

A first-grade student at the blackboard, Felege Abay Elementary School, Bahar Dar, Ethiopia.

Credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch



CHAPTER

1

Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion in Access to Education, and Support to Equity and Learning

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

IMPACT

GOAL 1

Improved and more equitable learning outcomes

#1

Proportion of partner countries with improved learning outcomes.

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#2

Percentage of children under age 5 developmentally on track.

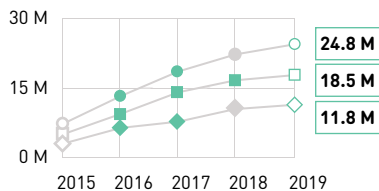
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GOAL 2

Increased equity, gender equality and inclusion

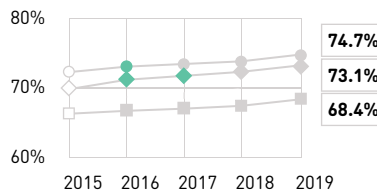
#3

GPE supported 24.8 million children since 2015.



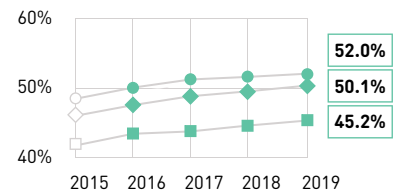
#4a

75% of children completed primary education.



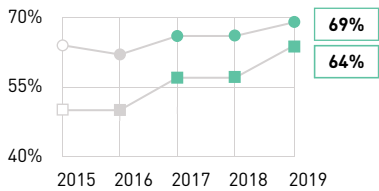
#4b

52% of children completed lower secondary education.



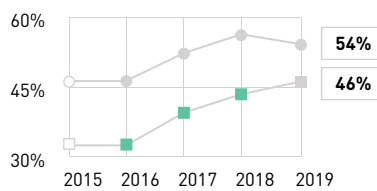
#5a

69% of partner countries were at or close to gender parity in primary completion.



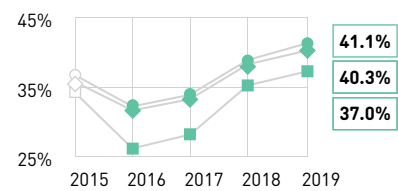
#5b

54% of partner countries were at or close to gender parity in lower secondary completion.



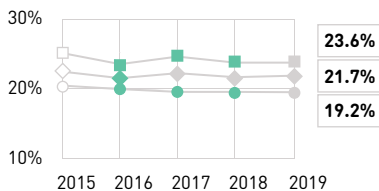
#6

41% of pre-primary-age children enrolled in pre-primary education.



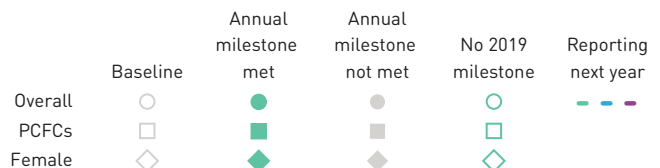
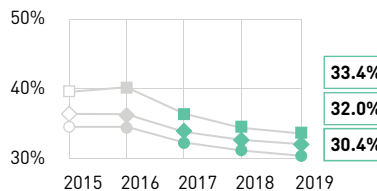
#7a

19% of primary-school-age children were out of school.



#7b

30% of lower-secondary-school-age children were out of school.

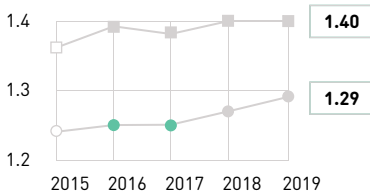


*Past actual values for Indicators 4-8 have been retrospectively updated here. Original values appear in [Appendix A](#).

IMPACT

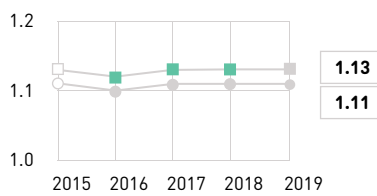
#8a

Primary-school-age girls were **1.29 times more likely** than boys **to be out of school**.



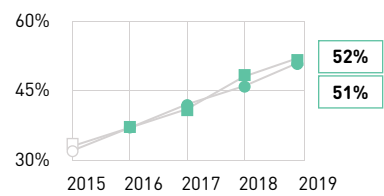
#8b

Lower-secondary-school-age girls were **1.11 times more likely** than boys **to be out of school**.



#9

51% of partner countries improved substantially on the **equity index since 2010**.



OUTCOME

GOAL 3

Effective and efficient education systems

#15

Proportion of **partner countries with a learning assessment system** that meets quality standards.

-

COUNTRY-LEVEL

OBJECTIVE 3

Effective and efficient GPE financing

#20

Proportion of grants **supporting EMIS and/or learning assessment systems**.

-

KEY FINDINGS

- > **Completion rates are improving overall, including for girls and in PCFCs, though progress at the primary level is slower than previously estimated.** Since 2015, primary completion rates improved by 2.5 percentage points overall, 3.2 percentage points for girls and 2.2 percentage points for PCFCs.
- > **Parity between girls and boys completing school is improving at both primary and lower secondary levels in PCFCs.** Since 2015, the proportion of PCFCs nearing equal numbers of girls and boys completing rose from 50 percent to 64 percent for primary, and from 32 percent to 46 percent for lower secondary.
- > **Too many children are still out of school, as education systems struggle to keep pace with population growth.** Nearly one in five young children are out of primary school, and that has not changed substantially since the 2015 baseline. Almost one in three children are out of lower secondary school, but that number has fallen by more than 4 percentage points since 2015 overall—and by more than 6 percentage points for PCFCs.
- > **Forty-one percent of young children attend pre-primary education, up from 36 percent in 2015.** There is nearly gender parity in pre-primary enrollment, with girls only slightly disadvantaged.
- > **Between 2015 and 2019, GPE grants have supported the equivalent of 24.8 million students:** 22.6 million in primary school and 2.2 million in lower secondary.
- > The partnership's emphasis on improving data is evident in **95 percent of active grants in 2019 supporting data systems.**
- > GPE implementation grants active as of June 2019 allocated over **US\$379 million to activities specifically promoting equity, gender equality and inclusion, and over US\$442 million to activities to improve learning.**

Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion in Access to Education, and Support to Equity and Learning

Equity and learning are at the heart of GPE's work, with strategic goals focusing on improved and more equitable learning outcomes, and on increased equity, gender equality and inclusion. This chapter reports on progress on a variety of facets of equity in access to education, including numbers of children in school and completing basic education, as well as early childhood care and education, with a special focus on gender equality and on partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFCs). Since data on learning, including learning outcomes and learning assessment systems, are next scheduled for reporting against the 2020 target, no new data are available for reporting in this interim year; the most recent analyses can be found in *Results Report 2019*.² However, GPE's efforts to support learning, including an interim update on implementation grant funding for learning and data systems, are included in this chapter.

1.1. Equity in completion of basic education

COMPLETION RATES (Indicator 4)

Indicator 4 measures the proportion of children who complete (a) primary education and (b) lower secondary education. Overall primary completion rates have increased from 72.2 percent at baseline to 74.7 percent against the 2019 milestone, and have increased each year in that time. Moreover, primary completion rates for girls have grown at a pace that has equaled or exceeded that of children overall since the baseline, and primary completion rates for PCFCs have grown at a pace that has equaled or exceeded that of children overall since the 2017 milestone.

