System Capacity Grant Completion Report Template

Status: Accepted

Country
Zimbabwe

Grant ID
GPE0000653

Grant Agent
United Nations Children's Fund

Grant Type
SCG

Grant Effectiveness / Start Date
09/08/2021

Grant Closing Date
07/31/2025

Grant Amount
344,005 (USD)

Date of Report Submission
01/29/2026

Area(s) and activity group(s) covered by grant (check all that apply):

Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact

- Gender-responsive sector planning, including operational planning and budgeting

Window 2: Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change

- Strengthening sector coordination, including local education groups, joint sector reviews and monitoring the effectiveness of the country-level partnership

Grant Implementation

Assessment of Grant Implementation: Relevance

Overall Relevance

Level of Overall Relevance 1
Substantial

Detailed Description
The grant was most relevant as it directly supported the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) by aligning with and implementing the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). Notably, it contributed to several critical initiatives, including, the summative evaluation of the GPE Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG). Additionally, the grant facilitated the organization of Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), which have proven instrumental in monitoring and measuring annual progress within the education sector, thereby fostering accountability, informed decision-making, and continuous improvement of relations between the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and development partners.
The grant further contributed to strengthening the national data ecosystem through support to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), which is expected to generate critical data not only for the education sector but also for other key social sectors.
While the funding provided under the initial grant (first SCG grant) was insufficient to fully address the sector's needs, an additional System Capacity Grant (SCG) was approved for the country in 2023. This subsequent additional funding contributed to strengthening and expanding support to the education sector thereby addressing critical capacity gaps more comprehensively. A consultative process conducted in close collaboration with the Local Education Group, known as the Education Coordination Group (ECG), ensured alignment of the SCG funding support with sector priorities and stakeholder consensus.

A no cost extension was approved from December 2024 to July 2025 to enable completion of all outstanding activities.

Beneficiaries' Views on Relevance

Detailed Description

The Beneficiary /satisfaction survey was not carried out.

Assessment of Grant Implementation: Efficacy

Overall Efficacy

Level of Overall Efficacy 2

Substantial

Detailed Description

The grant was implemented at the upstream (national) level and successfully achieved its primary objective of enhancing the capacity of the education sector in Zimbabwe. It focused on strengthening key planning, monitoring, and coordination mechanisms within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). The following objectives were fully met during the grant period:

1. Assessing the impact of the GPE ESPIG funded programme activities to the Education Sector in Zimbabwe during the period of 2016-2021 and build on the lessons learned.
2. Assessing the first-year implementation of the ESSP 2021-2025 and track progress as well as prepare for and inform its mid-term review in 2022-2023 for any programme adjustment. This activity was finally completed at Mid Term Review of the ESSP.
3. Strengthening the Education Sector's strategic planning and review processes to realize the goals set out in the new ESSP.

All grant activities were primarily conducted at the national level, reinforcing upstream capacity. The Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) were national-level exercises that informed sector-wide decision-making but involved all parties concerned from the learner school heads and teachers, District level personnel and provincial offices. District education offices contributed operational data, implementation insights, and feedback from schools, helping to ground national discussions in local realities. Provincial offices supported coordination across districts, validated findings, and helped synthesize district-level inputs into coherent priorities, ensuring that JSR recommendations reflected both national policy objectives and subnational implementation conditions.

While the operational focus remained at the national level, the impact of the activities, particularly the recommendations emerging from evaluations and JSRs cascaded down to the district level, influencing planning, resource allocation, and service delivery. This top-down influence ensured that the strategic outcomes of the grant translated into tangible benefits for learners and school communities across the country.

Efficacy by capacity area window

Detailed Description

Window 2 Education Sector Plan Development and Revision

The outcomes planned under this funding window were largely achieved and contributed to meaningful, system-wide improvements. These gains, particularly in planning, monitoring, and sector coordination, are expected to trickle down and positively impact learners, by strengthening the overall delivery and responsiveness of the education system.

The Summative evaluation of the GPE ESPIG 2016-2021

The ESPIG grant expired December 31, 2022. The summative evaluation of the GPE ESPIG 2016-2021 was supported by funding from the ESPIG grant and the SCG grant. The evaluation assessed the transformation brought about by the ESPIG and supported preparation for the 2023 Grant Application Cycle. Recommendations of the Evaluations included:

1. The next programme should consider funding more robust ICT, mobility and transportation needs especially at provinces and districts to strengthen monitoring and evaluation functions (this was incorporated in the current STG implementation) Through GPE funding, UNICEF will be supporting provinces and districts with school monitoring and supervision of schools, which is expected to enhance accountability,

improve data quality, and ultimately drive better learning outcomes for children

2. A further recommendation was for the ECG to conduct a programmatic performance assessment to improve workflow systems, reduce bureaucratic delays, while increasing decentralization in the delivery of planned activities and improve internal administrative and operational procedures – especially coordination with provinces, districts, and schools. MoPSE adopted the ECG recommendation by strengthening the SPPRS department to improve workflows, reduce delays, and enhance decentralization. This has streamlined coordination across provinces and schools, accelerating implementation. To sustain progress, MoPSE is embedding performance monitoring, building capacity, and promoting decentralized decision-making for long-term efficiency and alignment with GPE objectives

3. Another recommendation was for GPE support to consider including support for other subjects (commercials, arts), sporting facilities, and specialized rooms such as libraries and e-learning resources). The recent deployment of ICT devices to rural schools through GPE funding illustrates how the partnership is already advancing inclusive education beyond core subjects. By providing 815 laptops, 708 projectors, and 2,112 tablets through the GPE System Transformation Grant, to disadvantaged schools, complemented by solar power solutions and teacher ICT training, GPE support enabled digital literacy and e-learning integration across the curriculum. These investments create opportunities for specialized learning spaces such as libraries and digital resource centers, while also supporting the delivery of diverse subjects including arts and commercial studies through interactive platforms. This approach aligns with the recommendation from the GPE evaluation to broaden support for other subjects and facilities, including sporting infrastructure and specialized rooms, ensuring that rural learners access a holistic, future-ready education environment

