REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL ADVISORY PANEL (ITAP)

ASSESSMENT OF ENABLING FACTORS[1]

BURUNDI | DECEMBER 19, 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 partnership 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: Desmond Bermingham (Chair), Sonia Languille, Ruth Naylor, Theo Oltheten.

Part A: Main Panel Conclusions

Data and Evidence

There is good availability of comprehensive data and evidence on access and quality of education. The Education Management and Information System (EMIS) delivers timely, detailed annual statistical reports. Burundi participates in an international assessment of learning in language and mathematics. It is conducting more frequent national learning assessments as part of a donor-funded project. The government draws on a range of sources in its assessments and reviews of the sector. The most recent Education Sector Analysis demonstrates a considered and sophisticated use of available data and evidence, including extensive analysis of inequalities. However, these analyses do not always use the most recent data available, and have not been used effectively to inform planning and monitoring processes There remain some inconsistencies between the government's EMIS database and data published in various reports, raising concerns over reliability of current data management practices. The ITAP agrees with the self-assessment of enabling factors that data and evidence should be a **MEDIUM priority**.

Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy and Monitoring

The Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022-2030 (*Le Plan Sectoriel de l'Education 2022-2030*) provides a holistic and coherent policy framework for strategic and operational sector planning. It builds upon the reforms initiated and results achieved under the previous sector plans, the findings of sector reviews and nation-wide consultations. Its policy priorities are aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP) of Burundi 2018-2027 *(le Plan National de Développement du Burundi 2018-2027*). The legal and regulatory framework, including the revised Constitution of 2018, and the National Strategy for Inclusive Education provide the necessary tools to promote gender equality and to enhance safe and equal access to nine grades of quality basic education for all children. However, it does not yet guarantee nine grades of free and compulsory basic education. The ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis that the ministry still lacks the necessary tools for the analysis and integration of gender and inclusion for operational and budgetary planning. The Reform Priority "Towards an equitable and inclusive improvement in the quality of learning" as outlined by the Education Sector Group (ESG) provides a strategic action plan to address these critical challenges.

The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENRS) faces critical challenges to strengthen its (multi)annual operational and budgetary planning capacity at the different levels which is aggravated by discrepancies between the expected annual GDP growth rates used by the NDP and the financial simulation model 2020-2030 of the ESP. In addition to issues of format and coverage of the budgets, the ITAP is concerned about the delayed approval of the PAAB 2023-2024. Efforts are or will be

undertaken to improve budgetary planning by (re)introducing the CDMT and program budgeting from 2024/25 onwards. Annual planning and budgeting follow the fiscal year. The ITAP was informed, however, that annual monitoring (the sector reviews) follows the calendar year, which weakens its functionality for timely and strategic annual sector planning, management and budgeting.

In view of the weak links between strategic policy priorities and operational planning and budgeting, considering the delay of formal approval of the PAAB 2023-2024 and because of a the weak use of monitoring and evaluation to inform annual planning, the ITAP respectfully disagrees with the country's self-analysis and rates this enabling factor as a **HIGH Priority.**

Sector Coordination

Inclusive Sector Dialogue and Coordinated Action:

Burundi has a well-established sector coordination function that was disrupted by the poitical crisis but has now been reinstated. The Education Sector Group (GSE) is co-chaired by MENRS and UNICEF, and is responsible for monitoring progress towards ESP goals, and coordinating government and external support for the education sector. The membership of the GSE is broadly inclusive. However, the meetings appear to be largely dominated by government and development partner representatives. The GSE is supported by thematic groups in key policy areas, but these groups have not met as often as intended. The self-analysis acknowledges this as a gap and also notes that the lack of financial resources has often meant that recommendations following JSRs have not been fully implemented. There was evidence of effective coordination at the central level. However, the ITAP noted some significant gaps in capacity to produce consistent and coherent reports to inform coordination activities. Considering these challenges, the ITAP agrees with the local education group and assesses this enabling factor as a **MEDIUM priority**. Failure to make progress in this area will risk significant delays to the achievement of the priority policy objective.

