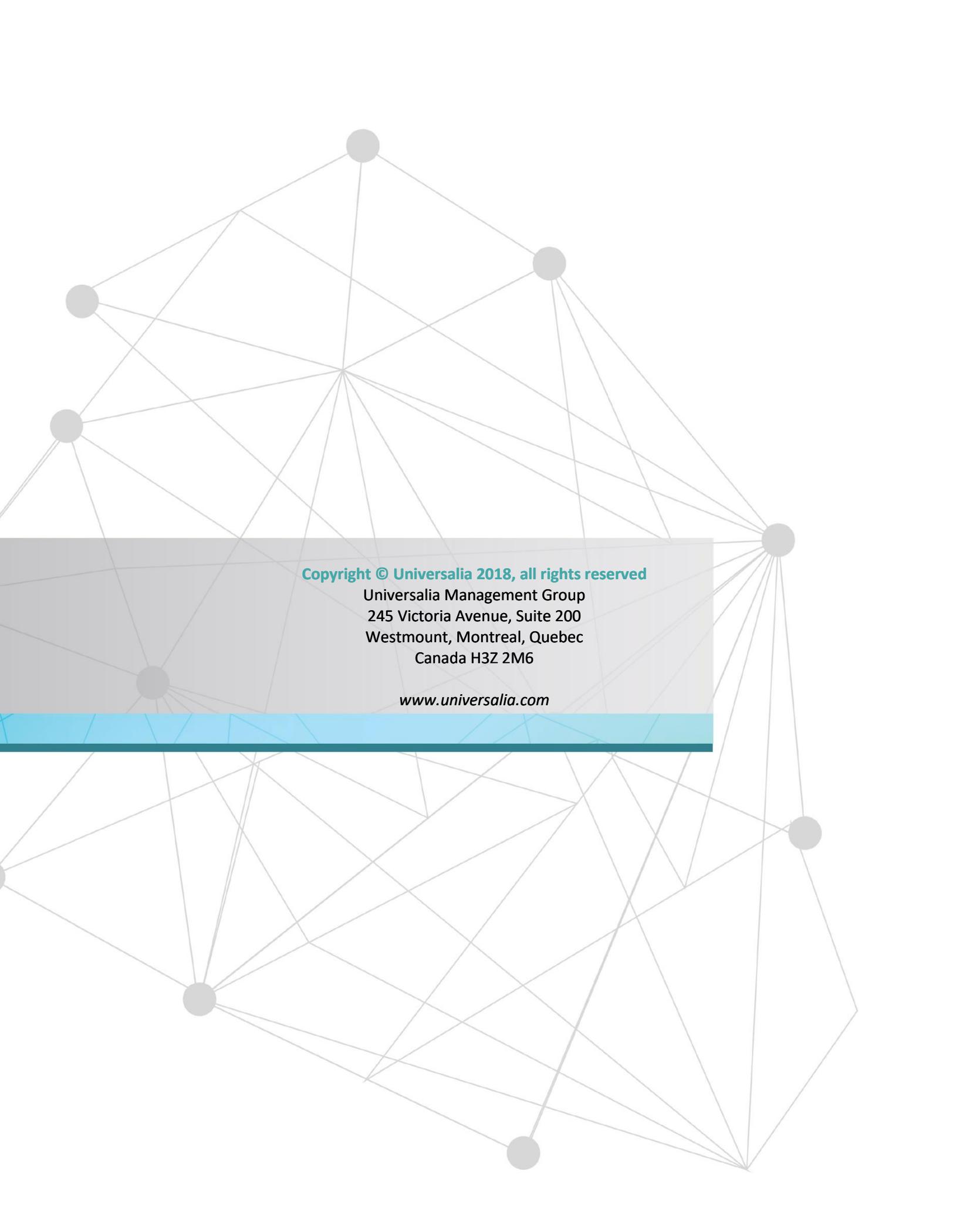


# Summative Evaluation of GPE's Country-level Support to Education

Batch 3, Country 8: Mauritania

FINAL REPORT | DECEMBER 2018





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# Executive Summary

## Evaluation purpose and approach

This evaluation is part of a larger study of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that comprises 30 country level evaluations (CLE). The overall study runs from 2017 until 2020. It aims to assess (i) GPE contributions to strengthening national education systems and, ultimately, education results related to learning, equity, equality and inclusion; and hence (ii) the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's theory of change (ToC) and country-level operational model. The assessment is based on a theory-based, mixed social science research methodology known as contribution analysis.

This study was conducted between June to December 2018 and covered GPE support from 2012 to 2018. It draws on document, database and literature review, as well as on consultations with a total of 47 governmental, multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental stakeholders in Mauritania and Washington DC.

## Education in Mauritania

Mauritania is a sparsely populated, desert country located between the North-African region and the Sub-Saharan region. It is the fourth least densely populated country in the world, with a population of 4.3 million. Mauritania's GDP grew consistently between 2004 and 2014, and this improvement was accompanied by a reduction in the poverty rate and inequalities. Despite this, the country faces development challenges related to its rapid urbanization, agricultural and fishery sectors performing below potential, lack of economic

diversification, and the weak management of extractive rents (such as minerals).

The last major education reform in 1999 centralized the education system into a single bilingual (French and Arabic) education system. This reform has since presented the government with considerable challenges in delivering quality education in an efficient and equitable way.

Responsibility for the education sector is shared between five ministries - the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Teaching (MAIEO), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS), the Ministry for Employment, Professional Training, and New Technologies, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Children (MASEF) and the Ministry of National Education (MEN), with the two latter ministries responsible for overseeing the delivery of formal, basic education.

Private schools (part of the formal system and regulated by MEN) are taking on increasing importance in the country – 20 percent of all formal schools are privately-funded and the percentage of new enrollments in the private system is growing very quickly. Mahadras (privately funded religious schools which are not part of the formal system) are also important in the country's education sector as they either replace formal education or complement formal schooling for the majority of school-aged children.

In the past two decades, Mauritania has developed two Education Sector Plans (ESPs). Its second ESP, the National Program for the Development of the Education Sector (PNDSE II) covered the period 2011-2021, and was accompanied by three Triennial Action Plans (PATs). **This evaluation focuses on the period covered by the PNDSE II, its accompanying PATs and the GPE-funded Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (PASEB, 2014-2018).**

## GPE in Mauritania

Mauritania joined GPE in 2002 and is represented on the GPE Board through the Africa 2 constituency. Under the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), Mauritania received three education sector plan implementation grants (ESPIGs), the most recent of which was approximately \$14 million for the period 2008-2012. After the transition of the FTI to GPE in 2011, Mauritania received one education sector plan implementation grant (ESPIG) of \$12.4 million for 2014-2018, and one program development grant (PDG) of \$170,000 in 2012.

## GPE contributions to sector planning

### *State of sector planning in Mauritania, 2012-2018*

The development of the PNDSE II was government-led and was informed by a two-year process including: a joint sector review of the PDNSE I in 2009; the March 2010 Education Status Report (RESEN); the 2010 external evaluation of the PNDSE I; recommendations developed by education sub-sector committees; and the adoption of the education Policy Letter 2011-2020.

In terms of the plan's evidence-base, there was considerable alignment between the analysis of education sector challenges in the 2010 RESEN and the strategic priorities identified in the PNDSE II, with both recognizing the need for a strategy to regulate the flow of students through secondary education, better mechanisms to retain children in basic education and better integration of civil society, the private sector and Mahadras in education sector planning and delivery.

The PNDSE II was also deemed credible. It was assessed as financially sustainable in both the short-term (2012-14) and the long-term (2020), and deemed to have met or was in the process of meeting all major FTI indicative funding requirements.

There were, however, several limitations to the PNDSE II:

- The education sector planning process did not include non-state actors, such as civil society, teachers' associations and private sector actors;
- The plan lacked sufficient priority setting or an appropriate level of operational detail in terms of roles and responsibilities for its implementation;
- Several ministries reported a sense of marginalization from the planning process and a lack of sufficient coordination, particularly surrounding development of the PATs.

## *GPE contributions*

The prospect of obtaining an implementation grant from GPE (then EFA-FTI) was **the major incentive for the government to develop sectoral plans in 2001 and 2011.**

Furthermore, there has been a demonstrable improvement in the quality and completeness of ESPs between the PNDES I and II, with increased precision and measurability in the indicators included in the PNDES II logical framework highlighted in particular. **This improvement corresponds closely with the content of GPE guidelines and the assistance provided by the Secretariat**, either through advocacy by its country lead or recommendations made through its external appraisals.

The Secretariat country lead, along with the Coordinating Agency (the French Development Agency – AFD) within the LEG, provided support in explaining GPE processes, guidelines

and funding requirements to government and education partners. While GPE had sufficient leverage to influence sector planning during the period under review, it has been an ongoing challenge to develop sector planning in Mauritania that is holistic and reflects all education investment. While education data systems have been improved through GPE ESPIG support, there remain concerns about the availability of an integrated and complete set of data with which to plan and subsequently assess overall PNDSE II progress.

## GPE contributions to sector dialogue and monitoring

### *State of sector dialogue and monitoring in Mauritania*

The Local Education Group (LEG) was created in 2001. It is currently presided over by the the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, and includes representatives of the five education ministries, development partners who finance PNDSE II implementation and one civil society representative.

The LEG is not yet a body that truly represents the education sector with several prominent stakeholders absent, including: teachers' associations, NGOs involved in education service delivery, several donor agencies and representatives of mahadras or private schools. Limited inter-ministerial coordination, coupled with the complexity of institutional arrangements for PNDSE II governance and implementation, represent significant challenges for sector dialogue in the Mauritanian context. Efforts have also been limited with regard to the promotion of harmonization with national systems among development partners.

While PNDSE II monitoring structures are established and joint sector review processes are held regularly, the quality and relevance of

sector monitoring are limited for several reasons:

- **Incomplete data:** Data is unavailable from actors that operate outside PNDSE II;
- **Institution arrangements:** The DPEF is responsible for organizing JSRs and reporting on PNDSE II progress but has no authority over the education ministries to ensure access to EMIS and education finance data; and lacks time and technical capacity to analyze and review education sector progress;
- **PNDSE II performance indicators** are aggregate values and do not sufficiently reflect education disparities in the country, limiting their utility for decision-making;
- **JSR report format:** The current format does not enable comprehensive assessment of PNDSE II progress against the previous year's annual plan, sector plan objectives or PNDSE II expected results;
- **Accountability** at the highest decision-making levels of government and across the five education ministries for the governance, coordination and implementation of the PNDSE II is limited.

### *GPE contributions*

During the review period, GPE contributed to strengthening sector dialogue and monitoring processes in Mauritania through:

- **Providing an incentive to structure and deepen education sector dialogue** through GPE funding criteria and successive grants. These have provided the incentive to entrench the LEG and annual JSRs in the country;
- **Providing support and resources for sector review**, in the form of an evaluation of the most recent PAT (2016-2018);
- **Advocating for the inclusion of civil society and other key stakeholder groups** in the

LEG as well as in education sector planning and review processes.

Despite these efforts, stakeholder capabilities and motivation to work together to solve education issues remain weak. The institutional structures supporting mutual accountability for PNDSE II results are not fully operational, inclusive or effective, and emerging recommendations from sector reviews are not seen to inform sector planning or concrete action to resolve identified bottlenecks.

## GPE contributions to sector financing

### *State of sector financing in Mauritania, 2012-2018*

Absolute domestic education expenditure decreased by 20 percent (from US\$157 million to US\$125 million) between 2010 and 2016, and government expenditure to education as a share of total government expenditure remained below the 20 percent GPE target, decreasing from 2010 to 2016 (16 percent to 9.3 percent). While basic education's share of total public education expenditure increased from 71 to 82 percent between 2010 and 2016, the absolute amount spent on basic education decreased by eight percent (from \$29.4 million in 2010 to \$22.1 million in 2016).

International education sector financing to Mauritania decreased overall by 18.3 percent, from US\$22.9 million in 2010 to US\$18.7 million in 2016. Additionally, education ODA as a share of overall ODA decreased from 6.5 percent in 2010 to 5.1 percent in 2016. A similar downward trend for the period 2010-2016 was also seen in the share of education ODA allocated to basic education which decreased from 14.2 percent to 5.8 percent.

## *GPE contributions*

**GPE contributed modestly to increasing international education financing in Mauritania** through a \$12.4 million ESPIG which financed the PASEB. The average yearly contribution of the ESPIG grant, US\$2.5 million, represents 1.7 and 12.4 percent of the average yearly domestic and international education financing respectively. Although the total funds provided and leveraged by GPE are small relative to overall domestic and international education financing, MEN stakeholders highlighted that GPE's contribution was significant since it has been constant over the past 15 years, providing long-term support to certain activities. Additionally, Mauritania is one of the first country members to benefit from the GPE Multiplier mechanism, which is noted as having encouraged the World Bank to commit to investing additional funding in the country in 2018.

**However, the evaluation found no evidence that GPE contributed to improvements in the quality of international education financing.** While the PASEB met seven out of ten GPE criteria for alignment and harmonization, and is aligned with the sector plan, it does not follow the same disbursement, expenditure and accounting procedures as the government. Also, there is limited evidence of the LEG's promotion of greater alignment with national systems or harmonization among development partners during the period under review, either in the form of pooled funding, coordinated reporting, or joint evaluation.

**The evaluation also found no evidence that GPE contributed to increased domestic education financing.** The evaluation found no evidence of GPE advocacy on the 20 and 45 percent targets after ESPIG approval. While spending on the education sector as a share of total government expenditures is below the 20 percent objective set by GPE, Mauritania dedicates more than 45

percent of its education budget to primary education.

## GPE contributions to sector plan implementation

### *State of sector plan implementation in Mauritania, 2012-2018*

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the PNDSE II has been implemented, given that available documentation focuses on listing implemented activities without comparing to planned activities, and does not summarize progress on activity and output targets. Using the evaluations of PAT 2016-2018 and PAT 2012-2014 as a proxy indication for PNDSE II implementation, 40 and 55 percent of the allocated budgets for the implementation of the PATs had been disbursed by June 2018, and the total amount disbursed during the implementation of both PATs amounts to only 19 percent of the anticipated costs of the PNDSE II (2011-2021). It is thus reasonable to assume that many activities planned in the PNDSE II have been partially implemented, or not implemented at all, or that some planned activities did not receive the funds allocated for their implementation.

### *GPE contributions*

During the period under review, the funds provided by GPE via the \$12.4 million ESPIG and \$170,000 PDG supported the activities of the PASEB. 82 percent of the funds allocated to the PASEB had been disbursed by December 2017, close to one year before the end of the implementation period. By this date, the PASEB had completed most of its activities, and had achieved or exceeded 10 of the project's 16 result indicator targets, partially achieved

targets for two result indicators, with no progress on the remaining four.

Exemplary achievements under the project's three thematic components include:

#### **Component 1: Improving the quality of primary education**

- 101 teacher training college (ENI) instructors received pedagogical training through the use of a newly-introduced standardized curriculum;
- All four directors of ENIs received training on the management of their institution, and 41 staff received language training;
- The Center for Language Study and Research (CREL) provided training in bilingual education to 28 math and science teachers, 78 ENI trainers, and 1,601 ENI students.

#### **Component 2: Promoting equity in access to lower secondary school**

- Construction of 13 local collèges in areas that currently have none, in the most densely populated poor regions;
- Six awareness-raising campaigns on girls' education were organized, with the support of NGOs, in the six targeted regions, reaching 290 participants including school principals, representatives of parents' associations, CSOs, and local media;
- 352 girls from the six regions received performance awards.

#### **Component 3: Strengthening the system's management capacity**

- Hiring of firm for development of a digitalized EMIS and training of 78 MEN staff in education statistics, with support from UNESCO;
- Three statistical yearbooks published following the conducting of three annual school censuses;

- Technical support, especially regarding financial simulation models, provided in the development of the RESEN;

## Factors other than GPE contributions affecting change

**Factors that positively influenced** change in the above described areas included (i) strong commitment by development partners to support joint sector planning, coordinated dialogue and joint review of sector plans since 2001; (ii) the centralization of project management functions within one government unit for education programming (DPEF); and (iii) the relative stability and continuity over time among members in the LEG, particularly with regard to development partners and DPEF.

**Factors that negatively influenced** change included (i) the institutional complexity for PNDSE II governance and implementation; 2) the limited capacity for and commitment to sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination in Mauritania; (iii) the perceived lack of commitment at the highest levels of the government for mutual accountability around PNDSE II performance; (iv) limitations in the inclusiveness of LEG membership; and (v) a reduction in the number of development partners in education in Mauritania since 2011 entailing fewer resources for the sector and a greater financial and policy dialogue burden assumed by fewer actors and reduced external investment in the system.

## Unintended results of GPE support

The evaluation did not find evidence of any unintended, positive or negative, effects of GPE support to sector planning, sector dialogue and monitoring, and sector plan implementation.

## System level change

### *System level change*

During the 2014-2018 period, Mauritania removed, or in some cases laid the foundation for removing, barriers to equitable education access and quality. Changes include:

- **Reorganization of primary schools** which entailed closing schools with only one classroom and upgrading others by building 121 new classrooms in existing primary schools;
- **Construction of 21 local collèges, and increasing number of public secondary schools** by 52 percent between 2012 and 2017;
- Opening of 1,113 **school canteens**, feeding up to 66,00 children every day;
- **Pilot projects on girls' transportation and housing implemented** for girls living in regions where secondary schools are located far from their communities;
- **Pilot project implementing formal education in 23 mahadras**, with the support of UNICEF, introducing science and mathematics in the curriculum, and training 200 mahadras teachers in these disciplines;
- **Strengthening ENIs and pre-service teacher training** through the construction of two additional ENIs, raising the minimum entrance requirement to the ENIs, extending teacher training by an additional year, and introducing a new standardized curriculum for teacher training and competency-based approach;
- Additionally, 1,019 **students from the ENIs received training in their second language** from the Center for strengthening language teaching (CREL);
- **Introduction of teacher recruitment on a contractual basis**, allowing the Regional

Education Director (DREN) to recruit teachers based on the needs of their respective regions;

- **Improvements in pupil/teacher ratios** in private and public secondary schools between 2012 and 2017, from 35:1 and 15:1, to 31:1 and 14:1 respectively. Pupil/teacher ratios also decreased in primary public schools in the same period, from 46:1 to 41:1;
- Acquisition and distribution of 450,397 **pedagogical kits** for all pupils in primary and lower secondary school in the targeted regions (wilayas);
- **Strengthened capacity to assess students' learning outcomes and teacher competencies** through capacity-building of the Assessment Unit (CNE). The CNE subsequently carried out learning assessments of children in grades 3 and 5 and in third year of lower secondary schools, and three assessments of students in the four ENIs;
- Available data provide **no evidence of system-level changes related to removing barriers to education access for children with disabilities.**
- **The MEN has engaged in the development of a human resource database** which is expected to be used by decision makers to identify teachers in need of training, and to dispatch qualified teachers where they are needed.
- **The MEN is also in the process of implementing a digitalized EMIS** with support from GPE through the PASEB and it is expected that the new EMIS be functional in the capital city by the end of the PASEB implementation period.

## *Likely links between sector plan implementation and system level change*

**Sector plan implementation likely contributed to most of the system-level improvements in Mauritania.** Most of the improvements described above can be linked to specific initiatives implemented as part of the PNDSE II. For instance, initiatives related to strengthening teacher's colleges and teacher training, the distribution of pedagogical kits, the establishment of an EMIS, among others are mentioned in the PNDSE II. The only system-level changes listed above that were not mentioned in the PNDSE II are the two pilot projects led by the MASEF and Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Teaching (MAIEO) on girls' transportation and housing, and the recruitment of teachers on a contractual basis.

**In some cases, it is too early to expect activities planned under the PNDSE II to have resulted in system-wide improvements** given that the respective initiatives are still in pilot phases (e.g. girls' transportation, formal education in mahadras), have not been fully implemented (e.g. implementation of the EMIS, human resource management system), or because innovations have not been institutionalized (e.g. language training for ENI students).

## **Learning outcomes and equity**

### *Changes in learning outcomes, equity and gender equality*

**Equitable access to basic education has not yet been achieved in Mauritania despite some improvements, and available evidence suggests deterioration in students' learning outcomes.**

Progress in reducing **out-of-school rates** between 2012 and 2017 has been limited to

primary (5 percent decrease) and upper secondary (11 percent decrease); the out-of-school rate for lower secondary education increased by 13 percentage points during the same period.

Targets set by the PNDSE II for **Gross Enrollment Rates (GER)** for both upper and lower secondary education (30 percent and 15 percent by 2021 respectively) were achieved by 2017.

**Primary completion rates** have stagnated around 70 percent between 2012 and 2017; **lower secondary completion rates** increased from 29 percent to 35 percent from 2014 to 2017.

**Gender disparities** in regard to out-of-school rates have increased between 2012 and 2017. However, gender disparities with regard to GER and completion rates have decreased.

**Regional disparities** in access to education remain significant. The GER at the primary level increased in three of the six regions targeted by the PASEB, but decreased in the remaining three regions. Overall, the GER decreased in five of Mauritania's 13 regions.

With regard to **learning outcomes**, national examination pass rates decreased at both lower and upper secondary levels (from 45 to 29 percent, and 18 to 15 percent respectively) between 2012 and 2017; and stagnated at 56 percent at the primary level between 2013 and 2017, despite an increase from 50 percent to 56 percent between 2012 and 2013.

### *Likely links to observed system level changes*

Improvements in the GER and GPI of GER at lower and upper secondary levels may have been at least partly due to the measures targeting girls' education, such as constructing

proximity collèges, conducting awareness-raising campaigns on girls' education, and distributing awards for girls. Additionally, the improvement in completion rates at the lower secondary level may be due in part to improvements in the pupil/teacher ratio at the secondary level. The slight decrease in out-of-school children at the primary and upper secondary levels of education during the period under review may have been affected by efforts to upgrade existing primary schools and increase the number of public secondary schools between 2012 and 2017.

**There is no clear relationship between the lack of progress in learning outcomes to system-level changes observed during the review period.** Efforts to improve teaching quality, teacher recruitment, and improve teacher proficiency in French and Arabic are too recent or not yet sufficiently advanced to show any improvement at the impact level.

## Conclusions/ Overall observations

### *Emerging good practice*

One approach observed in Mauritania is noteworthy and of potential interest to other countries.

**Strengthening national capacity for sector planning:** Throughout the implementation of PNDSE I, considerable capacity was built among national education stakeholders for assessing sector strengths and challenges and developing education sector plans. In the preparation of PNDSE II, much of its development was undertaken independently by national government with regard to sector analysis, financial simulation, the organization of sector dialogue around the plan as well as the preparation of the plan document.

## *GPE contributions*

**GPE support has made positive contributions to the development of education sector plans in Mauritania. Evidence partially supports the claim that GPE has contributed to mutual accountability for education sector progress, and the implementation of sector plans. Available evidence does not show that GPE has made contributions to more and better financing for education in the country.**

The Secretariat, grant agent and coordinating agency each fulfilled their respective roles and responsibilities within the GPE operational model effectively. Despite this, assumptions with regard to stakeholder commitment (political will) and their capability to work together to solve education issues did not hold true in the context of Mauritania for the period under review, as development partners were not motivated, or committed, to further align or harmonize their education investments.

The evaluation also found that the current GPE operational model was not sufficiently equipped to address key contextual challenges such as moderate government commitment to improving education sector performance, limited willingness among relevant ministries to work together, and modest commitment of donors to further aid effectiveness principles of alignment and harmonization. A higher and more strategic level of policy dialogue is likely required to support and complement the efforts of the GPE Secretariat, which works at a more operational level.

## *System level change*

During 2012-2018, Mauritania put in place several new measures aimed at removing barriers to equitable school access, increasing the quality of teaching and strengthening education system governance. The available evidence partly supports the assumed link

## *Perceived relevance of GPE support*

Mauritania would benefit from further guidance from GPE on processes for and quality standards with regard to the development of PATs, JSRs and joint sector evaluations. The country would also benefit from the clarification of the interdependence, focus, content, structure and resource-efficiency of these processes as well as how they can best be structured to inform ongoing and strategic decision-making.

While the Secretariat country lead has successfully advocated for greater inclusion of civil society and membership by UNHCR in LEG membership, more effort could be made by the country lead, the CA and GA to advocate for membership by other education actors, both foreign and domestic.

The government of Mauritania perceives the GPE funding model, which now includes fixed and variable tranches, as undermining the predictability of external investments in education. In particular, they see the variable tranche as a requirement to pre-finance education sector investments for which they do not have the resources. From the perspective of the GPE Secretariat, however, it is inaccurate to characterize the GPE funding model as 'pre-financing', and there appears to be a need to discuss and further clarify this issue with government stakeholders in Mauritania.

between ESP implementation and education system strengthening.

No or insufficient progress was made, however, in systematically identifying and addressing the needs of learners with special needs.

Initiatives to remove barriers to gender equality were relatively modest, short-term and punctual, and there were no education quality

or governance initiatives under PNDSE II which specifically focused on advancing gender equality.

theory of change in relation to the assumed link between system-level improvements and impact-level changes in learning outcomes, equity, equality and inclusion.

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### ***Impact level change***

There is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the validity of the GPE country-level

# Acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AfDB	African Development Bank
BID	Banque islamique de développement (Islamic Development Bank)
C2D	Catalyst to Development
CA	Coordinating Agency
CEQ	Country Evaluation Question
COMEDUC	Coalition des Organisations Mauritaniennes pour l'Éducation (Coalition of Mauritanian Organizations for Education)
CREL	Centre de Renforcement de l'Enseignement des Langues (Center for strengthening language teaching)
CRS	Credit Reporting System
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCP	Developing Country Partner
DPEF	Direction des Projets Education-Formation (Directorate of Education Training Projects)
DREN	Direction régional de l'éducation nationale (Regional Education Director)
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENI	École Normale des Instituteurs (teacher training college)
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Plan Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
ESR	Education Sector Review
EU	European Union

<b>FNAPEE</b>	Fédération nationale des associations des parents d'élèves et étudiants (National Federation of Parent and Student Associations of Mauritania)
<b>FTI</b>	Fast Track Initiative
<b>GA</b>	Grant Agent
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German development agency)
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education
<b>IBRD</b>	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>IIEP</b>	International Institute for Educational Planning
<b>INAP -FTP</b>	Institut National de la Promotion de Formation Technique et Professionnelle (National Institute for the promotion of Technical and Professional Training)
<b>JESR</b>	Joint Education Sector Review
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>LEG</b>	Local Education Group
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MAED</b>	Ministère des Affaires Économiques et du Développement (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development)
<b>MAIEO</b>	Ministère des Affaires Islamiques et de l'Enseignement Originel (Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Teaching)
<b>MASEF</b>	Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la femme et de l'Enfant (Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Children)
<b>MEF</b>	Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (Ministry of Economy and Finance, previously the MAED)
<b>MEFPNT</b>	Ministère de l'emploi, de la Formation professionnel et des nouvelles Technologies (Ministry for Employment, Professional Training, and New Technologies)
<b>MEN</b>	Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale (Ministry of National Education)
<b>MESRS</b>	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research)
<b>MRO</b>	Mauritanian Ouguiya – official former currency of Mauritania
<b>MRU</b>	Mauritanian Ouguiya – official current currency of Mauritania
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PASEB	Projet de soutien pour le secteur de l'éducation de base (Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project)
PASEC	Program for the Analysis of Education Systems
PAT	Plan d'actions triennal (Triennial Action Plan)
PDG	Program Development Grant
RESEN	Rapport d'État sur le Système Éducatif National (Education Status Report)
SCAC	Cooperation and Cultural Action Service (Service de coopération et d'action Culturelle)
SDI	Service Delivery Indicator
ToC	Theory of change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US\$	United States dollar
WB	World Bank



# Terminology

<b>Alignment</b>	Basing support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Basic education</b>	Pre-primary (i.e., education before Grade 1), primary (Grades 1-6), lower secondary (Grades 7-9), and adult literacy education, in formal and non-formal settings. This corresponds to International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 2011 levels 0-2.
<b>Capacity</b>	In the context of this evaluation we understand capacity as the foundation for behavior change in individuals, groups or institutions. Capacity encompasses the three interrelated dimensions of <i>motivation</i> (political will, social norms, habitual processes), <i>opportunity</i> (factors outside of individuals e.g. resources, enabling environment) and <i>capabilities</i> (knowledge, skills). <sup>2</sup>
<b>Education systems</b>	Collections of institutions, actions and processes that affect the educational status of citizens in the short and long run. <sup>3</sup> Education systems are made up of a large number of actors (teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations) interacting with each other in different institutions (schools, ministry departments) for different reasons (developing curricula, monitoring school performance, managing teachers). All these interactions are governed by rules, beliefs, and behavioral norms that affect how actors react and adapt to changes in the system. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Equity</b>	In the context of education, equity refers to securing all children's rights to education, and their rights within and through education to realize their potential and aspirations. It requires implementing and institutionalizing arrangements that help ensure all children can achieve these aims. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OECD, Glossary of Aid Effectiveness Terms. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/aideffectivenessglossary.htm>. GPE understands 'country systems' to relate to a set of seven dimensions: Plan, Budget, Treasury, Procurement, Accounting, Audit and Report. Source: Methodology Sheet for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Indicators. Indicator (29) Proportion of GPE grants aligned to national systems.

<sup>2</sup> Mayne, John. *The COM-B Theory of Change Model*. Working paper. February 2017

<sup>3</sup> Moore, Mark. 2015. Creating Efficient, Effective, and Just Educational Systems through Multi-Sector Strategies of Reform. RISE Working Paper 15/004, Research on Improving Systems of Education, Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University, Oxford, U.K.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank. 2003. World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People. Washington, DC: World Bank; New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Equity and Inclusion in Education. A guide to support education sector plan preparation, revision and appraisal. GPE 2010; p.3.

<b>Financial additionality</b>	This incorporates two not mutually exclusive components: (a) an increase in the total amount of funds available for a given educational purpose, without the substitution or redistribution of existing resources; and (b) positive change in the quality of funding (e.g., predictability of aid, use of pooled funding mechanisms, co-financing, non-traditional financing sources, alignment with national priorities).
<b>Gender equality</b>	The equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, girls, and boys, and equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. It encompasses the narrower concept of gender equity, which primarily concerns fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs. <sup>6</sup>
<b>GPE support</b>	The notion of “GPE support” encompasses financial inputs deriving from GPE grants and related funding requirements, as well as non-financial inputs deriving from the work of the Secretariat, the grant agent, the coordinating agency, and from GPE’s global, regional, and national level engagement through technical assistance, advocacy, knowledge exchange, quality standards and funding requirements.
<b>Harmonization</b>	The degree of coordination between technical and financial partners in how they structure their external assistance (e.g. pooled funds, shared financial or procurement processes), to present a common and simplified interface for developing country partners. The aim of harmonization is to reduce transaction costs and increase the effectiveness of the assistance provided by reducing demands on recipient countries to meet with different donors’ reporting processes and procedures, along with uncoordinated country analytic work and missions. <sup>7</sup>
<b>Inclusion</b>	Adequately responding to the diversity of needs among all learners, through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion from and within education. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> GPE Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020. GPE 2016, p. 5f. Available at:

<http://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2016-06-gpe-gender-equality-policy-strategy.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from OECD, Glossary of Aid Effectiveness Terms

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/aideffectivenessglossary.htm>, and from Methodology Sheet for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Indicators. Indicator (30) Proportion of GPE grants using: (a) co-financed project or (b) sector pooled funding mechanisms.

<sup>8</sup> GPE 2010, p.3.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and purpose of the summative evaluation

1. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multilateral global partnership and funding platform established in 2002 as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI) and renamed GPE in 2011. GPE aims to strengthen education systems in developing countries, in order to ensure improved and more equitable student learning outcomes, as well as improved equity, gender equality and inclusion in education.<sup>9</sup>

2. This evaluation is part of a larger GPE study that comprises a total of 20 summative and eight formative country level evaluations (CLE). The overall study is part of the GPE's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy 2016-2020, which calls for a linked set of evaluation studies to explore how well GPE outputs and activities contribute to outcomes and impact<sup>10</sup> at the country-level. The objective of each summative CLE is to assess (i) GPE contributions to strengthening education systems and, ultimately, the achievement of education results within a partner developing country in the areas of learning, equity, equality and inclusion; and hence (ii) the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's theory of change (ToC) and of its country-level operational model.<sup>11</sup> See Box 1.1.

### Box 1.1. Scope of this summative evaluation

This summative country evaluation is focused on eliciting insights that can help GPE assess and, if needed, improve its overall approach to supporting developing country partners. It does not set out to evaluate the performance of the government of Mauritania, the grant agents and coordinating agency, other in-country stakeholders, or specific GPE grants.

3. The primary intended users of the country-level evaluations are members of the Global Partnership for Education, including developing country partner (DCP) governments and members of local education groups (LEGs) in the sampled countries (in this case Mauritania), and the Board. The secondary user is the Secretariat. Tertiary intended users include the wider education community at global and country levels.

<sup>9</sup> Global Partnership for Education (2016): GPE 2020. "Improving learning and equity through stronger education systems"

<sup>10</sup> In the context of this assignment, the use of the term 'impact' is aligned with the terminology used by GPE to refer to sector level changes in the areas of learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion (reflected in GPE Strategic Goals 1 and 2 described in the GPE 2016-2020 Strategic Plan). While the country evaluations examine progress towards impact in this sense, they do not constitute formal impact evaluations, which usually entail counterfactual analysis based on randomized control trials.

<sup>11</sup> Assignment Inception Report (based on the evaluation TOR), p.1

## 1.2 Methodology overview

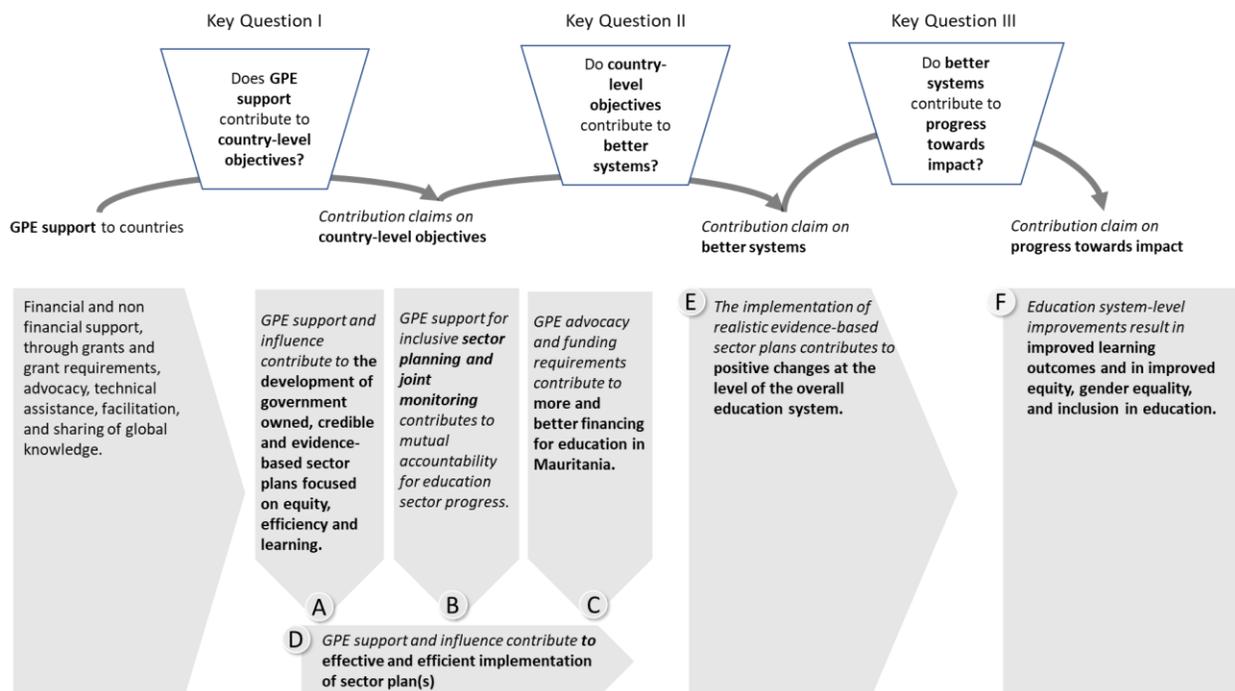
### Methodology

4. The guiding frameworks for the evaluation are the evaluation matrix (Appendix I) and the country-level theory of change for Mauritania based on a contribution analysis approach (Appendix II).<sup>12</sup> A brief summary of the country evaluation methodology is provided in Appendix III of this report. For further details, please refer to the Inception Report for the overall assignment (January 2018).

