JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

September 2018

GPE Transforming Education

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The GPE Secretariat welcomes feedback and examples of use of these guidelines—please write to information@globalpartnership.org, specifying *JSR guidelines* in subject heading.

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Glossary and abbreviations

Different terms may be used across countries for aspects common to JSRs. The terms used consistently in these guidelines and any related tools are given here.

Aide-Memoire	In the context of JSRs, the *aide-memoire* is the critical document providing information on collective agreements, recommendations, and decisions taken during the review to improve sector ESP/TEP planning, implementation and monitoring, as well as on organizational issues around the JSR. As such, it is the basis for moving forward, contributes to building an institutional memory of how the JSR is maturing over time, and works as an accountability framework.
Annual Implementation Report	The *annual implementation report* (titled differently in different countries; e.g., annual progress report) is the key input document for informing the JSR discussions. It provides an overview of annual sector financial status and performance against agreed actions and indicators. This annual report influences operational decision making and informs strategic policy dialogue on improving education results.
MultiYear Operational Plan	The *multiyear operational plan* is a medium-term (three to five years) document that sets out key ESP implementation strategies and indicates activities, responsibilities, time frames, and budgets. It can be updated on an annual rolling basis, informed by assessment of progress made in the preceding year and a reflection on how implementation can be improved in the coming years.
Annual Action Plan	The *annual action plan* sets out actions and financial allocations identified within the multiyear operational plan, when existing, or the ESP. In developing the annual plan, the Ministry of Education ensures that the prioritization, phasing, and timing of the programs are consistent with policy targets. The *annual action plan* should be regarded as a companion volume to the ESP, outlining the ongoing operational strategies for its achievement.
Education Sector Plan (ESP)	An *education sector plan* is a policy instrument elaborated under the responsibility of the government that translates that government's vision for the development of the national education system within a defined time period. It outlines a coherent set of strategies to reach objectives and is based on a sound analysis of the current situation and the causes of successes and difficulties. The ESP should include implementation, budget, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks and be endorsed by country partners that commit to support its implementation.
Transitional Education Plan (TEP)	In situations where longer term planning or the implementation of the ESP is compromised (or precluded) by contextual uncertainties, a *transitional education plan* enables the state and its partners to develop a structured plan that will maintain progress toward maintaining education services and longer term educational goals.
Terms of Reference (ToR)	In the context of JSR, the terms of reference, elaborated in the early stage of a JSR process (with yearly necessary updates and revisions) serves to unpack and reach collective agreement on prioritization actions needed. As such, it should ideally cover the development of the annual implementation report, the logistics for a JSR meeting, the process for developing the aide-memoire, and identification of follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of recommendations.
Local Education Group (LEG)	A *local education group* (going under different names across countries) is a multi-stakeholder body convened and chaired by the government to support policy development, sector planning, and monitoring of educational progress. Its composition differs from country to country but typically includes government representatives, development agencies, civil society organizations, education worker organizations, and other private actors supporting the education sector.
Coordinating Agency (CA)	The *coordinating agencies* are tasked with facilitating the work of the local education group to enable in-country development partners to collectively support the government, and the government to lead and interact with partners effectively. They enable development partners to develop constructive working relationships that enhance joint monitoring of education sector plans and policies, and results-oriented sector dialogue under the leadership of the government.
Partners	*Partners* refers to both national partners (civil society organizations (CSOs), local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, other bodies engaged in education) and international development partners (bilateral agencies, UN organizations, and international NGOs).

What are joint sector reviews?

Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs) are a government-led process bringing different stakeholders together to engage in dialogue, review status, and monitor expenditure, progress, and performance in the implementation of national education sector plans or countries' sector implementation frameworks. JSRs take a critical look at past achievements as well as bottlenecks in plan implementation and propose forward-looking remedial actions. The process usually consolidates evidence on sector progress in the run-up to a JSR gathering.

JSRs are . . .

- **Tailor-made and context specific.** The purpose, form, and functions of a JSR vary across countries in light of focus, contents, duration, modalities employed, evidence used, expected outputs, and mechanisms for follow-up to recommendations.

- **A process, not just a meeting.** JSRs do not exist in a vacuum and are integrated within existing policy dialogue mechanisms, national planning, and monitoring and evaluation processes. As such, they are organized in sequence with other important sector dialogue mechanisms in coordination with (or by) local education groups, technical working groups, and broader stakeholder forums, etc.

- **Robust when they are characterized by solid organizational preparedness.** The payoffs depend on the extent to which the broader education community has been engaged in deciding the scope of the review and its methodology, in elaborating the annual implementation report, and in identifying and acting on priority actions for follow-up. This engagement helps to build credibility and trust across stakeholders throughout the JSR process.

- **Country led** when they are built on strong government leadership with the wide and meaningful participation of country stakeholders in a *joint* review process and constructive policy dialogue.

- **Critical to strengthening policy dialogue and mutual accountability** in the implementation of the sector plan. The JSR is only one out of many contributing factors to these benefits.

- **Key to making planning more responsive and flexible.** The regularity of the review offers opportunities to identify achievements and bottlenecks and to formulate recommendations that enable adjustments in the annual or multiyear operational plan.

Why these guidelines?

Although countries have long been organizing JSRs in the education sector, there has not been much concerted reflection, or evidence produced, on the contribution of JSRs to education policy dialogue, planning, and monitoring efforts. Nor is there common guidance on how to optimize the full potential of JSRs, and especially stakeholder engagement, through their preparation, conduct, and follow-up.

These guidelines have been elaborated 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. The guidelines are rooted in recent action research, including a literature review, a survey, focus group discussions, and a review of 39 JSRs,[1] and shaped by consultations and knowledge exchange through an iterative peer review process.[2]

The cumulative lessons learned have been distilled to assist governments and relevant stakeholders in identifying entry points for the organization of their JSRs. It must be underlined, however, 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 JSRs should always be governments' stated priorities and national capacities. Moreover, JSRs will evolve and mature as national priorities shift, and 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 unique purposes and core functions of their JSR, for identifying capacity strengths/gaps, and overcoming some of the organizational and financial constraints to the full engagement of the education community in the joint review process.

With these caveats in mind, the following chapters offer a combination of contextual and conceptual foundations, practical guidance, and tools. Both Chapter 1 and 2 underpin the practical guidance in Chapter 3 and provide the backdrop against which the tools in JSR Tools are embedded.

Context	**Why:** Chapter 1 briefly sets the stage for JSRs, positioning the JSR as an important vehicle for strengthened sector monitoring and responsive planning within countries' wider sector dialogue and coordination frameworks, including the core benefits to national planning and monitoring efforts.
Effectiveness Framework	**What:** Chapter 2 provides an effectiveness framework and analytical lens to support country teams in reflecting on their JSR. The framework, which covers key characteristics and core functions of an effective JSR, describes what each of the five dimensions of an effective JSR entails, as well as vulnerabilities that may arise as a result of missed opportunities.
Practical Guidance	**How to:** Chapter 3 provides guidance to country teams for preparing, conducting and following up on JSRs. This includes steps and mechanisms for learning from one JSR to the next. This is complemented by country examples illustrating different options, and by a series of Annexes (1–5) which provide additional guidance for some of the key elements in the process.
Tools	**JSR tools:** The last part of the guidelines provides a set of tools which country teams can use for specific purposes, including for informed decision making around JSRs, monitoring JSR effectiveness, and facilitating cross-country exchange and peer learning. Optimum use of the effectiveness framework and general guidance includes use of the tools to design a process that is suitable for the specific country context.

1 For more information see the 2017 GPE Working Paper "Effective joint sector reviews as (mutual) accountability platforms" and "Key takeaways: Effective joint sector reviews as (mutual) accountability platforms" which are accessible here: http://www.globalpartnership.org/content/effective-joint-sector-reviews-mutual-accountability-platforms

2 See Acknowledgments for a brief description of the peer review process in developing these guidelines.

Chapter 1. JSRs within sector dialogue, planning, and monitoring

This chapter defines and positions JSRs within countries' sector policy, planning, monitoring frameworks, and timelines. It briefly explains **WHY** JSRs are important within existing sector dialogue mechanisms and monitoring processes, as well as the core benefits that JSRs can bring as a continuous and evolving exercise within sector planning implementation.

Defining JSRs

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.

The JSR performs two key functions in that it contributes to:

1. **Strengthened sector monitoring** by fostering alignment and harmonization of key partners and stakeholders around a shared policy framework, and addressing systemic issues related to sector monitoring arrangements, including data quality; and

2. **Responsive planning** by identifying challenges, priorities, and action points, and allowing planning assumptions and processes to be more reactive and responsive in light of the progress made, emergent needs, and system changes.

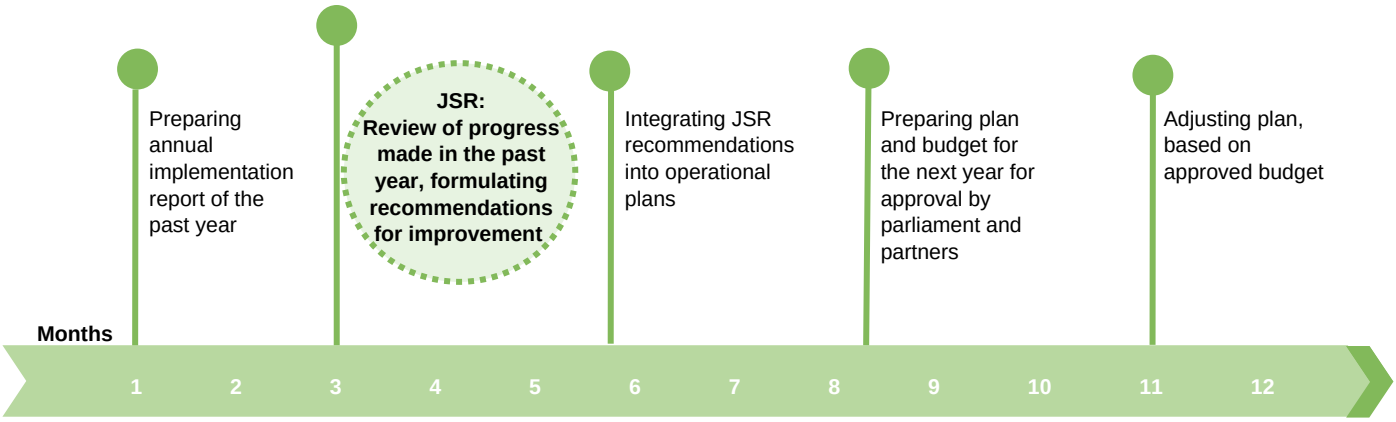
Recommendations issued during JSRs often require operational responses, budgeting decisions, and adjustments to sector monitoring arrangements. For this reason, **integrating the JSR into the annual planning, monitoring, and budgeting cycle is essential.**

Positioning JSRs

JSRs and sector dialogue mechanisms: JSRs are embedded in existing sector policy dialogue structures, including the local education group, thematic working groups, and task forces. The preparations for (and results of) JSRs are discussed in these forums and through the organization of a JSR gathering, meeting, or conference. JSRs provide a platform for engagement from a wide spectrum of national and local development and humanitarian partners about good practices and specific implementation challenges, bringing these messages to national and international audiences for consideration in policy and planning decisions.

JSRs and the national planning and monitoring cycle: JSRs are ideally anchored in the national planning cycle and existing monitoring mechanisms, offering a mechanism for monitoring around a *jointly* agreed education sector plan. Figure 1 describes how the JSR fits within the annual planning and monitoring timelines.

FIGURE 1: JSR WITHIN THE ANNUAL PLANNING AND MONITORING CYCLE



Where the education sector plan (ESP) and transitional education plan (TEP) is found to be out of sync with operational and implementation realities, the JSR enables stakeholders to identify areas requiring remedial attention, revise assumptions in the next planning cycle, and suggest solutions for moving forward. For this, among other reasons, the timing of the JSR is key to negotiations with the Ministry of Finance on budget allocations.

There are obviously differences in country practices and these often relate to: (i) the exact point at which the JSR takes place in the policy cycle; (ii) whether it has comprehensive sector coverage or focuses on specific subsectors; (iii) the extent to which it is integrated with broader sector or cross-sector evaluation, monitoring, and reporting arrangements; and (iv) its integration with wider strategies for development and humanitarian financing, public-private partnerships, governance, and human resource development, etc.

How JSRs complement other sector monitoring arrangements: What sets JSRs apart from mid-term and end-of-cycle reviews is that they are formative in nature, conducted jointly as a stakeholder community effort, and often have multiple objectives and benefits; i.e., they attempt to strike a balance between ongoing monitoring for results, mutual accountability, capacity strengthening, and ensuring systematic follow-up that allows for course correction.

The typical attributes of different types of education sector reviews are presented below in Table 1.

TABLE 1: SECTOR REVIEWS ALONG THE POLICY CYCLE OF THE ESP/TEP

	ANNUAL JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS	MID-TERM REVIEW	END-OF-CYCLE REVIEW
Purpose	To assess annual progress of sector plan implementation to influence operational planning of following year(s)	To review progress of sector plan implementation to inform any mid-term adjustments of the plan	To evaluate sector plan implementation and results serving as inputs to sector analysis and the development of the new education plan
Timing	Once or twice per year	At the midpoint of the ESP implementation period	Final year of sector plan implementation or in advance of the next policy cycle to allow findings to inform the next plan
Monitoring Focus	The year under review (backward looking)	The first years of plan implementation	Total or large majority of sector plan coverage
Scope	Implementation of annual or multiyear operational plan; discussion on enabling factors and bottlenecks; financial flows (domestic and external) and management; potential remedial actions and follow-up on previous JSR recommendations Review of the quality of the evidence base, capacity strengthening needs, and possibilities for innovative monitoring	Trends on indicators and financial results from baseline analysis of underperformance, and remedial actions and strategic/target changes for the coming years Focus on three OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency	Assessment of targets, sector plan implementation, and impact in general, including enabling and disabling factors Five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability
Indicators	Process and output indicators measuring the implementation of specific interventions, combined with outcome indicators whenever possible Indicators related to efforts to resolve bottlenecks, alignment around shared policy framework, participative monitoring	All indicators Results of all indicators available (some outcome indicators may not be available) taken into consideration to assess the three evaluation criteria	All indicators All available data used to inform the five evaluation criteria
Inputs	Annual implementation report Quantitative and qualitative data and information from a broad spectrum of development and humanitarian partners—complementary to the annual implementation report	Draft mid-term review report, informed by past annual reports and JSRs, among others	Draft final evaluation report, informed by past annual reports and JSRs, among others
Outputs	Aide-memoire	Mid-term review report	Final evaluation(s) report
Expected Outcome	Annual or multiyear operational plan adjusted based on agreed recommendations	Adjustments of the ESP/TEP and its results framework	Education sector analysis and new ESP informed by evaluation findings

Source: Adapted from *Joint Annual Health Sector Reviews: Why and how to organize them,* WHO, 2014.

JSRs also have a wider value to national education systems in that they can offer a forum for meaningful dialoguing of **countries' SDG target setting, coordination, and monitoring frameworks.** In the first instance, JSRs facilitate the inclusion of sustainable development goal (SDG) indicators within the national policy dialogue and their integration within planning frameworks. Through the comprehensive review and subsequent JSR meeting, stakeholders discuss areas for reprioritization, leading to a progressive refocusing of actions and education investments toward aligning ESP/TEPs with SDG targets.

Core benefits

There are three core benefits that JSRs can bring to the national education monitoring effort and education systems more generally.

1. **JSRs foster mutual accountability and shared responsibility for results:** Mutual accountability is a learning process, yet monitoring efforts are frequently perceived solely as a vehicle for one-way accountability from governments to their funding/technical partners. JSRs push for *mutual* accountability—the review not only examines government investments and progress in plan implementation, but also emphasizes the need to look at how *all* stakeholders have performed on their respective commitments to supporting the ESP/TEP implementation. JSRs complement existing mechanisms for *institutional accountability* (ministry and department responsibilities) and *domestic accountability* (through parliaments or civil society observatories). They also enhance trust between development partners, where results are transparent and where partners share their knowledge and information on their plans, investments, and programs that should be aligned on ESP/TEP priorities.

2. **JSRs contribute to strengthened, aligned, and more comprehensive sector monitoring:** A responsive, forward-looking and successful ESP/TEP planning cycle depends on a functioning monitoring system and a reliable, comprehensive evidence base. JSRs play an important role in strengthening these foundations through alignment and harmonization of monitoring efforts with country systems around a shared policy framework. *Joint* monitoring opportunities have proved particularly important in contexts defined by resource scarcity, including fragile and conflict-affected states, where large amounts of external assistance may not be aligned or channeled through regular government financing mechanisms.

3. **JSRs generate more responsive planning and resource optimization:** Of central concern to countries remains the adequacy of resources and institutional capacities to achieve quality and equity targets as included in the ESP/TEP, and how to refocus actions and investments in a progressive way to align ESP/TEPs with SDG targets. JSRs foster more responsive planning when implementation evidence and financial data are discussed during the JSR, when implementation and financial gaps are assessed, and when decisions are taken on course correction in light of the information available. As a result of broad stakeholder participation in the JSR, ministries of education are also able to gain a better understanding of the different types of resources—public, civil society organization (CSO), non-state, household—going into education, how these are used, and what types of partnerships are possible to support the implementation of the ESP/TEP.

