Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) – MTR Action Plan and update

Management Response to the KIX Mid-Term Evaluation (June 2022)

Overall response to the mid-term evaluation

The GPE Secretariat welcomes the mid-term evaluation of the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX), conducted between September 2021 and March 2022 by Delivery Associates to assess whether KIX is on track to meet its objectives and identify opportunities to improve its impact. We find the mid-term evaluation to be balanced and fair with helpful recommendations and agree with the principal finding that KIX has made significant progress, is valued by its stakeholders, and is well positioned for impact. We also agree that the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a capable grant agent and implementing partner, evidenced by the evaluation finding that the program is run efficiently from both time and money standpoints.

Based on the mid-term evaluation findings and recommendations, we believe the initial investment in KIX is showing promising results. We consider the findings on program performance and the grant agent to be positive and the recommendations for improvements to be useful.

We note that some of the recommendations can be actioned immediately and are funding neutral while bolder adaptations including widened functions for the Hubs and expanded grant modalities would require additional financing and time.

Response to the recommendations

Recommendation	Management Response
1. Leverage GPE's system transformation and system capacity efforts *GPE has tremendous leverage to create positive change in focus countries' education systems and is committed to evidence-based politics and system-level change. KIX works in the same spirit and could help inform what those transformations could look like. KIX can become 'the intellectual engine of GPE'*	The Secretariat agrees and considers KIX has significant unrealized potential to support GPE's aim of supporting education system transformation. The features of system transformation resonate strongly with the aims of KIX and its current practice; further adaptations would yield even stronger coherence. The Secretariat will work with the grant agent to help improve links between local education groups and KIX

by informing, advising, and supporting policy and implementation changes through innovation and evidence. The new Operating Model (specifically, the system transformation and system capacity efforts) provide a great opportunity for creating that leverage. This will allow KIX to expand its influence and help GPE and IDRC achieve their goals in strengthening education systems.	Hubs, explore a wider range of options for Hubs to respond to countries' evidence needs for system transformation, and consider differentiated modalities for grant making to provide opportunities for governments to co-create research directly related to their system transformation priorities and approaches.

2. *Strengthen links between the main components of the program* *KIX can clearly define how applied research grants and regional hubs collaborate, so there is a clear path for both applying research learning and tailoring the research to local needs. This can help inform how each mechanism strengthens the other and ensure that knowledge exchange and capacity-building happen at the system level.*	The Secretariat agrees. Systematic links between the KIX Hubs and KIX grants are important to maximise learning, exchange, and use of KIX-generated knowledge at national level. We note the mid-term evaluation focused on the portfolio of 12 global grants which began in January 2020 and did not examine the portfolio of regional KIX grants that began in July 2021, which were based on priorities identified by the Hubs. The Secretariat will follow up with the grant agent to help ensure these component links continue to be strengthened.
3. *Provide differentiated support to countries according to engagement levels* *There is already demand from highly committed countries to receive support in putting ideas and knowledge in to practice, with a focus on adapting innovation to local realities and helping officials overcome implementation challenges. KIX can maximise program impact by providing this additional, tailored support for a select group of highly committed countries. This approach could create success cases that prove the concept, build a clearer path for impact, and create motivation for other countries. Every country could be eligible for this additional support if they reach a participation threshold.*	The Secretariat partially agrees. KIX Hubs are unique in the global knowledge ecosystem and Hubs should not only reward those countries that already have strong engagement with further support but also incentivize and support those countries whose engagement is lagging. The Secretariat will work with the grant agent and KIX Hubs to leverage links between KIX country delegations, local education groups and national policy dialogues.

