Application Form *for* Education Sector Program Implementation Grant - ESPIG

May 2018

OVERVIEW	
Country:	Bhutan
Grant agent(s):	Save the Children US
Coordinating agency(ies):	UNICEF
Date of submission of the endorsed ESP/TEP:	2/1/2018
Period of the ESP/TEP:	2014-2024
Date of submission of the full ESPIG package:	5/1/2018
Program name (optional):	Improving the ECCD programme and the learning assessment system in Bhutan
ESPIG amount requested - Fixed Part:	1.8 Million USD
ESPIG amount requested - Variable Part:	Not Applicable
Agency fees (additional to the country allocation):	126,000 USD
Estimated ESPIG starting date:	10/1/2018
Estimated ESPIG closing date:	8/31/2021
Expected submission date of completion report:	2/28/2022

Grant modality - (please enter 'X')		
		Sector Pooled
		Project Pooled/ Co-financed
	X	Project/ Stand-alone

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

Note to the user

Notification to the Secretariat:

➔ Prior to any ESPIG application development process, the coordinating agency should always notify the Secretariat of the country's intent to apply. The Secretariat will engage with the government and coordinating agency to agree on a timeline for the preparation and submission of the application, based on the country's own education sector planning and GPE semi-annual submission dates.

ESPIG Guidelines:

➔ Applicants should read the *ESPIG Guidelines*, which explain the application development process, including timeline, necessary steps and intermediary submissions for the quality assurance process of the application. In case additional information is needed, the applicant can contact the country lead at the Secretariat.

Application package:

➔ The full ESPIG application package is considered an integral part of the Board's approval. Any changes to any of these documents from submission to the GPE should follow the *ESPIG Policy*. This includes any changes to program documents during the internal approval process of the grant agent.

Data Sources

➔ The financial, education sector, and any country information data included in the application should be accompanied by the relevant sources in the corresponding sections of the form.

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II. FULFILLMENT OF FUNDING REQUIREMENTS – FIXED PART

II.1 Requirement 1: An endorsed quality ESP/TEP[2]

Please explain why the endorsed ESP/TEP can be considered a quality plan by summarizing the main conclusions and recommendations of the Appraisal Report and how these were addressed in the Appraisal Memo, including any adjustments made to the ESP/TEP and/or any medium-long term follow-up actions decided upon, as a result of the independent assessment, as well as any other outstanding issues related to the ESP/TEP.

In 2014, the Ministry of Education (MOE) developed the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024, which is a comprehensive 10-year strategic road map to improve the access, quality, equity and efficiency of both formal and non-formal education. The document has been prepared based on a comprehensive review of the current education system, literature reviews (studies/policies), population dynamics, and a nationwide public consultations. The task of developing the Blueprint was carried out in collaboration with several organizations and agencies. Over the course of eight months from May 2014 to December 2014, more than 11,000 students, teachers, school leaders, ministry officials, parents, law makers, eminent scholars and administrators, senior citizens, business people, bureaucrats and members of the general public were consulted.

The Blueprint covers all areas of education including the vulnerable groups such as the special educational needs children, gender issues, child wellbeing, learning achievement gaps between rural and urban children. The document also has a separate section on financing education, which includes projected cost of education by levels until 2024.

The Blueprint identifies various emerging challenges to be addressed by its eight "*shifts*". Among them, the below are considered critical and in need of immediate attention:

a) Access and Equity

Bhutan is close to achieving universal basic education (primary and lower secondary) with the NER and GER of 95.7% and 108.8% respectively in 2017. On the other hand, access to ECCD remains limited despite the Royal Government of Bhutan's (RGoB) effort to expand the services. While there has been a significant improvement of access since the Blueprint was launched (NER: 9% in 2014 to 21.8% in 2017), it is extremely difficult to reach the most isolated populations of the country. In addition, with the recent urbanization trends, there is a growing number of children living in urban areas where ECCD centers are largely private and not affordable for many of the urban poor families who are mostly holding

unskilled and low-paying jobs.

In terms of equity, there is a significant difference in education attainment among children. In addition, learning outcomes vary significantly across the country and grades, regardless of the types of assessments. Girls tend to do better in language while boys score higher in math and science. Students in urban school tend to do better than those from rural schools, especially in English, math and science. Students who spent less time walking to schools did better than those who walk longer to schools. Also, students in private schools tend to outperform students in government schools.

The Blueprint shows the RGoB's commitment to providing access to quality education to all Bhutanese children irrespective of socio-economic backgrounds, intellectual ability, academic performance, gender, special education needs, and geographic location, to realize their full potential. The strategies include: (1) expanding ECCD; (2) increasing investment in special needs education; (3) ensuring equitable and efficient distribution of educational resources to minimize the rural-urban differences; and (4) introducing gender-sensitive policies and facilities.

b) Quality and Learning Outcomes

While access to education has expanded significantly in recent years, quality of learning is a major challenge. A critical report by the Royal Education Council (REC) and its partner published in 2009 concluded that student learning outcomes are below the minimum expectations of their grade levels, unable to perform basic numeracy and literacy tasks. The report also shared that employers perceived graduates as lacking the academic preparation and professional skills to succeed in entry level jobs.

Similar concerns were raised by the results of the National Education Assessment (NEA) for Class X conducted in 2013. Only slightly over half of the Class X students achieved the minimum competency level in math while a little less than half achieved the minimum competency level in English. Only a much smaller fraction of the students achieved proficiency levels in both of the subjects. The results of the PISA-D preliminary assessment survey conducted in 2017 are equally alarming, with very low level of proficiency levels performed in all 3 domains (reading, math and science) tested.

[2] Evidence of a credible ESP will primarily be drawn from the ESP documents submitted prior to the application itself. This section should therefore be limited to a brief summary of key issues highlighted in the appraisal process.

The strategies to address these challenges include: (1) reviewing and updating the curricula; (2) enhancing school-based assessments; (3) learning from international assessments to revamp the assessment system; and (4) strengthening teachers' professional development programs.

c) Efficiency

The Blueprint clearly recognizes that the past efforts to improve education in Bhutan had largely focused on inputs (e.g., infrastructure, facilities and human resources) and little attention had been given to improving efficiency of the system as a whole. The Blueprint shows a strong commitment to the systems approach to education in order to "maximize student learning outcomes for a given level of investment". One of the eight major transformation *shifts* proposed in the Blueprint is on restructuring the organizational structures at all levels of education management and administration, policy reforms, and strengthening timeliness and reliability of data for better educational policy and planning, to enhance the system efficiency and capacity.

