

## Concept Note

### Joint Sector Review Cross-country Exchange Initiative

#### Summary

The **JSR Exchange Initiative** has its origins in a GPE-supported pilot, which helped spark a community of practice among three francophone countries, meeting first time in February 2017 in Kinshasa. Building from this pilot, the GPE Secretariat is now launching another wave of cross-country exchanges in both francophone and anglophone developing partner countries to support peer learning around JSRs, and more generally around practices in monitoring the implementation of education sector plans.

**The concept is simple yet has the ambitious objective of supporting countries in enhancing the effectiveness of their JSRs:** Through peer learning exchanges, based on an agreed agenda around clear learning objectives for mutual benefits, a group of government officials from 3-4 countries engage virtually in a round of technical discussions around JSRs, followed by first-hand experience of how a JSR is organized in a host country. Participants provide feedback to their peers in the host country and draw lessons for strengthening or launching their own. The GPE Secretariat coordinates and facilitates and technically frames virtual and in-country interactions among participants. It also leverages the initiative by sharing JSR practices and insights gained with the Partnership more widely.

The initiative uses the [JSR guidance and tools available to partner countries](#), including a JSR self-assessment tool, a maturity ladder and a small toolbox to facilitate peer learning.

#### Objectives

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##### Overall objective:

- Leverage JSRs' potential to strengthen sector planning, monitoring and policy dialogue in participating countries through South–South cooperation and peer learning

##### Specific objectives:

- Provide learning opportunities for MoE officials to exchange with their peers in other countries around strategies for organizing effective JSRs
- Strengthen leadership in JSR processes, overcoming common challenges and achieving 'quick-wins'
- Roll out the JSR guidelines and related tools to better support country teams in strengthening their JSR process (or launching a new JSR), and collect user feedback
- Support improvements in JSRs across participating countries, monitored through the GPE Results Framework, RF18.
- Generate communications material around JSRs relevant to other countries and the broader Partnership

## Background

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*The Joint Sector Review (JSR) plays a pivotal and strategic role within national education systems. Through a participative review process, and inclusive sector dialogue, it is a mechanism for the joint review of results, progress and performance in the implementation of national education sector plans. Out of the discussions on the most difficult barriers to progress and on policy concerns, recommendations are made for corrective actions in the following annual or multiyear operational plans to reach targets and achieve greater impact. Moreover, these recommendations embed collective responsibility for ensuring longer term systemic improvements*

*[Defining JSRs, JSR guidelines]*

JSRs are central in GPE's operational model, and a key instrument for achieving GPE strategic objectives, more specifically those intended to #1 strengthening education sector planning and policy implementation, and #2: supporting mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring.

**The challenge:** Despite the above, desk reviews show that GPE as a partnership is not meeting its results framework milestones regarding quality JSRs. This indicates a lack of regular monitoring of the implementation of education sector plans (ESPs) and related annual-multi-annual operational plans, which is more firmly mirrored in the [Synthesis of GPE Country-level Evaluations](#).

Recognizing this challenge, JSRs and the monitoring of ESPs are getting heightened focus and the GPE Secretariat is hence increasing its support to JSRs in several ways. The cross-country exchanges initiative, being launched in francophone and anglophone countries through three communities of practice, and reaching some 12 countries, is part of these efforts.

**Tested pilot:** The initiative builds on a previous pilot from 2017 which brought together three countries (Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Madagascar) through virtual exchanges and several visits to JSRs. This was followed by several other exchanges with other countries (Burkina Faso et Cameroun) at countries' own initiative. The backbone of the cross-country exchange described in this note was initially conceived and shaped through these first exchanges, including a set of tools which helped frame the dialogue which were tested and refined and now part of the tools in the JSR guide.

**JSR guide:** The cross-country exchanges will generally draw from the JSR guide and related tools available to partner countries. This practical guide, published in 2018, is intended for all education decision makers and practitioners wishing to engage in a collaborative process of sector assessment, review, and course correction of the national education efforts. It is based on cumulative lessons learned distilled to assist governments and relevant stakeholders in identifying entry points for the organization of their JSRs and will hence serve the methodological framing of the cross-country exchanges.

