

Document of
The World Bank
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Report No: ICR00004737

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION AND RESULTS REPORT

TF016390

ON A

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION GRANT

IN THE AMOUNT OF US\$12.4 MILLION EQUIVALENT

TO THE

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

FOR THE

Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (BESSP)

May 31, 2019

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective May 14, 2019)

Currency Unit = MRU

37.035 = US\$1

US\$ = SDR1

FISCAL YEAR

July 1 - June 30

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFD	French Development Agency (<i>Agence Française de Développement</i>)
BESSP	Basic Education Sector Support Project
BPM	<i>Banque Populaire de Mauritanie</i>
CNE	National Student Learning Assessment Unit (<i>Cellule Nationale d'Évaluation</i>)
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
CREL	Language Research Center (<i>Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes des Langues</i>)
DA	Designated Account
DGSPC	General Directorate of Strategy, Planning, and Cooperation <i>Direction (Générale de la Stratégie, Planification et Coopération)</i>
DP	Development Partner
DPEF	Directorate of Education and Training Projects (<i>Direction des Projets Education Formation</i>)
DPO	Development Policy Operation
DREN	Regional Directorate of Education (<i>Direction Régionale de l'Éducation</i>)
DSPC	Directorate of Statistics, Planning, and Cooperation (<i>Direction des Statistiques, de la Planification et de la Coopération</i>)
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENI	Primary schoolteachers training institute (<i>Ecole Normale des Instituteurs</i>)
ESDP	Education Section Development Plan
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
FM	Financial Management
GA	Grant Agreement
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GOM	Government of Mauritania
GPC	Grants and Performance Committee
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDI	Human Development Index
IBRD	The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICR	Implementation Completion and Results Report
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IDA	International Development Association
IDEN	Departmental Inspectorate of Education (<i>Inspection Départementale de l'Education Nationale</i>)
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IFR	Interim Financial Report
IP	Implementation Progress
IPF	Investment Project Financing
IRI	Intermediate Result Indicator
IRR	Internal Rate of Return
ISR	Implementation Status and Results Report
JSR	Joint Sector Review

LEG	Local Education Group
MEE	State Ministry of Education (<i>Ministère d'État à l'Éducation</i>)
MEN	Ministry of Education (<i>Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale</i>)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NPV	Net Present Value
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PASEC	Program of Analysis of Education Systems of CONFEMEN (<i>Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN</i>)
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PDO	Project Development Objective
PNDSE	Education Sector Development Plan (<i>Programme National de Développement du Secteur de l'Éducation</i>)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Support Program
RESEN	Country Education Status Report (<i>Rapports d'Etat des Systèmes Éducatifs Nationaux</i>)
RF	Results Framework
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
SDI	Service Delivery Indicator
TA	Technical Assistance
TF	Trust Fund
TIMMS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DATA SHEET	1
I. PROJECT CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES.....	5
A. CONTEXT AT APPRAISAL	5
B. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES DURING IMPLEMENTATION (IF APPLICABLE)	12
II OUTCOME	17
A. RELEVANCE OF PDOs	17
B. ACHIEVEMENT OF PDOs (EFFICACY)	19
C. EFFICIENCY	25
D. JUSTIFICATION OF OVERALL OUTCOME RATING	28
E. OTHER OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS (IF ANY).....	30
III. KEY FACTORS THAT AFFECTED IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOME.....	31
A. KEY FACTORS DURING PREPARATION	31
B. KEY FACTORS DURING IMPLEMENTATION	34
IV. BANK PERFORMANCE, COMPLIANCE ISSUES, AND RISK TO DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME	35
A. QUALITY OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)	35
B. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND FIDUCIARY COMPLIANCE	38
C. BANK PERFORMANCE	39
D. RISK TO DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME	40
V. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	41
ANNEX 1. RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND KEY OUTPUTS.....	44
ANNEX 2. BANK LENDING AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT/SUPERVISION.....	64
ANNEX 3. PROJECT COST BY COMPONENT	66
ANNEX 4. EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS.....	67
ANNEX 5. BORROWER’S COMPLETION REPORT	82
ANNEX 6. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	86



DATA SHEET

BASIC INFORMATION

Product Information

Project ID	Project Name
P126902	Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (BEESP)
Country	Financing Instrument
Mauritania	Investment Project Financing
Original EA Category	Revised EA Category
Partial Assessment (B)	

Organizations

Borrower	Implementing Agency
Islamic Republic of Mauritania	DPEF

Project Development Objective (PDO)

Original PDO

The development objective of the proposed operation is to improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education and to promote equitable access to lower secondary education.

**FINANCING**

	Original Amount (US\$)	Revised Amount (US\$)	Actual Disbursed (US\$)
World Bank Financing			
TF-16390	12,400,000	12,400,000	12,243,001
Total	12,400,000	12,400,000	12,243,001
Non-World Bank Financing			
Borrower/Recipient	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0
Total Project Cost	12,400,000	12,400,000	12,243,001

KEY DATES

Approval	Effectiveness	MTR Review	Original Closing	Actual Closing
06-Feb-2014	19-May-2014	23-May-2016	01-May-2017	30-Nov-2018

RESTRUCTURING AND/OR ADDITIONAL FINANCING

Date(s)	Amount Disbursed (US\$M)	Key Revisions
28-Apr-2017	9.31	Change in Results Framework Change in Loan Closing Date(s)
31-Aug-2017	9.79	Change in Results Framework Change in Loan Closing Date(s) Change in Institutional Arrangements Change in Implementation Schedule

KEY RATINGS

Outcome	Bank Performance	M&E Quality
Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Substantial



RATINGS OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN ISRs

No.	Date ISR Archived	DO Rating	IP Rating	Actual Disbursements (US\$M)
01	24-Jun-2014	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	0
02	29-Dec-2014	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	1.20
03	27-Jun-2015	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	2.36
04	04-Jan-2016	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	4.13
05	04-Aug-2016	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	6.93
06	24-Apr-2017	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	9.10
07	18-Dec-2017	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	10.17
08	07-Jun-2018	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	11.15
09	18-Dec-2018	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	12.24

SECTORS AND THEMES

Sectors

Major Sector/Sector (%)

Education 100

Public Administration - Education 30

Primary Education 8

Secondary Education 46

Tertiary Education 16

Themes

Major Theme/ Theme (Level 2)/ Theme (Level 3) (%)

Human Development and Gender 100

Education 100

Access to Education 50

Education Financing 50



ADM STAFF

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I. PROJECT CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

A. CONTEXT AT APPRAISAL

Context

1. **Country context.** At the time of appraisal of the Basic Education Sector Support Project (BEESP) in 2014, Mauritania had a population of about 3.5 million and a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of about US\$1,160 (2011). The country had experienced significant structural changes since the 1970s: a sharp decline in the importance of agriculture mostly due to repeated droughts and a massive rural-urban exodus which reduced drastically the share of the nomadic population and has led to an increase in the share of the urban population to above 60 percent¹. This rapid urbanization had triggered high and growing demand for education, housing, employment, health, administrative, and other services. It has also placed significant pressure on existing social services, resulted in the degradation of living conditions of households and the breakdown of traditional structures of mutual aid and protection. The rate of population growth had been estimated at about 2.3 percent.

2. Poverty affected a major portion of the country's population, particularly those living in rural areas. At appraisal, the country ranked 161 out of 187 on the 2014 Human Development Index (HDI) scale. According to the latest available poverty assessment at appraisal (based on 2008 household data), poverty had declined slightly from 46.7 percent in 2004 to 42 percent in 2008². Important disparities existed between urban and rural areas. While poverty had declined from 28.9 percent in 2004 to 20.8 percent in 2008 in urban areas, the rate remained deeply entrenched and unchanged (59 percent) in rural areas where 78 percent of the poor live. Poverty also varied significantly between regions. Main constraints to poverty reduction in Mauritania included a weak rural economy, dependence on capital intensive sectors such as mining and industrial fishing, a political economy which undermined a redistribution policy, vulnerability to exogenous shocks such as droughts, floods and locust infestations and commodity price fluctuations for key exports and imports.

3. **Sector context.** Mauritania had made progress in the education sector at the time of appraisal. The gross enrolment rate (GER) at the primary level had reached 91 percent in 2011, with a gender parity index of 1.06. The primary retention rate had increased from 44 percent in 1991 to 65 percent in 2011, completion rate from 47 percent to 61 percent, and repetition rate had decreased from 15 percent to 2.7 percent. Beyond the expansion of primary education, the focus of the Government's efforts had shifted to issues of quality, including the lack of qualified and well-trained teachers, and the expansion of lower secondary schools to provide an incentive for families to keep children, especially girls in school. At the time of appraisal, girls' enrolment in secondary education remained low, especially in rural and poor areas, reaching only 45.9 percent. This was particularly due to (i) the lack of secondary schools in remote regions (*wilayas*), (ii) the distances girls have to travel to reach the nearest secondary schools, and (iii) the limited number of female teachers willing to move to remote areas. Furthermore, learning outcomes at all levels of the education system remained low. Standardized tests, such as the 2004 PASEC, showed that learning achievements at the primary level declined, while retention and completion rates improved.

¹ The capital city Nouakchott hosted approximately one-third of the total population.

² Bank staff estimated that the poverty level has not changed between 2008 and 2013: it was estimated at 42 percent in 2013.



4. Despite the relatively promising sectoral outlook presented at appraisal stage, the Mauritanian education system remains very weak today and faces enormous challenges at all levels. In the recent World Bank Human Capital Index (HCI, 2018), Mauritania was ranked 150 out of 157 countries mainly because of the education indicator. The HCI showed that Mauritians born today will only reach 35 percent of their productivity potential due to deficiencies in human capital formation. Access remains an unfinished agenda with more than 236,000 children aged 6-15 years (24 percent of total age-group) remaining out-of-school (MICS 2015). Quality of education is the most significant challenge faced by the sector. Even though the average 18-year old is expected to have received 6.3 years of schooling, this number goes down to 3.4 when adjusted for the quality of education or 2.9 years lost. Mauritanian children lose almost half of the time they spend at school learning very little due to a range of reasons including: dilapidated schools with inadequate infrastructure, incomplete schools with grade gaps, lack of textbooks or learning materials, teachers' absenteeism leading to lower instructional time for pupils, and most importantly, teachers who do not master the curriculum they teach and have extremely low pedagogical content knowledge.

5. A fundamental reform of the Mauritanian education system had taken place in 1999 when the Government of Mauritania (GoM) unified the two education sub-systems that coexisted in the country (one sub-system used French and another sub-system used Arabic). Previously, each sub-system was characterized by its specific language of instruction. Maintaining this dual system was costly but effectively contributed to creating scission in the society. As a result, the Government launched a ten-year Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) to make education more relevant by combining the existing education sub-systems into one unified system, where Arabic and French are the main languages of instruction. However, the implementation of this 1999 reform remains a significant challenge for the government. A major reason is the very low number of French or bilingual teachers, as 80 percent of the pool of would-be teachers were trained in Arabic as part of the 1979 reform. Teacher training institutes (*Ecole Normale des Instituteurs* - ENIs) continue to struggle to produce bilingual teachers, creating a large gap in the number of teachers for French or mathematics and science in primary schools. Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is also extremely low in Mauritania. ENIs enroll a very poorly prepared pool of would-be teachers and send them to teach before they are ready for the classroom. After two decades, the system still has not made any progress in finding an effective solution to the challenge of producing sufficient numbers of French or bilingual teachers, which requires that the quality of the flow of teachers that enter into the system needs to be tackled.

6. Poor sector management and governance continues to penalize the education sector's performance. Decision-making is centralized in Nouakchott with little involvement of decentralized regional and departmental administrations. Governance at the school level is also poor with no participation of the community. Highly centralized decision making, weak monitoring due to the size of the country and limited capacity, lack of transparency and involvement of stakeholders at the school level result in inefficient allocation and use of resources.

7. At the time of appraisal, the Government's follow up strategy ESDP II (2011–2020) built on lessons learned from the evaluation of ESDP I (2001–2010) and sought to provide improved access to 10 years of good quality education for the vast majority of Mauritanian children while achieving equity and make secondary education, technical and vocational training, and higher education more relevant to the labor market needs. To operationalize the ESDP II, the Government developed a mid-term Basic Education Development Plan (2012-2015) (which was fully endorsed by the Local Education Group – LEG) which focuses on the following three key areas: (i) improving the quality of education; (ii) increasing access; and (iii) strengthening sector governance and management. The BESSP was part of the GoM



ESDP II efforts to implement the Basic Education Development Plan (2012-2015) and was designed as a three-year Investment Project Financing (IPF) operation in response to the GoM's request to provide just-in-time support to a specific subsector, as spelled out in its request to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) was acting as Trustee for the GPE funds.

8. **Rationale for World Bank involvement.** The World Bank's Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) for Mauritania for 2013-2016³ focused on supporting the GoM's efforts to implement its third Poverty Reduction Support Program (PRSP III). The project contributed to the third pillar – *Developing Human Capital and Enhancing Access to Basic Services* – which underscored the importance of investing in human capital as a key development priority. The comprehensive education agenda covered primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as TVET and literacy, and focused on improving the quality and relevance of education at all levels as well as closing educational disparities based on gender, socioeconomic characteristics, and geographical location. The project also supported the World Bank's 2011 Africa Strategy, which recognized education as a key ingredient to growth and opportunities. The strategy highlighted the need for client countries to focus on education quality, learning outcomes and making education accessible to those in remote areas. Lastly, the project was aligned with the GPE strategic objectives, particularly those related to learning outcomes and girls' education. The BESSP was, therefore, fully consistent with Bank and Government strategies and contributed to the strategic priorities identified through focused interventions in support of the GoM's ESDP II.