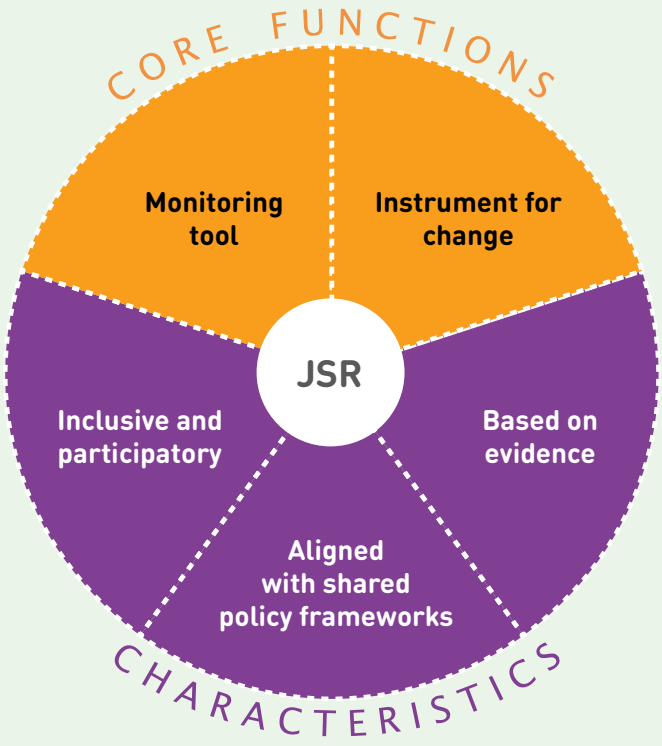
Chapter 2. JSR effectiveness framework

Chapter 2 presents a framework for defining effective JSRs—including **WHAT** are considered *three essential characteristics* for JSRs to fulfill their *two core functions* of monitoring and planning. This five-dimensional framework offers a device and analytical lens for understanding and identifying both quick wins and longer term strategies to better tap into the JSR's full potential.

In order for education stakeholders to engage with the JSR as a **monitoring tool** and leverage the JSR as an **instrument for change** embedded in the education policy cycle, the review should be **participatory and inclusive**, with the review of progress, achievements, and challenges **aligned with shared policy frameworks** and based upon robust and frequently reported **evidence.**

This approach underpins the conceptual effectiveness framework for JSRs, the five dimensions (Figure 2) of which are elaborated in this chapter. An explanation is offered of what each dimension entails and what country teams and stakeholders may miss out on if their JSR does not take the particular dimension into account.

FIGURE 2: FIVE DIMENSIONS OF AN EFFECTIVE JSR



Dimension 1: Inclusive and participatory

As a multi-stakeholder platform, JSRs aim at inclusion (*who is represented*) and participation (*effective engagement*) of the broader community in *joint* sector monitoring efforts. More inclusive stakeholder participation allows for a wider spectrum of perspectives to be heard on the realities, challenges, and successes of implementation. This not only helps to generate more realistic planning assumptions, but also builds consensus around education strategies and policies, including ownership and support for them.

The JSR process and meeting offer a unique opportunity for front-line education implementers and beneficiaries to engage in discussions with government representatives at centralized and decentralized levels regarding sector plan implementation and monitoring issues, and education practices. It is also essential to tap into the potential of civil society organizations (CSOs), and to include ministries of finance.

As a rule of thumb, it is important to pay attention to the active engagement of both women and men, so that their different perspectives are effectively represented. In an effective JSR, **participating actors** would aim for gender balance and include:

- *High-level leadership of the ministry (or ministries) in charge of education* and their technical departments, which lead and organize the JSR, including inclusive mechanisms for year-long policy dialogue that support the meaningful participation of different stakeholders.

- *Subnational education authorities,* who provide valuable information on the status of plan implementation and feedback on actual institutional and organizational capacities at decentralized levels to reach set targets.

- *The Ministry of Finance,* which provides the critical link between information on education finance, the annual planning process, and budgeting decisions, allowing dialogue on domestic financing and allocations to the education sector. The attendance of the finance ministry is essential given the high stakes of ensuring adequate education budget levels and the importance of financial reporting for mutual accountability and evidence-based discussions and decision making.

- *Other ministries implicated in education provision,* especially health, gender/women's affairs, social affairs, and sport, in so much as they can strengthen intra-governmental and cross-sector dialogue and coordination on education programming, budgeting and contents. Inclusion of these ministries may be even more important in countries with humanitarian crises. The direct and indirect impacts of conflict or disasters such as drought or famine on education need to be considered during the JSR process.

- *Development agencies,* which support both the implementation of the education plan technically and financially, and the JSR process, bringing national and international expertise, innovation, and experience to address complex monitoring and challenges, including coordinated follow-up through the local education group.

- *Humanitarian partners,* such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the education cluster in conflict-affected contexts, which are instrumental in helping to better align responses and funding in support of national education systems for all children and young people.

- *CSOs/NGOs,* including women's rights groups, ethnic and youth networks, and disabled people's organizations, which bring innovation, evidence, and knowledge of what is happening at community levels and alternative perspectives on sector progress and management.

- *Teacher organizations, and organizations representing education support personnel,* including principals, librarians, and other nonteaching staff, who bring classroom realities to the fore and provide a bridge between policy and practice.

- *Representatives of parents' associations and school management committees* who have increased responsibilities for education provision under decentralization policies in certain countries and who (or whose children) are the primary beneficiaries of sector policy.

- *The private sector,* including nonpublic educational providers, but also other private sector investors in education like foundations or corporate companies, which bring insights and investments to complement and strengthen public education.

- *Other relevant actors* who, depending on the country context, rarely participate in national education policy dialogue (media, elected representatives including parliamentarians, district council members, students' associations, etc.).

The success of the JSR as a *joint* endeavor will depend on the steps taken to embed broad stakeholder **engagement throughout the process** and facilitate **constructive dialogue** during the JSR meeting. These steps should include provision of technical, financial, and logistical support to stakeholder groups which would otherwise not have the capacity to fully engage. It also depends on factors such as the country context, the degree of governmental support and transparency in regular dialogue processes and the openness of partners to working alongside a wider stakeholder group, as well as their readiness to listen and accept different opinions.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, WHEN THE JSR IS *NOT* PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE

If openness to dialogue is limited, ESP/TEP ownership and a comprehensive assessment of what is working well (or not) may be difficult to obtain. Differences in perspective may not be aired or resolved.

If the ministry of finance is not involved, the findings of the JSR may not be leveraged to ensure that the education sector and ESP/TEP receive the adequate level of domestic financing. It may also suggest limited buy-in to the idea of JSRs as a tool for financial accountability at the national level.

If the ministry of gender/women's affairs and women's organizations are not involved, the perspectives, priorities, and needs of women and girls may not be represented, and key gender inequality issues impacting education results may be missed.

If subnational levels are not involved, there is a missed opportunity to listen to those who are responsible for implementation and closer to the beneficiaries. As a result, the JSR may fail to address regional disparities.

If CSOs, education and teachers' organizations, and parents' associations are not involved, school-level realities may be neglected. This is a missed opportunity to listen to alternative perspectives on overcoming challenges to quality education provision.

Dimension 2: Aligned to shared policy frameworks

JSRs are an important vehicle for all stakeholders to align their activities with the ESP/TEP, strategic plans and budgets, and offer a forum for stakeholders to (i) share knowledge and information on their plans, investments, and commitments; and (ii) situate their strategies within a more comprehensive view on the sector as a whole. Alignment of monitoring efforts around an *agreed-upon policy framework* is central to the comprehensive assessment of progress and critical constraints facing the education sector.

Among national education policy frameworks, it is typically the ESP or TEP[3] that **guides operational planning, budgeting, and support** for the education sector through its operational subsets (i.e., the annual or multi-year operational plan and results framework). The ESP/TEP also informs strategic policy dialogue in different stakeholder forums (local education groups (LEGs) and technical working groups, etc.) on improving education results. The ESP/TEP is therefore key in defining the overall perimeter of the annual implementation report.

Even if the full contents of the implementation report may not be covered during the JSR meeting, technical and political consensus is built on the most important issues raised in the report. The JSR offers a forum to engage in a meaningful policy dialogue based on an analytic review of the comprehensive stocktaking of progress and critical constraints facing education. This dialogue should generate greater alignment among stakeholders around the ESP/TEP and a common understanding of sector challenges beyond stakeholder groups' own priorities.

When the annual report is comprehensive, development partners should ideally be able to use it as part of their reporting processes. In contexts where governments work with many different partners, this can help to align reporting mechanisms and result in **reducing transaction costs and circumventing divergent lines of accountability** incurred from multiple reporting and monitoring requirements. Alignment on national monitoring tools and mechanisms is also critical for holding partners to account for their commitments to different ESP/TEP targets—thus promoting mutual accountability for results.

Given the central role played by the ESP/TEP as the foundational instruments on which sector monitoring tools and mechanisms are developed, consensus among stakeholders on the policy framework against which a JSR is based is essential. Close attention is needed to ensure coherence between stakeholder expectations for the JSR, what the JSR actually reviews, and countries' national sector plans and operational documents.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, WHEN THE JSR IS NOT ALIGNED TO A SHARED POLICY FRAMEWORK

If the scope of the JSR is not defined by a shared policy framework, there is a missed opportunity to reduce parallel processes and transaction costs for government.

If the JSR is primarily driven to respond to partner reporting requirements, it may not serve its overall purpose of monitoring sector performance and improving sector outcomes.

If a disconnect exists between the contents of ESP/TEPs and what the JSR as a process monitors (sector/subsector coverage, activities by type of internal or external funding, etc.), this could jeopardize the coherency and impact of the monitoring effort and lines of accountability.

3 A TEP may have been developed in contexts of uncertainty, where the situation is rapidly changing, due either to conflict or a widespread disaster, and where quality and reliable data are scarce (see Glossary and abbreviations).

Dimension 3: Evidence based

A robust evidence base is central to an effective JSR. It feeds the *annual implementation report,* which is the central document input to the JSR, and underpins informed and constructive dialogue during the JSR meeting. As such, it determines the focus and quality of discussions and acts as the baseline for moving forward.

A responsive, forward-looking ESP/TEP planning cycle depends, in part, on a reliable and comprehensive evidence base to inform planning assumptions and decision making. This requires **up-to-date education information and financial data** from the year under review, related to whether ESP/TEP targets were met (or not), the challenges and bottlenecks encountered, and even the usefulness of different indicators and related interventions. Across contexts, different types of information might include:

1. **Quantitative data:** Generally sourced from education management information systems (EMIS); government financial management systems; population census and other national databases; and targeted, rapid surveys (mostly in context of conflict, crisis, or natural disaster). When disaggregated (by region, rural/urban, gender, disability, ethnic or linguistic groups, child laborers, migrants/refugees, socioeconomic profiles), data improves understanding of how education strategies impact on different population groups.

   As the impact of education policies only becomes visible in the medium or longer run, data may include time series to demonstrate observed values on a yearly basis, as well as evolution over a given period.

2. **Qualitative data:** Generated from management reports; secondary analysis of databases; beneficiary surveys; 'deep dives' into specific sector or subsector issues; and interviews and observations with national and subnational level actors and education beneficiaries.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence are both important and complement each other, as numerical expression of progress alone cannot explain education patterns or specific results for different population groups. In conflict situations, for example, stakeholder perspectives may be able to provide critical inputs relating to the impact of the conflict on education, including attacks on teachers, students or schools, dropout rates of girls and boys, and out-of-school youth. Qualitative research can provide evidence and clarifications from implementers and beneficiary groups, allowing reviewers to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of successes or shortcomings.

It is crucial to include financial information data and program expenditure for the year under review as part of the mutual accountability mechanism, to assess the effect of education expenditure on quality and equity targets. This in turn is to be balanced with stakeholder and subnational perspectives on service delivery.

In fragile and conflict-affected states, routine data collection efforts may not be maintained, and data will need to be gathered in different ways. Disaggregating data (by gender, regions, etc.) in these situations is especially important for analyzing the situation and planning responses that are sensitive to the context.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, WHEN THE JSR IS *NOT* EVIDENCE BASED

If the evidence base for the report is not comprehensive or informed by reliable data, decisions can be swayed by opinion. Accountability for results will also be limited and discussions may generate unrealistic policy decisions and resource allocations.

If financial data are not available for JSR discussions, opportunities are missed to leverage JSRs as a tool for financial accountability (both of governments and development partners) in terms of delivering on commitments and effective use of allocated resources. Lack of available evidence also undermines efforts to advocate for increased domestic and/or external financing for education based on cost-efficient good practices.

If the data are not disaggregated, national averages may hide regional, gender, or other inequalities and lead to inadequate policies.

If data on gender inequalities and other key cross-cutting issues are not tracked, key barriers of exclusion may go unaddressed.

If the data comes too late to be considered, the quality of the plan/remedial actions will suffer and opportunities for effective engagement from a variety of stakeholders in the JSR process may be missed.

Dimension 4: A monitoring tool

JSRs are part of a continuous monitoring of sector plan implementation and have additional benefits for the monitoring of the SDG 4 education targets. The stocktaking of past performance, *looking back* at past results and shortcomings through the JSR, including the monitoring of previous JSR recommendations, underpins mutual accountability and enables an assessment of whether targets are being achieved on time and as planned.

The **review of sector performance** is not a one-time event but embedded within a broader and continuing year-round process through information gathering, data analysis, regular stakeholder feedback, and collaboration around related monitoring activities well beyond the JSR purposes. The JSR, through its regular and consistent stocktaking of performance, can be instrumental in reaping benefits for operational efficiency.

An important aspect of JSRs' effectiveness as a *monitoring tool* is also to review the extent to which agreed-upon recommendations from the previous JSR have been actioned and implemented (before making decisions on new recommendations).

As part of this monitoring function, effective JSRs encompass a **learning** function, as they leverage information from the monitoring exercise to enhance the understanding of enabling factors and identify good implementation practices and bottlenecks. They can also fulfill an important '**meta-evaluation**' purpose, as they offer the opportunity to assess progress in maturing the *quality of the evidence* base for monitoring. This can be done through the JSR by flagging critical gaps in data production, financial reporting, and qualitative information, and by proposing solutions for enhancing the overall monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, WHEN THE JSR IS *NOT* USED AS A MONITORING TOOL

If the monitoring function does not encompass a learning function, including a review of the enabling factors, challenges, and bottlenecks, the JSR will be limited to stocktaking—an accounting exercise—and may be ineffective as a driver for change.

If the JSR does not monitor progress regarding the recommendations from the previous year, accountability is weakened and the previously identified shortcomings may not be addressed.

If the JSR is not leveraged to review the quality of the evidence base feeding into the overall M&E mechanism, the evidence for monitoring may not improve in any significant way over time. Opportunities for exploring available data and developing a more effective national monitoring system may be missed.

Dimension 5: An instrument for change

Effectively embedding JSRs into the policy cycle makes them *responsive* to system changes and emergent needs by performing a *forward-looking* function. The JSR discussion and consensus, informed by diverse perspectives, helps fine-tune planning and influence domestic and external financing based on priorities and action points agreed upon by stakeholders. Well-resourced, effective JSRs can work as management and policy support for sector planning, programming, and budget preparation and monitoring.

Effective JSR meetings culminate in a set of prioritized and actionable recommendations that designate the responsible parties (**'who'**) in charge of the specific remedial action (**'what and how'**) and a timeline for their operationalization (**'when'**). These are documented in a collectively agreed-upon aide-memoire disseminated to the JSR stakeholder group (and beyond) as the basis for moving forward.

To this extent, JSRs are an important **instrument for change** in the short and longer term—first through their focus on formulating recommendations for better results and their linkages to institutionalized dialogue forums (i.e., the local education group, coordination bodies, working groups, task forces) where decisions are made on the resources available for corrective actions. Secondly, annual JSR deliberations are also the basis for mid- and long-term evaluations and may contribute to a revision of the ESP/TEP, from its policy priorities to the activity level, as well as the reallocation of sector expenditures.

In countries where the context is in flux, changes can be positive (e.g., a peace agreement or resolution of a conflict) or negative (e.g., conflict erupting, political instability). In these cases, the JSR provides an important opportunity to examine the current situation and to adjust targets or actions in ESP/TEP or change direction as needed.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES, WHEN JSR IS *NOT* EMBEDDED INTO PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES

If the JSR is not well embedded in the sector planning cycle, the incentives for persistent follow-up and political buy-in may decrease and stakeholders may not be held accountable, with a potential risk of the JSR being perceived as 'all talk, no action'.

If the JSR is not used to adjust priorities based on the prevailing country context, significant changes with regard to access and quality of education may not be identified, and opportunities to reprioritize efforts appropriate to these changes may be missed.

If recommendations are unclear or not agreed upon, the JSR will most likely generate only limited and fragmented follow-up and lose its power as an instrument for change and for sector dialogue.

TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF COMMON CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTED RESPONSES

Table 2 lists *common challenges* to overcome within the five dimensions, and points to the relevant practical guidance in Chapter 3, JSR Tools, and Annexes.