It must be underlined that the guidance in no way advocates a one-size-fits-all model. Quite the opposite—a standardized approach is not desirable, and the starting point and baseline for organizing a JSR should always be governments' stated priorities and national capacities. Moreover, JSRs will evolve and mature as lessons are absorbed from previous JSRs and organizers gain experience. To this extent, stakeholders are encouraged to use the guidelines and tools as an aid for achieving the core functions of their JSR in their unique context.

## Scope, approach and modalities

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Building communities of practice across countries are relevant for all countries who seek to strengthen the core functions of their JSR as a regular planning and monitoring exercise or countries that intend to organize one for the first time. Learning exchanges serve problem solving and identifying ‘fit for the context’ JSR practices and contribute to building leadership and support by demonstrating the benefits of JSRs. Because JSRs are usually organized at regular intervals, they provide multiple occasions for communities of practice to continue learning over a longer period.

The initiative brings together 3-4 countries with two participants from each country delegation. The exchange may include countries with strong JSRs as a regular planning and monitoring mechanism, countries with limited JSR experience, or no JSR but committed to organizing one.

The initiative uses a combination of different exchange modalities as referenced in the JSR guidelines (Chapter 3.5) to respond to participants’ various needs and demands:

- Regular online meetings - up to three video conferences in one round of exchange - to consult each other, and to share sufficient insights into the specific JSR challenges of each country, enabling participants to offer and benefit from relevant advice;
- Exchange of JSR country documents, as way of sharing examples and country practices and stimulating take-aways and feedback from peers
- Technical exchange in specific areas of expertise and mutual interest
- Observation missions to counterpart countries to gain exposure to other JSRs, draw lessons, and inform practices in the home country accordingly, while also providing advice to the host counterpart.
- Introduction to the JSR guidance and exchange around the application of related tools to inform the constructive dialogue

The role of the observation mission is central, as visiting stakeholders can then experience firsthand how JSRs are organized in other countries and exchange with their peers around JSR effectiveness. A commonly agreed methodology enables participants to gain technical, organizational, and institutional insights on entry points and equip them to address the persistent bottlenecks in the JSR practices in their home country. To this end, going well beyond observation and lessons sharing, participants of the cross-country exchange find value in:

- Identifying jointly what they can each contribute to the community of practice and how they can benefit from each country experience;
- Identifying learning objectives, prior to the actual exchange, which match the challenges found in the JSR practices in the home country, as well as expectations from the home-based institutional partners for takeaways and follow-up after the exchange;
- Organizing daily debrief sessions during the exchange to reflect on the takeaways from the JSR being observed and the relevance for their own JSR;
- Organizing side meetings with stakeholders whose role in the JSR is of special interest to the country delegation; and
- Preparing suggested improvement plans as tangible outputs which translate the lessons from the exchange into actions for improving the effectiveness of the JSRs in their own country.

Upon return from the observation mission, it is good practice and expected that visiting delegations present and discuss within the LEG what the team has learned from the cross-country exchange, relating it directly to how these new insights can be used and optimized to enhance the effectiveness of their own JSR. ***See detailed description and sequencing of activities in Annex 1***

### **Criteria for selection of participants**

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Each country delegation will consist of two participants, selected with careful attention to the risk of staff turnover. Expectations for the selection of participants are as follows:

- Participants are key ministry officials (decision-makers and/or technical and operational implementers) and play a central role and position in leading the organization of joint sector reviews in their own country
- They are able to technically contribute to group discussions and committed to mutual learning, ready to share their experiences, views and perspectives and accept those of others.
- They commit to staying engaged in the exchange including active engagement with peers before and after the country visit to ensure maximum application of knowledge gained.
- They commit to going beyond sharing lessons to produce deliverables for own country context (activity reports), incorporating lessons learnt into an action plan for their subsequent JSRs.

Representative of the **coordinating agencies** in the participating countries are encouraged to join the exchanges to contribute technically and facilitate the uptake of lessons learnt within the local education group. Where possible, they are also encouraged to join the in-country visits (at their agency's own costs) alongside the country.

### **Role of Secretariat**

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Strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of partners through the exchange of knowledge and good practices is a strategic objective for GPE. The Secretariat will provide technical, logistical and financial support to maximize the scope of exchanges among peers, and to minimize the workload of the host country. More specifically, the Secretariat will:

- Organize and facilitate the different steps (as outlined in Annex 1) and provide the technical framework for effective exchanges using available guidance and tools
- Design the exchange around participants' learning objectives, needs and demands and so that there is ample opportunity to exchange and reflect on fitting solutions to leverage JSR potential
- Coordinate with the coordinating agencies in respective countries to encourage participation and linkages with the local education group
- Collect information on good practices for wider sharing across the Partnership.

