# Education Sector Program Implementation Grant Completion Report Template

**Status:** Accepted

| Country | Name of project this grant is contributing to | Grant ID | Project ID (if applicable) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mongolia | Mongolia - MLT (May 10, 2022) | GPE0000647 | 03603399 |

| Grant Agent | Grant Type | Grant Approval Date | Grant Effectiveness / Start Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Save the Children Australia | MLT | 05/10/2022 | 08/23/2022 |

| Grant Closing Date | Grant Amount | Date of Report Submission |
|---|---|---|
| 12/31/2025 | 5,000,000 (USD) | 03/31/2026 |

## Project Implementation

## Assessment of Project Implementation: Relevance

## Overall Relevance

**Level Of OverAll Relevance** 1

High

**Detailed Description**

(I) Alignment with sector needs and relevance of objectives

There were no significant shortcomings in maintaining alignment between project activities and the needs of beneficiaries, partners, and the education sector. Throughout implementation, the project consistently demonstrated strong relevance to sector priorities and stakeholder needs.

The project design and implementation accurately reflected sector needs and remained aligned with the Education Sector Plan and its priorities relating to inclusive education, school lunch provision, and blended learning. These components also fully aligned with the first objective of the Ministry of Education's operational strategy. The project objectives were clearly defined, demand-driven, and responsive to identified sector challenges. Both the objectives and the results pathway proved realistic and achievable, as reflected in the successful completion of planned activities and delivery of expected outputs within the project period.

For example, under the inclusive education component, project activities—including capacity building for teachers and school staff, establishment of Student Development Support Classrooms (SDSCs), and awareness-raising activities for students and parents—strengthened schools' ability to support children with disabilities. While the project originally targeted an increase of 78 children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools at the provincial and district levels, enrollment in the targeted schools alone increased by 124 children, representing a 36.7 percent increase. This substantial overachievement demonstrates that the project's objectives were well aligned with sector needs and that the results pathway accurately reflected the nature and scale of barriers faced by children with disabilities, as well as the strong demand for inclusive education interventions.

Furthermore, the project recognized that increasing the enrollment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools required strengthened collaboration between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. By fostering coordination among ministries, local education boards, schools, and civil society organizations, the project reinforced a shared responsibility framework that supported inclusive practices beyond individual interventions.

Overall, strong alignment with sector priorities, an evidence-based design, realistic targets, and demonstrated responsiveness confirm that the project was both highly relevant and realistically designed.

(II) Use of consultations, lessons learned, and evidence
The project design was informed through consultations jointly facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Save the Children, with participation from a broad range of stakeholders, including multiplier partners (JICA, KOICA), development partners (ADB, UNICEF), MUST, school leadership, teachers, and national and local implementing partners.

Video-based lessons on working with children with diverse learning needs and working with parents, developed under JICA's START I & II projects, were effectively used to train primary and secondary school teachers under the EQUAL project. Although there was strong prior experience in establishing SDSCs under SC and JICA previous initiatives, practical experience on how to utilise them systematically to improve inclusive education outcomes was limited. EQUAL introduced structured approaches that strengthened individualized support, enhanced teacher collaboration, and improved service delivery for children with disabilities. These pilots helped transform SDSCs from physical spaces into functional support mechanisms contributing directly to the quality of inclusive education.

For the school lunch component, the project consulted closely with MUST who provided ongoing technical advice and evidence, informing project design and ensuring alignment with practical implementation realities. Training for nutritionists and cooks drew on curricula and materials developed with support from JICA and KOICA, further grounding the project in national evidence and expertise.

The project also incorporated lessons learned from earlier grants and pilot programs, particularly in teacher professional development, blended learning infrastructure needs, inclusive education service gaps, and the importance of cascade and institutionalization models. Evidence from diagnostics, sector analyses, and monitoring findings guided intervention prioritization. Where evidence gaps existed, such as scaling blended learning, the project applied piloting and adaptive approaches to refine implementation.

(III) Alignment with national legislation and regulatory frameworks
During the design phase, the project explicitly assessed the relevant legal, regulatory, and institutional frameworks. The project was guided by the General Law of Education, the Law on Primary and Secondary Education, the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Law on General Education School Food, Production, and Services, as well as related government resolutions and ministerial regulations. This review was conducted in close coordination with the MoE to ensure that regulatory processes governing education delivery, inclusive education, and school nutrition were fully in place and operational.

The project aligned with, and supported, the implementation of this legal framework, and no legal or regulatory barriers were identified during implementation. Although laws evolved during the project period, the revised General Law of Education (2023, amended 2024) retained core policy directions, confirming full alignment and demonstrating continued MoE support.

At the sector level, the Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan (2021–2030), approved by MoE Order No. A/96, prioritizes digital education and content development. MoE Orders No. A/67 (2020) and A/465 (2022) adopt and update UNESCO's ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, ensuring that teacher capacity development under this project aligns with nationally approved standards. MoE Order No. A/193 (2021) establishes quality and technical requirements for digital textbooks and open educational resources, guiding the selection and development of digital content supported by the project.

National strategic directions, including Vision 2050, the Medium-Term Development Policy (2021–2030), and the Government Action Plans for 2020–2024 and 2024–2028, emphasize digital education as a core pillar of human development. In addition, Parliament Resolution No. 23 (2021–2025) explicitly promotes ICT integration and digital learning in general education. Together, these sector-level policies and strategies strongly reinforce the project's relevance, particularly in advancing inclusive, digital, and competency-based education reforms.

Procurement followed the Public Procurement Law, ensuring transparency and legal compliance, although formal complaint mechanisms created delays. These challenges were resolved through coordinated mitigation measures, technical support from Save the Children, and adherence to regulatory procedures. Implementation proceeded without compromising legal compliance, accountability, or planned results.

(IV) Adaptation to changing circumstances

The project adapted effectively to changing circumstances, supported by continuous monitoring and responsive management.

Originally, Component 3 planned to hire 16 individual consultants, including four international specialists. Instead, services were procured as a consulting firm package, generating USD 140,000 in savings. These savings were reinvested in piloting assistive devices and procuring Chromebooks for students with hearing impairments, ensuring strengthened inclusiveness while maintaining alignment with the component's objectives. Engaging a professional team helped consolidate the previously fragmented activities under the blended learning component into a single management structure, which positively contributed to the overall project results.

Persistent procurement delays under the Public Procurement Laws, particularly for kitchen equipment, were addressed through escalation and activation of the emergency procurement provision in the Financing Agreement. Save the Children International's Procurement Policy was applied to conduct an international tender, enabling procurement to be completed within a shorter timeframe while maintaining transparency, accountability, and alignment with national requirements. This ensured that Component 2 could progress without compromising planned results.

Similarly, the project adapted its planned online training for school cooks after consultations with MUST confirmed the need for hands-on, practical learning. The training was delivered face-to-face, enabling participants to develop essential food preparation, hygiene, and nutrition management skills, and complete required professional certification. This adjustment ensured the training remained relevant, practical, and responsive to participant needs.

Together, these adaptations demonstrate how the project systematically integrated feedback and applied adaptive management to maintain relevance and delivery continuity despite operational challenges.

(V) Consideration of national and local capacity conditions

Project design explicitly considered national, subnational, and school-level capacities. Human resource, institutional, technical, and management capacities were assessed at the MoE, GAE, and school levels to ensure feasibility and appropriate sequencing of interventions.

Across components, capacity strengthening was embedded throughout. Under blended learning, 228 master trainers cascaded training to over 1,170 teachers; 80 inclusive education trainers delivered training to 4,761 teachers; special education teachers provided school-based support to children, parents, and teachers; and professional development groups were established across six disability categories.

Infrastructure investments—including digital classrooms, SDSCs, and kitchen facilities—were aligned with human resource development to ensure practical application of skills.

By ensuring national and local capacities were strengthened and appropriately supported, the project enhanced feasibility, improved institutional readiness, and contributed to sustainability of outcomes.

(VI) Quality of the Results Framework

The project's Results Framework clearly articulated logical linkages between activities, outputs, and intended outcomes. Indicators were appropriate, measurable, and grounded in baseline data. Targets were aligned with project scope and contextual realities.

Monitoring was conducted in accordance with Government Resolution No. 176 and in close collaboration with the MoE's Monitoring and Evaluation Department. Activities included progress reporting, joint monitoring visits, and structured reviews at national, local, and school levels.

In the blended learning component, annual learning outcome targets proved ambitious early on because foundational conditions—teacher capacity, infrastructure, regulatory clarity, and parental awareness—needed to be established first. Once these enabling conditions were in place, the project achieved the cumulative Year 3 target of a 10 percent improvement in mathematics and Mongolian language scores. This validated the relevance and sequencing of the results pathway.

Overall, the Results Framework, combined with strong monitoring systems and adaptive management, contributed to timely tracking of progress, informed decision-making, and achievement of the project's objectives.

## Beneficiaries' Views on Relevance

**Detailed Description**

Although no standalone satisfaction survey was conducted, beneficiary perspectives were systematically captured through the endline survey, project reports, monitoring records, and school-level assessments. Evidence from these sources shows that beneficiaries consistently viewed the project's activities and outputs as relevant, useful, and responsive to their needs. Based on the endline survey, focus group discussions, and consultations at school and community levels, the majority of beneficiaries reported that the project effectively addressed real challenges related to access, quality of instruction, inclusion, and school conditions.

Students:

Students, including children with disabilities, indicated that learning support services, inclusive classroom practices, blended learning activities, and improved school meals directly addressed barriers they previously faced. They valued the practical, interactive nature of blended learning and extracurricular activities. Endline findings show that 59.3% of students demonstrated clear understanding of inclusive education, and many reported improved concentration, mood, and engagement due to school meals. Participation in blended learning was associated with average end-of-year improvements of 11.9% in mathematics and 8.3% in Mongolian language, reinforcing perceptions of strong relevance to their learning needs.

Teachers and School Leadership:

Teachers and school leaders highlighted that training on inclusive education, IEP implementation, assessment, and blended learning provided practical tools they could apply immediately in the classroom. 4,761 teachers participated in inclusive-education training, and over 90% of teachers in target schools completed blended learning training. More than 80% were assessed as adequately prepared, indicating that teachers found the support highly relevant to their professional needs.

Parents and Caregivers:

Parents and caregivers reported increased confidence in supporting their children's learning, especially in blended learning contexts. 78% of parents reported improved collaboration with teachers and greater involvement in IEP processes. A total of 6,680 parents participated in IEP-related training. Parental engagement in school feeding monitoring also increased, with many reporting improved awareness of child nutrition and receiving advice from school nutritionists. These findings indicate that parents perceived the project as responsive to their needs and priorities.

Education Administrators:

Local and national administrators reported that the project aligned well with sector priorities, particularly in inclusive education, school feeding, and digital transformation. All target schools integrated inclusive education into school policies, and key standards and guidelines developed under the project were recognized as valuable for system-level institutionalization and sustainability.

Component-Specific Feedback

Component 1 (SDSCs): Teachers, students, and parents using the SDSCs consistently reported that the spaces enhanced children's development and improved the school environment. Endline data show 446 children with disabilities received regular support, and teachers rated their skills in supporting these learners at 4.7 out of 5.

Component 2 (Kitchen Equipment): Cooks, nutritionists, and students expressed high satisfaction with upgraded equipment. Improvements in efficiency, hygiene, and food quality were widely noted. Over 10,000 parents took part in nutrition awareness activities, and 3,396 parents monitored school meals, demonstrating strong community engagement.

Component 3 (Digital Classrooms): Teachers, students, school leaders, and MoE officials praised the relevance and functionality of the digital facilities. More than 90% of teachers participated in blended learning training, and student learning outcomes improved steadily, reflecting enhanced teaching and learning conditions.

Overall Perception of Relevance

Across all three components, feedback from students, teachers, parents, school leaders, and MoE officials consistently indicates that the project was demand-driven, addressed real challenges, and delivered

interventions considered highly relevant and valuable. Beneficiaries raised no major concerns regarding relevance, though some recommended continued investment in capacity building and infrastructure to sustain and scale results. Overall, endline evidence confirms that the project was well received, highly valued, and responsive to the needs and priorities of all participating stakeholder groups.