All recommendations of the Blueprint are being implemented through 11th Five Year Plan (2014-2018) and all proposed plans and programs for the 12th Five Year Plan 2018- 2023 were drawn from the Blueprint. All key result areas of the draft 12th Five Year Plan (12FYP) are in line with the recommendations of the Blueprint.

During the mission undertaken by the GPE country lead (CL) for Bhutan in May 2017, the contents and the development process of the Blueprint were reviewed and discussed. While the Blueprint was developed through extensive consultations involving more than 11,000 people, the CL informed the Ministry of Education (MoE) that for the Blueprint to be considered as a quality education sector plan, it had to be endorsed by the development partners. In addition, further strengthening the sections related to domestic financing and learning assessments was recommended. The GPE Secretariat team also pointed out that in the Blueprint, a detailed operational/implementation plan was missing.

Responding to the above recommendations and requirements, the MoE submitted two additional chapters of the Blueprint (funding and learning assessment) and had the Blueprint endorsed by the local education group (Education Sector Coordination Meeting – ESCM). Regarding the operational/implementation plan, the MoE clarified that the Blueprint is being implemented through education sectoral five-year plans which include the detailed operational and implementation planning guided by the Blueprint priorities and strategies.

During the GPE mission in May 2017, it was agreed that Bhutan's GPE/ESPIG proposal will follow the Ex-Ante approach, given the low amount of the Maximum Country Allocation (MCA) for Bhutan.

II.2 Requirement 2: Commitment to finance the endorsed ESP/TEP

Please use the table below to provide information on external resource mobilization. For evidence of domestic resource mobilization, complete the Excel template in ***this link***[3] only if there are changes to the education financing data submitted in the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process. Indicate if you are using fiscal or calendar year, and if the former please state when (the month) the fiscal year begins and ends. Also include, where applicable, the sources of all data.

TABLE 1 |

Evidence of external resource mobilization

Actual value for three years			Target values for the period of the Program					
Data for the past three years (indicate years as relevant)			Data for the relevant duration of the program (indicate years as relevant)					
2014	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**		**Total**
Education sector plan								
Education sector plan cost (Nu in million)								
6,257	7,301.3	8,988.9	10,924.3	10,931.7	11,794.8	12,735.6		
External funding – excluding GPE funds (Nu in million)								
765.7	712.3	1,644.2	2,577.4	1,068.7	1,068.7	2,137.4		

[3] This Excel template is the same as the domestic financing spreadsheet initially submitted during the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process. It is also available on the GPE website at: http://www.globalpartnership.org/content/funding-model-requirement-matrix-domestic-financing-annex. Should you have any question about this section of the application form, please send an email to the GPE Secretariat at gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org.

Funding gap as recorded in the ESP (Nu in million) –Government own sources								
765.7	306.3	2,045.5	2,861.1	3,483.1	4,921.4	6,718.1		
GPE support (Nu in million) @ Nu 63/USD 1								
US Dollars $1,800,000.00 + Agency fee $126,000.00								

II.3. Requirement 3: Availability of critical data, or a strategy to use and produce data

This requirement concerning the availability of data or alternatively a strategy to produce and use data is divided into three sub-components as indicated below.

II.3.1 A recent education sector analysis

- Provide information and dates on the most recent education sector analysis, including a list of which analytic elements are included (e.g. demographic analysis, analysis of existing policies, costs and financing, system performance and system capacity).
- Indicate how vulnerability and equity, particularly the situation of education for marginalized groups, including girls and children with disabilities, have been addressed.[4]

In 2017, an Education Situation Analysis was conducted and the analysis includes demographic analysis, analysis of the existing education policy, analysis of equity and quality as well as education financing. The findings are presented in the GPE/ESPIG Program proposal.

In addition, the Ministry collects student and teachers data through Education Management Information System (EMIS) every year. The National Statistical Bureau has also completed the Population and Housing Census of Bhutan (PHCB) in 2017. The latest data on population is expected to be made available towards the end of June 2018. In this context, Bhutan is planning to conduct the next Education Sector Analysis in 2019.

[4] Reference can be made to the assessment made in the GPE Funding Model Requirements Readiness Matrix (Quality Assurance Review Phase I Matrix), with this paragraph limited to an update on progress vis-à-vis identified gaps; alternatively, if the analysis exists in another document, this section can simply reference that document, which should then be attached.

II.3.2 Basic financial and education data

- Provide date of last submission of data to UIS and highlight any areas where data was not provided;
- Highlight any gaps in national data (such as data quality issues, disaggregation by gender, availability of data on marginalized groups, financial data, etc.); and
- Provide summary of strategies to address these, including how the implementation of a data strategies will be financed and whether they are part of the endorsed ESP.[5]

Bhutan reports information to UIS every year on timely manner with some exceptions especially on Education Expenditure data. The most recent year of data available for UIS QA (school, students and teachers for school education) is for 2016 submitted to the UIS on July 12 2017. All 12 GPE 2020 indicators, which should come from UIS, are available from Bhutan while there is an issue of time-lag especially on finance data. The gender-disaggregated data are available as per the UIS questionnaire.

The country is committed to improving the timeline, data gaps and quality of reported data. Both UIS QA 2017 and QB for 2016 will be submitted by June 2018. Also, improving Education Management Information System (EMIS) is one of the priorities in the Bhutan Education Blueprint. The support from UIS will be instrumental to enhance the quality of the data and information system. It is expected that the UIS technical support will continue to enhance the capacity of PPD officials to produce quality data at the country level and reporting to international level though UIS. The current GPE/ESPIG Program does not have direct provision to enhance the capacity of data providers. However, there is a provision to providing orientations to the DEOs and Education Monitoring officers (EMOs) focusing on ECCD it will help to improve the quality data reporting of ECCD.

II.3.3 A system or mechanisms to monitor learning outcomes

- Indicate whether there is a system for measuring learning outcomes and if so, describe briefly;
- Highlight any gaps and provide summary of strategies to address these, including how the implementation of the strategies will be financed.[6]

[5] If these strategies are included in the endorsed ESP, this paragraph should be limited to a list of the strategies and their financing source and a reference to the relevant section in the ESP.

