

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

[This FAQ relates to the **Tool for Strengthening the Effectiveness of Local Education Groups**.](#)

General

> What is meant by 'local education group'?

'Local education group' is a generic term used by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to define a country-led coordinating structure/platform for education sector planning and dialogue. The group is not a separate mechanism set up for GPE processes, but rather, a structure for education aid coordination and policy dialogue that most countries have in place. These groups are named differently in each country. While using the self-assessment tool, if it wishes to do so, the technical team can replace the term local education group with the name of the platform to ensure a common understanding across members of the group.

> What was the local education group pilot?

The local education group pilot trialed the initial tool with the engagement of group stakeholders in 14 countries across diverse country contexts between November 2019 and June 2020. This was one of two pilots of the [Effective Partnership Rollout](#), the other being a pilot on coordination agency/ministry of education financing to support sector coordination. The local education group pilot explored several elements in relation to the tool, including the motivation of ministries of education and their partners to engage with a self-assessment of the effectiveness of sector coordination mechanisms, utility of the tool and its fitness for purpose, its adaptability to respond to different needs in diverse contexts, support mechanisms for efficient use, and resourcing required and mechanisms for monitoring the tool's use.

Lessons learned and user feedback generated through this pilot allowed for revision of the tool, whose content was consolidated throughout, keeping the tool's basic foundations, as well as development of "how to" guidance informed by user practices. The revised version is lighter, more manageable, immediately accessible, and accompanied by a collection of country examples.

GPE's Grants and Performance Committee had oversight of the pilot, with two reporting points on progress and lessons in June and November 2020, respectively.

Purpose of tool and review

> Why undertake a self-assessment?

Self-assessments are useful to collectively reflect on the core factors contributing to (or hindering) the success of a partnership. Partnership assessment tools are often designed for use by *external* evaluators to

establish summative evaluations of progress or impact. Self-assessment exercises are different, as these are formative in nature (generating information to help improve and shape effectiveness at any point in time) and are organized and conducted by stakeholders themselves. They can help partnership members gain important insights on how partnerships function and on how their practices, in turn, impact strategic effectiveness. Given the complexity of factors influencing the way education stakeholders work with each other, a systematic and country-specific approach to identifying partnership strengths and challenges has been recommended.¹

> Why is it important to review education sector coordination mechanisms?

Collaboration and the efficient leveraging of sector expertise and assets are key aspects of strong education systems, especially in contexts where resources are limited. Local education groups – as a collaborative forum for education sector policy dialogue under government leadership – have an important role to play in coordinating and synchronizing stakeholder efforts but require dynamic leadership, healthy partnership dynamics and organizational efficiency as the basis of their effectiveness.

Group members can use the tool as a diagnostic and rear-view framework to identify the capacities, resources and actions needed to strengthen sector dialogue and coordination. The insights should enable a continuum of improvement strategies, from the renewal of the group’s policy dialogue and coordination ambitions to practical adjustments to organizational and collaborative frameworks.

Use of the tool

> How often should we assess our coordination body?

Whether comprehensive or more targeted, assessments can be undertaken annually or biannually. The tool can be used to “take the pulse” of the partnership whenever a need for improvement and reflection is perceived; for example, during sector reform processes. Once baselines are established, a full or partial assessment can be conducted periodically to assess progress made since the previous review, generate learning, and identify areas for continuous improvement. It may also benefit the partnership to target specific areas identified in the baseline data as the focus of attention on a more frequent basis. As with other diagnostic tools, assessments should be followed through with feasible improvement plans that support local education group effectiveness and change.

> How much time is recommended for completing the exercise?

A minimum of two consultations is recommended to complete the exercise. This includes at least one session to introduce the tool, build a shared understanding of the assessment purposes and process (if the approach is collective), run the assessment and clarify how the findings might be used. The second session (once findings have been analyzed, synthesized, disseminated for preliminary feedback, and incorporated into outputs by the task team) would focus on discussion of the results, action planning and agreement on the next steps.

> How does COVID-19 affect the use of the self-assessment tool?

Country partners have communicated that effective sector coordination mechanisms are critical to efficient prioritization of needs when sector processes are under stress. The global COVID-19 pandemic has required

¹ [Independent Summative Evaluation of the GPE 2020](#). MDF Training & Consultancy Ede, May 2020

countries to react very quickly to emergent development challenges and allocate resources more strategically; therefore, the value of assessment tools has gained even greater importance. The tool has been tested during the pandemic, which has changed the nature and modalities of activities. It has then been reviewed to ensure that it retains relevance, even when the process for using the tool may be affected.

> **Can the tool be used by recently established local education groups?**

The self-assessment tool can be used at different times in the lifecycle of a local education group or any other education coordinating body (emerging, well-defined and/or well-functioning groups). For newly formed groups, or groups that do not have a system for reviewing their performance, the tool can be used to establish baseline information that can be used as a reference in subsequent reviews to assess progress.

> **Can the tool be used in fragile and conflict-affected contexts?**

The self-assessment tool was tested in diverse contexts, including partner countries affected by fragility and conflict. The pilot has shown that as long as dedicated leadership, oversight capacities, and resourcing (e.g., coordinating agency, appointed administrator or third party) are available to drive and optimize the process, the tool can help identify the challenges that influence sectoral dialogue and key areas for improvement.

> **Do we need to use this tool as part of the application process for GPE grants?**

The self-assessment exercise is voluntary. The tool is made available as part of GPE's enhanced support to strengthening sector coordination, recognized as an enabling condition for system transformation in GPE's new strategy, GPE 2025. While there is no expectation for local education groups to undertake this exercise, if completed, it could be referenced in the application package for GPE's system transformation grant.

Considerations for trade-offs

> **Should we prioritize inclusion or a selective representation of constituents?**

The preferred option would always be to secure broad inclusion and engagement of all group members in the assessment to gather a wide range of perspectives. If time and resource constraints do not allow for such inclusion, the review can be undertaken by a smaller group. The task team should seek to ensure that different stakeholder groups are represented to the extent possible so that the outputs reflect a multi-stakeholder review.

> **Should we adopt a comprehensive or targeted approach?**

It depends on the country situation, specific objective of the exercise and resources available. A comprehensive assessment will enable education groups to establish a baseline on sector coordination mechanisms and their effectiveness, which can be used to monitor progress over the longer term. A targeted assessment allows more dedicated time on issues that are signaled as relevant to strategic goals and organizational/collaborative priorities. The latter might be more important in countries where the education groups have a long history and have already evolved significantly since their creation.

> **Should we consider online or offline approaches?**

The choice has implications for assessment approaches. Where meetings are chosen (especially online meetings) as the approach for running the assessment, the task team should consider the need for facilitators

or rapporteurs to guide the process. Where survey formats are in consideration, the team should consider whether a technician is needed, and most importantly, whether it is efficient and feasible in the country context to run the assessment as an online or paper survey. For instance, it is not recommended to cover three dimensions in a survey format due to risk of user fatigue.

Online and paper surveys do have certain advantages as they can facilitate anonymous responses and aggregation of results; however, their success depends not only on connectivity. Response rates can be low if it is generally challenging to mobilize individuals to participate. This approach should therefore be only considered where group members are already well engaged.

> **Should we produce a brief output or a detailed report?**

The choice depends on the resources available—including time, staff, and other commitments— and the intended use of results. Choosing a light-touch output does not mean less value; on the contrary, a succinct report can be very instrumental in structuring a dialogue and documenting the results. On the other hand, a detailed report is valuable for generating more comprehensive evidence, which can inform parallel activities and processes undertaken by the local education group.