Coordinated Financing and Funding:

External financing commitments have fallen sharply to US$135 million for the period 2022 – 2025 which represents approximately 3 – 4% of total education expenditure. The World Bank is by far the largest source of financing with commitments of US$94.8 million. Development partners previously used the Education Common Fund (CFE) to deliver external financing to the education sector. However, this mechanism was suspended in 2015/6 and partners currently provide support through projects and/or investment programs. The World Bank's Public Expenditure Review (2018) highlighted a number of weaknesses in the country financial management systems which will need to be addressed in order for development partners to use them with confidence. The ITAP saw

evidence of a willingness to have an open dialogue around effective use of resources as well as a commitment to move towards more effective aid delivery mechanisms. This will require significant improvements in country financial management systems and capacity development at the national and sub-national levels. Given these challenges, the ITAP agrees with the local education group's assessment of this factor as a **MEDIUM priority** as failure to make progress in this area will increase the risk of delay to the achievement of the policy priority goal.

Volume, Efficiency and Equity of Domestic Financing

Over the past decade, Burundi's financial effort towards education has been remarkable: the country has consistently dedicated more than 4% of its GDP to education and basic education has been receiving about two thirds of the education budget. The share of government budget dedicated to education is more difficult to ascertain due to contradictory data. Moreover, very limited funding is available for school infrastructure and equipment and quality-related expenses such as teaching and learning materials and teachers' in-service training. Households' contributions to education expenses are relatively high: pre-primary and basic education are not free in practice. Important disparities in educational performances, according to gender, place of residence and socio-economic status exist, especially at post-basic education level. A key challenge of Burundi's education system remains its low internal efficiency as testified by high drop-out and repetition rates, low completion rates and weak learning performances. Challenges in teachers' management and data-driven resource allocation as well as weak public finance management capacities throughout the system hamper the country to transform its educational resources into greater retention, better learning and lower inequalities. However, over recent years, the distribution of educational resources (teachers, textbooks, infrastructures) has become increasingly based on needs: a commendable achievement. The government is also committed to continue rationalizing the allocation of educational resources through better use of data. Given the challenges highlighted above combined with government sustained efforts to address them and the high volume of domestic resources dedicated to the sector, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **MEDIUM priority**.

Part B: Assessment of Enabling Factors

1. Data and Evidence

Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS)

The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENRS) conducts an annual school census. Data collection is paper-based at the school level, and electronic data entry is conducted at the central level. Private schools are included in the coverage. Data are made available through statistical year books and in spreadsheet format. These have been produced in a regular and timely manner. The statistical yearbooks are detailed and extensive. They include data on students, staff, structures, teaching and learning resources and school finance. Data are disaggregated by age, sex, location (province and commune) and school ownership. Data on enrolment of students with disabilities are presented by municipality and school ownership. These are disaggregated by sex, and type of disability. The EMIS system is not yet integrated with other education management data sources, including Human Resources Management, infrastructure and examinations, contributing to some inefficiencies and inconsistencies.

The 2021 Education Sector Analysis (ESA)(*Rapport d'Etat sur le Système Educatif*) includes a review of data reliability. It compares the EMIS data published and archived by MENRS with enrolment data from other sources. It notes that the enrolment data recorded through EMIS is reasonably consistent with data reported through household surveys. However, it notes several inconsistencies between data presented in the statistical year books and that in the national EMIS database archives, particularly with historical data. The ITAP notes further inconsistencies with EMIS data presented in the report of the 2021-22 Education Sector Review (*Rapport Revue Sectorielle*). For example, presentation of enrolment figures form 2015 to 2021 (table 3, p19) are inconsistent with historical data presented in the annual school yearbooks. The data on enrolment in the post-basic general and pedagogic schools is particularly erratic. For example, the most recent statistical yearbook (2021/22) presents data indicating that between 2015 and 2021, boys' enrolment at this level fell by half and girls' enrolment fell by a third. By comparison the sector review reports a modest rise in total enrolment. The ITAP appreciates that roll-out of the 2013 reform to the structure of the education system has presented challenges to the categorization of some cohorts as basic or post basic in the historical database. However, the erratic and inconsistent data raises concerns over the reliability of the EMIS database as a resource for monitoring change of enrolment over time. The lack of commentary on this issue indicates weaknesses in the capacity of the government to reliably manage and interpret its EMIS data.

Learning Assessment System (LAS)

Burundi has participated in two rounds (2014 and 2019) of an international learning assessment program, *Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN* (PASEC) and has committed to participation in the 2024 round. PASEC assesses language(s) of instruction and mathematics in grades 2 and 5. In 2019 Burundi conducted a national learning assessment in grades 2 and 4 as part of a baseline for a World Bank funded project (PAADESCO), with plans for further rounds in 2023 and 2024. The ITAP notes Burundi's intention to develop a national learning assessment system in the longer term. Data from PASEC and the PAADESCO baseline have been made available in detailed reports that compare observed learning outcomes with international and national standards and benchmarks. The reports also present statistical analyses of how learning outcomes vary by the availability of learning resources, teacher characteristics and other factors.