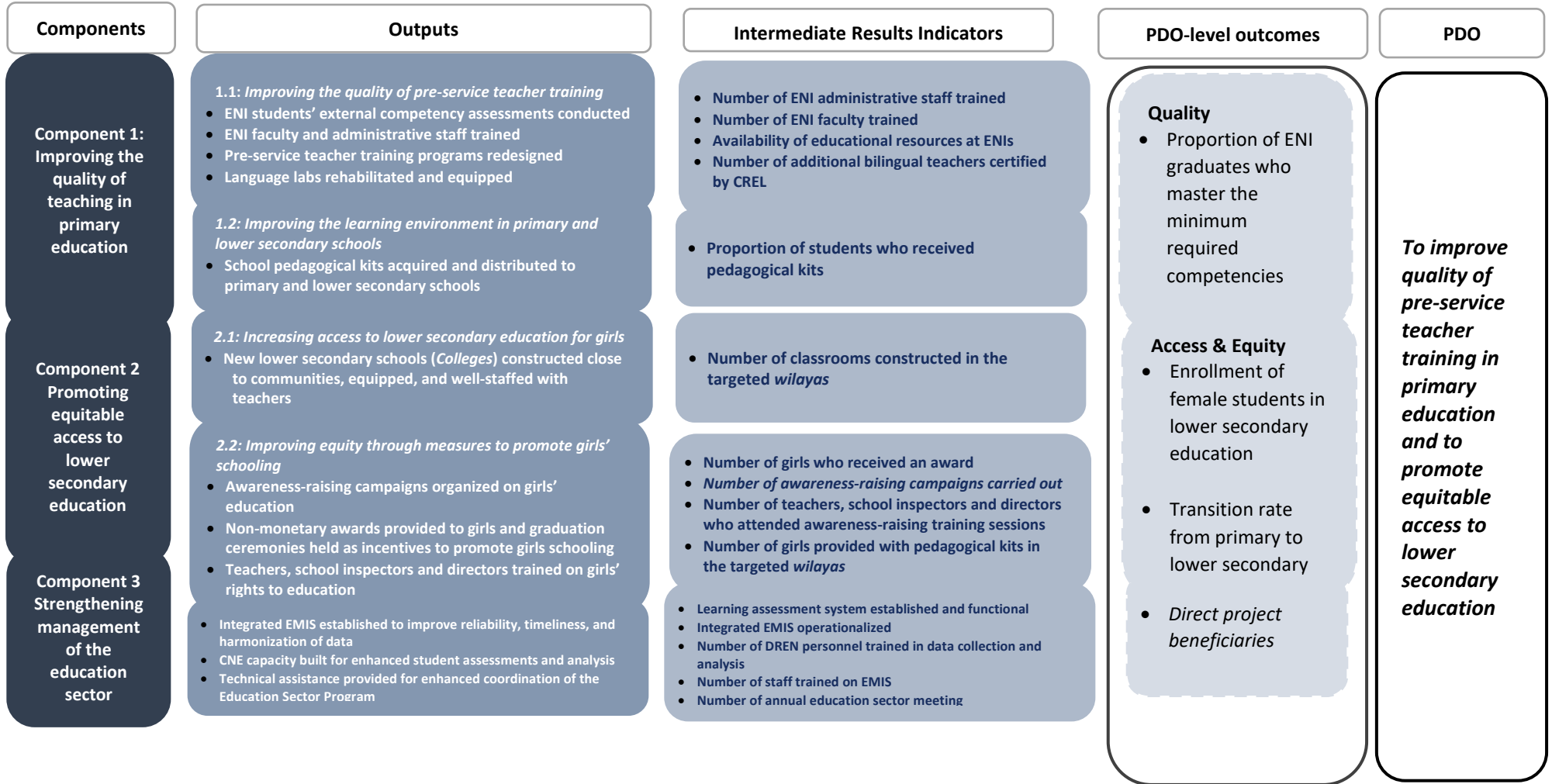
Theory of Change (Results Chain)

9. The Project Appraisal Document (PAD) did not illustrate the project's results chain, as this was not a requirement nor a standard practice at the time of project preparation. However, in this Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR), Figure 1 was created to show the theory of change underpinning the project. As shown in Figure 1, the project's interventions were designed to promote the achievement of the project's objectives, and the project's outputs were closely linked to the expected intermediate results indicators (IRIs) and to the Project Development Objective (PDO).

³ World Bank (2013). Country Partnership Strategy for the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the Period FY2014-2016.



Figure 1. Theory of Change: Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project





Project Development Objectives (PDOs)

10. The PDO stated in the Global Partnership for Education Fund Grant Agreement (GA) is “to improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education and to promote equitable access to lower secondary education”. The PDO statements in the PAD and the GA are consistent.

Key Expected Outcomes and Outcome Indicators

11. The ICR notes that the PDO consists of the following key outcomes: (i) improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education and (ii) increased equitable access to lower secondary education. For each outcome, the success of the project in terms of meeting its key objectives was based upon the review of its PDO-level indicators as well as several intermediate results indicators (IRIs) for more robust assessment (see section II.B Achievement of PDO). All key performance indicators were selected after in-depth discussions with counterparts and education sector stakeholders during project appraisal and were relevant to assessing the project’s development outcome. The intermediate outcome indicators effectively captured activities relevant to each component and linked these to the overall project outcomes.

Outcome 1: Improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education

12. Improved quality of pre-service teacher training was measured by the following indicators:

- Proportion of ENI graduates mastering the minimum required competencies (**PDO-level Indicator**)
- Number of ENI administrative staff trained (IRI)
- Number of ENI faculty trained (IRI)
- Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL (*Centre de Recherche et d’Etudes des Langues*) (IRI)
- Availability of educational resources at ENIs (IRI)

Outcome 2: Increased equitable access to lower secondary education

13. Increased equitable access was measured by the following indicators:

- Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the targeted *wilayas* (**PDO-level Indicator**)
- Enrollment of female students in lower secondary schools in the targeted *wilayas* (**PDO-level Indicator**)
- Number of classrooms constructed in the targeted *wilayas* (IRI)
- Number of girls receiving an award (IRI)
- Number of awareness-raising campaigns carried out to promote girls’ education (IRI)
- Number of teachers, school inspectors and directors who attended awareness-raising training sessions (IRI)

14. In addition, the project included an overarching PDO-level indicator which informed both Outcome 1 and Outcome 2 - direct project beneficiaries (*of which percentage female*).



Components

15. The BESSP consisted of three components: (i) improving the quality of teaching in primary education; (ii) promoting equitable access to lower secondary education; and (iii) strengthening management of the education sector.

Component 1: Improving quality of teaching in primary education (Estimated Cost US\$4.0 million. Actual cost: US\$3.82 million)

16. This component aimed at supporting pedagogical reforms in pre-service teacher training, focusing on the two existing primary schoolteacher training institutes (*Ecole Normale des Instituteurs* – ENIs). It also aimed at supporting the provision of pedagogical tools to schools in order to improve the learning environment. The component had two sub-components:

17. **Sub-component 1.1: Improving the quality of pre-service teacher training (Estimated Cost US\$2.00 million. Actual cost: US\$1.96 million).** This sub-component was designed to support quality improvement of pre-service training programs offered by the two ENIs in Mauritania, one located in Nouakchott and one in the city of Aioun. The objective of the sub-component was to be achieved through (i) the re-design of pre-service training programs, emphasizing language skills development and more practical teaching prior to certification, and restructuring of training course content to balance the student teacher’s mastery of content and pedagogical methodology; (ii) the provision of content and pedagogical training for the ENI faculty to improve the quality of teaching; (iii) the provision of training for ENI administrative staff on the overall management of the institutes; (iv) the introduction of an external competency assessment for each new student cohort at the beginning of their training program to assess their level when entering the ENI; (v) an external competency assessment to students of the second and third year of ENI training during the first year of the project in order to design remedial pedagogical actions; (vi) the acquisition and distribution of language laboratories equipment (to facilitate bilingual education) and classroom inputs such as desks, chairs and library books based on the needs of the ENIs; and (vii) computer networking between the two institutions.

18. **Sub-component 1.2: Improving learning environment in primary and lower secondary schools (Estimated Cost US\$2.00 million. Actual cost: US\$1.86 million).** This sub-component was designed to contribute to the improvement of school environment and learning conditions in the targeted *wilayas*. The objective of the sub-component was to be achieved through the acquisition and distribution of school pedagogical kits for all primary and lower secondary students in the targeted *wilayas*. The kits comprised backpacks, textbooks, pens, pencils, and supporting tools for geography and history such as charts, maps, geometrical figures and it was expected that teachers and students would use these tools to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms.

Component 2: Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education (Estimated Cost US\$4.7 million. Actual cost: US\$4.28 million)

19. This component aimed at expanding girls’ access to lower secondary education to reduce the significant gender gap through both demand and supply-side interventions. The component had two sub-components:



20. **Sub-component 2.1: Increasing access to lower secondary education for girls (Estimated Cost US\$3.7 million. Actual cost: US\$3.74 million).** This sub-component was designed to increase girls' access to lower secondary schools in the following six targeted disadvantaged *wilayas*⁴ - Assaba, Gorgol, Guidimaka, Hodh Ech Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, and Tagant - which are densely populated, with a potential high demand for schooling. The objective of the sub-component was to be achieved through the construction and equipment of 13 lower secondary schools (*colleges de proximité*) in remote rural areas, as a qualitative study⁵ had shown that distance and appropriate school infrastructure, in addition to availability of female teachers, were the main constraints to girls' education. The project had considered using a community-based approach to financing and constructing these schools. However, although such an approach was successfully implemented in Mauritania for the construction of primary schools, it was deemed technically inadequate for more complex construction of lower secondary schools. In addition, the GoM had committed to ensure that the newly constructed lower secondary schools are well-staffed with teachers.

21. **Sub-component 2.2: Improving equity through measures to promote girls' schooling (Estimated Cost US\$1.00 million. Actual cost: US\$0.54 million).** This sub-component was designed to respond to the demand-side of girls schooling. The objective of the sub-component was to be achieved through (i) awareness-raising sensitization campaigns to promote girls' schooling, closely supervised by the regional directorates of education (*Directions Régionales de l'Éducation* – DREN); (ii) incentivizing girls through graduation ceremonies and non-monetary awards provided by the GoM; (iii) awareness-raising training for teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural lower secondary schools (*Collèges*) on girls' rights to education; and (iv) the distribution of pedagogical kits (textbooks, pen, pencils) to girls enrolled in the *collèges de proximité* built by the project as a means to off-set the financial burden to parents. Building upon lessons learned from previous education projects in Mauritania, these activities were expected to stimulate demand for lower secondary education.

Component 3: Strengthening management of the education sector (Estimated Cost: US\$3.7 million. Actual cost: US\$4.02 million)

22. This component aimed at improving the overall capacity of the State Ministry of Education (*Ministère d'État à l'Éducation* – MEE) to design quality and relevant education policies, strategies, and programs and to effectively monitor and evaluate their implementation. The component had two sub-components:

23. **Sub-component 3.1: Strengthening capacity for monitoring and evaluation (Estimated Cost US\$2.9 million. Actual cost: US\$3.01 million).** This sub-component was designed to respond to the GoM's demand to fully integrate the Education Management Information System (EMIS) by networking all MEE departments, including the DRENs, to improve the reliability, timeliness and harmonization of data for the production of the annual education statistical yearbooks. The objective of the sub-component was to be achieved through (i) the training of DREN staff in data collection and analysis; (ii) the evaluation of policies aimed at improving teaching and learning; (iii) the implementation of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA); (iv) the participation in Program of Analysis of Education

⁴ Mauritania is divided into 12 *wilayas* (Adrar, Assaba, Brakna, Dakhlet Nouadhibou, Gorgol, Guidimaka, Hodh Ech Chargui, Hodh El Gharbi, Inchiri, Tagant, Tiris Zemmour, and Trarza) and the capital district of Nouakchott.

⁵ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle. Direction des Ressources Humaines et Inspection Générale de l'Éducation et de la Formation Professionnelle. *Guide d'amélioration des pratiques d'enseignement des adolescentes.*



System of CONFEMEN (*Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN – PASEC*), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to start focusing on progress in lower secondary; (v) an independent review of sector performance (replacing the Country Education Status Report (*Rapports d'état des systèmes éducatifs nationaux – RESEN*) to identify areas of weak progress and help policy makers make informed decisions; and (vi) building the capacity of the national assessment unit (*Cellule Nationale d'Évaluation – CNE*) to carry out student assessments and analysis.

24. Sub-component 3.2: Coordination of the Education Sector Program (Estimated Cost US\$0.8 million. Actual cost: US\$1.00 million). This sub-component was designed to finance some of the operating costs of the Directorate of Education and Training Projects (*Direction des Projets Education Formation – DPEF*), the project's implementing agency, in support of project implementation activities. At appraisal, the DPEF was already staffed with a coordinator, a project manager, and an accountant. A procurement specialist was planned to be recruited to the team. This sub-component was expected to finance the salaries of this staff (except civil servants) and the costs associated with regular M&E, supervision and reporting activities of the project, including supervision missions, joint annual education sector reviews, auditing and the costs of providing safeguards training.

B. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES DURING IMPLEMENTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

Revised PDOs and Outcome Targets

25. The PDO remained unchanged throughout the life of the project. However, all PDO-level indicators were adjusted to reflect the availability of more accurate data at the time of the 2017 restructuring, which followed the 2016 project mid-term review (MTR). The ICR further noted that the adjustments made were valid and consistent with the project's expanded scope and ambition fully in line with its original theory of change, which resulted in a significant increase of the number of direct project beneficiaries. Based on careful review and clear guidance from the latest Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) guidelines, the ICR concluded that a split rating is not warranted, and the project's outputs and outcomes are most appropriately assessed as a continuum building upon more up-to-date and accurate information on the education sector.

26. The baseline value and end-of-project target for the indicator on “transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in targeted *wilayas*” were adjusted: the end-of-project target was revised downward from 50 percent (i.e. representing faulty data introduced at the design stage) to 47 percent to remain consistent with the revised baseline value which decreased from 45 percent to 41.3 percent as a result of the availability of more accurate data at the time of the restructuring. Similarly, the baseline value and end-of-project target for the indicator on “number of females enrolled in lower secondary education in targeted *wilayas*” were adjusted: the end-of-project target was increased from 8,736 to 22,653 in line with the increased baseline value from 7,800 to 15,466 female students enrolled in lower secondary education in the targeted *wilayas*. In addition, by the project's MTR, 32 percent of ENI graduates had mastered the minimum required competencies against an end target of 15 percent. Building on this commendable progress made, the end-of-project target for the indicator on “proportion of graduates of ENIs who master the minimum required competencies” has been ambitiously revised upward from 15 percent to 42 percent during the restructuring to reflect this progress made.



27. Additionally, the end-of-project target for the core indicator on “direct project beneficiaries” was further clarified and revised upwards from 76,500⁶ to 360,000 in order to include: students and teachers in primary schools in the six targeted *wilayas*; girls in lower secondary in the six targeted *wilayas*; students in the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools; students, administrators, and ENI teachers; primary school teachers in schools where ENI students have internships; participants in the awareness-raising campaigns; staff of local and regional education directorates (DRENS) and departmental inspectorates (*Inspections Départementales de l'Education Nationale* - IDENs), staff of the Directorate of Statistics, Planning, and Cooperation (*Direction des Statistiques, de la Planification et de la Coopération* - DSPC) and the CNE. Relatedly, the end-of-project target for the sub-indicator on “proportion of female direct beneficiaries” was also modified accordingly from 12 percent to 50 percent, further reflecting the expanded scope of project activities supporting female beneficiaries.