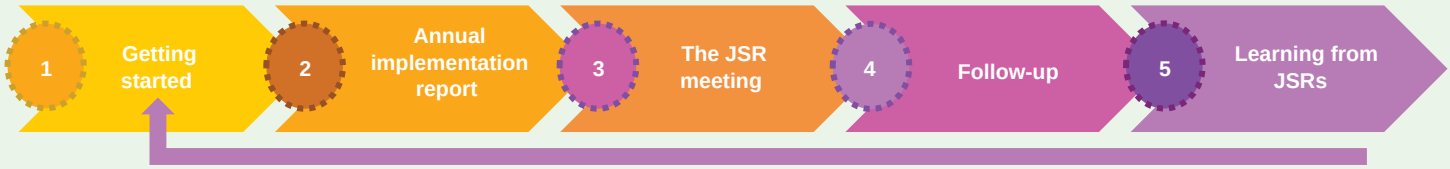
COMMON CHALLENGES	FIND RESPONSES IN CHAPTER 3, JSR TOOLS, AND ANNEXES	Page
DIMENSION 1: INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY		
Sub-optimal representation of stakeholders	**Agree on the JSR modalities** **Ensure broad and inclusive participation**	p. 29 p. 29
Token participation	**Enable effective stakeholder engagement** **Timely dissemination of meeting documents** **Planning the JSR meeting**	p. 31 p. 39 p. 41
Embedding country leadership and ownership	**Assign responsibilities for JSR organization and follow-up** **Build buy-in** **Table 3: Options for organizational arrangements**	p. 23 p. 33 p. 24
DIMENSION 2: ALIGNED WITH SHARED POLICY FRAMEWORKS		
Parallel reporting processes and links between national and subnational plans	**Agree on JSR scope and how it fits within broader planning, evaluation, and reporting** **Agree on the inputs and outputs of the JSR** **Table 4: Levels of monitoring**	p. 26 p. 28 p. 26
One-way accountability instead of *joint* review	**Establish a JSR terms of reference** **Annex 1: JSR terms of reference**	p. 32 p. 65
DIMENSION 3: BASED ON EVIDENCE		
Use of existing data and evidence	**Information sources and data gathering** **Table 5: Examples of sources contributing to the evidence base**	p. 35 p. 37
Data challenges	**Overcoming data and capacity constraints** **Box: The need for continuous data capacity strengthening**	p. 37 p. 38
Production of a quality report	**Drafting the annual implementation report** **Annex 2: Annual implementation report**	p. 39 p. 66
DIMENSION 4: MONITORING TOOL		
Balance of monitoring information	**Report coverage**	p. 34
Monitoring and reporting on JSR recommendations	**Follow-up and monitoring throughout the ESP/TEP cycle** **Table 6: Agenda setting—Options for recurrent and changing items**	p. 48 p. 42
Improving technical and nontechnical monitoring	**Monitoring JSR effectiveness** **JSR Tools: JSR self-assessment tool**	p. 51 p. 54
DIMENSION 5: INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGE		
Trade-offs around implementable recommendations	**Toward consensus on JSR recommendations** **Finalization of recommendations and agreement on action points** **The JSR report and aide-memoire** **Annex 3: Aide-memoire**	p. 43 p. 45 p. 46 p. 67
Making JSR a forward-looking tool for planning	**Agree on JSR objectives and strategic timing** **Integrating action points into operational and subnational plans** **JSR Tools: Maturity ladder**	p. 25 p. 47 p. 60
Learning to improve JSRs	**Stakeholder feedback** **Knowledge and experience exchange** **Annex 4: Cross-country knowledge exchange** **JSR Tools: Toolbox for facilitating cross-country knowledge exchange**	p. 50 p. 50 p. 68 p. 63
See also: overview	**Annex 5: Overview—The JSR process**	p. 69

Chapter 3. Practical guidance for organizing an effective JSR process

Chapter 3 offers practical guidance and tips on **HOW TO** *prepare, implement and follow up on a JSR.* This is complemented by examples of country practices to illustrate different organizational options. Keeping in mind the elements for an effective JSR presented in Chapter 2 and the most typical issues to address, the guidance works to embed the JSR's core functions as a vehicle for joint monitoring and policy change to increase impact and better results.

The practical guidance that follows is broken down into five sequential, organizational stages, reflecting the *JSR as a process.* Each of these can be consulted as a resource at the relevant stage in the JSR process.

FIGURE 3: JSR AS A PROCESS



For maximum gain, this chapter can be used in combination with the JSR tools, namely:

- JSR self-assessment tool
- Maturity ladder for visualizing an evolving JSR
- Toolbox for facilitating cross-country knowledge exchange

Selected outlines and further guidance are contained in the annexes:

- JSR terms of reference (ToR)
- Annual implementation report
- Aide-memoire
- Cross-country knowledge exchange

As a further support, examples are given to illustrate how countries (with various degrees of JSR experience) have approached the organization of their JSRs and responded to organizational challenges.[4] Generally, education stakeholders can also learn from JSR practices in other countries, with good practices shared through online and in-country exchanges or through international development partners.

4 These examples are not selected against any "good practice" criteria, but are rather testimony to how different countries have organized themselves to address some of the most common issues linked to the JSR process.

1. Getting started

Leadership and organizational preparedness lay the foundations for a robust JSR and are critically important to its success and outcomes. The payoffs come when there is collaboration and *joint* partner investments in setting clear mutual expectations and identifying the modalities and scope of work, elaborating the terms of reference to reach objectives, matching capacities with different task areas, and securing stakeholder engagement.

Assign responsibilities for JSR organization and follow-up under national leadership

High-level commitment to the JSR is important to the success of the review. In many countries JSRs are championed by the education minister or permanent secretary and involve decision makers within the ministry(ies). Commitment from the Ministry of Finance is also important to provide guidance on budget implications.

A high-level political push from top government policymakers, backed by the planning or finance ministry as the general custodian of public resource allocation and use, reinforces national ownership of the JSR process and generates institutional backing for any decisions taken during the policy dialogue.

In relation to the development compact, the relevant **sector dialogue structure** (LEG or other) is well positioned to facilitate, mobilize, and coordinate diverse stakeholders to support the government in organizing their JSR. This policy dialogue body can be proactive in promoting an inclusive approach, helping to ensure that the JSR is prepared and organized with the effective engagement of the wider education community. Country practice shows that governments also find the structures described in Table 3 useful for the planning and technical work involved in the JSR.

The **JSR self-assessment tool** can be useful to facilitate dialogue around JSR practice and priorities. See JSR Tools, page 54.

It will also be important, early on, to identify the lead mechanism for monitoring the follow-up of the JSR recommendations. Monitoring and documenting the implementation of agreed actions should be embedded as a collective responsibility within existing policy dialogue mechanisms—i.e., the LEG (or other)—and can be assigned to the JSR review team under this dialogue mechanism, or to the planning or M&E unit.

TABLE 3: OPTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

A Small Steering Committee	**To guide and oversee the planning process.** This should be composed essentially of high-level ministry personnel, with the participation of other relevant ministries (for example, finance and planning) and may include development partners. It can be housed within the ministry within the planning or M&E unit, or as a cross department effort, or by expanding on the LEG membership. Where steering committees have been created, there is a need for dedicated members who: • have the authority and credibility to reach across ministry directorates and departments • are familiar with ESP/TEP and planning processes • are familiar with/knowledgeable of development partners active in the country, and experienced in coordinating multi-stakeholder initiatives
A Technical Committee	**To coordinate the detailed technical work involved in developing the annual implementation report and the organizational work involved in convening a JSR meeting.** This committee might be led by a chief coordinator, with team members who: • possess the technical expertise for data collection, analysis, and report writing • possess the logistical experience for events organization • are representative of decentralized levels
Task Teams and Working Groups	**To focus on specific themes or subsectors being addressed through the JSR (e.g., teacher education, adult education, finance, M&E, gender issues, etc.).** When the education policy dialogue architecture already includes such working groups (as part of the extended LEG for instance), it is advisable to use the existing groups for streamlining efforts. Working groups can be composed of ministry staff and development partners, including the civil society, and should aim for a gender balance across levels of seniority. In working toward specific subcomponents of the JSR, the task teams can be supported by national think tanks, research institutes, and local consultants.

Country practices

In **Cambodia,** the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport appoints members of a preparatory committee around six months before the convening of the country's yearly Education Congress. The committee includes ministry staff, technical assistants, and development partner staff who provide support to the drafting of the agenda, preparing of invitations, organizing of facilitator training, and compiling of the comprehensive annual implementation report (*Education Congress Report*). Inputs and support to the report finalization process is usually provided by the LEG—the Joint Technical Working Group in Education—a long-established body in Cambodia for aid effectiveness through greater alignment and harmonization of development partner support to the ESP and annual operational plans.

In **Democratic Republic of Congo,** national and international stakeholders were mobilized for the third JSR, based on a clear road map, to lead the organization of the review through two committees: (a) a logistics committee composed of a coordinator, two other members, and an assistant. This committee took care of diverse organizational elements including financing, procurement, organization of the JSR event, etc.; and (b) a technical committee composed of a coordinator and two other members charged with obtaining the necessary data for the preparation of the annual implementation report and other technical tools to support the review (2017).

In **Uganda,** there was an early agreement that part of the follow-up of the 2016 JSR would be undertaken by the Commissioner for Education Planning and Policy Analysis. Responsibilities included: (a) final editing and formatting of the aide-memoire; (b) printing of the aide-memoire; (c) dissemination of the aide-memoire within four weeks after the workshop; (d) extraction of actionable issues contained in the aide-memoire for follow-up; (e) communication of agreed positions relevant to respective departments and institutions for implementation; and (f) monitoring of the implementation of undertakings.

Agree on JSR objectives and strategic timing

Countries may have multiple objectives for their review; i.e., in relation to whether the JSR is taking a comprehensive look at past performance, and/or looking specifically at the following year's plan and budgets; whether the JSR is looking at specific themes or issues; or whether the JSR is primarily seeking to foster mutual accountability, partnerships, coordination and sector dialogue. The objectives differ according to country context and maturity of the JSR, but in all cases JSRs should:

- Be timed so that recommendations can feed into national annual and multiyear operational planning and budgeting processes and make use of the latest available data from the preceding year;
- Be timed so that recommendations can also feed into broader policy frameworks and reform initiatives;
- Fit into the timing of related institutional reporting and planning processes—including joint appraisals, thematic evaluations, regional/provincial planning, and reporting processes; and
- Be positioned so that the findings can be leveraged within intra-governmental dialogue on development financing to heighten the case for increased financing to the education sector.

Country practices

In **Nepal,** the government and development partners organize their JSR in two rounds to ensure strategic timing in relation to the budget and planning cycle. As such, the joint review meeting in November 2016 discussed overall progress in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), with a focus on emerging implementation issues and agreement on corrective measures. A subsequent budget review meeting was organized in March 2017 to review the SSDP draft annual strategic implementation plan and annual work plan and budget for FY2017/18, specifically the provisions for meeting the key results within the SSDP program result framework.

In **Rwanda,** the JSR is held twice a year. A *forward-looking* review, usually held in May/June focuses on priorities within the sector in the coming fiscal year. A *backward-looking* review, held in November, reviews the achievements challenges of the past financial year. To this end, the Forward Looking Joint Sector Review of the Education Sector (JRES) 2017/2018, held in June 2017, was viewed by national leaders as an avenue to engage in policy dialogue and ensure ownership, accountability, and transparency in the elaboration of the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 3), later named the National Strategy for Transformation and Prosperity (NSTP 1) and monitoring processes.

Ideally the JSR objectives will be discussed well in advance, with a predictable moment for discussing the preparation of the JSR within the LEG or national dialogue structure and ESP/TEP coordination unit at the beginning of each annual operational plan. The planning for the review needs to allow sufficient time for data consolidation and the production of the annual implementation report.

Country practices

In **Cameroon,** the objectives of the JSR in 2014 were: (a) to examine the state of education and training funding and expenditures in relation to sector strategy targets and against the commitments of the country and its partners; (b) to examine 2015 budget projections against sector targets; (c) to assess medium-term budget forecasts for the period 2016–2018 against sector requirements; and (d) to evaluate the contributions of development partners for the year 2014 and the projections for the year 2015 and for the period 2016–2018.

In **Togo,** the 2016 JSR had a number of key objectives: (a) to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 JSR; (b) to report on the performance of each subsector by presenting the evolution of the main monitoring indicators defined in the ESP (including their financial implementation rate and the execution status of funding allocations); (c) to analyze progress in preparing programmatic and operational innovations foreseen in the ESP and its procedural manuals; and (d) to evaluate overall progress toward the results expected with the 2015–2017 ESP. Education stakeholders also identified and analyzed the main difficulties in achieving the goals set in the ESP and made recommendations accordingly.

In **Vietnam,** the first JSR was launched in 2013 in what was planned to be a continuous process of assessment, review, and analysis embedded within the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET). The JSR had several objectives, including: (a) to obtain a 'multi-angle' review of the current state of primary education drawing on input from several sources; and (b) to collect and analyze data and information identifying success factors and the challenges constraining further progress toward quality learning achievement for all. An additional important process objective was to build capacities within the MoET to conduct JSRs on an annual basis using its own resources and expertise as an integral element of its monitoring work.

Agree on JSR scope and how it fits within broader planning, evaluation, and reporting

The scope of a JSR is driven by the objectives set by the national education system and community, national priorities, and key system issues as addressed in the ESP/TEP. However, the JSR organizers should first agree on the specific policy framework that will serve as a basis for JSR reporting, monitoring, and corrective planning. This can be done by considering the different policy frameworks, including the operational subsets and their implied level of monitoring.

In some settings, external aid funding is poorly aligned with the shared policy frameworks. The JSR may be the opportunity for better embedding these programs into the agreed policy framework and reporting. For instance, some results-based financing programs may require additional indicators and targets monitoring to trigger external aid disbursements—including these within the scope of the JSR could help avoid parallel reporting mechanisms and eventually lead to better alignment with the core policy framework.

TABLE 4: LEVELS OF MONITORING

POLICY FRAMEWORK	WHAT IT COVERS
Agreed ESP/TEP Results Framework	• Focuses on results • Comprehensive monitoring of progress • Linkages between results and implementation
Multiyear Operational Plan	• Framework for multiyear operational planning and reporting, including on- and off-budget items • Focus on implementation of key interventions • Opportunities to link longer term monitoring with yearly plan implementation • Linkages with medium-term expenditure framework
Annual Action Plan	• Focus on activity implementation • Allows for activity-based monitoring • Facilitates monitoring of budget execution

Country practices

In **Benin,** the first JSR in May 2016 was conceived within the context of the elaboration of the government's new sector policy document. This first review provided an opportunity to report to stakeholders following the sector diagnosis and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) exercises and to highlight sector strengths and weaknesses that affect planning assumptions. The results of the JSR also served as the basis for the preparation of the June 2016 budget review.

In **Rwanda,** successive JSRs are situated within the Economic Development Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPR). At the launch of the EDPRS 2 in 2013/14, a maximum of 10 key performance indicators and associated policy actions for the education sector were outlined, with future JSRs expected to facilitate their monitoring and implementation. The emphasis was on ensuring consistency in monitoring by encouraging education sector stakeholders to update the targets in the sector plan matrix, as well as on deciding on the strategic policy actions in line with planning and budget consultations. Of note: the scope of the JSRs also includes reporting and an update on the follow-up to the implementation of the previous years' recommendations.

In **Ghana,** the 11th session of the National Education Sector Annual Review (NESAR) in 2015 offered an overview of progress over the period 2000–2015 and contributed recommendations from education stakeholders for the next 15 years as part of the development of the Education Strategic Plan 2016–2030. This long-term plan reflects the government's intentions under its strategic goal for 'free compulsory basic education' and fits within the National Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 4).

Once there is a solid consensus regarding the central framework against which to measure sector results and progress, there should also be discussion and agreement on the refined scope of the JSR, including:

i. The level of reporting detail expected (i.e., comprehensive reporting against program results indicators and annual targets and/or reporting against key performance indicators) depending on the choice of the ESP/TEP operational subsets used for reporting framework (i.e., whether to use the annual action plan, the multiyear operational plan, or broader sector monitoring tools—see Table 4 above); and

ii. Any specific issues and themes for the year under review.

Furthermore, **in relation to issues and themes,** stakeholders may reflect on areas for reporting that are key in the implementation and monitoring of the ESP/TEP. This could include:

- The SDG 4 agenda and national education targets;
- Specific quality/equity sector/subsector targets and thematic issues as described in the plan;
- Gender disparities, especially where these are particularly acute—gender equality could be a recurring theme each year in countries struggling to meet Gender Parity Index at primary and secondary levels;
- The governance structures and financial resources (domestic, external, private financing) enabling plan implementation and decentralized responsibilities at district, school, and community level;
- The wider policy context (macro-reforms, service delivery, and the presence of humanitarian actors);
- National monitoring and reporting mechanisms and capacities.

Country practices

In **Chad,** four of the most pressing subsector themes were chosen for 'deep-dive' analysis as inputs to the JSR in 2017. Specifically, sector stakeholders and JSR participants were divided into these thematic groups: (a) access to education and school buildings; (b) teaching profession (recruitment, contract teachers, statutes, training, and management); (c) literacy and nonformal education; and (d) national book policy. The findings were presented to the JSR meeting alongside the annual implementation report detailing the financial and operational execution of the ESP.

In **Rwanda,** the education sector establishes an annual work plan for analytical studies in support of the implementation of the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS). Within this work plan, the sector JSR is expected to identify analytical studies to be undertaken that are linked to both the EDPRS and expected sector outcomes. The work plans should include an explanation of how the findings will be used, the challenges in using evidence from previous studies, and how these challenges will be addressed.

In **Togo,** the scope of the JSR includes reporting on the take-up and realization of recommendations from the previous JSR. This is included as a recurrent item during the review alongside reporting on the thematic or subsector areas. This is also reflected in the agenda of the JSR meeting with an update on the implementation of previous recommendations (2017).

In **Uganda,** the 23rd Education and Sports Annual Sector Review (ESSR) chose a specific theme for the 2016 review: 're-aligning school governance and management toward sustainable quality of education and training outcomes'. This followed the 22nd JSR for 2014/15 which had focused on 'enhancing governance and management to improve sector service delivery'. Indeed, each year a thematic focus is taken up in addition to the comprehensive review. In 2016, emphasis was placed on how to capitalize on the gains of education decentralization and the improved management of education institutions to achieve sustained education quality.

Agree on the inputs and outputs of the JSR

The inputs and outputs of the JSR will depend on the objectives and the time allocated to the review. Typically, a comprehensive *implementation report* is produced and presented during the JSR meeting. At the end of the JSR meeting, a *short meeting report* might be produced summarizing the discussions and key issues identified. Most often, stakeholders work together on an *aide-memoire* as a way of recalling key commitments and recommendations made during the review. This is signed by national leaders and senior representatives of the partners and stakeholders. In many cases this output is finalized only after the meeting.