The 2021 ESA includes analysis of the findings of these learning assessments, including an analysis of disparities in learning by sex and location. It also presents data on the pass rates in national examination at the end of basic (grade 9) and post basic school education cycles. It notes that these pass rates are not comparable between different years. Currently, PASEC provides the only learning assessment data that can be used to monitor changes in learning at the national level over time.

Evidence production and use

The documents provided to the ITAP indicate a comprehensive range of evidence sources that can be used to provide a functional overview of key issues facing the sector. In addition to the EMIS and LAS, the 2021 ESA draws on data from a range of other sources including national household surveys; a 2017 study on out-of-school children and a 2017 study on teaching (drawing on 2012 data). The ITAP notes that more recent data on teachers' characteristics and perceptions, including an assessment of their disciplinary and didactic knowledge and skills, is included in the PASEC 2019 report, but is not referenced in the 2021 ESA or the 2021-22 Sectoral Review.

The 2021 ESA demonstrates a considered and sophisticated use of available data, including comparison of different data sources; forecasting of education capacity needs; and use of age-disaggregated survey data to produce education trajectories disaggregated by sex, location and wealth.

Both the 2021 ESA and the 2021-22 Sectoral Review include analyses of disparities in education. For example, the 2021 ESA analyses how different groups benefit from public investments in education. It also analyses the distribution of teachers and learning resources. However, the ITAP notes that the gender analysis in the 2021 ESA draws predominantly from a 2016/17 household survey, and fails to capture changes in gendered

patterns of enrolment over the last five years, with girls' enrolment at post-basic levels overtaking that of boys since 2017. The 2021-22 Sectoral Review considers a wide range of vulnerabilities associated with low education participation including regional-based risks relating to different types of child labor, ethnicity, disability status, household composition and wealth. It uses a variety of data and evidence sources to examine the root causes of low enrolment of girls and boys, both from the demand side and the supply side.

The 2021 ESA and the 2021-22 Sectoral Review, which were conducted with technical support from UN agencies, demonstrate accessible and transparent use of data for needs analysis. Inconsistencies noted in the historical EMIS data limit its reliability as a source for monitoring change over time, but other data sources are available to validate observed trends.The summary of the conclusions of the GSE on Burundi's priority reform demonstrate that the government and its partners use data and evidence to identify and prioritize the most pressing reforms needed. However, as noted below, the analyses of inequalities, including gender inequalities, have not translated into fully inclusive and gender responsive plans. This raises concerns regarding the capacity of MENRS to develop plans and monitor progress using the most recent data available.

Conclusion:

There is good availability of comprehensive data and evidence on access and quality of education, and the government draws on a range of sources in its assessments and reviews of the sector. There is extensive analysis of inequalities and the root causes driving these. However, these analyses do not always use the most recent data available, and have not been used effectively to inform planning and monitoring processes. There remain some inconsistencies between the government's EMIS database and data published in various reports, raising concerns over reliability of current data management practices. The ITAP agrees with the self-analysis of enabling factors that data and evidence should be a **MEDIUM** priority.

2. Gender-Responsive Sector Planning, Policy and Monitoring

Strategic planning frameworks and practices

One of the two strategic pillars of the National Development Plan of Burundi 2018-2027 (*Le Plan National de Développement 20218-2027*) is 'human capital development' which is further defined under axis 5: "Strengthening the education system and improving its services, which is clearly reflected in Burundi's Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2022-2030 (*Le Plan Sectoriel de l'Education 2022-2030*) of the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENRS). The ESP was developed by a government-led steering committee and a national technical team, composed of representatives from government, trade unions, civil society and development partners. It is based on and informed by reviews of the previous (transitional) sector plan, a comprehensive sector analysis (State Report on the National Education System (RESEN) and - based hereupon - a simulation model of various scenarios. It was endorsed by the Council of Ministers on 15 March 2023 as well as by the Education Sector Group (ESG) on 14 October 2022.