4. The next recommendation was that the next programme should direct more funding to satellite (to facilitate the commissioning of more registered schools) and rural schools to increase opportunities for access and inclusive education to all children. Notable progress has been made on this recommendation; through the GPE-supported School Improvement Grant (SIG), US$1,245,000 was disbursed to 249 schools, enabling 48 schools to complete formal registration. MoPSE has embedded this initiative within its systems through the SIG Complementary Programme, streamlining compliance checks, documentation, and coordination with local authorities. To ensure sustainability, registration protocols are now integrated into provincial and district workflows, with strengthened monitoring and resource allocation for underserved rural areas, laying a foundation for equitable access and systemic improvement.

5. it was recommended to expand the provision of free education through GPE support, especially to learners from very poor backgrounds, so that no learner would fail to go to school due to lack of fees. This would be achieved in collaboration with BEAM programme where feasible. Under the School Financing Policy development, which is being funded by GPE - and is still subject to approval and subsequent implementation - the policy ensures equitable allocation of resources and strengthens mechanisms for abolishing fees and thus complements efforts to expand access for vulnerable learners.

6. It was further recommended to invest more comprehensively in quality, access, and inclusive education, mainstreaming learning needs of children with special needs. Through GPE funding, UNICEF Zimbabwe is supporting the development and implementation of inclusive education strategies, including teacher training on special needs education and provision of assistive learning materials. Additionally, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to strengthen school-level capacity for inclusive practices, ensuring that children with disabilities can access and thrive in learning environment

Rapid Study of the first year of the ESSP.

Some of the recommendations of the Midterm review of the ESSP are as follows:

1. Revise ESSP Indicators: Update and align indicators with post-COVID realities, improve data collection mechanisms, and ensure indicator-priority alignment. (Status: In progress.)
2. Accelerate Infrastructure Development: Address the 3,000-school backlog, focus on underserved areas, and improve facilities including WASH and teacher housing. (Status: In progress)
3. Implement Heritage-Based Curriculum (HBC): Finalize and roll out HBC with teacher training and inclusive materials for all learners. (Status: Partially done, teacher training on-going and procurement of materials, the main challenge has been availability of resources)
4. Strengthen Inclusive Education and Safeguarding: Approve the Inclusive Education Policy, expand psychosocial support and SEN services, and invest in special educators. (Status: In progress)
5. Scale Up Teacher Capacity: Expand CPD, include key themes like HBC and digital literacy, and ensure equitable access to training (Status: In progress)
6. Enhance MoPSE Leadership and Planning: Improve EMIS, approve key policies, build leadership skills, and ensure MoPSE ownership in donor programmes (Status: In progress)
7. Advance Partnership Compact: Finalize and implement the School Financing Policy, maintain progress on satellite school registration, and align Compact activities with ESSP (Status: In progress)
8. Improve Financial Oversight: Ensure timely disbursements (e.g., BEAM, SIG), strengthen procurement and auditing, and promote equitable resource distribution (Status: In progress).
9. Promote Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement: Strengthen local coordination structures, involve civil society, and improve joint monitoring mechanisms (Status: In progress)
10. Boost Digital Learning and Innovation: Expand digital access, train teachers in ICT, and integrate digital tools into teaching. (Status: This is in progress. GPE supported with the procurement of ICT gadgets i.e. 815 laptops, 2112 tablets, and 708 projectors. To ensure teachers are fully equipped to maximize these benefits, an upcoming training will focus on two key manuals: “Basic Computer Use and

Maintenance" and "Teachers' guide for Blended Learning." This training will help educators confidently use technology to enrich teaching and learning experiences.)

Window 3 Joint Sector Reviews

This grant successfully supported the Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024. Each JSR was preceded by the development of an Education Performance Review Report, which assessed progress toward achieving the indicators set out in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). These assessments were made possible through the availability of EMIS data.

However, significant delays in the production of EMIS reports affected the timeliness of the JSR process. For instance, the 2022 JSR was only conducted in July 2023, thereby minimizing time for the sector to implement or follow up on the recommendations outlined in the Aide Memoire. Similarly, the EMIS report for 2023 was only released mid-2024, contributing to further delays.

Fortunately, the GPE Variable Part indicators provided an incentive to improve the timeliness of EMIS reporting. As a result, the 2024 EMIS report was produced within the same calendar year. This allowed for the consolidation of the 2023 and 2024 JSRs into a single, jointly held review, improving efficiency and enabling more coherent reflection on sector performance.

The 2023-2024 JSR confirmed key achievements including the rollout of the Heritage-Based Curriculum (HBC), construction of new schools and laboratories, and training of over 64,000 teachers. Significant partner contributions—led by UNICEF, CAMFED, World Vision, and others—enabled support in school feeding, menstrual health, inclusive education, and digital learning. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, notably low transition rates from Grade 7 to Form 1, underperforming indicators in foundational learning, and continued gaps in infrastructure, especially WASH and classrooms. The JSR emphasized the need for stronger provincial leadership, targeted interventions for vulnerable learners (especially boys in primary and girls in secondary), and improved use of data such as the Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA) to guide interventions.

The JSR also brought forward strategic reflections on system strengthening, financial management, and policy alignment. Stakeholders called for enhanced district effectiveness, better resourcing of Joint Monitoring Visits (JMVs), and increased capacity at sub-national levels. Recommendations focused on improving teacher capacity, institutionalizing inclusive education, expanding digital learning platforms, and finalizing key policies such as the School Financing Policy, Non-Formal Education Policy and Teacher Professional Standards. The draft 2025 Aide Memoire suggested by partners during the JSR, retained five priority areas: financing, inclusive learning, infrastructure, curriculum and assessment, and systems strengthening. The JSR concluded by urging better partner coordination, timely budget disbursements, and proactive implementation of agreed actions, framing these as essential for the final phase of the ESSP and preparation of the next strategic planning cycle.