5. For the Mauritania CLE, the evaluation team consulted a total of 47 stakeholders from the relevant ministries responsible for delivering education, development partners, civil society and the Secretariat (see Appendix IV for a stakeholder analysis and Appendix V for a list of consulted stakeholders), and reviewed a wide range of relevant documents, databases, websites as well as selected literature (see Appendix VI for a list of reviewed sources).

6. The report presents findings related to the three 'Key Questions' (KQs) from the evaluation matrix, which trace the contribution of GPE support to country-level objectives (KQ I); of country-level objectives to better systems (KQ II); and of better systems to progress towards impact (KQ III). The findings of this report are presented in three sections that correspond to the KQs. In turn, each section is divided into sub-sections of findings that address the contribution claims under each KQ. The three KQs and the six contribution claims (A, B, C, D, E, F) are presented in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1** The evaluation presents findings on key evaluation questions and contribution claims



<sup>12</sup> This country-specific ToC was adapted from the generic country-level ToC in the Inception Report.

## Limitations

7. The development of the summative evaluation of GPE's country-level support to education in Mauritania faced a number of limitations:
8. The timing of the evaluation mission in August 2018 limited the time available for data collection in Mauritania and stakeholder availability to participate in interviews. While the evaluation mission dates had been agreed by key stakeholders, the timing of the mission coincided with annual leave for many key respondents, the start of an election campaign in Mauritania, and the holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Several representatives of donor organizations were not available to be interviewed during the month of August, while many government representatives were unavailable once the election campaign commenced (on the fourth day of the evaluation mission). The evaluation team addressed this limitation rearranging the mission agenda and interviewing as many government representatives as possible in the first three days of the mission while following up with donor representatives by phone after the mission.
9. The availability of stakeholders that were familiar with PNDSE II for the period under review presented a limitation. Due to timing limitations explained above, the sample of respondents among senior donor representatives in the LEG (which is already a small group in Mauritania), remains relatively limited. Several respondents among donor representatives interviewed were recently arrived to posts in Mauritania. At the same time, it was challenging to identify stakeholders that had been involved and were knowledgeable of planning, coordination and monitoring processes from 2011-2015. Staff turn-over and fading memories for those who were present from 2011 also present a limitation to this evaluation. The evaluation team addressed this limitation by reviewing all relevant documentation on PNDSE II from 2009 onwards and triangulating its contents, where possible, with stakeholder perceptions among a diversity of stakeholders interviewed.
10. As a result of these limitations, the evaluation team had a limited the amount of time available to drill down in more detail and to reach beyond sets of primary stakeholders identified prior to the mission by the coordinating agency. The evidence base supporting the evaluation report is thus relatively limited, particularly with regard to some key issues (for example, mutual accountability). While the evaluation team left Mauritania with many impressions, a reliable evidence base was lacking in several areas to make stronger assertions.

## 1.3 Structure of the report

11. Following this introduction, **Section 2** gives an overview of the context of Mauritania, with a focus on the education sector, and on the history of Mauritania's involvement with GPE support.
12. **Section 3** presents evaluation findings related to GPE's claimed contributions to country-level objectives related to changes in sector planning; fostering mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and sector monitoring; sector plan implementation; and sector financing (Key Question I).
13. **Section 4** discusses education system-level changes in Mauritania that received GPE support during the period 2012-2018 and likely links between these changes and progress made towards the country-level objectives discussed in Section 3 (Key Question II).

14. **Section 5** presents an overview of the impact-level changes<sup>13</sup> observable in Mauritania and possible links to the noted changes in the education system (Key Question III).
15. Finally, **Section 6** presents overall conclusions of the evaluation.

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<sup>13</sup> In the context of this assignment, the term 'impact' is aligned with the terminology used by GPE to refer changes in the areas of learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion (reflected in GPE Strategic Goals 1 and 2 described in the 2020 Strategic Plan). While examining progress towards impact in this sense, the country evaluations do not constitute formal impact evaluations, which usually entail counterfactual analysis based on randomized controlled trials.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Overview of Mauritania

16. Mauritania is a desert country located between the North-African region and the Sub-Saharan region. It is the fourth-least densely populated country in Africa, covering an area of one million square kilometers with a population of 4.3 million.<sup>14</sup> It is classified a Lower Middle-Income Country with a per capita Gross National Income of US\$1,100 (2017)<sup>15</sup> and a Human Development Index rank of 157 out of 188 (2016).<sup>16</sup> Mauritania's population is young, with 43.6 percent below 15 years old.<sup>17</sup>

17. Mauritania's GDP grew consistently between 2004 and 2014, from US\$3.1 billion to US\$5.4 billion.<sup>18</sup> This growth was accompanied by a reduction in the poverty rate and inequalities. The proportion of people living on less than US\$1.90 a day declined from 14.4 percent in 2004 to 6 percent in 2014, and the Gini index<sup>19</sup> declined from 40.2 to 32.6 during the same period. Despite significant economic improvements between 2008 and 2014, the country faces development challenges related to its rapid urbanization, agricultural and fishery sectors performing below potential, lack of economic diversification, and the weak management of extractive rents (such as minerals). The current government's strategy to tackle these issues is encompassed in the National Strategy for Shared Growth and Prosperity (2016-2030).<sup>20</sup>

### 2.2 The education sector in Mauritania

18. In 1999, the government centralized the education system (which had been divided along linguistic lines, with one education system in French and another in Arabic) into a single bilingual education system. The implementation of this reform led to significant challenges due to teachers' lack of qualification in teaching in both official languages. No major reforms of the sector have occurred since.

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<sup>14</sup> The World Bank. "Overview, Mauritania". (Accessed October 5, 2018)

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mauritania/overview>

<sup>15</sup> 2017 data. The World Bank. "GNI Per Capita Ranking, Atlas Method And PPP Based. (Accessed October 4) 2018)

<https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/gni-capita-ranking-atlas-method-and-ppp-based>

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Human Development Index and its components" (Accessed October 2, 2018) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

<sup>17</sup> Ministère des Affaires Économiques et du Développement. 2015. "Rapport d'état sur le système éducatif national (RESEN).

<sup>18</sup> In constant 2010 US\$. Source: Work Bank Open Data,

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2017&locations=MR&start=1998>

<sup>19</sup> The Gini index is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income or wealth distribution of a nation's residents, and is the most commonly used measurement of inequality.

<sup>20</sup> Stratégie Nationale de Croissance Accélérée et de Prospérité Partagée.

19. The responsibility of providing free public and basic education is shared between two ministries in Mauritania: The Ministry of Social Affairs, Women and Children (MASEF)<sup>21</sup> responsible for early childhood education (ECE), and the Ministry of National Education (MEN) responsible for primary to higher secondary education. The official age groups for each level are shown in Table 2.1.

20. Three other ministries also play important roles in the education sector in Mauritania: the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS),<sup>22</sup> the Ministry for Employment, Professional Training, and New Technologies,<sup>23</sup> responsible for higher education and TVET; and the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Religious Teaching (MAIEO)<sup>24</sup> responsible for religious teaching through mahadras and adult literacy.

**Table 2.1** Official school age and grades in Mauritania by level and enrollment for 2017

LEVEL	AGE GROUP (YEARS)	GRADES	ENROLLMENTS
Early Childhood Education	3 – 5		30,477
Primary	6 – 11	1 – 6	627,085
Lower Secondary	12 – 15	7 – 10	147,651
Higher Secondary	16 – 18	11 – 13	61,475

Source: RESEN 2015; UIS 2018

21. Schools in Mauritania include government, private,<sup>25</sup> and mahadras schools.<sup>26</sup> All government institutions providing basic or secondary education are financed by the government and are considered

<sup>21</sup> Ministère des Affaires Sociales, de la femme et de l'Enfant

<sup>22</sup> In 2013, the then existing Ministry of State for National Education, Higher Education and Research was split into the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS - Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique)

<sup>23</sup> Ministère de l'emploi, de la Formation professionnelle et des nouvelles Technologies

<sup>24</sup> Ministère des Affaires Islamiques et de l'Enseignement Originel

<sup>25</sup> Private schools are privately funded schools whose curriculum, diplomas, schedule, and opening and closing times are regulated by the MEN. Private schools are considered part of the formal education system. They report their activities to MEN' Directorate of Private Education, for example on the number of students enrolled, number of teaching staff, opening and closing times, among others. As such, the data published by the MEN on education statistics (annual education census) contain data on enrolment by gender, educational level, and private vs public enrolment.

<sup>26</sup> Mahadras are privately funded religious schools teaching the Koran, Hadith (religious laws), and Arabic. They are not considered part of the formal education system, they do not follow any specified curriculum and, while overseen by a separate ministry (MAEIO) that tracks their development, there is no regulation and no obligation for mahadras to report to MAEIO. As such, they are not considered private schools. The last census of mahadras was undertaken by MAEIO in 2010.

public schools, whereas private schools are privately funded. Around 20 percent<sup>27</sup> of all schools are private (not counting mahadras), and they report their activities to and follow the policies implemented by the Directorate of Private Education<sup>28</sup> within the MEN. Of all 60,866 newly admitted students in primary schools between 2010 and 2014, 60 percent entered private schools.<sup>29</sup> During the same period, student population in private, primary schools increased by 61 percent against a five percent increase in public primary schools for the same period. These statistics demonstrate the significant growth of the private system since 2010 relative to public, primary education.

22. While mahadras are mainly focused on teaching the Koran and the Arabic language, some mahadras include aspects of formal education and TVET although their curriculum is not regulated by government. At the time of the last national census in 2010, there were 9,170 mahadras<sup>30</sup> with 167,152 children enrolled (around 30 percent female). The census also noted that 46 percent of children enrolled in mahadras were also enrolled in formal education, either in public or private schools. For some children, mahadras will replace formal education but for others, mahadras will complement formal schooling by providing a religious education. The majority of students in formal school in Mauritania have attended mahadras at some point between the ages of 6 and 14 years old.

23. Table 2.2 below shows the number of schools, teachers, and students at each educational level according to the 2017 education statistics produced by MEN.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This percentage reflects the totality of schools, but does not reflect the numbers disparity in importance of private education across educational level. As well in table 2.2 below, private schools represent a much larger share of the total number of schools at the secondary level than in primary education.

<sup>28</sup> Direction de l'Enseignement Privé

<sup>29</sup> Ginolin, Marion, and François Robert. March 2015. "Evaluation Plan d'Actions Triennal (PAT) 2012-2014". Evaluation commissioned by the DPEF and financed by the German Development Agency (GIZ).

<sup>30</sup> While we do not have data on the number of public and private formal schools in 2010 (the 2010 RESEN uses data from 2007 and 2008), using data from 2013 on public and private schools, 9,170 mahadras represents 65.5 percent of all schools (including mahadras, private and public schools at the primary, and lower and higher secondary levels).

<sup>31</sup> Education statistics are collected by the MEN through an annual census conducted by hired monitors dispatched on the field.

**Table 2.2** MEN data on number of schools, teachers, and children enrolled (2016/2017)

TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, ENROLLED STUDENTS	PRIMARY	LOWER SECONDARY	HIGHER SECONDARY
836,836 children enrolled from primary to higher secondary level in both public and private schools (50 percent are girls)	627,710 (51% are girls)	147,651 (49% are girls)	61,475 (48% are girls)
150,630 children enrolled in private schools (18 percent of all enrolled children)	95,421 (15% of all children at the primary level)	50,190 (24% of all children at the secondary levels) <sup>32</sup>	
4,839 schools across all educational levels (20 percent are private schools)	4,271 (16% are private schools)	568 (45% are private schools) <sup>33</sup>	
25,628 teachers across all educational levels (30 percent teaching in private schools)	16,964 (24% in private schools)	8,664 (42% in private schools) <sup>34</sup>	

24. Additionally, according to data from the MEN annual census, out of all the primary schools (including public and private), only 35 percent (1,096) offer teaching from grade one to six. The remaining 65 percent of schools do not teach all six grades from primary education.

25. MEN education statistics do not include pre-primary education, which is the responsibility of MASEF. The latest estimates (2015) indicate that 30,477 children were enrolled in pre-primary education, of which 67 percent in private schools.<sup>35</sup>

26. In 2000, Mauritania developed its first Education Sector Plan (ESP), the National Program for the Development of the Education Sector covered the period 2001-2010 (PNDSE I). In 2011, Mauritania developed its second ESP, the PNDSE II, covering the period 2011-2021,<sup>36</sup> which is accompanied by three Triennial Action Plans (PAT). The implementation status of the PNDSE II was reviewed by Joint Education

<sup>32</sup> MEN annual censuses' data on the number of students in private and public schools at the secondary levels does not distinguish between lower and higher secondary schools. As such, it is not possible to pinpoint exactly the percentage of students in private vs public school at the lower secondary level and higher secondary level separately. This absence of distinction in available data between lower and higher secondary levels of education is probably due to the fact that some secondary schools teach both lower and higher levels, while others teach only one of the two levels. However, MEN annual censuses' data does provide the proportion of girls enrolled in secondary education for each level (lower and higher), as seen in the first row of the table.

<sup>33</sup> Data from MEN annual censuses does not distinguishes teachers between lower and higher secondary levels.

<sup>34</sup> Data from MEN annual censuses does not distinguishes schools between lower and higher secondary levels.

<sup>35</sup> RESEN 2015

<sup>36</sup> The PNDSE II was initially planned for 2011-2020, but was extended until 2021.

Sector Reviews (JESRs) in 2012, 2014, 2015, and 2017. Reports on the state of the Education System (RESEN) were published in 2010 and 2015.

**Table 2.3** *Timeline of key policy documents in Mauritania education sectors, 2013-2018*

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Sector plans</b>	PNDSE I (2001-2010)	PNDSE II (2011-2021)								
<b>Triennial action plans</b>			PAT 2012-2014				PAT 2016-2018			PAT 2019-2021
<b>ESPIG-funded projects</b>					PASEB					
<b>Education sector review</b>			•		•	•		•		
<b>RESEN</b>	•					•				

## 2.3 GPE in Mauritania

27. Mauritania joined GPE in 2002 (at the time it was known as the Fast Track Initiative [FTI]), and is represented on the GPE Board through the Africa 2 constituency.

28. Under the FTI, Mauritania received three grants. After the transition of the FTI to GPE in 2011, Mauritania received one education sector plan implementation grant (ESPIG), and one program development grant (PDG) as shown in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.4** *GPE grants to Mauritania*

GRANT TYPE	YEARS	ALLOCATIONS (US\$)	DISBURSEMENTS AS OF 2017 (US\$)	GRANT AGENT
Education Sector Plan Implementation (ESPIG)	2014-2018	12,400,000	10,149,002	IBRD
	2008-2012	13,998,039	13,998,039	IBRD
	2004-2007	4,000,000	4,000,000	IBRD
	2004-2006	5,000,000	5,000,000	IBRD
Program Development (PDG)	2012	170,000	132,212	IBRD

29. In addition, the Coalition of Mauritanian Organizations for Education<sup>37</sup> (COMEDUC) received two Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) grants<sup>38</sup> to conduct participatory research on marginalized groups in education.<sup>39</sup>

30. This evaluation focuses on the period covered by the PNDSE II, its accompanying PATs and the GPE-funded Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (PASEB).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Coalition des Organisations Mauritaniennes pour l'Éducation

<sup>38</sup> Under CSEF II (2013-2015) and CSEF III (2016-2018)

<sup>39</sup> UNESCO, SEF 2013 – 2015 Progress Report to UNESCO for the period 01 July to 31 December 2013, (2015).

<sup>40</sup> Projet de soutien pour le secteur de l'éducation de base

### 3 GPE contributions to sector planning, implementation, dialogue/monitoring and financing<sup>41</sup>

#### 3.1 Introduction

31. This section summarizes findings related to Key Question I of the evaluation matrix: *“Has GPE-support to Mauritania contributed to achieving country-level objectives related to sector planning, to sector dialogue and monitoring, to more/better financing for education, and to sector plan implementation? If so, then how?”*<sup>42</sup>

32. The GPE country-level theory of change, developed in the inception report and adapted to the Mauritania context (Appendix II), outlines four contribution claims for GPE’s contributions to these dimensions. Each contribution claim is based on several underlying assumptions (Appendix VII).<sup>43</sup>

33. This section is structured around the four country-level objectives and their corresponding contribution claims. It tests each of the four contribution claims by answering two sub-questions for each phase of the policy cycle. First, what has changed in the country, during the period under review?<sup>44</sup> And second, has GPE contributed to these changes and, if so, how?<sup>45</sup> Answers to these questions are presented in the form of findings and a summary assessment of the contribution claim is presented at the beginning of each sub-section. The summary assessments are colored to indicate whether evaluation evidence supports (green), partly supports (amber), or does not support (red) the respective contribution claim, or if there is insufficient data to assess the respective claim (grey). Appendix VII explains the

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<sup>41</sup> In the generic country-level ToC developed during the inception phase, envisaged improvements in the areas of education sector planning, mutual accountability for sector progress, education sector financing, and ESP implementation constitute the key *country-level objectives* that GPE is aiming to contribute to. This largely mirrors how country-level objectives are defined in the GPE 2016-2020 strategic plan, except for mobilizing more and better education sector financing, which in the GPE 2020 is framed as a *global* level objective. The summative evaluations approach the issue of sector financing as a country-level objective to reflect that the focus is on changes in sector financing for the specific country under review.

<sup>42</sup> Improved planning, dialogue/monitoring, financing, and plan implementation correspond to Country-Level Objectives (CLOs) 1, 2, 3 and 4 of GPE’s 2016-2020 Strategic Plan.

<sup>43</sup> The contributions claims are : A) GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the development of government owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning; B) GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contributes to *mutual accountability* for education sector progress.; C) GPE advocacy and funding requirements contribute to *more and better financing for education* in the country; and D) GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective and efficient implementation of sector plans.

<sup>44</sup> This question corresponds to Country Evaluation Questions (CEQ) 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2 in the evaluation matrix.

<sup>45</sup> This corresponds to CEQ 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.3, 3.1, and 3.2.

underlying rating criteria and provides an overview of the evaluation's assessment regarding the likely application of each of the underlying assumptions related to each of the contribution claims.

## 3.2 Education sector planning

### Box 3.1: Assessment of contribution claim A

**Claim:** *GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the development of government owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning.*

**Assessment:** Available evidence **supports** the GPE contribution claim related to strengthening education sector planning.<sup>46</sup>

**Assessment is based on:** (a) The envisaged result was achieved. The education sector plan in Mauritania was credible, i.e. it met GPE/IIEP guidelines and quality criteria; (b) Available evidence indicates that the likelihood of the five assumptions underlying the GPE contribution claim holding true in Mauritania context are 'strong' for four, and 'moderate' for one (related to the availability and quality of EMIS);<sup>47</sup> (c) The evaluation found strong indications of GPE support having influenced sector planning processes and content. It identified no additional external factors beyond GPE support that would, on their own, suffice to explain the noted progress in sector planning. This overall assessment is elaborated on in the following paragraphs.

Please see Appendix VIII for a visual representation of evaluation findings presented in this section.

## Strengths and weaknesses of sector planning during the period under review (2012 - 2018)

**Finding 1:** **There is evidence of improvement in both the quality and content of education sector planning in Mauritania and the PNDSE II (2011-2021) is considered a government owned, evidence-based plan and credible plan.**

34. The PNDSE I (2001-2010) represented the first education sector plan in Mauritania developed in support of EFA-Fast Track Initiative membership. It was also the first sectoral plan in Mauritania to encompass all education sub-sectors and include a common set of results and indicators for joint sector

<sup>46</sup> This sub-section addresses evaluation question CEQ 1.1 (What have been strengths and weaknesses of education sector planning during the period under review?) and CEQ 1.3 (Has GPE contributed to the observed characteristics of sector planning? How?) from the evaluation matrix. Evaluation question CEQ 3.1 (What factors other than GPE support are likely to have contributed to the observed changes (or lack thereof) in sector plan development, sector financing and plan implementation, and in sector dialogue and monitoring?) is addressed throughout this section.

<sup>47</sup> Please see sub-section on 'validity of assumptions' below as well as Appendix VII.

review. Generally, the PNDSE II was considered, by external evaluators in 2011, to be of good quality while the process for developing PNDSE II was described as “state of the art”.<sup>48</sup>

35. In terms being *government-led*, education ministries and their departments organized and led each step of the process culminating in PNDSE II. The process for ESP development extended over a two-year timeframe (2009-2011) and was informed by: a joint sector review of PNDSE I in November 2009 which included the participation of government, donors and civil society; the organization of the March 2010 RESEN which analyzed strengths and challenges of the education system; the external evaluation of PNDSE I undertaken in September 2010; the establishment of committees by education sub-sector, engaging all education departments across government, to develop priorities and plans based on lessons learned and recommendations emerging from the RESEN and PNDSE I reviews; and the adoption of the education Policy Letter 2011-2020 by national government.<sup>50</sup>

36. The government of Mauritania is perceived to have been very invested in the development of the sector plan, and considerable capacity was built among national education stakeholders for sector planning as a result (see Box 3.2). As an indication of this ownership

### Box 3.2: Building capacity of national education stakeholders

*La période d'exécution du précédent plan décennal a été l'occasion, pour les autorités sectorielles mauritaniennes, de procéder à des actions de construction de capacités internes. Le terrain privilégié de ces activités a été celui de la planification et de la connaissance du système et de ses difficultés. De nombreuses études ont été diligentées, en particulier sur la qualité et sur la gestion du système. Le secteur éducatif mauritanien est, sans doute, le mieux documenté de toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest. De façon courageuse, ce souci de connaissance précise des difficultés du système est allé jusqu'à la réalisation d'une évaluation exhaustive du niveau de connaissance académique de l'ensemble des instituteurs mauritaniens. En termes de capacités de planification, on notera que le secteur s'est doté de compétences nécessaires pour être indépendant en la matière. La réalisation d'un modèle de simulation pour préparer les cadrages nécessaires à la nouvelle phase stratégique, la détermination des équilibres, l'élaboration du programme décennal et du plan d'actions triennal, ont ainsi été le fait des administrations sectorielles agissant de façon autonome.*<sup>49</sup>

Source : Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Rapport d'évaluation technique du Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif (PNDSE II) 2012-2020 en vue de son endossement à l'initiative Fast Track par les PTFs, Novembre 2011, p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> Translation: The implementation of PNDSE I (2001-2010) was an opportunity for education authorities in Mauritania to develop their internal capacities. The focus of this capacity building was centred on education sector planning, as well as mastering an in-depth understanding of the education system, its strengths and challenges. Many studies were undertaken, particularly with regard to education quality and system management. The education sector in Mauritania is, without a doubt, the best documented system in West Africa. In terms of planning capacity, it is worth noting that the government has developed the skills to manage the sector planning process independently. The development of the financial simulation framework, the preparation of the 10-year plan and its first three-year action plan for PNDSE II were all undertaken by the government without external assistance.

<sup>50</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op. cit. p. 10.

and capacity building, the PNDSE II is considered a much more precise and detailed plan than its predecessor<sup>51</sup> and the external appraisal of PNDSE II notes that much of its development was managed independently by national government with regard to sector analysis, financial simulation, and the planning process.<sup>52</sup>

37. In terms of its *evidence-base*, Table 3.1 demonstrates considerable alignment between the analysis of education sector challenges in the 2010 RESEN and the strategic priorities identified in the PNDSE II. Both documents underscore the urgent need for improvement in education quality and relevance at all levels as well as the strategic management of the education system for greater efficiency. The RESEN and the PNDSE II both recognize the need for a strategy to regulate the flow of students through secondary education, better mechanisms to retain children in basic education and better integration of civil society, the private sector and Mahadras in education sector planning and delivery.

38. In terms of the *credibility* of the PNDSE II, the sector plan was deemed financially sustainable in both the short-term (2012-14) and the long-term (2020), although certain macroeconomic assumptions underpinning the plan had to be revisited given effective changes in the country's economic situation coupled with its need to achieve the EFA targets.<sup>53</sup> The PNDSE II was assessed as having met or in the process of meeting all major FTI indicative funding requirements.<sup>54</sup> The plan's financing gap was described as 'quite moderate' by external evaluators, with three-quarters of external financing needs already pledged by development partners at the time of its appraisal in 2011.<sup>55</sup> Generally, the PNDSE II was perceived, by LEG members and external evaluators, as a logical and coherent response to existing challenges in the education sector, based upon priorities identified in the 2010 RESEN, and built upon learning from the previous sectoral plan.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Rapport d'évaluation technique du Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif (PNDSE II) 2012-2020 en vue de son endossement à l'initiative Fast Track par les PTFs, Novembre 2011. p.14.

<sup>52</sup> Sources : Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Rapport d'évaluation technique du Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif (PNDSE II) 2012-2020 en vue de son endossement à l'initiative Fast Track par les PTFs, Novembre 2011 ; Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011 ; interviews with education donors ; GPE Final Quality Assurance Review - Mauritania, November 2013; Lahaye, L. et Robert, F. Évaluation rétrospective du PNDSE I – Rapport de la mission d'évaluation. Octobre 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Donor Assessment of Mauritania's Education for All Fast-Track Initiative Proposal, November 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op. cit. Tableau 3 – Cadre indicatif, p. 52. These were the indicative requirements of 2012 set by the EFA-FTI and assessed in the PNDSE II external appraisal. The majority of indicative requirements were met by the Government of Mauritania in its PNDSE II with the exception the following: primary education completion rates by school-aged children (81% vs. 100%); annual average salary per teacher (3.7% vs. 3.5%); education inputs other than teacher salaries in recurrent expenditure (37% vs. 33%); the cost of constructing and equipping a classroom (US\$13,000 vs. US\$10,000); the proportion of students enrolled in private school (11% vs. 10%).

<sup>55</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op. cit. p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Rapport d'évaluation technique du Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif (PNDSE II) 2012-2020 en vue de son endossement à l'initiative Fast Track par les PTFs, Novembre 2011, pp.52-53. These were the indicative requirements of 2012 set by the EFA-FTI and assessed in the external appraisal.

**Table 3.1** *Priorities in 2010 RESEN and 2011-2021 PNDSE II*<sup>57</sup>

PRIORITY	2010 RESEN CONCLUSIONS	2011-2021 PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
<b>Access</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to address the major challenge of retention in primary education by improving the quality and scale of infrastructure as well as supporting education demand, particularly in under-served regions</li> <li>• The need to anticipate universal primary access and plan for the efficient flow of students between primary and secondary education</li> <li>• The need to develop a relevant place for technical and vocational skills training to improve access at secondary and tertiary levels of education</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improve access to achieve universal basic education and ensure a regulated flow from basic to higher levels of the education system by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving alignment between supply and demand (teachers, infrastructure, equipment)</li> <li>• improving school environment (school and class renovation and construction, increasing access to water and sanitation facilities)</li> <li>• developing a strategy for regulating the flow of students between primary and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles of secondary</li> <li>• improving demand through school feeding and other incentives, focusing inputs on under-served regions</li> <li>• improve the position of vocational skills training relative to different levels of the education system and improve its relevance to labour</li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to ensure that student teachers meet basic qualifications</li> <li>• The need to ensure sufficient numbers of bilingual teachers to implement 1999 reform and provide incentives for them to teach in both languages</li> <li>• The need to continue supporting reform of teacher training colleges (ENIs) to provide the length and quality of teacher training necessary to improve education quality</li> <li>• The need to ensure minimum teaching hours are respected and teacher absenteeism is curbed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improve the relevance and quality of education by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthening and restructuring the pre-service teacher training through ENIs to support the 1999 reform including its curriculum, the capacity of teaching staff, the infrastructure;</li> <li>• strengthening in-service teacher training and systems for the provision of local pedagogical support;</li> <li>• improving the relevance and effectiveness of education service delivery (curbing teacher absenteeism, improving distribution of teaching and learning materials, improving the school environment).</li> </ul>

<sup>57</sup> Sources: RESEN 2010, pp.127-128.; République Islamique de Mauritanie. "Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif 2011-2020 (PNDSE II), document provisoire." May 2011. This table presents a brief summary of the key points raised in both documents and the analysis and cannot be considered exhaustive. The purpose of the table is to demonstrate congruence between these documents so that issues and objectives have been selected accordingly.

PRIORITY	2010 RESEN CONCLUSIONS	2011-2021 PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
<b>Sector Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a need to manage education resources within the context of a holistic view of the education sector Improved management efficiency of human resources (teachers) based on demand</li> <li>• there is a need to improve the clarity of roles and responsibilities at different levels of the education system and among ministries with regard to its management</li> </ul>	<p><b>Improve the management and governance of the education sector by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fully develop EMIS including human resource management component</li> <li>• reviewing the education system delivery structure and the effectiveness of reform implementation efforts;</li> <li>• improving coordination and management of PNDSE II delivery;</li> <li>• improving financial, resource and administrative management with decentralization.</li> </ul>

39. There were, however, several perceived limitations to the PNDSE II. In terms of participation, the education sector planning process does not appear to have included non-State actors. It is unclear, based on the documentation from this period, to what extent civil society, teachers' associations and private sector actors were involved in the planning process. Reference to their participation is made only with regard to the joint sector review of 2009; in all other processes mentioned above it appears that planning discussions were restricted to government and education donors.<sup>58</sup>

40. In terms of the plan's operationalization, the PNDSE II is described, in the LEG endorsement letter, as 'a long list of activities' which require priority setting, further operational detail in terms of roles and responsibilities, as well as processes for close supervision of their implementation.<sup>59</sup> The institutional structure established for the implementation and accountability of PNDSE II also raised some concerns with regard to its complexity and coherence. While these issues were clearly communicated by development partners in the LEG to the government,<sup>60</sup> there was no requirement at the time for the government to respond to these concerns or review the sector plan based on comments received. The PNDSE II document was endorsed by government and education development partners in November 2011. Table 3.2 below summarizes the strengths and challenges of the PNDSE II.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p.12. This was triangulated with interviews from one staff member from DPEF and one staff member from MEN. Many stakeholders were not in the country or at their current posts in 2009-2011 or cannot remember the details of the planning process.

<sup>59</sup> Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op. cit.; Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011 ; interviews with education donors.

Table 3.2 *Strengths and weaknesses of the PNDSE II*<sup>61</sup>

ISSUE	STRENGTHS	GAPS/WEAKNESSES
<b>Government-led, participatory and transparent process of ESP development</b>	<p>Government-led, involving collaboration between the five ministries involved in education service delivery</p> <p>Government developed RESEN and financial simulation models unassisted</p>	Unclear the extent to which the 2010 RESEN process or sub-committees involved in PNDSE II development were inclusive or included the participation of any actors beyond government representatives and donor agencies
<b>Evidence-based, addressing key challenges of the education sector in relation to equity, efficiency and learning</b>	<p>Built upon evaluation/learning from PNDSE I, a RESEN, and the extensive analysis of education sub-committees</p> <p>PNDSE II objectives were closely aligned with RESEN priorities, national development policies and poverty reduction strategies</p> <p>PNDSE II provided greater detail and precision in the strategies and expected results than its predecessor.</p>	<p>PNDSE II was seen as ambitious in scope and breadth of planned strategies and activities</p> <p>Priority setting was seen to be weak – all objectives, strategies and activities had equal weight but not all could be undertaken simultaneously; priorities and sequencing of initiatives were not articulated</p>
	<b>Equity</b> measures focused on increasing access to the first and second cycles of secondary school and vocational education, particularly for girls and students from the most disadvantaged regions, through school construction, training multi-subject teachers for rural schools, and providing demand-side incentives.	<p>For gender equality, the PNDSE II articulated broad objectives only, with no articulated strategies to achieve gender parity in under-served regions or in secondary education</p> <p>Plans related to <b>equity</b> in the Triennial Action Plan (PAT) 2012-2014 were considered timid (focused on undertaking research, developing strategies)</p>
	<b>Efficiency</b> measures included plans to streamline the institutional structure of the education system, to improve EMIS, as well as human and financial resource use	<p>Strategies for capacity strengthening in the management of the education system (training, developing procedures, systems) were seen to lack operational detail.</p> <p>EMIS development had begun under PNDSE I - details of its continued development under PNDSE II lacked detail as did a new human resource management system for teachers.</p>
	<b>Learning</b> focused on strengthened teacher training, pedagogical support and the distribution of teaching and learning materials.	In terms of <b>learning</b> , key strategies for the provision of pedagogical support to schools, distribution of teaching and learning materials as well ensuring adequate instruction time were seen to lack operational detail.

<sup>61</sup> Sources: Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op. cit.; Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011; interviews with education donors; interviews with representatives of government departments who participated in the ESP process during 2009-2011 (representatives of DPEF, MEN only as other ministry representatives were not involved in education sector planning at that time).

ISSUE	STRENGTHS	GAPS/WEAKNESSES
<b>Credible - Realistic financing, implementation and monitoring</b>	<p>The DPEF, which was responsible for implementing the education investment budget, had demonstrated capacity and a tested procedures manual for ESP execution.</p> <p>The PNDSE II financial simulation model was found to be sound and sustainable. The government was also seen to have respected the vast majority of GPE (then FTI) indicative funding requirements.</p> <p>The PNDSE II included a logic model linking objectives, results, indicators and targets for 2015 and 2020.</p>	<p>Generally, priority-setting and operational details were seen to be lacking with regard to how the ESP would be implemented.</p> <p>Education officials were seen to lack the capacity to use monitoring information to inform decision-making and ensure continuous ESP performance improvement.</p> <p>The institutional architecture associated with the delivery and monitoring PNDSE II was overly complex and was not seen to address ongoing challenges with inter-ministry coordination at policy or technical levels.</p>

41. As was the case with PNDSE I, three-year action plans (PATs) translated the objectives and priorities of PNDSE II into detailed, operational and budgeted plans. Through the development of these action plans the government determined which activities were prioritized for implementation, when, how, by whom and with what resources. Based on interviews with government and donor representatives,<sup>62</sup> the process of three-year action planning has generally consisted of the government detailing a list of priority tasks and activities by strategic objective and by education sub-sector. The list of priority tasks is then supported by a financial simulation framework and detailed budget. The process of developing the action plans is driven by government through the PNDSE II Steering Committee (comité de pilotage) but is managed by an external consultant engaged with donor support. The action plan is validated within the Steering Committee and is then presented to and validated by the LEG, where education partners are called upon to review and support specific components of the action plan implementation. To date, the plans for 2012-2014 and 2016-2018 were developed with the support of development partners in the LEG.

42. Several ministries have felt marginalized<sup>63</sup> throughout PNDSE II planning, with regard to the internal discussions surrounding the development of PATs.<sup>64</sup> MEN is perceived to be driving the sectoral planning process and benefiting from the lion's share of external financial assistance flowing into the sector through PNDSE II. MASEF and MAIEO representatives report that their planning departments and their priorities are under-

**Box 3.3: Excerpts from LEG Minutes June 2018**

*Certain members expressed concern with regard to the potential deficit expected from the upcoming plan and sought reassurance with regard to the coherence between the 2019-2021 plan and the evaluation findings from the 2016-2018 plan. The government reminded members that the plan is simply an expression of needs and not a financing request, thus not requiring coherence with current capacities for its execution.*

<sup>62</sup> Interviews with government representatives of MEN, MAIEO, MASEF, DPEF, all education partners in LEG and UNESCO consultant involved in developing aspects of PAT (2019-2021).

<sup>63</sup> Please refer also to Finding 3 where this issue is also discussed. Several ministries feel marginalized from sectoral dialogue, planning and financing.