The ESP is a comprehensive sector plan with the same three strategic objectives of the previous sector plan. It presents a holistic vison on 'the development of the education system' and aims at consolidating the reforms initiated under the previous sector plan. Marginalized groups (persons with disabilities, rural and poor populations, ethnic and linguistic minorities, refugees and internally displaced persons) are included in the ESP in line with the recently validated National Strategy for Inclusive Education, the Constitution, national legislation and Burundi's international commitments. The Office of Inclusive Education was established for the implementation of the Inclusive Education Agenda in partnership with other relevant line Ministries.

Burundi has a legislative framework assuring to a certain extent at least 9 grades of 'free and compulsory' basic education. Article 17 of Law no.1/19 of 10 September 2013 guarantees that the state pays the fees for children between grade 1 and grade 9. However, some 30% of school-age children are out-of-school, one of the reasons being that parents/guardians are expected to contribute financially for their children's education.

The Emergency Cluster of the MENRS participates in the National Contingency Plan, which has been updated for 2021 and 2022 and falls under the responsibility of the National Platform for Risk Prevention and Disaster Management. It also participates in a working group on education in emergency situations. Natural disasters and diseases/epidemics are only briefly mentioned in chapter 6 of the ESP; a sector strategy to address these risks does not exist. OCHA and the Humanitarian Country Team play a catalytic role in terms of mobilizing and targeting humanitarian assistance in situations of crisis and disaster[2]. Its

[2] See OCHA: Burundi needs and humanitarian response plan, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2023, March 2023.

multi-sectoral response plan looks at sectoral needs and priority responses, including the education sector and returnees/refugees/IDPs.

Operational Planning Instruments and Practices

There are two operational planning instruments for the implementation of the ESP. The PAPB 2022/25 is the Multi-Annual Budgeted Plan of Actions (*le Plan d'Actions Pluriannuel Budgétisé*) and the PAAB 2022/23, the Annual Budgeted Plan of Actions (*le Plan d'Actions Annuel Budgétisé*). The procedures and steps for the elaboration of the PAABs are clearly described in the ESP as well as the criteria for their assessment and approval. The PAPB is structured around the five programs of the ESP and a summary overview of annual recurrent and investment costs of each of the programs. The PAAB is structured differently. It is a table of 118 pages that specifies for each of the 23 'structures' under the MENRS its objectives, action(s), expected result(s), indicator(s), location, timeline and budget (and funding source). Given the differences in formats, it is difficult to determine to what extent the PAAB is indeed derived from the PAPB and similarly, to what extent the PAPB is aligned with the financial simulation model of the ESP.

The status of the PAAB 2023/24 is not clear to the ITAP. According to the country's self-analysis, it was validated in June 2023. However, the PAAB 2023/24 was not included in the ITAP package and ITAP was informed afterwards that the PAAB 23/24 would become available by the end of December 2023. The ITAP expresses its concern about these delays which indicate that the MENSR faces serious operational/institutional capacity challenges to timely start and finalize the annual operational planning and budgeting cycle. The ESP states that a support unit will be established within the Bureau of Education Planning and Statistics to provide technical assistance to address these challenges. The ITAP cannot confirm that this unit has been established.

Budget Programming and Monitoring

A financial simulation model 2019 - 2030 was developed in 2019 for the sector with three different scenarios. It was developed with the participation of the Ministry of Finance (MoF). However, the ITAP has not been able to confirm if it is aligned with the MoF medium-term sector finance projections and there are discrepancies between the macro-economic projections of the NDP and the financial simulation model. Scenario 3 has been selected for the ESP as being the most realistic one in terms of targets, fiscal space and expected funding gap(s). Scenario 3 is based - among other things - on an expected annual GDP growth rate of 6% and scenario 2 and 1 on respectively 10.7% (the expected GDP growth rate used for the NDP) and 4.2%. However, the ITAP has noticed that the three scenarios of the Excel document 'Simulation Model (MSFE) Burundi 2020-2030' are all based on an expected annual GDP growth rate of 4.2% which is far above the 1.8% GDP annual growth rate of 2022 (World Bank) and the projected 3.1% GDP annual growth rate of 2023 (IMF). In this context, the ITAP highlights that around 70% of capital expenditure has not been linked

to sources of funding, affecting in particular school infrastructure at the level of preschool and the first three cycles of Fundamental Education. Even though the ESP points out that this should not be too alarming, the size of this gap reinforces the need to review the expected fiscal space for the sector in function of the expected GDP growth rate the coming years.