Country practices

In **Benin,** inputs to the reporting for the 2015 JSR included: (a) a detailed overview of the Common Framework of Performance Indicators for the education sector, which regroups the full range of indicators defined to follow development objectives outlined for the education sector (all subsectors included) and also includes an analysis of the difficulties encountered within different plans and programs and the orientation of actions toward improved performance; (b) an overview of the financial execution (including a detailed breakdown of the Ministry of Early Childhood and Primary Education; and (c) an overview of the operational plan execution (including activities realized).

In **Chad,** the expected outputs of the 2017 JSR included: (a) the technical and financial execution report of the transitional education plan (2013–2015) shared and validated; (b) the annual budgeted action plan for 2017 validated and disseminated to all stakeholders; (c) a memorandum elaborated to include analysis of sector developments, progress toward plan targets, and the preparation of the following Interim Education Plan for Chad; and (d) the final report of the review prepared and available.

Agree on the JSR modalities

In consultation with education stakeholders and the development partners, the Ministry of Education should identify the modalities for their JSR based on the current context and the objectives assigned to the JSR, including its scope. This will determine the format of the JSR, the level of representation, and the number of participants expected, that should in turn be examined in light of the budget/resources available for the JSR.

The national context will certainly influence cost. Gathering the evidence base in countries with weak data capacities may need to be preceded by a comprehensive or partial data assessment. Promoting inclusiveness in the review, and broad provincial/regional-level and/or CSO participation in the JSR meeting, may also increase costs in terms of transport and facilitation.

Countries should therefore calculate their JSR budget based on contextual needs and real possibilities for inviting as many categories of participants as possible (without compromising the effectiveness of the review process and policy dialogue).

Country practices

In **Guinea,** the modality for organizing the 2016 JSR included the organization of a general stakeholder meeting to maximize the participation of government actors and nonresident partners, as well as a follow-up meeting including principal sector stakeholders. In this way, the JSR reached: (a) representatives of government structures (presidency, prime ministry, ministries of education); (b) development partners already supporting the ESP and potential partners; (c) representatives of civil society; and (d) local education offices and other institutional representatives at the decentralized level.

In **Cambodia,** the JSR consists of several complementary mechanisms: (a) the Education Congress where over 1,000 participants come together to reflect upon (and contribute to) the process of assessing overall sector and program performance; (b) the JSR where the ministry and development partners discuss ESP implementation progress, issues, and solutions according to sub-sectors and key priority areas; and (c) the 'annual retreat' between the government and development partners for ministry leadership and key partners to reflect on ESP implementation progress, issues and solutions, but with more in-depth discussions. The Congress and the JSR take place around the same time, and the retreat later in the year. The retreat in 2017 focused on the ministry's key priority: teacher reform.

Ensure broad and inclusive participation

Partnerships and trust-based relationships in sector monitoring evolve over time from stakeholder participation in sector dialogue and coordination mechanisms beyond the JSR. However, there can be important gaps in participation in these regular mechanisms—including subnational education offices, civil society organizations, and NGOs (e.g., women's groups, youth networks, disabled people's organizations), humanitarian organizations, teachers' organizations, education workers' unions (i.e., affiliated nonteaching personnel and support staff), school leaders, school-based management committees, the media, and academia. To ensure inclusiveness and to avoid such gaps in the JSR, the organizers may find value in the following approaches:

- **Representation based on stakeholder analysis:** The choice of participants in the JSR needs to optimize representation, with opportunities for male and female stakeholders to anchor their engagement throughout the JSR and in its follow-up. As a first step, a stakeholder analysis can contribute to more inclusive participation and effective engagement based on identification of beneficiary constituencies and stakeholder strengths and what they can contribute in terms of new knowledge around progress and practice.

Country practices

In **Nepal,** the 2016 joint review meeting (JRM) aimed to be as institutionally inclusive as possible with a range of state and non-state actors identified for participation: (a) Ministry of Education and line agencies including the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Financial Comptroller General Office, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, and Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare; (b) members of the Nepal Education Group; (c) representatives from academic and research institutions such as the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development and; (d) representatives of the Central Level Project Implementation Unit and the Nepal Education Cluster. The JRM was supported by joint financing and non-joint financing development partners. The issues discussed helped the ministry to identify issues for moving forward in the implementation of the School Sector Development Plan (2016–2023).

- **Transparency in approaches to the JSR and procedures:** Creation of ground rules for participation, with collectively agreed-upon and well-communicated criteria. This is especially important for stakeholder groups that are typically less well represented in JSRs, including education and teachers' organizations, local NGOs, the private and innovative finance sectors, representatives of parents' associations, and school-based actors.

- **Facilitation and financial support** for civil society actors, national coalitions, and teachers' organizations can be sought through the LEG, sector budget, or other dedicated funds. This will be especially important in fragile or consultation adverse environments.

In **Burkina Faso,** the Ministry of Education is supporting CSO participation in the JSR and does so financially through the education sector pool fund. For the 2016 discussions, it invited teacher organizations from preprimary, primary, and secondary education. While the participation of teacher organizations required rigorous facilitation of the lively debates, it brought policy perspectives and teachers' and educational personnel concerns to the table that may otherwise not have been part of the discussions.

In **Benin,** teachers' organizations are considered key stakeholders in the local education group (and its eight subgroups) and contribute actively to sector dialogue at strategic points throughout the policy cycle. Their contributions include the monitoring of the education sector action plan. The role of teachers' organizations in national policy dialogue has been strengthened in recent years through regular participation in training opportunities facilitated by the technical and financial partners. The strengthened capacities of these organizations, and of their members, has enabled teachers to position themselves more effectively in social and education sector dialogue.

Since *subnational representation* is also less consistent in JSRs, options for ensuring that the inputs and concerns of subnational levels are taken into account include, for instance, organizing JSRs on rotation at regional or provincial/district level or organizing JSRs at subnational levels either prior to or after the 'central' JSR. Regional or district level JSRs serve as meaningful processes on their own: discussing local progress, challenges, and priorities based on regional operational plans that are aligned with the national ESP/TEP.

In **Senegal,** the modality for the 2016 JSR was based around a decentralized approach to organizing the policy dialogue, especially to reach those regions where education opportunities are weakest. About five review meetings were organized at the subnational level with the outcomes feeding into a national one-day meeting. The mechanism allowed national ministry representatives to engage with their subnational counterparts and understand local progress and disparities beyond national averages, while opening opportunities for local stakeholders to spotlight their successes and issues and engage with a wider range of actors.

In **Tanzania,** comprehensive and inclusive discussions with stakeholders at subnational levels, involving district councils, learners, and parents, and teaching/learning practice observations, allowed JSR organizers to effectively inform the agenda setting and focus of the JSR discussions and technical working sessions during the JSR meeting in 2017. This enabled the provision of action-focused recommendations for the improvement of education sector performance, grouped around issues of equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes. This was made possible through field visits to five local government authorities prior to the JSR, with the participation of ministry staff and other government departments mandated to deliver on education, as well as CSOs and development partners.

In many countries, *nonstate providers* such as NGOs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and formal and informal nonstate enterprises play a role in the delivery of educational services. Partnerships between the nonstate and public sectors are most efficient, and accountability lines clarified, when nonstate providers participate in sector dialogue mechanisms, and are included in the JSR.

Country practices

In **Ghana,** the number of private schools are increasing year on year, even outpacing public sector provision of education in certain urban areas. Regarded as key stakeholders/partners, these schools, represented through the Ghana National Association of Private Schools, are effectively engaged in policy dialogue and invited to the annual JSR, as well as other policy dialogue opportunities.

Enable effective stakeholder engagement

Defining tasks: Participants are more likely to participate when they are assigned and invested with resources to carry out specific responsibilities; i.e., participation in drafting the terms of reference (ToR), gathering the evidence base, drafting or peer reviewing the annual implementation report, presenting on a specific topic or chairing a session during the JSR meeting, or taking on responsibilities during the follow-up period. Attention should be paid to considering what additional support (technical, financial, processes) particular groups may need in order to engage meaningfully.

The division of labor and validation of responsibilities can be discussed (or negotiated) by stakeholders and JSR implementation partners during the preparation stage following a stakeholder analysis and in the context of the preparation of the JSR Terms of Reference.

Country practices

In **Ghana,** as an input to the 2016 National Education Sector Annual Review (NESAR), civil society stakeholders were requested by the Ministry of Education to undertake their own critical assessment of the implementation of targets and recommendations set out in the 2013–2015 NESAR, and to review and identify prominent subsector or education management issues. As a key stakeholder of education development, the Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition was also charged with: (a) producing a position paper; (b) making a statement to the NESAR; and (c) proposing a framework for coordinating the work of CSOs and nongovernmental organizations in support of the ESP.

In **Liberia,** stakeholders were engaged in the 2015 JSR process through two different ways: (a) as in previous years, since 2011, county education staff, development partners, civil society organizations, and community members were engaged in assessing sector performance from the bottom up through county technical working groups, with their inputs then drawn into the review process; and (b) more immediate engagement was achieved through the creation of six thematic working groups (building on the county level work) charged with conducting analysis on early childhood education, basic and secondary education, teacher education, governance and management, tertiary education, and technical and vocational education. Each group was asked to assess progress relevant to their thematic focus against all activities within the 2014 implementation plan. They were also tasked with collating and summarizing a report on their findings and recommendations for discussion during the JSR meeting.

Clear and timely communications: Updates and targeted information dissemination can also be provided and become quick-wins as the review process evolves, so that NGOs, CSOs, and other education partners can support the JSR process as required. The general public should also be kept abreast of developments to ensure public accountability and transparency. This can be facilitated through briefings to the media, press releases, and the availability in the public domain of JSR documents demonstrating progress against planned targets.

In line with the aims of stakeholder communications and outreach, the organizing team may find value in:

- Setting aside resources within the *JSR budget for information and communication efforts* (preparing updates, writing newspaper inserts, online dissemination of reports, etc.); and

- Identifying '*champions*' (e.g., high-level politicians, government staff, technical advisors, community/other civil society leaders) who can drum up support and sustain the momentum of the JSR.

Establish a JSR terms of reference

The JSR terms of reference (ToR) articulates, within a succinct document, all of the above agreements on the JSR and how these will be operationalized. A clear, well-designed and well-communicated ToR cements dialogue and engagement between the government and relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, on how to engage in joint monitoring of the ESP/TEP by:

- Clarifying the purpose, objectives, and expected outputs of the JSR;
- Outlining the approach and methodology for achieving objectives and outcomes (indicating any changes as a result of what was learned from the previous JSR, if relevant, in terms of the review process and its organization);
- Setting out resources and capacities needed for the organization, implementation, and follow-up of the JSR;
- Specifying the institutional arrangements for coordinating between ministry of education departments, other ministries, and different groups within and outside the LEG; and
- Building common understanding among the wider group of who will participate, what is expected of all stakeholders, as well as when and how, and paying attention to the representation of women.

More concretely, the ToR enables unpacking and prioritization of actions needed throughout the review process. In this regard the ToR should ideally cover:

i. the development of the annual implementation report
ii. the logistics of organizing the JSR meeting
iii. the process for developing the aide-memoire
iv. identification of follow-up mechanism for monitoring the implementation of recommendations

In countries with more experience of undertaking JSRs, the ToR is effectively leveraged as a planning and operational instrument and used for assessing whether the review is on track, on budget, and on schedule. The ToR is informed by organizational lessons from previous JSRs and also foresees a number of follow-up activities in advance, especially in terms of immediate follow-up around producing the aide-memoire.

The ToR can be developed by a drafting team—either within the Ministry of Education planning or M&E unit, or the JSR coordination body if one has been assigned (see Table 3, page 24), or within the LEG. A standardized ToR as well as standardized organizational checklists may facilitate the yearly organization, especially if individuals within organizing bodies change, with necessary revision and adaptation from year to year.

Wherever the responsibility lies, it will be useful to discuss the ToR within the LEG constituencies to ensure partner buy-in and support, especially around budget elements, and logistical and technical capacities needed for organizing the JSR. Indeed, in countries with less experience, or in fragile contexts, more resources and support may be required from partners in relation to the review preparation, logistics, and planning for the event as well as with collection of data.

Further considerations for the **JSR ToR** and contents can be found in Annex 1.

Country practices

In **Burkina Faso,** the ToR covers all aspects of the JSR, both as a process and the actual meeting, and includes details of the JSR preparation, agenda and the finalization of the aide-memoire, as well as annexes with formats for formulating recommendations and an aide-memoire production and validation timeline of the drafting committee. The ToR also includes a set of lessons from the previous JSR, including a methodology for screening recommendations (2016).

In **Vietnam,** a two-day workshop to engage in dialogue around the JSR and validate the ToR was organized in advance of the JSR (2013–2014). The meeting convened around 40 government participants from concerned ministry departments, subnational levels, and development partners (including NGOs), who discussed the ToR and methodology for the JSR, agreed on the priority issues and indicators used for assessing progress, and reached a consensus on the methods for obtaining the data and information. Meeting participants also anticipated potential challenges in conducting the JSR and proposed remedies to overcome them.

Build buy-in

Even if individuals within government departments and development organizations have long recognized the importance of strengthened ESP/TEP monitoring processes, institutional incentives for involvement in JSRs may not be apparent to all sector stakeholders. In some countries, there may be a lack of cross-ministry or cross-department consensus on the usefulness of JSRs as part of the ESP/TEP planning cycle, or trust in the process.

There may also be genuine concerns among nonstate actors about power asymmetries, the leveraging of the JSR by development agencies for different purposes, and/or CSOs' technical capacity to engage with the review process. The proposal to introduce, or reinforce, JSRs may therefore encounter resistance or be seen as 'just another meeting'. For this reason, it will be essential to understand political dynamics, and communicate and build buy-in as early as possible—both to stakeholders who are directly involved in JSR preparation at national and sub-national levels and to those less involved.

The **maturity ladder** can be used to visualize characteristics of the current JSR and how it could evolve to better fulfill its potential. See JSR Tools, page 60.

The principles of **mutual accountability for results** should be at the heart of this exercise; i.e., the nurturing of a shared vision or agenda for the JSR among the cooperating parties; agreement on common objectives and strategies aimed at achieving the vision; mutually agreed performance criteria for the JSR (e.g., expected outputs and ongoing follow-up modalities); and genuine dialogue and debate process based on consent, common values, and trust.

2. Annual implementation report

The annual implementation report is the key input document for the JSR, synthesizing different types of technical and nontechnical information against the annual or multiyear operational plan to provide *a comprehensive overview* of sector status, results, and performance, and to generate informed policy dialogue among stakeholders during the JSR. The overall responsibility for this document falls under the ministry/ministries of education. Some countries also select themes for review in a particular year, with the aim of making the review even more insightful.

Report coverage

A central pillar of the JSR is the production of the annual implementation report, which should build on and draw together existing data to provide a good understanding of:

- Sector progress and trends against national targets and objectives;
- Evolution of key sector performance and progress indicators (including equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes) in ESP/TEP implementation;
- Sector expenditures/financial trends;
- Critical analysis of both achievements and bottlenecks at the operational level;
- Progress and results on implementation of previous JSR recommendations;
- Recommendations for addressing operational bottlenecks, adjusting ESP/TEP targets, etc.; and
- Risks to implementation.

Ideally, the report should include details on expenditures at program/activity level covered by domestic and external funding and cover the entire review period at the national budget level, as well as allocations/expenditure against projections at national and decentralized levels. If possible, it is useful to include per capita expenditure disaggregated by region as a measure of equity and equality. Some countries include financial reporting within the main implementation report, while others discuss financial information within separate status reports.

Further considerations for the **annual implementation report** can be found in Annex 2.

In addition, based on commissioned studies and analyses on specific topics carried out during the period under review, the JSR may also take a few ‘deep dives’ into related education issues (e.g., equity, quality, and gaps in student learning, persistent student dropout, teacher absenteeism, spending efficiency, and other operational issues at sector-wide and/or subsector level). These complementary reports would serve to:

- Enrich understanding of issues within different sections of the annual implementation report;
- Support decision making on the selection of themes for the agenda and enrich stakeholder discussions (see also Table 6, page 42).

Information sources and data gathering

Preparing the annual implementation report should start with the collection of existing education and financial data on program outputs, outcomes, and expenditures for the year under review. Recognizing that the availability, reliability, and timelines of different kinds of data are ongoing challenges in many contexts, especially in fragile and crisis-affected countries, sufficient budget and time should be allocated for data processing in preparation for the report, so that it can inform decision making for any necessary adjustments.

Information can be *collected from a variety of sources,* including national EMIS and financial management and information systems (FMIS), learning assessment systems, budget reports, relevant ministries information systems as well as household or ad hoc surveys in some instances (see Table 5 below).

If deemed necessary, field visits can be planned by the review team and/or a mix of partners, with a clear specification of the purpose and scope of the visits. This includes data collected directly from schools, teachers, and district level education offices, as well as beneficiaries, or extracted from secondary sources like CSO and NGO implementation reports and evaluation studies.

It is helpful to generate knowledge on the specific types of monitoring information and data that stakeholders can contribute in light of their roles and constituencies (i.e., government departments at national and subnational levels; minority and linguistic groups and marginalized communities; learners with disabilities or special needs), subsector area, or geographical location.

Such information could be extracted through:

- **A mapping/inventory** of reliable quantitative and qualitative data from various information sources at the sector or subsector level (or possibly by region), including national research institutions; UN, NGO, and CSO reports; studies or evaluation reports; and systematized data from national surveys, as well as private sector analytics and insights.

- **Structured questionnaires and systematized feedback mechanisms** can also be useful to understand the types of information available from the beneficiaries, communities, district offices, school leaders, and teachers.

While the mapping exercise need not be conducted annually, a snapshot of the data landscape is nonetheless important—the involvement of the planning or M&E unit does not automatically guarantee the consideration of education data sitting in other government departments, or at statistics offices at the national and subnational level or at other education stakeholders.

Country practices

In **Afghanistan,** in order to ensure a comprehensive, non-biased and representative evidence feeding into the JSR, a mixed method research methodology was used for data collection and analysis in the run-up to the JSR. Interview guides, indexes and table formats, closed and open-ended questionnaires, and follow-up questionnaires were used to collect the data. A participatory approach was adopted across the entire review process and including field visits and report writing. In total, 36 districts and 211 education centers were selected and visited by the review team across 12 provinces (2015).

In **Ethiopia,** five teams were established to undertake the 2016 Joint Review Mission, focusing on general education. The teams were composed of representatives from the Ministry of Education, development partners, and the respective regional education bureaus. They were provided with detailed templates for regional itineraries, as well as interview and focus group discussion guides and data collection tools. The field visits began with introductory briefings in the regional bureau, discussions to finalize the detailed regional itinerary, and interviews and focus group discussions at the regional level. Data were then collected with the help of the guidelines and checklists. The field missions concluded with a debriefing session in the regional education bureaus on preliminary findings.

In **Vietnam** in 2013, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) sought out different types of information to inform the country's 'multi-angled' JSR, including: quantitative data from the national EMIS; the results of a detailed questionnaire sent to 660 primary schools nationwide; the results of visits to primary schools in both northern and southern areas along with input from interviews with children, parents and other caregivers, teachers and school principals; and interviews with representatives of local government bodies and mass organizations. Interviews and inputs from key officials within the MoET and other ministries (e.g., Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Labor, Disabled and Social Affairs) provided additional value. The MoET also undertook an inventory exercise to map and analyze government education policies and strategies, and projected support from development partners and NGOs.

However, decisions on sources that will contribute to the JSR evidence base should not only be based on information availability or known data gaps. The *criteria* for accepting data and information should be *rigorous, clearly defined, unbiased, and transparent.* This will ensure that data aligns with the objectives and scope of the JSR, is quality assured, and can be referenced and attributed in the JSR output documentation.

Country practices

In **Ghana,** district education offices have their own three-year operational plans and write annual reports on progress toward their expected results. Regional education offices then convene regional education review meetings to discuss the district reports. The national education sector report refers to the different regional reports (five to six regional reports contribute inputs) to analyze sector performance issues at local levels, together with data from the annual school census, financial studies, and other thematic reports compiled in line with ESP targets (2013).

In **Ethiopia** in 2016, different sources were leveraged to gather information on selected themes. This included: EMIS data officially released up to 2013/14; a combination of a desk review of documents, publications, reports, and articles; interviews; and focus group discussions and observations. Consultations were also held at all levels of education administration and delivery—including with officials and experts in the regional education bureaus, the woredas (district) education offices, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) agencies, and with school supervisors, principal teachers, students, and representatives of parent-student-teachers' associations. The selection of both the woredas and schools was done in consultation with the respective regions to include a mix of relatively better and underperforming woredas and schools in both rural and urban settings.

TABLE 5: EXAMPLES OF SOURCES CONTRIBUTING TO THE EVIDENCE BASE

Household surveys and population census	Quantitative and qualitative data and information can be drawn from national databases, surveys, and population census.
FMIS and budget documentation	Many countries maintain, or are in the process of creating, government-wide integrated financial management and information systems (FMIS). These systems maintain data on approved budget appropriations, sources of financing, budget transfers, and actual expenditures, etc. Ministries of finance usually issue in-year reports, a mid-year review, and a year-end report based on FMIS data.
EMIS	The education management information system (EMIS) is an important source of data for education monitoring and performance reports. Time series on specific indicators particularly contribute to consistency and to providing a picture of sector strengths and weaknesses.
Ministry of education department reports	Such smaller scale reports typically include the status of all expected outputs and expenses indicated in the plan by responsible department units. They also include analysis on causes of delay, changes, inaction, and/or discrepancies with planned expenses.
Reports of other ministries	Information on education programs and budget lines may be concealed in a wide range of ministries, especially gender, nonformal education, sports, health and social affairs, civil affairs, and planning. In countries housing large numbers of refugees, there may be a separate ministry charged with refugee affairs which should also be consulted.
Regional or local reporting	Regional reporting against regional targets in ESP operational plans offers important evidence of progress on government commitments at decentralized levels by official authorities or CSOs.
Partner reporting and monitoring	This includes specific partner data sets, thematic performance reports, and mid-term and final evaluations. In conflict or disaster-affected situations, data may also be collected from Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs—United Nations (OCHA), UNHCR or the Education Cluster. OCHA data may be useful for analyzing displacement issues.
Education in Emergencies Education Cluster	In crisis-affected and fragile situations, or settings where a crisis has just ended, the JSR can draw on information from partners within the Emergencies Education Cluster on what has worked in education in relation to strategies and interventions to promote educational access, quality of learning, and well-being among children.
Global commitments, subsector or thematic reports	This can include 'deep dive' reports during the year under review (or just previously) commissioned or undertaken by different ministries, development partners and research institutes, and CSOs, including CEDAW (United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) and SDG reports. This can help to identify root causes related to persistent challenges in student learning, dropouts, out-of-school youth, teacher absence, organizational performance, financial effectiveness, and other operational issues.
Stakeholder interviews	Enable stakeholders, especially stakeholders outside the lead education sector ministry, to gather firsthand evidence from representatives of district/regional education offices, teachers, school principals, school management committees, parents and other caregivers, and youth networks.

Overcoming data and capacity constraints

In preparing the annual implementation report, the main goal is to incentivize innovation and efficiency on the best ways to gather information so that the evidence basis for planning, monitoring, and managing the education system is collectively strengthened. This will be especially important in countries with weak education management information systems, data collection, and analytical capacities. Some countries have attempted to strengthen the JSR evidence base through the creation of multi-stakeholder research groups with responsibilities for data collection and analysis by activity or by thematic area.

THE NEED FOR CONTINUOUS DATA CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Capacity development for ensuring a robust evidence base for monitoring should be a continuous feature of the policy cycle. This encompasses two broad strategies: (1) development of stronger EMIS and (2) inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders in collecting and analyzing data. A comprehensive approach to tackling shortcomings can help fill gaps and enhance ownership of the evidence and its use.

First, in countries with significant data gaps, country practice shows that recommendations from JSRs have contributed to improvements in EMIS. Improvements to **national statistical capacities** can be broadly built through the following entry points:

- **Data policy**—i.e., what types of data are collected, processed and disseminated, when and how, including mechanisms for quality assurance
- **Updating data collection systems and availability**—i.e., new data collection instruments may be needed, existing survey instruments tweaked, surveyors trained, data made available online, etc.
- **Data analysis**—i.e., continuous training opportunities to planning and M&E staff at central, local levels; linking data collection to policy analysis and prioritization; institutional and organizational development; investment in domestic research capacities
- **Negotiation, coordination, consensus building**—i.e., effective use of data and indicators generated through the EMIS (and other management information systems [MISs]) for policy planning and monitoring

Second, collaboration across a wide group of stakeholders as part of a *joint* monitoring effort can make a significant contribution to overcoming known and emerging data challenges—by **diversifying the sources** from which evidence is drawn and creating a more nuanced analysis of education results.

The importance of collaboration means that **data capacity strengthening should not just be for government departments or units.** Where CSOs are unable to participate effectively as a result of capacity constraints, it is important to engage them in the process through other formats (e.g., surveys and focus groups) and make a conscious effort to include them in capacity development initiatives to reinforce these skills. Information and data can then be used for their own purposes and channeled through the JSR into national monitoring systems.

Country practices

In **Chad,** for the preparation of the 2017 JSR, four thematic groups were established (see Chad example p. 28) as part of efforts to ensure comprehensive thematic coverage and overcome data constraints in the EMIS. Each group, which included at least one member of civil society as well as beneficiary groups, was charged with undertaking targeted field visits to collect information as inputs to the review.

SImilarly, in **Nepal** in 2016, stakeholders were divided into groups as part of the data collection—including groups on finance, on early literacy, on continuous assessments, and on other reform or thematic issues. Data collection was undertaken to complement the regular input reports to the JSR meeting (see Nepal example p. 40). These groups were required to prepare and share semi-structured interview templates in advance and guided to different parts of the country to achieve geographical coverage, rather than focusing on one field visit area. In this way, the groups came to the JSR meeting with a structured presentation representing the findings of the field visits.

In **Ghana,** the 2013 JSR experienced difficulties in collecting data related to private schools, as these schools were less responsive to questionnaires sent from the Ministry of Education for the annual school census. Enrollment rates in urban areas subsequently showed deteriorating trends. In response, the Ghana National Association of Private Schools was requested to support the ministry in improving the response rate of private schools. The association called upon its members and specifically requested their cooperation in completing the annual school census, and the response rate improved.

Drafting the annual implementation report

Preparing the annual implementation report requires considerable investment within the JSR review process. Even in countries with a strong EMIS and M&E system and analytical capacity, a quality report takes time to write, quality assure, and edit, and requires careful planning and oversight of its contents, structure, drafting, and production processes.

A participatory drafting process led by the ministry of education, which pools stakeholder analytical and technical capacities, can provide considerable value to the annual report and to the ownership of its findings. This might involve thematic working groups working on different chapters, and stakeholders participating in cross-checking and peer reviewing. But this also requires careful coordination, and JSR organizers should be mindful of the tensions between producing quality reports and government leadership of that reporting.

Production issues: With drafting and production in mind, the team responsible for the implementation report may find value in:

- *Developing a detailed timeline* for the preparation of the annual implementation report (within the ToR), including a division of labor and calculation of the time needed for the collection of qualitative and qualitative data, financial and off-budget information, and the preparation of related intermediary deliverables feeding into the report. When the preparation of the report expects significant stakeholder engagement, the timeline is useful for coordinating who does what and by when.

- *Generating report writing guidelines* covering recurrent contents and chapter structures. This is especially important when the report writing is participatory and the team needs to work around a commonly agreed structure. In contexts with low institutional capacity, the team might draw on technical assistance from development partners to develop the guidelines or to provide on-the-job training to enhance the quality of report writing (particularly focusing on data analysis and referencing).

Structure: The structure may vary from year to year depending on the weight given by the ministry to different issues. To this extent, it may be valuable to develop reporting templates covering recurrent elements and/or chapter structures that are valid for the entire ESP period. Such templates would help to ensure:

- Consistency in the types of information needed in the annual implementation report (regardless of the writing team and peer reviewers working on it);

- Balance in the contents and uses of data gathered so that the report remains on message, useable and relevant for different audiences; and

- Comparison across reports in the same ESP/TEP cycle to quickly gauge progress.

Timely dissemination of meeting documents

Constructive policy dialogue during the JSR meeting depends on **timely information sharing** so that participants can position themselves on important issues. To this end, documents should be made available in good time in a format (soft or hard) that is user friendly and accessible (distilling key messages in a way that clearly identifies progress and prioritizes needs).

Since certain education issues are cross-cutting with the health, social, and economic development sectors (e.g., gender equality, disability, HIV/AIDs education, education for sustainable development), an integrated approach for disseminating the JSR report may help to maximize synergy with other sectors and relevant actors with an impact on education systems.

The time frame for disseminating the implementation report may vary from one week to one month before the JSR event. In all cases, stakeholders should receive the implementation report and related documents, as well as the ToR and JSR agenda, well in advance.

Country practices

In **Nepal,** a number of crucial documents related both to the comprehensive review and more specific financial accountability reporting are usually shared two weeks prior to the JSR meeting for review and comment by participants. These include (among others): (a) the annual implementation report); (b) the consolidated report with EMIS, including trend analysis); (c) the annual audit report; and (d) the financial monitoring report for the year under review.

In **Mozambique,** the ToR for framing the policy dialogue between partners and the ministry set out purpose and conditions for organizing key meetings during the year, including the JSR. The ToR includes the identification of meeting documents requiring preparation and the timeline for dissemination (at least eight days before the meeting). In the case of ill-timed distribution, the partners may request that the meeting be postponed or canceled until all documents have been shared and sufficient time has been allocated for consultation. Over the years, the ministry has improved considerably in its timely distribution of documents, and partners are now involved at an earlier stage in discussing drafts through subsector working groups.

3. The JSR meeting

The value of JSR meetings lies in the opportunity for inclusive and evidence-based policy dialogue—a space for participants to reach a *common understanding on sector progress* and issues and to arrive at *a consensus on strategies for overcoming challenges* and moving forward. Meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the dialogue requires openness to participation on the part of both the education leadership and coordination community, sound planning, and a meeting structure that allows for constructive engagement.

Planning the JSR meeting

Effective policy dialogue and stakeholder engagement during the JSR meeting are influenced by a number of planning issues that should be discussed already at the stage of developing the ToR.

These include, for instance, the timing of the meeting (sequencing with other sector dialogue events and competing commitments of stakeholders); planning of the production of the implementation report for timely dissemination; and identification of who should chair and facilitate the event and various related sessions.

Ensuring inclusiveness can raise its own issues. Concerns regarding representation can add up to a large number of stakeholders, and certain countries manage this by having a series of meetings. There may be a national JSR meeting which is more representative and inclusive (including from decentralized levels) alongside a smaller review where core partners focus on policy dialogue around specific thematic or follow-up issues.

Planning the event should cater for modalities and choices that allow for substantive discussions and not just a series of presentations. Other considerations include the meeting length and size, how the agenda and stakeholder interactions are organized and how participants are expected to engage in formulating and validating recommendations. In turn, all of these areas have an important impact on stakeholder involvement in follow-up and support for future JSRs.

Length of the meeting: JSR events can vary from large, impressive gatherings representing a wide range of stakeholders to smaller groups with carefully selected representatives. Most typically, participation in a JSR meeting is set at around 100 to 130 people with the aim of achieving balanced representation and effective stakeholder interaction.

In countries with established JSR cycles, the average length of the JSR meeting is usually one to three days, while in other countries the JSR may last for one week. More experienced countries often find it useful to limit the length, with preparatory and follow-up activities covered through regular sector dialogue structures and/or thematic and sector working group meetings.

Agenda: During the JSR meeting, approaches for effective participation should include ensuring that the agenda focuses on a strategic level, rather than on individual projects, and does not include too many topics. This allows stakeholders time to discuss findings in depth, as well as the way forward.

Space should also be given in the agenda to discussion on recommendations from previous JSRs—with a view to understanding whether the JSR process has evolved since the previous year and what recommendations have been actioned and implemented.

To facilitate agenda setting from year to year, a number of recurring items can be considered alongside specific focus areas or issues emerging during the year under review.

TABLE 6: AGENDA SETTING—OPTIONS FOR RECURRENT AND CHANGING ITEMS

Recurring Items	❯ Presentation of the implementation report and financial status summaries (the latter if presented as separate from the implementation report) ❯ Subnational and CSO/social partner reporting ❯ Review of indicators and targets, implementation success, and challenges to agree on changes in planning assumptions. In countries with high gender disparities, progress on gender equality should be monitored. ❯ Ongoing and incremental review of the M&E system and quality of the evidence base gathered for the JSR (related to the meta-evaluation function of the JSR) ❯ Follow-up to recommendations and learning since the previous JSR ❯ Recommendations for moving forward ❯ Daily summaries of meeting discussions from the previous day ❯ Overall résumé of outcomes as a basis for validating the meeting
Changing Items—'Big Dives'	❯ Commissioned studies and relevant evaluations on specific quality, equity, sector and subsector targets, as well as gender and other cross-cutting thematic issues described in the ESP/TEP (led by the Ministry of Education and/or nonstate actors, CSOs, NGOs, youth networks, etc.) ❯ Plan implementation and decentralized responsibilities at district, school, and community levels ❯ Focus on challenges linked to equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes in specific regions ❯ Focus on the preprimary subsector, such as a review of models for expanding access using government and nonstate providers ❯ Analysis of the gender responsiveness of the ESP as a whole ❯ Education financing—domestic, external, private financing including household contributions ❯ External aid alignment on country systems ❯ Review of target attainment of result-based financing ❯ Focus on emerging issues, especially in fragile contexts, such as education needs of refugee populations

Moderation: The quality of dialogue during the JSR meeting will partly depend on the identification of experienced moderators. It will be important to properly brief the moderators and ensure that they have a close familiarity with the JSR meeting methodology, particularly regarding the aim of facilitating open and transparent dialogue and encouraging the participation of underrepresented sector stakeholders. Moderators will be further expected to ensure that the meeting schedule is respected, thereby allowing the time foreseen to reach consensus on recommendations. In terms of oversight, it will be important to clarify the differences in roles and responsibilities between moderators, session chairs, facilitators, rapporteurs and note takers. If time allows, the JSR organizers could organize a briefing session beforehand to this end.

Plenaries: Space should be allocated up front in plenary for presentations on the annual implementation report and its main findings, distilling messages as far as possible. The presentation of subnational monitoring reports, and studies on specific issues, should also be encouraged in the plenary to raise their profile and promote debate. Last, but not least, time should be earmarked in the plenary for addressing prominent ESP/TEP implementation and monitoring challenges and discussing recommendations that are adequate for resolving the issues identified.

Parallel and side events: Sufficient time should be given to information sharing on subnational, CSO, and youth-led monitoring activities and good practices. A space can be created during breakaway sessions or

side events, lunch, and after program sessions with the information feeding back into the plenary to enrich discussions and build consensus around core issues.

Note taking and reporting: Throughout the plenaries and side events, designated rapporteurs from across the participant spectrum should be identified to keep notes that can be used as inputs to wrap up sessions, for general information sharing, and the drafting of the aide-memoire. To further facilitate the work of the aide-memoire drafting committee, it may be useful to gather the note takers and rapporteurs to distill the most important points from each day, and establish daily summaries. Such daily summaries could be presented the following day for validation. This will require adequate time allocation in the JSR agenda.

End-of-day debriefing: Linked to the above, short debriefing sessions among the JSR organizers at the end of each day are useful to take stock of how the day went, draw lessons that can inform the rest of the JSR undertakings, and make feasible adjustments in the conduct of the sessions the following day. It is good practice to begin each day by briefly summarizing and highlighting the most important points and emerging issues from the previous day.

Country practices

In **Burkina Faso,** for nearly 15 years, the ministry of National Education and Literacy has been convening all development partners in the sector to take part in the JSRs. Based on lessons learned from past experiences, the ministry continues to renew its approach and think innovatively about the preparation and organization of these annual meetings. For the 2016 review, for instance, the number of participants was decreased (from 180 to 70) to enable more in-depth discussions, which proved effective and was therefore maintained for the 2017 review. A new meeting structure and protocol was also adopted to encourage dynamic exchange between the thematic groups, and a standardized format and principles for formulating recommendations was established and refined (2016).

In **Senegal,** the one-day meeting for the 2014 JSR synthesizing the results of the subnational-level JSR meetings represented a summarized version of the main sector achievements and gaps. It was considered especially effective because it reflected consistent reporting through the regional JSRs and the outcome of separate consultations organized by groups of stakeholders, including civil society and teacher organizations (see Senegal example p. 30). The Ministry of Education and its principal development partners were able to discuss distilled findings of national and subnational achievements against annual objectives, further contributing to a productive and efficient meeting.

In **Uganda,** guidelines for presentation of special papers were developed for the 23rd Annual Sector Review in 2016. The first set of guidelines concerned the outcomes of research on enhancing the role of non-state actors (governing councils, boards of governors, school management committees, and parent-teacher associations) in governance and management of education and training institutions to improve quality of education and training. The second set of guidelines concerned the presentation of case study reports on the best practices in local government inspection and support supervision.

Toward consensus on JSR recommendations

There should be a movement toward *consensus on recommendations* by the end of the JSR meeting. The goal is to reach recommendations that are realistic and achievable and that all partners can mobilize around.

Reaching consensus: Collective agreements may grow naturally out of the emergence of common perspectives on the findings of the implementation report, which outlines the evidence base for ESP/TEP progress and prominent bottlenecks. Collective agreements may also be arrived at as part of a participative process for recommendation setting through a well-designed meeting agenda, or they may require carefully facilitated policy dialogue during the plenaries or side sessions.

A dedicated process of consensus building may be needed because stakeholders (CSOs, teachers' organizations, representatives at subnational levels, etc.) will have different perspectives to ministry and institutional actors on what needs immediate attention in the ESP/TEP. Stakeholders may also propose recommendations that touch on their specific interests but are not necessarily fully aligned with the agreed joint agenda.

Trade-offs: The most difficult recommendations emerging from the review are typically those that relate to policy change or budget reallocation. For this reason, diverse stakeholders should come prepared for the meeting with strong evidence on best practices, demonstrating cost efficiency and the value added to the national education strategy. But not every review finding, or issue discussed during the meeting, will be viable as a recommendation. Trade-offs may be needed that take into consideration existing policy commitments, financial implications and required organizational arrangements, as well as possibilities for partnerships or collaborative implementation.

Recording the recommendations: Lessons learned from country practice indicate that generic, hastily agreed, long lists of recommendations can be counterproductive, leading to unfeasible action plans that are eventually put aside. Participants should therefore prioritize and be as precise as possible:

1. Clearly articulating the relevance of recommendations to the different components of the ESP/TEP action plan and results framework and/or components of the annual or multiyear operational plan;

2. Identifying who should take the lead, or work together, on implementing recommendations and their follow-up; and

3. Identifying the resources needed and including a cost estimate and timeline for their implementation.

The above processes require sufficient time, stakeholder investment, and space in the meeting agenda. If the plenaries run over, or the JSR meeting does not provide enough time for stakeholders to elaborate the details of the last two points, there should at least be *clarity on the process*; i.e., who will be involved in finalizing recommendations and their conversion into action points, by when, and how decisions will be communicated back to JSR stakeholders.

Country practices

In **Burkina Faso,** the JSR meeting in 2016 was organized over four days with the recommendations formulated through a purposeful and constructive dialogue process. Following day 1, when the participants reviewed progress on the ESP for the year under review, day 2 participants worked in thematic groups to review the recommendations of the previous JSR and identify priority themes for the following year's annual operational plan. On day 3, two rapporteurs from each group presented their recommendations to the other groups and revised their own recommendations based on feedback from participants. On day 4, the recommendations from each of the working groups were presented to the plenary session for incorporation into the aide-memoire, which was drafted by a writing committee and signed by the Ministry of Education two weeks later. The JSR was praised by the partners for its creativity and constructive dialogue.

In **Togo,** the group work during the 2016 JSR discussed the thematic research, and particularly ensuing recommendations, with the aim of making the latter more operational (or reformulating them), identifying responsibilities and defining a deadline. The thematic areas related to effective training-of-trainers' mechanisms in technical education and vocational training; the place of quality assurance in higher education institutions; maximizing student learning time in primary education; and schooling options for out-of-school children aged 9–14. All four thematic groups had three hours, with facilitation and guidance, to discuss one recommendation each and how to implement it. The findings were compiled into a PowerPoint enumerating the recommendation, responsible body, expected date for realization, and a breakdown of the proposed activities.

4. Follow-up

The lack of systematic follow-up to JSRs is a frequently cited limit to their effectiveness. The drive and motivation to push forward on collective agreements can dissipate once the review is over and different actors weigh up the implications of *acting on JSR recommendations*. Sustaining the momentum in the weeks and months following the JSR meeting is therefore extremely important.

Finalization of recommendations and agreement on action points

In certain countries, ministries of education consider it necessary to follow up the main JSR meeting with a smaller forum, thematic working group or a specific session within the LEG to continue the dialogue on the JSR recommendations, their conversion into action points and the elaboration of an aide-memoire.

These smaller meetings also aim to clarify responsibilities and secure commitments around how specific recommendations will be concretely integrated into the next annual (or multi-annual) operational plan and budget which typically involves the identification of:

- The departments/units/organizations at national and subnational levels that will be responsible for taking specific ESP/TEP planning and plan implementation recommendations forward;
- What is needed by these actors in terms of financing, institutional resources, and capacity development to effect the changes expected, and the feasibility of mobilizing support to this end; and
- A viable framework for overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the recommendations throughout the plan cycle.

Where institutional commitments require additional funding and/or non-state partnerships, the inclusion of the relevant national financing bodies, core development partners and CSOs in the dialogue on how to move forward has obvious value. Care should be taken in the follow-up meetings to avoid decision making on required actions if the responsible parties are not present (or represented) and their buy-in cannot be guaranteed.

Where agreements can be reached fairly quickly, the recommendations and details of the action points can be included in the aide-memoire for stakeholder validation.

Focused discussion and agreements on action points leads to recommendations that are well thought out and feasible, with stronger national commitment to the processes agreed for moving forward. In countries where education coordination is complicated by fragility, crises, and/or weak education management and planning capacities, agreed recommendations should still be included in the aide-memoire, though the details may take longer to negotiate and finalize.

In all cases, the JSR findings, recommendations, and action points should be presented within the LEG (or its equivalent) as part of the ongoing sector dialogue on how to consolidate annual/multiyear operational planning, monitoring, and reporting processes and to optimize resource allocation and sector expenditures. In addition, and for maintaining transparency, decisions on intended action points must be communicated back to the review participants and education community.

Country practices

In **Benin** in 2014, the JSR meeting participants took part in the creation of a follow-up and monitoring framework outlining 'who does what and when' as part of the process of agreeing on recommendations. The framework included a description of the activities agreed on; the responsible structure within the Ministry of Education or among the development partners and stakeholder community; the wider structures affected by the action points and implications; and the implementation status of each action point agreed on (realized/not realized/under way) from one JSR to the next and accompanying observations.

In **Mozambique,** the usual practice is that draft recommendations are prepared in advance of the JSR and agreed on between the members of specific subsector working groups, and are part of joint working group reports that feed into the annual sector review report. These subsector reports and their recommendations are presented and discussed during the JSR meeting. Post-JSR, recommendations are refined and action plans developed in the working groups for different programs. Each action plan is approved, and subsequently monitored, in monthly meetings of the LEG led by the ministry and involving the coordinators of the CSO platform and development partners.

The JSR report and aide-memoire

Short meeting report: Countries sometimes produce a short meeting report briefly highlighting issues discussed, summaries of presentations and key findings that can be drafted relatively quickly, and not subject to validation from all participants.

The aide-memoire: The aide-memoire is the critical document validating collective agreements and recommendations made for improving sector ESP/TEP planning, implementation, and monitoring, as well as addressing issues around the organization of the JSR. The aide-memoire also cements *buy-in* to processes for taking recommendations forward. As such, it is the basis for moving forward and contributes to building an institutional memory. Its finalization, validation, and dissemination are immediate priorities following the JSR meeting.

The process of finalizing the aide-memoire should ideally have been agreed on as part of the ToR. The main elements of this process include:

- *Timeline:* Ideal finalization is within two to four weeks of the JSR meeting to maintain momentum and to keep the contents fresh and relevant in stakeholders' minds. In certain countries, the aide-memoire is prepared during the JSR meeting itself. While this facilitates immediate information sharing, it may also contribute to the inclusion of recommendations that are less robust or thought out.

- *Drafting:* A drafting committee composed of one or two people both from the ministry and its development partners, as well as peer reviewers, can be employed as part of the drafting process, both for validation of the contents and quality assurance purposes. At the same time, care should be taken not to weigh down the drafting and review of the aide-memoire with complex negotiations and perspectives on contents.

- *Contents:* There are no hard and fast rules about the contents of a JSR aide-memoire. Some countries focus solely on a recap of the JSR meeting outcomes and its immediate follow-up, including recommendations. Others include an overview of the JSR proceedings, as well as a summary of the key findings of the annual implementation report.

- *Endorsement:* JSR stakeholders and meeting participants should be involved in validating the contents of the aide-memoire to cement their commitment to follow up throughout the remainder of the ESP/TEP cycle. Having the aide-memoire signed and endorsed at a high level also increases its 'authority', making actors pay more attention to how agreements are phrased and increasing the likelihood that it will reach heads of missions and ministry decision makers. This can be done through a follow-up meeting of the LEG.

Once the aide-memoire has been validated, it should be disseminated widely to reinforce transparency and incentivize mutual accountability. Specific 'by-products', including press briefs, one pagers, and a summary report, can be produced to facilitate communications and information dissemination to stakeholder groups.

Further considerations for the process of developing the **aide-memoire** and its contents can be found in Annex 3.

Country practices

In **Nepal,** for the 2016 review meeting, an aide-memoire was produced which included details of the meeting proceedings, the agreements reached and the elaboration of a road map arising from the JSR deliberations. A time-bound consolidated action plan (annexed to the aide-memoire) was agreed on with specific tasks outlined for the technical working groups (working within the School Sector Development Program) up to the March 2017 budget revision meeting and the November 2017 joint review meeting.

In **Togo,** the aide-memoires of the 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2016 JSRs typically included: (a) a summary of the priority activities identified and a road map for following up on all recommendations coming out of the review; (b) specific space for reporting on progress against the previous recommendations; and (c) isolation of the priority recommendations for the attention of the government and development partners. The aide-memoires also included concrete recommendations for the organization of future JSRs.

Integrating action points into operational and subnational plans

For JSRs to be really effective as an instrument for change, all agreed action points should be integrated into the next ESP/TEP annual work plans, or multiyear operational plan, at national and subnational levels within an agreed timeline following the review. The timing should allow for the JSR recommendations to be integrated into the national and subnational planning guidelines for the next annual (or multiyear) operational plan when the planning window opens.

For this reason, getting the JSR timing right is important and, to this end, a clear process is needed to:

- Communicate around the agreed changes to planning assumptions and expected action points with the responsible departments/units/organizations; and

- Cross-check that the adjustments have indeed been integrated within ESP/TEP planning documents and work plans when they are submitted to national planning departments, and that corrective actions are being implemented at national and subnational levels.

As with the review process, government leadership, broad stakeholder participation, and anchorage in national dialogue and planning processes are needed to ensure follow-up to recommendations. Resources may be needed to reinforce decentralized planning capacities (to meet new planning, data, and analytic requirements) and to strengthen the national review processes, as well as reinforce the communications and institutional linkages between central and decentralized planning actors. In addition, and when relevant, the JSR recommendations and their related action points should be added to the agenda for supervision/inspection visits to regional/district education offices.

Country practices

In **Ethiopia** in 2016, the Joint Review Mission forwarded two sets of recommendations to the Ministry of Education following the findings of the field visits and the desk review. The first set involved a synthesis of recommendations from the five regional teams deemed applicable to all regions (see Ethiopia example p. 36). This synthesis also contained proposed action points to be implemented by the ministry and the regions based on their mandates and to be monitored and reported on in 2016/17. The mission further proposed that action plans and indicators, as well as monitoring and reporting mechanisms, be established at the beginning of the 2016/17 academic year to take the recommendations forward. The second set of recommendations contained region-specific recommendations with separate regional reports. In this way, it was hoped that the regional bureaus would develop short-/medium-/long-term action plans and work with the ministry, woredas (districts), and schools to address the challenges identified in their respective region.

In **Rwanda,** the 2014/15 backward-looking JSR held in October 2015 (see Rwanda example p. 25) identified broad priority areas for consideration during the 2016/17 planning and budgeting cycle. Sector working groups (SWGs) were expected to discuss how identified priorities would be concretely integrated into both planning and budgeting processes, including a detailed discussion on resource allocation linked to selected priorities for programs and subprograms. Each SWG was also expected to provide a brief narrative of the underlying planning assumptions for resource allocation and provide the indicators, targets, and policy actions that would form the basis for sector monitoring in 2016/17.

In **Senegal,** annual work plans for each responsible education authority, service, or program were introduced in 2016 as part of efforts to improve operational planning for the education sector. These individual operational plans are expected to correct dysfunctions in annual sector plan implementation, with budgets itemized for all activities (within each service) intended to reach the sector's strategic objectives. The elaboration and correction of these work plans ensures anchorage in and coherence between the recommendations of the performance report for the year under review, the sector annual budget, and the operational plans of the technical and financial partners.

Follow-up and monitoring throughout the ESP/TEP cycle

Government, development, and humanitarian partners can continue to engage in policy dialogue and work alongside each other throughout the plan cycle at district and local levels to maintain engagement on JSR priorities and thematic issues relevant to their context. Focused capacity development retreats could address the decentralized planning and monitoring processes affected by the JSR, as well as discuss how subnational levels can better contribute to the organization of the JSR itself. These retreats might involve selected CSOs in order to better promote their full engagement in JSRs and other monitoring exercises.

Throughout the plan cycle, institutional stakeholders should further agree on predictable processes for:

- Reporting back to the education community on progress made in following through on recommendations and the positive impacts for ESP/TEP planning and implementation; and
- Documenting agreed JSR follow-up actions for inclusion in the following year's implementation report.

Country practices

In **Mozambique,** results-based financing has been introduced by development partners to connect the JSR process and its follow-up more tightly with ESP annual plans and the disbursement of funds, and to incentivize stakeholders to hold a quality JSR. The regular assessment of (sector) performance is a condition for ensuring the following year's financial contributions as part of established procedures for both general budget and sector pool support. Certain countries have also linked incentives for improving district reporting on education finance, achievements, and indicators to the funding of district operational plans.

5. Learning from JSRs

A maturing JSR offers lessons and *opportunities to improve* the efficiency and effectiveness of the process in future cycles. JSR learning can help improve the quality of technical and nontechnical discussions and dialogue during the following JSR, contribute to improving JSR organizational processes, and help ensure that future JSRs reap their potential benefits.

Stakeholder feedback

Countries with JSR experience have sought to leverage the review by soliciting stakeholder perspectives to understand what worked in the preparation and rollout of the JSR, and how JSRs contribute, through their organization, to improving the quality of the evidence base for results-based planning and monitoring.

Such reflections can begin during the preparatory period as stakeholders revisit the previous year's recommendations and be continued during the JSR meeting and post-meeting period through regular national/subnational dialogue mechanisms. The elaboration of *structured feedback questionnaires* (disseminated to participants at national and subnational levels) and the organization of focus group discussions are other effective mechanisms for soliciting stakeholder feedback.

Cross-country knowledge and experience exchange

Benefits: Building communities of practice across countries are particularly relevant for countries with little JSR experience. Learning exchanges not only serve problem solving and identifying 'fit for the context' JSR practices, but can also contribute to building 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 long period.

Participants: Knowledge exchange programs can involve key government officials (decision makers and technical and operational implementers), CSOs, and development partners. The benefits are greatest when local partners are actively engaged and technical partners offer different perspectives, pool experiences, and/or add complementary information.

Modalities: Government representatives, CSOs, and development partners interested in launching a community of practice around JSRs should engage with their counterparts in other countries to define the purpose, scope, and modalities of a knowledge exchange program. Modalities can take and combine various forms:

- *Exchange of tools and JSR documents* as well as peer review;
- *Technical assistance and exchange* in specific areas of expertise and mutual interest;
- *Regular online meetings* 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; and
- *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.

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 will enable 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 may find value in:

Further considerations regarding **cross-country knowledge exchange** can be found in Annex 4 and practical guidance can be found in JSR Tools, page 63.