## Assessment of Project Implementation: Efficacy

## Overall Efficacy

**Level of Overall Efficacy** 2

High

**Detailed Description**

Outcome 1: Increased access to mainstream education for children with disabilities.

The project significantly reduced barriers to access and learning for children with disabilities. In this context, “accessing mainstream education” refers to children who were enrolled in and participating in mainstream schools, including regular attendance and engagement in learning. While the cumulative project target was to reach 820 children with disabilities accessing mainstream schools , including 370 girls, the project exceeded this target by reaching a total of 1,097 children, of whom 393 were girls, across the targeted provinces and districts.

In the 18 targeted schools alone, 421 children with disabilities were accessing mainstream education during the 2024–2025 academic year, including 148 girls, representing a substantial increase compared to baseline figures. This achievement also surpasses the original objective of increasing access of 78 children.
While the project exceeded its overall reach target and increased the absolute number of girls reached, girls represented approximately 36% of total beneficiaries, compared to 45% at target level. This difference may reflect a combination of factors, including structural barriers affecting girls with disabilities, as well as differences in identification and diagnosis patterns. Certain types of disabilities, such as autism and ADHD, are more commonly identified among boys, which may have influenced the overall gender distribution of beneficiaries.

In addition to access, the project addressed attitudinal barriers. A total of 20,142 students, representing 78.5 percent of all enrolled students in the targeted schools over two academic years, participated in awareness-raising activities aimed at promoting positive knowledge, attitudes, and practices toward peers with disabilities. Endline findings indicate that perceptions and attitudes toward inclusive education among teachers, school leadership, and parents improved significantly, with average scores increasing from 3.1 at baseline to 4.1 at endline. These activities also contributed to more positive peer attitudes and behaviours among students.

School-level capacity was also strengthened, with 18 schools fully operationalizing Student Development Support Classrooms, 4,761 teachers trained on inclusive education, and 413 parents actively involved in the development and monitoring of Individualized Education Plans. These results confirm a strong and coherent results chain from project activities to achieve outcomes.

Outcome 2: Improved quality of school food production and services.
The project strengthened the safety, hygiene, and nutritional quality of school food services, benefiting vulnerable and underserved children. By the end of implementation, 49,119 students, of whom 23,803 were girls and 889 were children with disablities, were receiving hot meals five days per week, exceeding the cumulative target of 48,000 students. This includes students in contracted and boarding schools supported by trained nutritionists, schools in Ulaanbaatar, and local schools equipped with improved kitchen facilities. Beyond meal provision, additional nutrition education and child-centered health and nutrition activities expanded the overall reach of Component 2 to 60,209 student beneficiaries.

Human resource capacity was strengthened through the successful completion of a conversion training program by 36 nutritionists, who are now employed in targeted schools. Parental engagement also

exceeded expectations, with 3,396 parents, of whom 86.7 percent or 2,947 were mothers, of first-grade students participating in the monitoring of the School Meal Program, surpassing the target of 2,900. Although some infrastructure-related outputs (e.g., number of kitchens fully meeting standards) are being finalized, the achieved results demonstrate meaningful progress toward improved nutrition, health, and learning readiness for vulnerable children.

Outcome 3: Improved learning achievement through a contextually appropriate blended learning model.
The blended learning component focused on introducing a contextually appropriate blended learning model to improve student achievement. As a result, students' test scores increased by 10 percent, achieving the project's target.
The project substantially reduced barriers to learning related to geography, digital access, and institutional readiness. While the original target was to pilot blended learning in 50 schools, the project exceeded this target by reaching 85 schools, all of which now use blended learning practices. Digital infrastructure and school-based e-learning platforms were improved in 85 schools, and 50 schools were supplied with digital device sets to support teaching and learning.
Capacity-building targets were also exceeded across all groups. A total of 389 Ministry and agency staff and teachers were trained (272 women, 117 men) against a target of 300. Blended learning pedagogy training reached 1,320 teachers (1,160 women, 160 men), exceeding the target of 900. Training was also provided to 121 IT staff (94 women, 27 men), surpassing the target of 100. In addition, 4,622 parents were supported to engage in their children's remote learning (3,928 mothers, 694 fathers), far exceeding the original target of 500. At the policy level, key regulatory and competency frameworks for blended learning were developed and approved, establishing a strong enabling environment for sustainability.

Cross-cutting results on equity, gender, and vulnerable groups.
Across all components, the project effectively reduced barriers to access and learning for the most vulnerable and marginalized children. Gender-disaggregated data show that girls consistently benefited alongside boys, including among children with disabilities and students benefiting from improved nutrition and blended learning opportunities. While gender-specific disparities were not identified as a primary constraint in all components, the proportion of girls among beneficiaries varied across interventions. For example, under Outcome 1, girls represented approximately 36 percent of total beneficiaries, compared to 45 percent at target level. This difference may reflect structural barriers affecting girls with disabilities, as well as differences in identification and participation patterns. Results Framework data overall confirmed that the project contributed to inclusive and gender-responsive outcomes, while highlighting the need for continued efforts to ensure more equitable participation.

Under the inclusive education component, the project directly addressed inequities faced by children with disabilities by expanding access to general education schools, strengthening individualized education planning, deploying specialized teachers, and improving both physical and psychosocial learning environments. The establishment of SDSCs and professional learning groups institutionalized support mechanisms that reduce exclusion risks beyond the project lifecycle.

A significant innovation under the school feeding component was the systematic consideration—introduced for the first time—of children with special dietary needs, including those with food allergies, congenital anomalies affecting feeding (e.g., structural or swallowing-related conditions), autism spectrum disorder, and other health-related nutritional requirements. The project developed specialized feeding manuals and practical guidance for teachers, cooks, and nutritionists to ensure safe, appropriate, and child-centered meal preparation and service. This marked an important shift from standardized meal provision toward more individualized and inclusive nutritional support.

In addition, a child-centered extracurricular program on health and nutrition was developed and piloted for dormitory students in 30 targeted schools, primarily in remote rural areas. This intervention addressed the heightened vulnerability of boarding students, who depend heavily on school-based services for their daily nutrition and well-being. The program strengthened students' knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to healthy eating and lifestyle habits, contributing to longer-term behavioral changes.
Within the blended learning component, the project piloted the use of Google education platforms to enhance classroom participation for students with hearing disabilities. This digital approach enabled students to engage more actively in lessons and communicate with teachers, peers, and parents through written and platform-based interaction, reducing reliance solely on sign language interpretation. This innovation expanded communication accessibility and demonstrated the potential of technology to promote inclusive classroom participation.

Gender-disaggregated data confirms that girls benefited equitably alongside boys across all components, including among children with disabilities and students participating in nutrition and blended learning interventions. While gender gaps were not the primary systemic barrier in all areas, the project ensured equal participation and monitored inclusion carefully, particularly to prevent under-identification or under-support of girls with disabilities.

Overall, the project advanced equity not only by expanding access, but by introducing targeted, responsive, and system-level measures that addressed multiple dimensions of vulnerability—disability, health, geography, income, and digital access—thereby strengthening inclusive and sustainable education practices.

## Efficacy by Component/Objective

| Component / Objective | Level of Achievement (Outcome Level) at End of Grant [3] |
|---|---|
| Inclusive education | High |

**Brief narrative on key achievements and challenges, by component/objective**

The Inclusive Education component successfully strengthened the capacity of mainstream primary and secondary schools to support children with disabilities in their learning. This was achieved through the preparation of 80 national inclusive education trainers, who cascaded training to 4,761 teachers, significantly improving teachers' competencies in inclusive education.

In addition, the project established SDSCs in 18 target schools, supported the development and application of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and created teacher professional development groups to promote collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The project also piloted the deployment of special education teachers to SDSCs, who provided consultations and tailored support to 446 children with disabilities, 388 teachers, and 413 parents. These combined interventions strengthened identification, referral, and instructional support mechanisms within schools, contributing to improved access and learning support for children with disabilities.

As a result, 446 children with disabilities received regular support services through the established support rooms, and enrollment of children with disabilities in the targeted districts and aimags increased by 355, significantly exceeding the original target of 78 additional enrollments. In total, 1,097 children with disabilities accessed mainstream education through project-supported interventions during the grant period. Improved teacher competencies, enhanced learning environments, and strengthened home and school collaboration contributed directly to increased participation of children with disabilities in mainstream education. Retention was not systematically measured as a separate quantitative indicator, in the project's results framework. However, qualitative evidence from schools indicates improved continuity in attendance and engagement among supported students. School-level reports and feedback from teachers suggest that the majority of enrolled children with disabilities continued attending classes regularly and remained engaged in learning activities, reflecting positive trends in retention.

Key innovations included the institutionalization of school-based support rooms and strengthened implementation of IEPs within the mainstream schools, enhancing sustainability beyond the life of the grant.. These innovations were supported by the development of training materials, operational guidelines, and the establishment of professional development groups, all of which were anchored within existing government structures and systems. Sustainability is further reinforced through policy alignment with national inclusive education frameworks, integration of these approaches into routine school operations, and the continued availability of trained teachers and education professionals. In addition, implementation relies on existing government resources and staffing, reducing dependency on external funding and supporting long-term continuity. Training materials and operational guidelines developed under the project provide practical tools for ongoing application and scale up across the education system.

Challenges included limited diagnostic capacity and low awareness among parents and communities regarding inclusive education. To address this, the project strengthened identification and referral processes through teacher-led screening and observation, supported by school-based multidisciplinary teams, including social workers, school psychologists, and special education teachers. Children identified as having potential learning or developmental needs were referred for further assessment and support planning, including the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). These processes were complemented by increased engagement of parents and awareness-raising activities, which helped improve early identification, referral pathways, and social acceptance of children with disabilities. Overall, the component demonstrated a strong and coherent results chain, with delivered outputs translating into measurable improvements in access, institutional readiness, and inclusive practices at school level.

| Component / Objective | Level of Achievement (Outcome Level) at End of Grant [3] |
|---|---|
| School Feeding | High |

**Brief narrative on key achievements and challenges, by component/objective**

The results chain for the school feeding component was coherent and evidence-based, linking infrastructure improvements, human resource development, and strengthened regulatory compliance to measurable improvements in the quality, safety, and inclusiveness of school food services.

The procurement and installation of kitchen equipment in 45 target schools enhanced production capacity and hygiene standards, while the training and deployment of 36 professional nutritionists and 60 cooks strengthened technical competence in menu planning, food safety, and child-centered meal preparation. Training on the importance of school lunch was conducted for more than 10,000 parents of which 3,396 parents participated in monitoring the quality and nutritional value of school meals.

These combined inputs led directly to improved compliance with national food safety and nutrition standards and to expanded access to safe, nutritionally balanced meals.
By the end of the grant, 49,119 students were receiving hot meals five days per week, and when complementary nutrition education and health-related activities are included, a total of 60,209 students benefited from the component's interventions. The component also introduced innovative approaches aimed at strengthening equity within the school feeding system.

Notably, it developed and piloted an extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition program, as well as national guidelines for assessing and supporting children with special dietary needs, including those with malnutrition, food allergies, or other health-related conditions. These tools—developed for the first time in Mongolia—enhanced schools' capacity to identify and respond to diverse nutritional needs and promoted more inclusive, child-sensitive feeding practices. The pilots demonstrated practical feasibility and strong potential for institutionalization and nationwide replication. Equity was promoted through targeted support to vulnerable groups, including children from low-income households, boarding schools, and those with special dietary needs, as well as through broad-based access to school meals and nutrition services. By the end of implementation, 49,119 students were receiving hot meals, with benefits distributed across girls and boys, including 23,803 girls and 889 children with disabilities. These results indicate that the component reached a wide and diverse group of beneficiaries, while targeted measures ensured that vulnerable and underserved children were included. The strengthened institutional capacity of schools and the systematic preparation of nutrition professionals contributed to more consistent service delivery across geographic locations.