28. Moreover, relevant adjustments were made to the following intermediate indicators:

- The end-of-project targets for the indicators measuring “the number of ENI administrative staff” and “the number of faculty trained” were revised downward from 70 to 41 and from 120 to 101 respectively to account for the total number of administrative staff and faculty working in the ENIs at the time of the restructuring;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the number of additional bilingual teachers certified by the Language Research Center (*Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes des Langues* – CREL)” was revised upward from 500 to 1,019 teachers in line with the increasing demand for bilingual teachers;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the proportion of students who received pedagogical kits in the targeted *wilayas*” was revised to measure the number of pedagogical kits distributed in the six targeted *wilayas* through the project (with the year-on-year targets being cumulative) as this value could be calculated more easily and provide a better understanding of the project’s reach;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the number of teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural schools who attended awareness-raising training sessions” was revised downward from 690 to 250 as the original targeted reflected the actual total number of these staff in the six targeted *wilayas*;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the number of girls provided with pedagogical kits in targeted *wilayas*” was revised downward from 72,407 to 18,879 to reflect the actual number of girls in lower secondary schools in the targeted *wilayas* at the time of the restructuring;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the number of DREN personnel trained in data collection and analysis” was revised downward from 120 to 70 to reflect the delay in the implementation of the EMIS intervention;
- The end-of-project target for the indicator measuring “the number of annual meetings of the education sector” was modified from 9 to 7 to reflect progress made on this indicator during the time of restructuring.

29. And lastly, the indicator on “completion of early grade reading assessment (EGRA)” was dropped and replaced with “completion of a Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey” which includes a sample-based testing in Arabic, French and Math for grade 4 students. Findings from an SDI survey were considered to be more useful in identifying limitations in the provision of education services and informing policy changes in line with the project’s objective. In addition, Mauritania being the 11th country in Africa to implement an SDI, the survey allowed for comparison of

⁶ At appraisal, the initial definition of direct project beneficiaries included ENI students, faculty and managers, female students of lower secondary education in the targeted regions, primary school students benefitting from pedagogical kits in the targeted regions, as well as staff of the central and regional structures of the education sector.



Mauritania to Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda, further informing the evidence base for improved policy dialogue.

30. The IEG guidelines for reviewing World Bank ICRs clearly provides the following specific guidance: (i) if the scope of the project expanded and project commitments remained the same, a split rating is not warranted, and the project should be assessed based on the revised objectives/targets; (ii) if the original indicator was relatively weak and that the new indicator/target provides a better measure for achievement of the PDO, then this would support a decision not to apply a split rating and instead assess the entire project based on the revised indicator/target; and (iii) changes in a project's components, outputs, and output targets should not trigger a split rating, as these kinds of changes reflect a different (and presumably better) path, in the absence of a revision of PDOs or outcome targets, to achieve the same expected outcomes.

31. Based on the detailed changes introduced in the 2017 restructuring presented and the specific IEG guidance provided above, the ICR concluded that a split rating does not apply in this case. More specifically, under the BESSP (i) the project scope had expanded while the project's development commitment and ambition level had remained the same; (ii) the revisions introduced mostly clarified indicators, reflected more accurate data available and progress made at the time of the 2017 restructuring, and increased targets; and (iii) changes made to the project's components and targets did not change the overall objectives of the project and did not reduce any targets of the PDO indicators.

Revised Components

32. Changes to Components under the restructuring included the following:

Component 1: Improving quality of teaching in primary education

33. The restructuring expanded the project's scope by expanding its support to two additional ENIs – ENI of Akjoujt and ENI of Kaedi. Under the restructured design, the component supported the following new activities: (i) the provision of equipment initially planned to the ENIs of Nouakchott and Aioun was extended to the two additional new ENIs; and (ii) the establishment of interconnectivity across the ENIs was replaced by a technical assistance (TA) to support the use of information communications technology (ICT) to strengthen ENI faculty's basic competencies, which was deemed to better support the achievement of the PDO. In addition, the restructuring formalized the government's choice of the six targeted regions that was made during project preparation with clearly specified criteria, but which was not reflected in the PAD, and included Adrar and Brakna instead of Assaba and Hodh Gharbi. This was an important design element as the equity focus of the project was to focus on specific targeted regions.

Component 2: Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education

34. The restructuring introduced two new activities to complement the incentives package to promote adolescent girls schooling and retention in the targeted *wilayas*, further expanding the project scope. These new activities include: (i) the provision of hygiene kits, to be designed and distributed with the support from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), to all girls in lower secondary school; and (ii) support to the functioning of six newly constructed sports facilities, one in each *wilaya* to encourage girls' participation in sports and exercise, through supplemental equipment, the provision of sport uniforms to girls, and the training of six female sports coaches (who had already been hired by the Government) in athletics instruction and also in how to use positive



reinforcement to encourage girls' participation in sports activities. In addition, under the restructured design, the component addressed issues of access to water faced by some schools and the absence of trees in and around schools which were detected by the safeguards team. The 13 newly built lower secondary schools were provided with access to water and sanitation as well as solar. Environment clubs were also set-up to involve students in environmental protection through tree planting and water saving.

Component 3: Strengthening management of the education sector

35. The restructuring downsized the planned activity on EMIS by limiting its scope to the development of two modules (students and teachers) with a focus on capacity building and supporting the establishment of basic functions including the collection, analysis, and management of data on students and teachers to improve policy formulation and implementation. The EMIS was planned to be implemented at the central level with one or two pilot regions, instead of in all regions as initially planned. In addition, under the restructured design, the component aimed to support the following activities: Under 3.1 of Schedule I of the Grant Agreement: (i) implementation of an SDI survey in lieu of an EGRA evaluation, originally envisaged; (ii) consolidation of the school map to optimize resource allocation and use; (iii) support to the CNE to improve and upgrade the ENI entrance examinations; (iv) an assessment of teachers in mathematics in the six targeted *wilayas*. Under 3.2 of Schedule I of the Grant Agreement; (v) TA to support a teacher management and professional development strategy; (vi) evaluation of national exams to ensure their design is of high quality and that they are administered properly; and (vii) TA to support the establishment of a school grants program that the Government planned to implement to improve the school environment.

Other Changes

36. The grant closing date was extended through two level 2 restructurings. The first restructuring was approved on April 28, 2017 and extended the grant closing date from May 1, 2017 to August 31, 2017 to allow sufficient time for thorough examination of the planned restructuring package (with additional changes) by the GPE Grants and Performance Committee (GPC). The GPC completed its review on August 3, 2017. The second restructuring approved on August 31, 2017 included a 15-month extension of the grant closing date of August 31, 2017 to November 30, 2018 –resulting in a cumulative extension of 19 months.

37. Originally, the General Directorate of Strategy, Planning, and Cooperation (*Direction Générale de la Stratégie, Planification et Coopération* – DGSPC) (which then became the DSPC) and the DPEF were jointly responsible for project implementation oversight. Following a government restructuring in 2014, these two entities had become part of two different ministries, the Ministry of Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale* – MEN) for the former, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development for the latter. Following this institutional change, the DSPC's capacity to fulfill its M&E responsibilities related the project became limited. As such, under the project restructuring, the project M&E responsibilities were vested in the DPEF.

Rationale for Changes and Their Implication on the Original Theory of Change

38. The second restructuring as noted above aimed to provide additional time for completion of planned activities and added a limited number of small activities to the project which further supported the achievement and sustainability of the PDO. The restructuring also allowed to clarify some of the indicators in the results framework (RF) and adjust some indicators' baseline values and end-of-project targets.



39. **Rationale for change in Component 1.** At the time of project approval, there were two ENIs in Mauritania – those of Nouakchott and Aioun. Shortly after effectiveness, two additional ENIs were established in Akjoujt and Kaedi as part of a decentralization process. Since these ENIs followed the same curriculum and provided pre-service training of primary teachers in Mauritania, it was decided that they should benefit from the project activities to ensure uniformity of pre-service training delivery in the country. The two new ENIs benefitted from the use of the curriculum which was revised and made uniform under the project, training of staff and faculty, including the provision of TA to accompany ENI trainers in the use of student assessment results, assessed mathematics competencies of existing teachers (to inform in-service training), and enhanced the ENI entrance exam, as well as provision of equipment and tools.

40. **Rationale for change in Component 2.** Research has shown that sports can have very positive benefits on an individual's overall well-being and development including: increased self-esteem and discipline, strengthened sense of community through team-building, and increased practice of positive health behaviors. The GoM had expressed its interest in the introduction of these sports activities in the project and had committed to cover the salaries of six female coaches in the medium to long term. In addition, the extension of the grant closing date was necessary to complete the provision and delivery of complementary equipment to the newly built *collèges de proximité* and to address issues of access to water for some schools and the absence of trees in and around schools detected by the safeguards team.

41. **Rationale for change in Component 3.** The extension of the grant closing date was key to complete essential activities to strengthen sector governance and management, a dimension that contributed to both objectives underpinning components 1 and 2. These activities include the revision of the EMIS intervention, which was delayed, and an SDI survey. The planned activity on EMIS was due to be implemented at the central level (within the DSPC) and in all the regions. It was deemed necessary to limit its scope to the development and effective implementation of two key modules (students and teachers) before the expansion of the EMIS, with a focus on establishing basic functions including the collection, analysis, and management of data on students and teachers to improve policy formulation and implementation. Moreover, findings from an SDI survey were considered to be more useful in identifying limitations in the provision of education services and informing policy changes, in line with the project objective. Similarly, the assessment of teachers in mathematics was instrumental in the Mauritanian context: teachers who possessed high proficiency in math were to be trained to be master teachers and were to provide in-school support to other teachers.

42. **The changes introduced throughout the life of the project did not negatively impact the project's original Theory of Change prepared for this ICR.** First, the 4-month extension under the first restructuring allowed for sufficient time for thorough examination of the planned restructuring package by the GPC as discussed above. Second, the subsequent restructuring fitted squarely well within the nature and scope of the original project design. The limited number of new activities introduced as part of the restructuring and discussed above further supported the achievement and sustainability of the PDO. In addition, the adjustments made to the RF clarified some of the indicators and revised some indicators' baseline values and end-of-project targets to more accurately monitor the project's achievements. Annex 1.C highlights these changes. And third, the last restructuring extended the grant's



closing date, which allowed the completion of planned activities to ensure that the PDO was fully achieved in line with the project's Theory of Change.

II OUTCOME

A. RELEVANCE OF PDOs

Assessment of Relevance of PDOs and Rating

Rating: **Substantial**

43. The project objectives were highly relevant and directly responded to the country's key development priorities. Recognizing that a well-educated population, equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge is essential for economic and social development, the Government's ESDP II (2011–2020) drew its lessons from the evaluation of ESDP I (2001–2010) and sought to: (i) provide improved and equitable access to ten (10) years of good quality education for the vast majority of young Mauritians and (iii) make secondary education, technical and vocational training and higher education more relevant to social needs and responsive to the demands of the labor market.

44. The project design is responsive to these priorities articulated in the mid-term Basic Education Development Plan (2012-2015) which focuses on the following three key areas: (i) improving the **quality** of education; (ii) increasing **equitable access**; and (iii) strengthening **sector governance and management**. Moreover, the project aligned with the GPE strategic plan, particularly the goals to improve teacher effectiveness and to ensure greater numbers of children, especially girls, complete primary school and enter secondary school.

45. First, the project aimed to improve the quality of education service delivery by (i) focusing on enhanced pre-service teacher training recognizing that teacher quality is the main school-based predictor of student achievement and that several consecutive years of outstanding teaching can offset the learning deficit of disadvantaged students and (ii) providing pedagogical kits (backpacks, textbooks, pens, pencils, supporting tools for geography and history such as charts, maps, geometrical figures) to primary school children in the targeted regions to improve the learning environment. In the Mauritanian context, the project's focus on pre-service teacher training was based on the principles of selectivity and complementarity with the support provided by other development partners in the sector: in-service teacher training was supported by the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) and the Spanish Cooperation. In addition, during project design, evaluation of teachers' competencies suggested that in-service teacher training did not seem to have any positive impact on teacher quality and therefore on quality of education, because its general, one-size-fits-all approach usually does not respond to the individual needs of teachers. The GoM, with the support from the Spanish Cooperation, had planned to develop a strategy that will clearly define the objectives, methodology, and approaches of in-service teacher training in order to improve its effectiveness and outcomes. Second, the project aimed to promote equitable access by building 13 middle schools (*colleges de proximite*) near the beneficiary communities, equipping them with reading rooms with books, desks, science labs, access to water and solar electricity, and ensuring that the government staffed them with qualified civil servant teachers. The construction of these *colleges de proximite* directly responded to the critical challenge of distance girls



must travel to attend lower secondary school, which was identified as a major concern by 79 percent of parents in a UNICEF study on girls' education in Mauritania (2011).

46. In addition, the project promoted equitable access through (i) organizing of awareness-raising campaigns in each of the six targeted *wilayas* to promote girls' education; (ii) working with communities, women in particular, to identify the main socio-psychological hurdles to girls' access to secondary education and to design an appropriate communication campaign to help address them; (iii) training teachers and principals of the lower secondary schools to discuss the issue of girls' education, based on cultural factors impeding girls' education; and (iv) providing additional incentives such as pedagogical kits to girls enrolled in the *colleges de proximite* and performance awards to high performing girls. Finally, the project aimed to strengthen sector governance and management by supporting key activities including the establishment of an integrated EMIS, the implementation of an SDI survey, and the evaluation of the latest three-year budgeted action plan (2016-2018) and the update of the national education sector plan (*Programme National de Développement du Secteur de l'Education - PNDSE II*) and its operationalization in the upcoming three-year action plan (2019-2021).

47. The project objectives remain highly relevant as they respond to the current key issues and challenges facing the Mauritanian basic education sector including: poor qualification of teachers, gender inequity and regional disparity in secondary education, and weak governance of the education sector. Yes, the ICR notes an important design element related to the PDO. While the equity focus of the project was to address gender inequity (through the targeted support provided to girls) and geographical disparities (through the specific targeting of disadvantaged *wilayas*), this is not clearly reflected in the PDO.

48. The objectives also remain consistent with the Government's strategic agenda for the sub-sector as outlined in the PNDSE II (2011-2020), the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (2010-2014), the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (2015-2030), all of which identified the need to ensure universal quality basic education. Furthermore, the project is well aligned with the World Bank Group's current Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Mauritania for the period FY2018-2023⁷. The CPF identifies three key engagement focus areas: (1) Promote Economic Transition for Diversified and Resilient Growth; (2) Build Human Capital for Inclusive Growth; and (3) Strengthen Economic Governance and Private Sector-Led Growth, which form the core of the World Bank Group's support to Mauritania. The BESSP's objectives directly supported Focus Area 2 of the CPF, through directly promoting human development and targeting rural, poor areas, focusing on equitable access to quality learning opportunities, and improving quality of education, to ultimately lead to greater earnings, more engaged and informed citizens, and a better-quality life. Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme permeating CPF focus areas and has been a key focus of the project. Therefore, there were no shortcomings in the relevance to the current CPF.