Contribution to system capacity to deliver reforms

Detailed Description

2.3 Contribution to system capacity to deliver reforms

Reflect on the grant's contribution to system capacity to deliver reforms, for example, the extent to which:

(i) The grant helped remediate the system capacity gaps/weaknesses assessed and prioritized in the partnership Compact or beyond (see ties to specific 'enabling factors' under the partnership compact).

(ii) The grant's capacity activities helped reinforce system-wide capacity.

(iii) The system-level capacity gained through the grant supported (or has the potential to support) the delivery of education reforms.

This grant commenced in 2021, prior to the endorsement of the Partnership Compact in December 2022. As such, its design and parameters were not directly informed by the reform priorities articulated in the Compact but rather very well aligned with the priorities set out in the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

However, the support to the Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) played a valuable role in sustaining sector dialogue and monitoring progress on key education reforms, including the introduction of the Heritage-Based Curriculum. The JSRs were attended by a broad and representative profile of stakeholders, including senior officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), provincial and district education officers, school heads and teachers, representatives of learners and parents, development partners, civil society organizations, and other line ministries. This diverse participation ensured that policy discussions were informed by both strategic oversight and frontline implementation realities.

The structure of the JSRs further enhanced their effectiveness. Deliberations combined thematic group work with plenary sessions, allowing participants to jointly analyze evidence, including EMIS data and monitoring findings, and to present consolidated recommendations for sector action. Group work sessions facilitated focused discussions on priority areas, such as curriculum implementation, teacher deployment, and learning outcomes while plenary sessions enabled validation, cross-sector alignment, and consensus-building. This mixed and participatory approach strengthened coordination, accountability, and shared ownership of agreed sector priorities and reform actions.

The JSR platform strengthened evidence-based dialogue among partners and enhanced coherence across interventions, contributing to more aligned and realistic sector plans. In particular, the process underscored the critical importance of the timely production and availability of EMIS data, reinforcing its central role in annual planning, resource allocation, and performance tracking at national and sub-national levels.

Furthermore, the grant-supported JSR processes deepened a shared understanding of the need for inclusive and multi-level engagement across the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). Engagement was strengthened not only at the central and provincial levels, but also at district, school, and classroom levels, recognizing the essential roles of teachers, school leadership, and learners in shaping effective and responsive education policies and programmes. This inclusive approach improved ownership, accountability, and the relevance of sector interventions.

Conditions which Affected the Grant

Detailed Description

Grant implementation was shaped by a combination of institutional, operational, and contextual factors that both facilitated and constrained progress towards achieving the grant's objectives. This section outlines key inhibiting and facilitating conditions, the mitigation measures adopted in response to emerging challenges, and how coordination within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and across sector levels evolved over the life of the grant.

Inhibiting Conditions

1. MoPSE Responsiveness and Timeliness of Deliverables:

The effectiveness of grant implementation was constrained by delays in responsiveness within MoPSE, particularly in the Strategic Policy Planning, Research and Statistics (SPPRS) Department. Timely availability of Education Management Information System (EMIS) data and the scheduling of Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) are essential for evidence-based planning, performance monitoring, and sector accountability. Delays in EMIS reporting and in convening JSRs limited the sector's ability to promptly assess performance, follow up on recommendations, and implement corrective actions within the same planning cycle.

2. Residual Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Although the grant commenced after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, its implementation was affected by lingering COVID-19 related disruptions. Institutional capacity remained strained due to earlier school closures, staff reassignments, and competing recovery priorities. These conditions affected timelines, availability of key personnel, and the sequencing of some planned activities, particularly those dependent on national data systems and multi-stakeholder processes. To mitigate the residual impacts of COVID-19 on grant implementation, flexible programming approaches were adopted, including adjustments to activity sequencing, extended timelines, and the use of hybrid and virtual coordination modalities where feasible. These measures helped sustain stakeholder engagement, maintain continuity of planning and review processes, and gradually restore implementation momentum as institutional capacity stabilized.

Facilitating Conditions

Despite these constraints, several enabling factors significantly supported grant design, implementation, and the achievement of results:

1. Capacity Building and Technical Support

Targeted training and technical assistance supported key institutional functions, including public finance management, procurement planning, and results-based planning (RBP). The Holistic Organizational Development (HOD) approach and associated training strengthened leadership, management practices, and institutional coherence within MoPSE. These efforts improved internal planning capacity and enhanced understanding of fiduciary and implementation requirements linked to GPE-funded programmes.

2. Strengthened Sector Coordination and Governance Structures
The grant supported sector coordination mechanisms, notably through the Education Coordination Group (ECG) and related technical platforms. Over time, coordination between MoPSE departments, development partners, and other stakeholders improved, with clearer roles, more regular engagement, and stronger follow-up on agreed actions. The review and strengthening of governance and coordination structures contributed to more consistent sector dialogue and better alignment between planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.

3. Improved Financial and Operational Flexibility
Operational adaptations, including the change of currency to United States dollars, reduced financial volatility and improved predictability in grant implementation. In addition, the no-cost extension helped address implementation delays and ensured that expenditures were aligned with the appropriate funding windows across the SCG, second SCG, and System Transformation Grant (STG).

4.Community engagement and government commitment
This has been central to the success of Zimbabwe's GPE Transformation Grant. Active participation by School Development Committees and local stakeholders ensured ownership and responsiveness to community needs, while strong leadership from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education aligned grant objectives with national priorities and maintained education as a top policy focus. Government commitment was further demonstrated through governance structure reviews and capacity-building initiatives such as training on Results-Based Planning (RBP), Heads of Departments (HOD) training, and support for sector coordination.