<sup>64</sup> Paul, Jean-Jacques. Évaluation du plan triennal 2016-2018. Document provisoire. Juin 2018. p. 12. (PAT 2016-2018 evaluation).

represented in the PNDSE II Steering Committee, that they receive very limited external assistance and are marginalized in the delivery of PNDSE II as a result<sup>65</sup>. As an example, MASEF points to PASEB's component to improve girls' education; girls' education is part of MASEF's mandate, but the Ministry claims it was never consulted or involved in PASEB planning or implementation. MAIEO points to the upcoming school census funded under PASEB, which will be driven by MEN and will include only formal education Institutions when non-formal and Mahadras (which are estimated to serve 48 percent of students in Mauritania at some point in their education path) have not been surveyed for over a decade.

43. At the time of the evaluation field visit to Mauritania, the upcoming PAT (2019-2021) had recently been presented by government to development partners in the LEG. Development partners commented on the need for greater coherence in the plan, with clearly identified priorities, developed in keeping with a more

**Box 3.4: Inter-ministerial Coordination in Sectoral Planning**

*Le PAT 2012-2014 n'a pas su être plus que la présentation agrégée de plans sous- sectoriels, sans que l'on ait une trace indiscutable d'une plus-value qui aurait été attachée à cette agrégation.*<sup>66</sup>

Source : Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Évaluation plan d'actions triennal 2012-2014, mars 2015. p.42.

realistic assessment of existing domestic resources and capacity.<sup>67</sup> Education partners observed the following limitations with the proposed PAT: limited coherence between sub-sector strategies and the global vision of the sector and its strategic objectives as outlined under PNDSE II; the lack of guarantees in the mobilization of government funding to cover its portion of plan implementation; and the lack of assurance that learning and recommendations emerging from the external evaluation of the previous PAT (2016-2018) would be applied to the implementation of the new plan.<sup>68</sup> As a result of LEG discussions in March and June 2018, the government revisited priorities put forth in the plan for 2019-2021 and scaled back its scope, in keeping with a more realistic assessment of resources and capacity.<sup>69</sup>

44. Based on a review of LEG minutes and interviews with stakeholders during the evaluation field mission, the purpose and content of PATs appears to have been a source of significant and ongoing discussion among LEG members since 2011.<sup>70</sup> The discussion appears to center on the extent to which PATs should be conceived as a list of needs by sub-sector, an investment plan to attract external financing, and/or a truly *sectoral* strategy to address key priorities and further the objectives and results achievement of PNDSE II. While these objectives are not mutually exclusive, and certainly should be mutually reinforcing, the optimal balance between them appears to be the subject of ongoing discussion between the Government of Mauritania (GoM) and its education partners. While formal endorsement by the LEG is required for the PNDSE, there is no such requirement for PATs. There is evidence, however, that action plans are reviewed and discussed within the LEG, comments are provided and adjustments

<sup>65</sup> See paragraph 55 below for further discussion of coordination between education ministries.

<sup>66</sup> Translation: The PAT (2012-2014) was no more than an aggregate presentation of sub-sector plans, containing no trace of potential value-added from this aggregation.

<sup>67</sup> Interviews with education partners in LEG and review of LEG meeting minutes from March and June 2018.

<sup>68</sup> LEG Minutes July 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Interviews with government representatives from DPEF and MEN.

<sup>70</sup> Sources: Lettre d'endossement de la stratégie sectorielle de l'Éducation en Mauritanie, 23 novembre 2011 ; LEG Minutes May 2015 ; LEG minutes March and June 2018.

can be made by government in light of these comments. This was the case with the most recent PAT for 2019-2021 submitted to the LEG.<sup>71</sup>

## Did GPE contribute to changes in sector planning?<sup>72</sup>

**Finding 2: GPE has contributed significantly to observed improvements in education sector planning in Mauritania.**

45. **Providing an Incentive:** All consulted stakeholders in Mauritania agreed that the prospect of obtaining an implementation grant from GPE (then EFA-FTI) was the major incentive for the government to develop sectoral plans in 2001 and 2011 that encompassed all education sub-sectors and that respected EFA-FTI indicative funding requirements. The education sector plans (ESP) were informed by education country sector reviews (RESEN 2000, 2010) and were developed in keeping with GPE guidelines for ESP development. As noted in the finding above, Mauritania has been singled out as an example of good practice in the West African region, given its capacity to develop ‘state of the art’ education sector plans (increasingly without the need for external assistance) that follow GPE guidelines on process and that meet the majority of GPE quality standards and funding requirements.

### Box 3.5: Incentive for strengthened sector planning

The FTI Maximum Country Allocation of US\$9 million for Mauritania in 2003 and US\$14 million in 2008 represented 7.2 and 12.1 percent respectively of external assistance to the education sector at the time<sup>73</sup>. Mauritania’s Maximum Country Allocation of US\$12.4 million in 2010 represented an estimated 12 percent of international education financing between 2013 and 2018.<sup>74</sup> GPE was the largest donor in basic education during the period under review (2011-2018).

46. **GPE Guidelines:** GPE guidelines and quality assessment criteria for the appraisal and endorsement of ESPs have evolved since 2011<sup>75</sup> in favor of more realistic and achievable strategies, with a focus on enhanced financial viability and sustainability, as well as more emphasis on demonstrating operational capacity to implement the plan. While both PNDSE I and II include logical frameworks (with results, indicators and targets), the PNDSE II indicators and targets have been discussed and revised within the LEG and are considered more precise and measurable as a result.<sup>76</sup> The analysis of the strengths and challenges of PNDSE I and II, presented in the finding above, demonstrates that there has been an improvement in the quality and completeness of education sector plans between PNDSE I and II in Mauritania; the nature of this improvement corresponds closely to the content of GPE guidelines and the assistance provided by GPE Secretariat (either through advocacy by its country lead or recommendations

<sup>71</sup> LEG Minutes September 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Evaluation question CEQ 1.1.

<sup>73</sup> OECD Credit Reporting System

<sup>74</sup> See section 2.4 for details on how the relative contribution of GPE for the ESPIG of US\$12.4 million is calculated

<sup>75</sup> FTI Appraisal Guidelines were used to appraise PNDSE II. The development and appraisal of PDEF were based on the updated (2015) ‘Guidelines on sector plan preparation’, ‘Guidelines on sector plan and ESP quality ratings criteria.

<sup>76</sup> LEG Meeting Minutes October 2016.

made through its external appraisals). Stakeholders interviewed in Mauritania consistently credit GPE with improving the quality and rigor of sector planning in the country.<sup>77</sup>

47. **Technical Assistance and Policy Dialogue:** The Secretariat country lead, along with the Coordinating Agency (the French Development Agency – AFD) within the LEG, provided support in explaining GPE processes, guidelines and funding requirements to government and education partners. The country lead regularly visited Mauritania and met with senior education officials, donor partners and the LEG, with a view to promoting and supporting joint sectoral planning.<sup>78</sup> As noted in Finding 1, while GPE invested considerable time and resources in ensuring that the PNDSE II met quality standards, the PATs do not benefit from the same level of support or have to meet the same quality standards. For example, although the PATs have been validated by the development partners, the GPE secretariat does not request a formal appraisal of the PATs.

### Validity of assumptions

48. Available evidence suggests that the combination of GPE financial and non-financial support positively contributed to sector planning by strengthening country-level stakeholder capabilities, motivation, and opportunities (i.e., financial resources) for participatory and evidence-based ESP development. The existence of capabilities, opportunities and motivation upheld three of the five underlying assumptions related to sector planning that were outlined in the GPE country-level theory of change (see Appendix VII). Available evidence further supports the fourth assumption that, in Mauritania, GPE had sufficient leverage to influence sector planning during the period under review. The fifth underlying assumption, namely that the Education Management Information System (EMIS or SIGE<sup>79</sup>) produce relevant and reliable data, was found to hold only partially true in the context of Mauritania. Despite this having been a priority under PNDSE II, it has been a challenge to develop sector planning in Mauritania that is holistic and includes all education investment (domestic and external, recurrent and investment expenditure). While education data systems have been improved through GPE ESPIG support (see sections 3.5 and chapter 4), there remain concerns about the availability of an integrated and complete set of data with which to assess overall PNDSE II progress.<sup>80</sup>

### Additional factors and unintended effects

49. **Positive** factors beyond GPE support that have influenced the observed characteristics of sector planning processes include the following: strong commitment by development partners in the sector to support joint sector planning, coordinated dialogue and joint review of sector plans since 2001; the centralization of project management functions within one government unit for education (DPEF); and the relative stability and continuity over time among members in the LEG, particularly with regard to development partners and DPEF. **Negative** factors that contributed to noted weaknesses in the PNDSE II include a reduction in the number of development partners in education in Mauritania since 2011,

<sup>77</sup> Interviews with development partners and representatives of education ministries.

<sup>78</sup> Analysis based on a review of the content of GPE Secretariat Country Mission Reports to Mauritania for 2015-2017.

<sup>79</sup> Système d'information et de gestion de l'éducation (SIGE).

<sup>80</sup> Ginolin, Marion, and François Robert. "Evaluation du Plan d'Actions Triennal (PAT) 2012-2014". (PAT 2012-2014 evaluation), and Paul, Jean-Jacques. "Évaluation du plan triennal 2016-2018, document provisoire". June 2018. (PAT 2016-2018 evaluation).

entailing a greater financial and policy dialogue burden assumed by fewer actors and reduced external investment in the system. While these factors were observed, on their own, they do not suffice to explain the noted changes in sector planning during the period under review.

50. The evaluation did not find evidence of any unintended, positive or negative, effects of GPE financial and non-financial support to sector planning.

### 3.3 Mutual accountability through sector dialogue and monitoring<sup>81</sup>

#### Box 3.6: Assessment of contribution claim B

**Claim:** “GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contribute to mutual accountability for education sector progress.”

**Assessment:** Available evidence **partially supports** the contribution claim related to strengthening mutual accountability for education sector progress. This overall assessment is elaborated in the following paragraphs.

**Assessment is based on the following observations:** (a) During the review period, Mauritania maintained existing and well-established mechanisms for sector dialogue and monitoring. While providing fora for information exchange, these mechanisms are not yet fully inclusive, and have not visibly strengthened mutual accountability for education sector results; (b) Available evidence indicates that the likelihood of the four assumptions underlying the GPE contribution claim holding true in Mauritania context are ‘strong’ for two, and ‘weak’ for two, with the assumptions related to stakeholder capabilities and motivation to work together to solve education issues being found to have held true to a very limited extent in Mauritania; (c) GPE support has likely influenced the existence and functioning of existing mechanisms for education sector dialogue and monitoring. At the same time, the evaluation found several external factors beyond GPE support that can also help explain the noted characteristics of mutual accountability mechanisms.

Please see Appendix VIII for a visual representation of evaluation findings presented in this section.

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<sup>81</sup> This section addresses evaluation questions CEQ 2.1 (Has sector dialogue changed during the period under review?), 2.2 (Has sector monitoring changed?), 2.3 (Has GPE contributed to observed changes in sector dialogue and monitoring? How?) and CEQ 3 (What factors other than GPE support can explain observed changes (or lack thereof) in sector plan development, plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring?).

## Have sector dialogue and sector monitoring changed from 2011-2018?<sup>82</sup>

**Finding 3:** The structures and mechanisms for sectoral dialogue and monitoring are well established in Mauritania, although important challenges in the quality and depth of education sector dialogue and monitoring remain and have not been effectively addressed during the period under review.

51. A Local Education Group (LEG) has been operational in Mauritania since 2001, created to support the development and implementation of PNDSE I.<sup>83</sup> The LEG is presided over by the government, more precisely by the General Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. The LEG currently includes representatives of the five ministries responsible for the education sector, the DPEF, development partners involved in financing PNDSE II implementation, and the National Federation of Parent and Student Associations of Mauritania (FNAPEE) as the one civil society representative. Development partner membership in the LEG has changed over the years and currently includes the French Development Agency<sup>84</sup> (AFD), World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO, with less regular attendance by the European Union (EU), the French Cooperation and Cultural Action Service<sup>85</sup> (SCAC) and the German Development Agency<sup>86</sup> (GIZ).

52. The LEG is not yet a body that truly represents the education sector and all of its stakeholders. Notably absent from LEG membership are specific donor agencies (Islamic Development Bank<sup>87</sup>, African Development Bank, the Gulf States, United Nations High Commission for Refugees) who invest in the education sector but have chosen not to participate in the LEG. The reasons for their non-participation remain unclear.<sup>88</sup> There are also government programs (such as l'Agence nationale Tadamoun, for example<sup>89</sup>) that mobilize significant domestic resources and relate to education, but which have not been integrated (or only recently so) into the PNDSE II or LEG. Also absent are civil society organizations representing different stakeholder groups (e.g., NGOs and associations involved in education service delivery or representing the needs of special interest groups, private sector schools, as well as teachers' associations and unions).<sup>90</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Evaluation questions CEQ 2.1 and 2.2.

<sup>83</sup> While there is reference in certain documents to donor coordination in the education sector prior to PNDSE I, details are scant. The first RESEN was completed in 1986 in Mauritania which would necessarily have involved structured dialogue between donors and government. No details are provided in the documents available.

<sup>84</sup> Agence Française de Développement

<sup>85</sup> Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle

<sup>86</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH

<sup>87</sup> Banque islamique de développement

<sup>88</sup> These donors were not available for interview.

<sup>89</sup> Agence Nationale Tadamoun pour la lutte contre les séquelles de l'esclavage, pour l'insertion et pour la lutte contre la pauvreté

<sup>90</sup> LEG Minutes from 2013 to 2018.

53. While civil society organizations (CSOs) are invited to participate in sector planning sub-committees and joint sector review workshops, their membership in the LEG has been an issue of ongoing discussion between donors and government since the start of PNDSE II in 2011. At the urging of donors to include more civil society representation, the government invited the national federation of parents' associations<sup>91</sup> (FNAPEE) as a member to represent civil society in 2015. The FNAPEE is not considered by education development partners to be representative of civil society interests in the education sector and these partners continue to encourage the government to enlarge civil society representation in the LEG. For its part, the government argues that civil society in Mauritania is fragmented and further internal organization within civil society is required before LEG membership can be considered.<sup>92</sup> It is unclear exactly why government is resistant to broadening LEG membership, although opening itself to further scrutiny and potential criticism by civil society and the private sector could be an important factor. Development partners are currently supporting CSOs in strengthening their coordination but there appears to be somewhat of a stalemate at the moment, between government and development partners, on expanding CSO representation on the LEG.<sup>93</sup>

54. The LEG is supposed to meet quarterly but, in practice, averages two or three meetings per year.<sup>94</sup> In addition to the LEG, the government of Mauritania has an internal coordinating structure for the governance of PNDSE II among the five education ministries, including an inter-ministerial committee which operates at a policy level and is responsible for strategic direction and performance, and a steering committee which operates at a more operational level, and is responsible for coordination and implementation oversight. For their part, donor agencies have established two committees – one on education and one on vocational education and skills training. These donor committees generally meet on a monthly basis for the purposes of information exchange and coordination between development partners.

55. Education sector dialogue among development partners in Mauritania is unusual in that the number of education donors is limited and leadership of this group is divided – there is a chef de file (currently UNICEF) and a GPE Coordinating Agency (currently AFD). The division of labor between the chef de file and CA is clearly articulated, cooperation is effective, and the situation does not appear to create any significant challenges. UNICEF represents education donors in their liaison with government through the LEG, while AFD provides a conduit for GPE communication within the LEG. There are some perceived advantages to this situation according to donor agencies interviewed: sector coordination is a heavy burden for development partners to assume, so splitting it between two donors is not necessarily a bad thing; and the greater the division of labor for education sector coordination among development partners, the more it forces agencies to communicate and collaborate.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Fédération nationale des associations des parents d'élèves

<sup>92</sup> The Coalition of Mauritanian Organizations for Education (COMEDUC) attended some LEG meetings as per requested by the GPE secretariat. However, the COMEDUC is not a formal LEG member.

<sup>93</sup> Interviews with government representatives (MEN, DPEF), donor members of LEG, and CSOs

<sup>94</sup> Based on a review of LEG minutes and interviews with current LEG members

<sup>95</sup> Based on interviews with donor members of LEG

56. Based on interviews with members and a review of recent LEG meeting minutes,<sup>96</sup> it appears that the LEG has served as a forum for information exchange and for the promotion of alignment between ESP objectives and the individual education projects of development partners. Stakeholders report that the organization of LEG meetings is driven by external events and focused on information exchange, rather than on regular PNDSE II sectoral progress tracking, sectoral analysis and troubleshooting.<sup>97</sup>

57. There is limited evidence of the LEG's promotion of greater alignment with national systems or harmonization among the investments of development partners.<sup>98</sup> While basic education and vocational skills training are integral components of PNDSE II, development partners have created separate structures to coordinate their investment efforts. The education sector in Mauritania is almost exclusively project-driven, with the exception of AFD budget support through Catalyst to Development (C2D - or the Debt Reduction Development Contract). Donor projects are, for the most part, implemented through two government units (the Department of Education and training Projects and the National Institute for Technical and Vocation Training), while these departments fall under different ministries (Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Employment respectively). Discussions around harmonization apparently take place in development partner sub-committees although there appears limited interest in moving towards greater harmonization (pooled funding for example) within the education sector. Harmonization for project costs (e.g., per diems) has not been addressed among development partners, although this issue is recognized as an ongoing challenge for project implementation within the context of PNDSE II.<sup>99</sup>

58. Limited coordination between the five ministries in the education sector appears to represent a significant challenge for sector dialogue in the Mauritanian context. As will be seen further below, the government's internal PNDSE II coordination and governance structures are not fully functional or effective<sup>100</sup> while the institutional architecture for PNDSE II governance is overly complex. The external evaluations of both PATs under PNDSE II underscore the complexity of institutional arrangements for PNDSE II, the lack of policy coordination or joint action between ministries in education, and as a result, the absence of truly sectoral dialogue or sectoral decision-making.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> I.e. seven development partners, two civil society organizations and the Task Force representative

<sup>97</sup> Based on interviews with education partners to LEG (EU, AFD, UNICEF, GPE Secretariat)

<sup>98</sup> There is no evidence of discussion of harmonization in the minutes of LEG meetings reviewed from 2014-2018.

<sup>99</sup> Interviews with donors in the education sector.

<sup>100</sup> LEG Minutes October 2016.

<sup>101</sup> PAT 2012-2014 evaluation, and PAT 2016-2018 evaluation.

59. In terms of inter-ministerial coordination, the PNDSE II Steering Committee appears to meet on an ad hoc basis, while several ministries report that they are marginalized on this committee in terms of the size of their representation and as well as their influence in decision-making<sup>104</sup>. The Inter-ministerial committee responsible for policy coordination and PNDSE II performance oversight is not operational. The external assessments of both PATs under PNDSE II pointed to significant weaknesses in coordinated planning and implementation among and within the five ministries involved, leaving it up to each ministry to develop separate plans, and seek funding for their respective priorities and separately track their progress (see Box 3.7).

### Box 3.7: Inter-ministerial Coordination and JSRs

*PNDSE et ses instances, les revues sectorielles et les comités de pilotage et de gestion, ne jouent pas de rôle fédérateur perceptible dans les politiques sectorielles... Chaque projet ou chaque sous-secteur travaille à son programme de dépenses et d'investissements sans relation avec l'évolution du secteur éducatif dans son ensemble.*<sup>102</sup>

Source : Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Évaluation plan d'actions triennal 2012-2014, mars 2015. p.41.

*Mais outre les questions de recherche de financement, transparait, à la lumière des interviews, l'insuffisance de coordination dans la conduite de la politique éducative. L'impression qui ressort est celle d'une juxtaposition d'initiatives et de politiques conduite par les différents ministères en charge des questions d'éducation, voire par les différentes directions au sein même des ministères en charge de l'éducation.*<sup>103</sup>

Source : Paul, Jean-Jacques. Évaluation du plan triennal 2016-2018. Document provisoire. Juin 2018. Pp. 12-13.

60. Much discussion within the LEG has been devoted to addressing the complexities of the institutional architecture governing coordination between government departments on the one hand, while ensuring greater engagement by senior policy-makers across the five ministries in PNDSE II stewardship on the other.<sup>105</sup> An assessment was commissioned in 2016 to review and improve the institutional arrangements for the governance of PNDSE II. The decree outlining institutional arrangements was revised on the basis of this study but has not yet been adopted by government.<sup>106</sup> The lack of sectoral coordination and governance is likely the result of a combination of factors – complex institutional arrangements for PNDSE II governance, coupled with limited commitment and capacity demonstrated by the five education ministries to engage in or improve sectoral coordination.

<sup>102</sup> Translation: The PNDSE II and its structures, including JSRS and the government's steering and management committees, do not play a perceived, federating role in sectoral policy... Each project and sub-sector works within its own investment framework without any relation to the evolution of the education sector as a whole.

<sup>103</sup> Translation: Other than the question of identifying sources of external investment, what emerges from the interviews conducted is insufficient coordination in the stewardship of the education policy. One is left with the impression of a juxtaposition of different initiatives and policies led by different ministries or even by different departments within the same ministry.

<sup>104</sup> PAT 2016-2018 evaluation.

<sup>105</sup> LEG Meeting Minutes October 2016, July 2017, October 2017, March 2018, July 2018.

<sup>106</sup> LEG Meeting Minutes July 2018.

61. Although education sector dialogue has been a well-established practice in Mauritania since 2001, it does not appear to have evolved substantially, either in quality or depth, since PNDSE I. As a result, the assumption related to the motivation of country stakeholders to work together to solve education sector issues is considered very weak in Mauritania. Based on the analysis above, there appears to be a confluence of factors on all sides which are influencing this situation. MEN is perceived to be driving sectoral dialogue and benefiting from the lion's share of external financial assistance flowing into the sector through PNDSE II, which increases feelings of marginalization and competition among ministries for scarce investment resources. There is weak coordination between government ministries and their departments, limiting the government's capacity to address key challenges and bottlenecks of a sectoral nature. Key actors, including several development partners and most civil society and private sector organizations, remain outside of sectoral dialogue through the LEG. The widespread reliance on project modalities and lack of harmonization among an increasingly small number of development partners further complicates sectorally-focused dialogue and coordination in education. Finally, government commitment at senior political levels appears limited for ensuring the strategic governance of the sector plan and overseeing its performance.

62. Some donors interviewed contrasted education sector coordination with that of the health sector in Mauritania, the latter being perceived as more open, harmonized and currently evolving towards the use of pooled funding mechanisms. This appears to be due, in some degree, to the fact that there is only one ministry in the health sector. Other factors influencing progress in the health sector could be explored further for their relevance to education sector dialogue.

**Finding 4:** While sector monitoring processes are in place, the government is challenged to provide adequate data, assess sector progress against plans and use monitoring information for strategic decision-making.

63. Table 3.3 below summarizes education sector monitoring processes.

**Table 3.3** *ESP Monitoring in Mauritania from 2012 to 2018*<sup>107</sup>

QUALITY THEME	MONITORING PNDSE II 2011-2018
Results Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PNDSE II included a detailed logical framework which was revised in 2016 to be more specific and measurable. The revision was complemented by support provided to the Planning Department of MEN to improve its database, analysis and reporting capacity. PNDSE II results are situated at system and impact levels.</li> <li>Annual plans are developed (as annexes to JSR report summary) which include strategies, activities, indicators, timelines and responsibilities for accountability and reporting.</li> </ul>

<sup>107</sup> Sources include: Lahaye, L. et Robert, F. Rapport d'évaluation technique du Programme national de développement du secteur éducatif (PNDSE II) 2012-2020 en vue de son endossement à l'initiative Fast Track par les PTFs, Novembre 2011; Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Evaluation plan d'actions triennal 2012-2014, mars 2015; Paul, J. Evaluation plan d'actions triennal 2016-2018, Document provisoire, juin 2018; LEG Meeting Minutes 2015-2018; interviews with education donor, DPEF, MEN representatives.

QUALITY THEME	MONITORING PNDSE II 2011-2018
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no effective forum where sectoral priorities and overall sectoral progress are discussed. The Inter-ministerial committee charged with stewardship of PNDSE II has met very infrequently since 2011. The PNDSE II Steering Committee and LEG meet regularly although discussions tend to focus on operational or technical issues and are seen to be driven by external events rather than regular review of sector progress.</li> </ul>
Roles and Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The institutional architecture governing PNDSE II has been the subject of ongoing discussion and review within the LEG; revisions to institutional structures have remained unresolved since August 2014. Accountability by government departments and ministries to report achievements against annual or three-year action plans is limited.</li> </ul>
M&E Capacity and Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are departments of planning and strategy in each ministry which are responsible for data management and analysis. However, institutional roles and responsibilities for M&amp;E on PNDSE II are unclear and disjointed.</li> <li>• DPEF is responsible for PNDSE II monitoring and the preparation of JSR reports although they have no authority over or access to the data from education ministries.<sup>108</sup></li> <li>• System strengthening support has been provided to the planning department in MEN although MEN is only one of five ministries responsible for PNDSE II delivery.</li> <li>• DPEF is responsible for JSRs. DPEF and its JSR reporting is dependent on the information provided by education ministries but DPEF has no authority over EMIS or the M/E activities of education ministries.</li> <li>• The LEG made specific recommendations on how to improve JSRs in October 2016 which have not yet been acted upon.</li> </ul>
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JSRs take place annually in two phases – a field mission in April and a meeting in November.<sup>109</sup> In 2016, the LEG recommended bringing these two activities together holding them in September, to coincide with education ministry budget cycles. No action has been taken to date.</li> </ul>

64. Annual JSR meetings generally take place over three days in November. Presentations focus on a review of activities undertaken and expenditures realized for the year, by sub-sector and by donor investment project. There is also presentation of relevant results from special studies or research undertaken during the year.<sup>110</sup> Impact level data from EMIS is also presented to assess progress against global PNDSE II indicators for the year. Group discussions are held around each of the three PNDSE II strategic objectives (access, quality, governance) and these group discussions lead to the formulation of recommendations annexed to each JSR summary. Recommendations vary in their format and content from year to year but generally tend to be quite numerous, ambitious, lacking in prioritization and limited

<sup>108</sup> Education ministries do share their data with the DPEF when requested, with some delays.

<sup>109</sup> The JSR of 2013 was not held because the government organized the États généraux en education instead. The JSR in 2016 was not held because of the study undertaken on the PNDSE II institutional arrangements and the need for meetings to discuss study findings (LEG Minutes April 2017).

<sup>110</sup> For example, in 2017 the results of the UNICEF study on out of school children was presented as was a review of model madrahas pilot schools.

in the operational and budget detail to ensure they can be acted upon. It is difficult to assess the alignment between JSR recommendations and the content of subsequent annual or three-year plans.<sup>111</sup>

65. While the frequency and structure of PNDSE II monitoring processes in Mauritania respect basic GPE guidelines, the quality and relevance of sector monitoring is weak and does not support analysis and decision-making, according to LEG members. There appear to be several, major challenges with regard to the government's ability to establish a comprehensive overview of sector progress against PNDSE II objectives:

- **Accessing data from all actors in the system**, many of which operate outside PNDSE II or the LEG, in order to paint a global portrait of education sector investment and progress in performance against plans. JSR summaries focus on infrastructure development and budget disbursement for donor investment projects implemented by DPEF and the National Institute for Technical and Vocation Training. JSR summaries list activities undertaken by sub-sector for the year but do not assess the rate of domestic investment delivery, expenditure or overall sectoral plan delivery against the previous year's plans.
- **PNDSE II institutional complexities** – DPEF organizes JSRs and prepares the review summary. DPEF has no authority over the education ministries but is dependent on these ministries for accessing EMIS and all education financial data. DPEF is a program implementation unit for donors' education projects; it has no time or technical capacity to analyze or review education sector progress as a whole.
- **PNDSE II performance indicators** are aggregate values situated at a system and impact level (i.e. gross enrollment rates) and do not help education stakeholders determine what, where and how performance in the system may be changing, given significant education disparities between regions and institutions in the country. Only gross enrolment rates are disaggregated by sex. Grade repeat rates and all education quality indicators are not currently disaggregated.
- **The current format of the JSR report** provides reliable data with regard to annual budget execution by education investment project and sub-sector but does not enable a comprehensive assessment of PNDSE II progress against the previous year's annual plan, sector plan objectives or expected results. It is virtually impossible to track planned to actual activity and output achievement year to year or for three-year planning cycles for PNDSE II or its PATs. There is no explanation of variance in what was planned versus what was achieved nor an analysis of implications for the future implementation of the sector plan. There are activity plans and there are reports that detail activities undertaken but the link between them is not made clear or analyzed.

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<sup>111</sup> Based on a review of JSR summary reports from 2012, 2014, 2015, 2017 and annual plans for 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018.

66. The JSR process is seen by stakeholders (donors and government representatives<sup>112</sup>) as time-consuming and resource-intensive, while not currently providing the necessary information to support strategic dialogue and decision-making at a truly sectoral level. Stakeholders question the value of holding JSRs annually<sup>113</sup>, given that results with regard to education quality and strategic management of the education system are not perceptible within such short timeframes.<sup>114</sup> The annual process to organize JSRs is also burdensome. According to DPEF, it requires three or four months to organize JSR field visits, collect data, prepare the summary report in anticipation of the workshop, organize the workshop and prepare the final report. DPEF has limited time available to analyze data on education sector progress and limited capacity to interpret emerging results. Logically, governance of PNDSE II – which includes monitoring, sector review and accountability – should fall to the structures set up for PNDSE II governance which include representation by all five education ministries concerned. Unfortunately, the Inter-ministerial committee which was established for PNDSE II performance oversight, does not meet or assume this role.

67. There has been considerable discussion in the LEG and among development partners on how to improve sector monitoring. In October 2016,<sup>115</sup> education partners in the LEG agreed upon a variety of measures required to improve joint sector reviews including the modification of their timing, the narrowing of their content focus, and the crucial role which needs to be played by the Inter-ministerial committee to follow and act upon recommendations emerging from the JSRs. Finally, partners and the DPEF also called for the creation of a technical unit within the PNDSE II institutional structure, reporting directly to the inter-ministerial committee, which would be responsible for PNDSE II monitoring (instead of DPEF).<sup>116</sup> There is little evidence to suggest that these recommendations made by the LEG, nor the recommendations emerging from the review of PNDSE II institutional structures in 2016, have been acted on to date. The ministerial decree addressing the institutional structure, monitoring and governance of PNDSE II remains under revision.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Sources: Interviews with MEN, DPEF, MAEIO, MASEF representatives as well as AFD, SCAC, EU, UNESCO and UNICEF representatives; Ginolin, M. and Robert, F. Op. cit. pp 10-12.

<sup>113</sup> As noted previously, there has been a JSR for every year of PNDSE II implementation with the exception of 2013 when Education États Généraux were organized in Mauritania and in 2016 when the institutional review of the education system was being completed.

<sup>114</sup> This criticism is based, however, on the assumption that JSRs have to focus on impact and/or system-level indicators which, indeed, are not likely to change rapidly. An alternative approach would be to (also) use JSRs to review activity/output level indicators related to ESP implementation, thereby allowing for course correction as needed. A central challenge for PNDSE II monitoring, however, is that there is limited alignment between PNDSE II strategies, three-year action plans, annual budgeted plans and JSR summaries. It is virtually impossible to track planned to actual activities and outputs year to year or for three-year planning cycles (and link these to budget execution rates).

<sup>115</sup> LEG Meeting Minutes October 2016.

<sup>116</sup> LEG Minutes October 2016, July 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Ginolin, M. et Robert, F. Op. cit. p. 42.

68. As an example of the current weaknesses in education sector dialogue and monitoring, the increasing scope of private sector education in Mauritania is a case in point. In 2011, PNDSE II included the objective of increasing education access by increasing the availability of private schooling in primary education up to 11 percent.<sup>119</sup> In fact, since 2011 (and as noted in section 2.2), the rise of private schooling in Mauritania has outpaced anything remotely imaginable by government in 2011; it is currently estimated that

approximately 16 percent of primary schools in the country are private and the student population in private primary schools increased by over 60 percent from 2010-2014 against a five percent increase in public primary schools for the same period.<sup>120</sup> The PATs under PNDSE II have included a limited number of initiatives to improve government oversight of private sector secondary education (nothing for primary) and the implementation of these limited measures has not been tracked.<sup>121</sup> Joint sector planning, dialogue and monitoring efforts appear virtually silent on the rise of the private sector, and its implications for equity, quality and efficiency of the education system in Mauritania, despite these issues being raised as significant concerns in both PAT external evaluations. Based on a review of LEG meeting minutes for the period under review, the implications of the ever-increasing role of the private sector in the education system do not appear to have been discussed in this forum during the period under review.<sup>122</sup>

### Box 3.8: The private sector and the PNDSE II

*L'évolution rapide du système scolaire, dans sa partie essentielle, vers la privatisation accélérée n'occupe donc pas place de choix dans les préoccupations du PNDSE et de ses instances. Il s'agit pourtant d'un phénomène social de grande importance, qui témoigne d'un choix clair des familles et se trouve porteur d'un grand risque de disparités (l'école publique pour les pauvres, l'école privée pour les classes moyennes et aisées ; l'école publique pour les ruraux, l'école privée pour les citadins). Ce phénomène n'est pas le résultat de la volonté des autorités, il est spontané et pourrait témoigner d'une perte de leur contrôle sur l'évolution du secteur...<sup>118</sup>*

Source : Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Évaluation plan d'actions triennal 2012-2014, mars 2015, p. 21.

<sup>118</sup> Translation: The rapid acceleration of the private sector within the education system, is not evident in the preoccupations of the PNDSE and its decision-making structures. This phenomenon, however, holds significant social import with regard to the choices made by families and it represents a great risk with regard to equity (public school for the poor, private school for the middle and upper classes, public school for rural populations, private school for urbanites). This phenomenon is not the result of the will of public authorities – it is spontaneous and could reflect their loss of control on the evolution of the education sector...

<sup>119</sup> PNDSE II, p. 77. While not specified in PNDSE II, it is assumed this means 11% of spaces available for children of primary school age.

<sup>120</sup> Ginolin, M. et Robert, F. Op. cit. p. 20.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p. 21.; Paul, J. Évaluation plan d'actions triennal 2016-2018, Document provisoire, juin 2018, p.20.

<sup>122</sup> LEG Meeting Minutes 2015, 2016, 2017.

69. Beyond limitations noted above around the scope, depth and focus of sector monitoring processes, significant concerns are raised by development partners interviewed with regard to government commitment and accountability for PNDSE II performance and results achievement. They are concerned that there is limited accountability at the highest decision-making

**Box 3.9: Utility of JSRs**

*Le fait de continuer à organiser et de financer des revues dont les recommandations n'ont pas de suites favorables ou du moins d'appropriation effective par les premiers décideurs du Secteur semble être un exercice peu pertinent. Il est nécessaire de mettre en place une réflexion profonde pour impliquer pleinement les Ministres dans le suivi de la mise en œuvre du PNDSE et dans l'organisation des revues et le suivi de leurs recommandations.*<sup>123</sup>

PTFs comments on revisiting JSRs, LEG Oct. 2016, p. 3.

levels, and across the five education ministries, for the strategic governance, effective coordination and implementation of PNDSE II. The current institutional structure for PNDSE II governance is not operational at a policy level and there appears to be little political will for resolving institutional coordination challenges across the five ministries to ensure joint planning and mutual accountability for sector results.<sup>124</sup> The lack of effective appropriation or follow-on action by education policy-makers, for the results and recommendations emerging from sectoral reviews or sector plan evaluations, has been documented in evaluations of PNDSE I and PNDSE II three-year action plans since 2011.

70. Observers describe the education sector in Mauritania as well analyzed and documented in terms of its strengths and challenges. There are regular external evaluations conducted of the three-year plans, a RESEN was conducted in 2010 and again in 2015, there was an institutional review of PNDSE II delivery structures undertaken in 2016, JSRs were organized every year except 2013 and 2015, while, more recently, an Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) report on key education indicators was prepared in 2018. From this perspective, considerable efforts are made to ensure that the education sector and its progress are well documented, but the information and recommendations emerging from these exercises are not consistently used to inform planning or decision-making.<sup>125</sup>

71. There remains a significant point of contention between education development partners and the GoM as to how recommendations emerging from joint sector reviews and evaluations should be addressed. Government representatives interviewed explain that donor investment projects should allow for sufficient flexibility in their budgets to accommodate emerging recommendations as they arise. Development partners explained that the implementation of recommendations from JSRs or sector evaluations should be supported through domestic education budgets as they are linked to PNDSE II viability and sustainability which is a government responsibility.<sup>126</sup> JSRs take place after annual education

<sup>123</sup> Translation: Continuing to organise and finance reviews where recommendations are not followed-up and are not owned by senior decision-makers appears to be an irrelevant exercise. There is a need for deep reflection on how to engage the Ministers in the monitoring of the implementation of PNDSE, in the organisation of JSRs and in the follow-up of their recommendations.