49. Moreover, the project objectives and associated activities were backed by key lessons learned from previous Bank's engagement in Mauritania such as the Education Sector Development Program (P071308) in support of the first phase of the ten-year national education program and from similar projects in other countries and by robust analytical work carried out by the Bank. For instance, based on the experience of the Education Sector Development Program which was too ambitious and extensive in scope compared to available resources and project

⁷ World Bank (2018). Country Partnership Framework for Mauritania for the Period FY2018-2023.



implementation timeframe, the BESSP was intentionally kept simple by design. The project's results chain is clear as the activities and objectives supported across each of the project's components were logically linked to the project's overall objectives. Relatedly, the original design was ambitious in scope and supported strategic reform areas - pre-service teacher training, education management and evaluation systems, girls' education – all critical elements to particularly strengthen the Mauritanian unified bilingual education system, where Arabic and French are the main languages of instruction. The ICR commends the strategic focus of the project given that bilingualism remains a highly politicized and sensitive issue in Mauritania, involving several actors with low capacities but with a high potential for positive impact in the education sector and for social cohesion more generally with the required coordination.

50. Based on the assessments above, the rating for the relevance of PDO is **Substantial**.

B. ACHIEVEMENT OF PDOs (EFFICACY)

Assessment of Achievement of Each Objective/Outcome

Rating: **Substantial**

51. Overall, the project was successful in achieving its PDO. All key performance indicators were relevant to assessing the outcomes. All targeted beneficiaries (students and teachers in primary schools in the six targeted *wilayas*, beneficiary girls in lower secondary in the six targeted *wilayas*; students in the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools; students, administrators, and teachers of the 4 ENIs; primary schools teachers in schools where ENI students have internships; participants in the awareness-raising campaigns; staff of local and regional education directorates (DRENS and IDENS), staff of the DSPC and the CNE) were included in the project beneficiaries and the total number of beneficiaries reached 366,338. This has exceeded the number of beneficiaries that the project targeted to serve by the project close (i.e. 360,000 beneficiaries). Moreover, as discussed in Section I.B, the end-of-project target for the core indicator on "direct project beneficiaries" was revised upwards from 76,500 to 360,000 to reflect the clarified broader definition of direct project beneficiaries during the 2017 restructuring. Considering the original definition of direct project beneficiaries (which mainly included ENI students, faculty and managers, female students of lower secondary education in the targeted regions, primary school students benefitting from pedagogical kits in the targeted regions, and central and regional structures of the education sector), the ICR notes that the project reached 283,750 beneficiaries far exceeding the original end-of-project target of 76,500.

52. The PDO consists of the following two key objectives/outcomes: (a) Improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education and (b) Increased equitable access to lower secondary education. The achievement of each outcome is summarized as follows:

Outcome 1: Improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education

Sub-rating: **Substantial**

53. Increased quality of pre-service was measured by the following five indicators: (i) proportion of ENI graduates mastering the minimum required competencies (PDO-level Indicator), (ii) number of ENI administrative staff trained (IRI), (iii) number of ENI faculty trained (IRI); (iv) number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL (IRI); and (v) availability of educational resources at ENIs (IRI).



54. The **first outcome** of improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education was achieved through a combination of interventions that support the pedagogical reforms engaged in pre-service primary teacher training. These interventions directly targeted the primary players in pre-service training including ENI faculty, administrators, and students as well as the pre-service teacher training environment itself.

55. These interventions resulted in commendable progress toward improving quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education. By the end of the project, the proportion of ENI graduates mastering the minimum required competencies⁸ had increased from 0 to 35.6 percent. While this does not yet reach the upwardly revised target of 42 percent (introduced under the restructuring), it exceeds by far the original target of 15 percent. Presumably the original end target was established based on the ENI graduate cohort of 2013, working on an assumption of 5 percentage points annual increase as compared to the reference year 2013. By the project's MTR, findings from an assessment of the first cohort of the ENI graduates (conducted in May 2016) showed that 32 percent of ENI graduates mastered the minimum required competencies against an end target of 15 percent. To reflect this progress made, the end target was ambitiously revised upward from 15 percent to 42 percent during the 2017 restructuring, keeping a proportion increase of 5 percentage points each year. It is worth noting however, the 2013 ENI cohort had benefitted from a full 3-year training program. The 2017 and 2018 cohorts were challenged by a shortage of teachers, and therefore had to shorten their training time to 2 years and were already assigned to classrooms and teaching in their third year of training. The upwardly revised target of 42 percent could be achieved only if the recruitment process was reformed. These two cohorts were subsequently evaluated by the CNE. In addition to this PDO-level indicator, all associated IRIs, which measure key outputs to achieve improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education were met or exceeded. Over the life of the project, 101 ENI faculty in all four ENIs were trained on the new ENI standardized curriculum and the competency-based approach (*Approche par Competences*) and the total number of ENI administrative staff (41) were trained in language, both reaching the expected end-of-project target.

56. The project had also contracted CREL to deliver language training for ENI students and faculty and to provide ongoing mentoring support to ENI faculty members during the last two academic years under the Project to ensure that they are building the required skills to deliver bilingual education to ENI students. By the end of the project, 1,019 additional bilingual teachers supported by the project had been certified by CREL, fully reaching the upwardly revised end-of-project target of 1,019 bilingual teachers. The ICR notes this important milestone in line with the Mauritanian bilingual education system. The CREL supported the student teachers to improve their teaching skills in a second language (Arabic or French as appropriate) and scientific subjects in French. It also strengthened the ENIs' capability to convert their student teachers into qualified and autonomous bilingual teachers. In addition to making educational resources available, the project also equipped all four ENIs with language and computer labs, office equipment, and libraries and provided hands on training on the use of ICT for instruction delivery. Moreover, 70 faculty members of the ENIs of Nouakchott and Aïoun benefitted from a two-week training on learning assessments and 106 primary school teachers who supervised ENI students during their internships were trained in mentoring.

⁸ Mastering the minimum required competencies' was defined as: ENI students achieving a determined level of proficiency in language and mathematics in their third year. These students take a text administered by the CNE that evaluates their command of the curriculum thought in primary schools.



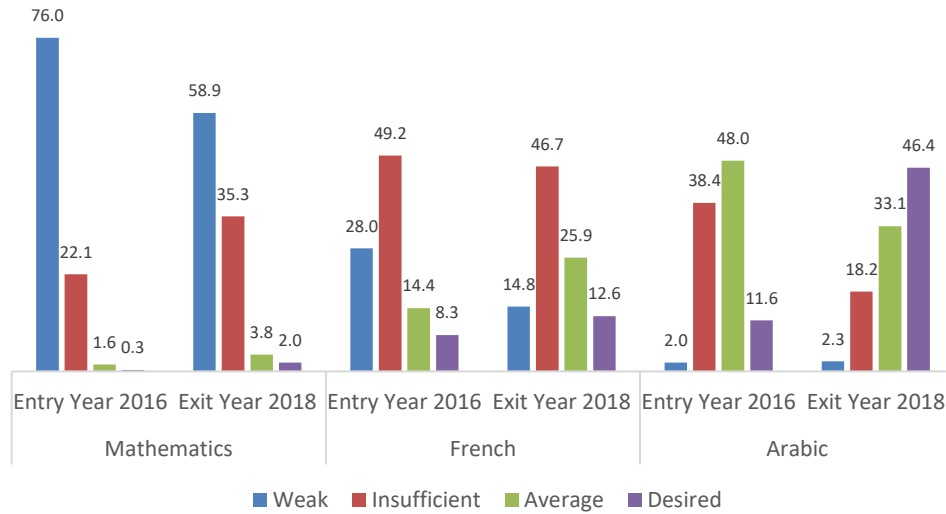
57. More broadly, the ICR notes that the project's strategic focus on improving pre-service training has allowed Mauritanian policymakers and education sector stakeholders to better understand the inherent challenges facing the basic education sector in Mauritania. Teachers constitute a major determinant of children's ability to read, write, and compute. Over the life of the project, the CNE undertook five independent assessments (2014-2018) of the ENIs' first and last year trainees to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics, so that remedial programs can be designed to target students in needs of improvement. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the results of the 2016 cohort of trainees at entry and at exit. The trainees are classified into four groups: (i) weak, i.e. unfit to teach, (ii) insufficient, for those who have serious deficiencies and have a slim chance of being upskilled, (iii) average, for those who can be brought up to standard with some adequate training, and (iv) desired, for those who have the pre-requisite to become teachers. Figure 2 shows that the ENIs generally hire from a pool of poorly qualified candidates in the first place. At entry, only 1.9 percent of would-be teachers had a chance of being a good teacher in mathematics, 22.7 percent in French, and 59.6 percent in Arabic (2016). These data clearly suggest that ENIs produce teachers with a low level of skills, which means that the quality of the flow of teachers that enter into the system needs urgent upgrading.

58. The last year assessment in particular allowed to measure knowledge acquired by the ENI students during their three-year pre-service training program or the ENIs' value-added. Although among the ENI cohort that graduated in 2018, about 21 percent, 62 percent, and 94 percent remain deemed unfit to teach in Arabic, French, and mathematics respectively, the study highlighted promising results for improved pre-service teacher training in Mauritania. The study showed improvement in *Arabic and French* language competency of ENI students, compared to their level in 2016. In mathematics, the study showed that while performance scores remain low, ENI students' competency in mathematics has also improved overall. The study further looked into the ENI students' ability and readiness to effectively teach at the basic education level. Overall, the study showed that the proportion of student teachers with the prerequisites to teach at the basic education level has improved between 2016 and 2017, recording an increase of 6 percentage points. More specifically, for the bilingual stream, the study showed that the proportion of student teachers identified as able to teach the three subjects (Arabic, French, and Mathematics) has been significantly increased from 3.5 percent in 2015 to 13.2 percent in 2018, corresponding to an increase of nearly 10 percentage points. This is a promising achievement to ensure improved delivery of quality bilingual education. For the Arabic stream, the proportion of student teachers with the required skills to teach the Arabic language and mathematics also increased by 7 percentage points, reaching 34 percent in 2018 against 27 percent in 2015.

59. Building on the project's focus on pre-service teacher training and the related analytical work undertaken under the project including the SDI survey, the government is engaging in a set of strategic evidence-based reforms to revamp the Mauritanian teacher training system. These include: the upgrade of the flow of student teachers into the ENIs, duration of training provided at ENIs, strengthening of training of trainers, reforming the training programs and the supervision of new teachers.



Figure 2: ENI Class of 2018 Results in Mathematics, French, and Arabic Tests at Entry and Exit



Source: « Evaluation des acquis des élèves-maitres de la 3ème année de l’ENI », CNE August 2018

60. Based on the assessments above, the achievement of outcome 1 is rated **Substantial**.

Outcome 2: Increased equitable access to lower secondary education

Sub-rating: **High**

61. Increased equitable access was measured by the following six indicators: (i) transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the targeted wilayas (PDO-level Indicator); (ii) enrollment of female students in lower secondary schools in the targeted wilayas (PDO-level Indicator); (iii) number of classrooms constructed in the targeted wilayas (IRI); (iv) number of girls receiving an award (IRI); (v) number of awareness-raising campaigns carried out to promote girls’ education (IRI); and (vi) number of teachers, school inspectors and directors who attended awareness-raising training sessions (IRI).

62. The **second outcome** of increased equitable access to lower secondary was achieved through a strategic combination of both supply and demand-side interventions to address the considerably low participation of Mauritanian girls in lower secondary schools. On the supply-side, these included the construction and equipment of lower secondary schools (*colleges de proximite*) in remote rural areas, closer to the targeted beneficiaries. On the demand-side, project interventions included awareness-raising sensitization campaigns to promote girls' schooling, closely engaging the *DRENs*, graduation ceremonies and provision of non-monetary awards to incentivize girls, awareness-raising training for teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural lower secondary schools (*Collèges*) on girls' rights to education, and the distribution of pedagogical kits (textbooks, pen, pencils) to girls enrolled in these *collèges de proximite* built by the project as a means to off-set the financial burden to parents. Moreover, during the restructuring, additional demand-side interventions were added to complement the incentives package to promote girls schooling and retention in the targeted *wilayas*. These included the provision of hygiene kits to all girls in lower secondary schools and the support for the functioning of six newly constructed sports facilities, one in each *wilaya* to



encourage girls' participation in sports and exercise, through supplemental equipment, the provision of sport uniforms to girls, and the training of six female sports coaches in athletics instruction who continue to work in the facilities.

63. These interventions resulted in substantial progress toward increasing equitable access to lower secondary education. By project close, the transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the targeted *wilayas* reached 49.3 percent, exceeding both the original end target of 45 percent as well as the upwardly revised end target of 47 percent (introduced in the restructuring). Similarly, the number of girls enrolled in lower secondary education in the targeted *wilayas* reached 26,610 students, also exceeding the upwardly revised end target of 22,653 female students against a baseline of 15,466. In addition to exceeding the upwardly revised targets of the PDO-level indicators, all associated intermediate results indicators were met or exceeded. Over the life of the project, thirteen (13) lower secondary schools were built and equipped with reading rooms with books, desks, science labs, access to water and solar electricity and the government has staffed them with qualified civil servant teachers as originally committed. These civil works activities intentionally built closer to the residence of beneficiary girls to allow their proximity to school resulted in significant improvement in the participation in secondary education of students from disadvantaged rural communities. Overall, fifty-two (52) additional classrooms were built – thus providing adequate space to nearly 3,000 students currently enrolled in these middle schools. In addition, 574 girls have received an award, far exceeding the end-of-project target of 480 girls. Twelve (12) awareness campaigns were carried out to promote girls' education, also exceeding the end-of-project target of nine (9) campaigns. Four hundred and fifty (450) teachers, school inspectors and directors attended awareness-raising training sessions, exceeding the end-of-project target of 250. Furthermore, 18,879 girls in lower secondary schools received pedagogical kits in the targeted *wilayas*, fully reaching the projected end-of-project target of 18,879.

64. Based on the assessments above, the achievement of outcome 2 is rated **High**.

Justification of Overall Efficacy Rating

65. The ICR further notes that, although not explicitly included in the PDO wording itself, **sector governance and education management strengthening** were a critical part of the project design and implementation as reflected particularly in **Component 3**. Overall, the BESSP has made commendable achievements in this regard. Main areas of institutional improvements which resulted from the project are described below.

66. **Student assessment.** The project's focus on improving technical capacity within the Government in the area of student assessment is clearly evident. The project funded two national learning assessments in addition to the implementation of the SDI survey. The SDI survey has been implemented in a national representative sample of 300 primary schools and its findings are currently serving to inform the new investment operation in the education sector. In addition, the project supported the capacity-building of the CNE which undertook: (i) three independent assessments of the ENIs' first year students and, in 2016, of incoming second- and third-year students to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics, which informed remedial actions in pre-service training during project implementation and (ii) three largescale national learning assessments for children in grades 3, 5, and 9 in 2014 and 2015.