Implementation encountered temporary delays related to procurement processes under national legislation, particularly due to complaints that affected timelines for large-scale equipment purchases. These challenges were addressed through adaptive management measures, including revised procurement modalities with partner support, which enabled completion of planned activities without compromising intended outcomes. All outcome-level and output-level targets were met or exceeded. The component achieved its objectives fully, demonstrating effective management, strong alignment between inputs and results, and a sustainable contribution to improving the quality, safety, and equity of Mongolia's school feeding system.

| Component / Objective | Level of Achievement (Outcome Level) at End of Grant [3] |
|---|---|
| Blended Learning | High |

**Brief narrative on key achievements and challenges, by component/objective**

The blended learning component focused on introducing a contextually appropriate blended learning model to improve student achievement. Based on school-level assessment data from the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 academic years, average test scores increased by approximately 11.9 percent in mathematics and 8.3 percent in Mongolian language across the target schools. Disaggregation by location shows that 34.4 percent of participating schools were located in Ulaanbaatar, while 65.6 percent were in aimag (rural) areas. Improvements in learning outcomes were observed across both groups; however, comparatively higher gains were recorded in rural schools. This is likely associated with lower baseline performance levels, indicating that the blended learning model was particularly effective in supporting underperforming schools and reducing learning disparities. Gender-disaggregated analysis indicates that 28.1 percent of participating students were boys and 71.9 percent were girls. Learning improvements were observed across both groups, with no clear evidence of significant gender-based disparities in performance gains. Further analysis indicates that schools with lower baseline scores, particularly those

below 50 percent, demonstrated higher relative improvements, reinforcing the effectiveness of the intervention in narrowing learning gaps. Overall, the results confirm that the intervention contributed to improved learning outcomes across geographic and gender groups, while supporting more equitable access to quality education.

The blended learning component demonstrated a coherent and credible results chain, linking policy and regulatory development, institutional capacity building, and investments in digital infrastructure to improved implementation of blended learning practices at school level. The development and approval of national standards and two regulatory requirements provided a formal policy framework for blended learning, while the localization and adoption of the MNS ISO/IEC 2382-36:2025 standard strengthened the technical and terminological foundation of digital education within the national system. In addition, two benchmarks outlining the requirements for teachers and institutions to implement blended learning were developed and applied in the target schools. These policy-level achievements were complemented by the establishment of digital classrooms in 50 target schools and the structured rollout of the blended learning model, ensuring that regulatory developments were translated into practical implementation at the school level.

Human resource development was a central pillar of the component. A total of 228 BL trainers, 1,320 teachers, 389 education administrators and school leaders, 121 ICT staff, and 4,622 parents were trained to support the effective implementation of blended learning. Training focused on digital pedagogy, instructional design, classroom management in hybrid settings, and use of educational technologies. In addition, child safeguarding and digital safety were systematically integrated into the training programmes. Save the Children specialists delivered dedicated sessions on child safeguarding policies and their practical application, ensuring that all participants understood their roles and responsibilities in protecting children. Child online protection elements were also incorporated, including guidance on safe and responsible use of digital platforms, online risk mitigation, and creating secure learning environments for students.
As a result, schools reported improved institutional readiness, increased teacher confidence in delivering blended instruction, and stronger collaboration between school leadership, technical staff, and parents. These combined efforts enabled schools to implement blended learning not as an ad hoc emergency response but as a structured and pedagogically grounded model.

A major innovation of the component was the pilot implementation of four contextually adapted blended learning models designed to suit Mongolia’s geographic, infrastructural, and school-level realities. These models were implemented through the newly established digital classrooms and integrated into regular instructional planning.

The pilots demonstrated strong relevance and feasibility, leading to expansion beyond the initially targeted number of schools. The scale-up reflected institutional uptake and growing demand, particularly in schools facing overcrowding or geographical access constraints. Benefits were observed across diverse groups of learners, including girls and boys, students in remote and rural areas, and those from underserved communities. The strengthened digital infrastructure and improved teacher capacity enhanced access to learning continuity and flexible instruction, contributing to greater resilience of the education system. Accessibility considerations were partially integrated into the blended learning model and digital classroom design. While a formal universal design framework was not systematically applied, the project incorporated flexible learning approaches—such as blended and asynchronous modalities—which supported participation of students with diverse learning needs, including those with health-related constraints. Targeted interventions were piloted for students with hearing impairments, including the use of assistive devices and adapted digital tools. These pilots provided important insights into inclusive digital learning. For other types of disabilities, no specific assistive technology interventions were piloted, however, inclusive teaching practices—such as differentiated instruction, flexible scheduling, and the use of multiple learning formats—were applied across participating schools, supporting broader inclusion. No systematic disparities in access or benefit were identified across gender or location. This assessment was based on comparative analysis of baseline and endline student performance data, as well as participation across schools in different geographic locations. Improvements were observed across all participating schools, with comparatively higher gains in rural areas, indicating a reduction in disparities between urban and rural contexts. The project experience highlighted the importance of further strengthening accessibility and integrating universal design principles into future digital education initiatives to ensure more comprehensive inclusion of learners with diverse disabilities.

Implementation initially faced disparities in digital readiness, ICT infrastructure, and teacher digital competencies across schools. These challenges were addressed through phased roll-out, differentiated training approaches, and ongoing technical support. Tailored capacity-building efforts allowed schools with lower baseline readiness to progressively strengthen their implementation capacity, thereby reducing gaps in digital preparedness. Several indicators exceeded their targets due to strong engagement from education authorities and schools, as well as higher-than-anticipated demand for participation. Expansion beyond initial targets did not compromise budget discipline or implementation coherence. The component remained aligned with its approved objectives and theory of change throughout implementation, and the scaling of activities was managed within the established financial framework. Overall, the blended learning component not only improved school-level digital and pedagogical capacity but also

institutionalized a national policy and standards framework, contributing to long-term system resilience and sustainable integration of blended learning within Mongolia's education sector.

| Component / Objective | Level of Achievement (Outcome Level) at End of Grant [3] |
|---|---|
| Program Management | High |

**Brief narrative on key achievements and challenges, by component/objective**

Program management was rated as High. The grant benefited from strong fiduciary oversight, effective coordination between the Ministry of Education, GAE, and Save the Children, and robust financial controls through the Treasury system. Procurement challenges under the national Public Procurement Law were successfully mitigated through emergency procurement and an international tender, enabling full delivery of planned activities. Regular monitoring, PSC and LEG engagement, and proactive risk management supported timely issue resolution and ensured compliance with GPE requirements.

## Contribution to system progress (including the variable part)

**Detailed Description**

Contribution to Sector-Level Progress, System Strengthening, and Resilience

The EQUAL project contributed meaningfully to sector-level progress by addressing structural barriers to inclusive and equitable education through a coordinated combination of policy reform, institutional strengthening, human resource development, and food service delivery improvements. Rather than functioning as a set of localized or stand-alone interventions, the project advanced systemic change aligned with national education priorities, particularly in inclusive education, school nutrition reform, and blended learning/digital transformation. Its design recognized that sustainable improvements in education outcomes require complementary interventions across policy, professional capacity, infrastructure, nutrition, and digital systems, rather than isolated inputs.

Sector Change and Institutionalization

At the policy level, the project supported the development, approval, and institutionalization of national standards, regulatory frameworks, and operational guidelines. This included benchmarks for blended learning implementation, strengthened guidance for inclusive education practices, and formalized frameworks that reduced fragmentation and improved coherence across schools. These normative instruments reinforced ongoing reforms led by the MoE and embedded inclusive education and blended learning approaches within the formal education system.

Under Component 1 (Inclusive Education), the establishment of Professional Development Groups for Inclusive education represented a structural reform in professional support architecture. By institutionalizing continuous peer learning, mentoring, and structured knowledge exchange, the project moved beyond short-term training models toward sustained professional capacity development. This strengthened the system's ability to deliver consistent, quality inclusive education services and enhanced sustainability beyond the project period.

Under Component 2 (School Feeding), the project addressed a long-standing systemic capacity gap through the structured training and deployment of school nutritionists, supported by formal institutional arrangements. This created a sustainable human resource pipeline within the national school feeding system. In parallel, the project introduced innovations that advanced child-centered nutrition practices. Notably, the development of the Extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition program and the School Feeding Guidelines for Assessing the Nutritional Status of Children with Special Dietary Needs, both developed for the first time in Mongolia, represented a significant investment in sector-level human capital. These initiatives engaged leading national experts, including senior academics, researchers, and university faculty, demonstrating full mobilization of high-quality sector expertise and generating lasting capacity impacts beyond the immediate scope of the project. Practical manuals and guidance for teachers, cooks, and nutritionists strengthened safe and inclusive meal provision. Additionally, a child-centered extracurricular health and nutrition program was piloted in 30 dormitory schools in remote rural areas, addressing the heightened vulnerability of boarding students. Collectively, these reforms improved compliance with national nutrition and food safety standards, reinforced quality assurance mechanisms, and strengthened the institutional foundations of the school feeding system.

Under Component 3 (Blended Learning), the project contributed to sector reform by institutionalizing blended learning through approved standards and regulatory frameworks. This shifted digital learning from a

temporary or pilot-based response to an integrated component of the national education system. In parallel, extensive capacity-building efforts were undertaken to support the practical application of blended learning, including training for teachers, IT staff, school administration on digital pedagogy, use of educational technologies, and classroom management in hybrid settings. Particular emphasis was placed on equipping teachers with the practical skills and confidence to apply blended learning approaches in real classroom contexts. As a result, teachers were empowered to design flexible, student-centered lessons and adapt instruction to diverse learning needs. Pilots such as the use of digital platforms to support students with hearing disabilities demonstrated inclusive communication models that enhanced classroom participation and accessibility. By formalizing these approaches, the project strengthened system readiness for scale and long-term adoption.
While systemic transformation requires sustained multi-year investments beyond a single project cycle, EQUAL made measurable contributions to strengthening the foundational elements necessary for inclusive and equitable sector progress.
Fitness Within the Broader Sector

The project was well-positioned within the broader education reform landscape and complemented, rather than duplicated, other sector initiatives. It aligned closely with the Ministry of Education's operational strategy and national priorities, and coordination with relevant departments, including digital education and statistics—and development partners ensured coherence.

Where parallel investments were underway, such as infrastructure expansion and externally financed loan projects, EQUAL contributed both "soft" and "hard" system components such as capacity building, standards development, professional mechanisms, guidance, and scalable pilots.

System Resilience
The project enhanced system resilience by strengthening institutional mechanisms that enable adaptation, continuity, and structured responses to disruption. The institutionalization of blended learning standards and teacher competencies improved preparedness to maintain learning continuity during emergencies such as pandemics, climate-related events, or geographic isolation.

Professional development groups strengthened peer support and collaborative problem-solving within schools, reducing reliance on ad hoc responses. In the school feeding component, strengthened nutritional management systems and specialized feeding guidance enhanced schools' ability to respond safely to diverse health and dietary needs, reinforcing operational stability during potential shocks.

Overall, the project contributed to shifting schools and system actors from reactive, fragmented responses toward structured, institutionalized practices—an essential characteristic of resilience.

Capacity Strengthening and Endogenous System Development

Capacity development was central to the project's sustainability strategy and was embedded at multiple levels of the system:
• Policy level: Development of standards, regulatory frameworks, and national guidelines strengthened the Ministry's ability to design coherent, inclusive, and scalable reforms.
• Institutional level: School leaders and administrators improved planning, monitoring, and implementation capacity through structured guidance and pilot experience.
• Teacher level: Professional development in inclusive pedagogy, individualized support planning, blended learning methodologies, and nutrition-sensitive practices strengthened frontline implementation capacity.
• System learning: Piloting innovative approaches—including child-centered dormitory health programs and digital accessibility tools—generated evidence and practical models for potential scale-up.

By embedding tools, manuals, professional structures, and regulatory frameworks within government systems—rather than operating through parallel project mechanisms—the project strengthened endogenous system capacity. It reduced dependency on external support and enhanced the education system's long-term ability to design, finance, implement, and sustain integrated programs independently.

Overall, the EQUAL project made a substantive contribution to long-term sector progress by reinforcing institutional functionality, strengthening professional and human resource pipelines, institutionalizing inclusive and digital reforms, enhancing resilience, and improving the system's capacity to deliver inclusive, equitable, and quality education outcomes on a scale.