The country's self-analysis mentions that in 2024 a CDMT will be prepared, which will be a good opportunity to address the above-mentioned inconsistences, to re-assess the various assumptions and to get a more solid multi-annual budgetary framework.

Sector Monitoring Mechanisms and Practices

The ESP has a comprehensive results matrix, specifying for each of the five programs the expected results, indicators, baseline data, targets 2025, targets 2030, periodicity, means of verification and the responsible structure within the ministry. Annual reviews are to be organized by the Directorate of Planning and Education Statistics (*Bureau de la Planification et des Statistiques de l'Éducation, BPSE*) of the MENRS with the participation of the members of the GSE. Annual reviews follow the calendar year and not the fiscal year whereas the Consolidated Annual Plan of Actions covers the fiscal calendar period July 2022-June 2023. The use of differing periods for operational and financial planning is likely to lead to inconsistencies and impede effective decision-making and monitoring.

A number of sector reviews, studies and (regional) workshops were held in the context of the finalization of the Transitional Plan PTE 2018-2020/21 and the design of the ESP 2022-2030, the results of which were reviewed during the two-day workshop in August 2023 to '*faire le bilan de la mise en œuvre des activités du PATB 2021-2022'.* The Aide Memoire of the Sector Review 2021-2022 was recently (September 2023) finalized with a thorough technical and financial assessment of progress and challenges, with due attention to the lack of progress to reach the vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Documentation on the thematic working groups was not included in the ITAP package, nor - links to - other documents such as surveys, studies, seminars, workshops or the semi-annual technical and financial progress reports.

Gender Mainstreaming Across the Policy Continuum

Burundi has an extensive list of gender (related) policies, strategies and legislation, including the National Gender Policy (NGP) 2012-2025 and its Action Plans, the National Strategy to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the National Policy of the Protection of the Child. The NDP 2018-2027 addresses gender under its strategic axe 2 aiming to eradicate gender inequalities in all forms. In its report Beijing 25+, the government of Burundi confirms that significant progress in the promotion and protection of women's rights has been made. The report also confirms that challenges persist, such as the level of ownership of gender equality by sectoral ministries; the level of integration

of gender-responsive budgeting into planning; insufficient resources for the operationalization of NGP's action plans, Resolution 1325 and the National Strategy to Combat SGBV, and the persistence of sexual and gender-based violence.

These challenges are echoed in the country's self-analysis that gender issues are not sufficiently taken into account in the ESP and that the ministry lacks the necessary tools for the integration of gender and inclusion for operational and budgetary planning. The ITAP concurs with this conclusion as well as with the observation that these challenges could have a negative effect on the priority reform proposal and reinforce disparities in terms of construction, rehabilitation, and equipment of school infrastructure, provision of inclusive school and teaching materials, access to school feeding and gender-sensitive hazard reduction.

Conclusion

Burundi has developed a coherent and holistic education sector plan based on a policy vision of a more inclusive, equitable and quality-oriented education system at all levels. It is aligned with Burundi's broader national policy and strategy frameworks. The legal framework is to a large extent conducive for its implementation but does not yet guarantee 9 years of free and compulsory basic education. Sector planning and budgeting are facing critical challenges in terms of institutional capacity. The planned CDMT in 2024 constitutes an opportunity to develop a more realistic and solid framework for annual planning and budgeting. The ITAP has noted that sector monitoring follows a calendar year and not the fiscal year of the Annual Plan of Actions which jeopardizes its functionality for annual planning and budgeting. The thematic working groups do not seem to be productive. Gender and inclusion in the ESP are in line with and in support of the national gender agenda and constitute a core element of the proposed Reform Priorities, indicating that the sector is still facing serious gender and inclusion challenges.

In view of the above, the ITAP does not concur 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

Burundi has a well-established sector coordination function led by the Education Sector Group (GSE) which is chaired by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research and co-chaired by the lead development partner agency (currently UNICEF). The GSE is responsible for monitoring progress towards ESP goals; sharing information with all government and non-government stakeholders; coordinating government and external support for the education sector. The membership of the GSE includes representatives from other government departments, NGOs/CSOs, faith-based organizations, teachers' unions and one parent-representative organization. This appears to be an inclusive group in terms of membership. However, it was not possible to assess the extent of stakeholder participation in the GSE meetings, which appear to be largely dominated by government and development partner representatives.