Although equity in primary completion rates is moving in the right direction, new data suggest that progress in primary completion is weaker than previously estimated. In October 2019, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) released revised retrospective data for completion rates,³ pre-primary enrollment rates, and out-of-school rates (Indicators 4, 6 and

7, respectively) based on updated population data estimates from the United Nations Population Division. These data also inform gender parity indicators on completion rates and out-of-school rates (Indicators 5 and 8). The milestones and 2020 targets for these indicators were selected based on prior estimates, and the new data show primary completion rates below these, as well as a slower rate of progress (Figure 1.1a).⁴

Lower secondary completion rates show good progress, meeting the milestone for 2019 overall and for PCFCs (Figure 1.1b). While the milestone for girls was missed for 2019, the rate of improvement over the previous year exceeded that of children overall, indicating that girls are gaining lost ground.

On average across GPE partner countries, girls are still disadvantaged in primary and lower secondary completion (Figures 1.1a and 1.1b), though the gender gap is narrowing slightly in lower secondary completion rates. Girls in PCFCs are especially disadvantaged: With a primary completion rate of 64.6 percent and a lower secondary completion rate of 41.1 percent, they fall dramatically below both the average for all children in PCFCs and the average for girls overall against the 2019 milestone. Compared

2. GPE, *Results Report 2019* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2019), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/results-report-2019>.

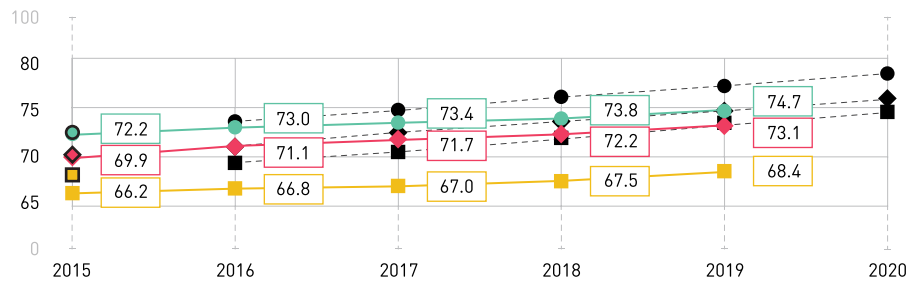
3. Updated completion rates are shown for all years based on updated population data for all affected indicators listed above. In Figure 1.1a, they reflect the fact that some partner countries have had higher populations of primary-school-age children than originally estimated, particularly in PCFCs such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kenya. Since completion rates are taken as a percentage of all children of completion age in a country, higher populations mean lower completion rates, given the same number of children completing school. The slower pace of progress on primary completion indicates that universal primary education is even more distant.

4. For details on any indicator methodology, replace X with the number of the indicator in the following link: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/methodology-sheet-gpe-result-indicator-X>.

FIGURE 1.1.

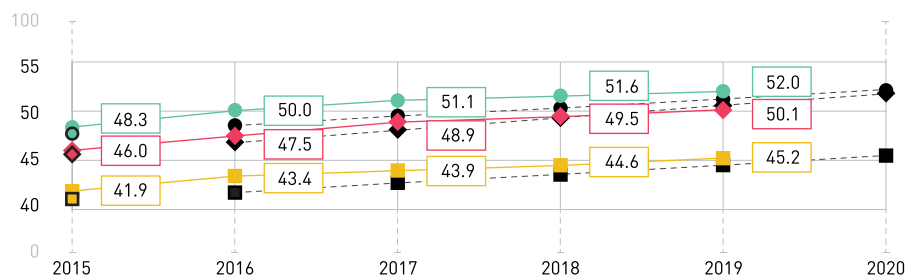
A: NEW DATA SHOW SLOW BUT STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN PRIMARY COMPLETION RATES.

Proportion of children who complete primary education



B: LOWER SECONDARY COMPLETION RATES ARE INCREASING, THOUGH GIRLS ARE STILL BEHIND.

Proportion of children who complete lower secondary education



	Milestone	Actual	Original baseline
Overall	●	●	●
PCFCs	■	■	■
Female	◆	◆	◆

Source: GPE compilation based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (2019).

Note: GPE does not revise official baselines; these are represented above as "Original Baseline." Originally reported data for years 2016–2018 can be found in [Appendix A](#).

to the previous year, this gap has grown at the primary level but shrunk at the lower secondary level.⁵

GENDER PARITY IN COMPLETION RATES (Indicator 5)

Another way to measure progress toward gender equality is through a gender parity index, which shows how girls are doing compared with boys on a given indicator, such as completion rates. Indicator 5 counts the number of countries with gender parity indexes for completion rates that come within

a set threshold of about 10 percent of the accepted range for gender parity.⁶

The proportion of partner countries near gender parity on completion of primary education met the 2019 milestones both overall and for PCFCs (Figure 1.2a). The proportions above translated to a gain of two countries out of 61 nearing parity, both of which were PCFCs that rose into the set threshold (Eritrea and Liberia). Both 2019 milestones were missed for gender parity in lower secondary completion (Figure 1.2b), however, with a net decrease of one country overall. One PCFC (Liberia) rose into the threshold,

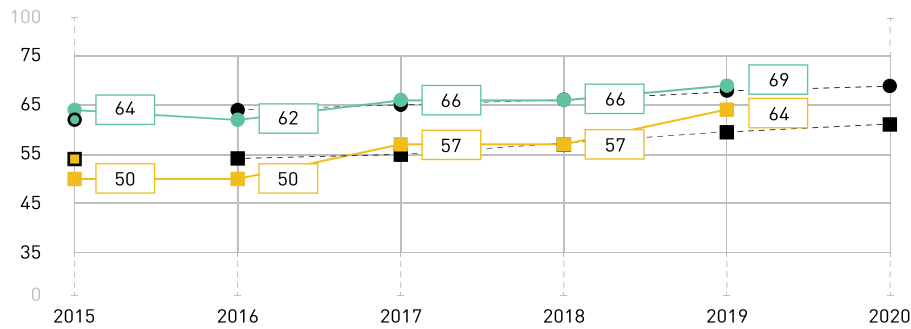
5. At the primary level, completion rates for girls in PCFCs increased by 0.89 percentage points over the previous year, compared to 0.92 for all children in PCFCs and 0.97 for girls overall. At the lower secondary level, completion rates for girls in PCFCs increased by 0.80 percentage points over the previous year, compared with 0.65 for all children in PCFCs and 0.51 for girls overall.

6. A gender parity index divides girls' results by boys' results to get a ratio—the closer this ratio is to 1, the more even the results are across girls and boys. Indicator 5 uses the threshold of 0.877–1.123, which represents coming within about 10 percent of the accepted range for gender parity of 0.97–1.03. Counting the number of countries within this wider range provides useful information about progress toward parity across the partnership.

FIGURE 1.2.

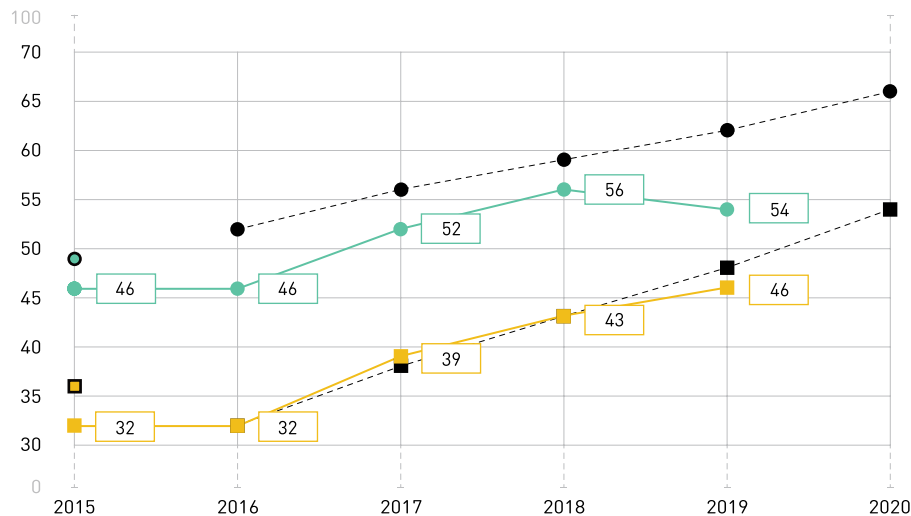
A: THERE IS GOOD PROGRESS ON GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY COMPLETION, ESPECIALLY FOR PCFCs.