[6] If the system or strategy to develop one are included in the endorsed ESP, this section should be limited to a brief statement and a reference to the relevant section in the ESP.

There is a school based assessment system at all levels of education from classes Pre-Primary (PP) to X, which comprises Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA), Continuous Summative Assessment (CSA) and term end summative assessment.

The summative assessment, in the form of written examinations, is conducted at the end of term one and end of the academic year. Written examinations for all levels in the mid-term and annual examinations are developed, conducted and evaluated by schools themselves. The results are used primarily to promote the students to the next higher class or retain them in the same class.

The other types of examinations are those prepared, conducted and evaluated by Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA), which include the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE) for class X and Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) for class XII, and Competency-Based Testing for classes III and VI.

Besides these examinations, BCSEA conducts National Education Assessment (NEA) to monitor and propose recommendations towards improving the student learning outcomes. BCSEA is gradually moving towards competency based assessment to enable testing of higher ordered thinking skills. The class III annual examination is competency based.

Since 2003, Bhutan has conducted five NEAs to benchmark the quality and standard of national level school education at the key stages of student learning. The NEA is administered to class VI (ISCED 1) and class X (ISCED 2) students in general education programs in public and private schools.

The NEA was first administered to class VI students in 2004 and in 2011 on Numeracy and Literacy. In 2011, the NEA used the same instruments as 2004 to allow comparison of the benchmark achieved in 2003 against that of 2011. The NEA was also administered to class X students in 2007 and in 2013 on English and Mathematics. In 2015, NEA was administered to class X students on Dzongkha (National Language).

Bhutan has also participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D) in November 2017 mainly to:

- Set a benchmark (baseline) profile of the knowledge, skills and competencies of the students in Bhutan; and,
- Collect evidence about the readiness of the Bhutanese education system for entry into the main PISA in (2018-2021).

Currently there is no policy framework that governs NEAs. The lack of the NEA Framework has resulted in unclear linkages with the existing assessments and examinations in Bhutan, often causing misunderstanding of an NEA as another high-

stake examination. In addition, there is no technical standard that can guide implementation of NEAs which affect validity and comparability of the data collected through NEAs. In addition, there has been no NEA for early grade learning (class III), which makes early interventions impossible.

It is proposed that with the GPE/ESPIG funding, the National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF) will be developed, the necessary capacity will be developed at the central and local levels, and a sample-based NEA will be introduced to class III students.

III. COUNTRY INFORMATION

NOTE: 1. Federal State applicants should duplicate this section as needed for States applying.
2. Please include the sources of population and GDP data in footnotes.

Total population:	790,215 (projected population for 2018, National Statistical Bureau, Bhutan)
GDP Per Capita (USD):	$2,879 (As of 2016, World Bank)
School year runs from (month to month):	February to December
Budget cycle runs from (month to month):	July to June

IV. PROGRAM

IV.1 Program description – summary

In 1,500 words or less (maximum 3 pages), please:

- Provide a narrative of the Program in summary form, describing overall program objectives and related expected outcomes, and the components and sub-components with financing amounts (further details are to be provided in table form under IV.2 and IV.3).
- Indicate as relevant GPE's anticipated share by components and sub-components if this is a co-financed project.

In response to the challenges identified in the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024, the MoE intends to utilize the GPE/ESPIG Program to focus on ECCD and learning assessments as transformative areas that can produce sustainable and system-level improvements. After successful implementation of the program, it is expected that the below changes will be brought to the education system:

1. More children, especially those from disadvantaged groups, are physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally prepared for schooling; and
2. Education policies and teaching/learning processes are informed and improved by robust and periodic learning assessments

These changes will contribute to realization of the 4 system-level aspirations stated in the Blueprint, namely: (1) access (also addressing the aspect of internal efficiency by reducing drop-outs among the ECCD learners in later levels of education); (2) equity, as ECCD expansion will focus on the most disadvantaged areas/populations and learning assessments can inform targeted interventions for disadvantaged learners; (3) quality and learning, as children will be more prepared for learning and teaching/learning processes can be constantly improved by the information obtained through learning assessments; and (4) system efficiency, as the MoE will be able to make more informed and evidence-based investments in education. These aspirations are fully aligned to Bhutan's commitments to SDG4 ("Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning"). They also correspond to GPE's priorities stated in GPE 2020 (Improved and More Equitable Learning Outcomes; Increased Equity, Gender Equity and Inclusion; and Effective and Efficient Education Systems).

These systemic improvements will directly contribute to realization of Bhutan's vision of creating "an educated and enlightened society of Gross National Happiness (GNH), built and sustained on the unique values of tha dam-tshi ley gyu-drey", stated in the Blueprint. The concept of ley gyu-drey and tha dam-tshi is central to the Bhutanese values. The concept of ley gyu-drey essentially states that good begets good and vice versa. The idea of tha dam-tshi outlines the sacred commitment to others in society. The theory of change of the program is provided in the GPE/ESPIG proposal.

The proposed GPE/ESPIG Program consists of two components.

The specific objectives of this component are:
- To significantly contribute to increase coverage of ECCD from 21.8% to 34% by 2021
- To enhance access and equity to ECCD services for all children especially disadvantaged children (e.g., rural children, urban poor children, children with special needs, children from hard-to-reach areas such as remote terrain of Bhutan); and
- To enhance quality of ECCD services and programs

This component has two sub-components. The first sub-component is to (1.1) enhance access and equity to ECCD program for children aged 3-5 (36-71 months). The second sub-component is to (1.2) enhance quality of ECCD program. The total budget requested for GPE/ESPIG is $1.8 Million USD. Out of this, the budget of sub-component 1.1 is $841,300 USD and the budget of sub-component 1.2 is $251,800 USD, making the total budget for component 1 USD $1,093,100 USD for a three-year period.

The objective of sub-component 1.1 is to enhance access and equity to ECCD services to 34% of 3-5 year old children by 2021. The expected outcome of this sub-component will be the enrolment of 3-5 year old children in ECCD centers supported under the GPE/ESPIG contributes to increase by 12% over their baselines (21.8% to 34 %, the 12FYP target) in the three-year period. In addition, the following will be undertaken as part of the sub-component:

1) Establishment of 100 ECCD Centers in Dzongkhags/Thromdes in 3 years
2) Parenting Education program in ECCD centers

The objective of sub-component 1.2 is to enhance the capacity of ECCD program management team and Centre facilitators to deliver quality ECCD program. The expected outcome of this sub-component is to enhance the capacity of ECCD Centre facilitators to deliver quality ECCD program.