The GSE is scheduled to meet every two months with more frequent meetings as required. The ITAP saw evidence in the minutes of the meetings and the reports of the joint education sector reviews of the effective functioning of the GSE including consideration of progress reports in key thematic areas; discussion of challenges affecting progress; discussion of strategies to mobilize additional resources; and examples of a willingness to be open, transparent and accountable. Although the ITAP also noted the weaknesses in capacity to analyse data and review progress evident in the most recent education sector review. The GSE is linked to the Education in Emergencies Cluster which coordinates humanitarian aid for the education sector in areas affected by conflict and/or natural disasters. The GSE is supposed to be supported by five thematic groups in key policy areas. However, as the enabling factors self-analysis acknowledges, these groups have not met as often as intended and the ITAP noted this as an important failing which will need to be addressed. The self-analysis also notes that the lack of financial resources has often meant that recommendations agreed by the GSE following JSRs have not been fully implemented. This is further compounded by the inconsistencies in financial planning and the unrealistic expectations of economic growth highlighted in the previous section.

Capacities for coordination

The quality of the reports and the organization of regular joint education sector reviews are evidence of capacity for coordination at least at the central level. There was, however, less evidence of this capacity at the sub-national levels of government and some significant gaps in capacity to produce consistent and coherent reports to inform coordination activities. There are only a small number of development partners with resident

representatives in Burundi and this also has an impact on the ability of the group to engage in a consistent manner in the sector policy and planning processes. The ITAP commends the GSE commitment to conduct regular reviews of the coordination functions and to continue to identify areas for strengthening and improvement.

Conclusion on 3.1:

Considering the need to ensure full inclusion of all stakeholders in the education sector group, the capacity gaps in coordination and the challenges of mobilizing additional resources to support implementation of key recommendations, the ITAP agrees with the local education group and assesses this enabling factor as a **MEDIUM priority**. Failure to make progress in this area will risk significant delays to the achievement of the priority policy objective.

3.2 Coordinated Financing and Funding

Availability of aid alignment and joint financing mechanisms

Total external financing commitments for the education sector were approximately US$135 million for the period 2022 – 2025. The external share of total education expenditure has fallen sharply from approximately 30% in 2015 /6 to 6-7% in 2021/2/3. The current major development partners are Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union, Belgian Development Agency (Enabel), UNICEF and the World Bank. The World Bank is by far the largest source of financing with commitments of US$94.8 million for projects in basic education and technical vocational training.

Development partners previously used the Education Common Fund (CFE) mechanism to deliver external financing to the education sector in Burundi. However, following the political crisis and outbreak of violence in 2015/6, this mechanism was suspended. Partners currently provide support through projects and/or investment programs that are aligned with the education sector plan priorities. The government has indicated that it would like to revive the pooled fund and budget support for the sector in order to increase transparency and reduce transaction costs. However, the 2018 Public Expenditure Review highlighted a number of weaknesses in the country financial management systems which will need to be addressed in order for development partners to use them with confidence. The government has set a target of 2027 to address these issues and reintroduce the pooled funding arrangements.

Accountability and dialogue around aid effectiveness

The ITAP saw evidence in the reports of the joint sector reviews and minutes of the GSE meetings of a willingness to have an open dialogue around effective use of resources (domestic as well as external funds) in order to maximize the benefits from all investments in the sector. There was also evidence of mutual accountability and flexibility in the development partners' response to challenges in the sector, and a willingness to adjust

plans and step in to fill gaps, for example when a local company was unable to deliver its contractual commitments.

Commitment towards greater aid effectiveness practices

The ITAP also saw evidence of a commitment to move towards more effective aid delivery mechanisms that reduce transaction costs, reduce delays, and improve harmonization and alignment with government plans. This will, however, require significant improvements in country financial management systems and capacity development at the national and sub-national levels.

Conclusion on 3.2:

Given the plans to strengthen country systems and increase the use of pooled funding mechanisms to improve the effective use of external financing for the sector, the ITAP agrees with the local education group's assessment of this factor as a **MEDIUM priority** as failure to make progress in this area will increase the risk of delay to the achievement of the policy priority goal.

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

Volume

Over the past decade, Burundi's financial effort towards education has been remarkable: the country has consistently dedicated more than 4% of its GDP to education (table 1), despite having one of the lowest GDPs in sub-Saharan Africa. It fares better than some African countries with higher GDP. ITAP has not been provided with education budget projections for the next three fiscal years. Nevertheless, given the consistent historical trend, the return to political stability and relatively positive macro-economic prospects (i.e., robust economic growth after the Covid-related downturn and increase in tax revenue), one may assume that there will be no major reversal in the country's commendable prioritization of education in the medium-term.