Proportion of partner countries within set thresholds for gender parity index of completion rates for primary education



B: DESPITE PROGRESS IN PCFCs, MILESTONES ARE MISSED FOR GENDER PARITY IN LOWER SECONDARY COMPLETION.

Proportion of partner countries within set thresholds for gender parity index of completion rates for lower secondary education



Milestone Actual Original baseline
 Overall ● ● ●
 PCFCs ■ ■ ■

Source: GPE compilation based on updated data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (latest data available 2017–13).

Note: GPE does not revise official baselines; these are represented above as “Original Baseline.” Originally reported data for years 2016–2018 can be found in Appendix A.

meaning that girls’ disadvantage was decreasing, while Bhutan and Senegal exceeded the threshold, as more girls than boys completed school.⁷ Here we see PCFCs outperforming

non-PCFCs with regard to trends, as gains for girls in non-PCFCs are more likely to result in a slight advantage for girls than they are in PCFCs.⁸

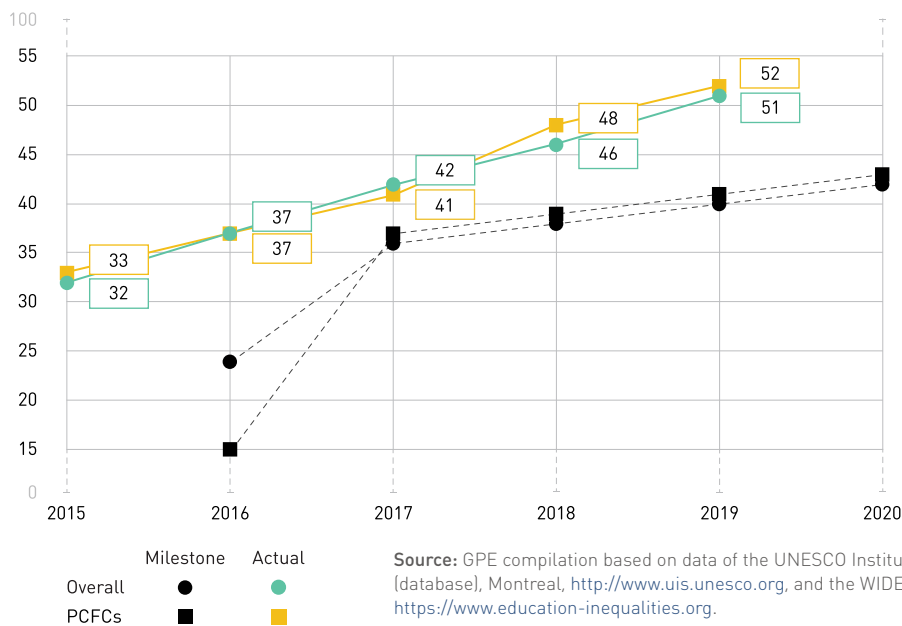
7. Note: The current threshold for nearing gender parity represents a range of 877 to 1,123 girls for every 1,000 boys. So while the highest possible ratio of girls to boys inside the threshold is 1.123, the highest possible ratio of boys to girls inside the threshold is 1.140 (1,000/877). This means that the current threshold is more sensitive to boys’ disadvantage in completion than to girls’ disadvantage. A threshold that used the same 1.123 ratio for boys to girls as girls to boys would correspond to a gender parity index range of 0.877-1.140, and would include four additional partner countries at the lower secondary level: Nicaragua, Rwanda, Senegal and Tanzania.

8. This may be due in part to a phenomenon in which stronger education systems may correlate with higher girls’ completion rates: More non-PCFCs than PCFCs are having girls complete lower secondary school, to the point where girls outnumber boys by more than 1.12 to 1. See S. Psaki, K. McCarthy, and B. Mensch, “Measuring Gender Equality in Education: Lessons from Trends in 43 Countries,” *Population and Development Review* 44, no. 1 (March 2018): 117-42, https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/departments_sbsr-pgy/485/, and UNESCO, *Gender Review: Creating Sustainable Futures for All*, Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 (Paris: UNESCO, 2016).

FIGURE 1.3.

GAINS IN EQUITY CONTINUE ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES.

Proportion of partner countries with an equity index that has increased at least 10 percent since 2010



THE EQUITY INDEX: LOWER SECONDARY COMPLETION RATES BY GENDER, LOCATION AND WEALTH (Indicator 9)

Indicator 9 of the GPE results framework tracks the performance of partner countries on the equity index each year and takes note of how many have improved at least 10 percent since 2010. The equity index provides a measure of equity in lower secondary completion rates in 59 partner countries with available data, by averaging the three parity indexes: girls to boys, rural to urban, and the poorest 20 percent of households to the richest 20 percent.⁹ In combining these three measures, the equity index provides a snapshot of how level the playing field may or may not be for all children within a given country to receive a full cycle of basic education.

Although new data were available only on the gender parity index, they still resulted in steady increases against the 2019 milestone for Indicator 9, as the equity index of three additional partner countries (including one PCFC) has now increased at least 10 percent since 2010 [Figure 1.3].

Examining country-level data on the equity index and its component parity indexes reveals a dramatic yet complex pattern

of disparities in lower secondary completion rates for children based on whether they come from the richest or poorest households, live in urban or rural areas, and whether they are boys or girls. Moreover, the ways these factors combine tend to be predictable on average—in that the poorest rural girls are usually left farthest behind—but the degree of disparity can vary a lot from one country to the next. More details on these dynamics can be found in GPE's *Results Report 2019*, including in Figure 2.6 of that report, illustrating the variance across countries in the disparity between completion rates for urban girls from the wealthiest quintile of the population and rural girls from the poorest quintile.

1.2. Out-of-school children

OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES (Indicator 7)

Too many children are still out of school: 58.5 million are out of primary school and 61.1 million are out of lower secondary, worldwide. Of these children, 75 percent and 57 percent, respectively, live in GPE partner countries. As many developing

9. Each component of the equity index always divides the rates of the more disadvantaged group by those of the advantaged group: In the relatively few countries where more girls complete lower secondary school than do boys, for example, boys' rates are divided by girls'. This way, unlike with traditional gender parity indexes used elsewhere in this chapter, the parity index never exceeds 1. No GPE partner country has any record of the poorest children with higher lower-secondary completion rates than the wealthiest, and no partner country has reported higher rates for rural children since 2006. GPE compilation based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org>, and the WIDE database, <https://www.education-inequalities.org>.

BOX 1.1.**GPE SUPPORT TO EQUITY: AFGHANISTAN**

In Afghanistan, despite remarkable increases in enrollment from 2002 to 2017, geographical disparity and gender inequality remain a grave concern. In eight provinces, more than 70 percent of school-age girls are out of school. Half of the country's schools operate without permanent buildings, and parents are reluctant to send their girls to schools that lack boundary walls and adequate sanitation facilities. In light of this situation, the current GPE-funded project (2018–2024), through the World Bank, aims to increase access to basic education in rural areas, especially for girls, in selected lagging provinces. The project supports the construction of 1,946 schools: permanent buildings with latrines and water wells. In addition, it provides schools with grants to undertake interventions to address local demand and supply-side constraints. Interventions may include provision of female hygiene products or transportation to and from school for female students and teachers.