67. **Education Management Information System (EMIS).** The project established an EMIS with three functional modules (Human resources, students, and schools) and deployed it on a pilot basis in the DREN of Nouakchott. The



EMIS IT platform (hardware and software) is now in fully operational, an important design element for establishing a solid M&E system. In addition, 65 EMIS administrators and users were identified and trained. Not all identified administrators and users (285) could be trained during the life of the project given the extensive delays experienced. While the project did not achieve the originally planned objective of a fully integrated and functional EMIS, the achievements noted thus far constitute an important milestone for the potential expansion of strong EMIS, which is the backbone of an effective education system. Moreover, the new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143) currently under preparation will further support the extension of EMIS to cover additional functionalities such as: (i) student learning, behavior and performance monitoring in schools; (ii) decentralized education management related to teacher's supervision and professional development; and (iii) provision of educational and pedagogical services via mobile and Internet to different users. The remaining DRENs will also be connected to the EMIS system, which they will utilize for oversight and M&E of the implementation of their three-year regional development plans.

68. Education sector planning. The project supported the following achievements which are all critical for more effective education sector planning, notably: (i) four annual school censuses were carried out; (ii) TA was provided to MEN in undertaking (a) the 2015 Education Country Status Report (RESEN), (b) the financial simulation model that served as a base for the development of the three-year budgeted action plan (2016-2018), (c) the evaluation of the implementation of the three-year national education plan (2016-18) and the update of the PNDSE II and its operationalization in the upcoming three-year action plan (2019-2021), and (d) the evaluation of the administration of the national system of examination. These achievements were timely in line with the preparation schedule of the new GPE operation. Moreover, throughout the life of the project, 15 education sector group meetings were held, including joint annual sector reviews, contributing to more harmonized and coordinated education sector planning.

69. Central and regional capacity. At the central level, the project coordination unit (PCU), fully integrated within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development following a government restructuring in 2014, effectively coordinated and technically managed the project. In this regard, the technical capacity was built within, particularly in financial management (FM), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and procurement, given that the project integrated within preexisting government systems. At the regional level, the DRENs were responsible for routinely monitoring and supervising departmental inspectorates, providing implementation support, consolidating all departmental inspectorate annual reports, and submitting an annual M&E report which provided strategic guidance on education planning, budgeting, and policymaking at the national, regional, and district levels of education. Given the DREN's enhanced role in monitoring, supervision, and data collection under the BESSP and the capacity building training in data collection and analysis to DREN staff, the planning and implementation capacity at the regional and district levels has improved.

70. The project is rated Substantial in terms of its efficacy based on achievements of each outcome as discussed above and provided in Table 1. With the PDO-level indicators and associated intermediate-level indicators targets being met, more ENI graduates now master the minimum required competencies, all four ENIs faculty members are trained on the new standardized curriculum and the competency-based approach, ENI administrative staff are trained in language, and more rural girls now have access to lower secondary education. Moreover, though not explicitly stated in the PDO, the project has made significant improvements in sector governance and education management. Among others, some examples of significant achievements include: the enhancement of the student assessment



system, the establishment of a fully operational EMIS, and the effective education sector planning as discussed above. Moreover, the project’s strategic focus on improving pre-service training and increasing equitable access has allowed Mauritanian policymakers and education sector stakeholders to better understand the inherent challenges facing the basic education sector in Mauritania. Building on the analytical work undertaken under the project including the SDI survey, the GoM is now engaging in a set of strategic and evidence-based education sector reforms.

Table 1. Efficacy Rating

	Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Overall
Rating	Substantial	High	Substantial

C. EFFICIENCY

Assessment of Efficiency and Rating

Rating: **Modest**

71. This analysis provides an overview of the assessment undertaken at appraisal using the most recent information – including actual costs and benefits incurred at project closing – and examines the efficiency of gains observed over the life cycle of the BESSP. Annex 4 provides a more detailed analysis of the efficiency gains realized under the project.

72. **Cost-benefit analysis (CBA).** Given that a CBA was not conducted at appraisal, this CBA undertaken for the ICR considers the steps and assumptions included under similar projects conducted in Mauritania. The analysis focuses on the quantifiable portion of the project’s total investments and evaluates the semi-quantifiable portion based on global standards for similar interventions. In the case of BESSP, the benefits stream estimates include quality and access.

73. The CBA calculations of the Internal Rate of Returns (IRRs) and Net Present Values (NPVs) for combined estimates of the quantifiable components for the project demonstrate that the project was economically viable. The present discounted value of benefits for the overall project is estimated to be US\$29.56 million. The corresponding NPV of program benefits is US\$11.91 million. The IRR associated with this NPV is 25.8 percent. Overall, the cost-benefit ratio estimates that for every US\$1 invested there is a return of US\$3.40. Consequently, while data to quantify all benefits are not available, the NPV derived from quantifiable benefits is greater than the NPV of costs. An analysis comparing the above results at closing with those at appraisal could not be performed. However, the IRR (25.8 percent) is higher than the discount rate of 15 percent and the benefit-cost ratio of 3:1, provide strong evidence of the efficiency of investments undertaken under the project.

74. **Cost-Effectiveness.** The project was cost-effective with the cost of most activities kept under budget, except for some activities under Component 3 which were underestimated at appraisal. However, some cost savings observed under Component 2 allowed for a revision of budgeted amount for Component 3 (increased from US\$3.7 million to US\$ 4.1 million in 2018). The cost saving also resulted in the addition of new activities under each component of the project, including (i) the promotion of socio-cultural and sports activities under Component 1; (ii) extension and improvement of contracts under Component 2; and (iii) support to the steering structures under Component 3.



75. In terms of unit costs, the actual per beneficiary cost of pedagogical kits was US\$4.67, which is significantly lower than the unit cost estimated at US\$7.03 at appraisal. This actual cost, lower than the budgeted amount by US\$2.34, resulted in a cost saving of US\$746,663. The decrease in the cost of the kits did not adversely affect quality but was achieved primarily through the use of more efficient procurement practices. Indeed, at appraisal, an international call for tender was anticipated; however, the project proceeded with a national call for tender resulting in substantial savings. Despite the wide variety in the kits' contents across projects, the cost of school kits under BEESP is lower than similar kits distributed in Benin, Ghana and Mali, for which unit costs range from US\$6.73 to US\$50.

76. The project also planned to efficiently increase the quality of teaching through pre-service training of 900 new teachers. The unit cost analysis at appraisal of the various options for training teachers in Mauritania showed that unit costs per student and per day for pre-service teacher training was MRO 2,215 which was much lower than the unit cost for in-service training of MRO 3,800. Under the project, 1019 new teachers were trained. The training and material provision unit cost per teacher and per day for the training intervention was approximately MRO 3,097. The unit cost of pre-service training under the project was certainly higher than the unit cost at time of appraisal but remains lower than the unit cost for in-service teacher training. Moreover, the project conducted multiple training activities including the use of ICT and language tools. All 1019 teachers trained through the project are CREL certified bilingual teachers. While pre-service training under the project generated some cost-saving as compared to in-service training, it is worthwhile to mention that only a third of the teachers trained under the project met the minimum requirements, which is significantly below global standards.

77. **Efficiency of implementation.** There were some delays in the initial project implementation, principally due to the issues with the project designated account following the bankruptcy of the bank where the account was held. These delays were also illustrated by the low disbursement rate at the beginning of the project (3 percent in 2014). Consistent supervision helped resolve the issues and ensure the smooth flow of funds throughout the project life cycle. As a result, the total amount of the project allocation has been committed at 100 percent. This indicates a strong move towards achieving a disbursement rate close to 100 percent at project closing. Furthermore, BEESP was efficiently implemented, particularly in the use of resources with planned activities carried out on average with an overall execution rate of 98 percent. At times, the allocation of the project budget was slightly adjusted across sub-components to ensure all planned activities were completed. Additionally, the project benefited from a 19-month extension of its closing date, which has allowed sufficient time for the achievement of planned activities.

78. The budget execution rate for some sub-components did not reach 100 percent, not because the activities planned were not achieved but because some activities were completed at a cost lower than budgeted. Both Components 1 and 2 had execution rate of 98 percent each, with certain activities under some of the sub-components – such as teachers' participation in workshops and acquisitions of books for the libraries of the 13 *collèges* – costing as low as 70 percent of the budgeted amounts. Under Component 1, only activities for the training of teachers exceeded the budget with an execution rate of 106 percent. Moreover, under Component 2, most of the budgeted amounts for sub-component activities reached 99 to 100 percent, indicating efficiency of the project in the execution of the budget. However, it is important to note that challenges in the conception of the tender process as well as the low capacity of the construction firm delayed the delivery of the 13 *collèges*. The extension of the grant closing date also allowed the project to complete all 13 *colleges*. The project was also less efficient in the execution of the budget for Component 3 with an overall rate 96 percent. Sub-component activities had execution rates ranging from 84 to 114 percent. Despite



the extension of the project, some activities such as technical assistance to the Student Learning Assessment Unit and financial audits of GPE and IDA credits were not completed and remain in progress.

79. Internal efficiency. Under the Mauritania BESSP, several activities were supported to improve access, equity and quality of the education system. These activities focusing on the immediate goals of the Education sector capture the internal efficiency, which is concerned with the maximization of the relationship between the inputs and outputs. These activities included distribution of pedagogical and hygiene kits, construction of new lower secondary schools and development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The majority of indicators related to internal efficiency showed continuous progress between 2014 and project completion in 2018. Transition rates from primary to lower secondary for girls in the six targeted *wilayas* significantly increased from 41 percent in 2014 to 49 percent in 2018, exceeding the project target of 47 percent. A similar positive trend was also observed in girls' enrollment in lower secondary in the six targeted *wilayas*, which increased from 17,500 in 2014 to 26,600 in 2018, exceeding the project target of 22,650. Altogether, these six *wilayas* represent at least 30 percent of the national enrollment of girls in lower secondary.

80. External efficiency. Several indicators captured the external efficiency of the project including the proportion of graduates from the teacher training institutions – “*Ecole Normale des Instituteurs*” (ENIs) -- who have mastered the minimum required competencies; indicators also measured the number of additional bilingual teachers. Indeed, the project substantially impacted the supply of primary school teachers with 1019 new bilingual teachers (exceeding the target of 900). Conversely, the project fell short of the target for the proportion of graduates of ENI who mastered the minimum required competencies, with only 35.6 percent meeting that criterion at closing against the target of 42 percent. Even though the project did not meet the target, stability was observed with values remaining around 35 percent since 2018. This is mainly because trainees are being assigned to classrooms before completing their training to fill the country's deficit of teachers. The target of 42 percent could only be achieved if the current recruitment process is reformed and trainee-teachers are allowed to fully complete their training programs before being assigned to schools.

81. Financial and Institutional sustainability. The GoM has been fully committed to continuing the efforts engaged in the BESSP. The institutional arrangements are also in place to ensure the project's sustainability. Yet the continuation of improvements in the quality of pre-service training and increasing equitable access to quality basic education is likely to remain a distant goal given the inherent challenges continuing to face the education sector. Many of the project interventions are system-wide improvements requiring sustained efforts and continuous reforms. The World Bank's commitment to the education sector, particularly through the new IPF under preparation and the DPO programmatic series (2018-2022), will ensure that the outcomes achieved under the BESSP are sustained and that the lessons learned are incorporated, to the extent possible, to further strengthen the basic education sector.

82. While the DPO will directly intervene to improve the quality of the flow of teachers that go into the teaching profession by introducing reforms on the ENIs, the new IPF (Mauritania Education Sector Support Project - P163143) under preparation will focus on quality of education, especially the quality of the stock of teachers in both primary and secondary schools. These actions taken together will gradually improve the quality of education in Mauritania. In addition, the new IPF continues the methodology used for selecting “deprived” regions and aims to support four out of the six regions served under BESSP. In terms of improving access and gender equity, activities such as the



construction of the 13 “*collèges de proximité*” which generated immediate results (significant increase in enrollment and transition rates for girls in the selected *wilayas*) will continue to benefit future cohort of students beyond the scope of the project at minimal maintenance costs (running costs relatively low compare to the large initial investment). In order to optimize the use of these schools and generate greater impact, the new IPF will further focus on improving the delivery of education services in selected *wilayas* (including four of the *wilayas* supported under the BESSP) through better allocation of resources and enhanced school-based management.

83. In the context of the implementation of the EMIS system, regional staff have been trained and are expected to transfer their knowledge and train their regional teams, and contribute to a reduction of training costs on the use of the EMIS system. The system, now fully operational and connected to all the DREN, provides the Ministry with a unified database accessible to all authorized users and will benefit future project and government initiatives. Additionally, following the evaluations conducted by the CNE on the learning outcomes of students, which show a low passing rate in national exams, the Department of National Education provided TA for capacity building in the assessment of learning achievements. As part of this TA, an analysis of national examinations identifying key challenges was undertaken and was used to revise the examinations to ensure they are more reliable in the coming years. These activities show the government’s commitment to capitalize on the achievements realized through the project. However, other activities under the project such as student assessments and distribution of pedagogical and school kits will need to be sustained through continued financing beyond the project period.

84. **Efficiency Rating.** With the NPV of the quantifiable benefits greater than the NPV of the costs, the project demonstrated strong efficiency in investments undertaken during implementation. Furthermore, substantial internal and external efficiency gains were observed over the life of the project, with a majority of the PDO-level indicators successfully achieving and some even exceeding their targets. These significant achievements bring the efficiency rating at the borderline between Substantial and Modest. However, given that the targets for a few of the indicators were not achieved, and considering the delays in the initial project implementation and in the delivery of the 13 *colleges*, the overall efficiency under the project is rated **Modest**.

D. JUSTIFICATION OF OVERALL OUTCOME RATING

85. In terms of **relevance** of PDO, the project objectives were relevant at appraisal and continue to remain so today, directly responding to the current key issues and challenges facing the Mauritanian basic education sector including: low qualification and preparedness of teachers and poor learning outcomes; gender inequity in secondary education, and weak governance of the education sector. Moreover, the project was fully in line with country priorities as articulated in the ESDP II (2011-2020) and consistent with Government’s strategic agenda for the sub-sector as outlined in the PNDSE II (2011-2020), the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (2010-2014), the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (2015-2030), all of which identified the need to ensure universal quality basic education. At project closure, the project continues to remain aligned with the current CPF for Mauritania (FY2018-2023), especially with regards to promoting human development and targeting rural, poor areas, focusing on equitable access to quality learning opportunities, and improving quality of education.