The following activities will be undertaken to pursue the objectives:

1) Basic training and parenting education will be conducted for 100 new ECCD facilitators
2) Capacity development of 5 ECCD program management and monitoring staff
3) Diploma in ECCD for 60 ECCD facilitators

4) Parenting material will be developed and provided to project sites
5) Orientation of DEOs/TEOs and Education Monitoring Officers (EMOs) on monitoring the ECCD GPE/ESPIG program and monitoring tools.

The second component of the program is to enhance national assessment system to improve learning outcomes. Under Component 2, the RGoB will develop a National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF) and conduct an NEA at Class III. The total budget requested for Component 2 is $502,421 USD. The remaining $204,479 USD is foreseen for program management.

Specific objectives of this components are:
- To have a technically robust National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF) for Classes III, VI, X, and XII;
- To enhance national capacity to implement the NEAF
- To provide comprehensive information to diagnose health of the education system for early-grade learning (Class III);
- Improve capacity to utilize assessment data to inform policy decision; and
- To ensure increased and sustained government funding for NEA from the current level of 3% of the budget of Bhutan Council of School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) to at least 5%

The expected outcome of this component will be the endorsement of the National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF). It will also lead to the necessary capacity building at national and sub-national levels and the assessment of Class III learning. In addition, it is hoped that the National expenditures on NEAs will be increased at the end of the GPE/ESPIG Program intervention.

The following activities will be undertaken to purse the objectives:
1) Developing the National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF) and developing the capacity of BCSEA
2) Developing national and sub-national capacity for the effective implementation of the NEAF
3) Undertaking a NEA at the Primary Education level (Class III)

Please define the event that will mark the start of the program and which will take place by the expected start date:

Once the GPE/ESPIG Program is approved by the GPE and the Grant Agent (Save the Children US) is informed, Save the Children International (SCI) and the implementing partner organizations as well as the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC – National Planning Commission) will sign a project agreement followed by the Program launch. The

launch event will have the attendance of all relevant stakeholders, the program details such as the results, the activities and timeframe, monitoring and reporting, and roles and responsibilities of the core stakeholders will be presented and endorsed.

Complementary information for overview purposes:

Please specify whether the Program covers the following:

• Development and use of Education Monitoring and Information System – EMIS (Please refer to definition in Annex I: **Definitions**)	No
• Development and use of learning assessment system? (See refer to definition in Annex I: **Definitions**)	Yes

Please complete the table below, specifying the levels of education and age (from age to age) covered by the program:

➔ *Extend an/or adapt the table to the number of levels covered by the program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 2

Levels of education covered by the program

Levels	Age
ECCD	3-5 years
Primary, lower and upper secondary	6-18 years
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.

➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.*

IV.2 Expected outcomes

Please complete the table below, extracting relevant information from the detailed Program document. The Program will be monitored and progress will be reported against these **outcome indicators and targets** in the ESPIG annual implementation status reporting template to be submitted each year of the grant to the Secretariat.

➔ *Indicate the years starting with the baseline year. Extend and adapt the table to the number of components, subcomponents and outputs that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 3

Outcome indicators (as extracted from the program document)

Baseline	**Targets**				
2017	**FY2018 - 2019**	**FY2019-2020**	**FY 2020 - 2021**	**year 4**	**year 5**
Component 1.1:	**Enhance access and equity to ECCD for age 3-5 (36-71 months)**				
Outcome Indicator 1:	**National Net enrollment rate for ECCD disaggregated by gender, districts, urban/rural/remote**				
Source of data:	Annual Education Statistics				
21.8	26	30	34		
Component 1.2:	**Enhance quality of ECCD program**				
Outcome Indicator 2:	**Percentage of ECCD facilitators meeting ECCD practice standards as defined in Quality Monitoring Tool for ECCD Centers (QMTEC).**				
Source of data:	ECCD Report				

0	70%	70%	70%		
Component 2:	**Enhance national assessment system to improve learning outcomes**				
Outcome Indicator 1:	**National Education Assessment Framework endorsed by the Board**				
Source of data:	NEAF Reports/documents				
		Endorsed by the BCSEA Board			
Outcome Indicator 2:	**Expenditure on NEAs as a percentage of the total BCSEA (RGoB-funded) expenditure**				
Source of data:	BCSEA Annual Report				
3%	N/A	N/A	At least 5% (To be determined by the Framework)		
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.*					

IV.3 Results framework[7]

Please complete the table below, extracting relevant information from the detailed program document. There is NO need to reproduce the full results framework here, as long as the program document provides a full results framework with a results chain. The Program will be monitored and progress will be reported against these **output indicators and targets** in the ESPIG annual implementation status reporting template to be submitted each year of the grant to the Secretariat.

[7] For sector-wide financing (through budget support or pooled funds), a reference could be made to the ESP results framework.

If the program plans to purchase and distribute textbooks, train teachers, or build or rehabilitate classrooms, please use the following indicators (GPE Strategic Plan 2016-2020)[8]:

- Number of textbooks purchased and distributed
- Number of teachers trained
- Number of classrooms built or rehabilitated

NOTE: These indicators are NOT compulsory indicators. They are therefore applicable only when the program plans to implement these activities. In case of sector-pooled funds, please indicate numbers planned at sector level.

➔ *Indicate the years starting with the baseline year. Extend and adapt the table to the number of components, subcomponents and outputs that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 4 |

Output indicators (extracted from the program document)

Baseline	**Targets**				
2017	**FY 2018 - 2019**	**FY 2019 – 2020**	**FY 2020 - 2021**	**year 4**	**year 5**
Component 1:	**Improve access to and quality of ECCD**				
Objective(s):	• To significantly contribute to increase coverage of ECCD from 21.8% to 34% by 2021 • To enhance access and equity to ECCD services for all children especially disadvantaged children (e.g., rural children, urban poor children, children with special needs, children from hard-to-reach areas such as remote terrain of Bhutan); and • To enhance quality of ECCD services and programs				
Sub-component 1.1:	Enhance access and equity to ECCD program for children aged 3-5 (36-71 months)				
Output indicator:	No of ECCD Centres established (cumulative)				

[8] For definition of indicators, see attached **Annex1**.

Source of data:	Annual Statistics Education				
307	327	367	407		
Output indicator:	Number of parents completing one cycle of parenting education program (cumulative)				
Source of data:	ECCD Report				
0	500 parents	1,000 parents	1,500 parents		
Output indicator:	Number of children enrolled in ECCD Centers (cumulative) disaggregated by gender, districts, urban/rural/remote				
Source of data:	Annual Education Statistics				
7,194	8,580	9,900	11,220		
Sub-component 1.2:	Enhance quality of ECCD program				
Output indicator:	No of ECCD facilitators trained on ECCD program and parenting education (cumulative)				
Source of data:	Training Report				
0	25	65	100		
Output indicator:	A set of actionable recommendations submitted to ECCD & SEN division by the trained staff who returned from the exposure visit				
Source of data:	Training Report				
N/A	1 Submitted				
Output indicator:	Number of ECCD facilitators enrolled in a 3-year ECCD diploma program				

Source of data:	Report from CoE, Paro				
0			60		
Output indicator:	Number of DEOs/EMOs oriented on monitoring GPE/ESPIG program and ECCD monitoring tools				
Source of data:	Workshop report				
0	60				
Component 2:	**Enhance national assessment system to improve learning outcomes**				
Objective(s):	• To have a technically robust National Education Assessment Framework (NEAF) for Classes III, VI, X, and XII; • To enhance national capacity to implement the NEAF • To provide comprehensive information to diagnose health of the education system for early-grade learning (Class III); • To improve capacity to utilize assessment data to inform policy decision; and • To ensure increased and sustained government funding for NEA from 3% of BCSEA budget to at least 5%				
Output indicator:	National Education Assessment Framework finalized				
Source of data:	Finalized NEAF document				
	Finalized NEAF				
Output indicator:	Percentage of officials (BCSEA and stakeholders) trained in implementation of National Education Assessment framework (cumulative)				
Source of data:	Annual Performance Target Report				

0 (2017)	20 (50% female)	40 (50% female)	60 (50% female)		
Output indicator:	Number of Field Education Officials trained (cumulative)				
Source of data:	Annual Performance Target Report				
0		50	100		
Output indicator:	Percentage of the staff who meet the competency standards for the NEAF implementation				
Source of data:	Annual Performance Target Report				
N/A	N/A	100%	100%		
Output indicator:	Number of Class III NEA reports available				
Source of data:	Project report, Annual Report, Annual Performance Target Report				
			At least 1		

IV.4 Financial overview

Please complete the table below, indicating program cost and disbursement by year as applicable, based on information extracted from the program document. If it is a co-financed project, indicate estimates for the expected disbursements of GPE funds by year.

TABLE 5 |

Program costs and expected disbursements by year – in USD

Indicate years:	Year 1 2018 -2019	Year 2 2019-2020	Year 3 2020-2021	year 4	year 5	Total

Total program costs per implementation year[9]	$547,563	$735,720	$642,717			**$1,926,000**
	9/1/18 – 12/31/2018	1/1/19- 12/31/19	1/1/20- 12/31/20	1/1/21 - 12/31/21		
Total program costs per calendar year	$273,845	$641,400	$689,155	$321,600		**$1,926,000**

Please complete the table below, listing the proposed interventions/components, and indicating the expected disbursement by year and total cost for each component, as well as their respective percentage of the total grant.

If it is a co-financed project, indicate estimates for the expected disbursements of GPE funds by year.

➔ *Extend and adapt the table to the number of components that fits the Program, by copying/pasting or erasing rows as relevant.*

TABLE 6 |

Program costs and expected disbursement by component[10] – in USD

Components	FY 2018 - 2019	FY 2019 - 2020	FY2020 - 2021	year 4	year 5	Total costs	%
Component 1	$284,860	$404,120	$404,120			$1,093,100	68.3
Component 2	$167,000	$208,421	$127,000			$502,421	31.4
Program Management and M&E of MoE	$1,000	$2,479	$1,000			$4,479	0.3

➔ *For more rows, please copy the above rows and paste them here.*

[9] Implementation year runs by 12-month cycle beginning with signing of grant agreement. For example, if the signing is expected to start in July 2016 then the implementation year is July 2016 to June 2017, and July 2016 should be entered as Year 1. The program costs per calendar year for 2016 should reflect the estimated costs for the July – December 2016 period.

[10] If not using budget support as grant modality.

IV.5 Supplemental program cost

TABLE 7 |

Other grant agent costs and general agency fees – in USD[11]

Indicate years:	FY2018-2019	FY 2019-2020	FY 2020 - 2021	year 4	year 5	Total
General agency fees (in addition to MCA):	$35,822	$48,131	$42,047			$126,000
Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc. (part of MCA)	$59,881	$70,569	$69,550			$200,000

IV.5.1 Use of Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc.

In 300 words, please indicate how Other grant agent costs, including for supervision, country office, etc. will be utilized.

As the GA, Save the Children US (SCUS) will facilitate the Grant Application including planning and budgeting in close collaboration with the SCI Bhutan Program Office, MoE, funds transfer, activity implementation, monitoring and evaluation, preparation and submission of reports to all concerned including the GPE Secretariat. The GA will also prepare reports with input from the MoE and submit to GPE secretariat as per the required frequency. Project personnel costs include:

1. The National Director who will be responsible for coordinating all resource mobilization for the Bhutan Office, including maintaining donor relationship and communications, and leading on proposal development and overall strategy.
2. The Education Manager will lead technical oversight of all education proposals and programs for the Bhutan FO and as such will be heavily involved in the implementation and oversight of the ESPIG grant, working closely with MOE and member/donor.
3. The GPE Project Coordinator will be responsible to ensure all work implemented with the MoE will be good quality and

[11] See *ESPIG Guidelines* for explanation of respectively other grant agent costs and general agency fees.

delivered in a timely manner based on the established work plan.
4. The MEAL Coordinator will provide the M&E support and reporting of program activities against outcomes included in the result framework.
5. The Program Development Coordinator will support donor reporting.
6. The Finance Manager will lead the development of the ESPIG application budget and ensure costs are accurate and in compliance with GPE requirements.
7. The Admin & HR Manager, IT & Logistics and Driver will support on the overall project staff in various daily functions.
The project will also provide a fair contribution that is based on their effort on the project following support teams in administration, finance, award management, and communications.