Source: IDA, Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 71.2 million (US\$100 Million Equivalent) and a Proposed Grant from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund in the Amount of US\$100 Million and a Proposed Grant from the Global Partnership For Education in the Amount of US\$98 Million to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the EQRA Project (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/835181538364643803/pdf/Afghanistan-Eqra-project-appraisal-document-pad-P159378-09112018.pdf>.

country populations continue to grow larger and younger, their education systems struggle to keep pace, and additional social, economic and other barriers to access persist. Indicator 7 tracks the proportion of (a) children of primary school age and (b) children of lower secondary school age who are out of school.¹⁰ The newly revised data (see discussion in Section 1.1) show that lower secondary out-of-school rates were higher at baseline than previously estimated; nonetheless, recent milestones have been met for partner countries overall and PCFCs, though girls' rates are still 0.8 percentage points above the milestone (Figure 1.4b). Progress on lower secondary out-of-school rates for all groups is steady. This is not the case for primary out-of-school rates, however, with milestones missed for all groups, and rates essentially stagnant over the past year (Figure 1.4a).

Across GPE partner countries, on average, more girls than boys are still out of primary and lower secondary school, and girls in PCFCs are especially disadvantaged, particularly at the primary level. At the 2019 milestone, 27.6 percent of girls were out of primary school in PCFCs, and 35.4 percent were out of lower secondary school—much higher than the rates shown in Figure 1.4.

GENDER PARITY IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN (Indicator 8)

Indicator 8 tracks the average gender parity index of out-of-school-rates: what proportion of girls are out of school versus what proportion of boys are out of school, on average across the partnership. The updated data show that girls' disadvantage in access to lower secondary has remained essentially unchanged since the baseline (girls being 11 percent and 13 percent are more likely to be out of school overall and in PCFCs, respectively, than boys), and has been getting worse at the primary level (where girls are 29 percent and 40 percent more likely to be out of school overall and in PCFCs, respectively).¹¹ The 2019 milestones were missed for both groups at both levels of education.

However, since taking an average across countries allows instances of girls' disadvantage to cancel out instances of boys' disadvantage mathematically, it can mask disparities. A clearer picture is revealed by looking at the country-level values. Substantial gender disparities with regards to out-of-school children persist in 71 percent of partner countries with data available at the primary level: Forty percent have

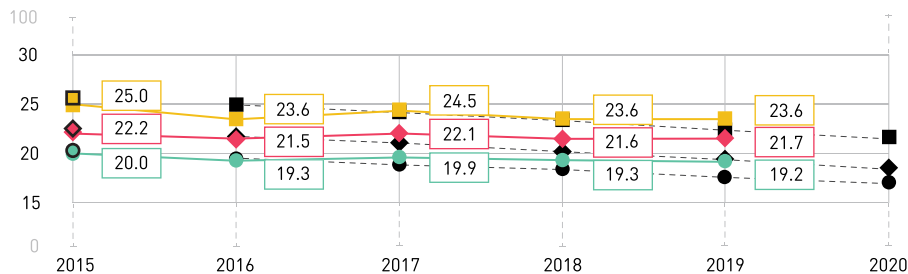
10. Out-of-school rates track the number of primary-school-age children who are not in primary school, as a proportion of all primary-school-age children; the same principle applies for lower secondary. Unlike completion rates, they are sensitive to whether children are enrolling at the intended age, and this may be one reason why their progress is slower.

11. GPE compilations based on revised data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (2019).

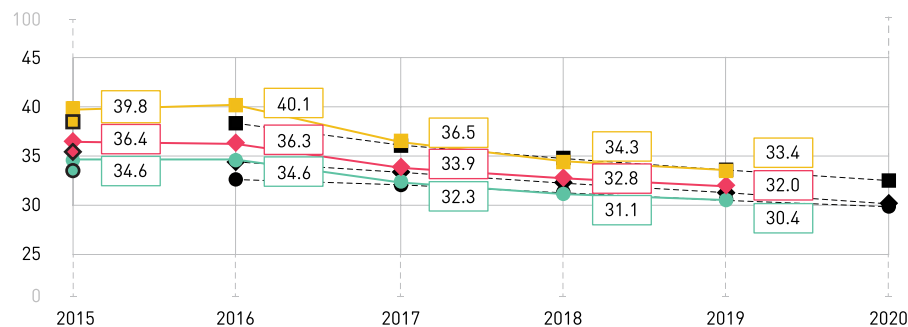
FIGURE 1.4.

A: PROGRESS IS SLOW ON PRIMARY OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES.

Out-of-school rate for children of primary school age

**B: THERE IS GOOD PROGRESS ON LOWER SECONDARY OUT-OF-SCHOOL RATES, THOUGH THE GENDER GAP IS LARGELY UNCHANGED.**

Out-of-school rate for children of lower secondary school age



	Milestone	Actual	Original baseline
Overall	●	●	●
PCFCs	■	■	■
Female	◆	◆	◆

Source: GPE compilation based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (2019).

Note: GPE does not revise official baselines; these are represented above as "Original Baseline." Originally reported data for years 2016–2018 can be found in Appendix A.

more girls out of school and 31 percent have more boys out of school.¹² Moreover, 26 percent of partner countries have more than 50 percent more girls than boys out of primary school, while 12 percent have more than 50 percent more boys than girls out of primary school. At the lower secondary level, 68 percent of partner countries with data available have substantial gender disparities: Fifty percent have more girls out of school and 18 percent have more boys out of school.

It is worth keeping in mind that the gender parity index of out-of-school rates can be misleading if considered in isolation

from the raw out-of-school rates. Indeed, the countries with the highest gender disparities in out-of-school rates are often those with the lowest overall out-of-school rates, because higher ratios are easier to come by between smaller numbers. For this reason, countries that have more out-of-school children are generally less likely to have the most troubling gender parity indexes. Especially when it comes to out-of-school rates,¹³ then, gender parity indexes must be considered in combination with the rates themselves in order to provide a full picture of where the needs are greatest.

12. Results are for 42 partner countries with data available for gender parity in out-of-school rates for primary, and 38 partner countries with such data available for lower secondary. GPE compilations based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (latest available data from 2017–2013). GPE does not have an official target threshold for gender parity indexes of out-of-school rates; the one employed for Indicator 5, regarding a gender parity index of completion rates (a ratio of 0.877–1.123 girls to boys), simply provides a frame of reference here for the inner limits of "substantial gender disparities."

13. Note that this concern does not apply in the same way to completion rates, which are typically larger numbers, and much more likely to have instances of gender disparity correspond with poor outcomes for children, generally in the form of low completion rates.

IN FOCUS

GENDER EQUALITY IN BASIC EDUCATION

Progress is being made on certain aspects of gender parity in access to education, but not quickly or comprehensively or enough. Girls are still disadvantaged on average on all of the indicators that measure girls' and boys' outcomes, and the gender gap is narrowing slowly if at all.¹⁴ The gap in completion rates has improved since 2015, but it has stagnated over the past year at the primary level while reducing at the lower secondary level. Primary out-of-school rates have seen the gender gap widen slightly, both over the past year and since 2015. And despite progress in reducing lower secondary out-of-school rates, the gender gap has remained essentially unchanged since 2015. At the same time, there are four partner countries with fewer than 85 boys for every 100 girls completing primary school, and five such for lower secondary school, showing that boys' disadvantage can also be a challenge within the partnership.¹⁵

Gender equality in education is a key priority for GPE (see Box 1.2), and goes beyond parity in enrollment and completion. In the words of GPE's *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020*, "Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys, and equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. It encompasses the narrower concept of gender equity, which primarily concerns fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs. Gender equality also refers to the transformational commitment needed to make equal rights and equal power a reality, within the human rights agenda. It entails that the interests, needs, and priorities of females and males be taken into consideration, recognizing the great diversity within these groups." GPE is committed to supporting gender equality in education, and striving to do so more fully. It has supported 28 countries to date to engage in gender-responsive education sector planning workshops co-convened with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and

partners (see Box 1.2 for details). GPE's results framework also requires that (and monitors whether) education sector plans/transitional education plans have strategies to respond to marginalized groups, including by gender, that meet quality standards (see Chapter 3).