86. In terms of **efficacy**, the project is rated Substantial having met three (3) out of four (4) PDO-level indicators' end targets and 15 out of 16 intermediate results indicators' targets. With these PDO indicators met, more girls transitioned from primary to lower secondary education, more female students in rural Mauritania enrolled in lower secondary schools in the targeted *wilayas*, and a total number of 366,338 individuals directly benefitted from the project, exceeded the upwardly revised end target of 360,000 beneficiaries. In addition, the number of female direct project beneficiaries reached 177,308, representing 48.4 percent of the upwardly revised end-of-project target of 50 percent. The target of one PDO-level result indicator was not fully met: the proportion of ENI graduates mastering the minimum required competencies increased from a baseline of 0 to 35.6 percent of by project close, against a revised end target of 42 percent. The ICR notes that by the project's MTR, 32 percent of ENI graduates had mastered the minimum required competencies against an original end target of 15 percent. The reason this target was not fully met is that (i) during the restructuring, the end-of-project target was upwardly revised to be more ambitious in line with the positive trend and achievements observed during the MTR and (ii) the low qualification of candidates joining the ENIs, particularly in French and Mathematics, which posed serious challenges. At the intermediate level, 15 indicators achieved or exceeded their targets and some of the end targets of these indicators were also upwardly revised to be more ambitious in line with progress made during implementation. The only intermediate result indicator that is way far from being met is the number of staff trained on EMIS: only 65 staff members are trained against an end-of-project target of 285. This is due to the delayed implementation of the EMIS intervention as described in Section I. B.

87. In terms of **efficiency**, the project rating is maintained at Modest even though the NPV of the project's benefits was greater than the NPV costs and significant internal and external efficiency gains were observed over the life cycle of the project. This is mainly, due to the initial delays in the project implementation and the delays observed in the delivery of the 13 colleges as well as the extension of the project. However, it is worthwhile to note majority of indicators related to internal efficiency showed continuous progress toward the achievement of their targets between 2014 and project completion in 2018. Transition rate from primary to lower secondary for girl in the six targeted *wilayas* significantly increased from 41 percent in 2014 to 49 percent in 2018 (overachievement of the project target of 47 percent). A similar positive trend was also observed in the six targeted *wilayas* where girls' enrollment in lower secondary increase from 17,500 in 2014 to 26,600 in 2018 exceeding the project target. Altogether, these six *wilayas* represents at least 30 percent of the national enrollment of girls in lower secondary. The project substantially impacted the supply of primary school teachers with 1019 new bilingual teachers (an overachievement of the 900 target). Conversely, the project fell short of the target for the proportion of graduates of ENI who master the minimum required competencies with 35.6 percent at closing against the 42 percent targeted. Furthermore, efficiency was observed in the implementation of the project particularly in the use of resources with planned activities carried out on average with an overall execution rate of 98 percent. Also, the project was relatively cost-effective in the implementation of several activities such as the acquisition of pedagogical kits with an actual unit cost per beneficiary of US\$ 4.67 which is US\$ 2.34 lower than the unit cost estimated at US\$ 7.03 at appraisal. This actual cost was lower than similar kits distributed in Ghana, Mali and Ghana which cost ranges from US\$ 6.73 to US\$50.

88. The overall outcome rating of the project is **Moderately Satisfactory** based on *Substantial* relevance, *Substantial* efficacy, and *Modest* efficiency, as discussed above and provided in Table 2.



Table 2. Overall Outcome Rating

	Relevance	Efficacy	Efficiency	Overall
Rating	Substantial	Substantial	Modest	Moderately Satisfactory

E. OTHER OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS (IF ANY)

Gender

89. The project focused on promoting equity by closing the gender gap at the lower secondary education level and by providing a package of incentives to girls from disadvantaged rural communities. In this regard, the project interventions have significantly benefitted girls in the targeted *wilayas*, as discussed in Section II.B. In the past, more boys were enrolled in primary schools. However, with the government’s ongoing efforts to increase girls’ participation and retention, this trend was reversed. At primary level, gender parity in the GER has improved and convergence between girls and boys have been observed. The GER for girls improved from 97.3 in 2011 to 103.7 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, the GER for boys increased from 92.4 to 98.8 percent. At the lower secondary level, the GER for girls improved from 25.5 in 2011 to 37.1 percent in 2016, corresponding to an increase of 12 percentage points. Similarly, the GER for boys improved from 29.1 to 37.0 percent during the same period. As discussed earlier, various gender-focused interventions (for example, the construction of middle schools in rural areas, closer to the homes of the beneficiary girls to address the challenge of their physical access, the provision of a package of incentives, including non-monetary awards to girls in these rural areas, the provision of pedagogical kits, the promotion of girls’ rights to education through sensitization campaigns and training programs, and ensuring adequate access to water and toilet facilities for girls) were implemented and had direct positive impacts on promoting gender equity. At the end of the project, the number of female direct project beneficiaries reached 177,308, representing 48.4 percent against the upwardly revised end-of-project target of 50 percent of female direct beneficiaries (as introduced in the second restructuring). Though the revised end-of-project is not fully met, the result is satisfactory given that more rural girls have now access to lower secondary education, which translated in a GER increase of nearly 12 percentage points as indicated above.

Institutional Strengthening

90. Although not part of the PDO, institutional strengthening was a critical part of the project design and implementation as reflected mainly in Component 3. Overall, the BESSP has resulted in significant institutional strengthening. Significant institutional improvements have resulted from the project including (i) enhanced student assessment system, (ii) fully operational EMIS established, (iii) effective education sector planning, and (iv) central and regional capacity built, the details of which are discussed in Section II.B.

Mobilizing Private Sector Financing



91. Not applicable.

Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity

92. While the BESSP did not include any specific impact measurement of poverty reduction and shared prosperity, it contributed to human capital formation by supporting the primary and lower secondary sub-sectors. Similar to many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Mauritania experienced relatively good economic growth in recent years. While the contribution of sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing to growth has been low and shrinking, studies show that Mauritania also has the potential to develop a diversified economy outside natural resource exploitation (i.e., service industry, fisheries, agriculture and infrastructure), which would allow the country to reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity. However, this potential shift in the economy requires mainly the increased availability of highly skilled labor, as such, the development of human capital is vital.

93. Recent evidence suggests that private rate of return to lower secondary education is higher than that to primary education for Mauritania, which means that graduates of secondary education earn more than children who completed only primary school. At the national level, an additional year of schooling yields a 6 percent return. A high share of wage employment appears to be in the services sector and the poverty rate among wage employees is generally low. In Mauritania, more educated individuals tend to work in the services sector because it offers better economic benefits and formal employment. Only 34 percent of the working-age population with no education works in the services sector whereas 91 percent of the labor force working in the services sector has a postsecondary education. On average, 12 percent of the working-age population has wage-paying jobs; of those, the proportion of the working-age population with a postsecondary education is high at 81 percent. The BESSP is likely to have helped the education sector equip children with knowledge and competencies that potentially make them more productive and capable of future higher earnings. The knowledge and competencies obtained through the education system could then affect poverty reduction and shared prosperity at the country level.

III. KEY FACTORS THAT AFFECTED IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOME

A. KEY FACTORS DURING PREPARATION

94. The BESSP design and preparation process provided a sound foundation for the project which was informed by the following key factors:

95. **Alignment with the country's development agenda.** The project was aligned with the country's long-term development strategy and education sector priorities articulated in the ESDP II (2011–2020). The GoM fully recognized the need to improve access to ten years of good quality education for the vast majority of Mauritanian children while achieving equity and making secondary education as well as technical and vocational training and higher education more relevant to the social and labor market needs.

96. **Evidence-based design.** The project design directly responded to the key findings from sector studies which highlighted the main characteristic of the Mauritanian education system. Generally, major issues identified include poor quality of basic education, inequitable access to secondary education resulting mostly from supply constraint,



and weak information management system of the sector. More particularly, the project's focus on pre-service teacher training was influenced by strong evidence suggesting that teacher training is one of the determinants of quality of education. Teacher quality is the main school-based predictor of student achievement and that several consecutive years of outstanding teaching can offset the learning deficits of disadvantaged children. While various options to training teachers exist (including pre-service training, in-service training, distance education, or different combinations of them), the BESSP focused on pre-service teacher training for a variety of reasons in line with the Mauritanian context. First, pre-service training is essential for future teachers to acquire core academic and pedagogical competencies for teaching and helps reduce the needs for in-service teacher training (which in Mauritania has been mostly addressed to unqualified teachers). Second, evaluation of teachers' competencies suggested that in-service teacher training did not seem to have any positive impact on teacher quality and therefore on quality of education, because its general, one-size-fits-all approach usually does not respond to the individual needs of teachers.

97. Appropriate targeting of beneficiary groups. A long distance from home to the closest primary and secondary school was consistently identified as a constraint in enrolment. In 2011, UNICEF completed a study on girls' education in Mauritania which clearly showed that parents were reluctant to send their girls to lower secondary school because of: (i) the distance girls have to travel to attend lower secondary school, which was identified by 79 percent of parents as a major concern; and (ii) the need to ensure the safety of their girls once they are in school which was identified by 71.2 percent of parents as a concern. The project targeted disadvantaged girls from remote rural areas for the equitable expansion of lower secondary education. A mapping of population of secondary school enrolment across the country helped to identify the regions (*wilayas*) with the highest rural population and with the lowest girls' participation in secondary. Among those *wilayas*, 13 communities were identified without any secondary school. Thus, the project planned to build a middle school (*collège de proximité*) in each of these specific communities to ensure access to lower secondary schools for the most vulnerable children in those rural communities, particularly girls. Those new *collèges* were expected to decrease the distance to the closest lower secondary school, which is negatively correlated with enrolment in general and with enrolment of girls in particular.

98. In addition, the BESSP design was developed based on analytical work carried out by the Bank in the education sector and key lessons learnt from previous experience in Mauritania and from sound educational practices elsewhere, particularly from GPE projects in Niger, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo. These included:

99. Simple design. Based on the experience from the previous education project in Mauritania (Education Sector Development Program - P071308) which was too ambitious and extensive in scope compared to the funds and implementation period allocated, the project design of the BESSP was intentionally kept simple by design. Also, there were weak linkages between the interventions and objectives in the previous project, a design element that was fully considered in the BESSP. Relying on these lessons, sufficient quality reviews allowed a deeper analysis of the RF which informed clear and measurable indicators and ensured the project's ability to track progress and assess achievement of objectives. Relatedly, the activities and outputs supported by the project were closely linked to the PDO and the project's RF was fully aligned with the operational objectives.

100. Participatory and consultative approach. The World Bank team was in continuous policy dialogue with the GoM and development partners (DPs) while leading the project preparation process. Ongoing consultations with DPs (including UNICEF, *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United



Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Spanish Cooperation) throughout the project preparation phase ensured complementarity and better coordination and harmonization of the BESSP activities with those of the other DPs⁹. In addition, joint Government and DPs annual sector reviews are important for ensuring coordination of activities and quality implementation and maximizing harmonization and exchange of information. Although each project in Mauritania has a specific separate account, all education sector projects are implemented through the DPEF and a joint mission report is sent to the Government following each joint review, including main donor recommendations and suggestions. This was a critical design element that was included as a key intermediate outcome in the project's RF and has now become a well-developed practice.

101. **Adequacy of monitoring arrangements.** One key lesson learnt from previous GPE projects is that adequate monitoring arrangements need to be put in place prior to effectiveness, with a well-staffed and capacitated unit that would facilitate the monitoring of various aspects of the project. The BESSP tried to ensure that the M&E unit under the DPEF had the required systems and fully trained staff with adequate capacity to fully monitor all aspects of implementation. Building on the previous project which greatly benefitted from the joint annual sector reviews, serving as a platform for donors and the government to discuss education sector intervention and find solutions to common problems, the BESSP pursued that dynamic, by fitting its monitoring schedule and supervision into the context of joint reviews with the Government and DPs and financing assessments used as the basis of discussion.

102. **Decentralized education management.** Experience from GPE projects in the sub-region showed that efficient education service delivery and improvements in the quality of the teaching and learning process depend on management structures that are closer to the schools and an empowered teaching force. Previous projects did not pay sufficient attention to the decentralization of educational management and planning or to the empowerment of teachers and school directors to take full responsibility for the educational outcomes of their schools. The BESSP design clearly defined the roles of regional and district structures building on lesson learnt from decentralization experiences in neighboring countries.

103. **Adequacy of risk assessment and mitigation measures.** Key risks and appropriate mitigation measures were adequately identified during preparation. The PAD identified weak financial sustainability in the education sector, inadequate implementation capacity, and substantial risk in delivery monitoring. While the DPEF had been responsible for implementing donor supported education projects for ten years, it had a high turnover of director and implementation staff. This lack of continuity had an impact on the timely implementation of previous projects. In addition, the collection of reliable data had also been difficult in Mauritania. These key risks were appropriately identified during the design phase and the related mitigation measures that were proposed were realistic and informed by lessons learned from previous education projects in Mauritania and other countries.

⁹DPs interventions in the subsector included: (i) UNICEF. Provision of small grants to (a) local school communities in two of the six targeted *wilayas* (Guidimagha and Brakna) to establish school councils and operate micro business to generate resources to improve the school environment (included access to water and sanitation and the purchase of basic school supplies) and to (b) regional and district education directorates to operate remedial programs in primary schools; (ii) AFD. Support to in-service teacher training, mainly focusing on enhancing French language proficiency of secondary education math and science teachers; and (iii) Spanish Cooperation. Support to pre-service teacher training in full complementarity with BESSP which ended in 2014.



B. KEY FACTORS DURING IMPLEMENTATION

104. The project was completed after a cumulative extension of the grant closing date by 19 months total. As of April 17, 2019, disbursement stands at US\$12.24 million representing around 99 percent of the total trust fund (TF) with a remaining undisbursed amount of US\$0.16. Various factors played a role in the success and challenges during implementation as summarized below.

105. **Factors outside the control of government and/or implementing entities.** Soon after effectiveness, the project faced an important unexpected hurdle following the liquidation of the primary national bank (*Maurisbank*) where the project's designated account (DA) was originally held. An initial amount of US\$1.2 million was already transferred to the DA when *Maurisbank* went bankrupt. While a new account was immediately opened at the *Banque Populaire de Mauritanie (BPM)*, the project implementation started with only US\$276,016, a payment that was already made in the original special account for the reimbursement of expenditures. The transfer of the remaining amount from *Maurisbank* (which was then defunct) to *BPM* was a significant issue that spread over a period of more than 12 months. Finally, on March 3, 2016, this issue was resolved with funds being made available to project by the GoM. This unpredictable situation resulted in initial delays in disbursements and the execution of activities, which explained the extension of the grant closing date. In addition, following a government restructuring in 2014, the DGSPC (which became the DSPC) and the DPEF, which were jointly responsible for project implementation oversight, became part of two different ministries, the MEN for the former, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development for the latter. This institutional change also resulted in some delays in project monitoring and implementation given the downsizing of the DSPC's capacity to fulfill its M&E responsibilities related the project.