- 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 the home country.

Upon return from the observation mission, it is good practice 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.

Country practices

In **Democratic Republic of Congo,** the Ministry of Education invited ministry officials from **Chad** and **Madagascar** to attend the third JSR in February 2017 with the aim of knowledge exchange and mutual learning around good practices. Visiting ministry participants experienced firsthand how JSRs are being organized elsewhere and had an opportunity to problem solve with a more diverse group of actors, and also shared information on their own experiences as part of efforts to build a mutually beneficial community of practice between the three countries on JSR processes. Chad also invited counterparts to attend their JSR in July 2017 for a similar process. Peer learning and mutual support are continued in between the countries' JSRs with virtual follow-up meetings and consultations.

Monitoring JSR effectiveness

Monitoring JSR effectiveness helps to avoid repetition of the same issues, JSR fatigue, and doing 'business as usual'. It is also key to creating a learning environment and institutional memory.

Systematic efforts toward monitoring and measuring JSR effectiveness might relate to:

- The JSR's characteristics and core functions as identified in the five dimensions (in Chapter 2);
- The JSR's process dimensions—including the preparation phase, JSR meeting conduct, and follow-up—all of which deserve greater priority toward enhancing national ownership, engagement, communications, and transparency, etc; and
- Whether the quality of the education evidence base is maturing and becoming stronger from year to year, directly or indirectly as a result of JSR activities (through capacity building efforts and more coordinated stakeholder inputs across civil society and at subnational levels, etc.).

Both the **JSR self-assessment** and the **maturity ladder,** cited earlier, are useful tools to monitor essential characteristics and core functions of the JSR and to set feasible targets for improving their effectiveness. See JSR Tools.

An overview of key elements in the JSR process based on this chapter is provided in Annex 5.

Country practices

In **Democratic Republic of Congo,** the strengths and weaknesses of the 2017 JSR were analyzed during and following the review using the five dimensions from the JSR effectiveness framework (see Chapter 2). Although some aspects of the five dimensions had already been institutionalized by the Ministry of Education, this analytical lens and process were instrumental in identifying how to improve the JSR in the future. Participant observations led to the elaboration of a road map for improving the following JSR, including logistical and organizational needs, good practices, actions, risks and challenges, partner responsibilities, and a calendar for action within the five dimensions for effective JSRs.

JSR tools

A set of tools accompanies the guidance in the previous chapters and supports different purposes, from helping country teams assess the status of their JSRs and engage in dialogue, to analyzing and monitoring JSRs' effectiveness as they evolve from one year to the next, as well as facilitating cross-country exchange:

- JSR self-assessment tool
- Maturity ladder
- Toolbox for facilitating cross-country knowledge exchange

The first two tools are presented in full here, while the toolbox is briefly summarized and made available online. All tools are available in digital format for pratical use and adaptation.

JSR self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool can be used both in preparation for the JSR and at a predictable point following the review to gauge past JSR effectiveness. Both uses can be motivating and meaningful for JSR organizers as inputs to improvement agendas and for agreeing on action points to improve JSR practices.

How and when to use the JSR self-assessment tool

Purpose and Use: The tool offers countries an easy way to assess and systematically reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their JSR process and practices.

Whether the tool is used in an environment with emerging, well-defined, or well-functioning JSRs, the results of the assessment can have multiple uses including:

- *Positioning JSR practices* against a conceptual framework on effectiveness;
- *Identifying existing capacity* strengths and entry points for addressing capacity gaps;
- *Unpacking persistent challenges* that undermine sector monitoring and dialogue and therefore the quality of the JSR;
- *Revealing 'quick wins'* that can immediately be had and make a difference going forward; and
- *Prioritizing what aspects of the JSR process are most important to address* in the immediate and longer term;
- *Monitoring and documenting how the JSR is maturing* from one JSR to the next (through repeated use of the tool in association with successive JSRs).

Methodology: The assessment can be undertaken individually by a number of key stakeholders (with subsequent consolidation of the results) or within a smaller group. Ideally, organizers of JSRs would discuss the results within a broader group of stakeholders, such as the local education group, ensuring representation of women and men. In all cases the rankings are subjective, based on users' own judgements in specific country contexts.

Timing: The assessment can be undertaken during the initial stages of organizing the JSR so that the results feed into elaborating the ToR and related decision making. When used as a monitoring tool, the assessment can be run again in the immediate follow-up to the JSR to document any improvements and draw lessons for the next review, and be repeated to monitor the extent to which the JSR is evolving.

The tool below is also available on the GPE website for use and adaptation: JSR self-assessment.*

*https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/joint-sector-review-self-assessment-tool

JSR self-assessment tool

DIMENSION 1: INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY					
The JSR includes participation of all education stakeholders and sets the stage for mutual accountability. The participants have the right profile and authority to speak on behalf of the organization/entity they represent.					
1.1. Diverse categories of stakeholders are represented	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ Ministry(ies) of education at the national level, representing all subsectors					
❯ Regional and subnational level stakeholders					
❯ Ministry of Finance					
❯ International development partners (multilateral or bilateral agencies, international NGOs)					
❯ Local NGOs/CSOs, including women's rights groups, ethnic and youth networks, and disabled people's organizations					
❯ Teachers' organizations					
❯ Workers' unions (administration staff)					
❯ School management committees and parents' associations					
❯ Additional categories: ministries such as planning, gender/women's affairs, health, ethnic affairs, civil service; academic institutions; private education providers; media; members of parliament					
1.2. Stakeholders have a defined role and participation is considered effective	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ The roles and responsibilities of different key stakeholders are discussed and agreed upon in advance of the JSR (i.e., through discussions around the ToR; agenda setting; etc.)					
❯ Local CSOs have a clear role (e.g., contributing data for the annual implementation report, providing inputs to the JSR agenda, following up on recommendations)					
❯ Development partners have a clear role (e.g., contributing data for the annual implementation report, providing inputs to the JSR agenda, providing financial or technical support to conduct the JSR)					
❯ The modalities and methodology for both plenary and working group sessions enable constructive dialogue, take gender dynamics into account, and build consensus on recommendations					
❯ Facilitators are carefully selected and enabled with guidance to foster effective participation and drive discussions towards expected outcomes					
1.3. Stakeholders demonstrate leadership and ownership	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ The ministry(ies) of education take the lead in the JSR process (preparation, organization, follow-up) and government officials at all levels demonstrate ownership of JSR processes					
❯ NGOs, CSOs, bi-and multilateral development partners are engaged in the JSR as a *joint* process and support the JSR objectives that were jointly agreed upon					
Comments:					

DIMENSION 2: ALIGNED TO SHARED POLICY FRAMEWORKS					
The JSR is aligned with the ESP/TEP as the shared policy framework that defines the perimeter for different areas covered by a JSR. This includes the sector plan as well as its operational subsets (annual or multiyear operational plan).[6]					
2.1. The scope of the JSR is defined by the ESP and its operational subsets	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The ESP is shared and endorsed by all partners and known to JSR participants					
❍ The JSR input documents (e.g., implementation progress report, financial reports) are aligned with the ESP and its subsets (e.g., annual or multiyear operational plan)					
❍ The results framework used for the JSR is the same as the one in the ESP and/or its operational documents					
2.2. The JSR is embedded in a sector-wide approach and enables alignment	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The reporting used (implementation report) for the JSR covers all subsectors included in the ESP/TEP, such as preprimary, primary, secondary, nonformal, TVET, and higher education, and cross-cutting issues, including gender					
❍ The JSR meeting or the implementation report addresses activities/programs resourced by domestic financing, as reported in the ESP/TEP					
❍ The JSR meeting or the implementation report addresses activities/programs resourced by external aid and that are *on budget, as reported in ESP/TEP*					
❍ The JSR meeting or the implementation report addresses activities/programs that are resourced by external aid but *off budget (not reflected in the ESP budget)*					
❍ The JSR meeting or the implementation report discusses externally funded activities/programs that are *off plan (not reflected in the plan)*					
2.3. The JSR contributes to reducing parallel reviews processes	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The JSR is an integral part of regular sector dialogue mechanisms among government and its key development partners					
❍ The JSR is the primary education sector review mechanism around which all stakeholders align					
❍ The annual implementation report and aide-memoire are used by development partners to report back to their headquarters on sector performance					
❍ Parallel reviews for a single category of stakeholders (e.g., donor reviews, CSO reviews) are reasonably limited. If they exist, the reasons are known and findings contribute to the JSR					
Comments:					

5 Some entries may be not applicable in some contexts. In this case, skip the question.

DIMENSION 3: BASED ON EVIDENCE					
The JSR is informed by reliable and valid data on results and sector implementation as well as financial data from the year under review. This is contributed by a variety of stakeholders including teachers, beneficiary groups, local CSOs, donors, and government.					
3.1. The JSR is based on an annual implementation report	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
The report includes a brief situational analysis of review period with *key sector indicators* at the output, and preferably outcome, level of the year under review					
It includes a brief situational analysis with *key financial information* of the year under review on national and education budget information					
It includes progress and results achieved through the implementation of the ESP/TEP annual or multiyear operational plan (review of programs/activities)					
It includes expenditures at program/activity levels covered by *domestic funding*					
It includes expenditures at program/activity levels covered by *external funding*					
It includes information on international aid commitments and actual disbursements to the education sector					
It includes diagnosis of sector weaknesses and strengths, including the quality and robustness of the evidence base and information generated through the M&E					
It includes status of follow-up on previous JSR recommendations					
It builds on contributions from regional educational authorities, development partners, including local CSOs, who participate in the production of evidence					
It is easy to navigate and serves its intended purpose and target audiences					
3.2. The JSR is based on additional evidence on sector performance	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
The JSR draws on key findings of commissioned reports, learning assessments, studies, fieldwork reports, and evaluation findings					
The additional evidence feeds into focused sessions ('big dives') during the JSR meeting					
3.3. The evidence base effectively informs the dialogue during the JSR	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
The annual implementation report is shared sufficiently in advance of the JSR to allow participants to be prepared to discuss its contents					
The annual implementation report highlights the main sector challenges and is used to focus the agenda on key findings and issues					
The annual implementation report and related additional documentation are used during the JSR presentations and discussions					
Comments:					

DIMENSION 4: MONITORING TOOL					
The JSR is viewed as more than a mechanism for 'accountability for results' and helps understand the causes of the system bottlenecks and shortcomings, including implementation challenges. JSRs help to improve the overall M&E system by flagging issues related to the quality of available evidence and deficits in data collection, analysis, and use.					
4.1. The JSR has a monitoring function	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The JSR leads to strategic analysis of sector performance regarding sector trends, ESP implementation, expenditures and financing, based on stocktaking against objectives					
❍ The monitoring for ESP results during the JSR process involves mutual accountability on commitments and responsibilities					
❍ Sector implementation issues at the operational level are effectively discussed, resulting in the identification of bottlenecks in sector performance of *what works* and *what does not work*					
4.2. The JSR has a learning function	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The JSR discussions deepen understanding of *why objectives have been achieved or not achieved*					
❍ The JSR discussions address shortcomings and root causes and identify appropriate remedial actions to improve the ESP implementation					
4.3. The JSR has a meta-review function	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❍ The JSR is used to review the quality of the evidence base, flagging gaps and enabling a formative assessment of the M&E system and capacities					
❍ The JSR uses indicators focusing on the quality of the information generated through the M&E system to monitor improvements					
❍ The JSR agenda includes this meta-review exercise as one of its recurrent items to enable discussion and recommendations to support improvements in the evidence base					

Comments:

DIMENSION 5: INSTRUMENT FOR CHANGE EFFECTIVELY EMBEDDED INTO A POLICY CYCLE					
Recommendations from the JSR are owned by stakeholders and effectively feed into addressing weaknesses in the ESP/TEP implementation, influencing the policy planning and budget programming.					
5.1. The JSR recommendations are actionable	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ Recommendations are prioritized and directly related to the ESP/TEP or the organization of the JSR					
❯ They designate responsible parties for implementation and monitoring and include a timeline for implementation and/or for leading to planning document revision					
❯ The JSR recommendations are validated and signed off by the majority of stakeholders, either during the JSR or shortly after the JSR through the aide-memoire or another mechanism					
5.2. The JSR is conducted at a strategic time during the fiscal year	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ The JSR is timed so that the recommendations can feed into national annual or multi-annual operation planning and budgetary processes					
❯ The annual or multiyear operational plan is updated in line with the JSR recommendations					
5.3. Follow-up	**- -**	**-**	**+**	**++**	**N/A**
❯ Follow-up to the JSR is integrated into national dialogue and coordination structures such as the local education group and thematic working groups, and at subnational levels					
❯ The implementation of the JSR recommendations is monitored, documented, and presented in the following JSR—thereby enhancing mutual accountability					
❯ Aspects that are key to optimizing potential benefits of the JSR are monitored to enhance effectiveness from year to year					
Comments:					

Maturity ladder

This two-page matrix sets the JSR within an evolving framework, using short narratives to describe characteristics of different maturity levels of JSRs, from *basic to intermediate* to *mature*. Organizers of JSRs can use this intuitive tool as an initial exercise to assess past JSRs against the five dimensions and create a quick and visual overview of the potential for growth and optimized use of JSRs.

How and when to use the maturity ladder

Purpose and Use: The tool reflects how country teams might progress from the organization of their first-time or 'ad-hoc' JSR, toward a more robust, well-defined, and well-managed JSR. A more mature JSR foresees and responds to changing sector priorities and stakeholder expectations, and is used as an instrument to manage technical and capacity risks. It is also fully embedded in the institutional landscape, and collectively supported.

As such, organizers of JSRs can use this intuitive tool as an initial exercise to:

- *Position their JSR* against the five dimensions;
- *Create a quick and visual overview* of the potential for growth and optimized use of JSRs; and
- *Kick off dialogue* around current and potential JSR practices.

Methodology: The tool is intended to engage organizers or a wider group of stakeholders in initial dialogue around the JSR, for instance during the preparation of the ToR to set a vision.

It is helpful to use color coding to mark the maturity level that is most resonant within the situation in the specific context for each dimension. Country teams can also mark the level of maturity they are aiming toward, to envision and assess realistic direction for their JSR.

Timing: The tool can be used as a taster of the more detailed self-assessment tool (see previous tool), or independently as a shorthand method for assessing organizational maturity and where focus may be needed in the undertaking of JSRs.

The tool is also available on the GPE website for use and adaptation: JSR maturity Ladder.*

*https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/joint-sector-review-maturity-ladder

JSR MATURITY LADDER

Create a quick visual overview of what characterizes your current JSR practices and how you envision these to evolve over time, based on the maturity characteristics for each JSR dimension. Use one color to mark the box that best captures past/current/likely practices, and another color to mark the desired and feasible level of maturity for the next JSR.

Note: The characteristics described for the maturity level of each JSR dimension are indicative only and not mutually exclusive—JSRs do not necessarily evolve linearly, as many factors are at play. Learning can and should happen at all levels. If country teams move along the maturity ladder from one step to the next, they should always be considered as having created a learning environment.

DIMENSIONS OF AN EFFECTIVE JSR	MATURITY LADDER OF EVOLVING JSRS				
	EMERGING		INTERMEDIATE	MATURE	
	INITIAL	DEVELOPING	WELL DEFINED	WELL MANAGED	OPTIMIZED
1. Inclusive and Participatory	Narrow stakeholder participation in JSR and limited mutual accountability for plan implementation and sector results. Weak trust in JSR process and/or limited agreement on JSR usefulness as part of strengthening of ESP planning, monitoring, and reporting cycle.	Growing stakeholder awareness around necessity of JSR, but limited and reactive engagement of stakeholder groups. Engagement not always effective, with limited stakeholder commitment to JSR priority actions.	Good communication, support services, and funding for broad participation of state and non-state actors in JSR. Expected stakeholder roles well defined and according responsibilities proactively followed. More effective participation and data contributions throughout the review process.	All stakeholder groups represented and proactively participating in JSR. Stakeholders effectively contribute to JSR ToR, gathering evidence base, production of documents, agenda setting, recommendations, etc.	Regular stakeholder updates and communications, and process transparency toward optimizing year-round collaboration on JSR.
2. Alignment with Sector Planning Cycle	No or partial alignment of JSR to ESP/TEP or sector/subsector strategies. JSR recommendations not systematically followed up to benefit sector reporting, monitoring, and planning cycles. Monitoring efforts entail high transaction costs.	Improvements in joint assessment of education sector performance against ESP/TEP and annual results frameworks, but continued parallel monitoring processes led by development partners and civil society stakeholders. Limited follow-up on JSR recommendations.	JSR largely aligned with ESP/TEP planning and reporting cycle and ESP/TEP annual results frameworks. Explicit linkages with subsector strategies and programming. More systematic attention to documenting and implementing agreed follow-up actions. ESP/TEP regularly reviewed in light of JSR findings.	JSR is principal sector review mechanism to which majority of education stakeholders align. JSR input documents fully aligned with ESP/TEP and its operational documents (e.g., annual or multiyear operational plan and results framework).	Fully integrated JSR serving sector planning, appraisals, and M&E—resulting in mutual accountability and reduced transaction costs. Optimization of JSR data and outcomes across all sector planning, programming, and budgeting elements.