Gender equality is often a focus of implementation grants as well, helping to drive results. For example, Burkina Faso's previous implementation grant (2013-2017), through a pooled fund,¹⁶ addressed girls' disadvantage in access to school through a range of interventions. This included scholarships for girls, the distribution of school supplies and dry rations to take home, and awareness-raising campaigns. This likely contributed to gains for girls such as those seen in lower secondary completion rates: When the grant began, only 87 girls completed lower secondary school for every 100 boys in Burkina Faso; when it finished, that number had risen to 101.

In December 2019, the Secretariat completed a thematic review of the gender responsiveness of recent education sector analyses, education plans and implementation grants, focusing on questions of alignment across the policy cycle as well as with global conventions and evidence-based approaches. Out of the 40 partner countries included in the study, all identified specific barriers, needs or challenges with respect to gender equality, all but one proposed activities to address such challenges in their education plans, and all but two funded activities promoting gender equality in their implementation grants.¹⁷ Moreover, the review found nearly complete alignment between the approaches undertaken in implementation grants and those advocated in literature reviews and international conventions. The thematic review report also identified areas for further inquiry, such as whether more support may be needed to equip countries to tackle particularly socially complex and multilayered issues such as child marriage and child labor, or to enhance the responsiveness to varying country contexts advocated by GPE's gender equality policy and strategy.¹⁸

14. Here, the gender gap is calculated as the difference between girls' and overall rates taken as a proportion of overall rates.

15. Out of the 61 partner countries in the GPE 2020 results framework set. GPE compilation based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> [2019].

16. The pooled fund for the 2013-2017 implementation grant included contributions from the GPE Fund, Canada, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and UNICEF. This pooled fund has continued since, and has disbursed on average US\$32 million per year between 2017 and 2019, including during the current implementation grant (2018-2023).

17. This count includes subnational states that have their own education sector plans, such as in Nigeria and Somalia. The number of ESPIGs in the study was 36, since Nigeria has one ESPIG.

18. GPE, *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2016), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gender-equality-policy-and-strategy-2016-2020>.

BOX 1.2.**PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY 2016–2020**

The Board of Directors adopted the *Gender Equality Strategy 2016–2020* to put GPE's *Gender Equality Policy* into practice, in alignment with GPE 2020, and to advance inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys. In the second half of 2019, the Effective Partnership Rollout provided the Secretariat with the opportunity to take further steps to mainstream gender into GPE's country operations, which has involved revised guidance for education sector plan development grants (ESPDGs), revised language in program development grants, and guidance to help ensure sufficient funding from education sector program implementation grants (ESPIGs) on the implementation of gender equality strategies, in cases where an ESPDG supports an equitable education sector plan. The mainstreaming also included enhanced integration of gender considerations into the quality assurance process and the local education group self-assessment tool, among other areas.

Ongoing work also focuses on three other prioritized areas, the first of which is oversight and capacity building within the Secretariat. As the partnership works toward a new strategy and funding model through 2025, ensuring that gender is fully incorporated into both is the second priority area. The third concerns continued support through gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) and the new G7 Gender at the Center Initiative (GCI), which supports gender equality in and through education systems. GPE Secretariat staff are represented on GCI's steering committee and have been participating in GCI workshops since September 2019. GCI will focus on eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

There are several new developments in the GRESP program jointly developed by GPE and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) as well. An interim independent review in May 2019 established that this program has made important progress in building capacity and strengthening the commitment of participants to advance gender equality in education. A new GRESP workshop was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in September 2019, co-hosted by GPE, UNGEI and the UNICEF Nigeria Country Office. Funding for a new phase of GRESP through December 2020 was also approved by the Secretariat and UNGEI, utilizing the remaining balance of the US\$8 million in targeted financing for gender equality provided by the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. Program components, which are designed to complement the GCI, include (a) training of facilitators on gender-responsive education sector planning, (b) development of a package of additional GRESP tools, (c) development of a global set of minimum standards to assess the gender-responsiveness of education sector program implementation grants, (d) an independent review of the three phases of GRESP, and (e) strengthening the capacity of the UNGEI Secretariat to coordinate the G7 GCI.

More details can be found in the annual reports on implementation of the *GPE Gender Equality Strategy 2016–2020*, the latest of which will be published to GPE's website in mid-2020.

IN FOCUS

BASIC EDUCATION IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY FRAGILITY AND CONFLICT

As of November 2019, 32 of GPE's 68 partner countries (47 percent) were categorized as PCFCs.¹⁹ Children are less likely, on average, to complete basic education in PCFCs, and more likely to be out of school. GPE places a high priority on supporting these countries to provide a quality education to all

children within their borders (see **Box 1.3** for an overview of GPE support to the Central African Republic).

GPE weights its funding allocations toward PCFCs so that these countries get more support from the outset.²⁰ As of December 2019, 76 percent of all active implementation grant allocations were for PCFCs.²¹ GPE's accelerated funding mechanism now allows partner countries to access the equivalent of up to 20 percent of their maximum allocation in additional

19. An updated list of GPE partner countries affected by fragility and conflict is available at <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/list-gpe-partner-countries-affected-fragility-and-conflict>.

20. GPE, *GPE Funding Model: A Results-Based Approach for the Education Sector* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2015), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-funding-model>.

21. Of the US\$1.128 billion in total active implementation grant allocations as of the end of calendar year 2019, US\$853.1 million was allocated to PCFCs; see Section 4.1 for more details.

funding in case of emergency education needs.²² Previously, this 20 percent would come out of the maximum allocation, but in December 2019 the Board approved an expansion of accelerated funding that would make these funds additional to that allocation.²³ GPE grants can be also restructured to meet emergency needs and deployed for direct service provision to ensure schools remain open, under the *Operational Framework for Effective Support in Fragile and Conflict-affected States*.²⁴ GPE also provides financial and technical support to help countries emerging from a crisis to establish a transitional education plan, which sets up a coordinated approach by identifying priority actions in the medium term to maintain progress toward key educational goals and by linking development and humanitarian actors.

GPE promotes the inclusion of refugees and displaced children in education sector plans and works with partners, such as

the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Education Cannot Wait, to meet the needs of these populations. In December 2019, GPE, Education Cannot Wait and the World Bank announced a joint pledge to improve the coordination and financing of the Global Compact on Refugees, in support of education for refugees and host communities.²⁵ Refugees are also key beneficiaries of GPE grants to host countries; for example, a recent education sector program implementation grant to Djibouti, which includes Multiplier funding, supports the government to make public education more inclusive for refugees and to operate schools that were previously run by nongovernmental organizations or by UNHCR in refugee settlements.

BOX 1.3.