5.Financial management systems and partner coordination
This also played a critical role; strengthened fiduciary systems, complemented by training on financing and procurement planning, enabled timely disbursement and accountability. Despite external challenges such as currency changes, these systems maintained compliance and minimized risks. Effective partner coordination through the Local Education Group fostered harmonized efforts, reduced duplication, and leveraged resources and expertise. This collaborative approach, combined with governance reforms and capacity-building measures, enhanced coherence and impact across the education sector.

Mitigation Measures and Adaptive Responses
Several mitigation measures were adopted to address implementation challenges:
• Greater use of interim coordination meetings and technical working sessions helped maintain momentum when EMIS data or formal JSR timelines were delayed.
• The GPE Variable Part indicators provided a strong incentive for improving the timeliness of EMIS reporting, contributing to notable improvements by 2024.
• Closer collaboration between UNICEF and MoPSE supported adaptive planning, re-sequencing of activities, and continued implementation despite external constraints.

Lessons and recommendations, successful practices and innovative interventions

Detailed Description
The Lessons learnt in implementing this grant include the following:
1. Importance of Timely Data and Coordination:
The implementation of the SCG highlighted the critical need for timely availability of Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, as delays in data dissemination affected the timely conduct of key activities such as the Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). Strengthening coordination between the Ministry's Strategic Policy, Planning, Research and Statistics Department and key stakeholders proved essential for

more efficient implementation. In this regard, enhancing the coordination, planning, and leadership capacity of this department is crucial, given its central role in data production, sector analysis, and evidence-based decision-making. Positioning the department at the Chief Director level has been suggested to strengthen its authority, improve cross-departmental coordination, and enable more timely alignment of data, planning, and policy processes across the Ministry.

Equally important is enhancing the department's planning and leadership capacity, as it drives evidence-based policy formulation, strategic alignment, and resource prioritization. Strong leadership ensures coherence across programs, timely responsiveness to emerging challenges, and data-driven decision-making that builds stakeholder confidence. Elevating the department to Chief Director (CD) level would provide the authority and visibility needed to influence cross-sectoral decisions and enforce compliance with strategic priorities. This structural upgrade would also attract high-level technical expertise, positioning the department as a central driver of sustainable policy and planning within the Ministry

2. Effects of COVID-19:
The grant's performance was affected by lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as disruptions caused by prolonged school closures and shifting sector priorities placed additional strain on timelines, implementation capacity, and monitoring efforts. Within MoPSE, the pandemic negatively affected staff availability, routine coordination processes, and the functioning of core systems, including data collection and reporting. At the same time, COVID-19 prompted adaptive changes that had positive longer-term effects, such as increased use of digital tools for coordination, greater flexibility in planning and implementation, and heightened awareness of the importance of data, risk management, and system resilience. These adaptations have contributed to more responsive institutional practices and informed subsequent recovery and reform efforts.

COVID 19 disrupted MoPSE's functionality through prolonged school closures and intermittent reopenings, which deepened learning loss, increased dropout risks, and widened equity gaps especially for rural and vulnerable learners. At the same time, the Ministry working with partners introduced a national alternative learning framework (radio and TV lessons, workbooks, and the Learning Passport) to sustain continuity of learning and begin recovery. Operationally, MoPSE developed and enforced Standard Operating Procedures for safe reopening, including school-level health coordination, WASH measures, and infection prevention protocols.

Positively, rapid teacher training in open, distance and online learning strengthened instructional capacity and accelerated the shift to blended delivery models across hundreds of schools. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated infrastructure and connectivity deficits, prompting remedial investments such as solar radios and recent ICT equipment handovers, which aim to reduce the digital divide and build resilience for future shocks.

3. Value of Joint Sector Reviews:
JSRs, supported under this grant, proved to be a valuable tool for tracking sector progress, fostering policy dialogue, and strengthening accountability across the education sector. The JSR process was notably inclusive, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, including MoPSE senior management and technical departments, provincial and district education officials, school heads and teachers, development partners, civil society organizations, and representatives of learners and communities. This inclusivity ensured that diverse perspectives are considered, fostering transparency, accountability, and shared ownership of education outcomes. By engaging stakeholders at every level, the JSR strengthens alignment between national policies and partner interventions, reduces duplication, and promotes coordinated resource mobilization.

This broad participation ensured that discussions reflected both policy-level priorities and implementation realities from the ground. However, there remains a need for improved planning and stronger institutional commitment to ensure that JSRs are held regularly and that their findings are systematically integrated into sector planning, budgeting, and follow-up mechanisms supported under this grant proved to be a valuable tool for tracking sector progress, fostering policy dialogue, and ensuring accountability. There is still need for better planning and institutional commitment to ensure that JSRs are held regularly and that findings inform sector planning.

The JSRs were a platform for evidence-based dialogue, where data and research inform decisions, and marginalized voices such as those representing learners with disabilities or rural communities are heard.

Ultimately, the inclusive nature of the JSR builds trust and commitment, making it a cornerstone for collaborative planning and monitoring within the education sector.