The pattern of the country's budgetary effort towards education is less easy to ascertain given contradictions in the data available, which may stem from the instability of the institutional framework and the difficulty to capture education expenditure in a comprehensive and consistent way. According to the domestic financing matrix (table 1), between 2019/20 and 2023/24, the budget allocation for education has met only once the GPE benchmark of 20% of public expenditure (excluding debt service), in 2021/22. However, according to the country's enabling factors self-analysis, this target has actually been regularly achieved throughout the 2018/19 – 2021/22 period. The Education Sector Plan (2022-2030) and the Aide-memoire of the 2023 Education Sector Review confirm this past trend.

Nevertheless, different sources of data point to a recent significant drop in the education budget: according to the domestic financing matrix (table 1), in 2023/24, only 16.4% of public expenditure (excluding debt service) were dedicated to education. This important inflexion is chiefly due to a large increase in the volume of investment in the overall government budget (+36%), which has mainly benefitted the ministry in charge of infrastructure, including school infrastructure. The country still dedicates more than 4% of its GDP to education in 2023/24. Nevertheless, in face of the contradictory data, the ITAP urges the government and its partners to harmonize the way they account for all education expenses, irrespective of the changing organization of the sector. The ITAP also urges Burundi's government to continue fulfilling its stated commitment to allocate more than 20% of public expenditure (excluding debt service) to education.

Finally, in the past, Burundi has been dedicating very limited funding to investment, which represented only 1.18% of the education budget in 2022/23 and 1.78% in 2023/24. Despite a slight increase over the past two years, this level remains quite inadequate to address the poor state of school facilities throughout the country - most schools do not have basic amenities and face the combined pressure of a relatively rapid demographic growth, the

return of refugees and the impact of extreme-weather events. Donor funding, traditionally earmarked to investment, have not compensated for this low level of domestic investment. External financing represented 30% of the total education budget in 2015. However, following the 2015 political instability, it dramatically fell to 5.6% in 2016 and fell further still to 0.8% in 2021. External financing has increased over the last two years but remains much lower than at its 2015 peak (7.7% in 2021/22 and 5.1% in 2022/23).

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

	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24
	Budg.	Act.	Budg.	Act.	Budg.	Act.	Budg.	Act.	Budg.
Education as per cent of GDP	4.0%	4.2%	3.6%	4.1%	3.6%	4.0%	3.4%	4.2%	4.2%
Education as per cent of government expenditure (excluding debt service)	16.1%	17.4%	18.9%	18.7%	20.3%	16.1%	17.7%	22.0%	16.4%
Recurrent education expenditure as per cent of public recurrent expenditure (excluding debt service)	24.4%	21.6%	31.0%	27.0%	33.6%	24.5%	29.6%	36.9%	26.2%

Source: Computed from "Domestic financing matrix" completed by the country.

Equity

The intra-sector budget allocation favours basic education ("*éducation fondamentale*": from primary to lower secondary education), which receives 67.7% of the education budget. In the recent past, higher education, which benefits from the second highest budget envelope, has received a declining share of the education budget from 21.6% in 2014/15 to 17.5% today, in face of a significant decrease in enrolment. Post-basic education (general and teacher education) receives 10.8% and technical education 2.6%. With 0.63% of the education budget, pre-primary receives very limited funding but its share has steadily increased since 2014/15 and it is set to continue to grow to reach 3% in 2030, according to the Education Sector Plan 2022-2030.[3]

The country faces disparities in educational performances, according to gender, socio-economic status and geography, especially in post-basic education ("*post fundamental*"). While gender parity has almost been achieved in basic education, gender disparities emerge at the end of basic education and get reinforced in post-basic and higher education. The place of residence constitutes a significant determining factor of educational disparities: 35% of children in rural areas are expected to complete

[3] Data on budget shares based on the country's enabling factors self-analysis.

basic education, against 60% of children in urban areas. In addition, only 18% of children from the poorest families are likely to complete basic education against 58% of children from the richest families. Only limited resources are allocated to address the needs of specific vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons.