GPE SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION IN PCFCS: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Central African Republic has been suffering from conflict and fragility for decades. By early 2018, about 688,000 Central Africans were internally displaced and 546,000 were refugees in neighboring countries. In light of this long-standing crisis, a GPE implementation grant (2014-2018) through UNICEF supported the government to restore its education system. The GPE-supported project targeted 12 of the prefectures most affected by the conflict. Despite insecurity and escalating violence, partners in the country successfully rehabilitated 110 schools that had been damaged during the conflict. This resulted in access to secure, standards-compliant schools for an estimated population of more than 50,000 students in the prefectures targeted. The project also financed remedial classes for children previously released from armed groups and conducted back-to-school campaigns to encourage parents to send their children to school, and to call on combatants to leave children and schools out of the conflict. It also distributed math and reading textbooks to 222,968 students and trained and recruited 1,050 new teachers. Ministry staff were trained on the preparation of education response in emergency situations. At the end of the GPE project period, 228,400 additional children were enrolled in primary schools across the 12 beneficiary prefectures.

Source: UNICEF, *Appui au relèvement du système éducatif en République Centrafricaine* (New York: UNICEF, 2019).

22. GPE, *Guidelines for Accelerated Support in Emergency and Early Recovery Situations* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2015), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidelines-accelerated-support-emergency-and-early-recovery-situations>.
23. GPE, "Board Decisions: Final," Meeting of the Board of Directors, December 10-12, 2019, Nairobi, Kenya. Global Partnership for Education, Washington, DC, 2019, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/board-decisions-december-2019>.
24. GPE, *Operational Framework for Effective Support in Fragile and Conflict-affected States* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2016), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-operational-framework-effective-support-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states>.
25. Y. Sherif, A. Albright, and K. Miwa. "Our Joint Pledge to Increase Financing and Coordination and Improve Education for Refugees." *World Education Blog*. GEM Report, UNESCO, December 16, 2019, <https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2019/12/16/our-joint-pledge-to-increase-financing-and-coordination-and-improve-education-for-refugees/>.

1.3. GPE support for equity and learning in basic education

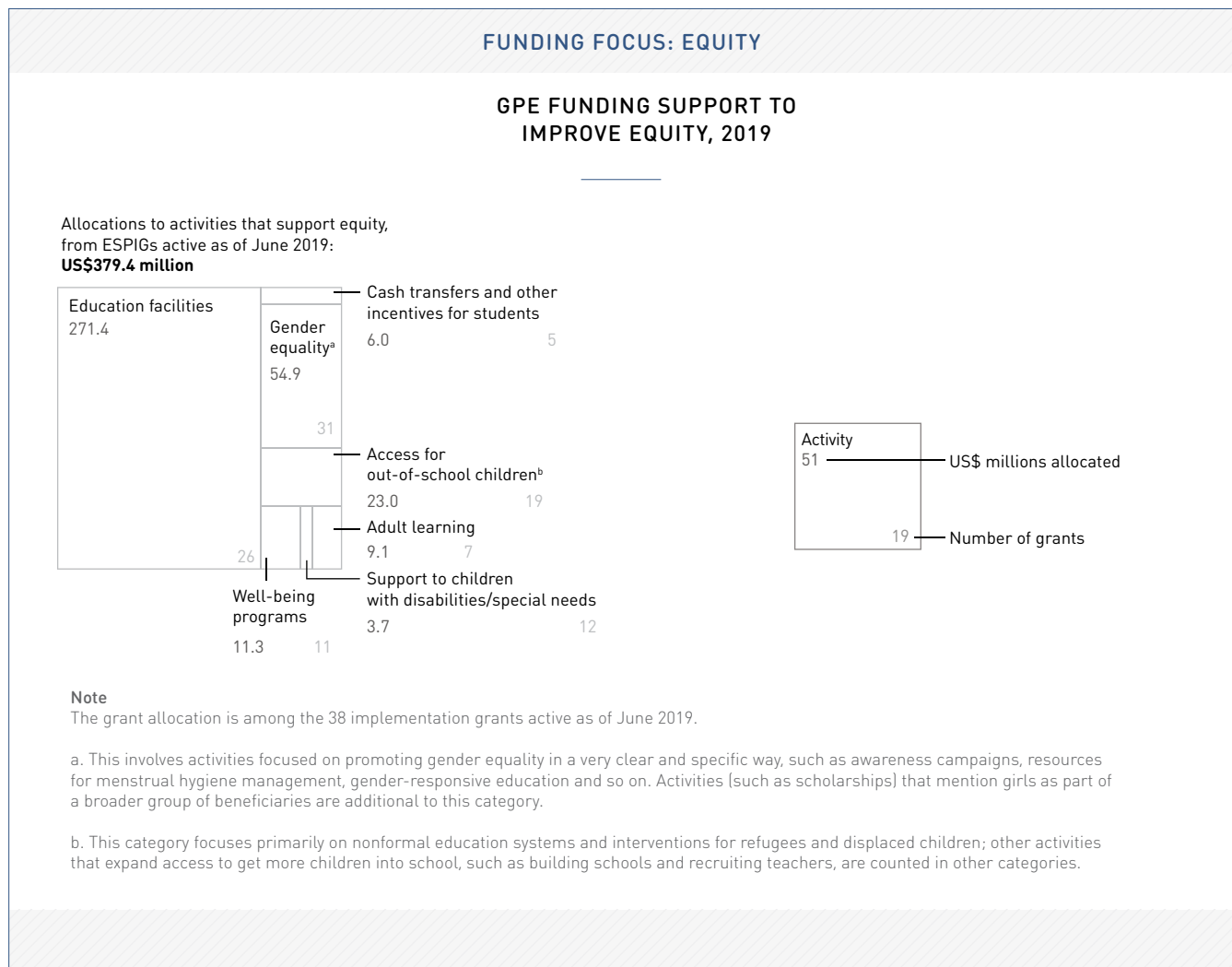
SUPPORTING BASIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN (Indicator 3)

Indicator 3 provides a rough equivalence of the number of additional children enrolled in basic education as a result of the disbursements of GPE grants in a particular year.²⁶ Since 2015, the grants disbursed by GPE have amounted to the cumulative cost of supporting 24.8 million students: 22.6 million in

primary school and 2.2 million in lower secondary, including 11.8 million girls [Figure 1.5].²⁷

Among the 38 implementation grants active during fiscal year 2019 (for more details, see Chapter 4), US\$379.4 million in GPE funding supported activities to improve equity, ranging across seven categories (Funding Focus: Equity).

Education facilities are the largest expenditure for equity. They are key to expanding access to school, especially for children in underserved areas, and for girls, who may be less likely to be sent to school if it is too long a journey. The facilities



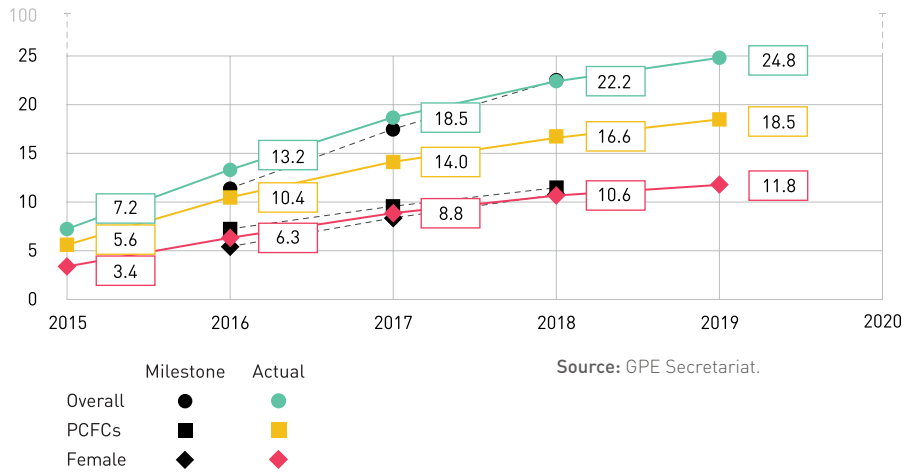
26. Note that this indicator is not intended as a formal count; it is only a proxy for the actual number of children reached by GPE. Specifically, depending on how a given GPE grant is used by a country and the nature of country-level projects implemented, its impact may affect more or less children than estimated by the indicator. The 2019 milestones do not appear for this indicator because the previous milestones were set in 2015 for the period 2016-2018. These were calculated based on the grant allocations for the period 2016-2018 (according to the 2015-2018 GPE replenishment). Given the new grants approved under the new replenishment cycle (2018-2020), it was not possible to compute comparable milestones or targets for the period 2019-2020.