4. Need for Broader Stakeholder Engagement:
The implementation process underscored the importance of engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including provincial and district education offices, development partners, civil society, and community representatives, to ensure relevance, buy-in, and sustainability of interventions. In practice, this was done through structured consultations linked to key evidence and policy processes, for example:
(i) multi-stakeholder validation meetings for the Education Sector Performance Reports and JSR Aide-Memoirs, where provincial and district perspectives were incorporated into the assessment of ESSP progress and agreed follow-up actions.
(ii) participatory group work and plenary sessions during JSRs, which allowed technical departments, partners, and sub-national officials to jointly review data, identify bottlenecks, and propose corrective actions.
(iii) consultative approaches used in analytical work such as the ESPIG summative evaluation and ESSP review processes, including key informant interviews and technical review workshops with MoPSE departments and sector partners to test findings, confirm feasibility of recommendations, and strengthen ownership. Stakeholder engagement was also reinforced through routine sector coordination platforms (e.g., ECG and technical working meetings), joint monitoring visits that brought together government and partners to observe implementation issues firsthand, and iterative feedback loops where draft findings from studies were circulated for comment before finalization.
This combination of national-level consultations, sub-national participation, and validation processes helped ensure that policies and evidence products reflected sector realities and were more likely to be acted upon. For instance, the development of Zimbabwe School Financing Policy in 2025 involved broad stakeholder consultations in Harare and Bulawayo with teachers, parents, local authorities, and civil society, followed by a national validation meeting led by the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe, which engaged the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, parliamentarians, and development partners to address funding gaps and accountability. Similarly, the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy (ZELP), launched in 2024, was shaped through multi-tiered consultations, including provincial forums facilitated by the Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA) and a subsequent validation process to align national priorities with grassroots realities. These inclusive approaches ensured that both policies were grounded in evidence and stakeholder consensus, increasing their likelihood of successful implementation
5. Flexibility in Grant Design and Implementation:
The need for adaptive programming emerged as a key lesson, especially in the context of a rapidly changing policy environment and unforeseen disruptions. A flexible approach to grant activities and timelines would allow for more responsive and effective implementation. The support provided to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) reflected the benefit of investing in broader data systems that inform not only education but also other social sectors, promoting integrated planning and policy coherence.

The recommendations for the grant include:
1. Strengthening Coordination Mechanisms and Institutional Ownership:
It is important to strengthen coordination and institutional ownership primarily within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) by improving collaboration across core technical departments, particularly Strategic Policy Planning, Research and Statistics (SPPRS), Finance and Administration, Curriculum Development, Teacher Education, and Infrastructure Development. This should include establishing regular inter-departmental technical review meetings linked to the annual planning and monitoring cycle, with clearly defined roles, timelines, and accountability for data production, analysis, and follow-up actions.

Strengthened internal coordination would improve the timeliness of EMIS data, alignment between planning and budgeting, and consistency in implementing agreed sector priorities. it is also important to establish clearer coordination frameworks between the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) departments and stakeholders such as the development partners - the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF, UNESCO, civil society organizations like the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors, School Development Committees and parent–teacher associations, teachers and school heads, as well as technical experts and consultants.

This includes setting up regular technical review meetings and defining roles and responsibilities to enhance timely data sharing, joint planning, and improved implementation efficiency. Standardized processes and service guidelines have been introduced and made accessible through a shared platform to promote consistency. Across the departments there is need for data integration through a central dashboard

combining EMIS, finance, and HR information for evidence-based decision-making. Budget coordination and partner engagement are formalized through structured meetings and thematic subgroups aligned to MoPSE priorities. Capacity building initiatives and continuous improvement practices, such as after-action reviews and feedback loops, will also need to continuously be embedded to sustain coordination.

These measures collectively strengthen systems and foster a culture of collaboration, transparency, and results-driven delivery amongst the various MoPSE departments.

2. Institutionalize and Prioritize Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs):
MoPSE should commit to an annual schedule for JSRs, ensuring they are integrated into the education sector planning and budgeting cycle. The annual MoPSE Strategic Planning should be linked to or even merged with the JSR. Resources should be allocated for their consistent implementation, and findings should be used to guide policy adjustments and donor engagement.

3. Adopt a More Flexible and Responsive Grant Management Approach:
Future SCG designs should incorporate contingency planning and allow for adaptive implementation to accommodate disruptions such as pandemics or policy shifts. This could include built-in flexibility in timelines, budgeting, and activity sequence, as well as mid-term reviews to re-align priorities where necessary.

Some of the successful practices and innovation include
1. Support to Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) as a Policy Dialogue Mechanism:
One of the most notable successes of this grant was its support for conducting Joint Sector Reviews in 2022, 2023, and 2024, including a joint review with the subsequent SCG in 2025. These JSRs provided a platform for evidence-based policy dialogue, strengthened mutual accountability among stakeholders, and allowed for systematic tracking of progress against the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). The institutionalization of JSRs is an example of good practice in sector-wide monitoring and coordination.

2. Integration of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS):
The grant's support to the MICS is an innovative approach to leveraging national household survey systems to improve data availability for the education sector, especially foundational literacy and numeracy module which will be part of the MICS. This cross-sectoral data initiative will allow the Ministry to access disaggregated education indicators while simultaneously contributing to broader development planning.

3. Evidence Generation for Strategic Decision-Making:
This grant financed key analytical pieces, including the independent appraisal of the ESSP, the summative evaluation of the GPE ESPIG. These evidence products strengthened policy planning, informed the design of subsequent grants, and enhanced transparency and accountability within the sector.

Impact stories

Detailed Description
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https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/zimbabwe-learners-join-sector-review-plan-future-education

https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/stories/zimbabwe-takes-stock-education-sector-achievements-plots-future

Other Effects

Detailed Description

There was a revision of the workplan - with approval from the Donor - to allow for Data Collection through Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Zimbabwe is currently undertaking the seventh round of the MICS, whose results track progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and inform progress on national development priorities. The survey is implemented by the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) and has received support from UNICEF and UN Women. Through the funding, 26 enumerators were trained using the Paper Assisted Personal Interviewing (PAPI) tool and pre-testing was done between 9-23 June 2025 to test for consistency, functionality, clarity, assess cultural appropriateness of the questions, assess translations and make appropriate refinements to the data collection tool before an electronic version is created for the tablets.