<sup>124</sup> Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Op. cit. pp. 41-43 ; Paul, J. Op. cit., p. 13, 19.

<sup>125</sup> Sources: Lahaye, L. and Robert, F. Op.cit.;; Ginolin, M et Robert, F. Op. cit. ; Paul, J. Op. cit.; LEG Minutes October 2016.

<sup>126</sup> Sources: Interviews with MEN and DPEF representatives as well as education partners in LEG; LEG Minutes October 2016, p. 2.

plans are developed and annual education budgets are approved, making it difficult for government to integrate these recommendations in their on-going work. Donors have suggested that the timing of JSRs be revised although this has yet to be decided. The discussion about how to implement sector review recommendations appears to be at an impasse between government and education development partners for the time being, while LEG recommendations for the reform of the JSR process remain in limbo.

### Did GPE contribute to observed changes in sector dialogue and monitoring? How?<sup>127</sup>

**Finding 5:** GPE has effectively promoted the development of a joint results framework, the organization of inclusive joint sector dialogue, reviews and external evaluations. Despite these efforts, mutual accountability for education sector results remains limited.

72. As discussed in the findings above, sector dialogue and monitoring processes in Mauritania are regularly scheduled, well-structured and generally respectful of GPE guidelines and funding requirements. Available evidence suggests that GPE has contributed to improving the frequency, rigor and structure of sector dialogue and monitoring in the following ways.

73. **GPE provided an incentive to structure and deepen education sector dialogue:** With membership in GPE since 2001, Mauritania has been encouraged to establish a local education group and undertake joint sector reviews on an annual basis. GPE funding criteria and successive GPE grants have provided the incentive to entrench these processes in the country. All stakeholders interviewed consistently reported that GPE guidelines and funding requirements had contributed directly to improvements in the frequency and structure of sector dialogue and monitoring.

#### Box 3.10: GPE Contribution to Sector Dialogue

*The GPE has contributed to sector dialogue and review by improving the quality and rigor of our processes, making them more frequent and pushing us to improve the quality of dialogue based on current information and available data.*

Government representative

74. **GPE provided support and resources for sector review:** GPE provided support for the evaluation of the most recent PAT (2016-2018).

75. **GPE advocated for civil society:** The Secretariat has consistently advocated for the inclusion of civil society and greater representation of other key stakeholder groups in the LEG as well as in education sector planning and review processes.<sup>128</sup> The Secretariat country lead held meetings with civil society organizations and MEN in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2018 to further their dialogue and inclusion. AFD as the coordinating agency and UNICEF as the chef de file have also actively encouraged broader stakeholder engagement in the LEG as well as in sectoral planning and review processes.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>127</sup> Evaluation question CEQ 2.3.

<sup>128</sup> Back to Office Reports of the GPE Secretariat country lead from 2014-2018.

<sup>129</sup> Sources: Interviews with AFD and UNICEF representatives; LEG Meeting Minutes November 2017; Back to Office Reports of GPE Secretariat country lead November 2017.

76. GPE funding requirements, guidelines and the advocacy undertaken by the GPE Secretariat have all served to improve the frequency of, inclusion in and structure of sector dialogue and monitoring in Mauritania since 2001. The relevance and quality of sector dialogue and review, however, have not substantially improved during PNDSE II implementation. Despite clear recommendations made by the LEG since 2016, there has been no evident progress made with regard to improving the JSR process or the institutional arrangements for PNDSE II governance, monitoring or inter-ministerial coordination. These challenges are seen to undermine mutual accountability for PNDSE II results and overall performance.

### Validity of assumptions

77. Available evidence suggests that two of four assumptions have generally held to be true in Mauritania with regard to sector dialogue and mutual accountability. GPE has had sufficient leverage in Mauritania to positively influence the LEG's existence and functioning. Sector dialogue and monitoring processes take place on a regular and predictable basis. Government has invited a civil society representative to be a member on the LEG, although it is felt that membership needs to be more inclusive of all education stakeholders. Finally, country-level stakeholders have opportunities to work together to solve education sector issues; resources were made available, by GPE and other development partners, for the joint sector reviews in 2012, 2014, 2015 and 2017 and two PAT evaluations.

78. Assumptions around stakeholder capabilities and motivation to work together to solve education issues, however, were found to have held true to a very limited extent in Mauritania (see Appendix VII). The institutional structures supporting governance of and mutual accountability for PNDSE II results are not fully operational, inclusive or effective. JSRs do not yet reflect a comprehensive picture of the education sector and do not yet adequately measure progress against plans in activity and results achievement. While PNDSE II sector progress is reasonably well documented through external evaluations of PATs, emerging lessons learned and recommendations from sector review efforts are not seen to inform sector planning decisions or concrete action to resolve identified bottlenecks. Emerging issues, such as the rise of private schooling, which have significant implications for education equity, quality and resources, do not appear to be effectively addressed in sector dialogue or monitoring.

### Additional factors and unintended effects

79. While the evaluation found positive evidence of GPE contributions, information deriving from stakeholder consultations and document review indicates that the capacity of in-country stakeholders for engaging in effective sector dialogue and joint sector monitoring has also been influenced by several other factors beyond GPE's direct influence. **Positive factors** included the commitment of other development partners in the education sector in Mauritania to support inclusive, sectoral coordination and joint sector review. **Negative factors** included the institutional complexity, limited capacity for sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination in Mauritania coupled with the perceived lack of commitment at the highest political levels for PNDSE II performance.

## 3.4 Education sector financing<sup>130</sup>

### Box 3.11: Assessment of Contribution Claim C.

**Claim:** *GPE advocacy and funding requirements contribute to more and better financing for education in the country.*

**Assessment:** The evaluation found that available evidence **does not support** the GPE contribution claim related to strengthening more and better domestic financing, and **partially supports** the contribution claim to more and better international financing.

**Assessment is based on:** (a) Overall financing trends for the education sector show decreases in both domestic and international financing of education in Mauritania and no changes in the quality of this financing; (b) the likelihood of the two assumptions underlying the contribution claim holding true in the Mauritanian context was moderate for one and weak for another;<sup>131</sup> (c) available evidence indicates modest GPE contributions to increasing the amount of international financing, but no influence on the amount of domestic financing or the quality of sector financing. At the same time, the noted absence of some development partners in sector dialogue and coordination mechanisms is an important factor beyond GPE support that is likely to negatively affect the quality of financing.

This overall assessment is discussed in the following findings. Please see Appendix VIII for a visual representation of evaluation findings on GPE contributions to sector financing.

## How has education sector financing changed during the review period?

**Finding 6:** Both domestic and international education financing levels diminished during the period under review.

### Domestic financing for education

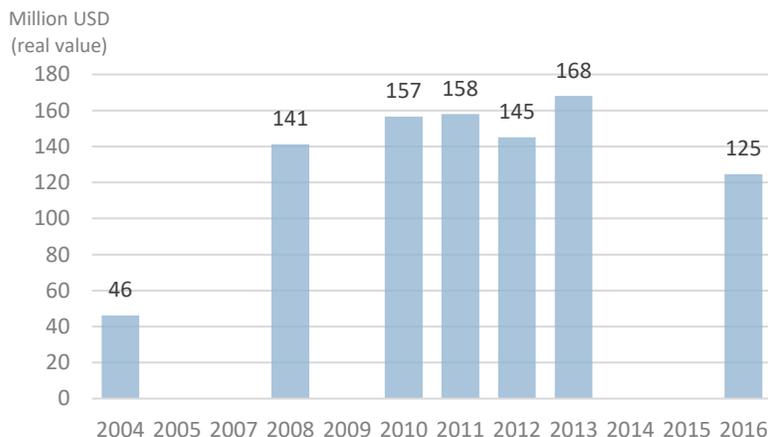
80. As shown in Figure 3.1, while absolute domestic education expenditure<sup>132</sup> tripled between 2004 and 2010, it decreased by 20 percent (from US\$157 million to US\$125 million) between 2010 and 2016.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> This section addresses evaluation question CEQ 1.4 (How has GPE contributed to leveraging additional education sector financing and improving the quality of financing?) and CEQ 3 (What factors other than GPE support can explain observed changes (or lack thereof) in sector plan development, plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring?).

<sup>131</sup> See sub-section on 'Validity of assumptions' below.

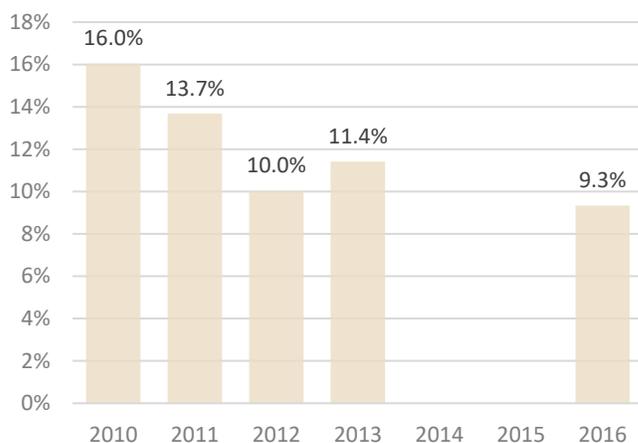
<sup>132</sup> The data in this section on domestic education financing reflect expenditures, not allocations. Data comparing allocations and expenditures for the education sector as a whole was not made available to the evaluation. Additionally, absolute domestic education expenditures include both recurrent and capital development expenditures.

<sup>133</sup> When adjusted for inflation, absolute education expenditure doubled between 2004 and 2010 (from US\$69.4 million to US\$138.8 million), while it decreased by six percent between 2010 and 2016 (from US\$138.8 million to US\$130 million). Source: UIS data

**Figure 3.1 Education expenditures Mauritania (2004-2016)**

Source: UIS data (data for the years 2004 and 2016 are estimates)<sup>134</sup>

81. As seen in figure 3.2, government expenditure to education as a share of total government expenditure has remained below GPE's goal of 20 percent and decreased from 2010 to 2016.<sup>135</sup>

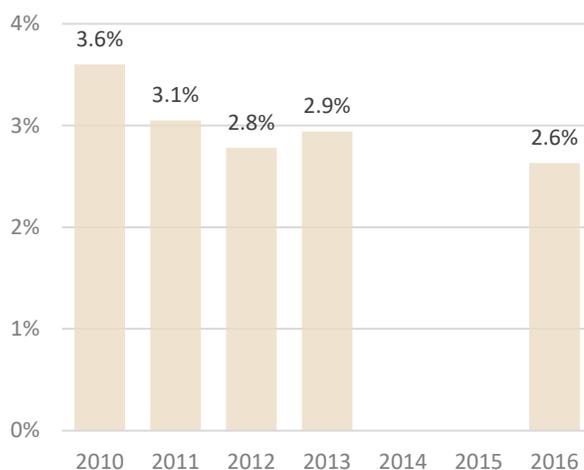
**Figure 3.2 Education expenditures as share of total government expenditure (2010-2016)**

Source: UIS data

82. Finally, the share of government expenditure to education relative to the country's GDP has been decreasing since 2010 (Figure 3.3).

<sup>134</sup> UIS data does not include figures for the years 2014 and 2015.

<sup>135</sup> UIS data. GPE 2016 results framework data for indicator 10 also shows Mauritania allocating less than 20 percent of total government expenditure to education, with 15.1 percent and 14.7 percent of total government expenditure allocated to education in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

**Figure 3.3** Education expenditures as share of Mauritania's GDP (2010-2016)

Source: UIS data

83. During the period under review, Mauritania has exceeded GPE's objective of dedicating more than 45 percent of its education budget to primary education. However, while basic education's<sup>136</sup> share of total public education expenditure increased from 71 to 82 percent between 2010 and 2016, the absolute amount spent on basic education decreased by eight percent.<sup>137</sup> Comparatively, the share of public expenditure on tertiary education relative to total public education expenditures decreased from 19 to 18 percent between 2010 and 2016, and the amount of government expenditure to tertiary education decreased by 25 percent.<sup>138</sup> While we do not have data on public expenditures on ECE, the MASEF, responsible for providing ECE, received 0.2 percent of total public allocated budget in education in 2016.<sup>139</sup> By types of expenditure, the budgeted share of salary costs was 69 percent in 2015 and 2016, the only two years for which this data is available.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> UIS data on domestic education expenditures does not distinguish expenditures in lower and upper secondary education. As such, although upper secondary is not generally included in the definition of basic education, it is included in the data presented in the paragraph.

<sup>137</sup> From US\$111.6 million in 2010 to US\$102.6 million in 2016 (real value), public expenditures only. This includes both capital and recurrent expenditures. It excludes public expenditures on ECE. Source: UIS data.

<sup>138</sup> From US\$29.4 million in 2010 to US\$22.1 million in 2016. Data on government expenditure to TVET is not available. Source: UIS data.

<sup>139</sup> The distribution of public education allocated budget across the five ministries responsible for providing education services show that the MEN, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and the Ministry for Employment, Technical and Vocational Training, and New Technologies received the largest share of the education budget with 75, 15, and 6 percent of the total education budget in 2016. The MAIEO and MASEF, responsible for religious schools, pre-primary education, and adult literacy, received 1.6 and 0.2 percent of the education budget respectively. Source: GPE 2016 results framework data for indicator 10.

<sup>140</sup> GPE 2016 results framework data for indicator 10.

## International financing for education

84. International education sector financing to Mauritania decreased overall by 18.3 percent, from US\$22.9 million in 2010 to US\$18.7 million in 2016.<sup>141</sup> In relative terms, education ODA as a share of overall ODA to Mauritania has remained low (below 10 percent) and decreased from 6.5 percent in 2010 to 5.1 percent in 2016. Finally, the share of education ODA allocated to basic education<sup>142</sup> remains low and decreased significantly, from 14.2 percent in 2010 (US\$3.3 million) to 5.8 percent in 2016 (US\$1.1 million).<sup>143</sup> Table 3.4 below shows that Mauritania received less donor support during the implementation of PNDSE II (2011-2021) than it did during the implementation of the PNDSE I (2001-2010).

**Table 3.4** Yearly Average education and basic education ODA received by Mauritania

ESP	EDUCATION ODA (ANNUAL AVERAGE)	BASIC EDUCATION ODA (ANNUAL AVERAGE)
PNDSE I (2001-2010)	US\$28.4 million	US\$7.7 million
PNDSE II (2011-2021) <sup>144</sup>	US\$20.1 million	US\$ 1.3 million

Source: OECD Credit Reporting System

85. Consulted stakeholders had differing points of view on the factors influencing the sharp decrease in international basic education sector financing for the period under review.<sup>145</sup> Three main factors stand out, based on discussions with a limited sample of government authorities and development partners.<sup>146</sup> First, the number of donors and development partners contributing to basic education in Mauritania was quite modest to begin with and has declined since 2010. While 14 of the 29 OECD DAC countries provide education ODA to Mauritania, only five<sup>147</sup> provided basic education ODA to Mauritania between 2010 and 2016. AFD is the only bilateral agency that has provided more than US\$1 million in basic education ODA during the period under review.<sup>148</sup> Secondly, as noted in the 2012-2014 PAT evaluation and as confirmed

<sup>141</sup> In constant 2016 USD. Mauritania received on average US\$20.44 million per year in education ODA between 2010 and 2016. Source: OECD Credit Reporting System.

<sup>142</sup> Data from the OECD Credit Reporting System on education ODA does not distinguish expenditures in lower and upper secondary education. As such, although upper secondary is not generally included in the definition of basic education, it is included in the data presented in the paragraph.

<sup>143</sup> OECD credit reporting system.

<sup>144</sup> 2016 is the latest year for which data on education ODA is available.

<sup>145</sup> The decrease in international education financing is likely not due to changes in overall ODA, since the amount of overall ODA to Mauritania increased by five percent between 2010 and 2016 (Mauritania received on average US\$350 million per year in overall ODA between 2010 and 2016).

<sup>146</sup> It must be recognized that the sample of stakeholders from both development partners and government was limited by various factors explained in the chapter on methodology above. The three main factors reducing foreign investment in basic education, outlined in paragraph 85, are representative of the opinions expressed by those who raised or commented specifically on this issue during data collection. As such, this was not necessarily a representative sample and may not be reflective of the views of all education stakeholders in Mauritania.

<sup>147</sup> France, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Japan, as per OECD credit reporting system.

<sup>148</sup> France provided US\$4.4 million in basic education ODA in Mauritania between 2010 and 2016, followed by Japan with US\$0.9 million, Spain with US\$0.7 million, Poland with US\$150,000, and Italy with US\$90,000.

by consulted development partners, global restructuring of ODA led several donor agencies to shift their priorities away from basic education towards other education sub-sectors including TVET.<sup>149</sup> Consulted development partners commented that the shift was influenced, at least in part, by regional trends such as growing youth unemployment and the increased importance of addressing migration issues in Europe.<sup>150</sup> Finally, reference was made, by a small sub-set of stakeholders, to a perceived lack of commitment to basic education investment at the highest political levels as a potential factor limiting foreign investment in education in Mauritania.

86. Regarding the quality of international education financing in Mauritania, almost all development partners activities in Mauritania are project-based, with the exception of AFD budget support through C2D. While all consulted stakeholders from donor organizations and development partners mentioned that their participation in the committees ensured coordination of their activities which reduced duplication of efforts, they agreed that harmonization within the education sector had not been addressed in LEG or committee meetings (see Finding 3). Consulted stakeholders pointed to the lack of participation of some development partners<sup>151</sup> on the LEG and development partner committees as a factor hindering greater coordination and harmonization of efforts, as well as limiting government efforts to plan, implement, and monitor activities. There is, however, a certain degree of harmonization since donor projects in education are, for the most part, implemented through two government units – DPEF for education and National Institute for Technical and Professional Training<sup>152</sup> (INPFTP) for vocational and skills training. In terms of alignment, all consulted stakeholders agreed that development partners' activities were aligned with the PNDSE II and its accompanying PATs.

### How has GPE contributed to leveraging additional education sector financing and improving the quality of financing?

**Finding 7:** While GPE has contributed to increased international education financing, the evaluation found no evidence that GPE contributed to improvements in the quality of international education financing or to increased domestic education financing.

87. During the period 2010 to 2016,<sup>153</sup> GPE contributed modestly to increasing external education sector financing, both directly and indirectly. In direct terms, GPE's contributed to international education financing with US\$12.4 million ESPIG grant, financing the Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (PASEB). It is difficult to assess the relative importance of the ESPIG in relation to domestic and international education financing, since data are not available for multiple years in both cases. However, the average yearly contribution of the ESPIG grant, US\$2.5 million, represents 1.7 and 12.4 percent of the

<sup>149</sup> A development partners committee on TVET was created in 2017 in parallel to the broader committee on education.

<sup>150</sup> It is important to note, however, that some donors are still indirectly supporting basic education in Mauritania through their contributions to GPE.

<sup>151</sup> For example, the African Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Fund for Development, and UNHCR.

<sup>152</sup> Institut National de Formation Technique et Professionnelle

<sup>153</sup> Period for which data on domestic and international financing is available.

average yearly domestic and international education financing respectively.<sup>154</sup> Additionally, the total contribution of the ESPIG represents 3.5 percent of the USD 353 million in international education financing needed for the implementation of the PNDSE II. Although the total funds provided and leveraged by GPE are small relative to overall domestic and international education financing, consulted stakeholders from the MEN highlighted that GPE's contribution was significant since it has been constant over the past 15 years, providing long-term support to certain activities. In indirect terms, consultation with stakeholders revealed that Mauritania is currently in the process of applying for a US\$5 million ESPIG grant within the GPE multiplier fund, to which the World Bank (WB) has committed to contribute an additional US\$25 million.

88. Mauritania is one of the first country members to benefit from the GPE new Multiplier mechanism. In 2018, GPE announced that it would provide Mauritania with an additional grant of \$5 Million to the education sector, provided other development partners matched this grant through new (additional) funds at a ratio of 3:1. The World Bank was the only development partner that came forward to invest and it has committed the full funding amount required for Mauritania to benefit from this additional grant. The World Bank reported that it had the intention to invest its own resources in basic education in Mauritania prior to the announcement of the Multiplier mechanism but that it had not determined a specific amount at the time. The requirements of the Multiplier mechanism, combined with limited interest demonstrated by other donors to support this mechanism, encouraged the World Bank to commit to investing the full amount required. In this sense, the GPE Multiplier did encourage additionality in financing as the Bank reports that its investment would probably not have been as large without the Multiplier. The World Bank was developing the details of its education program to be financed under this mechanism at the time of the evaluation mission.

89. GPE's introduction of the variable tranche for the upcoming ESPIG is perceived by consulted MEN stakeholders as limiting the predictability of GPE's financial support to Mauritania. Government representatives perceive the introduction of the variable tranche as essentially requiring the country to pre-finance parts of the implementation ESPIG for a later (potential) reimbursement.

90. Regarding GPE contributions to the quality of international education financing, the PASEB met seven out of ten GPE criteria for alignment and harmonization.<sup>155</sup> More precisely, the PASEB is aligned with the sector plan and included in the national budget and national sector plan implementation reports; it followed government procurement procedures, but does not follow the same disbursement, expenditure, and accounting procedures as the GoM.<sup>156</sup> Consultations with donor partners and other stakeholders did not result in any evidence of GPE contributions to the quality of international education financing. As discussed in section 3.3, there is limited evidence of the LEG's promotion of greater alignment with national systems or harmonization among development partners during the period under review, either in the form of pooled funding, coordinated reporting, or joint evaluation.<sup>157</sup> However, GPE's

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<sup>154</sup> The average yearly domestic education financing is the average of government expenditure to education for the recent years for which we have data, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2016. The average yearly international education financing is the average of education ODA from 2012 to 2016.

<sup>155</sup> Indicator 29 in the GPE 2020 results framework

<sup>156</sup> While the evaluation did not find concrete evidence explaining why the PASEB does not follow these procedures, PAT evaluations consistently raise the challenge of weak internal government management systems and procedures, financial and otherwise.

<sup>157</sup> There is no evidence of discussion of harmonization in the minutes of LEG meetings reviewed from 2014-2018.

country lead for Mauritania encouraged UNHCR to participate in development partners committees on basic education in order to facilitate coordination of activities and foster potential collaboration.<sup>158</sup>

91. With regard to GPE's contribution to domestic education financing, two of GPE's objectives are for countries to invest at least 20 percent of domestic resources in education or at least show progress toward that threshold, and for countries to dedicate at least 45 percent of their education budget to primary education.<sup>159</sup> Obtaining a GPE ESPIG is contingent upon the government's commitment to increase domestic education financing.<sup>160</sup> The evaluation team found no evidence of GPE advocacy on the 20 and 45 percent targets after ESPIG approval.<sup>161</sup> However, it is important to note that during the most recent ESPIG application period, the GPE country lead explained and emphasized the importance of this commitment.<sup>162</sup> Consulted national stakeholders, besides MEN, were not aware of the 20 and 45 percent targets or of its ties to GPE.

### Validity of Assumptions

92. The evaluation found that there is moderate support for the underlying assumption that GPE had sufficient leverage to influence the amount and quality of domestic and international education sector financing. While GPE contributed directly and indirectly to international education financing through the PASEB and through the multiplier effect, the quantity of domestic and international education financing has decreased in Mauritania and there are no indications that GPE funding requirements or advocacy influenced domestic financing to education.

93. There is weak support for the underlying assumption that external (contextual) factors were favorable and permitted national and international actors to increase/improve the quality of education sector financing. Consulted international actors noted the recent strategic shift away from basic education toward TVET taken by some donors in the region as a potential factor in the decreasing number of actors involved in basic education in Mauritania and the resulting decreasing contributions to international education financing.

### Additional factors and unintended effects

94. **Negative.** Consulted stakeholders pointed to the fact that some development partners working in basic education are not LEG members (see sections 3.2 and 3.3) and do not participate in the development partners committees, as a factor hindering greater coordination and harmonization of

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<sup>158</sup> GPE Secretariat country lead for Mauritania, mission report form March 2018

<sup>159</sup> As noted earlier, UIS data reveals that government education expenditures as a share of total government expenditures is below the 20 percent objective set by GPE. However, UIS data also shows that Mauritania dedicates more than 45 percent of its education budget to primary education.

<sup>160</sup> The evaluation team did not find evidence of the government commitment in that sense, for example through a letter of commitment addressed to GPE.

<sup>161</sup> ESPIG grants to Mauritania predate the New Funding Model (NFM). Hence more contemporary efforts by GPE inherent in the NFM to lever domestic and donor financing did not occur. It is important to note that this assessment is based on incomplete data regarding domestic education financing. As mentioned previously, data on domestic education financing is not available for the years 2014 and 2015.

<sup>162</sup> Mission report March 2018.

efforts.<sup>163</sup> Additionally, the perceived lack of commitment to education at the higher levels of the GoM could be a factor limiting domestic education financing in Mauritania.

### 3.5 Sector plan implementation<sup>164</sup>

#### Box 3.12: Assessment of Contribution Claim D.

**Claim:** *GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective and efficient implementation of sector plans.*

**Assessment:** The evaluation found that available evidence **partially supports** the GPE contribution claim related to strengthening education sector plan implementation.

**Assessment is based on:** (a) Mauritania has made limited progress in most of the priority areas outlined in the PNDSE II; (b) available evidence indicates that the likelihood of the assumptions underlying the contribution claim holding true in the Mauritanian context is strong for one, moderate for four, and weak for one; (c) GPE supported the implementation of the plan in all three thematic areas detailed in the PNDSE II. Low technical capacity within ministries responsible for ESP implementation, low levels of political support, and a lack of human resources were among the key factors beyond GPE support that negatively affected ESP implementation.

Please see Appendix VIII for a visual representation of evaluation findings on the contribution claim related to sector plan implementation.

### Strengths and weaknesses of ESP implementation

**Finding 8:** While it is not possible to assess the extent to which the PNDSE II is being implemented, available evidence suggests a low financial disbursement rate for its implementation.

95. It is difficult to assess the extent to which the PNDSE II has been implemented, given that available documentation (such as JESRs, PAT evaluations, RESEN) focusses on listing implemented activities without comparing to planned activities, and does not summarize progress on activity and output targets.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, no evaluation of the PNDSE II has been conducted as of yet. As a result, it

<sup>163</sup> The evaluation did not find clear explanations for why some development partners do not participate in the committees. One hypothesis is that some donors are not interested in participating in LEG, and others have not been invited because until recently, because their membership did not appear relevant (UNHCR). These hypotheses are speculative and not supported by evidence.

<sup>164</sup> This section addresses evaluation questions CEQ 1.2 (What have been strengths and weaknesses of sector plan implementation during the period under review?), 1.3 (How has GPE contributed to the observed characteristics of sector planning and sector plan implementation?) and CEQ 3 (What factors other than GPE support can explain observed changes (or lack thereof) in sector plan development, plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring?).

<sup>165</sup> The PNDSE II includes a results framework and the PATs include activity matrices, but there is no follow-up on these in available documentation. In other words, there is no comparison of planned vs actually implemented

is not possible to report on the PNDSE II implementation rates or progress toward results. However, the evaluations of the PAT 2016-2018 and PAT 2012-2014 provide an assessment of the allocated vs disbursed funds, which can be used as a proxy indication of the extent to which the PATs, and hence the PNDSE II, have been implemented.

96. As seen in table 3.5 below, 40 and 55 percent of the allocated budgets for the implementation of the PATs had been disbursed by June 2018,<sup>166</sup> and the total amount disbursed during the implementation of both PATs amounts to only 19 percent of the anticipated costs of the PNDSE II (2011-2021).<sup>167</sup> In other words, as of June 2018, three years before the end of the PNDSE II implementation period, less than 20 percent of the PNDSE II has been expended. Therefore, although we cannot provide specific data on the implementation rate, it is reasonable to assume that many activities planned in the PNDSE II have been partially implemented, or not implemented at all, or that some planned activities did not receive the funds allocated for their implementation. Both PAT evaluations noted several activities that have not been implemented and for which no reporting was carried out.

**Table 3.5** Comparison of planned costs and amount disbursed of Pats and PNDSE II

ESP	PLANED COST (IN MRO) <sup>168</sup>	AMOUNT DISBURSED (IN MRO)	PROPORTION OF PLANNED COSTS DISBURSED
PAT 2012-2014	180.9 billion	72,715 billion	40%
PAT 2016-2018	76.4 billion	42,029 billion	55%
PNDSE II (2011-2021)	607 billion	114,744 billion	19%

97. A review of available documentation and consultations with stakeholders point out two main challenges faced during the implementation of the PATs:

- Heavy procurement procedures are an obstacle to the timely implementation of the PATs. The DPEF, which is responsible for procurement procedures for the implementation of multiple projects within the PATs, does not have enough human resources to make the procurement requests to service providers for all the projects under its umbrella.<sup>169</sup> While some measures have been

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activities. The PAT 2016-2018 evaluation specifically notes the absence of a monitoring and evaluation system for the implementation of activities planned in the PAT. As a result, it is impossible to track planned to actual activity and output achievement year to year or for three-year planning cycles and the PNDSE II.

<sup>166</sup> PAT 2012-2014 and PAT 2016-2018 evaluations.

<sup>167</sup> In its design, PNDSE II anticipated a total cost of MRO 607 billion (US\$2.2 billion) between 2012 and 2020 with an estimated gap of MRO 67 billion (US\$246 million, or 11 percent).

<sup>168</sup> The Mauritanian Ouguiya is the currency of Mauritania. In January 2018, Mauritania changed its currency from MRO (1 MRO = 0.0027 USD) to MRU (1 MRU = 0.027 USD). The MRO is used consistently in this report. When available data were in MRU, the conversion rate used was 1 MRU = 10 MRO.

<sup>169</sup> The centralization of monitoring, reporting, and procurement activities at the DPEF is endorsed by available documentation, and by most stakeholders consulted on the subject.

implemented to address this bottleneck,<sup>170</sup> delays in procurement are still highlighted in the latest available documentation.<sup>171</sup>

- Second, low technical capabilities of staff implementing the PNDSE II lead to delays in ESP implementation. The PAT focus on the thematic areas of quality and management translates into a set of activities that require the provision of intellectual services such as capacity building, studies, and establishment of new institutional and administrative procedures, among others. The delivery of these services is often delayed due to a lack of technical expertise within the ministries to prepare the terms of the reference for these services, to define precisely the services to be provided, and to budget for their delivery.<sup>172</sup> Consulted stakeholders also pointed out that some ministries responsible for delivering education services have very limited human resources in certain regions of the country.

### Has GPE contributed to PNDSE II implementation? If so, how?

**Finding 9: GPE's financial and technical support through an ESPIG contributed to PNDSE II implementation in all three strategic objectives.**

#### Contributions through GPE-funded grants

98. During the period under review, GPE provided an ESPIG of US\$12.4 million for the implementation of PNDSE II, as well as a PDG of US\$170,000. These funds supported the activities of the Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (PASEB) and represent 0.6 percent of the total planned costs for ESP implementation.

99. The PASEB includes three components that are aligned with the three main thematic areas highlighted in the PNDSE II, namely, relevance and quality, access, and governance and management:

- Component 1: improving the quality of primary education (US\$3.8 million, or 31 percent of the total ESPIG)
- Component 2: promoting equity in access to lower secondary school (US\$4.6 million, or 37 percent of the total ESPIG)
- Component 3: strengthening the system's management capacity (US\$3.6 million, or 29 percent of the total ESPIG).

100. Due to delays in the implementation of the third component, the PASEB received two no-cost extensions,<sup>173</sup> extending the closing date from December 2016 to November 2018. The implementation of a national EMIS as part of Component 3 has been significantly delayed due to the lack of technical

<sup>170</sup> Notably, the minimum threshold for an expense to have to go through a competitive procurement process was increased in 2015.

<sup>171</sup> The JESR 2017 and the PAT 2016-2018 evaluation.

<sup>172</sup> The PAT 2012-2014 evaluation notes the approach regarding the activities associated with the thematic areas of quality and management, as well as their expected results, were not specifically defined in the PAT 2012-2014.

<sup>173</sup> The first extension was for four months, from May 2017 to August 2017. The second was for 15 months, from August 2017 to November 2018. Source: The World Bank, *BEESP, Restructuring paper on a proposed project restructuring of Mauritania basic education sector support project*.

capacity with the MEN to carry out the planned activities.<sup>174</sup> The MEN submitted an initial proposal for the creation of an EMIS that would be implemented in every region of the country. The World Bank rejected this proposal as the MEN did not have sufficient capacity to carry out the proposed activities. In August 2017, the project was restructured; instead of implementing a national and already functioning EMIS by 2017, an incremental approach was adopted in which the basic functionalities of the EMIS would be set, and capacity building would be provided to the core EMIS team within the MEN.

101. Some 82 percent of the funds allocated to the PASEB had been disbursed by December 2017,<sup>175</sup> close to one year before the end of the implementation period. By this date, the PASEB had completed most of its activities, and had achieved or exceeded 10 of the project's 16 result indicator targets, partially achieved targets for two result indicators, with no progress on the remaining four (Appendix X details the progress towards the achievement of the PASEB result indicator targets). Three result indicator targets had not been achieved due to the fact that three of the planned nine awareness campaigns had not been carried out as of December 2017. Two unachieved result targets concerned the implementation of the EMIS, whose implementation started only in August 2017 for the reasons explained above. The last unachieved target concerned the drafting of the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) report.<sup>176</sup>

102. Key PASEB achievements are summarized in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.6 PASEB key achievements and related components**

PASEB COMPONENT	PASEB 2014-2018 ACHIEVEMENTS <sup>177</sup>	PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FULLY OR PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GPE ESPIG PASEB
<b>1. Improving the quality of primary education<sup>178</sup></b>		<b>Relevance and quality of education</b>
<b>1.1 Improving initial teacher training</b>	Pedagogical training for ENI instructors to improve the quality of instruction: all 101 trainers from the four teacher colleges (ENI) <sup>179</sup>	<b>Increase the quality of teachers' training and tailor it to the bilingual needs of the</b>

<sup>174</sup> The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017

<sup>175</sup> The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017

<sup>176</sup> During the evaluation visit to Nouakchott in August 2018, the SDI report had been drafted and was awaiting approval for publication.

<sup>177</sup> Sources: The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, multiple.

<sup>178</sup> All the planned activities under this component have been implemented and the PASEB achieved or exceeded all of the project's result indicator targets related to this component (see Appendix X for details on the progress towards the achievement of the PASEB result indicator targets).

<sup>179</sup> Écoles Normales des Instituteurs (ENI). During PASEB implementation, two additional ENIs were established, for a total of four. While the PASEB was planned to support only two ENIs, consulted stakeholders from the DPEF and MEN noted that the PASEB implemented activities in all four ENIs using the same allocated budget.

PASEB COMPONENT	PASEB 2014-2018 ACHIEVEMENTS <sup>177</sup>	PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FULLY OR PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GPE ESPIG PASEB
	<p>benefited from capacity-building activities in which new standardized curriculum and competency-based approach were introduced. 70 ENI trainers were also trained on learning assessment.</p> <p>All four directors of ENIs received training on the management of their institution, and 41 staff received language training.</p> <p>The Center for Language Study and Research (CREL) provided training in bilingual education to 28 math and science teachers, 78 ENI trainers, and 1,601 ENI students.</p> <p>Desk and office equipment and IT equipment have been procured in all four ENIs.</p>	<b>education system</b>
<b>1.2 Improving the primary school learning environment</b>	Acquisition and distribution of 450,397 school kits <sup>180</sup> for all pupils in primary and lower secondary school in the targeted regions (wilayas). <sup>181</sup>	<b>Improve the quality and distribution of pedagogical kits</b>
<b>2. Promoting equity in access to lower secondary school</b>		<b>Access to education</b>
<b>2.1 Improving access for girls to lower secondary school</b>	13 local collèges <sup>182</sup> were constructed in areas that currently have none, in the most densely populated poor regions. The ESPIG financed civil engineering works, purchase of school furnishings and basic equipment, and purchase of books for the new college libraries. <sup>183</sup>	<b>Increase access to lower secondary education</b>
<b>2.2 Improving equity through</b>	With the support of NGOs, six awareness-	<b>Promote girls' education</b>

<sup>180</sup> These kits include textbooks, support tools for geography and history classes, as well as maps, geometric figures, etc. Source: ESPIG application.