27. Girls make up less than half of the estimated children supported because these estimates are based on the children being served by the education systems across partner countries, and girls are still on average less likely to have access to education, so they are less likely to be beneficiaries.

FIGURE 1.5.

MORE CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED FOR BASIC EDUCATION.

Cumulative number of equivalent children supported for a year of basic education (primary and lower secondary) by GPE, in millions



BOX 1.4.

GPE SUPPORT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, less than 10 percent of children with disabilities are enrolled in school. To address this, the current GPE-funded program (2016–2021), through UNICEF, has a variety of measures to expand educational opportunities for children with special needs. It supports (1) the establishment of an early screening process to identify children who have or may have learning challenges, (2) the development of a database of children’s support needs, and (3) the provision of training for teachers to support children with disabilities. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has made it a priority to develop and implement a comprehensive inclusive education policy during this program period.

Source: Zimbabwe, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, *Global Partnership For Education Support Programme* (Harare, 2016), https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/programme_document_gpe_submission_for_2nd_grant_august_2016_zimbabwe.pdf.

category also includes water, and sanitation and hygiene facilities, which are likewise critical for equitable access.

GPE SUPPORT FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Expanding support for the inclusion of children with disabilities in quality education is an important priority for GPE. GPE provides a wide range of assistance toward this goal, including guidance, support and funding for interventions to include

children with disabilities in countries’ education systems. GPE’s support also includes tools and guidelines for education sector analyses and planning to support improved disability data, teacher training in inclusive education, and equipment and learning materials such as braille machines, eyeglasses and hearing aids (see [Box 1.4](#) for an example from Zimbabwe).

In 2019, the Secretariat finalized “Leaving No One Behind,” a Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) discussion paper on equity and inclusion and the related concept note listing areas for investment, holding an online consultation and webinar to

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consolidate feedback on the paper. Work also began on a thematic review of equity and inclusion in education sector analyses, plans and program implementation grants across partner countries, and examining alignment across the policy cycle, as well as with evidence-based best practices. In addition, GPE commissioned a UIS study on monitoring data on inclusive education, with inputs from the Secretariat.²⁸ The study examines how to increase the availability of data on education for people with disabilities, outlining how global data from the UIS and national data from education management information systems (EMIS) could be better used to monitor inclusive education. GPE held a joint webinar with the UIS to discuss this study as well as other recent work involving EMIS for inclusive education, with panelists from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank.²⁹ Efforts to improve the availability of disability-disaggregated education data across partner countries is also a strategic priority for fiscal year 2020.

UPDATE ON SUPPORTING DATA SYSTEMS (Indicator 20)

GPE's implementation grants provide support to various dimensions of learning assessment systems, as well as EMIS. Indicator 20 of the GPE results framework examines the proportion of grants supporting EMIS and/or learning assessment systems, and is next scheduled for formal reporting against the 2020 target. The interim update, however, is that in 2019, 36 of out 38 grants supported data systems, including 21 of 22 grants to PCFCs. This surpasses even the 2020 target for this indicator.³⁰

One example of GPE support to learning assessment systems is in Djibouti, where an implementation grant is supporting improvements to the national learning assessment (known as the *évaluations indépendantes*) as well as the system of examinations. Results-based financing is incorporated into the project, with disbursement of the variable tranche tied to an improvement in learning outcomes.

Among the 38 implementation grants active during fiscal year 2019, US\$442.8 million in GPE funding supported activities to improve learning—the largest thematic allocation—covering five categories (Funding Focus: Learning). The two largest allocations among these categories were to standards, curriculum and learning materials (US\$196.6 million) and teacher development (US\$144.4 million).

FUNDING FOCUS: LEARNING

GPE FUNDING TO IMPROVE LEARNING, 2019

Allocations to activities that support learning, from ESPIGs active as of June 2019:
US\$442.8 million

Activity	US\$ millions allocated	Number of grants
Standards, curriculum and learning materials	196.6	33
Teacher development	144.4	34
Teacher management	59.8	22
Use of ICT in learning	5.1	4
Learning assessment systems	36.9	33
Total	442.8	130

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN GPE SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, GPE's indicators on learning outcomes and learning assessment systems are next scheduled for reporting against the 2020 target, and the latest data currently available can be found in the *Results Report 2019*. GPE's work to support learning continues, of course, including a number of new developments in the past year.

GPE's Assessment for Learning (A4L) initiative has made substantial progress in the past year. In October 2019, GPE

28. UIS, "The Use of UIS Data and Education Management Information Systems to Monitor Inclusive Education" (Information Paper 60, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal, 2016), <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip60-use-of-uis-data-and-emis-to-monitor-inclusive-education.pdf>.

29. GPE, "Webinar: Improving EMIS Data on Inclusive Education to Effectively Monitor SDG 4," filmed October 31, 2019, in Washington, DC, at the Global Partnership for Education, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/events/webinar-improving-emis-data-inclusive-education-effectively-monitor-sdg-4>.

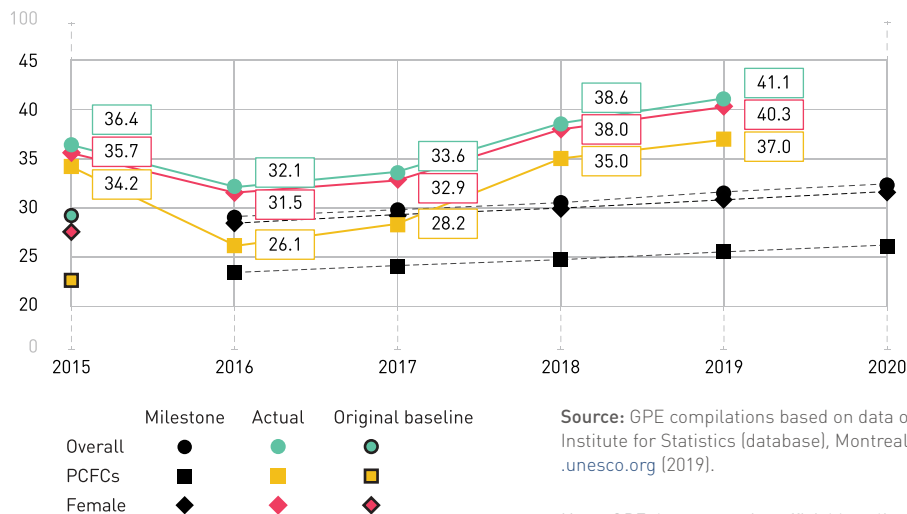
30. Milestones were based on initial data for baselines that were much lower, but not comprehensive and not reliable.

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FIGURE 1.6.

PRE-PRIMARY GROSS ENROLLMENT RATIOS CONTINUE TO INCREASE.

Children enrolled in pre-primary education, as a percentage of children of pre-primary school age



Source: GPE compilations based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (2019).