The pilot test report indicates that four diverse enumeration areas from both urban and rural settlements were selected, and enumerators practiced administering the questionnaires, followed by debriefing sessions to share observations and propose improvements. Key revisions included adjusting response codes, clarifying age ranges and wording, updating the interviewer manuals, and addressing emotional sensitivity in modules such as food insecurity. Another notable feature of this MICS was the pilot testing of an enhanced foundational learning module, an innovation of significant interest to the country given its potential to generate robust evidence to inform future policy and programming in foundational learning.

The report also highlights logistical and procedural lessons, recommending better training venues and more field practice days. Detailed module-by-module feedback resulted in numerous accepted revisions for clarity and contextual accuracy. Some modules were not tested due to pending finalization or expert unavailability. A Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) field test is planned to ensure digital system readiness, test equipment and software, and train personnel on digital tools. The report concludes with a checklist for the CAPI test and emphasizes cross-team collaboration, comprehensive documentation, and careful attention to both technical and human factors to ensure quality and reliability in the main MICS 2025 implementation.

Tangible outputs and knowledge products

#	File Name	Document Type	Description
1	Final Report_UNICEF Zimbabwe_GPE_Evaluation report.pdf	Evaluation Report	Final Summative Evaluation of GPE Support to Zimbabwe

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Efficiency, Sustainability and Grant Management

Assessment of Project Implementation: Efficiency

Overall Efficiency

Level of Overall Efficiency 3

Substantial

Detailed Description

The grant was implemented at the upstream (national) level and successfully achieved its primary objective of enhancing the capacity of the education sector in Zimbabwe. It focused on strengthening key planning, monitoring, and coordination mechanisms within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). The following objectives were fully met during the grant period:

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completed at Mid Term Review of the ESSP.
3. Strengthening the Education Sector's strategic planning and review processes to realize the goals set out in the new ESSP.
All grant activities were primarily conducted at the national level, reinforcing upstream capacity. The Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) were national-level exercises that informed sector-wide decision-making but involved all parties concerned from the learner school heads and teachers, District level personnel and provincial offices. District education offices contributed operational data, implementation insights, and feedback from schools, helping to ground national discussions in local realities. Provincial offices supported coordination across districts, validated findings, and helped synthesize district-level inputs into coherent priorities, ensuring that JSR recommendations reflected both national policy objectives and subnational implementation conditions.
While the operational focus remained at the national level, the impact of the activities, particularly the recommendations emerging from evaluations and JSRs cascaded down to the district level, influencing planning, resource allocation, and service delivery. This top-down influence ensured that the strategic outcomes of the grant translated into tangible benefits for learners and school communities across the country.

Timeliness

Detailed Description
The grant was approved in September 2021 and there were no delays on commencement. The aims were eventually achieved - though some of the planned outputs experienced implementation delays due to factors such as residual COVID-19 effects, limited funding, and institutional coordination gaps. More specifically, delays were experienced during the implementation of the Rapid study of the first year of the ESSP. Additional delays were caused by the absence and unavailability of updated Education Management Information System (EMIS) data, which is a critical input for many of the activities supported under the grant. As EMIS data predominantly drives evidence-based planning, performance reviews, and sector dialogue, its unavailability significantly affected the timely execution and sequencing of grant-supported processes. From this experience, it is noted that there is need for greater flexibility, strengthened intra-ministerial collaboration, and a more proactive risk mitigation approach in future capacity-building grants.

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Grant costs

Detailed Description
The major cost saving in this grant was the Summative Evaluation of the ESPIG which had a budget of USD 150,000 but support also came from ESPIG, and this grant only utilized USD 42,000 thereby making a cost saving of USD 108,000.00

Partnerships and Inclusive Dialogue

Detailed Description

Partnerships

The implementation of activities under the grant was supported by strategic partnerships that provided technical expertise, coordination, and advocacy rather than direct financial contributions. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education played a key role in guiding school management initiatives and facilitating e-training for school heads, while teacher training colleges and local education NGOs contributed to capacity building. Development partners such as UNESCO, World Bank, and UNICEF offered technical assistance for Joint Sector Reviews, Education Sector Plan revisions, and operational planning, complemented by civil society organizations and academic institutions that supported stakeholder engagement and research. Independent research firms, universities, and media partners assisted with evaluations, communication, and evidence generation, while national statistics agencies and community-based organizations collaborated on data collection for MICS surveys.

Additionally, government policy units and advocacy groups provided input for policy finalization, and regional education forums enabled peer learning and benchmarking, ensuring effective implementation and sustainability of education system strengthening efforts However, all stakeholders were actively involved in providing feedback to Terms of Reference (TORs), participating in consultations on reports such as Joint Sector Review reports, Education Sector Plan revisions, and other key documents, ensuring inclusivity and shared ownership throughout the process.

Sector dialogue

The Education Coordination Group (ECG) served as the primary forum for sector engagement, bringing together key stakeholders including the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), other government ministries, donor partners, UN agencies, and civil society organizations. This inclusive framework ensured that dialogue remained consultative, transparent, and aligned with sector priorities.

In 2024, the governance structure changed with MoPSE's new governance structure. It now comprises the Education Coordination Group (ECG) and the Education Partners Steering Committee, supported by thematic Technical Working Groups. The ECG, acting as the Local Education Group for GPE, brings together government ministries, development partners, UN agencies, CSOs, and private sector representatives to align technical and financial support, guide sector planning, monitor ESSP implementation, and coordinate multi-stakeholder dialogue. The Steering Committee focuses on high-level partner coordination and grant oversight. Together, these bodies ensure harmonized policy, inclusive sector reviews, and strategic oversight for education sector strengthening. To strengthen the mechanism of the sector dialogue, UNICEF supported MoPSE in the engagement of a consultant who has been supporting the MoPSE through the SPPRS department to coordinate and plan for the meetings.