<sup>181</sup> The regions are: Hodh El Charghy, Guidimakha, Gorgol, Tagant, Adrar, and Brakna.

<sup>182</sup> Schools offering both cycles of secondary education, not to be confused with teacher colleges where teachers are trained.

<sup>183</sup> Consultation with regional stakeholders from the MEN reveals that the DRENs (Direction Régionale de l'Éducation Nationale) from the regions in which local collèges were built were not consulted in the selection of school sites. They also noted that the DREN's human resource capacity to teach in these newly built collèges was not assessed. The DRENs staffed the 13 local collèges without support from the PASEB. The World Bank ISR December 2017 noted the challenge of staffing local collèges, particularly with teachers qualified in mathematics and science.

PASEB COMPONENT	PASEB 2014-2018 ACHIEVEMENTS <sup>177</sup>	PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FULLY OR PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GPE ESPIG PASEB
<b>measures to promote education for girls</b>	<p>raising campaigns on girls' education were organized in the six targeted regions.<sup>184</sup> 290 participants have been reached by the campaigns, including school principals, representatives of parents' associations, CSOs, and local media.<sup>185</sup></p> <p>352 girls from the six regions received performance awards.<sup>186</sup></p>	
<b>3. Strengthening the system's management capacity</b>		<b>Governance and management in the education sector</b>
<b>3.1 Strengthening the capacity for monitoring and evaluation</b>	<p>Technical support in developing a digitalized EMIS: with the aim of establishing the basic functionalities of a digitalized EMIS,<sup>187</sup> a firm was hired with the ESPIG funds with the mandate to develop the EMIS software.</p> <p>In order to facilitate usage of the data generated by the digitalized EMIS in development, 78 MEN staff, both in the capital and in the targeted regions,<sup>188</sup> received training in education statistics with support from UNESCO.</p> <p>Data collection on education indicators: Three annual school censuses were carried out with</p>	<b>Build and consolidate central and regional education authorities in management and evaluation</b>

<sup>184</sup> The PASEB's target of conducting nine awareness campaigns to promote girls' education has not been achieved as of December 2017. Source: The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017.

<sup>185</sup> The PASEB aimed to have 250 teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural schools attending awareness-raising training sessions. The latest PASEB implementation report indicates that none have been attending. Source: The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017.

<sup>186</sup> The PASEB's target of distributing 480 awards to girls has not been achieved as of December 2017. Source: The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017.

<sup>187</sup> As mentioned earlier, the current EMIS is paper based, and data are collected through annual censuses conducted by hired monitors dispatched on the field.

<sup>188</sup> Consultation with regional stakeholders from the MEN from two regions in which the project conducted training on education statistics reveal that DRENS from these regions were unaware that these capacity-building activities had taken place in their region.

PASEB COMPONENT	PASEB 2014-2018 ACHIEVEMENTS <sup>177</sup>	PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FULLY OR PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GPE ESPIG PASEB
	<p>ESPIG funds. Until the EMIS is fully implemented with support from the ESPIG,<sup>189</sup> these censuses are the only data collection exercises in the education sector in Mauritania. The school censuses collected data on a wide range of education indicators. Three statistical yearbooks have been published, reporting the data collected in the school censuses.<sup>190</sup></p> <p>Technical assistance was provided in the development of the Education Status Report (RESEN), notably regarding financial simulation models.</p> <p>Training at the regional level: 917 primary school directors and 332 basic education inspectors were trained in management and pedagogy, respectively.</p> <p>Computers and office equipment were provided to the regional and local education offices.</p> <p>Two consultants were hired for the implementation of the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey.<sup>191</sup></p>	
	<p>Learning assessment capacity strengthened: Capacity building of the Assessment Unit (CNE).<sup>192</sup> The CNE carried out three learning assessments for children in grades 3 and 5 and in third year of lower secondary schools. The CNE also undertook three independent assessments of the four ENIs' first-year student and of incoming second and third-year students, evaluating their proficiency in French, Arabic, and Mathematics. Each learning assessment exercise carried out by the CNE</p>	<p><b>Improve learning assessments and implement a result-based management system</b></p>

<sup>189</sup> The PASEB target of having an integrated EMIS operational within the MEN and the DREN has not been achieved. See paragraph 94 for more details on the delays and obstacle in the implementation of the EMIS.

<sup>190</sup> Source: The World Bank, *Global Partnership for Education, BESSP, Implementation Status & Results Report*, December 2017

<sup>191</sup> As of August 2018, when the evaluation conducted consultation in Nouakchott, Mauritania, the SDI report was drafted and its approval for publication was pending.

<sup>192</sup> Cellule Nationale d'Évaluation

PASEB COMPONENT	PASEB 2014-2018 ACHIEVEMENTS <sup>177</sup>	PNDSE II STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FULLY OR PARTIALLY SUPPORTED THROUGH THE GPE ESPIG PASEB
	includes recommendations directed at the relevant authorities within the MEN. <sup>193</sup>	

### Contributions through GPE non-financial support

103. DPEF stakeholders involved in reporting on PASEB implementation highlighted the supporting role played by the grant agent (GA), the World Bank, in tracking progress toward implementation of the PASEB. They mentioned that WB reporting requirements were in line with those of Mauritania, but that they were somewhat burdensome compared with reporting requirements of other donors.

104. Most consulted MEN representatives described the GPE ESPIG application process as demanding yet manageable. Mission reports from the GPE country lead note that the country lead provided the GoM numerous clarifications regarding the ESPIG application process, notably regarding the new funding model with variable tranches. However, consulted stakeholders from the MASEF and MAIEO mentioned that they had not been consulted during the application process for either the ESPIG grant financing the PASEB or the upcoming ESPIG.<sup>194</sup> MASEF stakeholders pointed out that their involvement in the development of the PASEB would have been beneficial considering that the project included strategies relating to girls' education, which is part of the ministry's mandate.

### Validity of assumptions

105. The likelihood of the country-level ToC's six underlying assumptions related to sector plan implementation holding true were rated 'strong' for one, 'moderate' for four, and 'weak' for one. Available evidence indicates that the PNDSE II did include provisions for strengthening the EMIS. However, there was moderate political support for ESPs implementation; relevant government actors lacked technical capabilities and financial means to implement the sector plan; funds allocated for ESP implementation were not always followed by disbursements; and although country-level development partners aligned their activities with the priorities of the sector plan, not all development partners worked through the LEG as consultative and advisory forums. Finally, available evidence suggests weak support for the assumption that country-level stakeholders apply recommendations developed during the JSRs.

<sup>193</sup> Consulted MEN stakeholders noted that the learning assessment exercises had not been published to date, and the evaluation team was not provided with these results. Consulted stakeholders also mentioned that support provided by PASEB allowed for the basic functioning of the CNE, but it did not finance the learning assessment exercises. The CNE submits a request to the DPEF for every study to be conducted.

<sup>194</sup> During the evaluation team visit to Nouakchott, the MEN was preparing an application for a new ESPIG grant. Consulted stakeholders from the MASEF and MAIEO were unaware that this application process was under way.

### **Additional factors and unintended effects**

106. The main factors beyond GPE support that negatively influenced ESPs implementation were capacity challenges in ministries responsible for implementing the PNDSE II, and heavy procurement procedures.

107. The evaluation found no evidence of unintended, positive or negative, effects of GPE support to ESP implementation.

## 4 Progress towards a stronger education system<sup>195</sup>

108. This section summarizes evaluation findings in relation to Key Question II from the evaluation matrix: *“Has the achievement of country-level objectives<sup>196</sup> contributed to making the overall education system in Mauritania more effective and efficient?”*

109. Progress in this regard is measured by drawing on evidence of achievements made in each of the three thematic areas outlined in PNDSE II, namely access, quality, and governance and management. In doing so, the analysis focuses on changes that go beyond specific activities or outputs, and, instead, constitute changes in the existence and functioning of relevant institutions (e.g. schools, MEN, MAIEO, MASEF, DPEF), as well as changes in relevant rules, norms and frameworks (policies, standards, curricula, teaching and learning materials) that influence how actors in the education sector interact with each other.<sup>198</sup> The system-level changes noted in this section are taken from available documentation, mostly PAT evaluations and the JESRs. These documents usually include a list of activities implemented during

### Box 4.1: Assessment of Contribution Claim E.

**Claim:** *The implementation of realistic evidence-based sector plans contributes to positive changes at the level of the overall education system.*

**Assessment:** The evaluation found that available evidence **partially supports** the contribution claim related to strengthening the education system.

**Assessment is based on:** (a) There has been some progress towards all three thematic areas outlined in the PNDSE II; (b) the likelihood of the four assumptions underlying the contribution claim holding true in the Mauritanian context was rated ‘moderate’ for all four assumptions;<sup>197</sup> (c) In terms of external factors, alternative explanations beyond the implementation of the PNDSE II include projects supported by development partners and donor organizations, which were aligned with the sector plans.

<sup>195</sup> This section addresses evaluation questions CEQ 4 (During the period under review, how has the education system changed in relation to (a) quality of teaching/instruction, (b) evidence-based, transparent decision-making, and (c) country-specific areas of system strengthening?). Following a recommendation by the GPE Secretariat, the section is structured according to the ESP 2014-2018 Strategic Objectives.

<sup>196</sup> In particular implementation of the ESPs

<sup>197</sup> See sub-section on ‘validity of assumptions’ for a discussion of these assumptions.

<sup>198</sup> Please see definition of ‘education systems’ provided in the terminology table on page ‘I’ of this report. The GPE 2020 corporate results framework indicators defines six indicators for measuring system-level change: (a) increased public expenditure on education (RF10, covered in section 4.3 of this report on education financing); (b) equitable allocation of teachers, as measured by the variance in the ratio of pupils to trained teachers across schools (RF11, covered here under Access, Equity and Completion); (c) improved ratios of pupils to trained teachers at the primary level (RF12, covered below under Quality and Relevance); (d) reduced student dropout and repetition rates (RF13, covered under Access, Equity and Completion); (e) the proportion of key education indicators the country reports to UIS (RF14, covered under Systems Strengthening), and (f) the existence of a learning assessment system for basic education that meets quality standards (RF15, covered under Quality and Relevance).

the time period they cover.

## During the period under review, how has the education system changed?

**Finding 10:** During the review period, Mauritania removed, or, in some cases, laid the foundations for removing, barriers to equitable education access and education quality.

### System-level Changes to Improve Access, Equity and Completion

110. During the review period, the GoM, in collaboration with development partners and donor organizations, expanded existing measures and put in place new measures aimed at removing barriers to equitable school access.

#### School construction, school upgrades, and improvement in school infrastructure

111. As shown in Table 4.1, between 2012 and 2017 the number of public primary schools decreased overall by 7 percent. This is likely due to the MEN strategy to reorganize schools and ensure that primary schools have the capacity to offer all six grades of primary education. This reorganization strategy entailed closing schools that had only one classroom and upgrading others by building 121 new classrooms in existing primary schools.<sup>199</sup> As a result, the percentage of schools that offer all six grades of primary education remained relatively stable (from 34 to 35 percent) between 2012 and 2017.<sup>200</sup> Another factor potentially explaining the decrease in number of public primary schools is that the fact that the number of private primary schools increased by 70 percent.

112. At the secondary level, the number of public secondary schools increased by 52 percent between 2012 and 2017.<sup>201</sup> With the objective of facilitating girls' access to secondary education, and to facilitate girls' transition from lower secondary to higher secondary education, 21 local collèges<sup>202</sup> have been built<sup>203</sup> Finally, the MEN renovated<sup>204</sup> 487 primary schools and 41 secondary schools.<sup>205</sup> The government

<sup>199</sup> Source: JESR 2017.

<sup>200</sup> While available data indicates the percentage of schools offering all six grades from primary education, it does not specify the number of schools doing so. Reducing the number of schools and increasing primary schools' capacity to offer all six primary education grades are stated objectives of the PNDSE II. The objective of reducing the number of public primary schools to 3,536 by 2021 has almost been achieved. While one of the PNDSE II strategies is to increase the proportion of schools delivering all six primary education grades, the PNDSE II targets in this regard are stated as numbers of classrooms built, an indicator for which we do not have data. While Table 4.1 details the number of classrooms in primary schools, it does not indicate the number of new classrooms that have been built in comparison with the number of classrooms that have been closed as a result of reducing the number of schools.

<sup>201</sup> The PNDSE II target in regard to access in secondary education is to create 1,100 new classrooms by 2021. Between 2012 and 2017, 672 new classrooms were built. Hence, as of 2017, the target has not been achieved.

<sup>202</sup> "Collège de proximité" in French. They are small collèges offering both cycles of secondary education in rural areas to reduce distance for children to continue their education and facilitate students' transition from lower to higher secondary education.

<sup>203</sup> Thirteen with the help of GPE and eight with support from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The PNDSE II target is 28 collèges built by 2021. The target had not yet been achieved as of October 2018.

focus on increasing access to secondary education is likely due to the fact that the gross enrollment rate at the primary level is close to 100 percent, while it is lower than 40 percent at the secondary level (see section 5). During the same period, the number of private secondary schools increased by 30 percent.

**Table 4.1** *Number of schools and classrooms per educational level in Mauritania*

SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PRIVATE / PUBLIC	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Primary schools	Public	3,863	3,755	3,799	3,867	3,296	3,569
	Private	417	453	497	563	534	702
	Total	4,100	4,189	4,296	4,430	3,830	4,271
Classrooms in primary schools	Public	11,485	12,219	11,170	11,580	12,164	10,956
	Private	2,689	2,981	3,230	3,629	3,236	3,177
	Total	14,174	15,200	14,400	15,209	15,400	14,133
Proportion of primary schools that are complete <sup>206</sup>	Public and private	33.9 %	34.9 %	35.8 %	35.7 %	36 %	35 %
Secondary schools	Public	205	221	231	243	267	311
	Private	197	218	254	296	296	257
	Total	402	439	485	539	563	568
Classrooms in secondary schools	Public	2,148	2,247	2,305	2,489	2,618	2,820
	Private	1,342	1,530	1,747	1,970	1,944	1,670
	Total	3,490	3,777	4,052	4,459	4,562	4,490

Sources: Annual censuses conducted by the MEN.

113. **School feeding programs:** With the objective of increasing access to pre-primary and primary education, 1,113 school canteens have been opened,<sup>207</sup> feeding up to 66,000 children every day.<sup>208</sup>

114. **Pilot projects on girls' transportation and housing:**<sup>209</sup> With support from UNFPA and UNDP, the MASEF implemented two pilot projects on accommodation and transportation for girls living in regions

<sup>204</sup> Renovation includes construction of sanitary installations, fences, offices for school directors.

<sup>205</sup> Secondary schools include both lower and upper secondary levels. Sources: JESRs 2014 and 2017.

<sup>206</sup> A complete primary school offers education for grade one to six, in other words, the complete primary education cycle. Includes both private and public schools.

<sup>207</sup> School canteens take the form of community feeding centers, nutrition centers, and mobile school canteens; 500 were opened by the government, 120 with support from JICA, and 493 by the Food Security Secretariat (GoM)

<sup>208</sup> The PNDSE II target for school feeding is expressed as the percentage of schools having a canteen (45 percent by 2020), an indicator for which we do not have data.

where secondary schools are located far from their communities. These projects demonstrated that lodging girls with host families and in community housing, as well as community-driven school transportation models, increased girls' attendance in secondary schools.<sup>210</sup>

115. **Pilot project introducing formal education in mahadras:** With support from UNICEF, the MAIEO implemented a pilot project in 23 mahadras, introducing science and mathematics in the curriculum, and training 200 mahadras teachers in these disciplines.<sup>211</sup> There is no report on the effectiveness of this pilot project, but consulted stakeholders from UNICEF and MAIEO considered it a success, as they considered the pilot project as a promising initiative with potential for replication and scaling up. They also mentioned that working with mahadras by introducing formal education in their curriculum would be an efficient approach to reach out to numerous children that are currently considered out-of-school.<sup>212</sup>

116. Available data provide no evidence of system-level changes related to removing barriers to education access for children with disabilities. This may be due to the fact that the PNDSE II did not include targeted objectives in this regard.

### System-level Changes to Improve Education Quality and Relevance

117. **Strengthening teacher colleges (ENIs)<sup>213</sup> and pre-service teacher training:** During the period under review, two additional ENIs were built to conduct additional teacher training. In addition, the minimum requirement to study at the ENIs has been raised,<sup>214</sup> and teacher training has been extended by one additional year, for a total of three years of training.<sup>215</sup> With support from GPE through the PASEB, 41 administrative staff and 101 trainers from the ENIs received training on the management of ENIs, a new standardized curriculum for teacher training, and the competency-based approach were introduced. Additionally, 1,019 students<sup>216</sup> from the ENIs received training in their second language from the Center for strengthening language teaching (CREL),<sup>217</sup> and the four ENIs have been equipped with computer

<sup>209</sup> The PNDSE II does not have stated strategies or objectives with regard to girls' transportation.

<sup>210</sup> The PAT 2012-2014 evaluation made this claim, although the exact number of girls participating in the two pilot projects, as well as the impact on their attendance, was not documented in the evaluation. Additionally, stakeholders mentioned that a study evaluated the results of the pilot project on girls' transportation. However, the evaluation has not been able to locate or review the study.

<sup>211</sup> JESR 2014, JESR 2017, and DPEF, *Situation du Secteur 2017*, November 2017.

<sup>212</sup> The PNDSE II objectives in regard to the teaching of formal education subjects in mahadras is to create a fund to support the promotion of formal education within mahadras. Available documentation (PAT evaluations and JESRs) do not report on the creation of such fund.

<sup>213</sup> Écoles Normales des Instituteurs (ENI).

<sup>214</sup> While ENI entry was previously allowed to people having completed their secondary education, a baccalauréat is now required to become a student at the ENIs.

<sup>215</sup> Without specifying a target in that regard, a stated objective of the PNDSE II is to improve teaching programs in the ENIs.

<sup>216</sup> ENIS students, once they graduate, can become teachers in public schools. Private schools have the possibility of hiring teachers that did not graduate from the ENIs.

<sup>217</sup> Centre de Renforcement de l'Enseignement des Langues (CREL).

laboratories, libraries, and additional language learning material.<sup>218</sup> However, all language training conducted through the PASEB has been carried out on a case-by-case basis, as stand-alone training, and has not led to a formalization of teacher training in languages within the ENIs, for example through changes in pre-service curriculum. Moreover, the impact of teacher training on languages is likely to be mitigated by the fact that the MEN does not currently have the management capacity to identify and dispatch qualified bilingual teachers based on where they are needed.<sup>219</sup>

**118. Introduction of teacher recruitment on a contractual basis:** During the period under review, the MEN recruited teachers on a contractual basis for the first time, allowing the DREN to recruit teachers based on the needs of their respective regions. As a result, DREN are more easily able to recruit qualified teachers in mathematics and science in regions where these qualifications are lacking.<sup>220</sup> While no formal evaluation of this new recruitment method has been carried out, the evaluation of the PAT 2012-2014 points out that teachers recruited on a contractual basis are not subject to any form of examination, and do not take part in training provided by the ENIs.<sup>221</sup>

**119. Improvements in pupil/teacher ratios at primary and secondary levels:** As shown in Table 4.2, pupil/teacher ratios decreased in secondary schools in the private and public sectors. While the pupil/teacher ratios also decreased in primary public schools, it has increased in primary private schools. Changes in the number of pupils per teacher may be due to an increase in the number of teachers as a result of the creation of two additional ENIs and/or due to recruitment of teachers on a contractual basis. It is important to note that improvements in pupil/teacher ratios have been achieved in a context where the number of students has increased by 14 and 38 percent at the primary and secondary levels respectively.<sup>222</sup>

**Table 4.2** *Number of pupils per teacher per educational level in Mauritania*

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PRIVATE / PUBLIC	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Primary education	Public	46	42	42	40	37	41
	Private	21	22	23	23	18	24
	Combined	40	37	37	36	33	37
Secondary education	Public	35	36	34	35	33	31

<sup>218</sup> All these activities are strategies outlined in the PNDSE II: review of the curriculum in the ENIs, strengthening managerial and teaching capacities of teaching and administrative staff in the ENIs, equipping the ENIs with language laboratories, and creation of a new ENI. The associated targets for these strategies are expressed in terms of the percentage of bilingual teachers, and percentage of ENI student receiving language training, indicators for which we do not have data.

<sup>219</sup> PAT 2012-2014 evaluation.

<sup>220</sup> Teachers recruited on a contractual basis are usually recent university graduates or retired teachers and are often from the region in which they teach. Source: PAT 2012-2014 evaluation.

<sup>221</sup> The recruitment of contractual teachers is not mentioned in the PNDSE II.

<sup>222</sup> Source: annual censuses conducted by the MEN.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PRIVATE / PUBLIC	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Private	15	14	15	14	13	14
	Combined	26	26	25	25	24	24

Sources: Annual censuses conducted by the MEN.

120. **Strengthened capacity to assess students' learning outcomes and teacher competencies:** With financial support from GPE, the MEN strengthened the capacity of the Assessment Unit (CNE)<sup>223</sup> with the provision of equipment and computers. As mentioned in section 3.5, the CNE carried out learning assessments of children in primary and secondary schools<sup>224</sup>, as well as three independent assessments of the four ENIs' students, evaluating their proficiency in French, Arabic, and Mathematics.<sup>225</sup> Each learning assessment exercise includes recommendations directed at the relevant authorities within the MEN.<sup>226</sup> The CNE also hired two consultants, with support from GPE, to conduct the Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) report, which was not available for review within the context of this evaluation, but which is supposed to be published by the end of 2018. The results from these recent assessments are significant considering that the last international learning assessments in Mauritania were undertaken in 2004 by the Program for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC).<sup>227</sup>

121. **Distribution of pedagogical kits:** Through the PASEB, 445,437 pedagogical kits<sup>228</sup> have been distributed to public primary schools and their students (girls and boys) in the six targeted regions (wilayas).<sup>229</sup>

## Sector Management

122. **Development of a human resource management system:** With the objective of allocating human resources where they are needed in the education sector, particularly in terms of qualified bilingual teachers in mathematics and science in certain regions where they are lacking, the MEN has made some progress in the development of a human resource management system. The MEN developed a human resource database in which teacher qualifications are documented; it is expected to be used by decision makers to identify teachers in need of training, and to dispatch qualified teachers where they are

<sup>223</sup> Cellule Nationale d'Évaluation

<sup>224</sup> Including students from both private and public schools.

<sup>225</sup> No independent assessment of in-service teachers' qualifications was carried out by the CNE.

<sup>226</sup> Consultation with stakeholders from the MEN reveals that the results from the learning assessment exercises have not been published to date, and the evaluation team was not provided with these results. Consulted stakeholders also mentioned that the support provided by the PASEB allowed for the basic functioning of the CNE, but did not finance the learning assessment exercises other than the SDI report. The CNE submits a request to the DPEF for financing every study to be conducted.

<sup>227</sup> All these activities, the strengthening the CNE and the conduct of learning assessments, are mentioned in the PNDSE II, however, no result indicator is included to measure progress.

<sup>228</sup> The pedagogical kits for students include backpacks, textbooks, pens, pencils, and the kits for primary schools include manuals, supporting tools for geography and history such as charts, maps, geometrical figures.

<sup>229</sup> The PNDSE II target for the distribution of pedagogical kits is expressed in terms of percentage of students having a kit, an indicator for which we do not have data.

needed.<sup>230</sup> Due to delays in the implementation of the EMIS, which will feed data on teacher posting and DREN needs in qualified teachers, the database is not yet in use.<sup>231</sup>

**123. Progress toward the establishment of a digitalized EMIS, and capacity strengthening in data collection and analysis:** As mentioned in section 3.5, the MEN is in the process of implementing a digitalized EMIS<sup>232</sup> with support from GPE through the PASEB and it is expected that the new EMIS should be functional in the capital city by the end of the PASEB implementation period.<sup>233</sup> Consulted stakeholders noted that these activities will carry on in the next GPE ESPIG grant. Once operational, the digitalized EMIS is expected to yield results in terms of management of resources in the education sector. The data currently available, the annual censuses collecting data on education indicators, done with support from GPE, are of limited use to decision makers since the annual censuses provide data on education indicators for one point in time, and, as such, do not reflect the regular changes in the education sectors in regard to teachers' posting, schools opening and closing, among others. The MEN also conducted a situation analysis of the education sector in 2015. All consulted MEN stakeholders mentioned that through this exercise and the support provided by GPE, MEN's capacity to carry out situation analyses has increased significantly, and that the next situation analysis should be carried out by the MEN without support from development partners.

**124. Capacity building of MEN staff at the local level:** As mentioned in section 3.5, with the support from GPE, 917 primary school directors and 332 basic education inspectors were trained in management and pedagogy, respectively, and computers and office equipment were provided to the regional and local education offices.<sup>234</sup>

**125. Audit and restructuring of the DPEF:** In 2015, an audit of DPEF staff led to a reorganization of the directorate. Some responsibilities were split into multiple positions, notably the responsibility of serving as focal points for development projects with development partners. Procurement processes within the DPEF, whose slowness has been noted by multiple sources as an obstacle to the implementation of PATs, have been simplified, and a monitoring and evaluation unit has been created with the objective of strengthening coordination within the DPEF.<sup>235</sup>

## Did ESP implementation contribute to system-level changes?

**Finding 11: Implementation of the PNDSE II likely contributed to most of the noted system-level improvements in Mauritania.**

126. Most of the improvements described above can be linked to specific initiatives implemented as part of the PNDSE II. For instance, the initiatives such as strengthening teacher's colleges and teacher

<sup>230</sup> One PNDSE II objective is to improve the management of human resources, specifically focusing on the allocation of teachers based on need (by number of students, school and language of instruction). There is no result indicator associated with this objective.

<sup>231</sup> PAT 2012-2014 evaluation and PAT 2016-2018 evaluation.

<sup>232</sup> As mentioned earlier, the current EMIS is paper based, and data are collected through annual censuses conducted by hired monitors dispatched on the field.

<sup>233</sup> The creation of the EMIS is a stated objective of the PNDSE II. It was also a stated objective of the PNDSE I.

<sup>234</sup> While these activities are mentioned in the PNDSE II, no result indicator to track progress has been established.

<sup>235</sup> JESR 2015

training, the distribution of pedagogical kits, the establishment of an EMIS, among others are mentioned in the PNDSE II. The only system-level changes listed above that were not mentioned in the PNDSE II are the two pilot projects lead by the MASEF and MAIEO on girls' transportation and housing, the recruitment of teachers on a contractual basis, and the restructuring of the DPEF. In some cases, it is too early to expect activities planned under the PNDSE II to have resulted in system-wide improvements given that the respective initiatives are still in pilot phases (e.g. girls' transportation, formal education in mahadras), have not been fully implemented (e.g. implementation of the EMIS, human resource management system), or because innovations have not been institutionalized and are thus not (yet) likely to be sustained (e.g. language training for ENI students). Table 4.3 below illustrates the system-level changes described above, the targets established in the PNDSE II, and states whether the PNDSE II targets have been achieved or not.

**Table 4.3** *System-level changes and the PNDSE II*

SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGES	PNDSE II	STATUS IN 2017
School construction	The PNDSE II aims to reduce the number of public primary schools to 3,536 by 2021.	Almost achieved.
School upgrades and improvement in school infrastructure	<b>Primary level:</b> The PNDSE II aims increase the proportion of schools delivering all six primary education grades. <b>Secondary levels:</b> The PNDSE II aims to create 1,100 new classrooms by 2021.	<b>Primary level:</b> No available data on the indicator used to measure progress. <b>Secondary levels:</b> Not achieved.
School feeding programs	The PNDSE II aims to have 45 percent of schools with a canteen by 2021.	No available data on the indicator used to measure progress.
Pilot projects on girls' transportation and housing	The PNDSE II does not have stated strategies or objectives with regard to girls' transportation and housing.	
Formal education in Mahadras	The PNDSE II aims to create a fund to support the promotion of formal education within mahadras.	Data unavailable.
Strengthening ENIs	The PNDSE II aims to review the curriculum in the ENIs, strengthen managerial and teaching capacities of teaching and administrative staff in the ENIs, equip the ENIs with language laboratories, and create a new ENI.	No result indicator is included in the PNDSE II to measure progress. However, activities have been implemented across all stated objectives.
Teacher recruitment on a contractual basis	The recruitment of contractual teachers is not mentioned in the PNDSE II.	

SYSTEM-LEVEL CHANGES	PNDSE II	STATUS IN 2017
Improvements in pupil/teacher ratios	The PNDSE II aims to have pupil/teacher ratios of 38 at the primary level, 32 at the lower secondary level, and 18 at the higher secondary level by 2021.	Target not achieved at the primary level of education. Data on pupil/teacher ratio disaggregated by cycles of secondary education is not available.
Strengthened capacity to assess students' learning outcomes and teacher competencies	Strengthening the CNE and conducting learning assessments are objectives mentioned in the PNDSE II.	No result indicator is included in the PNDSE II to measure progress. However, activities related to the objectives have been implemented.
Distribution of pedagogical kits	The PNDSE II aims to ensure that 25 percent of all pupil across all levels have a pedagogical kit.	No available data on the indicator used to measure progress.
Development of a human resource management system	The PNDSE II aims to improve the management of human resources, specifically focusing on the allocation of teachers based on needs.	No result indicator is included in the PNDSE II to measure progress.
Progress toward the establishment of an EMIS	The creation of the EMIS is a stated objective of the PNDSE II.	No result indicator is included in the PNDSE II to measure progress.
Capacity building of MEN staff at the local level	Building the capacity of the MEN staff at the regional level is a stated objective of the PNDSE II.	No result indicator is included in the PNDSE II to measure progress.
Audit and restructuring of the DPEF	The PNDSE II does not have stated strategies or objectives with regard to the DPEF.	

127. The GPE appraisal of the PNDSE II notes that activities/strategies for teacher training, the creation the EMIS, and the management of human resources were all planned but not implemented during the PNDSE I (2001-2010). While the implementation of the PNDSE II to date has started to tackle these issues, progress is still rather slow. For example, five years into the implementation of the PNDSE II, the human resources database is still not fully operational, the implementation of a national EMIS was initiated in 2016 and then scaled back, and although two additional ENIs have been created since 2012, measures to improve teacher language training have still not led to institutional and sustainable changes. In sum, although the implementation of the PNDSE II has yielded more results in regard to the quality and management of education, progress remains slow and incremental, just as in the implementation of the PNDSE I.

### Validity of assumptions

128. Based on the available evidence, the evaluation rated the likelihood of the following three assumptions underlying the country level Theory of Change holding true in Mauritania as 'moderate': sector plan implementation leads to improvements of previous shortcomings in relation to (i) sector management (ii) strengthening learning, and (iii) enhancing equity. The likelihood of the last assumption

holding true was also rated as 'moderate', namely that ESP implementation leads to improvements of previous shortcomings in relation to provincial capacity (technical capabilities, political will, resources) or relevant technical assistance to analyze, report on and use available data and maintain EMIS and LAS.

### **Additional factors and unintended effects**

129. Additional factors beyond the implementation of the PNDSE II that positively affected ESP implementation included projects supported by development partners and donor organizations, which were aligned with the sector plans. These projects include AfDB's Support Programme for Youth Training and Employment, the World Bank's projects on TVET, WFP's support to school feeding, UNESCO's program for building national capacities on literacy and non-formal primary education, among others.

## 5 Progress towards stronger learning outcomes and equity

130. This section summarizes evaluation findings in relation to Key Question III from the evaluation matrix: *“Have changes at education system level contributed to progress towards impact?”*

### Box 5.1: Assessment of Contribution Claim F

**Claim:** *“Education system-level improvements result in improved learning outcomes and in improved equity, gender equality, and inclusion in education.”*

**Assessment:** The evaluation found that for Mauritania **available evidence was not sufficient** to assess the likely validity of the contribution claim related to progress towards impact. This primarily reflects that, although data on access is available, the relatively short window under review (2012-2018) does not lend itself to methodologically rigorous examination of impact claims.<sup>236</sup>

### How has the education sector changed during the review period in terms of inclusion, gender equality, equity, and learning outcomes

**Finding 12:** Despite some improvements, equitable access to basic education has not yet been achieved.

#### *Out-of-School Rates*

131. Before the period under review, Mauritania made significant progress in reducing the percentage of out-of-school children (from 38 percent in 2005 to 30 percent in 2010).<sup>237</sup> Since 2012, however, progress has been limited to the primary and upper secondary levels of education, as shown in Figure 5.1. Between 2012 and 2017, the percentage of out-of-school children decreased by 5 percentage points in primary education and by 11 percentage points at the upper secondary level of education.<sup>238</sup> However, the out-of-school rate for lower secondary education increased by 13 percentage points during the same period.<sup>239</sup> The evaluation found no information on likely causes for this steep increase.

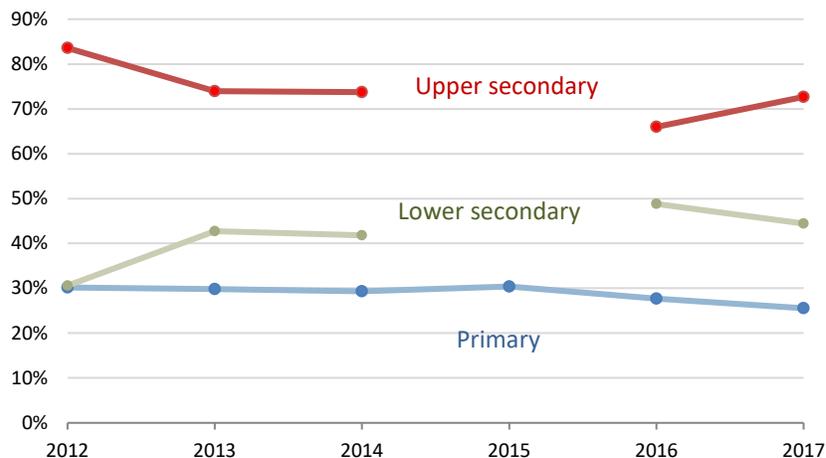
<sup>236</sup> The two underlying assumptions related to this contribution claim as per the Theory of Change were: 1. Changes in the education system positively affect learning outcomes and equity (insufficient evidence); and 2. Country-produced data on equity, efficiency and learning allow measuring/tracking these changes (moderate).

<sup>237</sup> UIS data

<sup>238</sup> The PNDSE II target for reducing the number of out-of-school children at the primary level is expressed as the number of out-of-school children included in the education system, an indicator for which data are not available.

<sup>239</sup> The PNDSE II does not have targets for out-of-school rates or completion rates at the secondary level of education.