## Other Effects

**Detailed Description**

Beyond the activities originally planned under Component 1, the project generated several additional positive effects that expanded the scope and reach of inclusive education interventions under Component 1. It includes:

- As part of efforts to better understand and respond to out-of-school and marginalized learners, the project conducted on-site field visits and developed statistical data on 433 Mongolian students studying in 12 monasteries in India. Based on this visit, it was determined that 302 monks would be enrolled in a compensatory education program to be implemented at General Education School No. 112, while 431 monk students would participate in a Mongolian language, script, and culture program. These actions extended the project's contribution to inclusive education by addressing the learning needs of a group that had previously remained largely outside the formal education system. The causal link to the project is evident, as these interventions emerged directly from project-supported data collection, analysis, and engagement with vulnerable learner groups.
- In addition, the project strengthened institutional inclusivity within the education system by providing introductory Mongolian Sign Language training to 38 officials from the Ministry of Education and its affiliated agencies. This intervention was financed under the Inclusive Education component of the Project. It enhanced communication capacity and awareness related to learners with hearing impairments, contributing to a more inclusive and accessible education administration environment.
- Furthermore, under the project's inclusive education component, 18 teachers from the 18 targeted schools were enrolled in a bachelor's-level conversion program on Inclusive Education Teacher. Following completion of the program, these teachers have continued to work in their respective schools in their area of specialization. They now provide professional guidance and mentoring to other teachers, and several are successfully managing Student Development Support Classrooms, thereby strengthening school-level capacity and sustainability of inclusive education practices.

Under Component 2, the project supplied automatic dishwashers to an additional 150 schools, resulting in improved hygiene practices, reduced workload for kitchen staff, and strengthened compliance with national food safety and sanitation standards.

Under Component 3 (Blended Learning), an additional 35 schools were incorporated into the project in 2024 through a Ministerial Order, expanding the scale and reach of blended learning implementation. This expansion strengthened system-level uptake and demonstrated growing institutional commitment to the blended learning model. In addition, the project implemented an activity titled "Adjusting Assistive Devices for Students with Hearing Impairments," which enabled hearing-impaired students to effectively use Chromebooks to communicate with teachers and peers during lessons. This activity enhanced accessibility and participation in digital and blended learning environments, contributing to more inclusive classroom interaction and ensuring that students with hearing impairments could actively engage in teaching and learning processes alongside their peers.

## Conditions Affecting the Project

**Detailed Description**

(i) Conditions that Facilitated or Inhibited Project Design, Implementation, and Achievement of Objectives

A range of internal and external conditions influenced project performance. The strong institutional arrangements facilitated success, although procurement under national legislation posed significant operational constraints.

Among internal factors, strong project management and supervision arrangements played a critical facilitating role. Clear roles and responsibilities among the MoE, implementing partners, and SC enabled effective coordination, timely decision-making, and accountability throughout the project cycle. In particular, the relevant departments of the MoE responsible for each project component, including the School Food Production and Services Division, the Inclusive Education Division, and the Digital Policy and Education Statistics Department, as well as the corresponding divisions of the GAE, actively fulfilled their

assigned roles. These institutions were engaged from the project design stage through to successful completion, and their sustained commitment and technical leadership were instrumental to effective implementation.

Financial Management and Fiduciary Conditions

Financial management arrangements significantly facilitated effective implementation and minimized fiduciary risks. All project funds were channeled through the Government Treasury system, which applies robust internal control mechanisms to monitor and approve expenditures. The Treasury's structured verification procedures ensured transparency, compliance, and traceability of all transactions, substantially reducing financial management risks.

In addition, the MoF reviewed all expenditures related to training and capacity-building activities in accordance with its officially approved tariff standards. This provided an additional layer of financial control and ensured that payments were consistent with government regulations. Budget execution, reporting, and audits were conducted in compliance with both national systems and Grant agent requirements, contributing to strong fiduciary performance throughout the project lifecycle.

Procurement Conditions and Constraints

While financial management systems were strong, procurement conducted under the Public Procurement Law presented substantial challenges. The complaint and appeal mechanisms embedded within the law are complex and lengthy, and they significantly affected implementation timelines.

At the bid announcement stage, potential bidders were able to file complaints with the Anti-Monopoly Agency. If issues were raised, the procurement process was automatically suspended for a minimum of 14 days or longer. Following bid evaluation, dissatisfied bidders could first submit complaints to the MoF. If not satisfied with the Ministry's resolution, they could escalate the case to the Court. Court proceedings often required more than one month for resolution and, in some cases, extended to one year or longer. There were instances in Mongolia where procurement-related court cases have continued for two to three years. These delays were primarily driven by external legal and regulatory processes beyond the control of the project and were not related to deficiencies in project design or procurement planning. All procurement activities were conducted in compliance with national legislation and established procedures.

As a result, procurement processes could be delayed by at least one year in worst case scenarios. These risks were largely external to the project's direct control but had direct implications for implementation timelines.

In addition, the evaluation requirements under Public Procurement Guidelines are highly stringent and documentation heavy. Bidders are required to submit extensive supporting documentation, some of which may not be directly relevant to technical performance. Failure to provide such documents can lead to automatic disqualification. In practice, outcomes sometimes depend on the interpretation capacity and experience of Bid Evaluation Committee (BEC) members. Limited willingness of senior ministry officials to participate in BECs also affects institutional capacity and consistency in evaluation processes.

Despite these constraints, the project mitigated procurement risks through strengthened oversight, adaptive emergency procurement strategies (including international tendering where appropriate), and close coordination with the Grant Agent. In cases where procurement processes were delayed due to repeated complaints, an assessment of the tender process was conducted, and the procurement approach was revised by re-launching the tender as an international competitive bidding process. This approach was successfully implemented, enabling procurement activities to proceed efficiently and be completed without compromising overall project outcomes.

SC, in line with its defined roles and responsibilities, played a key role in addressing implementation challenges as they arose, resolving issues at both the implementing partner and Grant Agent levels. Regular monitoring, supervision missions, and progress reviews, led by SC, enabled early identification of implementation bottlenecks and informed adaptive management responses. For example, repeated complaints from bidders during the procurement of kitchen equipment resulted in several unsuccessful tender processes and delayed implementation of Component 2. In response, Save the Children conducted targeted monitoring and assessment, and subsequently decided to shift to an international tendering process. This approach was successfully implemented, fully resolving the procurement challenges and allowing

project activities to proceed as planned.

Monitoring and evaluation conditions strongly facilitated project success. A well-designed Results Framework with clear indicators and realistic targets enabled systematic tracking of progress. Alignment of the project's monitoring plan with national M&E requirements, including Government Resolution No. 176, strengthened data credibility and utilization. In addition, the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Education actively participated in the project's annual M&E activities. The findings and results of these exercises were regularly presented and discussed at Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, which enhanced transparency, accountability, and the practical use of M&E evidence. This institutional engagement contributed to ensuring that M&E processes were robust, credible, and results oriented.

Coordination, partnership, and participatory processes played a significant role in facilitating effective project implementation and achievement of results. The project was implemented through close collaboration among the MoE, its affiliated agencies, SC as the Grant Agent, and key multiplier and development partners, including SC, ADB, JICA, KOICA, and UNICEF. These partners contributed to policy dialogue, technical consultation, and coordination, ensuring alignment with broader education sector reforms and avoiding duplication of interventions. Effective coordination mechanisms were maintained throughout implementation. Relevant departments of the MoE and the GAE actively engaged in component-level planning, implementation, monitoring, and review processes, strengthening government ownership and technical leadership. The project maintained regular engagement with the Local Education Group (LEG), with meetings organized annually during the project implementation period. These meetings served as a platform to share progress, review results, discuss emerging challenges, and coordinate with parallel initiatives supported by development partners. Notably, the no-cost extension of the project was discussed and agreed upon through a LEG meeting, ensuring transparency, collective oversight, and continued sector alignment following procurement-related delays. Participatory processes were implemented at national, local, and school levels through consultations, training activities, monitoring visits, and review meetings involving education authorities, school leadership, teachers, parents, and communities. This inclusive approach strengthened stakeholder ownership, enhanced responsiveness to contextual needs, and contributed to effective implementation across all components.

Among external conditions, no major macroeconomic, political, or security-related shocks significantly disrupted project implementation.

(ii) Accuracy of Risk Identification and Adequacy of Mitigation Measures
The key risks identified at the project development stage were largely accurate, relevant, and comprehensive, covering both programmatic and operational dimensions of implementation. Identified risks included safeguarding concerns, institutional and human resource capacity constraints, procurement and fiduciary risks, coordination and partnership risks, information management and data protection risks, and external contextual factors affecting education service delivery.
Procurement-related risks had been identified during project design; however, the extent and duration of delays resulting from the complaint and court appeal mechanisms were greater than initially anticipated. While the nature of the risk was accurately foreseen, the complexity and time implications of the public procurement compliance system proved more significant in practice.

Mitigation measures—including enhanced supervision, escalation mechanisms, adaptive procurement approaches, and proactive engagement with relevant authorities—were ultimately sufficient to resolve bottlenecks. However, the experience demonstrated that procurement risks under the Public Procurement Law represent a structural systemic constraint that requires realistic timeline planning and contingency buffers in future projects.

Safeguarding-related risks associated with working with children, vulnerable learners, and school-based environments were appropriately identified and managed through the implementation of safeguarding policies, staff training, codes of conduct, reporting and referral mechanisms, and partner compliance requirements. These measures proved effective, and no major safeguarding incidents affecting project implementation were reported.

Capacity-related risks at national, local, and school levels were also accurately identified. The project's strategy of embedding targeted capacity-building interventions across all components effectively mitigated these risks, as evidenced by improved institutional readiness, staff competencies, and implementation capacity reflected in Results Framework monitoring and endline survey findings.

Some emerging risks were not fully anticipated at the design stage, particularly disparities in digital readiness and accessibility of assistive technologies for learners with disabilities. These risks were identified early during implementation through routine monitoring and supervision and were successfully addressed through phased rollout, additional technical support, and targeted interventions.

Overall, risk identification at the project development stage was sound, and the mitigation measures applied during implementation were adequate and effective, supported by continuous monitoring, proactive supervision, and adaptive management, enabling the project to achieve its intended objectives.

## Lessons and Recommendations, Successful Practices and Innovative Interventions

**Detailed Description**

Key Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: System-oriented design and institutionalization are critical for sustainable impact.

The project demonstrated that reforms anchored in institutional structures, policy frameworks, and professional systems are more likely to generate sustainable and scalable results. Institutionalized interventions—including Professional Development Groups for special education teachers, structured training pipelines for school nutritionists, and approved blended learning standards—ensured continuity beyond the project period. Embedding reforms within existing governance and institutional arrangements strengthened ownership and reduced reliance on temporary project mechanisms.

Lesson 2: Capacity building is most effective when combined with practical tools, infrastructure, and clear role definition.

Capacity-building efforts achieved the greatest impact when paired with enabling infrastructure, equipment, and operational guidance. Investments in ICT tools, kitchen modernization, assistive technologies, and inclusive learning spaces translated into improved service delivery because they were accompanied by structured training and clearly defined responsibilities.

Lesson 3: Clear functional roles and responsibilities within project implementation structure are critical for effective delivery.

The project also demonstrated that clear functional role separation within the PIU is essential. Combining procurement and administrative functions into a single position reduced recruitment attractiveness for qualified procurement specialists and created workload imbalances. Clearly defined and professionally aligned roles enhance efficiency and accountability.

Lesson 4: Strong national fiduciary systems can effectively mitigate financial management risks.

Channeling funds through the Government Treasury system significantly reduced financial management risks. The Treasury’s strict internal control mechanisms ensured transparency and traceability of expenditures. In addition, the Ministry of Education reviewed all training and capacity-building expenditure according to its official tariff standards, providing an additional safeguard. This confirms that where strong public financial management systems exist, they can serve as reliable fiduciary frameworks.

Lesson 5: Procurement under the Public Procurement Law poses structural implementation risks.

While the Public Procurement Law promotes transparency, its complex complaint and appeal mechanisms can significantly delay implementation. Bidders may submit complaints to the Anti-Monopoly Agency, the Ministry of Finance, and ultimately the Court, resulting in delays ranging from weeks to over a year. In some cases nationally, litigation processes extend even longer.