106. **Factors subject to government and/or implementing entities control.** The Government's strong and continued commitment was central to the successful implementation and completion of the project. The BEESP used existing institutional structures which clearly built client ownership and implementation capacity. By design, the project was housed under the auspices of the MEE which had the mandate to design and implement the government's education policies and coordinate education-related activities, and supersedes all ministries involved in the education sector. The relevant directorates of within the ministries in charge of education led the implementation of the project, in close collaboration with the DPEF, which originally handled the fiduciary aspects of the project (under the MEE). Following a government restructuring in 2014 however, while the DSPC and the DPEF had become part of two different ministries, both directorates remained jointly responsible for project implementation oversight while M&E responsibilities were vested in the DPEF.

107. Despite the extensive delays experienced due to the defunct of *Maurisbank*, a total extension of the project by nineteen (19) months ensured that all planned activities were completed, in addition to select number of strategic interventions that were newly introduced. In addition, the MTR, which was conducted in May-June, 2016 addressed the weaknesses of the project and suggested to adjust the project scope, modify the RF through updating or revising some baseline values and targets through a level-2 restructuring, as well as extend the closing date. The specific changes made are discussed in Section I.B. However, though discussions on restructuring with the GoM and the Country Management Unit (CMU) started soon after the MTR, the actual restructuring was only approved in August 31, 2017. Finally, annual joint sector reviews (JSR) strengthened collaboration and coordination and minimized the reporting requirements for the GoM as well as the related transaction costs. Similarly, the project contributed to



enhancing the Client’s fiduciary system by using country systems for financial management and procurement activities.

108. **Factors subject to World Bank control.** The project benefitted from consistent World Bank team support and proactive follow-up on issues which had a significant impact on implementation. The team was highly effective in ensuring the continuity of the project implementation and having a detailed approach during the MTR to ultimately make important and necessary changes during the restructuring. This contributed to help the Government in achieving all of the project outcomes and key activities by project closure and improve the performance over the life of the project. In addition, the technical support from the World Bank, including TA and capacity building implemented under Component 3 played a key role in supporting activities that were delayed as well as those that were critical for effective education sector planning. TA was provided for the development of the 2015 Education Status Report (RESEN) and a financial simulation model and the CNE capacity was built to undertake learning assessments in the sector. Without such support, activities would have likely been more delayed and may not have produced the same level of outputs or achieved the same level of outcomes observed by project closure.

IV. BANK PERFORMANCE, COMPLIANCE ISSUES, AND RISK TO DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME

A. QUALITY OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)

M&E Design

109. The links between the inputs, outputs, and outcomes and the PDO were sound (as shown in Figure 1). The PDO was clearly specified at appraisal and remained the same throughout the life of the project. Four (4) PDO-level indicators and fifteen (15) intermediate outcome (IO) indicators were defined at appraisal to measure (i) improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education, (ii) increased equitable access to lower secondary education, and (iii) strengthened management of the education sector.

110. During project preparation, the World Bank task team and the GoM agreed to use the existing government monitoring and evaluation system. While the collection of timely and reliable data had proved to be difficult in Mauritania, especially at the local levels, the project was considered as an opportunity to build capacity and enhance Government ownership of the project and its monitoring as part of the overall education sector program. Therefore, the BESSP’s RF was prepared based on existing data and projections provided by the GoM and sources of data for the indicators were identified in line with the relevant directorates in charge of project implementation. The DGSPC was overall responsible for coordinating, overseeing, and implementing the project activities. As such, based on inputs from the DRENs and departmental inspectorates, it was responsible for consolidating and analyzing data and producing a detailed M&E report annually on project implementation by component, including a summary description of activities at the national, regional directorate, departmental inspectorate, and school levels.

111. To further strengthen the quality of M&E and ensure adequacy of project monitoring, the BESSP dedicated a specific sub-component (Sub-component 3.1) to strengthening capacity for monitoring and evaluation. The following activities were envisaged at appraisal:



112. **At the central level**, the planned improvements of the EMIS and learning assessment system were critical design elements to ensure reliability of data and efficacy of the project M&E. The project envisaged the full integration of the EMIS by networking all MEN departments, including the DRENs to improve the reliability, timeliness and harmonization of data for the production of the annual education statistics yearbooks, through supporting the development of the network system. The interconnectivity was expected to allow regional, district offices and departments to transfer data to the DSPC for consolidation and facilitate DSPC's final analysis of the data. In addition, several evaluation activities were planned, including: (i) evaluation of policies aimed at improving teaching and learning; (ii) implementation of EGRA; (iii) supporting participation in PASEC and TIMMS evaluations, by starting to focus on progress in lower secondary; (iv) independent review of sector performance; and (v) building capacity of the assessment unit (CNE). JSRs were also planned to serve as a platform for donors and the GoM to discuss education sector programs and project progress for effective and coordinated sector monitoring.

113. **At the decentralized level**, the project supported training on data collection and analysis to DREN staff given the regional directorates enhanced role in M&E.

M&E Implementation

114. The ICR noted that key project results were monitored during project implementation, and the project management and monitoring system has been strengthened overall despite some shortcomings encountered. The proposed activities aimed at strengthening M&E quality were also carried out partly.

115. **At the central level**, the project built the capacity of the CNE which undertook several research studies including (i) three independent assessments of the ENIs' first year students and, in 2016, of incoming second- and third-year students to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics and (ii) three largescale national learning assessments for children in grades 3, 5, and 9 in 2014 et 2015. In lieu of the EGRA, the project also implemented the SDI survey. In addition, while the planned support to Mauritania's participation in PASEC and TIMMS evaluations did not materialize, the project implemented the following activities, which all contributed to improved M&E: (i) four annual school censuses; (ii) TA for (a) the 2015 Education Country Status Report (RESEN) and (b) the evaluation of the implementation of the three-year national education plan (2016-18) and the update of the national education sector plan (PNDSE II). Also, fifteen (15) education sector group meetings were held, contributing to more harmonized and coordinated education sector monitoring. Yet, the originally planned EMIS intervention, which was due to be implemented at the central level (within the DSPC) and in all the regions, was downsized as part of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017 and the project was only able to establish an EMIS with the development of an IT platform focusing on three basic modules (Human resources, students, and schools) and deployed it on a pilot basis in the DREN of Nouakchott. In addition, 65 EMIS administrators and users (against an end-of project target of 285) were identified and trained. As stated above, these activities allowed to further strengthen the already established solid M&E system.

116. **At the decentralized level**, the planned interconnectivity between the central level and the regions was to allow regional offices and departments to transfer data to the DSPC for consolidation and to facilitate DSPC's final analysis of data. Although this computerized interconnectivity was not materialized during the project's life as initially planned, a



system has been put in place to ensure that data are adequately tracked. In addition, the project trained DREN staff on data collection and analysis and on the EMIS application tool. It also equipped key personnel in all the DRENs with a computer and connectivity to the central EMIS to ensure the timely collection and availability of data.

117. Moreover, based on the project's MTR recommendations, changes were made to original RF to further enhance the project's monitoring and performance, and to clarify and introduce a set of new upward targets based on more sound data available at the time of the restructuring. The changes to the RF are discussed in Section I.C.

M&E Utilization

118. The project's progress toward achievement of its stated development objectives and implementation progress (IP) were mainly informed by the utilization of M&E data. The adequate M&E system in place enabled the timely availability of data. The selected performance indicators were tracked regularly, and the RF was updated timely for supervision missions, MTR, and JRMs. Particularly, the MTR identified the key shortcomings to the RF which led to the project's restructuring, and relatedly mid-term course correction of the RF ultimately led to more accurate and reliable data by the project closure.

119. A large body of analytical work was also supported by the project, including several national student assessments for different grades in primary and secondary, assessment of ENI students, and an extensive SDI survey. For instance, the assessment of ENI students informed policy makers to what extent the planned pre-service training programs are implemented as intended, what the quality of the program is, and what additional measures are needed to improve pre-service training, particularly in line with the bilingual education policy that is being implemented. The assessment of new ENI students (2015) showed that student-teachers in first year of ENI had very low qualifications, particularly in mathematics and in French, a significant challenge for the effectiveness of the planned pre-service program. Findings from such analytical work were utilized to inform policy design and direction. As such, these findings led to a new redesign of the pre-service entry requirements as well as remedial courses offered to ENI students.

120. In addition, key findings from the SDI survey carried out in 2018 present the evidence-base for informed policy dialogue in Mauritania. The SDI measures various indicators of school quality using a standardized set of instruments across countries. It highlighted that quality of education is by far the most significant challenge faced by the education sector. Mauritanian students were still outperformed by pupils of all countries except Mozambique and Nigeria. Almost surprisingly, Mauritanian pupils performed very well on non-verbal reasoning of logic where they came second only to Morocco.

121. The project also benefitted from reviews, discussions, and recommendations from JRMs. Relevant M&E data and project information proved to be useful in conveying progress to key education stakeholders, particularly in demonstrating the extent to which the project was achieving its stated objectives and contributing to the overall education sector development plan.



Justification of Overall Rating of Quality of M&E

122. The M&E design, implementation, and its utilization allowed for adequate tracking of progress made under the project. The project collected a significant amount of M&E data on results progress and performance. In addition, capacity was built within the ministry through the use of existing monitoring system and the results, including those from the analytical work carried out, played an important contributing role to inform government policy decisions. Moreover, improvements in the management of education data under the EMIS intervention were explicit focus of the project aiming for long-lasting results in effective data collection, analysis, and management in the education sector. The learning assessment system established is also fully functional, which would allow to further monitor the quality of the system. Based on the MTR recommendations, necessary changes were made to the original RF to enhance the project's monitoring and performance, and to clarify and introduce a set of new upward targets based on more sound data available at the time of the restructuring. Further, M&E data collection and project monitoring have been enhanced over the course of project implementation through capacity building activities. The enhanced quality of M&E improved coupled with the analytical work supported by the project provided adequate information to assess the achievement of project objectives and overall performance. Thus, the overall rating of quality of M&E is **Substantial**.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND FIDUCIARY COMPLIANCE

123. **Safeguards.** At appraisal, the project was classified as Environmental Category B given that the impacts associated with the proposed activities were considered likely to be small-scale, reversible and manageable through minimum anticipatory mitigation measures. Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01), Physical Cultural Resources (OP/BP 4.11), and Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12) were triggered under the project. An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and a Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) were prepared, reviewed, and approved during project preparation and disclosed on time as required. During implementation, the project had overall fairly good performance with regards to safeguards. Safeguards compliance was satisfactory throughout, until two specific environmental and social safeguards supervision missions (carried out in March and May 2017 respectively) determined that, while the project's social risks remained moderate, environmental risks were substantial due to access to water and sanitation not being adequately addressed in some of the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools. In addition, the missions also recommended the documentation of social safeguards related to the occupation of land on which these schools were built.

124. By project closure, the project had adequately rectified the identified social and environmental issues and corrective measures were successfully implemented. Access to water and sanitation, and solar energy were provided to all 13 newly built lower secondary schools. In addition, environmental clubs were set-up to engage students in environmental protection through tree planting and water saving. Further, the PCU provided sufficient documented evidence that school construction activities did not lead to any expropriation and/or displacement of population and/or restriction on their abilities to make a living, and subsequently produced land titles for all 13 lower secondary schools concerned as recommended.

125. **Procurement.** In general, throughout the life of the project, procurement remained strong and steadily on track. At the initial stage of the project implementation, the procurement rating was assessed as Satisfactory. The procurement staff was fully experienced and had relevant qualifications, closely following procurement guidelines. However, the procurement rating was later downgraded to Moderately Satisfactory and was maintained as Moderately



Satisfactory for the rest of the project implementation until closure to be conservative. Delays were observed in school construction and the TA for the EMIS intervention. In addition, while the procurement unit awarded contracts in compliance with standard procedures and requirements, the Bank task team and the GoM opted to further improve the monitoring of contracts and their implementation to ensure full compliance with agreed upon procurement plans.

126. **Financial Management (FM).** The FM rating was changed from Satisfactory to Moderately Satisfactory at the fourth Implementation Status and Results Report (ISR) completed on January 3, 2016, and it was further downgraded to Moderately Unsatisfactory at the fifth ISR completed on July 22, 2016 due to the continued delay in transferring project funds from Maurisbank (which was then defunct) to BPM following Maurisbank's bankruptcy. Following MTR recommendations, the project took a number of specific actions to further improve FM which led to an upgrade to Moderately Satisfactory including the designation of a second signatory at the DPEF to ensure timely continuity of service in case of absence of the Director and/or the Finance Officer. The FM staff had adequate experience to carry out their required tasks effectively. Moreover, external audits were undertaken on a regular basis and revealed no significant irregularities. Unaudited interim financial reports (IFRs) were submitted in a timely manner and in accordance with well established guidelines and procedures. At the seventh ISR completed on December 16, 2017, the FM rating was upgraded from Moderately Satisfactory to Satisfactory following a steady improvement in fiduciary performance including up-to-date accounting, regular preparation of bank reconciliation statements, satisfactory quality of IFRs, regular internal audit carried out to reinforce the internal control systems and recommendations from external audit and previous supervision missions fully implemented. The ICR notes that the project addressed some of the financial inefficiencies that had been identified in a timely fashion and achieved its overall objectives with full disbursement. The FM rating at project closing remained Satisfactory.

C. BANK PERFORMANCE

Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

Quality at Entry

127. The project objectives were aligned with the GoM's development priorities and the World Bank's CPF. The PDO was highly relevant and remained so throughout the life of the project. The preparation of the project was highly consultative, engaging all key education stakeholders, and the design of the project was based on robust analytical work carried out by the Bank and drew on key lessons learned from previous World Bank engagement in Mauritania and from similar projects in other countries. The activities and outputs supported by the project were logically linked to the PDO. Working closely with the GoM and the LEG, the World Bank education task team led the IPF preparation process and the design of the project fully complied with the World Bank and GPE's operational policies and procedures. Sufficient attention was given to implementation arrangements and related institutional strengthening, and the use of existing structures was meant to build government internal capacity and ownership of the project. All potential risks were identified, and mitigation measures developed subsequently. The task team used best available data at the time of preparation. However, the project's RF had some discrepancies mainly due to the lack of accurate information at the design stage. Baseline and target values for most indicators had to be modified later during implementation.



128. The Bank rating for Quality at Entry is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Quality of Supervision

129. Sufficient budget and staff resources were allocated, and the project was adequately supervised and closely monitored. Supervision missions were undertaken regularly to review progress and identify any areas for improvement. The JSRs were well planned and served as a platform for the GoM and its donors to discuss project progress (among other education sector programs), maximizing the impact of supervision. Aide Memoires were prepared regularly and effectively alerted the Government on project implementation issues requiring special attention. The ISRs provided management with a transparent assessment of the project's achievements and challenges. The RF was formally revised through restructuring to update the baseline and target values for some of the indicators that were not available or that were faulty at appraisal. In addition, TA was mobilized as necessary to build capacity of the MEN. The TA provided played a key role in supporting activities that were delayed as well as those that were critical for effective education sector planning such as the 2015 Education Country Status Report (RESEN), the financial simulation model that served as a base for the development of the three-year budgeted action plan (2016-2018), the evaluation of the implementation of the three-year national education plan (2016-18) and the update of the PNDSE II and its operationalization in the upcoming three-year action plan (2019-2021) as well as the evaluation the national examination system. The efforts that the World Bank task team put forth was commendable and the World Bank team effectively engaged with other DPs to ensure continued collaboration and complementarity between the BESSP activities with those of the other DPs. An earlier project restructuring would have allowed sufficient time for enhanced project implementation course-correction in line the MTR recommendations, and a potential full achievement of the expected project results.