IV.6 Monitoring and evaluation

In 300 words, please:

- Explain how the Program will be monitored and evaluated.
- Include how the monitoring and evaluation of the Program is aligned with the national reporting systems and to the monitoring and evaluation of the Education Sector Plan through the Joint Sector Reviews or other processes.

The monitoring and evaluation of the GPE/ESPIG Program will be implemented as per the M&E framework. Program staff, Monitoring Officers from the Education Monitoring Division (EMD) of MoE and key stakeholders (e.g., DEOs at district levels, principals/ teachers, and parents) will be involved in monitoring. The processes fully align to the existing national monitoring of the 12FYP and the Blueprint to monitor the outcomes.

The monitoring of the ECCD Centers has been institutionalized and decentralized to the districts. The DEOs/TEOs are responsible for overall monitoring of the schools, education programs including ECCD centers. The DEOs/TEOs combine ECCD Center monitoring with their regular school monitoring visit which is twice a year. During the GPE/ESPIG Program period the ECCD and SEN Division will monitor all of the ECCD centers at least once annually to ensure safety and quality of refurbishment, verify data, discuss with the DEOs about the status of program activities and way forward to improve the program if necessary. After the centers are operational, the monitoring of the center program will be the responsibility of the district /thromde education offices as is the practice. Policy and Planning Division, MoE, and Save the Children will directly monitor the status and progress of the activities under Component 2 (Learning Assessment).

The MoE and SC will monitor GPE/ESPIG implementation through biannual, annual and mid-term reviews, and monitoring visits to implementation sites as required. Mid-Year and Annual review meetings will be held, bringing together the key

stakeholders. The purpose of the meetings will be to discuss progress in project activity implementation against the targets, identify challenges, and collectively find solutions to address them as necessary and take decisions for realignment.

Mid-Term Review of the GPE/ESPIG Program will be conducted midway through Year 2 to assess the implementation status and progress towards the achievement of objectives and outcome level indicators as included in the Results Framework.

An end of Program review will be carried out involving the key stakeholders including beneficiaries which may be conducted in-house or may be led by a consultant. Achievement of the expected results vis-à-vis the indicators of achievement as reflected in the Results Framework, challenges and constraints, and lessons learned will be documented and recommendations made for the way forward for further GPE support in educational sector development and implementation of the sector plan.

IV.7 Risks, implementation readiness, and sustainability

In 300 words, please:

- Outline the principal risks and assumptions associated with the Program and what is planned to mitigate these risks.
- Demonstrate readiness for implementing the Program.
- Explain what is being done to ensure sustainability of the Program.

While there are several risks associated with the Program, necessary mitigation strategies are in place to ensure readiness to implement the program.

Risks:
1. Shortage of human resources in ECCD Division for program management
2. Lack of trained full-time ECCD facilitators available for ECCD centres.
3. Natural disaster
4. Insufficient fund commitment from government for RGoB contribution to Class III NEA
5. High staff turnover in BCSEA
6. Insufficient capacity of MoE in effectively coordinating education sector development partners

Mitigation strategies:
1. Recruitment of one additional officer in ECCD section
2. Expedite regularization of ECCD facilitators; explore interim measures to train and redeploy Non-formal Education

instructors as ECCD facilitators; increase intake in ECCD Diploma program
3. Extend disaster management and preparedness capacity development program and plan to ECCD; ensure compliance of ECCD centres with building disaster-risk reduction standards; build capacity of ECCD Division and Facilitators.
4. Ensure approval of budget for NEA in 12FYP; advocate to prioritize assessment as a means to ensure quality education; demonstrate cost-effectiveness of NEAs
5. Carry out succession planning and institutional capacity building
6. Reinforce PPD by recruiting Chief Planning Officer and filling two vacancies and conducting through briefing, share successful cases from other GPE countries; ensure timely and effective support from GA and CA (coordinating agency – UNICEF)

The GPE/ESPIG Program will ensure financial sustainability by:

• Enabling RGoB to make initial investment for key interventions committed in BEBP 2014-2024 and the 12FYP. Subsequently, RGoB will assume financial responsibilities to continue program activities beyond 2021.
• Regularlizing ECCD facilitators' positions to ensure absorption of their salary costs into the government's regular budget.
• Professionalizing ECCD cadre through degree program.
• Improving financial stability for NEAs based on the NEAF.

Technical sustainability will be ensured by focusing on building sufficient capacity at the national and sub-national levels in all activities under the program. Advocacy at the community level will also mobilize local support and thus improve sustainability.

IV.8 Past and current performance

In 250 words or less, please:

- Describe the implementation status of any past or current GPE grants.
- Explain how the proposed Program builds on lessons learned through the implementation of previous grants.

For countries that are not past or current GPE grant recipients, answer "Not applicable" in the box below.

N/A

IV.9 Aid effectiveness

Please complete the table below to illustrate how the proposed grant financing modality is evolving in comparison to the previous grant (where applicable) vis-à-vis alignment with national systems.

TABLE 8 |

Evolvement of grant financing modality

	Previous GPE grant	Current application
In relation to the ESP/TEP		
Is the GPE-funded Program aligned with the Education Sector Plan?	N/A	Yes. Expansion of ECCD and the development of the Learning assessment are the major recommendations of the Bhutan Education Blueprint and the 12th Five-Year Plan.
Are the projected expenditures of the Program included in the multi-year forecast of the Minister of Finance (Medium Term Expenditure Framework)?	N/A	Yes, Bhutan follows Multi-Year Rolling Budget (MYRB). Since ECCD and Learning assessment development are part of the 12th five year plans of the Ministry of Education, the budgeting will follow the Multi-Year Rolling Budget (MYRB) system.
In relation to the national budget and parliament		