The EQUAL project experience further demonstrated that using the Grant Agent’s procurement policy can provide a more efficient alternative in certain circumstances. In particular, this approach proved effective in cases where national procurement processes faced repeated complaints, prolonged appeals, or significant implementation delays. During emergency procurement of kitchen equipment, the Financing Agreement was amended to allow the use of Save the Children International’s procurement guidelines. This approach successfully resolved procurement bottlenecks and ensured timely completion of activities. This experience suggests that, where permissible under GPE rules, clearly defined triggers, such as repeated tender failure, excessive delays, or high-risk procurement complexity, should guide the use of the Grant Agent’s procurement framework to better safeguard implementation timelines and results.

Lesson 6: Adaptive management strengthens resilience and protects outcomes.
Continuous monitoring, PSC oversight, and proactive Grant Agent engagement enabled timely identification and resolution of implementation challenges. The project demonstrated that flexibility in procurement strategy, timeline adjustments, and escalation mechanisms are essential in complex regulatory environments.

Lesson 7: Inclusive and participatory approaches enhance effectiveness and equity.
Strong engagement of government institutions, development partners, schools, parents, and communities enhanced ownership and alignment with sector priorities. The project also confirmed that advancing equity requires attention not only to service delivery but also to behavioral, social, and institutional factors that influence inclusion and access.

Successful Practices and Innovative Interventions
- Establishment of Professional Development Groups for special education teachers within mainstream schools.
- Systematic training and deployment model for school nutritionists.
- Development of Mongolia’s first extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition program and related dietary assessment guidelines.
- Institutionalization and expansion of blended learning standards, particularly to support learning continuity in three-shift schools in Ulaanbaatar.
- Introduction of assistive technology adaptations for learners with hearing impairments.
- Effective use of the national Treasury system as a fiduciary safeguard mechanism.
- Application of the Grant Agent’s procurement policy under emergency provisions to successfully complete delayed procurement processes.

Key Recommendations for Future GPE Projects
- Prioritize institutionalization from the design stage. Embed reforms within national policies, professional systems, and institutional mandates.
- Consider applying the Grant Agent’s procurement framework in a targeted and conditional manner, where permissible. The EQUAL project experience suggests that national procurement systems should remain the primary approach; however, the Grant Agent’s procurement procedures may be used in clearly defined situations where implementation risks are high. Such situations may include repeated tender failure, prolonged delays due to complaints or appeals, or emergency procurement needs. Applying this balanced approach can help mitigate systemic delays while maintaining government leadership and safeguarding project timelines and outcomes.
- Conduct detailed procurement risk assessments during design. Incorporate realistic timelines and contingency buffers when national procurement systems are used. In parallel, define clear mitigation measures in advance, including the potential use of the Grant Agent’s procurement framework in specific high-risk situations. Such triggers may include repeated tender failure, prolonged delays due to complaints or appeals, or emergency procurement needs. This combined approach can help anticipate risks, strengthen preparedness, and ensure timely implementation while maintaining government leadership.
- Align project indicators with sector-level and outcome-level targets. Future proposals should emphasize measurable contributions to systemic learning outcomes, equity improvements, and sector reform priorities, rather than focusing predominantly on output-level indicators.
- Adopt integrated capacity-building approaches. Combine training with infrastructure, tools, and operational guidance.
- Ensure clear role separation within PIUs. Establish distinct procurement and administrative functions to improve efficiency and recruitment quality.
- Maintain structured coordination mechanisms. Continue strong engagement with PSC, LEG, and development partners to ensure alignment and oversight.
- Address equity through multi-dimensional strategies. Integrate social, behavioral, and institutional change approaches alongside service delivery interventions.

Overall, the project demonstrated that institutional ownership, strong fiduciary controls, adaptive management, and strategic procurement planning are critical to successful implementation of large-scale education grants. The lessons learned provide valuable guidance for strengthening the design and execution of future GPE-funded programs in Mongolia.

## Impact Stories

**Detailed Description**

Yavuukhun Finds Her Place: A Story of Confidence, Friendship, and Learning

When Yavuukhun first approached school age, her parents felt uncertain. Yavuukhun, a Grade 2 student in Sukhbaatar aimag, has hydrocephalus, a chronic neurological condition that affects her mobility and concentration. At times, she experiences fatigue, headaches, and difficulty sustaining attention in class, which can make it challenging to keep up with lessons and participate consistently in classroom activities. Her parents worried whether she would be able to learn, make friends, and feel comfortable in a mainstream school environment.

Today, their worries have turned into pride and confidence.

Thanks to the “Enabling Equity to Advance Learning (EQUAL)” project funded by the Global Partnership for Education, Yavuukhun’s school has become a place where she feels supported, included, and happy. The school participates in all three components of the project - inclusive education, school feeding, and blended learning - which together have transformed the learning environment for many students like Yavuukhun.

Her class teacher, B. Altantsetseg, was a big part of Yavuukhun’s success at school. Altantsetseg was supported by the project to study a bachelor’s degree in Inclusive Education, along with the five-module blended learning training. The training has had a huge impact on how Altantsetseg supports students with disabilities. “Using the knowledge and skills I gained from my university studies and the blended learning training, I completely revised Yavuukhun’s Individualized Education Plan,” Altantsetseg says.

She explains that when Yavuukhun experiences strong fatigue or headaches, Altantsetseg uses flexible blended learning methods that allow the young student to continue learning from home according to her Individualized Education Plan. At other times, Altantsetseg applies the flipped learning model - Yavuukhun reviews learning materials at home with the support of her parents, and when she comes to school she completes assignments and learning activities together with her classmates and with guidance from her teacher.

This flexible approach ensures that Yavuukhun does not fall behind in her studies while also protecting her health and well-being.

The project has also worked to improve collaboration between the school and the family. Yavuukhun’s parents participated in training on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), helping them understand Altantsetseg’s approach and work closely with the school to support their daughters development and learning.

School life has also become more enjoyable for Yavuukhun, and she has benefitted from the school feeding component. The kitchen at her school was upgraded with modern equipment, allowing students to receive nutritious meals prepared according to national guidelines, including consideration of children with specific dietary and health needs. For Yavuukhun, who experiences fatigue related to her condition, access to regular, balanced meals has helped maintain her energy levels and improve her stamina for learning. This has supported her ability to concentrate, participate more actively in classroom activities, and remain engaged throughout the school day, strengthening the link between nutrition, well-being, and inclusion.
.
Through the blended learning classrooms established by the project, Yavuukhun can also participate in interactive digital lessons with her classmates. These engaging learning activities have helped her gain confidence and stay motivated.

Most importantly, Yavuukhun has found something every child needs at school - friendship and a sense of belonging. She now happily participates in classroom activities with her peers and has developed close friendships with classmates who study and play with her during breaks.

For her parents, the transformation has been remarkable. Where they once hesitated to send their daughter to school, they now see her excited to attend classes, learn new things, and spend time with her

friends.

Yavuukhun’s story shows how the right combination of teacher training, inclusive support systems, nutrition, and flexible learning approaches can help reduce barriers to participation, learning, and belonging for children with diverse learning needs. Through the EQUAL project, schools are helping children like Yavuukhun not only access education, but truly participate, belong, and thrive in school.

## Multiplier Cofinancing

| Cofinancing (in US$/€) expected to be mobilized at design | Cofinancing (in US$/€) actually mobilized | If the cofinancing wasn’t mobilized fully, provide reasons why |
|---|---|---|
| 15,750,000 | 14,008,230 | The SCJ project underspent USD 141,770; however, all planned activities were fully implemented.<br>The JICA projects fully disbursed their allocated funds.<br>The KOICA project was extended by one year and is expected to utilize the full allocation; as of 31 December 2025, USD 6,400,000 had been spent. |

## Assessment of Project Implementation: Efficiency

## Overall Efficiency

**Level of Efficiency** [4]

High

## Timeliness

**Detailed Description**

The GPE approval date for the project was 10 May 2022. The Grant Financing Agreement between Save the Children Australia, the Ministry of Finance of Mongolia, the Ministry of Education of Mongolia, and Save the Children Japan in Mongolia was signed on 23 August 2022, enabling the timely launch of project activities. During this period, key start-up actions were undertaken, including finalization of implementation arrangements and completion of administrative and contractual processes.

No delays were experienced at the project start stage, and the transition from approval to implementation was managed effectively without requiring remedial actions.

**Detailed Description**

During the early phase of implementation, preparatory activities were carried out in parallel with institutional and administrative arrangements. In December 2022, the target schools for Components 1 and 2 were formally identified and approved through a Ministerial Order. Prior to and alongside this process, key start-up activities were completed, including the establishment of the Project Implementation Unit, selection of participating schools, development of Terms of Reference for the baseline study, and preparatory work for convening meetings of the Project Steering Committee. These coordinated preparatory actions ensured that the project was operationally ready to transition smoothly into full implementation.

As a result, project activities began reaching beneficiaries from January 2023 onward. Capacity-building activities, assessments, and service delivery interventions were rolled out in a sequenced manner, allowing beneficiaries to start receiving project-supported services relatively early in the implementation period.

Throughout the project lifecycle, almost all project components were implemented and completed within the approved timeframe. Core activities across inclusive education, school feeding, and blended learning progressed largely as planned and achieved their intended objectives.

The project experienced some delays during the initial stage and implementation period due to several operational and contextual factors. One of the main challenges was the procurement process, particularly for the procurement of kitchen equipment under the school feeding component. The procedures under the Public Procurement Law involve multiple stages and a formal complaint mechanism, which extended the procurement timeline. In addition, bid evaluation committees sometimes introduced complex technical requirements for bidders, partly due to varying levels of procurement capacity and frequent staff turnover within government institutions.

The blended learning component also required more time than initially anticipated. Significant preparatory work was needed to develop training models, build the capacity of master trainers and teachers, and establish the necessary ICT infrastructure in schools. Uneven ICT readiness across schools, unstable internet connectivity, and limited initial support from some school administrators also contributed to delays in piloting the blended learning model.
Despite these challenges, the project team adapted implementation strategies and timelines to address emerging constraints. As a result, the project was able to fully implement all planned activities and achieve its key targets by the end of the project period.

## Grant Costs

**Detailed Description**
Unit Costs of Delivering Key Outputs

Unit costs for delivering key outputs were monitored at the activity level through systematic comparison of the grant design budget against actual implementation expenditures recorded in the Donor Recording Codes. Given the multi-component nature of the grant—covering teacher capacity development, procurement of kitchen equipment and assistive devices, provision of digital learning tools, development of guidelines and platforms, and community engagement—unit costs were primarily assessed through activity-based expenditure efficiency rather than through a single standardized metric.

Output 1.1 – USD 761 Overspend
A minor overspends of USD 761 was recorded under Output 1.1. This variance resulted from small adjustments during the final implementation stage of several activities under this output. The additional cost was marginal and remained within the overall grant envelope.
Output 2.1 – USD 106,403 Underspend
An underspend of USD 106,403 was recorded under Output 2.1. This was primarily due to procurement savings from the purchase of school kitchen equipment. All required equipment was successfully procured and delivered based on the actual needs of the target schools. Competitive procurement processes and market price efficiencies allowed the project to obtain the required items at lower costs than originally estimated.
Output 3.1 – USD 12,371 Underspend
Output 3.1 recorded an underspend of USD 12,371. This resulted from savings accumulated across three different activity cost lines within the output. The savings were mainly due to efficient implementation and slightly lower operational costs than originally budgeted.
Output 3.2 – USD 123,632 Overspend. An overspend of USD 123,632 occurred under Output 3.2. During implementation, it was identified that the IT labs for blended learning in five target schools, which had previously been established under an ADB-funded project, did not fully meet the required standards. Some essential equipment had not been supplied, and the overall quality of the facilities was insufficient to support the planned pilot blended learning model.
Following discussions with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a development partner, it was necessary to re-equip and upgrade the IT labs to meet the technical requirements for blended learning

implementation. As a result, additional investments were required under this output cost line.

Despite these shifts, the expenditure variations did not affect the overall grant ceiling. The adjustments were effectively managed within the grant framework, allowing the project to prioritize high-impact investments while maintaining sound financial control and ensuring full utilization of the grant resources.

Unit Costs and Benchmarks for Comparison

For major delivery areas such as teacher training, inclusive education support, school feeding infrastructure, and digital learning provision, the primary benchmark applied was the approved grant design budget for each activity code. Planned allocations served as the baseline reference against which actual costs were measured, with variance analysis used to assess efficiency, cost realism, and value for money.

Procurement-based market benchmarking was applied particularly for school kitchen equipment, assistive devices, and digital learning tools. Competitive quotation processes and market price comparisons were used to confirm that unit costs remained aligned with prevailing market rates and procurement best practices.

Standardized cost parameters approved by the MoF were applied for training and capacity-building activities, including agreed norms for workshop organization, training venue expenses, participant travel, and per diem rates. These standards ensured consistency and comparability of delivery costs across provinces, districts, and implementation sites.

Internal financial monitoring and expenditure controls were also applied, whereby planned budgets served as the primary benchmark and revised allocations or expenditure ceilings were introduced where necessary. This approach enabled proactive cost management, helped prevent escalation of unit costs, and ensured that resources were directed toward priority activities in line with grant objectives.

External international benchmarks were limited due to the diverse modalities of interventions and the contextual specificity of inclusive education and school feeding support in Mongolia.

Changes Between Grant Design and Actual Implementation

Unit costs did change between grant design and actual implementation due to adjustments in delivery modalities, expanded beneficiary coverage, technical recommendations from sector institutions, and procurement-related factors. While many activities achieved savings through implementation efficiencies and economies of scale, several components required higher expenditures due to quality improvements or expanded scope.

Illustrative examples include:

- The unit cost for some teacher-related activities decreased by USD 2, while the number of beneficiaries increased by 68 teachers, reflecting efficiency gains in training delivery.
- The unit cost for teacher collaboration activities decreased by USD 23, while six teacher networks were established across 18 target schools covering six types of disabilities.
- Another activity experienced a unit cost decrease of USD 129 while fully achieving the planned target.
- The unit cost for establishing School Development Support Centers (SDSCs) decreased by USD 333, while two additional SDSCs were established beyond the original plan.
- The unit cost per parent decreased by USD 36, while the number of parents reached increased by 5,704, indicating improved cost efficiency through expanded outreach.
- In another case, the unit cost decreased by USD 12 while the number of beneficiaries increased by approximately 7,100, reflecting the efficiency benefits of scaling up implementation.

However, several activities experienced increased unit costs due to necessary implementation adjustments. For example, the unit cost for training cooks and nutritionists increased by USD 115. The training had initially been planned as an online activity; however, during implementation it was determined that online training was not suitable for cooks, as the training required practical, hands-on professional development. Consequently, the training was delivered in person. Despite the higher unit cost, all cooks (100%) from the targeted 45 schools participated, ensuring full beneficiary coverage. This adjustment suggests that the initial delivery modality may have underestimated the practical training requirements at the design stage.

Similarly, the unit cost for developing extracurricular curricula increased because the original project design planned to develop only one extracurricular curriculum for dormitory students. However, specialists

from the Educational Research Institute recommended developing age- and grade-appropriate curricula together with implementation guidelines. As a result, the final curriculum package consisted of four volumes, which increased development costs but improved the quality and usability of the materials.

In addition, certain activities achieved lower unit costs because they were implemented on a broader scale than initially planned. For example, one activity was implemented in all public (709 schools) general secondary schools instead of only the originally targeted 45 schools, significantly reducing the unit cost per beneficiary due to the larger scale of implementation.

A detailed unit-cost table, including planned vs actual costs, beneficiary numbers, and variance explanations, is provided in Annex 5 (Unit Cost Table).

## Alignment and Harmonization

**Detailed Description**

(i) Use of aligned modalities

The project made extensive use of aligned modalities by relying on national institutions, human resources, and procedures for the execution of external aid. Implementation involved a broad range of actors operating across all levels of the education sector, including the MoF, MoE, GEA, education departments at provinces and capital city levels, target schools, teachers, school facilities and classrooms, as well as higher education and research institutions such as the Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE), Health Sciences University of Mongolia (HSUM), and the Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research (MNIER). In addition, national NGOs, independent education and cross-sector consultants, and consulting firms were actively engaged in the implementation of project activities.

These national actors were involved not only as beneficiaries but also as implementers, technical contributors, and partners, ensuring that project activities were embedded within existing national systems rather than delivered through parallel structures. Financial management, procurement, and reporting followed national regulations and Ministry of Finance approved norms, further reinforcing alignment with government systems.

At the component level, alignment was operationalized as follows:

- Component 1 (Inclusive Education): Baseline studies were conducted in collaboration with independent national consultants working in the education sector. Awareness-raising activities targeting peers and parents were implemented with the support of national NGOs. Major activities such as training, research, establishment of professional development groups, and deployment of special diverse learning needs education teachers in mainstream schools were carried out in close collaboration with consultants, private sector actors, teachers and school leaders from special schools, the Ministry of Education, the GAE, province and capital city education departments, and the MNUE.
- Component 2 (School Feeding): Implementation relied on strong collaboration with faculty from MUST, school-level practitioners, the GEA, province and capital city education departments, the HSUM, the MNIER, national NGOs, and the Ministry of Education. These institutions contributed to training, guideline development, research, and service delivery, ensuring consistency with national nutrition, health, and education standards.
- Component 3 (Blended Learning): Activities were implemented in partnership with MUST, schools, teachers, and education administrators at national and local levels. This collaboration supported the development and application of blended learning standards, capacity-building activities, and classroom-level implementation using existing national education infrastructure.

(ii) Coordinated and harmonized mechanisms

The project was implemented through coordinated and harmonized mechanisms, with synchronized actions among key country actors. Coordination was facilitated through regular engagement with the Local Education Group (LEG), which convened annual meetings throughout the project period. These meetings served as a platform to review progress, align activities with broader sector initiatives, address implementation challenges, and jointly agree on key decisions, including the approval of the project’s 3 months no-cost extension.

In parallel, close coordination with multiplier and development partners such as ADB, JICA, KOICA, and UNICEF ensured complementarity with other ongoing interventions in inclusive education, school feeding, and blended learning. This coordination helped avoid duplication, promoted synergies across programs, and supported coherent sector level responses.

Strengthening future government capacity
By consistently applying aligned and harmonized approaches, the project contributed to strengthening government capacity to manage externally funded programs using national systems. Government counterparts gained hands-on experience in coordinating diverse national stakeholders, integrating donor supported activities into existing institutional frameworks, and applying national procedures for financial management, procurement, and monitoring.

As a result, the project enhanced institutional readiness to adopt more aligned, coordinated, and harmonized modalities in future education programs, supporting increased national ownership, sustainability, and coherence of external assistance within the education sector.

It has specifically provided the Mongolian education system with substantial support, particularly in implementing the digital transition to general education. Additionally, Mongolia updated its Education Law, which went into effect in January 2024. The fact that this amended law's implementation provided excellent models for best practices in inclusive education was particularly notable.

## Partnerships

**Detailed Description**
Partnership and Complementarity under the EQUAL Project
The EQUAL project strategically developed and leveraged a wide range of partnerships spanning the public sector, academic and research institutions, non-governmental organizations, development partners, independent consultants, and private service providers. These partnerships played a critical role in enhancing technical quality, implementation efficiency, sustainability, and sector-level impact across all three project components.

Nature and Scope of Partnerships
At the core of the partnership model was strong collaboration with national public institutions, including the MoF, MoE, the GEA, province and capital city education departments, and target schools. These partnerships ensured that project implementation was embedded within national systems, strengthened government ownership, and aligned with sector policies and priorities.

Academic and research partnerships were another defining strength of the project. Institutions such as the Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mongolian National University of Education, Health Sciences University of Mongolia, and the Mongolian National Institute for Educational Research provided substantial in-kind technical contributions, including curriculum development, training delivery, applied research, baseline and endline analysis, and the development of national standards and guidelines. For example, under the School Feeding component, MUST faculty led the training of school nutritionists and supported the development of Mongolia’s first extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition program, as well as guidelines for assessing the nutritional status of children with special dietary needs. Under the Inclusive Education component, education universities and specialists supported teacher training, professional development groups, and applied research. Under the Blended Learning component, academic institutions contributed to policy development, standards setting, and technical capacity building.

National NGOs and independent consultants also played an important complementary role, particularly in baseline studies, community engagement, awareness-raising activities targeting parents and students, and specialized advisory services. Their contextual knowledge and field-level presence strengthened outreach to marginalized groups and improved responsiveness to local needs.

The project also benefited from strong coordination and complementarities with development partners, including JICA, KOICA, ADB, UNICEF, and Save the Children initiatives. Although these partners did not directly finance the project, their technical resources, tools, curricula, and prior investments were leveraged in-kind, helping avoid duplication and ensure coherence with broader education sector reforms.

Complementarity with Multiplier and Development Partner
Under Component 1 (Inclusive Education), JICA and Save the Children served as multiplier partners. In establishing SDSCs in 18 target schools, the project built on Save the Children's earlier inclusive education experience. The project also utilized the pool of inclusive education trainers previously developed through JICA–Save the Children initiatives, which supported the preparation of 80 national inclusive education trainers under the EQUAL project. Training modules developed through earlier JICA–Save the Children collaboration was refined and used for the cascade training model, reaching 4,751 primary and lower secondary teachers.

Under Component 2 (School Feeding), JICA and KOICA projects acted as multiplier partners. In collaboration with these initiatives, the project updated and strengthened training agendas and modules for cooks and nutritionists, ensuring alignment with existing national school feeding practices and international standards. By leveraging experiences from these programs, the project enhanced technical quality and sustainability in the school feeding component.

Under Component 3 (Blended Learning), the project collaborated closely with an ADB-funded education sector project. Through ADB's investment, IT laboratories were established in selected schools, providing essential infrastructure for piloting the blended learning model. In addition, the project utilized the Teacher Platform developed under the ADB project to strengthen teachers' professional capacity. All guidelines, training materials, and blended learning resources developed under the EQUAL project were uploaded to this platform, enabling wider access for teachers and supporting the scaling up and sustainability of blended learning practices nationwide.

Private sector entities and consulting firms were engaged through transparent procurement processes to deliver training services, supply equipment, and provide technical support. Competitive engagement ensured quality, cost-effectiveness, and timely delivery of outputs.

Level of Success and Challenges
Overall, partnerships were highly effective and contributed directly to the achievement—and in some cases overachievement—of project outcomes. By mobilizing existing national expertise, institutional capacity, and infrastructure, the project reduced reliance on external consultants, improved value for money, and strengthened sustainability of results.

The primary challenge is related to coordinating a large and diverse group of partners. This was addressed through clear role delineation, contractual arrangements, regular coordination meetings, and strong oversight by the Ministry of Education and Save the Children as the Grant Agent.

Key lessons from the partnership approach include:
• Early and systematic engagement of national academic and research institutions significantly enhances technical quality and institutional sustainability.
• Leveraging in-kind technical contributions from partners can substantially increase project impact without increasing costs.
- Strong coordination mechanisms and clear governance structures are essential when engaging multiple partners to maintain coherence and implementation efficiency.

## Use of Data and Evidence for Improvement

**Detailed Description**
Throughout its lifecycle, the project made systematic and effective use of monitoring data, analytical studies, and research evidence to guide implementation, support adaptive management, and ensure achievement of intended results. Data and evidence were actively used not only for reporting purposes, but as a core tool for decision-making, joint problem-solving, and continuous improvement.

The project was guided by a well-defined Results Framework with clear indicators and realistic targets, supported by routine monitoring, annual progress reporting, and periodic reviews. Monitoring data were

regularly collected, analyzed, and discussed through internal project management processes, Project Steering Committee meetings, and sector coordination platforms. In parallel, baseline studies, applied research, and endline surveys provided qualitative and quantitative evidence on changes in access, service quality, institutional capacity, and beneficiary experiences. Endline survey findings were used to triangulate Results Framework data and validate outcome-level achievements.