These disparities are further exacerbated by an unequal distribution of educational resources. The availability and quality of school infrastructure diverge across provinces, with Bujumbura Mairie being the best endowed province. In basic education, resources, especially textbooks, are concentrated at the end of the cycle at the expense of the early years: this is a concern given the foundational role these years play in terms of learning. The student/teacher ratio in basic education varies from 37 in Bururi Province to 62 in Bujumbura Mairie Province, with several other provinces with a ratio above the national average of 52. Nevertheless, over the past few years, the deployment of teachers has increasingly taken into account actual enrolment: the degree of randomness in the allocation of teachers in basic education has decreased by 20 percentage points between 2017 and 2019 and is now comparable to the average level achieved in similar countries. Also, unlike many countries in sub-Saharan countries, in Burundi most teachers are permanent: the share of contract-teachers in basic education is marginal.

The central government transfers funds to education services in provinces and communes as well as grants directly to schools ("frais de compensation"). Based on the documentation provided to ITAP, the central government does not seem to use any equity-based formula to allocate these funds. Despite the legal requirement, pre-primary and basic education are not free in practice: from pre-primary to post-basic education, households contribute between 85% and 90% of school operational and pedagogic expenses. While there are still 1.9 million out-of-school children and adolescents (one third of school-age children and adolescents), the cost of schooling constitutes the main reason behind families' decision not to enrol their children.

Efficiency

Burundi's education system remains largely inefficient as illustrated by high drop-out and repetition rates and low completion rates. Repetition is particularly prevalent in Burundi, throughout the system, more than in other comparative countries. The repetition rate in basic education actually increased from 19% in 2014 to 26% in 2019. The basic education completion rate also declined from 39% in 2015 to 32% in 2019. This is all the more concerning as many students experience significant learning difficulties at the end of basic education. The coefficient of **internal efficiency** has deteriorated from 44% in 2014 to 34% in 2019 in basic education and from 80% to 76% in post-basic education over the same period.

Several management challenges hinder the transformation of available resources into greater retention and better learning. **Teachers' management**, in all its components (recruitment, deployment, professional development, payroll), constitutes a critical challenge to the efficiency of Burundi's education system. In general, as noted above, the **allocation of resources** is insufficiently guided by data on needs, which contributes to the disparities across cycles and provinces noted above. Under the 2022-2030 Education Sector Plan, the government is committed to reinforce the role of the schooling map with geo-referencing at school, communal and provincial level, which should help rationalize the allocation resources. Priority criteria for the construction of school infrastructure should be included in this instrument. The ministry of education is also developing a human resources module to be integrated in the education management information system.

Limited **public finance and human resource management** capacities throughout the education system also hamper the efficient use of resources. Both budgeting and execution (including procurement) functions require strengthening. The **accountability mechanisms** are also undermined by the lack of clear definition of roles and responsibilities between the central level and deconcentrated and decentralised actors. **Monitoring education spending** up to the school level remains challenging, in part because the financial information about the use of school grants is not captured by the Integrated Financial Management Information System. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the annual education statistical yearbooks include information on school finance, which is very rare across GPE's partner countries.

Conclusion:

Over the past decade, Burundi's financial effort towards education has been remarkable: the country has consistently dedicated more than 4% of its GDP to education and basic education has been receiving about two thirds of the education budget. However, very limited funding is available for school infrastructure and equipment, teaching and learning materials and teachers' in-service training. The low internal efficiency of the education system remains the key challenge. However, over recent years, the distribution of educational resources has become increasingly based on needs. The government is also committed to continue rationalizing the allocation of resources through a better use of data and to strengthen public finance management capacity throughout the system. Given the challenges highlighted above combined with government sustained efforts to address them and the high volume of domestic resources dedicated to the sector, the ITAP concurs with the country's self-analysis and is rating this enabling factor as a **MEDIUM 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:** The country needs to strengthen operational planning and budgeting capacity to improve links with strategic priorities and ensure timely approval of annual plans of action. The country also needs to resolve anomalies caused by different planning and financial years. **Rationale for high priority:** It will be very difficult / impossible to achieve the policy priority unless the country addresses the significant weaknesses in the sector planning processes. Annual plans and annual review reports are the basic management tools to steer the sector, to engage with state and non-state stakeholders at the central and decentralized levels, and to ensure efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of resource allocation towards the strategic high priority actions. These delays could jeopardize the credibility of the MENRS and weaken the support base for the ESP, in particular at the decentralized levels, putting its implementation and expected results at risk.