Is the project included in the national budget?	N/A	Yes. Both proposed programs have been already included in the 12th five year plan as such It will be part of the annual Education Budget as sub-part of the national budget.
Does the national annual budget show specific appropriations for the different planned expenditures (economic and/or functional classification)?	N/A	Yes. All activities and/or projects will be classified by program and object code.
In relation to treasury		
Is the majority of the financing disbursed into: (a) the main revenue account of government, (b) a specific account at treasury or (c) a specific account at a commercial bank?	N/A	b) A specific account at the treasury/Government budget fund account maintained by the Department of the Public Accounts.
Is the expenditure process (documents and signatures on commitment, payment orders, etc.) for the national budget used for the program expenditures? Are there any specific derogations or safeguards on the national execution procedures for the program expenditures (other documents and/or signatures)?	N/A	Yes, expenditure are made for the for program execution. Internal audit and Royal Audit Authority (Govt. External Audit) will keep the check and balance on the judicious use of fund.
In relation to procurement		
	N/A	Yes, government rules will be used. However, Save the Children US

Are government procurement rules used? If so are there any derogations/safeguards on the use of these rules introduced?		(GPE Grant Agent) policies and procedures will be used for any procurement implemented directly by the Grant Agent (if requested by the government partner). Internal audit and Royal Audit Authority (Govt. External Audit) will keep the check and balance on the judicious use of fund.
In relation to accounting		
Is the financial accounting directly on government's accounting systems used for the national budget? If not, are the accounting results afterwards integrated in government's accounting systems?	N/A	Public Expenditure Management System and Multi-year rolling budget - both are used for project funding.
In relation to audit		
Will the financial accounts be audited by the government's external auditor?	N/A	Yes, Royal Audit Authority of Bhutan will conduct the regular audit.
In relation to reporting		
Will the information on project execution be included in the Education Sector Plan Annual Implementation Report prepared by the Ministry of Education?	N/A	Bhutan does not produce Education Sector Plan Annual Implementation Report. However, the implementation of the five year plans and programs are reviewed on annual basis through Annual

		Performance Target of the Ministry that is coordinated by the Government Performance Management System (GPMS) under the Office of the Prime Minister.
Will separate / additional reports be required for the Program?	N/A	No

IV.5.1 Evolution of aligned assistance

In 375 words or less, please:

- Describe how the proposed grant financing modality is evolving in comparison with the previous grant (if applicable) based on the table above.
- Explain what mechanisms are in place to mitigate fiduciary risks and why they seem appropriate.
- Detail how the proposed Program lays the foundation for more aligned assistance in the future.

On the GPE fund Management, Save the Children US (Grant Agent) and Save the Children International (SCI - Bhutan Office) will follow the existing official partnership modality in the country. Under this modality SC will execute tripartite agreement with the GNHC, Ministry of Education and SC. After signing the agreement SC will release the funds to the Department of Public Account (DPA) with intimation to the GNHC. Following this the DPA will then disburse the funds to the Administration and Finance Division of the implementing agencies. The implementing partner agencies will manage the funds under the RGoB financial rules and procedures and submit quarterly progress reports (both program & financial) to SC through the GNHC. Further, SC will also receive monthly financial reports from the MoE due to monthly cash planning and disbursement procedures of SC. On receiving the program and financial reports SC will review and provide necessary feedback. The next fund release from the SC will depend on the program and financial progress against the funds released. SC will also periodical financial monitoring/ reviews of the partner agencies.

On the auditing requirement of SCI, the MoE will be audited by the Royal Audit Authority (RAA) of the RGoB on the sub-grant received and the audit report will be shared with SCI. In addition, SCI's internal/external auditors and donor audit will have access to the partner agency's books of accounts. This will further mitigate the fiduciary risks.

In addition, since the GPE/ESPIG Program is the first external funding specially dedicated to the implementation of BEBP 2014-2024, this has become a valuable precedent for receiving more aligned assistances for the future, and strengthen collaboration and partnership with relevant government and non- government stakeholders.

V. VARIABLE PART INFORMATION: Not Applicable

V.1 Summary of Variable Part indicators and targets

Please complete the table below, by providing and defining the selected indicators and providing recent data for the indicators, where applicable, to reflect past trends, and the specific targets for the Program.

➔ *Extend the table as necessary to fit the Program and number of indicators in each dimension, by copying/pasting rows as relevant.*

TABLE 9

Variable Part Indicators

	Past trends data		Baseline	Program targets	
Indicate years for data entries:	year	year	year	year	year
1. Equity					
Indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Definition of indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Data/targets:					
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.*					
2. Efficiency					

Indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Definition of indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Data/targets:					
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.*					
3. Learning outcomes					
Indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Definition of indicator:	Click here to enter text.				
Data/targets:					
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above rows and paste them here.*					

V.2 Strategies and actions in equity, efficiency, learning outcomes

For each specific dimension, please:

- Describe the selected strategies/actions in the Education Sector Plan to address the issue of each specific dimension.
- Explain how the proposed strategies/actions are included in a results' chain and can be considered transformational.
- Demonstrate that the proposed implementation strategies are robust and evidence-based.
- Demonstrate that the selected indicators have a stretch effect as opposed to a mere continuation of current trends.

1. Equity

Click here to enter text.
2. Efficiency
Click here to enter text.
3. Learning outcomes
Click here to enter text.

V.3 Means of verification

Please complete the table below by providing an overview of means of verification for each of the three dimensions, the timing and methodology (including inclusiveness) of the process for determining whether the target is reached as well as the process to determine (partial) disbursements based on the results. The means of verification should include:

1) Responsible party
2) Source document
3) Indicative timing of validation by local education group.

➔ *Extend and adapt the table if more rows are needed to fit the Program, by copying/pasting rows as relevant.*

TABLE 10

Target attainment verification for disbursement

Means of verification	Month and year of target attainment verification	Month and year of disbursement of variable part
1. Equity		
Indicator:	**Click here to enter text.**	

Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.*		
2. Efficiency		
Indicator:	**Click here to enter text.**	
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.*		
3. Learning outcomes		
Indicator:	**Click here to enter text.**	
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
➔ *For more rows, copy a set of the above set of rows and paste them here.*		

VI. INCLUSIVE APPROACH

VI.1 Consultation

In 300 words, please:

- Discuss the scope and depth of collaboration in the development of the application within the local education group, the government and its development partners including civil society organizations, teachers' organizations, and the private sector.
- Describe if and how the development of the application has strengthened local education group collaboration.