In addition to the ECG, the GPE/TEACH Steering Committee, which has recently evolved into the Education Partners Steering Committee (EPSC) played a complementary role in advancing discussions specific to GPE-financed interventions and broader sector reforms. While the ECG drives overall sector policy alignment and coordination, the EPSC concentrates on managing and monitoring GPE-funded programmes. The transition from GPE/TEACH SC to EPSC reflects a maturation from a teaching-quality focus to a comprehensive governance platform for all GPE grants.

These platforms operated on a regular schedule, with the ECG initially convening every six weeks and the GPE/TEACH Steering Committee meeting quarterly. More recently, the ECG has also transitioned to a quarterly meeting schedule to align with other sector coordination mechanisms and streamline engagement. This structured and consistent dialogue has been instrumental in promoting joint planning, mutual accountability, and shared ownership of the education reform agenda.

Use of data and Evidence for Improvement

Detailed Description

Information generated through Joint Monitoring Visits and Joint Sector Reviews was systematically used to inform and shape programming decisions. For example, evidence from these processes revealed a high prevalence of non-readers within the school system, which directly informed the development of the national reading strategy. This, in turn, led to the introduction and implementation of targeted literacy interventions, including THRASS, alongside other complementary initiatives aimed at improving foundational reading skills.

The summative Evaluation of the GPE ESPIG provided a comprehensive assessment of the grant's implementation and outcomes, offering valuable insights not only for the SCG itself but also for the broader education sector and stakeholders within the Local Education Group (LEG). The findings informed sectoral discussions and were instrumental in shaping Zimbabwe's application during the 2023 GPE funding cycle.

Another key output was the Aide-Mémoire, developed as part of the annual Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) conducted in 2022 and 2023–2024. The Aide-Mémoire outlined five strategic recommendations, accompanied by a set of actionable follow-up measures and clearly designated responsible parties. Monitoring and follow-up of these actions were systematically carried out through the Education Coordination Group (ECG) meetings, thereby ensuring strong linkage between the grant's activities and ongoing sector dialogue and accountability mechanisms. This approach facilitated a seamless integration of SCG support with the JSR process, reinforcing sector monitoring, learning, and responsiveness.

Use of GPE Processes

Detailed Description

This grant had a limited scope, and as such, many of the key system capacity processes and mechanisms may not be fully reflected here. These are more comprehensively addressed under the second SCG, which was approved in 2023. The second SCG was specifically designed to respond to the priorities and systemic challenges outlined in the Partnership Compact, thereby building on the foundational work of the first SCG and taking a more integrated and strategic approach to sector capacity strengthening.

Sustainability

Detailed Description

This section examines the extent to which the results and system-strengthening gains achieved under the System Capacity Grant are likely to be sustained beyond the grant's closing date. It considers the continuity and scalability of key processes and initiatives, the durability of the capacity improvements achieved, and the institutional, financial, and policy conditions required to safeguard and deepen these gains over the medium to long term.

• The development, appraisal, and mid-term review of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) will continue, with preparations already underway for the next ESSP covering the 2026–2030 period.

• The Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), along with their accompanying reports and related activities such as the Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR) and the Aide-Mémoire, will be conducted on an annual basis to maintain consistent monitoring and evaluation of sector progress, eventually merging it with the strategic planning of the Ministry.

• The grant played a crucial role in addressing key system weaknesses, particularly in the areas of sector planning and performance review. Through its support to the independent appraisal of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), the monitoring of its implementation, and the mid-term review, this first SCG strengthened the foundations for evidence-based planning and accountability. By investing in critical processes such as evidence generation, strategic sector planning, and inclusive policy dialogue mechanisms, the grant contributed meaningfully to building the capacity, resilience, and institutional memory of the education system. These contributions lay the groundwork for sustained improvements and can be scaled and deepened through ongoing support, particularly under the second SCG.

• Any gaps in continuity, whether current or anticipated, can largely be attributed to limited and inconsistent funding. As this SCG concludes, the approval and rollout of the second SCG in 2023 has provided a much-needed bridge to sustain critical sector activities. However, to mitigate future risks and ensure uninterrupted implementation, it is essential that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) institutionalizes key processes—such as the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), the Education Sector Analysis (ESA), mid-term reviews, and Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs)—by incorporating them into the national education budget. Even modest domestic allocations toward these processes would reflect national ownership and significantly enhance the sustainability and long-term impact of the systems strengthened under the System Capacity Grant. This approach remains the most effective path to embedding and safeguarding the gains made through the SCG.

• The approval and implementation of the second System Capacity Grant (SCG) and the System Transformation Grant (STG) have provided a clear pathway for sustaining and deepening the gains achieved under the first SCG. These grants build on earlier investments by further strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing accountability mechanisms, reinforcing national ownership of sector processes, and improving efficiency in planning, financing, monitoring, and implementation. Together, they support the institutionalization of key reforms and processes, thereby improving the long-term sustainability and resilience of the education system. The second SCG and the STG have provided sustainability by transforming and strengthening the capacity for more accountability, ownership efficiency and sustainability

Grant Management and Use of Funds

Unspent Funds

Amount of funds that were not spent by grant closing

16,763.6

Detailed Description

(ii) Savings were made under activities which were supported by the ESPIG and other activities supported by the second SCG for example the JSR 2024

Management Performance

Level of Management Performance 4

Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description

UNICEF has played a central role in ensuring grant procedure compliance among stakeholders and partners by leveraging its robust internal processes across planning, implementation, funds utilization, and expenditure tracking—ensuring effective efficient impactful delivery.

Funds disbursed by UNICEF are managed through the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), which includes programmatic visits, financial spot-checks, and quarterly programme reviews. This system ensures that activities are implemented as planned and expenditures are well monitored. Risk management is further supported by a dynamic monitoring framework that is regularly updated to detect and resolve compliance issues.

Procurement processes are guided by UNICEF's stringent internal control systems, with the Human Resource and Supply Sections providing end-to-end technical support. This includes the hiring of consultants and also the hiring of venues for meetings and workshops. This review mitigates risks related to partner capacity, quality, timeliness, and safety—safeguarding both UNICEF's and donors' reputations.