**Figure 5.1** Out-of-school rates for primary and secondary education, 2012-2017



Source: UNESCO UIS

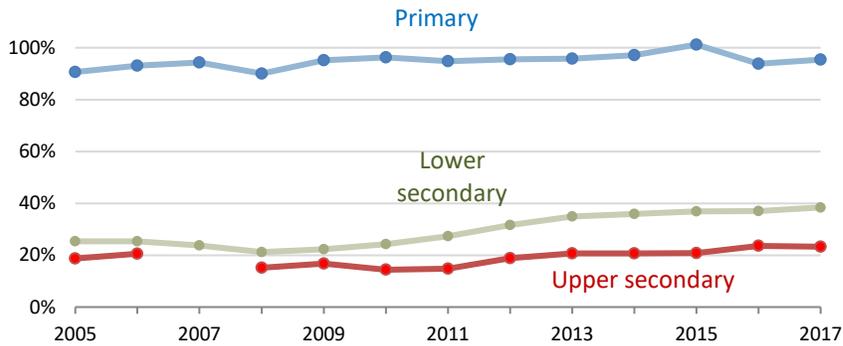
### Gross Enrollment Ratio

132. The PNDSE II aims to increase the gross enrollment ratio (GER)<sup>240</sup> to 100 percent, 30 percent, and 15 percent by 2021 for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education respectively. As seen in Figure 5.2, there have been improvements in the GER at both levels of secondary education, and the targets set in the PNDSE II had been achieved by 2017 in regard to lower and upper secondary education, with the biggest improvements after 2010. The target of reaching 100 percent GER at the primary level of education had not been achieved as of 2017, and little progress has been achieved in this regard since 2012.<sup>241</sup>

<sup>240</sup> In order to report on the targets established in the PNDSE II, Gross Enrollment Ratio is used over Net Enrollment Rates to report on changes in terms of access to education in Mauritania. UNESCO's definition of the GER is "number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education". As such, the GER can exceed 100 percent since it includes overage learners. The NER does not include overaged learners, and cannot exceed 100 percent.

<sup>241</sup> A study published by the MAED in 2014 reports lower GER for primary education, and higher GER for secondary education, source: MAED, *Profil de la Pauvreté en Mauritanie – 2014*. The discrepancy found between the data used in the report (UIS data), and the EPCV is likely due to the fact that both data are collected through different methodologies, and more precisely in that case, the denominator (population estimated) used to calculate the GER. In the case of UNESCO, the UIS uses the United Nations Population Division population estimates across all countries to ensure consistency. In the case of the MAED study, the methodology used for data collection is a survey carried out at the household level from a random sample.

**Figure 5.2** Gross enrollment ratio for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary

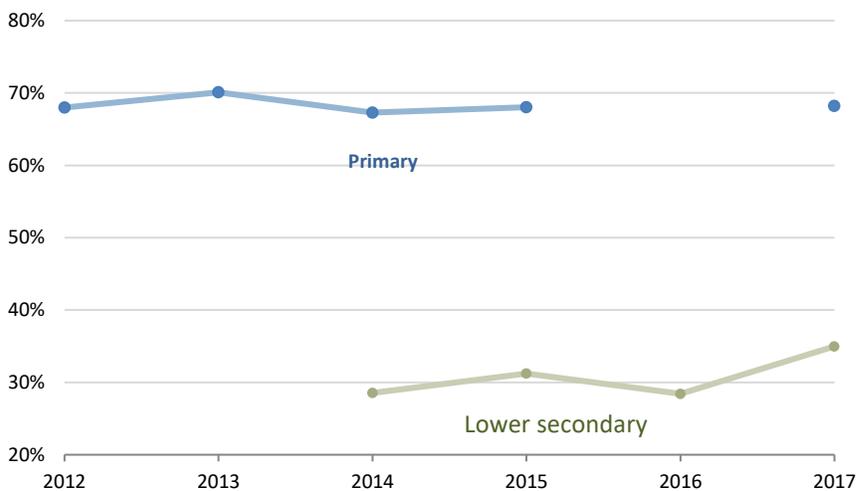


Source: UNESCO UIS

### Completion Rates

133. The PNDSE II aims to achieve primary completion rates of 75 percent by 2015, and of 100 percent by 2021. As seen in Figure 5.3, there has been no progress toward achieving this objective since 2012, with completion rates stagnating around 70 percent. While lower secondary completion rates increased by almost 15 percentage points during the period under review, they remained rather low (35 percent in 2017).<sup>242</sup>

**Figure 5.3** Completion rates at primary and lower secondary level, 2012-2017



Source: UNESCO UIS

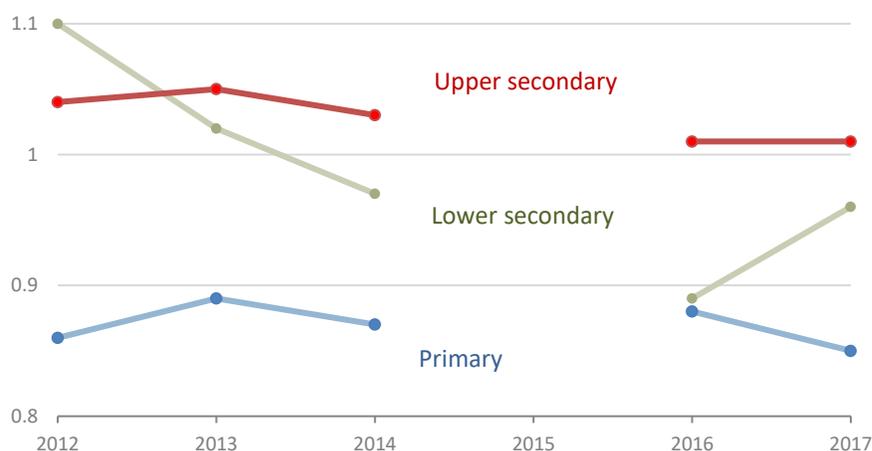
<sup>242</sup> The PNDSE II did not include a target for lower secondary completion rates.

### Gender Parity

134. While gender disparities in regard to out-of-school rates have increased between 2012 and 2017, gender disparities in regard to GER and completion rates have reduced.

135. Mauritania has made some mixed progress since 2012 in ensuring that girls are less likely than boys to be out of school. As seen in figure 5.4, the gender parity index (GPI)<sup>243</sup> of out of school rate has remained below one at the primary level between 2012 and 2017, indicating that the out of school rates for girls is lower than the out of school rates for boys. In other words, girls are less likely than boys to be out of school at the primary level of education. Moreover, the decrease in the GPI of out of school rates between 2016 and 2017 indicates that boys are increasingly more likely than girls to be out of school. At the lower secondary levels, the overall decrease in the GPI of out of school rates from 1.1 to 0.96 indicate that girls are increasingly more likely to be out of school than boys. At the higher secondary level, the fact that the GPI of out of school rates remain above one during between 2012 and 2017 indicates that girls remain more likely than boys to be out of school. However, the decreasing GPI of out of school rates at the higher secondary level indicate some improvements in reaching gender parity in this regard. In sum, while out of school rates are increasingly progressing toward gender parity at both levels of secondary education, boys are increasingly more likely to be out of school than girls at the primary level.

**Figure 5.4 Gender Parity Index of out-of-school rates, 2012-2017<sup>244</sup>**



Source: UNESCO UIS

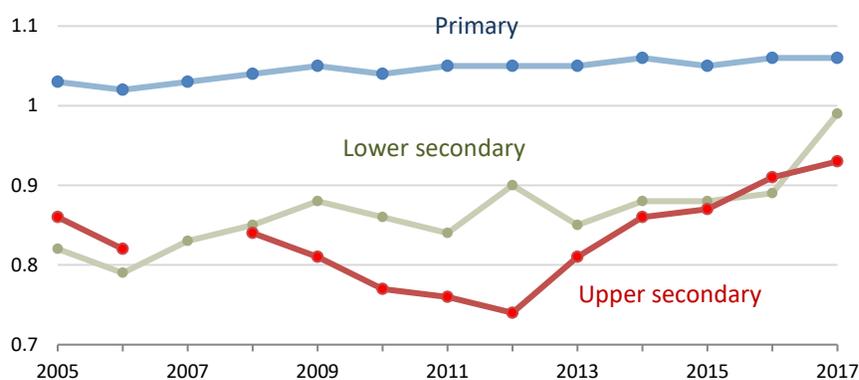
136. Mauritania made progress in expanding girls' access to education during the period under review. As seen in figure 5.5, at the primary level, the GPI of GER has been consistently above 1.0 since at least 2005, indicating that more girls are enrolled than boys. This trend corresponds to the trend noted above in the GPI of out of school rate at the primary level. While the GPI remains below 1.0 at lower and upper

<sup>243</sup> The gender parity index of out-of-school rates is the out-of-school rates for girls over the out of school rates for boys. When interpreting gender parity index for out of school rates, an index of value greater than 1 indicates that girls are more likely than boys to be out of school.

<sup>244</sup> As opposed to data on GPI of GER, data on GPI of out of school rates are not available prior to 2012.

secondary levels, gender parity has improved significantly since 2012, particularly at the lower secondary level where parity has almost been reached.

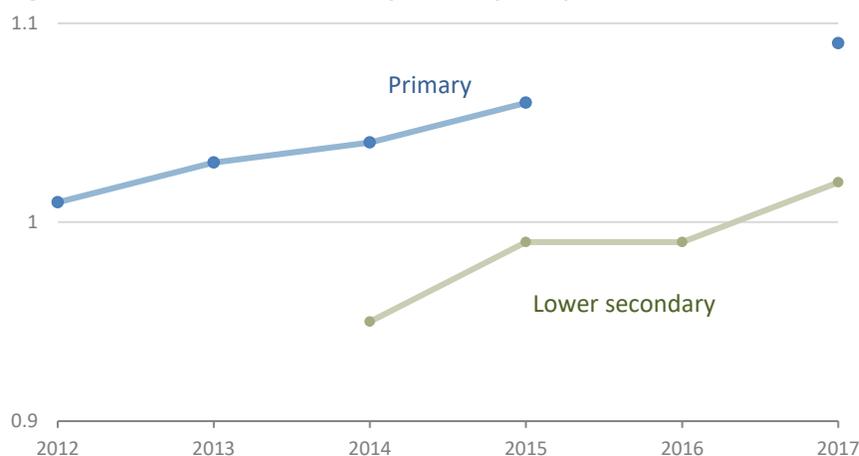
**Figure 5.5 Gender Parity Index of Gross Enrollment Ratio, 2005-2017**



Source: UNESCO UIS

137. Mauritania has made important progress with regard to ensuring that girls complete the different educational levels as much as boys. As shown in figure 5.6, at both primary and lower secondary levels, girls increasingly tend to complete their education in comparison with boys, as indicated by the GPI of completion rates above one for both educational levels in 2017. At the lower secondary level, while completion rates were greater for boys than girls in 2014, the proportion of girls completing lower secondary schools is greater than the proportion for boys in 2017.

**Figure 5.6 Gender Parity Index of completion rates, 2012-2017<sup>245</sup>**



Source: UNESCO UIS

<sup>245</sup> As opposed to data on GPI of GER, data on GPI of completion rates are not available prior to 2012. Data on GPI of completion rate at the higher secondary level is not available.

### **Regional Disparities**

138. Regional disparities in access remain significant with a lower than average GER at the primary level in the south-eastern regions,<sup>246</sup> but there were improvements in some regions in the period under review. The GER at the primary level increased in three of the six regions targeted by the PASEB,<sup>247</sup> but decreased in the remaining three regions.<sup>248</sup> Overall, the GER decreased in five of Mauritania's 13 regions.<sup>249</sup> Data on regional disparities for GER at the lower and upper secondary levels were not available. The reasons behind the lack of progress in increasing access in an equal fashion across regions may be due to the fact that the GoM's policy<sup>250</sup> tackling regional disparities has not translated into concrete actions.<sup>251</sup>

### **Learning outcomes**

**Finding 13:** While the government of Mauritania has not published the results of learning assessments conducted by the Assessment Unit (CNE), available evidence suggests deterioration in students' learning outcomes.

139. Since the GoM does not publish data from the learning assessments conducted by the CNE,<sup>252</sup> data on student pass rates at the national standardized examinations is used as a proxy indicator of students' progress on learning outcomes. As seen in Table 5.1, while the proportion of students who successfully pass the national examination at the end of the primary cycle of education increased by six percentage points between 2012 and 2013, it stagnated at around 56 percent during the following four years. The proportion of students who successfully complete national examinations at the lower and upper secondary education levels fluctuated and decreased overall between 2012 and 2017, with the most significant decline at the lower secondary level.<sup>253</sup> Also, using data on the national standardized examinations, both the PAT 2012-2014 evaluation and the 2015 RESEN note a substantial deterioration in learning outcomes for basic education since 2010. The 2015 RESEN points to the lack of teachers'

<sup>246</sup> South-eastern regions traditionally face more challenge with regard to access to education, in particular because of their low density, their poor socio-economic status, and the pastoral nomadic aspect of its population.

<sup>247</sup> Tagant, Brakna, and Adrar.

<sup>248</sup> Guidimakha, H Charghi, and Gorgol.

<sup>249</sup> Guidimakha, H Charghi, Gorgol, H. Gharbi, and Assaba. These regions are the most densely populated poor regions according to the 2014 ESPIG application.

<sup>250</sup> In 2015, the GoM launched the Priority Education Areas policy (Zones d'Éducation Prioritaires in French), with the aim of organizing the coordination of activities aiming to reduce regional disparities in terms of access to education.

<sup>251</sup> The PAT 2016-2018 evaluation notes that the activities related to the Priority Education Zones policy were never carried out.

<sup>252</sup> As mentioned in section 3.5, although the Assessment Unit (CNE) carried out three learning assessment for children in grades 3 and 5, and in the third year of lower secondary schools, interviews with MEN stakeholders revealed that the results of these assessments are not published or available to the public. The latest international studies on learning outcomes carried out in Mauritania by the PASEC date from 2004.

<sup>253</sup> Using examination pass rates as a (proxy) measure of learning is problematic insofar as differences in these rates may be due to changes in examination difficulty rather than reflecting changes in learning outcomes. However, the evaluation found no indication of national standardized examinations having substantially changed since 2012.

language qualifications as the main reason the reduction in proportion of students successfully completing national examinations. In the same line of reasoning, some consulted stakeholders mentioned that the challenge of having qualified teachers in both official languages has still not been solved since the implementation of the 1999 education reform that centralized the education system into a single bilingual education system.

**Table 5.1** *End of cycle national examination pass rates at the primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary level*

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Primary	50 %	56 %	56 %	55 %	56 %	56 %
Lower Secondary (BEPC) <sup>254</sup>	45 %	36 %	30 %	41 %	28 %	29 %
Upper Secondary (BAC) <sup>255</sup>	18 %	17 %	13 %	15 %	12 %	15 %

Source: DPEF, Situation du Secteur 2017, November 2017.

### Is there evidence to link changes in learning outcomes, equity, gender equality and inclusion to system-level changes identified? What other factors can explain observed changes (or lack thereof)?

**Finding 14:** System-level improvements in infrastructure, as well as measures aimed at increasing girls' access to education, likely contributed to increased access. System-level changes aiming to improve the quality of teaching and learning are too recent and/or insufficiently advanced to have influenced learning outcomes.

140. As noted above, there has been some limited progress in increasing education access and equity. However, no detectable progress has been made with regard to the quality of education since the PNDSE I (2001-2010).<sup>256</sup>

141. Some of the system-level achievements detailed in Section 4 represent potential foundations for future improvements in learning outcomes but are either too recent or have yet to be fully implemented to affect changes at the impact level. Table 5.2 summarizes the evaluation's observations on the extent to which system-level changes achieved from 2012-2018 (see Section 4) are likely to have affected the noted impact-level improvements described in this section. The absence of demonstrated linkages largely reflects the fact that the evaluation focused on the relatively short time period 2012-2018; in most cases,

<sup>254</sup> Secondary school diploma, *Brevet d'études du premier cycle* in French

<sup>255</sup> Baccalaureate certificate, *diplôme du Baccalauréat* in French

<sup>256</sup> The GPE appraisal of PNDSE II noted that all quality indicators are alarmingly low in Mauritania (without specifying which indicators). The appraisal also mentioned that measures implemented during PNDSE I to improve the quality of education have not yielded expected results.

it would be unrealistic to expect that education system improvements achieved during that period would already be reflected in learning outcomes or equity-related indicators.

**Table 5.2** *Link between system-level improvements and impact-level change (or lack thereof)*

IMPACT-LEVEL TRENDS	LIKELY RELATION TO ANY SYSTEM-LEVEL IMPROVEMENTS
<p><b>Some improvements in gender equality in enrollment and completion rates, as well in enrollment at the secondary levels of education</b></p>	<p><b>Plausible link to system-level improvements</b></p> <p>The improvement in the GER and GPI of GER at lower and upper secondary levels may have been at least partly due to the measures targeting girls' education, such as constructing proximity collèges,<sup>257</sup> conducting awareness-raising campaigns on girls' education, and distributing awards for girls. However, no focused evaluations or other data exist that would allow verifying this possible link.</p>
<p><b>Some improvements in completion rates at the lower secondary level</b></p>	<p><b>Plausible link to system-level improvements</b></p> <p>The improvement in completion rates at the lower secondary level, from 20 percent in 2012 to 35 percent in 2017, may be due in part improvements in the pupil/teacher ratio at the secondary level. However, no data were available to verify this possible link.</p>
<p><b>Mixed resulted in percentage of out-of-school children</b></p>	<p><b>Plausible link to system-level improvements</b></p> <p>The slight decrease in out-of-school children at the primary and upper secondary levels of education during the period under review may have been affected by efforts to upgrade existing primary schools and especially the 50 percent increase in the number of public secondary schools between 2012 and 2017.</p>
<p><b>Lack of progress in improving learning outcomes</b></p>	<p><b>No clear relationship to the system level improvements</b></p> <p>Lack of progress in improving learning outcomes can plausibly (partially) be explained by the fact that efforts to improve the quality of teaching and reform teacher recruitment and training are too recent or not yet sufficiently advanced to show any improvement at the impact level.</p> <p>The lack of qualified teachers in French and Arabic has been pointed out by multiple consulted stakeholders as a major factor limiting the quality of teaching.<sup>258</sup> As mentioned in section 4, while measures to improve teacher proficiency in French and Arabic have yielded results, these measures have not led to a formalization of language training in teacher colleges.</p> <p>If implemented, the EMIS and the human resources management systems have the potential to improve in-service teacher training and the distribution of qualified teachers across the regions where they are lacking, which could contribute to improving students' learning outcomes.</p>

<sup>257</sup> Collège de proximité" in French. As mentioned in section 3, they are small collèges offering both cycles of secondary education.

<sup>258</sup> According to the RESEN 2015, at the primary level, only 5 and 14 percent of teachers are proficient enough to teach French and Arabic respectively.

## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Overview

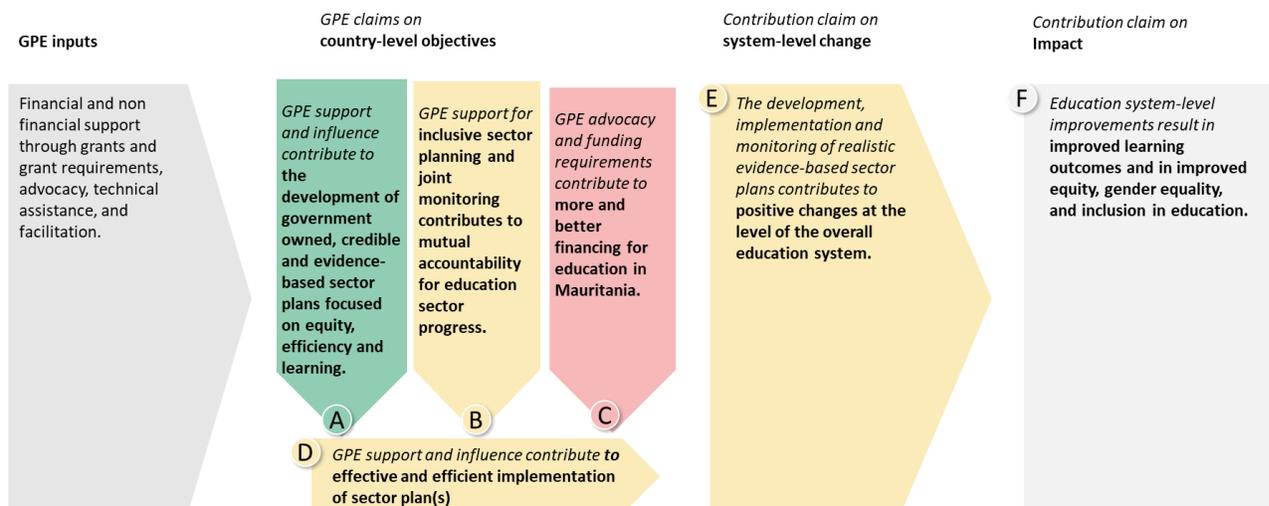
142. This final section of the report draws overall conclusions deriving from the evaluation findings.

143. The summative country-level evaluation set out to assess (i) GPE contributions to strengthening education systems and, ultimately, the achievement of education results in GPE partner developing countries in the areas of learning, equity, equality and inclusion; and hence (ii) the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's theory of change and country-level operational model. The following conclusions are structured accordingly.

### 6.2 Contributions to results and validity of the GPE country-level theory of change

144. Figure 6.1 provides a visual overview of key evaluation findings in relation to GPE contributions and the validity of the GPE country level theory of change in Mauritania. In the graphic, the items labelled A-F indicate the contribution claims that logically link the different elements in the ToC to each other. The color rating indicates the extent to which available evidence supports (green), partly supports (amber), or does not support (red) the respective contribution claim. Items in white indicate insufficient data to make an assessment. Full definitions of color ratings are provided in Appendix VII. The elements of the ToC are explained in the paragraphs that follow.

**Figure 6.1** Adapted country-level theory of change for Mauritania



## GPE contributions to sector planning, dialogue and monitoring, and sector plan implementation

145. **Data deriving from the evaluation's various lines of inquiry support contribution claim A** related to the development of education sector plans.<sup>259</sup> GPE appears to have positively influenced national capacity<sup>260</sup> related to sector planning in the dimensions of motivation (primarily by providing an incentive in the form of ESPIG funding requirements but also through the GPE country lead and the Coordinating Agency, to promote inclusive and sector-wide planning processes) and capabilities (primarily through Secretariat quality assurance, including the sharing of relevant guidelines and supporting the ESP appraisal process).<sup>261</sup>

146. **Available evidence partially supports contribution claim B** related to joint sector planning and monitoring for mutual accountability. GPE support (especially ESPIG funding requirements and advocacy through the country lead and the CA) were found to have positively influenced joint sector dialogue mechanisms and monitoring practices in the education sector. However, CLE findings indicate that despite GPE support, important challenges remain that limit mutual accountability for results. While the structures and mechanisms for sectoral planning, dialogue and monitoring are well established, sectoral coordination mechanisms are not yet fully operational or inclusive; three-year action plans (PATs) are not adequately sectoral in focus or realistic with regard to existing resources and capacities; and JSRs do not capture all education investment or adequately inform strategic decision-making. Key factors likely to have negatively affected mutual accountability included the institutional complexity of education system delivery in Mauritania, as well as limited capacity or commitment for inter-ministerial coordination and a perceived lack of commitment at the highest political levels for PNDSE II performance.

147. **Available evidence does not support contribution claim C** related to the availability of more and better financing for education. Both domestic and international investments in the education sector in Mauritania have decreased during the period under review. There has been no discernable improvement in alignment or harmonization of international investment with government systems, no move towards pooled funding or joint reporting among development partners. While GPE was the largest single donor to basic education for the period under review, it has not had any influence on the quality or amounts of international and domestic investments in the sector. The absence of some development partners in sector dialogue and joint monitoring mechanisms is a factor beyond GPE support that is likely to have negatively affected the quality of sector financing.

148. **Available evidence partially supports contribution claim D** related to ESP implementation. Mauritania has made limited progress in most of the priority areas outlined in the PNDSE II. Through PASEB, GPE supported the implementation of the ESP in all three thematic areas detailed in the PNDSE II albeit with a focus on basic education. Key factors beyond GPE support that negatively affected overall ESP implementation included low technical capabilities and lack of staff within the responsible ministries,

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<sup>259</sup> The likelihood of the five assumptions underlying this claim applying in the Mauritania context was rated 'strong' for four, and 'moderate' for one.

<sup>260</sup> As noted in section 3.2, in this report we understand 'capacity' as deriving from the combination of motivation (including incentives), opportunity (factors outside of individuals, including resources, conducive environment), and capability (individual and collective knowledge and skills). Change occurs when existing or emerging capacity affects the behavior of targeted actors, organizations, or institutions.

<sup>261</sup> Additional factors such as funding from other sources also contributed to strengthening in-country capacity.

lack of funding and insufficient disbursement of available funds, as well as low levels of political support for implementing the PNDSE II. While most country-level development partners broadly aligned their activities with the priorities of the sector plan, not all development partners worked through the LEG as a joint consultative and advisory forum. Insights and recommendations deriving from the JSRs were not systematically used to inform ESP implementation.

### Education system-level change

149. While PNDSE I included components related to improving education quality and governance, its principal focus was on improving access through infrastructure investment. As enrolment rates increased significantly in Mauritania as a result of investment under PNDSE I, the aim of PNDSE II was to improve education sector quality and governance through coordinated policy, strengthened capacity and improved system management. Where PNDSE I was essentially an infrastructure investment plan, PNDSE II objectives were much more ambitious, involving the coordinated implementation of a shared policy vision among all education ministries. As noted in sections 3.2 and 3.3, capacity, commitment and institutional governance of PNDSE II have limited its progress. While the implementation of PNDSE II to date has laid some of the foundations to address systemic change related to education quality and governance, progress remains slow and incremental.

150. During the period under review, Mauritania expanded the scope of initiatives already underway while putting in place several new measures aimed at removing barriers to equitable school access. Notably, progress was made in improving education infrastructure by constructing and/or renovating schools. While some initiatives were launched to increase the quality of teaching and learning and to strengthen education system governance, most of these measures remain either at a pilot phase (e.g., girls' housing and transportation and the introduction of formal education in mahadras), are not fully implemented (e.g., EMIS and human resources management systems), or have not yet been institutionalized and are thus not likely to be sustained (e.g., language training for ENI students).

151. The available evidence partly supports the assumed link between ESP implementation and education system strengthening. As mentioned in section 4, most of the improvements described above can be linked to specific initiatives of the PNDSE II; only three system-level changes addressed in section 4 were not mentioned in the PNDSE II.

### Impact level change

152. There is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the validity of the GPE country-level theory of change in relation to the assumed link between system-level improvements and impact-level changes in learning outcomes, equity, equality and inclusion. This is due to data gaps (e.g., data from learning assessments have not been published), but also to the relatively short timeframe covered by the evaluation combined with the fact that system-level improvements require considerable time to effect change at the level of learning outcomes or equity.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> One assumption related to this contribution claim (availability of data) was rated as moderate, while the other (system changes affect learning/equity outcomes) was not rated for lack of evidence. The lack of evidence is not the same as disproving the ToC. It merely illustrates the difficulty of establishing clear cause and effect relationships when reviewing a relatively short period of time, given that impact-level change likely derives from longer-term processes.

## Gender

153. During the review period, initiatives to remove barriers to gender equality were relatively modest, short-term and punctual and are unlikely to be sustained by government in the absence of external investment. Except for two pilot projects on girls' transportation and housing and several demand-side incentives,<sup>263</sup> the major supply-side incentives for improved access were directed equally at girls and boys. No education quality or governance initiatives under PNDSE II were specifically focused on advancing gender equality and there appears to have been limited policy dialogue undertaken since 2014 that focused specifically on gender equality.

## Regional disparities

154. The PNDSE II put particular attention on reducing regional disparities in access to and quality of education by focusing some initiatives on regions where education indicators were the lowest. During the review period, some progress was made in reducing regional disparities in education access as evidenced by increased gross enrollment rates in more than half of Mauritania's region. However, available data provide no indication of changes in disparities related to learning outcomes.

## Special Needs Education

155. The PNDSE II did not focus on learners with special needs, since learning disabilities and physical disabilities did not receive any significant attention. Likely causes for this are a lack of internal capacity to analyze special needs as well as long-term societal patterns of discrimination with respect to individuals with special needs. While both RESEN (2010 and 2015) and the annual censuses conducted by the MEN collect data on education indicators disaggregated by gender and region, the data are not disaggregated by children's socio-economic levels and no reference is made to children with physical or learning disabilities.

## Roles played by country-level partners and the Secretariat

156. Insights on the GPE operational model – specifically of the roles played and the division of labor between the Secretariat, grant agent and coordinating agency – are positive overall. Each of these key actors fulfilled their respective roles and responsibilities effectively, coordination among them worked well, while government and development partners were satisfied with their contributions.

157. Despite the noted positive contributions made by GPE support, evaluation findings indicate that the country-level operational model, improvements to education sector dialogue, implementation, monitoring and financing are not deemed significant for the period reviewed. As noted in this report, assumptions with regard to stakeholder commitment (political will) and capability to work together to solve education issues did not hold true in the context of Mauritania for the period under review. Development partners were not motivated to further align or harmonize their education investments.

158. The evaluation also found that the current GPE operational model was not sufficiently equipped to address key contextual challenges to education sector progress in Mauritania. These include challenges

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<sup>263</sup> These included the distribution of student kits and some prizes, exclusively for girls, as well as sensitization campaigns at the community level in support of girls' education. Hygiene kits were also distributed in disadvantaged zones at the end of PASEB.

such as moderate government commitment to improving education sector performance, limited willingness among relevant ministries to work together, and modest commitment of donors to further aid effectiveness principles of alignment and harmonization. A higher and more strategic level of policy dialogue is likely required to support and complement the efforts of the GPE Secretariat, which works at a more operational level.

### **Other observations on the (perceived) relevance and quality of GPE support to Mauritania**

159. In terms of how GPE could improve specific aspects of its support to Mauritania, there is a need for more guidance from GPE on PATs, JSRs and joint sector evaluations, which clarify the interdependence of these processes in tracking and reporting on ESP performance; Mauritania needs further guidance on the focus, content, structure and resource-efficiency of these processes as well as how they can best be structured to inform ongoing and strategic decision-making. Given that Mauritania has been proficient in following GPE guidelines and requirements, providing a clear road-map on the process and content surrounding the cycle of planning to performance review would likely be received positively.

160. With regard to LEG membership, while the Secretariat country lead has successfully advocated for greater inclusion of civil society and membership by UNHCR in LEG membership, more effort could be made by the country lead, the CA and GA to advocate for membership by other education actors, both foreign and domestic (e.g., donors to education not currently in the LEG, INGOs, NGOs, private sector actors, teachers' unions, etc.).

161. Finally, the government of Mauritania perceives the GPE funding model, which now includes fixed and variable tranches, as undermining the predictability of external investments in education. In their view, they see the variable tranche as a requirement to pre-finance education sector investments for which they do not have the resources. This may mean that activities falling under the variable tranche do not get implemented for lack of funds. From the perspective of the GPE Secretariat, it is inaccurate to characterize the GPE funding model as 'pre-financing'. However, there appears to be a need to discuss and further clarify this issue with government stakeholders in Mauritania.



## Appendix I Evaluation matrix

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
Key question I: Has GPE support to [country] contributed to achieving country-level objectives related to sector planning, sector plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring, and more/better financing for education? <sup>264</sup> If so, then how?			
<b>CEQ 1: Has GPE contributed to education sector planning and sector plan implementation in [country] during the period under review?<sup>265</sup> How?</b>			
CEQ 1.1 What have been strengths and weaknesses of education sector planning during the period under review?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which the country's most recent sector plan meets GPE/UNESCO IIEP appraisal criteria.<sup>266</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Plan preparation process has been country-led, participatory, and transparent</li> <li>– Plan constitutes a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector</li> <li>– Issues of equity, efficiency, and learning are soundly addressed to increase sector performance</li> <li>– There is consistency between different components of the sector plan</li> <li>– Financing, implementation and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and past sector plans (including from period prior to country joining GPE if available)</li> <li>• GPE ESP/TSP quality assurance documents</li> <li>• JSR reports</li> <li>• Other relevant reports or reviews that comment on the quality of previous sector plans</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post analysis (where data on previous policy cycles is available)</li> <li>• Triangulation of data deriving from document review and interviews</li> </ul>

<sup>264</sup> OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

<sup>265</sup> The core period under review varies for summative and prospective evaluations. Prospective evaluations will primarily focus on the period early 2018 to early 2020 and will relate observations of change back to the baseline established at this point. The summative evaluations will focus on the period covered by the most recent ESPIG implemented in the respective country. However, for selected indicators (and subject to data availability) the summative evaluations will look back up to five years prior to the country becoming a GPE member to conduct a trend analysis of relevant data.

<sup>266</sup> Global Partnership for education, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal. Washington and Paris. 2015. Available at: [file:///C:/Users/anett/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge\\_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/2015-06-gpe-iiep-guidelines-education-sector-plan-appraisal.pdf](file:///C:/Users/anett/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/2015-06-gpe-iiep-guidelines-education-sector-plan-appraisal.pdf)

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which previous sector plans met current GPE or other (e.g., country specific) quality standards (if and where data is available)</li> <li>• Stakeholder views on strengths and weaknesses of (most recent and previous) sector planning processes in terms of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Leadership for and inclusiveness of sector plan preparation</li> <li>– Relevance and coherence of the sector plan</li> <li>– Adequacy of sector plan in addressing equity, efficiency and learning issues</li> <li>– Timeliness of plan preparation processes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
CEQ 1.2 What have been strengths and weaknesses of sector plan implementation during the period under review?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress made towards implementing sector plan objectives/meeting implementation targets of current/most recent sector plan. (If data is available: compared to progress made on implementing previous sector plan)</li> <li>• Extent to which sector plan implementation is fully funded (current/most recent plan compared to earlier sector plan if data is available)</li> <li>• Stakeholder views on timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency of sector plan implementation, and on changes therein compared to earlier policy cycles, due to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extent to which plans are coherent and realistic</li> <li>– Implementation capacity and management</li> <li>– Funding</li> <li>– Other (context-specific)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current and past sector plans (including from period prior to country joining GPE if available)</li> <li>• DCP government ESP/TSP implementation documents including mid-term or final reviews</li> <li>• Relevant program or sector evaluations, including reviews preceding the period of GPE support under review</li> <li>• JSR reports</li> <li>• Reports or studies on ESP/TSP commissioned by other development partners and/or the DCP government</li> <li>• CSO reports</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post analysis (where data on previous policy cycles is available)</li> <li>• Triangulation of data deriving from document review and interviews</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
<p>CEQ 1.3 Has GPE contributed to the observed characteristics of sector planning? How?</p> <p>a) Through the GPE ESPDG grant (funding, funding requirements)</p> <p>b) Through other support (technical assistance, advocacy, standards, quality assurance procedures, guidelines, capacity building, facilitation, CSEF and Advocacy and Social Accountability Fund (ASA) grants, and cross-national sharing of evidence/good practice)<sup>267</sup></p>	<p>a) Contributions through GPE ESPDG grant and related funding requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESPDG amount as a share of total resources invested into sector plan preparation. Evidence of GPE ESPDG grant addressing gaps/needs or priorities identified by the DCP government and/or LEG</li> </ul> <p>b) Contributions through other (non ESPDG-related) support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support directed at priority needs/gaps identified by the DCP government and/or LEG</li> <li>• Support adapted to meet the technical and cultural requirements of the specific context in [country]</li> <li>• Support aimed at strengthening sustainable local/national capacities for sector planning or plan implementation</li> <li>• Stakeholder views on relevance and appropriateness of GPE technical assistance, advocacy, standards, guidelines, capacity building, facilitation, CSEF and ASA grants, and knowledge exchange in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Addressing existing needs/priorities</li> <li>– Respecting characteristics of the national context</li> <li>– Adding value to country-driven processes (e.g., quality assurance provided by Secretariat)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESP implementation data including joint sector reviews</li> <li>• GPE grant agent reports and other grant performance data</li> <li>• Secretariat reports, e.g., country lead back to office/mission reports</li> <li>• GPE ESP/TSP quality assurance documents</li> <li>• Other documents on technical assistance/advocacy</li> <li>• Country-specific grant applications</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Education sector analyses</li> <li>• Country's poverty reduction strategy paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation of data deriving from document review and interviews</li> <li>• Where applicable: Comparison of progress made towards ESPIG grant objectives linked to specific performance targets with those without targets (variable tranche)</li> </ul>

<sup>267</sup> Technical assistance and facilitation provided primarily through the GPE Secretariat, the grant agent and coordinating agency. Advocacy can include inputs from the Secretariat, grant agent, coordinating agency, LEG, and GPE at global level (e.g., Board meetings, agreed upon standards). Knowledge exchange includes cross-national/global activities related to the diffusion of evidence and best practice to improve sector planning and implementation.