Evidence-informed decision-making was demonstrated through several concrete implementation adjustments. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the project conducted an analysis of student enrollment capacity and overcrowding risks for the 2023–2024 academic year, focusing on schools at risk of operating in three shifts. Based on this analysis, 35 high risk schools in Ulaanbaatar were identified and added to Component 3, increasing the total number of target schools to 85. This data-driven adjustment directly supported the Ministry of Education's objective to reduce the risk of three shift schooling and ensured that blended learning interventions were targeted to schools facing the most pressing capacity constraints.

Monitoring data and stakeholder feedback were also used to improve learning environments and student well-being. Based on monitoring findings and recommendations from teachers, the Project Steering Committee approved the establishment of calming corners within Student Development Support Classrooms. This decision addressed observed needs related to emotional regulation and learning readiness, particularly for children with diverse learning needs, and contributed to more inclusive and supportive classroom environments.

Similarly, under Component 2, the project worked with the Ministry of Education to conduct a targeted assessment of 150 schools to identify those with the most urgent need for automatic dishwashers. Drawing on this assessment and financial monitoring data, cost savings generated from delayed kitchen equipment procurement were reallocated to finance a separate tender for automatic dishwashers. As a result, priority schools received this equipment, significantly strengthening hygiene conditions and food safety standards in school meal services without increasing the overall project budget.

Joint problem-solving processes further reinforced effective use of data and evidence. When procurement-related delays emerged, monitoring and financial data were reviewed by the Ministry of Education and relevant partners to assess risks and identify corrective measures. These consultations led to revised procurement modalities and the approval of a three month no-cost extension, ensuring full delivery of outputs and strengthened outcomes.

Overall, the use of data and evidence for improvement was highly successful. The project demonstrated strong capacity to translate evidence into timely management decisions, align implementation with national policy priorities, and improve the quality and reach of interventions. Looking forward, the experience suggests that earlier integration of real-time monitoring tools, more frequent joint data review sessions with sector partners, and structured learning exchanges with the GPE Secretariat could further strengthen evidence-based adaptive management in future projects.

## Use of GPE Processes

**Detailed Description**

The project made effective use of GPE processes and requirements throughout the entire grant lifecycle, from design and approval through implementation, monitoring, and completion. These processes provided a structured framework that strengthened alignment with sector priorities, enhanced accountability for results, and ensured continuous engagement with key stakeholders.

During design and implementation, the project adhered to GPE requirements related to Results Framework development, monitoring and reporting, fiduciary management, and risk oversight. The use of the GPE-aligned Results Framework enabled systematic tracking of outputs and outcomes, while annual progress reports, financial reporting, and fiduciary reviews supported transparency and evidence-based decision-making. Regular interactions between the Grant Agent, the Ministry of Education, and the GPE Secretariat facilitated constructive dialogue and ensured adherence to technical and fiduciary standards.

The project also engaged proactively with GPE-supported coordination mechanisms, particularly through the Local Education Group (LEG). Annual LEG meetings provided a platform to review progress, discuss implementation bottlenecks, and align project activities with broader sector reforms. The LEG played a central role in endorsing the project's three-month no-cost extension, ensuring transparency, collective oversight, and continuity of results without additional costs.

GPE processes related to quality assurance and adaptive management were applied throughout implementation. Feedback from Secretariat reviews, combined with monitoring data and operational evidence, informed adjustments to procurement modalities, refinement of school targeting under the blended learning component, and sequencing of activities. These adaptations improved implementation efficiency and strengthened project outcomes.

Overall, the structured engagement with GPE processes added significant value by reinforcing country ownership, improving alignment with national priorities, strengthening fiduciary discipline, and promoting learning and accountability. The experience demonstrated that GPE mechanisms supported more effective and coordinated implementation and enhanced the Ministry of Education's capacity to plan, manage, and oversee externally financed education programs in line with global standards. Looking forward, continued use of these processes will further support more effective, coordinated, and results-oriented education sector programming.

## Sustainability and Grant Management

## Sustainability

**Detailed Description**

(i) Results, Services, Initiatives, or Reforms with Potential for Continuity

The project established multiple results, services, and reforms with strong potential for continuity beyond the grant closing date. These include:

• Institutionalized policies, standards, and regulatory frameworks for blended learning, formally approved and integrated into the national education system;

• Professional Development Groups and conversion training models for special education teachers, now embedded within mainstream schools and existing professional development structures;

• A systematic model for training and deploying school nutritionists, strengthening the institutional foundations of school feeding services;

• Student Development Support Classrooms, including calming corners and inclusive learning practices, which continue to function using existing school staff and infrastructure;

• Extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition programs and school feeding guidelines, developed for the first time in Mongolia and applicable nationwide;

In addition, the Ministry of Education has expressed its commitment to scaling up blended learning in Ulaanbaatar's three shift schools. The objective is to ensure learning continuity, reduce instructional time constraints, and mitigate learning loss associated with overcrowded school schedules. The regulatory framework, teacher training modules, and digital tools developed through the project provide a ready-to-use foundation for expansion. With established standards, trained teachers, and practical implementation experience in pilot schools, the Ministry is well positioned to extend blended learning approaches to additional three-shift schools, strengthening system resilience and improving equitable access to quality education. These results are embedded within national institutions and school systems rather than dependent on temporary project arrangements, significantly strengthening their prospects for sustained implementation.

(ii) Conditions for Continuity and Potential Risks

Several enabling conditions are in place to support sustainability. These include strong government ownership, alignment with national legislation and education sector strategies, availability of trained human resources, and integration of project outputs into the institutional mandates of the MoE and the GPA. The involvement of national universities, research institutions, and education authorities further reinforces technical and institutional continuity.

Potential risks to sustainability include fiscal constraints that may affect future budget allocations, staff turnover at school and subnational levels, and uneven implementation capacity across regions. Continued operation and maintenance of infrastructure-related improvements, particularly ICT equipment and nutrition facilities, will require sustained attention at the school level. While these risks may influence the pace

and scale of continuation, they do not fundamentally undermine the sustainability of the core institutional and policy-level achievements.

(iii) Sustainability Plans and Exit Strategies

The project did not rely on a stand-alone exit strategy; instead, it adopted an institutionalization and capacity transfer approach from the outset. Sustainability was embedded in project design through the use of national systems for training, procurement, monitoring, and policy development.

Implementation responsibilities were progressively transferred to government counterparts, ensuring that by project closure, national institutions had assumed full ownership of core functions. Monitoring and evaluation processes were aligned with national systems, and key policies, standards, and guidelines were formally approved, integrating project outputs into routine government processes and sector planning frameworks.

(iv) Measures for Scaling Up Pilots and Promising Practices

Clear mechanisms for scaling up successful pilots and promising practices were established. The professional development model for special education teachers can be expanded through existing national training and management structures under the leadership of the GAE. The institutional arrangements, trained personnel, and coordination mechanisms developed under the project provide a strong foundation for continued expansion without reliance on additional external financing.

Similarly, the extracurricular, child-centered school health and nutrition programs, together with their guidelines and manuals, are fully scalable at national level. These materials were developed in alignment with national policies and disseminated to all state-owned general education schools nationwide, enabling immediate and equitable uptake. All public schools now have access to standardized tools required for implementation.

The blended learning modules piloted in capital city schools have demonstrated practical relevance, particularly in three-shift schools, and can be expanded through the established blended learning regulatory framework and teacher professional networks.
Overall, the project demonstrates strong sustainability prospects. By institutionalizing reforms, strengthening human resource capacity, aligning with national systems, and establishing clear pathways for scale-up, the project laid a solid foundation for the continuation and expansion of benefits beyond the grant period.

## Grant Management and Use of Funds

## Unspent Funds

**Amount of funds that were not spent by grant closing**
0

**Detailed Description**
All funds have been fully expended

## Management Performance

**Level of Management Performance** 5

Highly Satisfactory (HS)

**Detailed Description**

Management performance over the lifecycle of the grant was assessed as Highly Satisfactory, reflecting strong fiduciary oversight, well-defined financial management systems, effective implementation arrangements, and responsive supervision that directly supported the achievement of intended results and outcomes.

Financial Management

Financial management arrangements were designed to ensure the efficient, prudent, and judicious use of resources while maintaining full transparency and accountability throughout the project cycle—from planning and budgeting to fund disbursement, financial reporting, auditing, and project closure.

The PIU administered financial management in alignment with:

• Government Resolution No. 176 and the Integrated Budget Law of Mongolia,
• Treasury fund regulations
• Project Implementation Manual
• Save the Children's finance policies and procedures, and GPE grant requirements.

The MoF and the MoE through their Departments of Development Finance and Investment, provided technical guidance on accounting, reporting, and internal auditing.

External audit arrangements were managed by the National Audit Office (NAO), which hired an independent auditing firm through an open competitive process. The selected auditing firm conducted the independent audit annually and submitted its reports to the NAO, the Grant Agent, and the donor.

Save the Children, as Grant Agent, exercised close fiduciary oversight and continuous monitoring to manage financial and operational risks.

Clear segregation of responsibilities was maintained. The Project Director, Project Coordinator, Finance and Procurement Officer were accountable for adherence to financial regulations, prevention of errors and fraud, safeguarding of project assets, maintaining accurate and auditable records, and ensuring the integrity and reliability of financial information. Project accounts were maintained according to internationally recognized accounting standards, with transparent documentation and linkage between budget lines, accounting records, and financial statements.

Funds were managed through a structured advance and disbursement mechanism designed to ensure control, predictability, and performance-based financing.

The Grant Agent transferred funds in USD to a designated advance account at the Commercial bank and it was automatically transferred to USD account at the Treasury fund, jointly operated under MoF and MoE oversight. Advances were disbursed on a quarterly basis (and bi-annually in later years), subject to review of financial reports, workplans, acquittals, and verification of progress against planned results. Subsequent disbursements were contingent upon satisfactory financial reporting and appropriate utilization of prior advances.

The PIU prepared monthly, quarterly and yearly financial reports, including:

• Budget line expenditure reports,
• Bank statements and cash books,
• Statements of outstanding obligations,
• Updated workplans and financial plans,

• Annual workplans and asset verification reports (as required).

This performance-linked disbursement model strengthened accountability and ensured that expenditure remained within approved budget lines. In cases of delayed implementation or inadequate reporting, the Grant Agent retained the right to withhold advances until corrective measures were taken.

The project maintained strong accountability and transparency, ensuring that resources were efficiently converted into outputs and outcomes, with no unspent funds at grant closure.

Budgeting, Accounting, and Payment Procedures

Annual project budgets were integrated into Mongolia's national budgeting framework and reflected in the Medium-Term Budget Framework in accordance with government regulations. Annual and quarterly workplans and financial plans were reviewed and approved by the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and entered into the Management Information System as named ODAMS.
Separate sub-accounts were maintained for project operational costs and PIU operational costs, with clearly defined signatory authorities to ensure internal control. All payments to nationally registered entities were made in local currency (MNT) through the Treasury system, following review and approval by the MoF. Tax and social insurance obligations were deducted and transferred in compliance with national legislation.
These arrangements ensured:
- Clear authorization procedures,
- Compliance with national financial regulations,
- Transparent audit trails,
- Strong expenditure control mechanism and
- Effective mitigation of fiduciary risks through the Treasury based financial management system

Procurement Management
Procurement arrangements were comprehensive, fully compliant with national legislation, and aligned with GPE and Grant Agent requirements. With the exception of emergency procurement, all activities were carried out by the MoE and coordinated by the PIU in accordance with the Public Procurement Law, relevant government regulations, and agreed grant procedures. The processes upheld the principles of transparency, fair competition, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and accountability.

All major procurement packages—including equipment for SDSCs, school feeding kitchen modernization, and blended learning ICT equipment—were conducted through open competitive bidding. Domestic preference was not applied. The MoE appointed BEC for each procurement activity, with representation from the PIU and SC to ensure technical rigor, transparency, and compliance. The Grant Agent conducted prior and post reviews of bidding documents, bid evaluations, and award recommendations, and issued formal "no objection" approvals before contracts were awarded, thereby strengthening fiduciary assurance and mitigating procurement risks.