From logistical point of view, the Secretariat will:

- Take care of the administrative formalities (transport to and from the airport, hotel, per diem, travel, etc.) following the World Bank's operational travel procedures (however host country would need to send invitation letters, where visa applications are required)
- Participate with three staff minimum in the in-country visit to ensure that the exchanges and planned activities for the visiting country delegations run smoothly.

Suggested sequencing of activities for first round of exchange	
Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants familiarize themselves with the present ToR for the exchange as well as <a href="#">JSR guidance</a> and related tools available to partner countries</li> <li>- Participants reflect on their specific learning objectives</li> </ul>
Video Conference 1	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Get to know each other – participants’ respective role in relation to JSR, planning, monitoring, sector dialogue and coordination as relevant</li> <li>- Get to know the JSR cross-country exchange initiative and how it works</li> <li>- Briefly present JSR status in each country – challenges and good practices</li> <li>- Identify what participants would like to learn about from their peers and what they could potentially share with their peers</li> <li>- Introduce participants to the JSR guidance and tools – JSR effectiveness framework</li> <li>- Discuss and agree on methodology and scope – setting mutual expectations</li> </ul>
Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants run the <a href="#">JSR self-assessment tool</a> and <a href="#">JSR maturity ladder</a> - either two by two; or together with the CA, or within the LEG, as appropriate</li> <li>- Participants share available JSR-related documents from their country (e.g. JSR ToR, annual implementation report, agenda, aide-memoire...)</li> <li>- Participants familiarize themselves with JSR documents from their peers with attention to areas related to their own learning objectives</li> </ul>
Video conference 2	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share and discuss JSR self-assessment tool results carried out by each country delegations prior to VC2</li> <li>- Share and discuss key take-aways and feedback on peers’ JSR country documents with attention to areas related to their own learning objectives and issues of mutual interest as identified in VC1</li> <li>- Plan and discuss the in-country visit</li> </ul>
Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants familiarize themselves more closely with information available related to the upcoming JSR in preparation of the country-visit (e.g. ToR, annual/multi-annual action plan, annual implementation report; information on previous JSR)</li> <li>- Participants familiarize themselves with the <a href="#">JSR country-exchange toolbox</a> to prepare visiting delegations, and guide the exchanges during the in-country visit</li> <li>- Participants communicate to the GPE Secretariat any suggestions to meet bilaterally or as a group with counterparts during the in-country visit – requests will be met to the extent possible and will depend on availability of host counterparts</li> </ul>

<p><b>In-country visit</b></p>	<p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visitors attend JSR plenary and working sessions as observers</li> <li>- Daily debrief sessions between GPE Secretariat team and visiting country delegations to discuss key observations, and how practices and lessons learned could be implemented at home</li> <li>- Visitors meet (bilaterally or as a group) with organizers, ministry departments, developing partners, and CSO representatives, to exchange and gain inputs on specific challenges identified during the planning phase.</li> <li>- After the JSR, visitors share their key take-aways and feedback with the JSR organizers or with the broader LEG</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prep</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants draft their improvement plans for strengthening their JSR/or for organizing one paying attention to 'fit-for-the-context' actions</li> <li>- Participants debrief the LEG in their home country lessons learnt and relevant practices and discuss their recommendations and suggested improvement plan</li> <li>- Host country shares the aide-memoire from the JSR with other participants</li> <li>- Participants familiarize themselves with the aide-memoire of host country</li> </ul>
<p><b>Video conference 3</b></p>	<p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Debrief of JSR follow-up by host-country – process of aide-Mémoire finalization and validation, and following-up of JSR recommendations, followed by discussion and feedback</li> <li>- Debrief by visiting delegations on their respective improvement plans; how these have/will be taken onboard through the LEG; and expected change as a result of the exchange</li> <li>- Discuss next steps as relevant</li> </ul>
	<p><b>GPE Secretariat:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leverages the initiative to communicate on JSR practices and new insights through the GPE website with participants' involvement as relevant and based on interest</li> <li>- Seeks participants' feedback on the cross-country exchange and how it was conducted for future improvements</li> <li>- Seeks participants' feedback on JSR guidelines and related tools</li> </ul>