The Education Sector Coordination Meeting (ESCM) is chaired by the Secretary, and the purpose of this meeting is to strengthen coordination, collaboration, and partnerships among the MoE, relevant government agencies, development partners, and civil society organizations towards provision of equitable quality education and skills in the country. The membership of the ESCM is open to all stakeholders of education (multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, CSOs, other relevant government ministries/agencies). The ESCM is conducted on a quarterly basis or as necessary. The Policy & Planning Division, MoE serves as the Secretariat to the ESCM. Technical and capacity development support to the MoE to ensure its effective coordination will be provided by UNICEF (CA), Save the Children (GA), and UNESCO.

The main role of the ESCM in this GPE/ESPIG Program (2018 -2021) will be to build close relationships between members and ensure synergies and coherence between the GPE/ESPIG Program and other activities. This will ensure the alignment of the GPE/ESPIG Program, the support of the development partners and the efforts of the CSOs towards achievement of the government priorities articulated in the BEBP and the 12FYP. This shall improve efficiency and effectiveness of education provision in Bhutan as a whole. This shall be achieved through information sharing and documentation of the on-going and incoming educational interventions in Bhutan.

The ESCM members were fully consulted at every step of the GPE/EGPIG proposal development. They were fully engaged in the needs assessment, appraisal, proposal drafting and finalization. The GPE/ESPIG proposal development process has already provided a valuable opportunity to the ESCM members to strengthen the communication and strategic planning among the members to reduce duplication of the activities. The RGoB's leadership was also strongly demonstrated in coordinating the EDCM members throughout the process.

VI.2 Sign-off

Signature of applicant ministry representative	
The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the government. (Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)	
Name of signatory:	**Karma Yeshey**
Date:	Click here to enter a date.
Signature:	
Signature of the grant agent representative (Country Director of agency)	
The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the grant agent agency or organization. (Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)	
Name of signatory:	**M.B Ghalay**
Date:	Click here to enter a date.
Signature:	
Signature of the coordinating agency representative	
The below signatory endorses this application on behalf of the development partner group. (Please scan this page after signature and include it as an attached file to the submission.)	
Name of signatory:	**Click here to enter text.**

Date:	Click here to enter a date.
Signature:	

Submission

➔ The coordinating agency submits the full ESPIG application package (see *ESPIG Guidelines* for details) on behalf of the government and the local education group via email addressed to gpe_grant_submission@globalpartnership.org, with copy to the grant agent, the ministry focal point and the country lead within the Secretariat.

Annex I:

DEFINITIONS	
The definitions below explain how certain terms used in the template should be understood within the context of the ESPIG:	
Relating to funding modalities	
Sector Pooled	This refers to a scenario of diverse group of grant or credit modalities with varying instruments and mechanisms. The specificity for sector pooled funds is that multiple contributing partners deliver funds in a coordinated fashion to support implementation of the national education plan, or specific parts thereof. Under this modality, country systems are normally used for procurement, financial management, M&E and reporting.
Project Pooled/ Co-financed	This refers to a scenario where the funding mechanism is made up of different source agency funds to support a common project.
Project/ Stand-alone	This refers to a scenario where the funding mechanism is unilateral, or in other words, not pooled with any other sources of financing.
Relating to key indicators	
Number of textbooks purchased and distributed	This indicator tracks the number of school textbooks that were purchased and distributed through the Program during the reporting period. Textbooks are books designed for instructing pupils in specific subject areas. The requested data should include textbooks that have been distributed to schools and have either been distributed to pupils on loan or kept in schools for use in the classroom. The data on textbooks should exclude books in school libraries as well as novels and books for use by teachers (such as curriculum guides, syllabi and teacher guides). The data of textbooks can include textbooks in stock but not currently in use by pupils and should include all languages of instruction.

Number of teachers trained	This indicator tracks the number of teachers who received and completed formal training, according to national standards, through the Program during the reporting period. The requested data refers to formal teacher training (pre- or in-service) designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behavior, and skills required for teaching at the relevant level and perform their tasks effectively. Teachers are comprised of professional teaching/instructional personnel who are directly involved in teaching students. They include classroom teachers; special education teachers; and other teachers who work with students as a class in a classroom, in small groups in a resource room, or in one-to-one teaching inside or outside a regular classroom. Teaching/ instructional staff excludes non-professional personnel who support teachers in providing instruction to students, such as teachers' aides and other paraprofessional personnel.
Number of classrooms built or rehabilitated	This indicator tracks the number of classrooms that were built and/or rehabilitated through the Program during this reporting period. Data on classrooms should be reported upon completion of the building or rehabilitation during the reporting period. Classrooms comprise rooms in which teaching or learning activities can take place. They are semi-permanent or permanent physical structures and may be located in a school.
Relating to system areas	
Education Monitoring and Information System EMIS	A system for the collection, integration, processing, maintenance and dissemination of data and information to support decision-making, policy-analysis and formulation, planning, monitoring and management at all levels of an education system. It is a system of people, technology, models, methods, processes, procedures, rules and regulations that function together to provide education leaders, decision-makers and managers at all levels with a comprehensive and integrated set of relevant, reliable, unambiguous and timely data and information to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities.[12]

[12] Definition of EMIS from the Global Monitoring Report (UNECO, 2008), page 101.

Learning assessment system	**Assessment** is "the process of gathering and evaluating information on what students know, understand, and can do in order to make an informed decision about next steps in the educational process," whereas an **assessment system** is "a group of policies, structures, practices, and tools for generating and using information on student learning and achievement."[13] It is the use of this information that is key for improving learning, and for that to be possible, learning data must be accompanied by contextual data so that factors that impact learning can be identified and action taken. When we talk about a **national learning assessment system**, then, what we are talking about is a functional apparatus, usually housed within a Ministry of Education, which gathers information on learning – together with contextual data – nationwide and feeds this information back to the policy, management, and classroom levels to improve learning. As Pedro Ravela and his colleagues point out: "Assessment in and of itself does not produce improvement. There must be stable links between the domains of assessment and those of curriculum development, teacher training, research, policy design, communications and outreach, among others."[14] In this way, a strong national learning assessment system closes the feedback loop to the rest of the education system to achieve meaningful improvement in learning.

[13] *Clarke, M. (2012) "What Matters Most for Student Assessment Systems: A Framework Paper."* SABER-Student Assessment Working Paper 1. *Washington, DC: WB.*

[14] Ravela, P. et al. (2008). "The Educational Assessment that Latin America Needs". *Working Paper Series No. 40*. Washington, DC: PREAL, p. 17.