4. *Identify key roles in the education department to engage with KIX efforts* *The closer the country participation who engage with regional hubs are to policy and decision-making, the more likely hub ideas will be adopted. Identifying key characteristics, including links with policy dialogue and decision-making, as well as the conditions of success for her/his engagement, can help 1) target who the ideal members of the delegations should be, and 2) refine outreach and engagement efforts.*	The Secretariat agrees and will work with the grant agent to identify and target key education ministry stakeholders to engage more systematically in KIX.
5. *Simplify Communication* *KIX has a broad scope (3 objectives, 6 education priorities, and 70 target countries) and complex dynamics. Acknowledging this complexity, the communications strategy could be refined to transmit a more straightforward message overall. Telling the story of KIX with a clear, communal narrative will motivate, engage, and build cohesion among different stakeholders so they can successfully navigate the complexity of the program which returning to the shared values and goals. This will reinvigorate them to serve as champions who expand KIX's reach and impact.*	The Secretariat agrees that strategic communications around KIX, while improved over the past year, will benefit from further work as some stakeholders continue to be unsure how best to engage with KIX, or what the benefit of doing so may be. Augmenting strategic communications around KIX will be a priority of the GPE Secretariat's support to KIX going forward, undertaken jointly with the grant agent. The Secretariat will also build on its broader partner engagement strategies to build greater understanding around KIX and what it has to offer.

6. Refine the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) model *KIX can support a shared narrative around the program's progress and success by reducing 'busy work' and prioritizing a smaller set of meaningful indicators in a collection, reporting, and reflection process for regional hubs and research grantees. This could also lead to more precise and practical evaluations, translating data and insights that better support decision-making and continuous improvement. MEL and communications strategies could be aligned, generating opportunities to elevate achievements, accelerate learning, and generate a shared sense of purpose.*	The Secretariat agrees with the recommendation.

Annex One: KIX MTR Status Update as of August 2023

KIX Mid Term Evaluation recommendations					
Improvement area	**Key action(s)**	**Time frame**	**Responsible**	**Follow up**	
				Status as of August 2023	
1. Leverage GPE's system transformation and system capacity efforts	• Improve links between local education groups and KIX Hubs; • Explore range of options for Hubs to respond to countries' evidence needs for system transformation; • Consider differentiated modalities for grant making to provide opportunities for governments to co-create research directly related to system transformation priorities and approaches	Ongoing as a part of GPE2025 Strategy	IDRC and GPE	In February 2023, a series of six meetings between IDRC, 12 KIX grantees and the four Hubs with GPE Secretariat teams identified areas and means to ensure alignment. This includes quarterly meetings between IDRC, KIX Hubs and GPE teams for ongoing coordination, and participation of KIX Hubs and IDRC in Partner Country constituency meetings. KIX has contributed to partnership compact processes in several countries (e.g., El Salvador, Honduras, Burkina Faso) by facilitating conversations among different stakeholders and sharing compact-relevant evidence from KIX applied research projects. Under the costed extension, KIX is operationalizing the Country Support Mechanism, the purpose of which is to provide direct and rapid responses to needs for evidence, policy support and capacity strengthening to GPE member countries on issues that are relevant to national educational challenges and linked to specific policy moments. Different secretariat teams (including country teams, thematic leads and those working on Education Out Loud and Strategic Capabilities) are reviewing new	

				KIX grants to ensure complementarity with GPE work in country (operating model and grants).	

2. Strengthen links between the main components of the program	• Systematic links between Hubs and applied research projects are developed	Ongoing as a part of GPE 2025 Strategy and beyond (KIX was extended to 2027)	IDRC	In 2022, all four regional Hubs profiled KIX applied research in online exchange events that responded to demand-driven regional learning agendas. Findings from projects and the expertise of the organizations involved contributed to hub discussions and capacity strengthening opportunities. Hub workplans for the extension were completed in April 2023 and based on consultations with national stakeholders to determine demand that will inform new calls for research proposals, precision on how Hubs will support dissemination of KIX research and detail the offer of the new country support mechanism. The monitoring data shows that applied research projects are increasingly sharing their findings with Hubs as their work matures and they have results to share. Between April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023 the regional learning partners reported 45 instances of the projects participating in hub activities, including workshops, communities of practice, and conferences, to further disseminate their work.	

3. Provide differentiated support to countries according to engagement levels	• Leverage links between KIX country delegations, local education groups and national policy dialogues.	Completed -April 2023	IDRC	Hubs have developed approaches for different levels of country engagement that are included in their updated proposals, from knowledge consumption to active knowledge production and exchange. Hubs are presenting options to countries based on the country engagement and ownership rubric they complete on an annual basis through the KIX MEL system. As an example, the Afrique21 regional hub is supporting national policy dialogue processes in member countries, with a sequence of steps built on countries' readiness and interest in doing so. Countries are able to choose to what degree they participate, according to their capacity and interest, and may adjust engagement over time. New GPE partner countries will be invited to join their regional Hub, convene a national KIX delegation, and participate according to interest. Country engagement in Hubs will continue to be self-reported as part of the KIX MEL system.	

4. Identify key roles in the education department to engage with KIX efforts	• Identify and target key education ministry stakeholders to engage more systematically in KIX.	Ongoing- as a part of GPE 2025 Strategy and beyond (KIX was extended to 2027)	IDRC and GPE	In consultation with the GPE Secretariat and IDRC, KIX Hubs are developing strategies to better target decision makers closer to the center of policy making. Strategies take in to account the fluid realities of government administrations and civil servant roles, and more directly target parliamentarians, national academia, and civil society organizations, thereby supporting inclusive policy dialogue aligned with GPE effective partnership and mutual accountability objectives. Engagement has broadened out formally identified national delegations or steering committees to involve the relevant national experts and stakeholders to participate in processes on different topics, whether communities of practice, learning cycles, roundtables, country visits or other activities. These individuals come from government and non-governmental institutions and identified because they are well-positioned to contribute and make use of the opportunities in their countries. GPE and IDRC are jointly developing shared country dashboards of KIX and GPE activities in-country (operating model, grants) to maximise coordination and strategic links with decision makers. A KIX Information Protocol was finalized in August 2023 that aims to ensure GPE and key in-country partners (including the GPE Focal Point and	

				Coordinating Agency) are informed of key Hub and research partner activities.	

5. Simplify Communication	• Augment strategic communications around KIX; • Build on partner engagement strategies to build greater understanding around KIX and what it has to offer.	Compelted December 2022	GPE and IDRC	A revamped and updated Communications and Outreach strategy was developed in December 2022 with inputs from senior management and the communications teams at GPE and IDRC. Hubs have convened in-person meetings in the lead-up and kick-off to their extensions to build clarity and ownership over how they engage in KIX, and how different parts of KIX interconnect. The www.gpekix.org website is being updated and expanded with pages that offer a country-by-country view. KIX has been hosting monthly communication working group meetings with regional hubs' communications officers to align messaging and strengthen engagement. An update to the KIX communication strategy will be commissioned with a focus on simplified messaging and to strengthen strategic engagement plans.	

6. Refine the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) model	• Review and simplify the MEL framework for all KIX partners	April 2023	IDRC	In March 2023, IDRC provided an amended results framework with a narrative that details the reduced number of outcomes and indicators, decreased administrative burden on grantees, better defined outcome indicators (including on gender), and sharper support for collective sense-making of monitoring data by grantees and IDRC. The amended framework stems from refinements to the KIX theory of change and, consequently, a more targeted impact pathway that includes changes proposed in the extension proposal. Specifically, refinements include: • The impact pathway was simplified by reducing the number of immediate and intermediate outcomes from 12 to 7 and reworking the visual representation to demonstrate how activities and outputs contribute to the achievement of outcomes and the overall goal of KIX • A new mechanism of country support has been added to the impact pathway to provide demand-driven, customized research, knowledge mobilization and capacity strengthening assistance to ministries of education and key stakeholders in response to specific policy processes and reform agendas. • The assumptions underpinning the impact pathway have been adjusted based on internal learnings to date.	

				The overall goal of KIX has been modified to better align with GPE 2025. The original goal was: 'To contribute to the improvement of DCP policy and practice to strengthen national education systems through capacity strengthening and the creation, curation, and mobilization of knowledge and innovation'. The modified version is: 'Countries have and use the evidence and innovation they need to accelerate access, learning outcomes, and gender equality through equitable, inclusive, and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century.' KIX is Currently preparing to introduce the revised results framework to the Hubs and then to a new set of applied research grantees.	