UNICEF works closely with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), the former GPE TEACH Steering Committee, now the Education Partners Steering Committee (chaired by the MoPSE Permanent Secretary), and other stakeholders through quarterly decision-making meetings and bi-quarterly GPE implementation meetings. These engagements ensure alignment, responsiveness, and adaptive management of the programme.

Monthly bilateral meetings to review progress are also conducted between the UNICEF Chief of Education and the MoPSE Permanent Secretary, Chief Directors, and technical teams across education sub-sectors. One key challenge has been the delay in convening high-level coordination forums such as the Education Coordination Group (ECG), which are vital for strategic decision-making and timely problem-solving. Based on the weak capacity of the MoPSE to coordinate the sector, the recruitment of the ECG Secretariat under the SCG has been commendable and instrumental in improving the organization and frequency of these critical engagements. Consequently, meetings were conducted quarterly without fail and delay in 2025.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description
CERID	Educational Research, Innovation and Development
DOP	District Operational Plan
DRMR	Disaster Risk Management and Resilience
DSI	District School Inspector
ECG	Education Coordination Group
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
EDT	Education Development Trust
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPR	Education Sector Performance Report
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
ESPIG	Education Sector Program Implementation grant
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
GA	Grant Agent
JMV	Joint Monitoring Visit
MoFED	Ministry of Finance Economic Development and Investment Promotion
MoHTEISTD	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Childcare
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
NAPH	National Association of Primary Heads
NASH	National Association of Secondary Heads

POP	Provincial Education Plan
SEN	Special Education Needs
SPPRS	Strategy, Policy Planning, Research and Statistics Department
TDIS	Teacher Development Information System
TMIS	Teacher Management Information System
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe School Examinations Council
ZELA	Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment
CWD	Children with Disabilities
CDTS	Curriculum Development and Technical Services
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EWS	Early Warning System
HBC	Heritage Based Curriculum
HOD	Holistic Organizational Development
JSR	Joint Sector Review
STG	System Transformation Grant
TEACH	Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for All Children
TPC	Teaching Professions Council
ToR	Terms of Reference
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ZELP	Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy
SIG	School Improvement Grant
SIGMIS	School Improvement Grant Management Information System
PPC	Parliamentary Portfolio Committee

SCG	System Capacity Grant
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers

Annex 2: Efficacy by Grant Window

Capacity Area Window	Level of Achievement at End of Grant
Window 2: Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change	Substantial

Detailed Description:

The window experienced delays in implementing the First-Year Rapid Study, primarily due to the delayed endorsement of the ESSP in 2021, which affected the sequencing of planned activities.

Further, in response to emerging needs, a grant revision was requested to allocate funds for data collection, which had not been included in the original budget. This reallocation was made possible by significant cost savings from the GPE Summative Evaluation, which benefited from cost-sharing arrangements with the ESPIG. This flexible use of resources enabled the grant to adapt to evolving priorities while staying within its overall funding envelope.

Capacity Area Window	Level of Achievement at End of Grant
Window 3: Strengthen capacity, adapt, and learn, to implement and drive results at scale	Substantial

Detailed Description:

One of the major challenges experienced during this window was the delay in the production of the annual EMIS data, particularly in 2022 and 2023. These delays had a ripple effect on several key activities, most notably the Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR), which relies heavily on EMIS as its primary data source. Consequently, this also affected the timing of the Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), as well as the production and follow-up of the Aide-Mémoire, thereby disrupting the overall review and accountability cycle.

Despite this challenge, it is important to note that there was no major deviation from the planned activities under this window. All activities were eventually implemented as intended, demonstrating the grant's flexibility and the implementing partners' commitment to achieving its objectives.

Capacity Area Window	Level of Achievement at End of Grant
Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact	Modest

Detailed Description:

Grant did not undertake activities in Window 1

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1 High - There were no shortcomings or at most minor shortcomings in the continued alignment between grant activities and the capacity needs/priorities. The grant provided clear evidence of such alignment. If circumstances changed, the objectives were changed accordingly to keep objectives fully relevant. Substantial - There were moderate shortcomings in the continued alignment between grant activities and the capacity needs/priorities. The grant provided limited information on such alignment. If circumstances changed, the objectives were changed accordingly to keep objectives fully relevant. Modest - There were significant shortcomings in the continued alignment between grant activities and the capacity needs/priorities. The project provided limited information on such alignment. If circumstances changed, the

objectives were not changed accordingly to keep objectives fully relevant. Negligible - There were severe shortcomings in the continued alignment between grant activities and the capacity needs/priorities. The grant differed from those current needs or did not provide information to assess such alignment. If circumstances changed, the objectives were not changed accordingly to keep objectives fully relevant.

2 High-The project exceeded or fully achieved its objectives (intended outcomes) or is likely to do so. Substantial -The project almost fully achieved its objectives (intended outcomes) or is likely to do so. Modest- The project partly achieved (or is expected to partly achieve) its objectives (intended outcomes). Negligible-The project barely achieved or did not achieve (minimal achievement, if any) its objectives (intended outcomes).

3 High-Efficiency exceeded expectations. Substantial-Efficiency was what would be expected in the sector.Modest-Efficiency was below expectations in the sector. Negligible- Efficiency was very low compared to both the benefits (if any) and recognized norms in the sector.

4 Highly Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance prevented the achievement of one or more outputs. Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance limited or jeopardized the achievement of one or more outputs. Moderately Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance delayed the achievement of one or more outputs, but issues were resolved during the grant life cycle. Moderately Satisfactory – Overall grant management performance supported the grant to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings. Satisfactory – Overall grant management performance supported the grant to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings. Highly Satisfactory – Overall grant management performance supported the grant to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings.