and inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action.
Volume, Equity and Efficiency of Domestic Public Expenditure on Education	**Challenge:** The volume and distribution of domestic financing create a bottleneck to expand equitable access to basic education. Girls, children living in rural areas and those from the poorest families are the most affected by the inequity and inefficiency of public spending. **Rationale for high priority:** The volume of public expenditure allocated to education (7.8 percent of public expenditure and 1.3 percent of GDP) is not aligned with the GPE benchmark. The government's commitment, expressed in 2022, to increase the volume of public expenditure in education to 20 percent of the total public expenditure in 2026 is unrealistic in relation to the current context of crisis and constraints on public finances. The transformation of the education sector in CAR requires a radical change of the paradigm leading to a social consensus of the imperative need for the development of the education sector and the achievement of universal education. If an increased mobilization of resources (internal and external) is necessary, better distribution and more equitable and efficient allocation of resources are essential to address the multiple challenges.