(continued)

DIMENSIONS OF AN EFFECTIVE JSR	MATURITY LADDER OF EVOLVING JSRS				
	EMERGING		INTERMEDIATE	MATURE	
	INITIAL	DEVELOPING	WELL DEFINED	WELL MANAGED	OPTIMIZED
3. Based on Evidence	Weak baseline for monitoring. EMIS and M&E data not robust (e.g., inaccurate; outdated; not disaggregated by region, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic level). Low information transparency. Weak financial reporting on government and development partner investments. Lack of reporting from sub-national level, CSOs, NGOs. Poor quality annual report, or no report.	Data still not robust, but broader data contributed by stakeholders (although not all integrated into main JSR documents). Annual implementation report accompanied by financial reporting, complementary studies, etc. However, report quality impinged by data quality and technical capacities. Drafting guidelines developed.	JSR based on verifiable evidence sourced through variety of stakeholders. Information clearly attributed, referenced, unbiased and transparent. JSR documentation quality assured through planning, dedicated capacity development, and peer review.	JSR fed by year-round data collection and analysis. Evidence base regularly updated and aligned with ESP/TEP. Regular availability of good quality JSR documentation (e.g., implementation updates, financial reports, specially commissioned thematic studies).	Metrics and stakeholder feedback on use of data used to drive continuous improvements in data gathering and production of review documents. JSR evidence contributes to strengthened EMIS and M&E capacities by supporting capacity development and flagging urgent deficits in M&E data.
4. Monitoring Tool	JSR organized on ad-hoc basis. No standardization of processes, resulting in reactive decision making and unpredictability. Weak buy-in to, and accountability for, review process and findings.	JSRs undertaken more regularly. Some parts of JSR process repeatable through standardized ToR. Decision-making sound and work flows improving with some training available, but weak metrics on JSR effectiveness.	JSRs undertaken regularly and gaining momentum. Well-defined ToR with repeatable processes (expected roles and tasks in evidence gathering, implementation report drafting, aide-memoire). Well-defined metrics for measuring JSR process quality and M&E effectiveness.	Well-managed JSR process now part of year-round M&E culture and integrated within a single monitoring system. Metrics and self-assessments exploited to identify inefficiencies, risks, and effectiveness.	JSRs part of a continuous monitoring cycle. JSR metrics analysis and stakeholder feedback drives continuous improvements in JSR processes, ESP/TEP implementation, and M&E systems.
5. Instrument for Change	No dedicated government staff and resources assigned to the JSR process. Lack of clarity on stakeholder responsibilities. JSR largely supported through technical support of development partners.	Government leadership identified and dedicated coordination structure engaged with government staff. Clearer roles/responsibilities emerging with some standardization of tasks.	Strategic value of JSR recognized. Drive to fully institutionalize JSR and strengthen capacities. Consistent follow-up throughout year and review of priorities of previous JSR.	JSR fully institutionalized through the LEG; national dialogue structures, thematic working groups, and planning cycle. Strong commitment of government to priority actions and JSR follow-up.	Multi-stakeholder collaboration, information sharing and pooling of experiences optimizes government JSR capacities and ESP/TEP education investments.

Toolbox for facilitating cross-country knowledge exchange

This toolbox, provided online, offers four tools to facilitate the organization of cross-country exchange and peer learning, using the five dimensions for an effective JSR as an analytical lens. The tools have been conceived and used to help ensure structured and focused approach in the exchange of experiences.

The toolbox includes the following:

1. *Reading guide* for participants who are going to observe a JSR in a partner country
2. *Observation grid* for observing JSR practices in a comparative perspective
3. *Daily debriefing sessions guide* to facilitate the discussions during JSR cross-country exchange
4. *Improvement agenda template* for outlining key follow-up actions in participants' individual countries, based on lessons learned through the exchange.

These tools and instructions for their use are available on the GPE website: Toolbox for JSR Exchange.*

*https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/toolbox-cross-country-exchange-joint-sector-reviews

Annexes
Further considerations for organizing JSRs

Annex 1: JSR terms of reference

JSR TOR—SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A USEFUL OPERATIONAL TOOL		
	ASPECTS	**TO CONSIDER**
Context	➲ Short analysis of the current political and economic and education system context ➲ Short historical overview of JSR process in country, how the JSR is evolving/expected to evolve ➲ Lessons from the previous JSR ➲ Positioning JSR within current sector dialogue and monitoring landscape	• Major changes since the previous JSR (if any) • Specific issues that may affect the JSR, including changes in the overall context • Findings from self-assessment exercise (JSR Tools), influencing/justifying changes in how the JSR is organized
Objectives and Results	➲ Scope of the JSR including the policy framework that will ground the review ➲ General and specific objectives ➲ Expected results	• Separation between *recurrent* objectives, results and products and *specific* ones for the current review
Methodology	➲ Preparation and dissemination of the annual implementation report ➲ Approach to JSR event and dialogue ➲ Recommendation making process ➲ Aide-memoire production	• Clarification on purpose of field visits, technical or thematic pre-meetings, and regional events • Clarification on approach to JSR preparation, conduct, and follow-up, including approach for reaching consensus around the recommendations • Establishment of drafting committee for producing and finalizing the aide-memoire
JSR Outputs	➲ Aide-memoire	• Clarification on how the JSR outputs will feed into the planning and budgeting cycle and sector dialogue mechanisms and work streams
Participants	➲ Stakeholder groups—methodology for identifying review participants ➲ Expected roles and inputs	• Transparency and communication around how participants are identified and in what capacity
Logistics	➲ Date, location, and timing of review and JSR event ➲ Roles and responsibilities	• Language of the JSR event, translation options
Documentation and Dissemination	➲ Input documents to JSR event ➲ Other relevant documents, including agenda ➲ Dissemination timeline	• Production timeline and dissemination plan (including access options) for the annual implementation report
Budget and Resources	➲ JSR coordination ➲ Information gathering ➲ Report writing ➲ JSR event organization ➲ Follow-up	• Specific budget requirements that may increase costs; e.g. pre-review events, commissioned studies, invitees from subnational, remote locations, facilitation support
Annexes	➲ Participants' list with roles ➲ Agenda outline ➲ Formats for recommendations and aide- memoire ➲ Proposed follow-up mechanism	• Other documents as annexes to the ToR, depending on whether widespread sharing is considered beneficiary or not, such as: format and production line for annual progress report, JSR budget, key lessons from previous JSR, and in which way these have affected the planning for the current JSR

Annex 2: Annual implementation report

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT—SUGGESTIONS FOR RECURRENT REPORTING ITEMS	
Report Coverage	❯ Executive summary (including national progress in advancing toward SDG 4) ❯ Information scope and sectors covered by the ESP/TEP
Analysis of Sector Performance	❯ Sector progress and trends against national targets and objectives, disaggregated by gender, regional/geographical coverage, population group, disability, language group, socioeconomic status whenever possible ❯ Situational analysis of key sector performance indicators at the outcome level for the year under review ❯ Summary findings of commissioned studies (national learning assessments, teachers, gender parity, out-of-school youth, etc.) ❯ Diagnosis of sector weaknesses and strengths ❯ Review of the quality and robustness of the evidence base
Financial Reporting	❯ Expenditures at national budget level ❯ Expenditure at ministry budgets level ❯ Expenditures at program/activity level covered by *domestic funding* ❯ Expenditures at program/activity level covered by *external funding,* including international aid commitments and actual disbursements to the education sector When possible, the financial reporting should present budget execution against key interventions, regions, level of education, and per capita expenditure.
Review of Planned Actions	❯ Progress on implementation of key interventions, achievements, and good practices ❯ Enabling and impeding factors affecting ESP/TEP implementation and sector performance ❯ Status of follow-up on previous JSR recommendations
Development Cooperation	❯ Reporting on development cooperation and development of aid effectiveness indicators, including alignment on country systems ❯ Where relevant, reporting on humanitarian financing for education
Conclusions	❯ Summary of main trends relating to progress and key challenges identifying areas that require further attention for dialogue at the JSR

Annex 3: Aide-memoire

JSR AIDE-MEMOIRE—SUGGESTIONS FOR PROCESS AND CONTENTS		
	ASPECTS	**TO CONSIDER**
Purpose	❯ To document the deliberations	• Institutional memory, and documented proof that the JSR took place and that it monitored progress against targets • A well-documented aide-memoire can serve as basis for future JSRs (avoid repetition of subjects/issues)
	❯ Basis for follow-up	• Recommendations feed into annual or multi-annual operational plan
	❯ To function as a reminder of commitments	• Formal signing off signals intention to follow-up • Reporting on JSR recommendations as per aide-memoire in the next JSR
Preparation Process	❯ Setting up a drafting committee	• A small committee composed of both ministry staff and partners • Note taking during the meeting • Good practice is to make a summary by the end of every day to maintain reporting • Adequate time allocation to present (and validate) daily summaries
	❯ Predefining format and process	• A pre-set format and a matrix for recommendations will ensure that key issues are included and no discussion is wasted on format • Ensure that the process of finalizing the report is agreed upon before the JSR (ideally part of the JSR ToR) • A timeline for finalization with adequate time for sharing drafts
	❯ Consensus building on recommendations	• While consensus building on recommendations should be part of the JSR agenda, further time is often required after the JSR to finalize the process of formulating recommendations that can be followed through at the institutional level • Consider signing off at the highest level possible • Consensus should be reached at the technical level (LEG) on the report and the recommendations, before signing off
Contents	❯ Summary of outcomes	• A short summary capturing the resulting key recommendations of the JSR in a policy friendly manner
	❯ Introduction	• Context, meeting objectives, organizational arrangements, dates—consistent with the ToR
	❯ Methodology	• Agenda, approach to discussions, and dialogue • Stakeholder groups represented • Evidence and documents produced specifically for the JSR and those submitted as contributions by education partners, civil society, etc.
	❯ Summary of presentations and discussions	• Summaries of key presentations followed by a summary of discussions including the main issues raised • PowerPoints in annexes as appropriate
	❯ Recommendations	• Conclusions and recommendations agreed on
	❯ Lessons from JSR process	• Key lessons learned from the JSR process and related remedial action to consider for the following JSR for enhanced effectiveness
	❯ Annexes	• List of participants with the title and the stakeholder represented in a readable format, agenda, presentations, key speeches

Annex 4: Cross-country knowledge exchange

CROSS-COUNTRY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND PEER LEARNING AROUND JSRS		
	ASPECTS	**TO CONSIDER**
Country Profiles	❯ Country teams ❯ Building a community ❯ Mutual benefits and expectations	• Identify communities of practice based on language, JSR experience, sector processes, and country situations • Ideal combination of countries will include different levels of experience and exposure to JSRs in recent years • Reach out to ministry of education representatives, local partners, and potential financing partners to gauge interest in joint venture and secure participation and funding • Define purpose and scope, incl. technical areas to exchange on
Modalities	❯ Modalities for learning ❯ Exchange and rotation	• Country missions—one to three country delegations visiting a JSR in a third country (exchange can be in a cycle of 2–3 missions) • Technical assistance and support can be solicited to assist in preparing the JSR • Online meetings—to discuss specific areas of a JSR • Exchange of tools and documents (aide-memoire, annual implementation reports, terms of reference, agenda)
Preparations	❯ Logistics ❯ Analysis of JSR ❯ Tools ❯ Methodology and structure	• Organizing missions well in advance by involving partners in the agenda design to increase ownership • Composition of the country delegation can include Ministry of Education, CSOs, development partners' representatives • Attention is needed on logistical issues (visas, health, security clearances, flights, local transports, per diem) • Organize action planning meetings with country stakeholders to discuss expectations from both host and visiting participants • Discuss and peer review JSR documents ahead of a country visit
Participation in JSR	❯ Support/feedback ❯ Debriefings ❯ Logistical support	• Visiting delegations attend as observers • Host country secures side meetings with JSR organizers, development partners, and CSO representatives to discuss JSR effectiveness • Daily debrief sessions organized with visiting delegations to exchange on key lessons learned • Bilateral meetings between host and visiting delegations organized at the end of mission to exchange on the specific challenges identified • Feedback from visitors provided to the host to discuss how the findings have affected/will affect the JSR in own country
Feedback	❯ Feedback to hosting country ❯ Action points for own JSR	• Visiting and host delegations produce activity reports to share among themselves and with local partners • Visiting delegations prepare JSR improvement plans to be presented to the LEG for discussion and endorsement • Virtual meetings convened to discuss and exchange on JSR follow-up (aide-memoire, JSR recommendations)
Mobilization of Support	❯ Funding and technical	• Financial, technical, and logistical support secured through in-country and other development partners as part of collective efforts to improve ESP/TEP planning and monitoring • Importance of assigning leads in charge of facilitating the knowledge exchange before, during, and after a field mission

Annex 5: Overview—The JSR process

OVERVIEW—SUGGESTIONS AND KEY ELEMENTS FOR ORGANIZING AN EFFECTIVE JSR		
	ASPECTS	**TO CONSIDER**
1. Getting started	➔ National leadership & ownership	• Secure high-level political commitment from top government officials • Engage the relevant sector dialogue structure (LEG or other) • Consider options for organizational arrangements (steering committee, technical committee, task teams/working groups . . .)
	➔ Within sector dialogue structure (LEG or other)	• Use available tools to engage in constructive dialogue around strengths, weaknesses and progress of country JSR processes and practices, based on core functions and characteristics of JSR (JSR Tools) • Consider lessons from previous JSRs, if relevant, and feedback solicited from participants (see 5 below—Learning from JSRs) • Agree on JSR objectives, strategic timing and fit within broader planning, monitoring and reporting • Agree on scope and level of monitoring based on shared policy framework (results framework, multi-year operational plan, annual plan) • Agree on the JSR modalities, format and level of representation • Cost the JSR and engage financial support for civil society actors, teachers' organizations and sub-national representation
	➔ Terms of reference (TOR) (see also Annex 1)	In a document for wider sharing and based on the above: • Articulate the agreed purpose, objectives and expected outputs • Outline the approach, methodology and participation (preparation, conduct and follow-up) • Specify the agreed institutional coordination arrangements, task areas for working groups, and roles and responsibilities • Specify the expected inputs and outputs of the JSR • Clarify implementation report coverage and development (see 2 below—Annual Implementation Report) • Set out resources and capacities needed, including for communication • Include a timeline for the JSR process, including for the follow-up • Include annexes to provide additional information as necessary • Share the TOR with LEG members for comments before finalizing • Use the TOR, and the consultation process for its development, to build common understanding among the wider group as well as buy-in
2. Annual implementation report	➔ Report development (see also Annex 2)	• Secure government leadership and responsibility for report development • Prioritize report development and begin well in advance, as it determines focus and quality of discussions • Identify information sources and data gathering methodologies, ensuring use of existing evidence and/or needs for collecting additional data • Ensure inclusion of data on sector expenditure and financial trends • Assess data and capacity constraints and propose remedial strategies • Establish report writing guidelines, and template for consistency over time and across the writing team • Develop a detailed report production timeline, with clear roles, and planning time for sharing the draft and for integrating comments • Ensure critical analysis of education performance, implementation achievements and bottlenecks • Include reporting on follow-up on previous JSR recommendations
	➔ Timely dissemination	• Distribute annual implementation report for stakeholders' preparation, ideally at least two weeks in advance of JSR meeting, as well as other meeting documents; i.e., agenda, relevant studies, evaluations

(continued)

OVERVIEW—SUGGESTIONS AND KEY ELEMENTS FOR ORGANIZING AN EFFECTIVE JSR (*CONTINUED*)		
	ASPECTS	**TO CONSIDER**
3. The JSR meeting	Agenda	• Allocate space for presentations on the annual implementation report and its main findings, including sub-national monitoring (recurring items) • Allocate space for examining core challenges, thematic areas and/or emerging issues ('big-dives') • Include status of implementation of previous JSR recommendations • Reflect approaches for effective participation and facilitation both in the way sessions are organized and in time allocation • Consider a combination of plenaries, parallel break-out sessions and side events in agenda as appropriate • Balance the agenda between items looking back at past results and shortcomings and items leading to forward-looking action points to cater for the two core functions of the JSR (Chapter 2, dimensions 4–5)
	Moderation and organization	• Identify and properly brief the moderators, session chairs, rapporteurs and notetakers • Distill the most important points through daily summaries • Organize end-of-day debriefing among the JSR organizers • Keep the focus on building consensus during sessions that are intended to inform and lead to JSR recommendations • In framing sessions on recommendations, take into consideration existing policy commitments, financial implications, required organizational arrangements and harmonization of support
4. Follow-up	Finalize the aide-memoire (see also Annex 3)	• Convene a smaller forum, thematic working group(s) or specific session within the LEG to finalize recommendations if necessary • Clarify responsibilities for recommendations and secure commitments for follow-up, monitoring and reporting • Produce the aide-memoire reflecting agreements, recommendations, action points and responsibilities • Share the aide-memoire for collective validation at a highest level possible, for instance in a follow-up meeting of the LEG
	Integration into the next ESP/TEP work plan and budget	• Ensure that JSR recommendations are integrated into planning documents and budgeting when planning window opens • Communicate around changes to planning assumptions and expected action points as a result of the JSR • Cross-check that adjustments have been made at various levels
	Monitoring and reporting	• Report to the education community on progress made in following through on recommendations • Document progress on agreed JSR follow-up actions
5. Learning from JSRs	Stakeholder feedback	• Solicit stakeholder perspectives and feedback on the JSR process to inform lessons and planning for the next JSR • Use evaluation questionnaires during the JSR or structured feedback questionnaires disseminated to participants after the JSR • Communicate about lessons learnt and demonstrate improvement measures taken in response to feedback (in TORs, in agenda setting, during the JSR meeting, and/or in other communication)
	Monitoring JSR effectiveness	• Use the self-assessment tool to assess and monitor status/progress on the key characteristics and core functions of the JSR (JSR Tools) • Use the maturity ladder to position the JSR and its further potential evolvement and role in planning and monitoring tasks (JSR Tools)
	Cross-country exchange (see also Annex 4)	• Explore interest among key government officials, CSOs and development partners to engage with other countries on JSRs • Identify common points of interest across countries, modalities and funding • Use available tools to facilitate and structure cross-country knowledge exchange (JSR Tools)

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