Formative Evaluation of GPE’s Support for Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

Preliminary findings from the primary data collection
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Presentation to GPE Board, May 28, 2021
Evaluation Questions

• The suitability of GPE support and grant mechanisms

• The type and relevance of interventions undertaken with GPE COVID-19 AF grants

• The efficiency and (early) effectiveness of GPE COVID-19 grants
Methodology: **Rapid Research Appraisal**

Desk based review of secondary data and documentation

FORMATIVE EVALUATION REPORT

COUNTRY REVIEWS
- Afghanistan
- DRC
- Ghana
- Lesotho
- OECS
- Senegal

Key Informant Interviews: Country and Global Level
RQ1: The suitability of GPE support and grant mechanisms

“GPE filled a big hole… it was done quickly and efficiently”

- **GPE support encouraged global and regional coordination, learning and knowledge sharing**

- **Timeliness and adequacy of funds** was commended:
  - Rapidity of COVID-19 funding window design, review and approval of grants to 66 countries
  - Responsiveness of GPE to increase funding window up to US$500 million

- Majority of stakeholders: **first come first served approach** was not the appropriate strategy

- GPE Secretariat demonstrated agility in their recognition of a change being required and adapted to a more **needs-based approach**.

- Robust **internal process that was replicable and trackable** and the **GPE Secretariat’s efforts and support were highlighted and commended**.

- **High quality COVID-19 grant applications were received** despite tight application deadlines

- Benefit of GPE model is that it **empowers governments to take ownership of the process and the multistakeholder nature of the operating model** allows for the **strengths of many organizations** to be brought together to support partner countries
RQ1: The suitability of GPE support and grant mechanisms

“We can benefit from the things done now long after the pandemic has ended”

• **Changing nature of COVID-19 and different waves of school closing** required a less structured and more adaptable approach.

• **System strengthening and long-term capacity strengthening** – not an objective of the AF grants but progress on this front in some countries.

• Some stakeholders indicated that **reporting requirements** are too frequent.

• **Core indicators noted to be useful however context specific indicators may be more relevant.**

“the need to build the bike while we were riding it”
RQ2: The type and relevance of interventions undertaken with GPE COVID-19 AF grants

“Flexibility in terms of programmatic choice was key combined with the rigour of process”

• Prerequisite for COVID-19 AF grants to be based on COVID-19 response plans developed by countries (and GPE funding of plan development) helped lay important technical groundwork.

• Focus on gender inequality and marginalisation – prevalent feature within scoring criteria reflected in grant applications.

• Spotlight on the role of ICT – took different form in different contexts.

• Experience with emergency situations – determined country capacity to respond.

• Grants were well-aligned with other efforts in country

• Covid-19 AF grants bridged a gap – addressing immediate emergency needs and ensuring the safe return to school allowing the opportunity for ongoing grants to remain focused on longer term educational goals.
RQ3: The efficiency and (early) effectiveness of GPE COVID-19 grants

Implementation

I. Grant allocation as costed (in US$ millions)
- Mitigation: 267.60, 61%
- Recovery: 168.89, 39%

II. Grant allocation as costed, by category (in US$ millions)
- Equity: 105.85, 24%
- Learning: 165.84, 38%
- System resilience and reopening: 164.79, 38%
RQ3: The efficiency and (early) effectiveness of GPE COVID-19 grants

“Lots of people have come to the table .. all working together for the good of the region”

• Early signs of effectiveness in certain categories of interventions and some where it has been more challenging: realism is required when assessing reach and learning.

• Many countries have faced issues with procurement: according to some stakeholders in some countries these issues have been alleviated through the multi stakeholder nature of the GPE model e.g. in this instance UNICEF being experienced in this regard

• Country level coordination mechanisms: overall these were deemed effective with all country level stakeholders meaningfully engaged and consulted. LEG played an important role in the process.

• Strategic partnerships and collaborations were activated/ leveraged through the grant process.
Innovations and good practice examples

“Some of the unfinished business problems before COVID may ... be addressable by some of the interventions tested as a result of COVID”

- **Learning**: measuring learning outcomes to a greater extent than ever before and building the capacity of the ministries to measure learning loss e.g. Afghanistan

- **Access**: in Pakistan – used this situation as an opportunity to engage with technology to reach vulnerable populations not reached in the past; Lesotho – use of WhatsApp and audio books to further reach.

- **Gender equality** – flexible learning solutions for girls and protection from GBV and exploitation e.g. in Senegal

- **Quality teaching**: engaging with teachers as critical stakeholders through teacher and teacher union workshops as well as teacher training e.g. Lesotho

- **Innovative partnerships** e.g. in DRC with CSOs and in OECS/ Zimbabwe with private telecom companies; In Senegal with private sector such as Microsoft and Huawei (e.g. distribution of tablets for distance learning).
Possible areas of focus for forthcoming summative evaluation

Too early to assess effectiveness in this current formative evaluation, therefore, the summative could focus on following potential areas (in collaboration with PILC):

• **Effectiveness by grant features**: how well are the varied categories of interventions being achieved?

• **Assessing whether the grants reached specific populations** e.g. girls, marginalized populations, children with disabilities, refugees etc.

• **Provision vs utilization** e.g. WASH

• **Indicators**: which specific indicators have been useful?

• **Identify activities that can be sustained and scaled-up** e.g. online content, blended education provision.

• **Leverage on collaborations** with critical stakeholders such as teachers.

• **Rapid response** may have implications for **transactions costs**, distortions and fiduciary risk. Working within existing instruments and revising existing structures with due process may be more effective?

• **Pros and cons of GPE COVID approach** in partner countries e.g. specific emergency response team within GPE for future situations
Reflections and Questions for discussion

• Any questions regarding the findings?
• How do the current findings inform the design and implementation of the new operating model?
• What specifically do we need to learn from the final summative COVID-19 evaluation?