The PIU prepared annual procurement plans in line with the approved workplans and budgets. These plans were reviewed and approved by the PSC, and any amendments required justification and formal approval. Technical specifications and Terms of Reference were developed in consultation with relevant MES officials and reviewed by the State Secretary of MoE. Procurement packages were structured strategically—by purpose, type, and geographic location—to promote competition while complying with legal provisions prohibiting artificial division of contracts to bypass open tender thresholds.

Despite overall effective procurement performance, some delays were experienced under national procurement legislation, particularly for large-scale kitchen equipment purchases. These challenges were managed through adaptive measures, including revised procurement modalities and application of emergency procurement provisions, supported by the Grant Agent. A three-month no-cost extension enabled the project to finalize all pending procurement without additional cost.

Overall, procurement management was robust, transparent, and well-supervised. The combination of structured planning, competitive bidding, Grant Agent oversight, clear accountability mechanisms, and adaptive management ensured compliance with fiduciary standards and safeguarded efficient use of project resources. Despite delays arising from external grievance procedures, these arrangements ultimately enabled completion of all major procurement activities within the revised timeline and without compromising results.

Implementation Arrangements
The MoE served as the Executing Agency and undertook overall responsibility for project oversight, strategic direction, and ensuring timely and effective implementation. The Policy Implementation and Coordination Department and the GAE acted as Implementing Agencies, supervising day-to-day technical implementation and coordination in target districts and provinces.

The PSC, chaired by the State Secretary of MoE, provided high-level oversight and policy guidance. Members include MoE directors, GAE representatives, the Coordinating Agency (Embassy of Japan), and the Grant Agent (Save the Children). During the project implementation period, the PSC acted to approve annual workplans, budgets, and procurement plans, review implementation progress and policy implication, provide strategic direction and resolve inter-sectoral issues and review monitoring and evaluation findings and endorse corrective actions.

A dedicated PIU, established within MoE and based in Ulaanbaatar, was responsible for day-to-day management. The PIU managed planning, procurement, recruitment, contract administration, financial management, monitoring, and reporting.
The LEG, chaired by MoE in collaboration with the Coordinating Agency, provided sector-level coordination and alignment with national priorities and GPE guidance. The LEG reviewed major program changes, supports monitoring missions, and ensured coordination among development partners.

The Grant Agent was responsible for ensuring that the program was implemented in accordance with the approved grant agreement, GPE policies, and fiduciary standards. The Grant Agent provided financial oversight, reviewed and approved key program documents and disbursement requests, and ensured that funds were used for eligible and agreed activities. It conducted regular supervision and risk monitoring, reviewed financial and audit reports prior to submission to GPE, and ensured compliance with procurement, safeguarding, and anti-fraud requirements. In addition, the Grant Agent provided quality assurance and technical support as needed, participated in the Program Steering Committee and Local Education Group, and served as the formal liaison with the GPE Secretariat regarding reporting, extensions, and other program amendments. Through these functions, the Grant Agent safeguarded the integrity, accountability, and effective delivery of the program.

Social and environmental safeguards were appropriately managed, with safeguarding measures integrated into implementation processes to ensure that project activities were delivered safely and inclusively, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized children.

Overall, these strong management arrangements positively affected grant performance by enabling effective delivery of outputs, resolving implementation challenges, and achieving outcomes across all three components, contributing to the project’s high level of success.

## Cofinancing (not related to the Multiplier)

**Detailed Description**
N/A

## Document Attachments

## Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, and Results Framework

| # | File Name | Document Type | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Annex 3 – External Audit Report.pdf | Knowledge Product | 2025 Audit Report |
| 2 | Annex 2 – Final Financial Acquittal.pdf | Knowledge Product | Final Financial Acquittal |
| 2 | Annex 4 – Endline Survey Report.pdf | Evaluation Report | |
| 2 | Annex 5 - Unit Cost Table.docx | Knowledge Product | Unit Cost Table |
| 2 | Annex 6 - Project Video Links.docx | Knowledge Product | Links to project video |
| 2 | Annex 8 - Impact Story Photo.jpg | Knowledge Product | Impact Story Photo |
| 2 | Annex 1 - Results Framework.docx | Results Framework | Results Framework as of 31 Dec 2025 |

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.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: List of Acronyms

| Acronym | Description |
|---|---|
| AESB | Aimag Education and Science Department |
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| BEC | Bid Evaluation Committee |
| CA | Coordinating Agency |
| CSDN | Children with Special Dietary Needs |
| EQUAL | Enabling Equity to Advanced Learning |
| GA | Grant Agent |
| GAE | General Authority for Education |
| GPE | Global Partnership for Education |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |
| KOICA | Korea International Cooperation Agency |

| | |
|---|---|
| MES | Ministry of Education and Science |
| MOF | Ministry of Finance |
| MUST | Mongolian University of Science and Technology |
| NCB | National Competitive Bidding |
| IEP | Individulized Education Plan |
| SCA | Save the Children Australia |
| SCJ | Save the Children Japan |
| PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| LEG | Local Education Group |
| MOH | Ministry of Health |
| MOFALI | Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry |
| AEB | Aimag Education Board |
| BL | Blended Learning |
| ESPIG | Education Sector Program Implementation Grant |
| HSUM | Health Sciences University of Mongolia |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IE | Inclusive Education |
| ISO | International Organisation for Standardization |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MLT | Multiplier Grant |
| MNUE | Mongolian National University of Education |
| MNIER | Mongolian National Institute for Education Research |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |

| | |
|---|---|
| NAO | National Audit Office |
| SDSC | Student Development Support Center |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

## Annex 2: Global Numbers Reporting Template

**Provide the data related to GPE's three global numbers for this reporting period below:**

- Textbooks purchased and distributed
- Teachers trained
- Classrooms built or rehabilitated

**Note**: For cofinanced grants, please provide the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 50 percent of a teacher training activity, the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant for the number of teachers trained through that activity would be 50%. If the unit of analysis in the indicator is the number of schools and not classrooms, please enter an estimated number of classrooms and provide an explanation in the comments box.

**GPE Indicators**

**Textbooks purchased and distributed**

| # | Indicator | Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period) | % attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Braille textbooks under Activity 1.1.5 | 90 | | 90 braille textbooks were provided to children with disabilities whose parents participated in a classroom training session focused on "Strengthening the capacity of parents to participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of Individualized Education Plans". |

**GPE Indicators**

**Teachers trained**

| # | Indicator | Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period) | % attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Teachers trained for inclusive education under | 4,761 | | In aggregate, 4,761 teachers and administrators |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | activity 1.1.1 | | | actively participated in the classroom training sessions, contributing to the enhancement of their knowledge and skills in inclusive education practices. |
| 2 | Teachers trained as Trainers under activity 1.1.1 | 80 | | To conduct the training outlined in Activity 1.1.1 of Component 1, a total of 80 teachers were trained as trainers |
| 3 | Teachers trained as Inclusive education teachers under activity 1.1.1 | 18 | | 18 teachers participated in conversion training on Inclusive education teacher for 1 year and earned bachelor degrees |
| 4 | Teachers trained for sign language under activity 1.1.1 | 17 | | 17 teachers from 17 target schools of the component 2 of the project have received 40 hours of basic sign language training. |
| 5 | Teachers trained in in methods for supporting children with disabilities under activity 1.1.2 | 388 | | During the deployment of diverse learning needs education teachers to target schools, 388 teachers trained for methods of working with children with disabilities within the framework of professional development groups. |
| 6 | Teachers trained for reflection on the inclusive education under activity 1.1.5 | 36 | | In collaboration with the General Authority of Education, 2 teachers from each of the targeted mainstream schools, totaling 36, received a 4-hour module training on the topic "Reflection on the current situation of inclusive education." |
| 7 | Number of teachers trained on pedagogy skills on blended learning (activity 3.2.5) | 1,320 | | A total of 1320 teachers were trained on basic pedagogy skills utilizing blended learning to support teaching at the right level, differentiated learning through IEPs, continuous formative assessment, etc. |

**GPE Indicators**

**Classrooms built or rehabilitated**

| # | Indicator | Actual Number Achieved (during this reporting period) | % attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants) | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Student Support Development Classrooms built | 18 | | 18 Student Support Development Classrooms are built in target schools of component 1 of the project and equipped with adapted materials and assistive devices for children with disabilities, furniture, computer, textbooks etc. funded by EQUAL project.<br><br>These included textbooks and learning materials, ICT equipment, and classroom furniture, as well as specialized products designed to support children with diverse functional needs. |
| 2 | E-Classrooms built | 50 | | 50 E-Classrooms are built in target schools of component 3 and equipped for blended learning. |

## Annex 3: Variable Part Reporting Template (During Implementation)

No Data Available

## Annex 4: Cumulative Beneficiary Children / Other Students Reporting Template

Provide the cumulative number of children of pre-primary, primary and secondary school age (both in school and out of school) and other students (adolescents beyond secondary school age and adult learners participating in basic education programs), who directly participated in project activities, received project-supported incentives or services, or benefited from project interventions so far. Also provide relevant disaggregated values by sex (applicable to all grants).

If appropriate and available, provide disaggregated values by varied subgroups and by education level. Reporting beneficiary data cumulatively means counting all beneficiaries as a running total, adding up all beneficiaries since the start of the grant and up to the end of this reporting period. Data on beneficiaries are to be collected using the methods and tools proper to each project. It is understood that some disaggregated data will only be collected if a project expressly targets specific subgroups through their interventions and uses their own methods for counting beneficiary children/other students

**NOTE**: For cofinanced grants, please provide the numbers for the entire program and indicate the proportion that can be attributed to GPE grant. For example, if the grant's financial contribution accounts for 40 percent of the program that is cofinanced by GPE and other donors, enter 40% in the "% attributed to this grant.

| | Pre-primary (optional) | Primary (optional) | Secondary (optional) | Others (optional) | Total | % attributed to this grant (for cofinanced grants) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of children who directly benefited from the project so far: | | 49,128 | 70,580 | 32,079 | 151,787 | |
| Of which, girls: | | 23,859 | 33,801 | 14,525 | 72,185 | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Of which, children with a disability (optional): | | 517 | 372 | 198 | 1,087 | |
| Of which, refugee children (optional): | | | | | | |
| Of which, internally displaced children (optional): | | | | | | |
| Of which, out-of-school children, in school age (optional): | | | | | | |
| Of which, children from marginalized ethno-cultural/ linguistic minorities: specify which ones (optional): | | | | | | |

Provide any comments on beneficiary children/students, if needed. This could include, for example, the definition employed by the project for a particular subgroup (including a more granular description of these subgroups), the approach/tool used to calculate the number of beneficiaries overall or by subgroup, any limitation of the approach/tool employed for this calculation and reasons why data on beneficiary children/students are unavailable. Please provide the number or proportion of girls for varied subgroups in the comment section below, if available.

In Mongolia, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary (high school) levels are typically located within the same school building. Therefore, when project activities were implemented at the school level, high school students (others) were also involved. Similarly, children with disabilities at the high school level benefited from services provided through the Student Development Support Classrooms (SDSCs).

1 High-There were no shortcomings or at most minor shortcomings in the continued alignment between project activities and the needs of the beneficiaries, partners and the sector. The project provided clear evidence of such alignment. If circumstances changed, the objectives were changed accordingly to keep objectives fully relevant. Substantial-TThere were moderate shortcomings in the continued alignment between project interventions and the needs of the beneficiaries, partners and the sector. The project provided generally sufficient 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 project interventions and the needs of the beneficiaries, partners and the sector. 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 project interventions and the needs of the beneficiaries, partners and the sector. The project 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, or is expected to barely or not achieve) its objectives (intended outcomes).

3 The scale is as follows: Negligible – The component/objective did not achieve (minimal achievement, if any, or is expected to barely or not achieve) its intended outcomes. Modest – The component/objective partly achieved (or is expected to partly achieve) its intended outcomes. Substantial – The component/objective almost fully achieved its intended outcomes or is likely to do so. High – The component/objective exceeded or fully achieved its intended outcomes or is likely to do so.

4 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 with recognized norms in the sector.

5 Highly Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance prevented the achievement of one or more grant outputs. Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance limited or jeopardized the achievement of one or more grant outputs. Moderately Unsatisfactory – Overall grant management performance delayed the achievement of one or more grant 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.