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
<p>CEQ 1.4 Has GPE contributed to the observed characteristics of sector plan implementation? How?</p> <p>a) Through GPE EPDG, ESPIG grants-related funding requirements and the variable tranche<sup>268</sup></p> <p>b) Through non-financial support (technical assistance, advocacy, standards, quality assurance procedures, guidelines, capacity building, and facilitation, and cross-national sharing of evidence/good practice)<sup>269</sup></p>	<p>a) Contributions through GPE EPDG and ESPIG grants, related funding requirements and variable tranche (where applicable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absolute amount of GPE disbursement and GPE disbursement as a share of total aid to education</li> <li>• Maximum allocation amounts and actual amount a country received from GPE through the fixed and/or the variable tranche and reasons for not receiving the total MCA;</li> <li>• Evidence of GPE grants addressing gaps/needs or priorities identified by the DCP government and/or LEG.</li> <li>• Progress made towards targets outlined in GPE grant agreements as triggers for variable tranche, compared to progress made in areas without specific targets (where applicable)</li> <li>• Proportion of overall sector plan funded through GPE ESPIG</li> <li>• Proportion of textbook purchases planned under current/most recent sector plan funded through GPE grant</li> <li>• Proportion of teachers trained under current/most recent sector plan funded through GPE grant</li> <li>• Proportion of classrooms built under current/most recent sector plan funded through GPE grant</li> <li>• Progress made towards objectives/targets outlined in GPE grant agreement (where applicable: compare progress made in areas with specific targets as triggers for release of variable tranche compared to progress made in areas without specific targets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESP implementation data including joint sector reviews</li> <li>• GPE grant agent reports and other grant performance data</li> <li>• Secretariat reports, e.g., country lead back to office/mission reports</li> <li>• GPE ESP/TSP quality assurance documents</li> <li>• Other documents on technical assistance/advocacy</li> <li>• Country-specific grant applications</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Education sector analyses</li> <li>• Country's poverty reduction strategy paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation of data deriving from document review and interviews</li> <li>• Where applicable: Comparison of progress made towards ESPIG grant objectives linked to specific performance targets with those without targets (variable tranche)</li> </ul>

<sup>268</sup> Where applicable.

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timeliness of implementation of GPE grants (Education Sector Plan Development Grant, Program Development Grant, Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant)</li> <li>• Grant implementation is on budget</li> <li>b) Contributions through non-financial support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPE support aimed at strengthening sustainable local/national capacities for plan implementation</li> <li>• Stakeholder views on relevance and appropriateness of GPE non-financial support in relation to:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Addressing existing needs/priorities</li> <li>– Respecting characteristics of the national context</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>c) Adding value to country-driven processes (e.g., quality assurance provided by Secretariat)</li> </ul>		
<p>CEQ 1.5 Has GPE contributed to leveraging additional education sector financing and improving the quality of financing?</p> <p>a) Leveraging of additional finance from the government?</p>	<p>a) Leveraging additional finance from government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in country’s public expenditures on education during period under review (by sub-sector if available)</li> </ul> <p>b) Leveraging additional finance through multiplier funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with national actors (e.g., Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Local Education Groups/ Development partner groups)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend analysis for period under review</li> <li>• Comparative analysis (GPE versus other donor contributions)</li> </ul>

<sup>269</sup> Technical assistance and facilitation provided primarily through the GPE Secretariat, the grant agent and coordinating agency. Advocacy – including inputs from Secretariat, grant agent, coordinating agency, LEG, and GPE at global level (e.g., Board meetings, agreed upon standards). Knowledge exchange - including cross-national/global activities related to the diffusion of evidence and best practice to improve sector planning and implementation.

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
<p>b) Leveraging of additional finance from other partners through the GPE multiplier funding mechanisms (where applicable)?</p> <p>Leveraging of additional finance from other partners through means other than the multiplier funding mechanism?</p> <p>c) Improvements in the quality of education finance (e.g., short, medium and long-term predictability, alignment with government systems)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent to which country has achieved, maintained or exceeded 20% of public expenditures on education during period under review</li> <li>• Amount received through the GPE multiplier fund (if applicable).</li> </ul> <p>c) Leveraging additional finance through other means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amounts and sources of domestic resources mobilized through GPE advocacy efforts</li> </ul> <p>(b and c):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in relative size of GPE financial contribution in relation to other donor' contributions</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trends in external and domestic financing channeled through and outside of GPE, and for basic and total education, to account for any substitution by donors or the country government</li> <li>• Changes in donor aid to country; Extent to which GPE Program Implementation Grant-supported programs have been co-financed by other actors or are part of pooled funding mechanisms; Amounts and sources of non-traditional financing (e.g., private or innovative finance) that can be linked to GPE leveraging</li> </ul> <p>d) Quality of education finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of GPE education sector program implementation grants with GPE's system alignment criteria (including the 10 elements of alignment and the elements of harmonization captured by RF indicators 29, 30 respectively)</li> <li>• Possible reasons for non-alignment or non-harmonization (if applicable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPE data (e.g., grant documents, country commitments and disbursements, donor pledges and contributions)</li> <li>• Creditor Reporting System (CRS) by OECD-DAC</li> <li>• UIS data by UNESCO</li> <li>• National data (e.g., Education Management Information</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems, school censuses and surveys, National Education Accounts, Joint Sector Reviews, public expenditure reviews)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulation of quantitative analysis with interview data</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
<b>CEQ 2 Has GPE contributed to strengthening mutual accountability for the education sector during the period under review? If so, then how?</b>			
CEQ 2.1 Has sector dialogue changed during the period under review?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition of the country’s LEG (in particular civil society and teacher association representation), and changes in this composition during period under review</li> <li>• Frequency of LEG meetings, and changes in frequency during period under review</li> <li>• Stakeholder views on changes in sector dialogue in terms of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inclusiveness</li> <li>– Frequency, consistency, clarity of roles and responsibilities</li> <li>– Relevance (i.e., perceptions on whether stakeholder input is taken into account for decision making)</li> <li>– Quality (evidence-based, transparent)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEG meeting notes</li> <li>• Joint sector reviews or equivalents from before and during most recent ESPIG period</li> <li>• GPE sector review assessments</li> <li>• ESP/TSP, and documents illustrating process of their development</li> <li>• Back to office reports/memos from Secretariat</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post comparison</li> <li>• Triangulate results of document review and interviews</li> <li>• Stakeholder analysis and mapping</li> </ul>
CEQ 2.2 Has sector monitoring changed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequency of joint sector reviews conducted, and changes in frequency during period under review</li> <li>• Extent to which joint sector reviews conducted during period of most recent ESPIG met GPE quality standards (if data is available: compared to JSRs conducted prior to this period)</li> <li>• Evidence deriving from JSRs is reflected in DCP government decisions (e.g., adjustments to sector plan implementation) and sector planning</li> <li>• Measures in the current sector plan to strengthen sector monitoring (especially monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, equity, equality and inclusion) are implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEG meeting notes</li> <li>• Joint sector reviews or equivalents from before and during most recent ESPIG period</li> <li>• GPE sector review assessments</li> <li>• Grant agent reports</li> <li>• Back to office reports/memos from Secretariat</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post comparison</li> <li>• Triangulate the results of document review and interviews</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder views on changes in JSRs in terms of them being:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inclusive and participatory</li> <li>– Aligned to existing sector plan and/or policy framework</li> <li>– Evidence based</li> <li>– Used for learning/informing decision-making</li> <li>– Embedded in the policy cycle (timing of JSR appropriate to inform decision making; processes in place to follow up on JSR recommendations)<sup>270</sup></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Stakeholder views on extent to which current practices of sector dialogue and monitoring amount to ‘mutual accountability’ for the education sector.</li> </ul>		
<p>CEQ 2.3 Has GPE contributed to observed changes in sector dialogue and monitoring? How?</p> <p>a) Through GPE grants and funding requirements</p> <p>b) Through other support<sup>271</sup></p>	<p>a) Grants and funding requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of EMIS-related improvements outlined current/most recent sector plan funded through GPE grant</li> </ul> <p>b) Non-grant related support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support is targeted at issues identified as priorities by DCP government and/or LEG</li> <li>• Support is adapted to meet the technical and cultural requirements of the specific context in [country]</li> <li>• Support is aimed at strengthening local/national capacities for conducting inclusive and evidence-based sector dialogue and monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEG meeting notes</li> <li>• Joint sector reviews or equivalents from before and during most recent ESPIG period</li> <li>• GPE sector review assessments</li> <li>• Grant agent reports</li> <li>• Back to office reports/memos from Secretariat</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulate triangulation the results of document review and interviews</li> </ul>

<sup>270</sup> Criteria adapted from: Global Partnership for Education. Effective Joint Sector Reviews as (Mutual) Accountability Platforms. GPE Working Paper #1. Washington. June 2017. Available at: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/helping-partners-make-best-use-joint-sector-reviews>

<sup>271</sup> Technical assistance, advocacy, standards, quality assurance, guidelines, capacity building, facilitation, and cross-national sharing of evidence/good practice

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	a) and b) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder view on relevance and appropriateness of GPE grants and related funding requirements, and of technical assistance in relation to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Addressing existing needs/priorities</li> <li>– Respecting characteristics of the national context</li> <li>– Adding value to country-driven processes (e.g., around JSRs)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changes in priorities pursued by (traditional/non-traditional) donors related implications for [country]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• results of document review and interviews</li> </ul>
<b>CEQ 3: Has GPE support had unintended/unplanned effects? What factors other than GPE support have contributed to observed changes in sector planning, sector plan implementation, sector financing and monitoring?</b>			
CEQ 3.1 What factors other than GPE support are likely to have contributed to the observed changes (or lack thereof) in sector plan development, sector financing and plan implementation, and in sector dialogue and monitoring?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in nature and extent of financial/non-financial support to the education sector provided by development partners/donors (traditional/non-traditional donors including foundations)</li> <li>• Contributions to sector planning, plan implementation, sector dialogue or monitoring made by actors other than GPE</li> <li>• Changes/events in national or regional context(s)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Political context (e.g., changes in government/leadership)</li> <li>– Economic context</li> <li>– Social/environmental contexts (e.g., natural disasters, conflict, health crises)</li> <li>– Other (context-specific)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents illustrating</li> <li>• Relevant studies/reports commissioned by other education sector actors (e.g., donors, multilateral agencies) regarding nature/changes in their contributions and related results</li> <li>• Government and other (e.g., media) reports on changes in relevant national contexts and implications for the education sector</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulate the results of document review and interviews</li> </ul>
CEQ 3.2 During the period under review, have there been unintended, positive or negative, consequences of GPE financial and non-financial support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of unintended, positive and negative, effects on sector planning, sector financing, sector plan implementation, sector dialogue and monitoring deriving from GPE funding (grants)</li> <li>• Types of unintended, positive and negative, effects deriving from other GPE support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All data sources outlined for CEQs 1 and 2 above</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triangulate the results of document review and interviews</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
<b>Key question II: Has the achievement of country-level objectives<sup>272</sup> contributed to making the overall education systems in Mauritania more effective and efficient?</b>			
<p>CEQ 4 During the period under review, how has the education system changed in relation to:</p> <p>a) Quality of teaching/instruction</p> <p>b) Evidence-based, transparent decision making<sup>273</sup></p> <p>c) Country-specific areas of system strengthening for furthering equity and/or learning, and for ensuring effective and efficient use of resources.</p>	<p>a) Quality of teaching/instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in pupil/trained teacher ratio during period under review</li> <li>• Changes in equitable allocation of teachers (measured by relationship between number of teachers and number of pupils per school)</li> </ul> <p>b) Evidence-based, transparent decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in number of education indicators that country reports to UIS during period under review</li> <li>• Changes in whether country has quality learning assessment system within the basic education cycle during period under review</li> <li>• Other, country-specific indicators illustrating changes in evidence-based, transparent data collection, reporting and decision making</li> </ul> <p>c) Indicators for specific areas of education systems strengthening as outlined in the country's current sector plan related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector management (e.g., changes in ministerial, district and/or school level management structures, guidelines, staffing, financing, approaches to ensuring effective and efficient use of resources)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Management Information System (EMIS)</li> <li>• UIS data</li> <li>• World Bank data</li> <li>• Household survey data</li> <li>• ASER/UWEZO other citizen-led surveys</li> <li>• Grant agent progress reports</li> <li>• Implementing partner progress reports</li> <li>• Mid-term Evaluation reports</li> <li>• GPE annual Results Report</li> <li>• Appraisal Reports</li> <li>• Public expenditure reports</li> <li>• CSO reports</li> <li>• SABER database</li> <li>• Education financing studies</li> <li>• Literature on good practices in education system domains addressed in country's sector plan</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post comparison of statistical data for periods under review</li> <li>• Triangulate the results of document review with statistical data, interviews and literature on 'good practice' in specific areas of systems strengthening</li> </ul>

<sup>272</sup> GPE country-level objectives related to sector planning, plan implementation, and mutual accountability through sector dialogue and monitoring

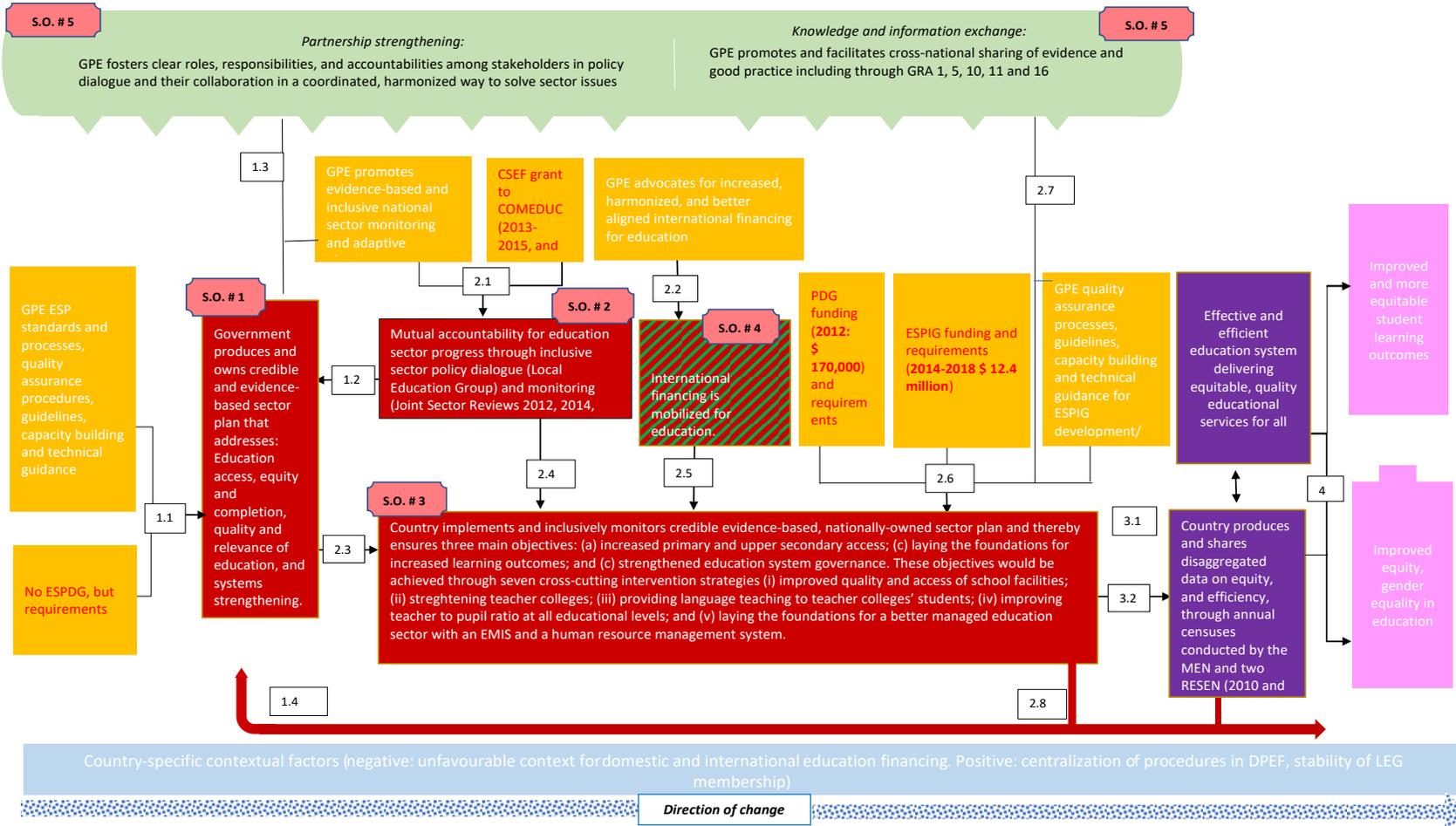
<sup>273</sup> Sub-questions a) and b) reflect indicators under Strategic Goal #3 as outlined in the GPE results framework. Sub-questions c) explores additional, country-specific indicators for system-level change.

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning (appropriate and available education inputs, additional country-specific efforts to enhance the quality of teaching/instruction, e.g., through new/improved incentives for schools/teachers)</li> <li>• Equity (removal of barriers to school participation for all learners; creating inclusive learning environments)</li> </ul> <p>(a-c): Stakeholder perceptions of areas within the education system that have/have not changed during period under review</p>		
<p>CEQ 5 How have changes in sector planning, plan implementation, and mutual accountability contributed to observed changes at education system level?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The specific measures put in place as part of sector plan implementation address previously identified bottlenecks at system level</li> <li>• Alternative explanations for observed changes at system level (e.g., changes due to external factors, continuation of trend that was already present before current/most recent policy cycle, targeted efforts outside of the education sector plan)</li> <li>• Stakeholder perceptions of reasons for observed changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sources as shown for CEQ 4</li> <li>• Literature on good practices in education system domains addressed in country's sector plan</li> <li>• Education sector analyses</li> <li>• Country's poverty reduction strategy paper</li> </ul>	
<b>Key question III: Have changes at education system level contributed to progress towards impact?</b>			
<p>CEQ 6: During the period under review, what changes have occurred in relation to:</p> <p>a) Learning outcomes (basic education)?</p> <p>b) Equity, gender equality and inclusion in education?</p>	<p>a) Learning outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in learning outcomes (basic education) during period under review.</li> <li>• Changes in percentage of children under five (5) years of age in COUNTRY who have been developmentally on track in terms of health, learning and psychosocial well-being. Or changes in other early childhood care and education measures from country-level surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector performance data available from GPE, UIS, DCP government and other reliable sources</li> <li>• Teacher Development Information System (TDIS)</li> <li>• Education Management Information System (EMIS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post comparison of available education sector data during period under review</li> <li>• Triangulation of statistical data with qualitative document analysis and interviews</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
	<p>b) Equity, gender equality, and inclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in proportion of children who complete (i) primary, (ii) lower-secondary education</li> <li>• Changes in out of school rate for (i) primary, (ii) lower-secondary education</li> <li>• Changes in the distribution of out of school children (girls/boys; children with/without disability; ethnic, geographic and/or economic backgrounds)</li> <li>• Education sector plan sets gender parity index/targets for (i) primary, (ii) lower-secondary education</li> <li>• Extent to which these targets have been achieved</li> <li>• Stakeholder perceptions on extent of, and reasons for, impact-level changes during period under review</li> </ul> <p>(a and b): Additional country-specific indicators as outlined in current sector plan and/or related monitoring framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National examination data</li> <li>• International and regional learning assessment data</li> <li>• EGRA/EGMA data</li> <li>• ASER/UWEZO other citizen-led surveys</li> <li>• Grant agent and Implementing partner progress reports</li> <li>• Mid-term Evaluation reports</li> <li>• GPE annual Results Report</li> <li>• Appraisal Reports</li> <li>• Interviews</li> </ul>	
<p>CEQ 7 Is there evidence to link changes in learning outcomes, equity, gender equality, and inclusion to system-level changes identified under CEQ 4?</p> <p>What other factors can explain changes in learning outcomes, equity, etc.?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in country's change trajectory related to learning outcomes, equity, gender equality, and inclusion during period under review</li> <li>• Additional explanations for observed changes in learning outcomes, equity, gender equality, and inclusion other than system-level changes noted under CEQ 4 and 5</li> <li>• Stakeholder perceptions on extent of, and reasons for, impact-level changes during period under review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Studies/evaluation reports on education (sub)sector(s) in country commissioned by the DCP government or other development partners (where available)</li> <li>• Literature on key factors affecting learning outcomes, equity, equality, and inclusion in comparable settings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-post comparison of available education sector data during period under review</li> <li>• Triangulation of statistical data with qualitative document analysis and interviews</li> </ul>

MAIN EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND SUB- QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION	ANALYSIS S
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviews</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weigh supporting and refuting evidence of GPE contributions to sector outcomes during period of review</li></ul>

# Appendix II GPE country-level theory of change for Mauritania



## LEGEND

Xxx	Non-financial GPE inputs/support (technical assistance, facilitation, advocacy)
xxx	GPE financial inputs/support (grants) and related funding requirements
	Country-level objectives that GPE support/influence directly contributes to. Underlined items are issues (at least partly) supported through the ESPIG-funded PDSEB sub-sector plan.
	Global-level objectives that GPE support/influence directly contributes, which have consequences at country level (policy cycle continuum)
	Global-level objectives with ramifications at country level, that are influenced but not solely driven by GPE's global and country-level interventions and/or influence
	Intermediate outcomes: Education system-level changes
	Impact: Changes in learning outcomes, equity, equality, and inclusion
	Contextual factors
<b>S.O. # 3</b>	Corresponding Strategic Objective in the GPE 2020 Strategic Plan
1	Numbers represent the key areas where logical linkages (explanatory mechanisms) connect different elements of the theory of change to one another ('because of x, y happens'). Numbers are aligned with the anticipated sequencing of achievements (1. sector plan development, 2. sector plan implementation, sector monitoring and dialogue, 3. education system-level changes, 4. envisaged impact).

Table ii.1 Key explanatory mechanisms and underlying assumptions in the adapted country ToC for Mauritania

#	EXPLANATORY MECHANISM	CRITICAL UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS <sup>274</sup>	(IMPLICIT) CONTRIBUTION CLAIM
<b>1 – GPE contributions to sector planning</b>			
1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4	<p><b>BECAUSE</b></p> <p>(1) GPE provides guidance, quality assurance, capacity development and technical guidance, and</p> <p>(2) GPE promotes (at global and country levels) evidence-based and adaptive planning</p> <p>(3) GPE promotes and facilitates cross-national sharing of evidence and good practice</p> <p>(4) Data on systems, and equity generated through annual censuses and RESEN are fed back and used to inform sector planning</p> <p>– <b>Mauritania produces and owns credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency, and learning.</b></p>	<p>Stakeholders (MEN, LEG members) have the capabilities (knowledge and skills), opportunities (resources, conducive external environment), and motivation (political will, incentives) to jointly and collaboratively improve sector analysis and planning.<sup>275</sup></p> <p>GPE has sufficient leverage within the country for GPE financial and non-financial support to influence sector planning, including LEG existence and functioning.</p> <p>While Mauritania does not have an EMIS, and that learning assessments are not reported, annual censuses produce relevant and reliable data.</p>	<p><b>Contribution claim A:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the <i>development</i> of government owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning.</p>

<sup>274</sup> Critical assumptions are events and conditions necessary for the respective logical link (mechanism) to work.

<sup>275</sup> Mayne (2017) suggests analyzing changes in individual or organizational ‘capacity’, as the foundation of behavioral and practice change, by exploring the three interrelated dimensions of capabilities, motivation, and opportunity. See: Mayne, John. *The COM-B Theory of Change Model*. Working paper. February 2017.

#	EXPLANATORY MECHANISM	CRITICAL UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS <sup>274</sup>	(IMPLICIT) CONTRIBUTION CLAIM
<b>2 - GPE contributions to sector plan implementation, sector monitoring, and dialogue</b>			
2.1	<p><b>BECAUSE</b></p> <p>(1) GPE supports and promotes evidence-based and inclusive national sector monitoring and adaptive planning at global and country levels, and</p> <p>(2) GPE promotes and facilitates cross-national sharing of evidence and good practice,</p> <p>– <b>there is progress towards mutual accountability for sector progress through inclusive sector policy dialogue and monitoring.</b></p>	<p>GPE has sufficient leverage at global and country levels to positively influence LEG existence and functioning.</p> <p>Country level stakeholders (MEN, LEG members) have the capabilities (knowledge and skills), opportunities (including resources), and motivation (including political will and incentives) to work together to solve education sector issues.</p>	<p><b>Contribution claim B:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contribute to <i>mutual accountability</i> for education sector progress.</p>
2.2	<p>(1) GPE advocates for increased, harmonized, and better aligned international financing for education, and</p> <p>(2) GPE funding requirements include the promotion of improvements in domestic financing for education promotes</p>	<p>GPE does not have sufficient leverage to influence the amount of and the quality of domestic and international education sector financing.</p> <p>External (contextual) factors do not permit national and international actors to increase/improve the quality of education sector financing.</p>	<p><b>Contribution claim C:</b> GPE advocacy and funding requirements does not contribute to more and better financing for education in the country.</p>
2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6 2.7 and 2.8	<p><b>BECAUSE –</b></p> <p>(1) GPE provides funding through PDGs and ESPIGS,</p> <p>(2) GPE provides quality assurance, processes, guidelines, capacity building and technical guidance for ESPIG development and implementation,</p> <p>(3) the country has developed a credible and evidence-based sector plan,</p> <p>(4) GPE promotes and facilitates cross-national sharing of evidence and good practice</p> <p>(7) Data on systems and equity through</p>	<p>Relevant country-level actors have the motivation (political will, incentives) to implement all elements of the sector plan.</p> <p>Relevant country-level actors partially have the opportunity (funding, conducive environment) to implement all elements of the sector plan.</p> <p>Relevant country-level actors have the technical capabilities, motivation (political will, incentives) to implement all elements of the sector plan.</p> <p>Country-level development partners partially have the motivation and opportunity (e.g. directive from respective donor government) to align their own activities with the priorities of the sector plan and to work through the LEG as a consultative and advisory forum.</p>	<p><b>Contribution claim D:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective and efficient <i>implementation</i> of sector plans.</p>

#	EXPLANATORY MECHANISM	CRITICAL UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS <sup>274</sup>	(IMPLICIT) CONTRIBUTION CLAIM
	annual school censuses are fed back and used to inform sector plan implementation – <b>Mauritania implements credible, evidence-based sector plans based on equity, efficiency and learning.</b>	Country-level stakeholders (MEN, LEG members) take part in regular, evidence-based joint sector reviews, but only partially apply recommendations deriving from these reviews to enhance equitable and evidence-based sector plan implementation.  The sector plan includes provisions for strengthening EMIS and LAS to produce timely, relevant and reliable data.	
<b>3. From country-level objectives to system-level change (intermediary outcome)</b>			
3.1	<b>BECAUSE</b> Mauritania implements realistic, evidence-based education sector plans based on equity, efficiency and learning – <b>the education system becomes more effective and efficient towards delivering equitable quality educational services for all.</b>	Education sector plan implementation leads to improvements of previous shortcomings in the education system including related to each of, as well as to the interaction between elements such as:  Sector management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress towards effective and efficient use of available resources</li> <li>• Progress towards evidence-based, transparent decision making – e.g., regularly conducted quality learning assessments, regularly collected data on EMIS, transparency and reporting of data, integrated and effective data systems to facilitate use</li> </ul> Learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate and available education inputs – e.g., curricula, pedagogical kits, and other teaching/learning materials, school infrastructure, lesson plans/teacher training tools.</li> <li>• Quality of teaching/instruction – e.g., teacher language training</li> </ul> Equity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removal of barriers to school participation for all learners</li> </ul>	<b>Contribution claim E:</b> The development and implementation of realistic evidence-based sector plans contributes to positive changes at the level of the overall <i>education system</i> .

#	EXPLANATORY MECHANISM	CRITICAL UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS <sup>274</sup>	(IMPLICIT) CONTRIBUTION CLAIM
3.2	<p><b>BECAUSE</b></p> <p>(1) sector plan implementation includes provisions for strengthened EMIS and LAS, and</p> <p>(2) because GPE promotes and facilitates sharing of evidence and mutual accountability for education sector progress</p> <p>– <b>Mauritania produces and shares disaggregated data on equity and efficiency.</b></p>	<p>There are clearly delineated roles and responsibilities to produce data, report against data, and use data to monitor implementation.</p>	
<b>4. From system-level change (intermediate outcomes) to impact</b>			
4	<p><b>BECAUSE</b> of improvements at the level of the overall education system, <b>there are improved access, equity, and equality in education.</b></p>	<p>Changes in the education system positively affect equity.</p> <p>Country-produced data on equity and efficiency allow measuring/tracking these changes.</p>	<p><b>Contribution claim F:</b> Education system-level improvements result in <i>improved equity and gender equality</i> in education.</p>

## Appendix III Evaluation methodology

The evaluation aims to assess the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of GPE's inputs at the country level and the validity of GPE's theory of change to establish if and how GPE outputs and activities contribute to outcomes and impact.<sup>276</sup> The guiding frameworks for the evaluation are the **evaluation matrix** (Appendix I) and the **country-level** theory of change for Mauritania (Appendix II).<sup>277</sup>

The overall approach to this evaluation is theory-based and uses **contribution analysis** (CA). CA is a theory-based approach to evaluation designed to identify the contribution a program or (series of) interventions is making to observed results through an increased understanding of why observed changes have occurred (or not occurred) and the roles played by the intervention and by other internal and external factors respectively.<sup>278</sup>

The evaluation team chose contribution analysis as the main approach to this assignment as it is particularly useful in situations (i) where a program is not experimental, but has been implemented on the basis of a relatively clearly articulated theory of change; (ii) where the change processes in question are complex rather than one-dimensional, i.e., where change is influenced due to a variety of inter-related factors as opposed to single policy interventions that could be isolated; (iii) where the change processes in question are highly context-specific. A report deriving from applying contribution analysis does not provide definite proof, but rather provides an evidence-based line of reasoning from which plausible conclusions can be drawn on the types and reasons for contributions made by the program/intervention in question. CA draws upon both quantitative and qualitative evidence to build the 'contribution story' for the program or intervention(s) under review

The process for this country evaluation involved four stages: (i) assessing the availability and quality of data, adapting the country-level theory of change and conducting a country-specific stakeholder mapping to determine priorities for consultations during the in-country site visit (see Appendix IV); (ii) in-country data collection during a ten-working day mission to Mauritania from August 13<sup>th</sup> to August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018; (iii) assembling and assessing the GPE contribution story; and (iv) writing the evaluation report.

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<sup>276</sup> In the context of this assignment, the term 'impact' is aligned with the terminology used by GPE to refer changes in the areas of learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion (reflected in GPE Strategic Goals 1 and 2 described in the 2020 Strategic Plan). While examining progress towards impact in this sense, the country evaluations do not constitute formal impact evaluations, which usually entail counterfactual analysis based on randomized controlled trials.

<sup>277</sup> This country-specific ToC was adapted from the generic country-level ToC that had been developed in the assignment Inception Report.

<sup>278</sup> See, for example: Mayne, J. "Addressing Cause and Effect in Simple and Complex Settings through Contribution Analysis". In *Evaluating the Complex*, R. Schwartz, K. Forss, and M. Marra (Eds.), Transaction Publishers, (2011).

Data collection and analysis were conducted by a team of two international and one national consultant. Methods of data collection included:

- Document and literature review (see Appendix VI for a bibliography)
- Stakeholder consultations through individual and group interviews in Mauritania. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with the Secretariat country focal point, and World Bank staff members currently based in Washington. Appendix V provides a list of consulted stakeholders. In total, the evaluation team interviewed 74 individuals (see Box iii.1), of which 19 were women.
- Education sector performance data analysis, drawing upon publicly accessible information on learning outcomes, equity, gender equality and inclusion, and education financing.<sup>279</sup>

**Box iii.1: Consulted Stakeholders**

Education ministry: 8  
 Other ministries responsible for delivering education services: 8  
 grant agent (World Bank): 1  
 coordinating agency (AFD): 1  
 Development partners/donors: 8  
 Civil Society/Teacher Organizations/Parent organizations: 21

The evaluation team analyzed the available data using qualitative (descriptive, content, comparative) and quantitative techniques, thereby triangulating different data sources and methods of data collection.

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<sup>279</sup> The key sources of data are the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database, [data.uis.unesco.org](http://data.uis.unesco.org); the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Creditor Reporting System (CRS), <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>; and country-level datasets and data sources.

## Appendix IV Stakeholder mapping

The table below is adapted from the generic stakeholder mapping presented in the assignment inception report and tailored to the Mauritania context.

STAKEHOLDER	INTEREST IN/INFLUENCE ON GPE COUNTRY-LEVEL PROGRAMMING IMPORTANCE FOR THE EVALUATION	ROLE IN THE COUNTRY-LEVEL EVALUATION
<b>Global</b>		
Secretariat	Interest: High. Influence: High. The Secretariat operationalizes guidance on overall direction and strategy issued by the Board. Importance: High	The main internal stakeholders and users of the evaluation; Key informants; country lead facilitated the evaluation team's contacts with stakeholders.
Board members (from developing countries included in the sample)	Interest: High. Influence: High. Board members influence the direction, strategy development and management of GPE, and they ensure resources. The extent to which DCP Board members are involved in and intimately familiar with GPE grants in their respective countries likely varies. Importance: High	Mauritania is represented on the GPE Board through the constituency Africa 2 constituency. There are 18 francophone countries in the Africa 2 constituency. These board members were <i>not</i> consulted during the course of this country evaluation.
<b>Country-level</b>		
Ministry of National Education (MEN)	Interest: High Influence: High. Responsible for shaping and implementing education sector policy and managing related financing. Focal point with GPE Secretariat. Importance: High. Main partner for GPE grant design and implementation.	Key informants at country level. Directors of all key MEN directorates were interviewed in person during the country visit (see Appendix V, list of stakeholders).
Other ministries responsible for delivering education in Mauritania: MASEF and MAIEO	Interest: High Influence: medium. Responsible for alphabetization, religious teaching (mahadras), and early childhood education. Importance: High. Responsible for implementing measures planned in the ESP.	Key informants at country level (see Appendix V, list of stakeholders).

STAKEHOLDER	INTEREST IN/INFLUENCE ON GPE COUNTRY-LEVEL PROGRAMMING IMPORTANCE FOR THE EVALUATION	ROLE IN THE COUNTRY-LEVEL EVALUATION
DPEF	Interest: High Influence: High. Responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of the education sector policy and managing related financing. Importance: High.	Key informants consulted at country level. (see Appendix V, list of stakeholders).
<b>Key Education Sector Stakeholders (national level)</b>		
Grant Agent: The World Bank	Interest: High Influence: High. Responsible for managing the ESPIG in Mauritania. Importance: High	Key informant at country level. Consulted during after the visit in Mauritania.
Coordinating Agency: French Development Agency	Interest: High Influence: Medium-High. Through its facilitating role, the coordinating agency plays an important role in the functioning of the LEG. Importance: High	Key informant at country level.
Development Partners (donor agencies, multilateral organizations): The EU, UNESCO, UNICEF, Cooperation and Cultural Action Service (French Embassy).	Interest: High Influence: Medium-High, through their participation in the LEG, in sector monitoring exercises, as well as to their own activities in the education sector. Importance: High	Key informants at country level were interviewed in person during the country visit.
Domestic non-governmental organizations: COMEDUC, Espoir, Armes, National Federation of Parent and Student Associations of Mauritania	Interest: High Influence: Low. Most are not members of the LEG, but several have participated in sector planning consultations and education sector reviews. Importance: Medium-High.	Key informants at country level were consulted during the country site visit.
Philanthropic Foundations	Interest: NA Influence: NA Importance: NA	No consultations conducted.

The evaluation team did not conduct any consultations at the local and/or school level.

## Appendix V List of consulted stakeholders

In total, 47 individuals were interviewed in Mauritania, of which 10 were women. All consulted individuals, except for five, were based in Nouakchott. Seven individuals were consulted over the phone, while the rest were interviewed in person.