Note: GPE does not revise official baselines; these are represented above as "Original Baseline." Originally reported data for years 2016-2018 can be found in Appendix A.

launched the Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS), a toolkit to support countries in conducting comprehensive analysis of their learning assessment systems.³¹ The toolkit was piloted in Ethiopia, Vietnam and Mauritania and then refined and finalized. It is now available globally as a public good, and some GPE partner countries have already expressed interest in using it. A4L has also supported eight regional capacity development workshops through the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) run by UNESCO Bangkok and the Teaching and Learning: Educators' Network for Transformation (TALENT) networks run by UNESCO Dakar. These workshops serve ministry officials working on learning assessment from the GPE partner countries in the two regions; they have focused on aspects of learning assessment such as school-based assessment, assessment of transversal competencies, contextual data and development and use of large-scale assessments.

GPE funding can also be used to support participation in regional and international assessments. For example, an implementation grant has supported Burundi to participate in the 2019 round of Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), a regional assessment. PASEC tests grades 2 and 6 students in mathematics and language skills.

1.4. Early childhood care and education

PRE-PRIMARY ENROLLMENT (Indicator 6)

Indicator 6 of the results framework tracks progress on access to pre-primary education through the pre-primary gross enrollment ratio.³² While revised data against the 2016 milestone show a dip, enrollment ratios have since been increasing for all groups (Figure 1.6). All 2019 milestones were met for this indicator. Pre-primary enrollment is nearly at gender parity overall, and the rate for girls in PCFCs is 35.9 percent.³³

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is one of the best investments available to improve outcomes for children.³⁴ It greatly increases children's chances of staying and succeeding in school down the line, and it reduces the impact of social inequality on educational outcomes.

In addition to ensuring that support to pre-primary education and other aspects of ECCE is included in grants and technical support (see Box 1.5 for one example), GPE is investing in ECCE in a variety of ways:

- > The Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative is well underway with a US\$1.3 million

31. GPE, *Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS): Manual* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2019), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/toolkit-analysis-national-learning-assessment-systems-anlas>.

32. The pre-primary gross enrollment ratio of a country measures the number of children enrolled in pre-primary education, as a percentage of the number of children of pre-primary school age living in that country.

33. GPE compilation based on data of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (database), Montreal, <http://www.uis.unesco.org> (2019).

34. B. Daelmans et al., "Early Childhood Development: The Foundation of Sustainable Development," *The Lancet* 389, no. 10064 (2017): 9-11.

BOX 1.5.**GPE SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: CAMBODIA**

GPE's previous two implementation grants to Cambodia (2008-2012 and 2014-2017), through the World Bank, supported improvement of access and quality of early childhood education, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in rural/remote areas, and in ethnic minority communities. These grants funded the construction of 502 formal preschools and 500 community-based preschools, and the additional establishment of 950 community-based and 950 home-based preschools. They also supported training, materials and pedagogical support for more than 5,000 preschool teachers, and a communications campaign to increase parental awareness of the benefits of preschool education. During this period, the national enrollment ratio of five-year-olds more than doubled, from 31.4 percent in 2008 to 66.3 percent in 2017.

Sources: World Bank, *Implementation Completion and Results Report (TF-92097) on a Grant in the Amount of US\$57.4 Million to the Kingdom of Cambodia for an Education for All-Fast Track Initiative Education Sector Support Scale-up Action Program* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2013); World Bank, *Implementation Completion and Results Report (TF-17490) on a Global Partnership for Education Grant in the Amount of US\$38.5 Million to the Royal Government of Cambodia for the Cambodia Global Partnership for Education Second Education Support Project (P144715)* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018).

- grant to UNICEF to strengthen education sector planning for early childhood education through in-country capacity building and learning exchange, with a focus on four pilot countries: Ghana, the Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, and Sao Tome and Principe.³⁵ This work has already yielded valuable insights into the specific challenges and opportunities for the pre-primary subsector related to the sector planning process. Early 2020 will see several cross-country learning exchanges on improving planning for the pre-primary subsector as well as the launch of a global toolkit.
- › The BELDS initiative will be further scaled as one of two KIX global grants financing ECCE to start in 2020. With partnerships expanded to include the World Bank and the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), the BELDS program under KIX expects to extend to four additional countries (Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan and Zambia) and offer a wider range of resources targeting pre-primary education in the full policy and planning cycle.
 - › The KIX discussion paper on ECCE was completed in fiscal year 2019, having been shaped by two in-person consultations with partner countries and extensive feedback from external partners and global experts.³⁶ The paper has been commended by partner countries as a strong resource for global evidence in ECCE. Looking ahead, KIX will continue to support tangible capacity development, research and innovative practices to help countries in providing quality and equitable pre-primary education at scale. The forthcoming KIX regional hubs³⁷ will provide an opportunity for countries to learn from their peers on innovative approaches to strengthening ECCE.
 - › GPE collaborated extensively with UNESCO, including UNESCO-IIEP, and UNICEF to produce a free five-week massive open online course, *Mainstreaming Early Childhood Education into Education Sector Planning*.³⁸ The course made its debut in October-November 2019, with more than 3,600 participants from 167 countries registering for it, of whom more than 2,000 were from 62 GPE partner countries. This is the first course to

35. For more information on BELDS, see GPE and UNICEF, *Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS)* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2019), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/better-early-learning-and-development-scale-belds-flyer>.

36. GPE, "Strengthening Early Childhood Care and Education" [Knowledge and Innovation Exchange discussion paper, Global Partnership for Education, Washington, DC, 2019], <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/strengthening-early-childhood-care-and-education-knowledge-and-innovation-exchange-kix-discussion-paper>.

37. For details, see "Call Document: Regional Learning Partners for the Global Partnership for Education's Knowledge and Innovation Exchange," International Development Research Centre, <https://www.idrc.ca/en/call-document-regional-learning-partners-global-partnership-educations-knowledge-and-innovation>.

38. See C. McConnell, D. Doury, and I. Borisova, "Online Course on Early Childhood Education Planning Draws Enthusiastic Global Participation," *Education for All blog*, Global Partnership for Education, January 23, 2020, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/online-course-early-childhood-education-planning-draws-enthusiastic-global-participation>.

cover integrated holistic planning specifically for pre-primary education. The course organizers are exploring opportunities for future cohorts to engage in this topic, and the course readers are available online.³⁹

- › GPE co-hosted a successful side event on early childhood education at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7) in August 2019, which led to the drafting of a global call to action, with new partners continuing to sign on weekly.⁴⁰

TOWARD EQUITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN ACCESS AND LEARNING

The data on equity in access to education highlight several areas where real progress is being made, as well as a few that

remain stagnant. More young children are enrolling in pre-primary education, and these represent nearly equal rates of boys and girls. And of the children who make it through primary school, more are able to attend and complete lower secondary. The gap between girls and boys completing school is slowly decreasing on average. At the same time, the proportion of children out of primary school has improved minimally since the 2015 baseline, and primary completion rates are increasing more slowly than previous estimates had suggested. This suggests that while the partnership's targets are being achieved in many respects, universal primary education is still a key challenge in many countries,⁴¹ and efforts must be redoubled to ensure that all children have the chance to receive a quality education, especially at the primary level.

39. See IIEP-UNESCO, UNICEF, and GPE, *Mainstreaming Early Childhood Education into Education Sector Planning*, Course Reader for Module 1: *The Rationale for Investing in Pre-primary* (Paris: IIEP-UNESCO, New York: UNICEF, Washington, DC: GPE, 2019), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/rationale-investing-pre-primary>.

40. See African Union, Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF, African Early Childhood Network, World Bank Group, and Global Citizen, *Call to Action Statement: Early Childhood Education for All* (Washington, DC: Global Partnership for Education, 2020), <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/call-action-early-childhood-education>.

41. According to Secretariat projections, universal primary education will not be achieved in the average GPE partner country by 2030, but will take several decades beyond that.