ORGANIZATION	LAST NAME, FIRST NAME	TITLE	M/W
MEN	Adama, Diallo	Chief planning	M
MASEF	Ahmed Obedde, Mohamed Sid	Childhood director	M
UNESCO office in Rabat	Alaoui, Mohamed	Education coordinator	M
MAIEO	Aled Sahir, Khadijellea	Executive assistant traditional teaching	W
Espoir (NGO)	Atigh, Mghuyli	President	W
Community Development Association	Ba, Abdul Karim		M
MEN	Ba, Diadé	Director of the Human Resources Directorate	M
MEN	Ba, Ahmed	Planning	M
COMEDUC	Bouve, Sidi Idoumou		M
COMEDUC	Brahim, Mohamed Ould	President	M
MEN	Breye, Mohamed Ould	Coordinator, Learning Assessment Unit	M
French Development Agency	Bucher, Harmonie	Project director	W
Union for Private Education Teachers	Chabarmia, El Hadj	Honorius president	M
Union for Private Education Teachers	Chaless, Mane Bamba	Treasurer	M
Union for Private Education Teachers	Chulchina, Siolaty	Coordinator	M
Union for Private Education Teachers	Cimé, Mohamed	Honorius president	M
Espoir (NGO)	Dahid, Zoukia	Vice president	W
COMEDUC	Diallo, Hamady		M
DPEF	Dickeh, Mohamed Vall	Project coordinator	M
MAIEO	Ehaikh Touad, Chaikhna	Executive assistant traditional teaching	M
COMEDUC	Elhoussein, Yahia		W
COMEDUC	El Nrustapha, Marieu Ned		M
National Federation of Parent' Associations	Ely, Cheikhna	Executive secretary	M
MEN	Ely, Samba	Mission director	W

ORGANIZATION	LAST NAME, FIRST NAME	TITLE	M/W
Cooperation and Cultural Action Service (French Embassy)	Isaac, Nadia	Cooperation officer	W
MASEF	Jeireb, Saleck	Director of cooperation studies and monitoring	M
Consultant	Konaté, Cheikh		M
UNESCO office in Rabat	Maalouf, Philippe	Chief education	M
COMEDUC	Maham, Saleck Ahmed		M
COMEDUC	Maladou, Baye		M
UNICEF	Manno, Fabio	Chief Education	M
Union for Private Education Teachers	Mdiege, Demba Sariba	Relations with students' parents	M
MAIEO	Mint Raby, Gweija	Chief of alphabetization direction	W
DPEF	Mohamed Saleh, Mohamed El-Béchir	M&E manager	M
National Federation of Parent' Associations	Mohamed, Saleck	Vice president	M
COMEDUC	N'Gam, Hamidou Oumar		M
UNICEF	Okamoto, Hiroshi	Education officer	M
UNICEF	Périès, Hervé	Resident representative	M
MEN	Rabami, El Hadj	Chief statistician	M
MAIEO	Salecke, Mohamed	Chief of planning services	M
MEN	Sam Ba, Mohamed	DREN Odelsha	M
MEN	Oumou Seleme Cheikh,	Focal point GPE	W
National Federation of Parent' Associations	Sghair, Ahmed	General secretary	M
Armes	Suleman		M
National Union for Public Education	Traoré, Maria	General secretary	W
European Union	Valiente Izquierdo, Jorge	Program director	M
National Federation of Parent' Associations	Vall Yarba, Ned	Executive secretary	M

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## Appendix VII Ratings of contribution claims and assumptions

To illustrate evaluation findings on the likely validity of the different elements, and the assumed logical linkages between these element, in the GPE country-level theory of change, the evaluation team used a simple color rating approach to rate (i) the extent to which available evidence **supported different contribution claims** outlined in the ToC; (ii) the **strength of the various assumptions** that had been identified as underlying each contribution claim. Tables vii.1 and vii.2 below illustrate the criteria applied to guide these ratings.

**Table vii.1** Definition of color-coded ratings for contribution claims and GPE contributions

Evidence <b>supports</b> the contribution claim. <sup>280</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Envisaged objective has been fully or mostly achieved (e.g., a country owned credible ESP has been developed)</li> </ul> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All or most of the underlying assumptions as outlined in the theory of change apply (i.e., are rated 'strong')</li> </ul> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPE grant-related and/or non-financial support likely influenced observed changes AND there are no alternative explanations that would suffice/are more likely than elements in the ToC to explain the change</li> </ul>
Evidence <b>partly supports</b> contribution claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Envisaged objective has been partly achieved (e.g., ESP has been developed, but is not country-owned)</li> </ul> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All or most underlying assumptions as outlined in the theory of change apply only partially (i.e., are rated 'moderate')</li> </ul> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GPE grant-related and/or non-financial support likely influenced at least some of the observed changes AND/OR there are some alternative explanations that are as or more likely than elements in the ToC to explain noted change</li> </ul>

<sup>280</sup> While it does not *prove* the claim, evidence suggests that contribution claim is *more likely than not* to be true

Evidence <b>does not support</b> contribution claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Envisaged objective has not or only marginally been achieved (e.g., ESP has not been developed; no positive change in quality/amounts of education sector funding)</li> </ul> <p><i>and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All or most of the underlying assumptions as outlined in the theory of change do not apply (i.e., are rated 'weak')</li> </ul> <p><i>and/or</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GPE grant-related and/or non-financial support are not likely to have influenced the observed changes AND/OR There are alternative explanations that are more likely than the elements of the ToC to explain the noted change</li> </ul>
Insufficient evidence to assess the likely validity of the contribution claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No/insufficient data on whether the envisaged objective has or has not been achieved</li> <li>For all or most of the underlying assumptions as outlined in the theory of change it is unclear if they apply or not (i.e., they are rated 'white', see assumptions rating below)</li> </ul>

**Table vii.2** *Definition of color-coded ratings for likelihood of underlying assumptions holding true in the country context*

Strong	Evidence deriving from all or most lines of enquiry indicates that this assumption applies in the given context <i>And</i> There is no evidence that contradicts the application of this assumption
Moderate	Evidence deriving from all or most lines of enquiry indicates that the assumption only partly applies in the given context <i>And/or</i> There is some evidence that indicates that this assumption does not apply
Weak	Evidence from all or most lines of inquiry indicates that this assumption does not apply in the given context
Insufficient data	Available evidence does not allow assessing the assumption, i.e., available evidence either does not address the specific assumption or is inconclusive on whether it applies or not.

Table vii.3 applies this color coding to the Mauritania context and illustrates the relationship between the six **contribution claims** and the various **underlying assumptions** for each of them.<sup>281</sup>

<sup>281</sup> We have slightly adapted the list of underlying assumptions that had been presented in the inception report, by in one case separating one complex assumption into three separate ones (to distinguish between changes in key actors' motivation, opportunity and capabilities), and in another case merging two assumptions that addressed the same issue (reporting and use of EMIS data).

**Table vii.3** Areas of progress and GPE contribution

AREA OF PROGRESS	EXTENT OF PROGRESS	LIKELIHOOD AND DEGREE OF GPE CONTRIBUTION <sup>282</sup>		
Progress towards a government-owned, robust ESP <sup>283</sup>	Achieved	Very likely / considerable		
Progress made towards mutual accountability for sector progress <sup>284</sup>	Progress, but room for improvement	Likely, but limited by additional factors		
Progress made towards more/better education sector financing <sup>285</sup>	Total domestic education expenditure decreased	No visible contribution to the amount domestic financing	Modest contribution to international financing	No visible contribution to the quality of financing
	Education share of domestic budget decreased			
	Did not meet the 20 percent goal			
	Amount of international financing decreased			
	Quality of financing did not change			
Progress made towards sector plan implementation <sup>286</sup>	Moderate progress	Very likely / considerable		

<sup>282</sup> The likelihood of GPE contributions is based on evidence deriving from document review and stakeholder interviews on types of GPE support and related effects (e.g. support through ESPDG funds and uses of these funds). The 'degree of GPE contributions' aims to capture insights on the extent to which GPE support either made a notable difference to the nature of the respective process, or whether it was positive, but without notable effects on the nature or scope of in-country processes. Related colour-coding is based on (i) whether there is evidence of alternative factors beyond GPE that were equally or more likely to explain key aspects of the noted progress; and (ii) stakeholder perceptions of the relevance/influence of GPE support on shaping,

<sup>283</sup> Relevant to contribution claim A.

<sup>284</sup> Relevant to contribution claim B.

<sup>285</sup> Relevant to contribution claim C.

<sup>286</sup> Relevant to contribution claim D.

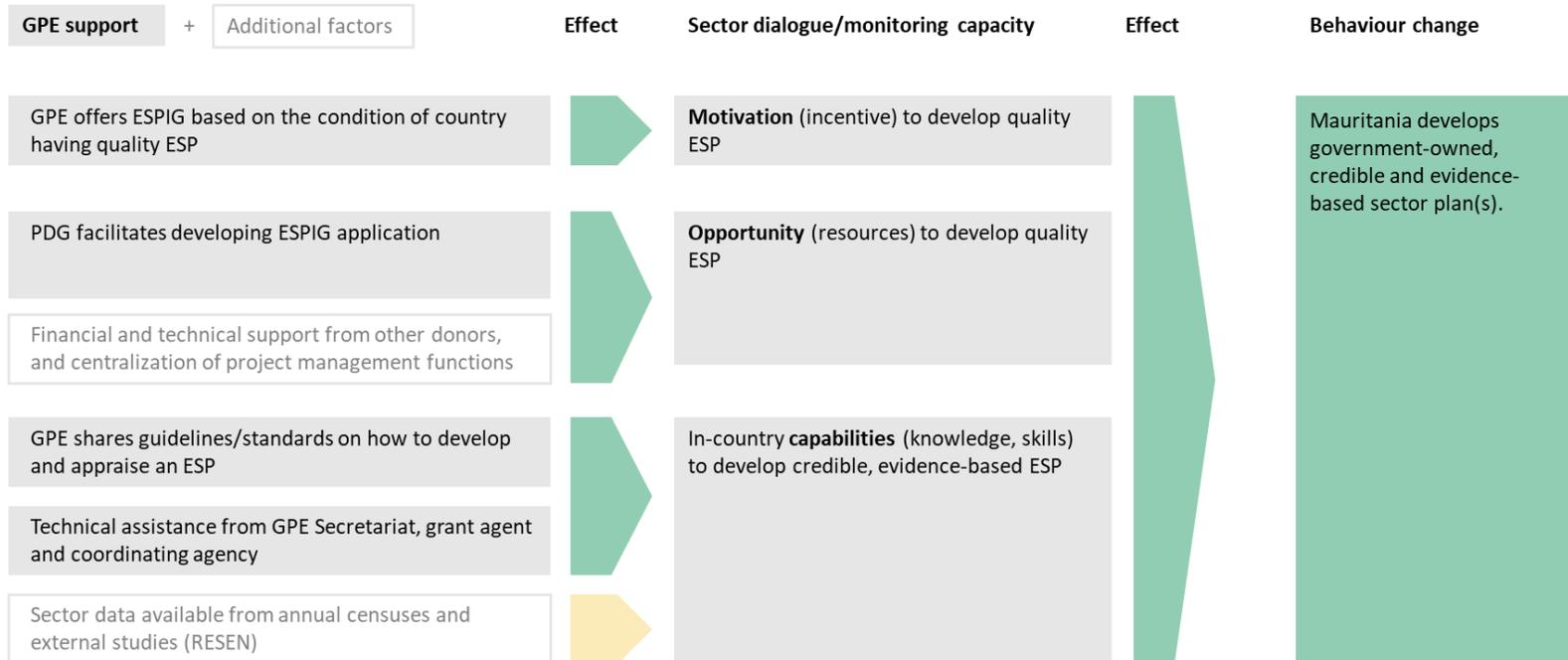
Table vii.4 Contribution claims and underlying assumptions

CONTRIBUTION CLAIM	UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS	RATING
<b>A:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the <i>development</i> of government owned, credible and evidence-based sector plans focused on equity, efficiency and learning.	Country level stakeholders have the <i>capabilities</i> (knowledge and skills) to jointly and collaboratively improve sector analysis and planning.	
	Country level stakeholders have the <i>opportunities</i> (resources, conducive external environment) to jointly and collaboratively improve sector analysis and planning.	
	Country level stakeholders have the <i>motivation</i> (political will, incentives) to jointly and collaboratively improve sector analysis and planning.	
	GPE has sufficient leverage within the country for GPE support to influence sector planning, including LEG existence and functioning.	
	EMIS and learning assessment and reporting systems (LAS) produce relevant and reliable data.	
<b>B:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support for inclusive sector planning and joint monitoring contributes to <i>mutual accountability</i> for education sector progress.	GPE has sufficient leverage at global and country levels to positively influence LEG existence and functioning.	
	Country level stakeholders have the <i>capabilities</i> (knowledge and skills) to work together to solve education sector issues.	
	Country level stakeholders have the <i>opportunities</i> (including resources) to work together to solve education sector issues.	
	Country level stakeholders have the <i>motivation</i> (including political will and incentives) to work together to solve education sector issues.	
<b>C:</b> GPE advocacy and funding requirements contribute to <i>more and better financing for education</i> in the country	GPE has sufficient leverage to influence the amount of and the quality of domestic and international education sector financing.	
	External (contextual) factors permit national and international actors to increase/improve the quality of education sector financing.	
<b>D:</b> GPE (financial and non-financial) support and influence contribute to the effective	Relevant government actors have the <i>motivation</i> (political will, incentives) to implement all elements of the sector plan.	
	Relevant government actors have the <i>opportunity</i> to implement all elements of the sector plan. (Conducive environment, domestic and international funding is sufficient in quantity and adequate in quality).	
	Relevant government actors have the <i>technical capabilities</i> to implement all elements of the sector plan.	

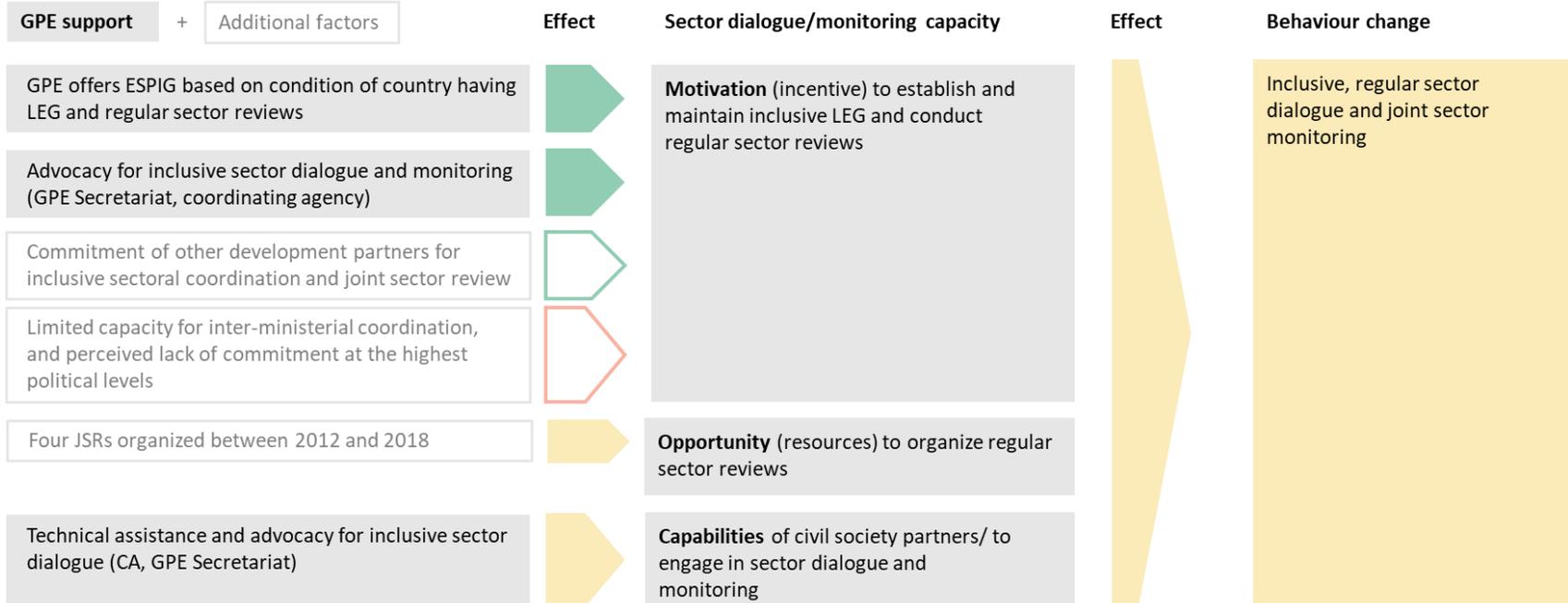
CONTRIBUTION CLAIM	UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS	RATING
and efficient <i>implementation</i> of sector plans.	Country-level development partners have the motivation and opportunity (e.g., directive from respective donor government) to align their own activities with the priorities of the sector plan and to work through the LEG as a consultative and advisory forum.	
	Country-level stakeholders take part in regular, evidence-based joint sector reviews and apply recommendations deriving from these reviews to enhance equitable and evidence-based sector plan implementation.	
	The sector plan includes provisions for strengthening EMIS and LAS to produce timely, relevant and reliable data.	
<b>E:</b> The implementation of realistic evidence-based sector plans contributes to positive changes at the level of the overall <i>education system</i> .	Education sector plan implementation leads to improvements of previous shortcomings in the education system including in relation to:	
	Sector management (e.g., effective and efficient use of available resources).	
	Learning (e.g., appropriate and available education inputs – e.g., curricula, textbooks and other teaching/learning materials, school infrastructure, instructional time, school management).	
	Equity (e.g., removal of barriers to school participation for all learners).	
	There is sufficient national capacity (technical capabilities, political will, resources) or relevant technical assistance to analyze, report on and use available data and maintain EMIS and LAS.	
<b>F:</b> Education system-level improvements result in <i>improved learning outcomes</i> and in <i>improved equity, gender equality, and inclusion</i> in education.	Changes in the education system positively affect learning outcomes and equity.	
	Country-produced data on equity, efficiency and learning allow measuring/tracking these changes.	

# Appendix VIII Visual summary of contribution claims and assumptions

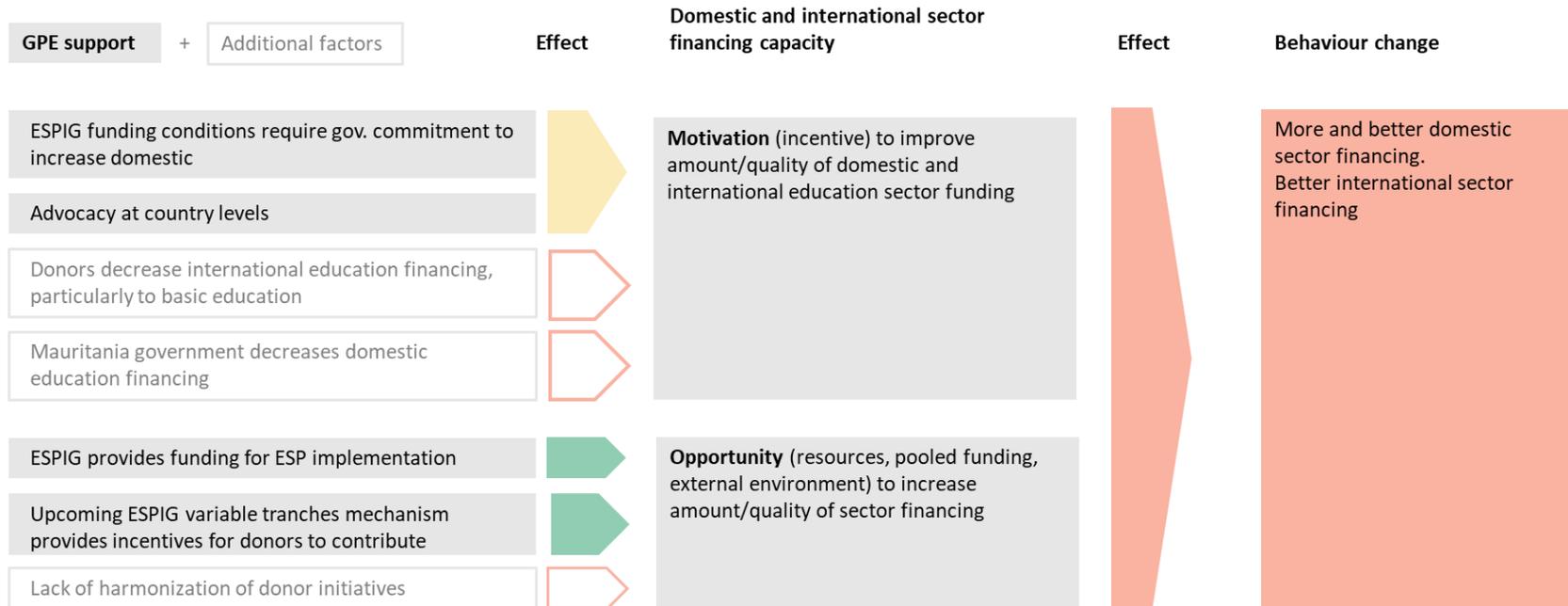
## PLANNING



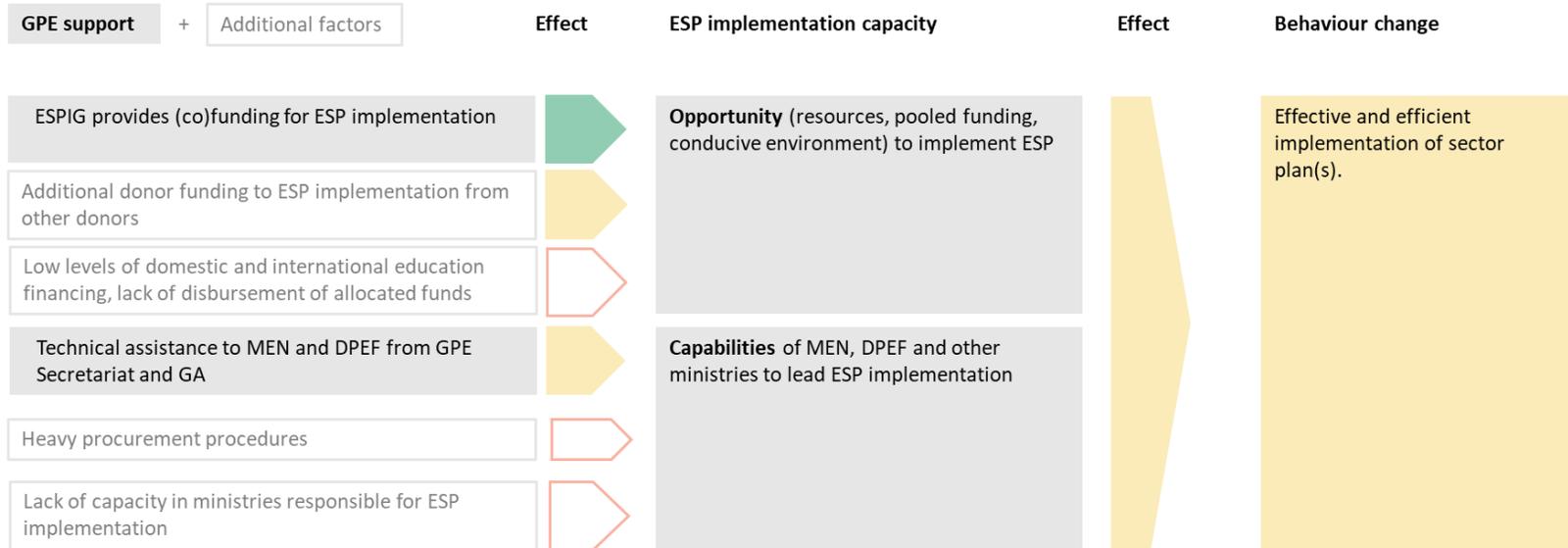
## Sector dialogue and monitoring



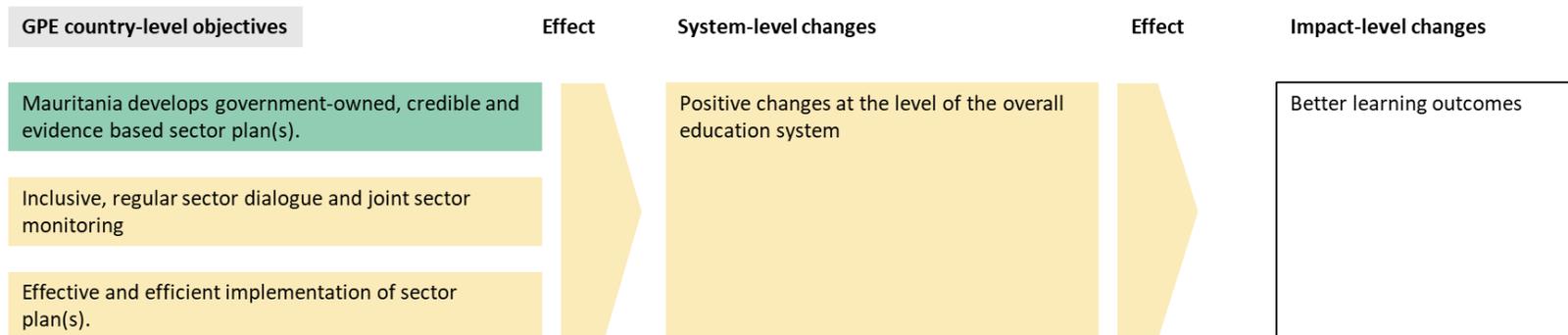
## Sector financing



## Sector plan implementation



## Contribution to system-level change and impact



## Appendix IX Data on GPE results framework indicators

*Table ix.1 GPE RF data on ESPIG Performance*

GPE RF INDICATOR / EVALUATION MATRIX INDICATOR	INDICATOR VALUE
<b>RF20: ESPIG supports EMIS/learning assessment system</b>	<p><b>On EMIS: yes</b></p> <p><b>On learning assessment system: yes</b></p>
<b>RF21: Proportion of textbook purchases of ESP funded through ESPIG</b>	<p><b>Insufficient data</b></p> <p>No data found in ESA 2017, GPE RF for Mauritania, or the ESPIG progress reports. PNDSE II and PASEB do not include explicit target for number of textbooks to be purchased.</p>
<b>RF 22: Proportion of teachers trained of ESP funded through ESPIG</b>	<p><b>Total number of teachers targeted to be trained by ESPIG: 63</b></p> <p><b>Proportion of teachers trained by ESPIG: 0 %</b></p> <p>ISR reports from the World Bank, dated December 2017 indicates that 101 teacher colleges faculty were trained.</p>
<b>RF 23: Proportion of classrooms built of ESP funded through ESPIG</b>	<p><b>Actual total number of classrooms built or rehabilitated by ESPIG: 28</b></p> <p><b>Total number of classrooms planned to be built or rehabilitated by ESPIG: 7</b></p> <p><b>Proportion of classrooms built or rehabilitated by ESPIG (Actual vs Planned numbers): 400%</b></p>
<b>RF 25: Progress made towards objectives/targets outlined in ESPIG agreement</b>	<p><b>Moderately satisfactory</b></p> <p>According to the GPE's RF 2017 data for Mauritania, the grant agent rated the ESPIG as moderately satisfactory and marked as slightly behind.</p> <p>In the most recent implementation status and results report (December 2017) the WB rated overall implementation progress as only 'moderately satisfactory'. This reflects gaps in overall performance, mainly in the delays of implementation of the ESPIG project.</p>

Table ix.2 GPE RF data - System-Level

GPE RESULTS FRAMEWORK INDICATORS	VALUES FOR MAURITANIA
<b>RF10: increased share of public expenditure allocated to education</b>	<p><b>Progress.</b></p> <p>The share of public expenditure allocated to education is below 20 percent but has increased between 2015 (14.7 percent) and 2016 (15.1 percent), GPE results framework data, 2017 collection.</p> <p>UIS data shows a different picture, with a decreasing share of public expenditure allocated to education from 16 percent in 2010 to 9.3 percent in 2016.</p>
<b>RF11: equitable allocation of teachers, as measured by the variance in the ratio of pupils to trained teachers across schools</b>	<p><b>Unsatisfactory level of equitable allocation of trained teachers</b></p> <p>The GPE's RF 2016 collection indicate that the R<sup>2</sup> value of the ratio of pupils to trained teachers across schools in Mauritania was not at a good standing with 0.75 for primary level education. This result is below the 0.8 threshold for the desired level of equitable allocation of trained teachers to pupils across districts.</p> <p>More recent data was not available in the GPE Results Framework or other available documents.</p>
<b>RF12: improved ratios of pupils to trained teachers at the primary level</b>	<p><b>Available data sources vary, data collected by the GoM indicates improvement in the ratio of pupils to trained teachers at the primary level since 2013</b></p> <p>GPE's RF for Mauritania 2016 data indicates a primary PTTR of 37.69 in 2016, below the threshold of 40. (GPE's RF for Mauritania 2016).</p> <p>The MEN annual censuses for 2016/2017 shows a primary PTTR of 41, an improvement since 2012 (primary PTTR of 46).</p>
<b>RF13: reduced student dropout and repetition rates</b>	<p><b>Limited data shows signs of improvement</b></p> <p>GPE data on the Internal Efficiency Coefficient (IEC) of Mauritania is sparse, with only one data point from 2004, 2008, and 2014.</p> <p>The Internal Efficiency Coefficient increased from 54.4 in 2014, to 67.05 in 2014, meaning that an increasing number of pupils at the primary level of education are completing the primary cycle.</p>
<b>RF14: the proportion of key education indicators the country reports to UIS</b>	<p><b>Mauritania is not reporting on enough key indicators</b></p> <p>Based on data up to 2017 available on the UIS website, Mauritania is reporting on nine indicators of the 12 specified indicators in 2015. Thus, the country is below the criteria of reporting on at least 10 of 12 indicators.</p> <p>The indicators Mauritania has not reported on are public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP, expenditure on education as percentage of public expenditure and expenditure in primary education as percentage of total educational expenditure.</p>
<b>RF15: the existence of a learning assessment system for basic education that meets quality standards</b>	<p><b>Mauritania' Assessment system is under development</b></p> <p>GPE's 2016 data on this indicator classifies Mauritania's learning assessment system as "under development" and therefore as not meeting quality standards.</p>
<b>RF16:</b> a) <b>Number of endorsed ESP/TEP quality</b>	<p><b>GPE's RF for the 2016 and 2017 collections do not have information on this indicator</b></p> <p>However, as noted in section 2.2 of the report, the appraisal of the ESP notes that</p>

GPE RESULTS FRAMEWORK INDICATORS	VALUES FOR MAURITANIA
<p><b>standards met by the ESP - that is, meeting at least 5 out of a possible total of 7 standards for ESPs, and at least 3 out of a possible total of 5 standards for TEPs.</b></p> <p>b) <b>Does the ESP have a teaching and learning strategy meeting quality standards?</b></p> <p>c) <b>Does the ESP have a strategy to respond to marginalized groups meet?</b></p> <p>d) <b>Does the ESP have a strategy to improve efficiency that meets quality standards? (4/5)</b></p>	<p>the PNDSE II was judged to be of good quality and met the vast majority of existing GPE (then FTI) standards and indicative funding requirements.</p>
<p><b>RF17: Country has a data strategy that meets quality standards to address data gaps in key outcome, service delivery and financing indicators.</b></p>	<p><b>GPE's RF for the 2016 and 2017 collections do not have information on this indicator</b></p>
<p><b>RF18: Total number of Joint Sector Reviews (JSR), which meet quality standard- that meet at least 3 out of 5 criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Mauritania meets three out of five of the JSRs criteria</b></p> <p>According to GPE 2017 data, Mauritania meets two (evidence-based, comprehensive) of the five (criteria not met are participatory and inclusive, a monitoring instrument, anchored into an effective policy cycle) therefore not meeting the quality standard (minimum of 3).</p>
<p><b>RF19: Local Education Group (LEG) has representation of both Civil Society Organization(s) (CSO) and Teacher Organization(s) (TO)</b></p>	<p><b>LEG partly representative</b></p> <p>According to the 2017 GPE data, civil society organizations are represented in the LEG in Mauritania, while teacher representation is not.</p> <p>However, it is important to note that the civil society representation in the LEG is limited to only the National Federation of Parent and Student Associations of Mauritania, and donors continue to encourage the government to enlarge civil society representation and make it more representative.</p>

Table ix.3 GPE RF data - Impact-Level

	LATEST DATA, ANY CHANGES BETWEEN BEFORE 2014 AND AFTER 2014
<b>RF1: Improved learning outcomes at primary level</b>	<b>GPE's RF for the 2016 and 2017 collections do not have information on this indicator</b>
<b>RF2: More children under five years developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial wellbeing</b>	<b>Insufficient data to make an assessment</b> GPE's RF 2016's data on Mauritania only provided UNICEF data for 2011, when Mauritania's Early Child Development Index score was 57.9.
<b>RF3: Increased number of children in school supported by GPE</b>	<b>Overall increase in the number of children in schools supported by GPE</b> The number of children in GPE-supported primary schools increased from 54,074 students in 2016 to 72,129 in 2017. Similarly, number of children in GPE-supported lower secondary schools increased from 5,301 in 2016 to 7,071 in 2017.
<b>RF4: Improved primary and lower secondary completion rates, total and by gender (using Gross Intake Ratio to the last grade of primary/lower secondary education as a proxy)</b>	<b>At the primary level:</b> Gross intake ratio in last grade (GIR): 68.05. GIR female: 70.09. GIR male: 66.08. <b>At the lower secondary level:</b> GIR: 31.23 GIR female: 31.10. GIR male: 31.37.
<b>RF5: Improved gender equity in primary and lower secondary completion rates (measured by Gender Parity Index of completion)</b>	<b>At the primary level:</b> Gender Parity Index: 1.06 <b>At the lower secondary level:</b> Gender Parity Index: 0.99
<b>RF6: Increased pre-primary gross enrollment</b>	Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of pre-primary education: 10.22 (GER) of pre-primary education, female: 11.44 (GER) of pre-primary education, male: 9.05
<b>RF7: Reduced out-of-school rates, total and by gender, for children of primary school age, and children of lower secondary school age</b>	GPE's RF for 2016 <b>At the primary level:</b> Out-of-school children rate: 24.92 Out-of-school female rate: 23.17 Out-of-school male rate: 26.62 <b>Lower secondary level:</b> Out-of-school children rate: 41.52 Out-of-school female rate: 40.79 Out-of-school male rate: 42.23

## Appendix X Progress toward ESPIG objectives

PASEB COMPONENT	INDICATORS	TARGET	ACHIEVED	STATUS 2017
Improving the quality of primary education	Number of ENI administrative staff trained	41	41	Met
	Number of ENI faculty trained	101	101	Met
	Educational resources available at ENIs	Yes	Yes	Met
	Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL supported by the Project	1,019	1,019	Met
	Number of pedagogical kits distributed in the six targeted wilayas through the project	403,283	445,437	Met
Promoting equity in access to lower secondary school	Number of classrooms constructed in targeted wilayas with support from the project	52	52	Met
	Number of girls receiving an award	480	352	Not met
	Number of awareness campaigns carried out to promote girls' education with NGOs in each of the six targeted wilayas	9	6	Not met
	Number of teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural schools who attended awareness-raising training sessions	250	0	Not met
	Number of girls provided with pedagogical kits in the six targeted wilayas	18,879	18,879	Met
Strengthening the system's management capacity	System of learning assessment established and functional	Yes	Yes	Met
	Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey completed <sup>287</sup>	Yes	No	Not met
	Integrated EMIS (network system) is operational within the State Ministry of Education (MEE) and the regional offices	Yes	No	Not met
	Number of DRENs personnel trained in data collection and analysis	70	70	Met
	Number of staff trained on EMIS	285	0	Not Met
	Number of meetings of the education sector group	7	15	Met

<sup>287</sup> At the time of the evaluation field work in Nouakchott in August 2018, the SDI report has been drafted and was awaiting approval for publication.