130. The Bank rating for Quality of Supervision is **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Justification of Overall Rating of Bank Performance

131. Based on the assessments above the Bank Performance is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**.

D. RISK TO DEVELOPMENT OUTCOME

132. Since the design phase, great attention has been given to the sustainability of the Government's financial support, with a detailed long-term financial plan worked out early in the process and approved by the Government. The GoM's 10-year ESDP is based upon financial simulations of key sets of policies as well as the macro-economic framework. The general orientations of the ESDP financing included that: (i) all the recurrent expenditures of the education system to be financed by government budget resources, while the investment effort will be shared with international financing partners and, to a lesser extent, with domestic partners, particularly communities; (ii) a significant share of the Government's recurrent budget, up to 22% by 2015, to be allocated to non-salary expenditures to provide a permanent allocation of funds for in service training and maintenance activities, and (iii) for the procurement of small equipment for the schools and the administration of the education system a significant share



of the budget to be allocated to non-salary expenditures to provide a permanent allocation of funds for teacher training and maintenance activities. Financial simulations of the ESDP policies suggested that the sustainability of the public expenditures on education required that the share of education in GDP should increase from 4.4 percent in 2010 to 4.5 percent in 2020. The major multilateral and bilateral donors have been effectively engaged and consulted extensively on this financial plan.

133. The GoM has been fully committed to continuing the efforts engaged in the BESSP. The institutional arrangements are also in place to ensure the project's sustainability. Yet, the continuation of improvements in the quality of pre-service training and increasing equitable access to quality basic education is likely to remain challenging given the inherent challenges continuing to face the education sector. Many of the project interventions are system wide improvements requiring sustained efforts and continuous reforms. The World Bank's continued education sector engagement, particularly through the new IPF under preparation and the DPO programmatic series (2018-20122), will ensure that the outcomes achieved under the BESSP are maintained and that the lessons learned are incorporated, to the extent possible, to further strengthen the basic education sector. These two instruments are expected to be mutually reinforcing in support of reforming teachers' recruitment, training, and management as well as school-based management and finance. While the DPO will spur reforms to improve efficiency by tackling rampant absenteeism and the quality of the flow of teachers that go into the teaching profession, the IPF will focus on quality especially the quality of the stock of teachers. This DPO clearly indicates the government's commitment to structural and growth-enhancing reforms especially as it tackles measures to boost competitiveness and skills including in basic education. These actions taken together will gradually improve the quality of education in Mauritania. Based on this strong government commitment, and current level of financing and support from both the Government and education sector DPs in the country, it is highly likely that develop outcomes will be sustained.

V. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

134. The following key lessons have been identified:

135. **Lesson 1: A comprehensive vision for the teacher profession is critical for learning.** A high quality and motivated teaching workforce is the single most important factor in improving learning. A series of good or bad teachers over several years can widen gaps in student learning. In a context where there is a dearth of teachers at all levels of education and where it is not uncommon to find teachers that have not mastered the content of primary education, it is not arguable that the project should have a specific focus on teachers. While the BESSP's strategic and specific focus on improving pre-service training and its full complementarity with other DPs supporting in-service training is commendable, teacher training institutes in Mauritania generally hire from a poor pool of candidates in the first place which make it highly challenging for these institutes to produce quality teachers with the required level of skills. This suggest that it is critical to address the issue of teachers as a continuum, starting with the quality of the flow of teachers that enter into the system, an ENI entrance examination to ensure that would-be teachers have the minimum level requirements, the upgrading of the current stock of teachers coupled with an enhanced and harmonized teacher management system. Further, strong incentives should be considered to facilitate teacher redeployment and the profile change of bilingual teachers to be. The new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143) under preparation should build on the BESSP's achievements and focus on the improvement of both the quality of the flow



of teachers as well as the stock of teachers. Furthermore, considering that some of these needed reforms are generally beyond the scope of a project, they are best addressed through a programmatic development policy operation (DPO).

136. Lesson 2: Strong government commitment and project ownership coupled with adequate support lead to project success even in low capacity context. The level of ownership of the project by the Government and stakeholders can play an important role in determining an operation's overall success and long-term impact. Yet, positive project outcomes are not necessarily impacted by institutional instability when a country has a strong commitment to a stated government policy. The Government of Mauritania was fully committed to the implementation of their ten- year education program which resulted in positive outcomes and improvement in the education sector. In addition, JSRs by the GoM and DPs are well-established mechanisms that could positively contribute to effective project implementation and minimize the transaction costs. Utilizing existing sector monitoring systems such as JSRs allows enhanced sector harmonization and DPs coordination to better support the Government to design and implement effective education sector reforms. With the right support, a project can be effectively implemented, and accountability strengthened by streamlining the project into existing sector monitoring mechanisms.

137. Lesson 3: A PDO must very clearly reflect the project's objectives, including all relevant equity dimensions targeted. While the equity focus of the BESSP was to address gender inequity (through the targeted support provided to girls) and geographical disparities (through the specific targeting of disadvantaged *wilayas*), this was not clearly reflected in the PDO. This is an important design element to consider for future project designs.

138. Lesson 4: The establishment of a robust M&E system is instrumental and must always be prioritized. The availability of timely and reliable data and information is critical for designing, identifying, selecting, and setting the results indicators to measure the achievement of the development objectives and monitoring. In this project, the lack of reliable data and information at the design phase was a key challenge to ensure the project's effective monitoring. The establishment of a robust M&E system should always be prioritized to ensure that the achievements and challenges under a project are monitored and well-documented, allowing the client and project task teams to make course-corrections in order to enhance their overall effectiveness and impact.

139. Lesson 5: A project's results framework must be carefully designed at project preparation and must give a clear picture of the project's expected impact. The project's results framework plays a critical role in monitoring project progress and improving project performance. The RF needs to be carefully designed at project preparation and should be based on a realistic assessment of the data availability, accuracy, reliability, and implementation capacity. The feasibility of project indicators should be fully assessed prior to finalization to avoid changes during project implementation. When feasible, results indicators should be measured through proportion rates and not just numbers to better reflect the project's impact. Including performance indicators with faulty baselines or where no baselines exist at project appraisal is challenging as making accurate projections may be very difficult.

140. Lesson 6: Evidence-based policy dialogue must be an integral part of a project; the 'bigger picture' always needs to be kept in sight. For instance, looking at the specific gender equity focus of the BESSP, the project has effectively reached the planned project results. Yet, while the effective transition rate for girls into lower secondary schools increased from 58 percent in 2013 to 65 percent in 2016, and GER for girls increased from 29.8 percent in



2012 to 37.8 percent in 2017, the bigger picture is not completely bright. The cumulative dropout rate for girls in lower secondary schools soared from 17.57 percent in 2014 to 30.59 percent in 2016, although for boys it has decreased slightly from 24.68 percent to 23.9 percent in the same period. Proactive and intensive World Bank engagement and capacity building are all essential elements to effectively support sector reforms. Effective technical assistance can provide the needed support at critical points and help overcome project implementation challenges. Building the capacity of key stakeholders is also important for project management and sustainability, especially in a decentralized education management system. Continued capacity building at the decentralized level is essential.



ANNEX 1. RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND KEY OUTPUTS

A. RESULTS INDICATORS

A.1 PDO Indicators

Objective/Outcome: Improve quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Direct project beneficiaries	Number	0.00	76500.00	360000.00	366338.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018
Female beneficiaries	Percentage	10.00	12.00	50.00	48.40

Comments (achievements against targets):

Exceeded. At appraisal, the number of direct project beneficiaries included female students of lower secondary schools in the targeted regions, ENI students, faculty and managers, as well as staff of the central and regional structures of the education sector. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the end target was formally revised upwards from 76,500 to 360,000 to include: students and teachers in primary schools in the six targeted *wilayas*; girls in lower secondary schools in the six targeted *wilayas*; students in the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools; students, administrators, and ENI teachers; primary school teachers in schools where ENI students have internships; participants in the awareness-raising campaigns; staff of local and regional education directorates (DRENs) and departmental inspectorates (IDENs), staff of the DSPC and the CNE. Relatedly, the end target for the “proportion of female direct beneficiaries” was also formally revised from 12 percent to 50 percent to reflect the expanded scope of project activities supporting female beneficiaries.



Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Proportion of graduates of ENIs who master the minimum required competencies	Percentage	0.00	15.00	42.00	35.60
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Partially achieved. By the project’s MTR, 32 percent of ENI graduates had mastered the minimum required competencies against an end target of 15 percent. To reflect this progress made, the end target has been ambitiously revised upward from 15 percent to 42 percent during the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017. In addition, the planned ENI assessment of the 2018 cohort is not yet available. Upon the completion of the assessment, this indicator's achievement is expected to increase.

Objective/Outcome: Promote equitable access to lower secondary education

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the six targeted wilayas	Percentage	41.30	50.00	47.00	49.30
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Exceeded. The end target was formally revised downward from 50 percent (i.e. representing faulty data introduced at the design stage) to 47 percent to remain consistent with the revised baseline value which decreased from 45 percent to 41.3 percent as a result of the availability of more accurate data at the time of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017.



Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of females enrolled in lower secondary education in the six targeted wilayas	Number	15466.00 28-Feb-2014	8736.00 28-Feb-2017	22653.00 30-Nov-2018	26610.00 30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): Exceeded. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the baseline value and end target were formally revised: the end target was increased from 8,736 to 22,653 in line with the increased baseline value from 7,800 to 15,466 female students enrolled in lower secondary education in the targeted <i>wilayas</i>.</p>					

A.2 Intermediate Results Indicators

Component: Improving the quality of teaching in primary education

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of ENI administrative staff trained (Component 1)	Number	0.00 28-Feb-2014	70.00 28-Feb-2017	41.00 30-Nov-2018	41.00 30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets):</p>					



Achieved. The end target was formally revised downward from 70 to 41 to account for the total number of administrative staff working in the ENIs at the time of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017.

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of ENI faculty trained (Component 1)	Number	0.00	120.00	101.00	101.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Achieved. The end target was formally revised downward from 120 to 101 to account for the total number of ENI faculty at the time of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017. The indicator measured the number of ENI faculty trained in curriculum and instruction.

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Educational resources available at ENIs (Component 1)	Yes/No	N	Y	Y	Y
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Achieved. As of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the indicator referred to 4 ENIs instead of 2 as originally planned and educational resources included: library books, computer lab, language lab as well as classroom and office equipment.



Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL supported by the Project (Component 1)	Number	0.00	500.00	1019.00	1019.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): Achieved. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the end target was formally revised upward from 500 to 1,019 teachers to respond to the increasing demand for certified bilingual teachers.</p>					

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of pedagogical kits distributed in the six targeted wilayas through the project (Component 1)	Number	0.00	25.00	403283.00	445437.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, “the <u>proportion</u> of students who received pedagogical kits in the targeted <i>wilayas</i>” was formally revised to measure the <u>number</u> of pedagogical kits distributed in the six targeted <i>wilayas</i> through the project to provide a better understanding of the project’s reach. The end target was adjusted accordingly. The original target that aimed to reach 25 percent of students receiving pedagogical kits in the targeted <i>wilayas</i> was exceeded. The total number of pedagogical kits distributed by project close (445,437) covered the total number (100 percent) of primary and lower secondary students in the targeted six <i>wilayas</i>.</p>					



Component: Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of classrooms constructed in targeted wilayas with support from the project (Component 2)	Number	0.00 28-Feb-2014	52.00 28-Feb-2017		52.00 30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Fully achieved.

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of girls receiving an award (Component 2)	Number	0.00 28-Feb-2014	480.00 28-Feb-2017	480.00 30-Nov-2018	574.00 30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Exceeded. As of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the indicator refers to the number of girls in lower secondary schools receiving a non-monetary award in the six targeted *wilayas*.



Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of awareness campaigns carried out to promote girls' education with NGOs in each of the six targeted wilayas (Component 2)	Number	0.00	9.00		12.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017		30-Nov-2018
Comments (achievements against targets): Exceeded.					

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of teachers, inspectors and school directors in rural schools who attended awareness-raising training sessions (Component 2)	Number	0.00	690.00	250.00	450.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018
Comments (achievements against targets): Exceeded. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the end target was formally revised downward from 690 to 250 as the original target reflected the total number of teachers, inspectors, and school directors in the six targeted <i>wilayas</i> .					



Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of girls provided with pedagogical kits in the six targeted wilayas (Component 2)	Number	0.00	72407.00	18879.00	18879.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017	30-Nov-2018	30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): Achieved. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the end target was formally revised downward to reflect the actual number of girls in lower secondary schools in the targeted <i>wilayas</i>.</p>					

Component: Strengthening capacity of the education sector

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
System of learning assessment established and functional (Component 3)	Yes/No	N	Y		Y
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017		30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): Achieved.</p>					

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised	Actual Achieved at
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				Target	Completion
Integrated EMIS (network system) is operational within the State Ministry of Education (MEE) and the regional offices (Component 3)	Yes/No	N 28-Feb-2014	Y 28-Feb-2017		Y 30-Nov-2018
Comments (achievements against targets): Achieved.					

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Number of DRENs personnel trained in data collection and analysis (Component 3)	Number	0.00 28-Feb-2014	120.00 28-Feb-2017	70.00 30-Nov-2018	70.00 30-Nov-2018
Comments (achievements against targets): Achieved. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2018, the end target was formally revised downward to reflect the delay in the implementation of the EMIS intervention.					

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
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Number of staff trained on EMIS (Component 3)	Number	0.00	285.00		65.00
		28-Feb-2014	28-Feb-2017		30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Only partially achieved due to the delayed implementation of the EMIS intervention. The planned training is expected to take place in summer 2019.

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey completed (Component 3)	Yes/No	N 28-Feb-2014	Y 28-Feb-2017	Y 30-Nov-2018	Y 30-Nov-2018

Comments (achievements against targets):

Achieved. During the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017, the indicator “early grade reading assessment (EGRA) completed” was dropped and replaced with “Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey completed”. SDI includes a sample-based testing in Arabic, French and Math for grade 4 students and its findings were considered to be more useful in identifying limitations in the provision of education services and informing policy changes in line with the project’s objective. In addition, Mauritania being the 11th country in Africa to implement an SDI, the survey allowed for comparison of Mauritania to Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda, further informing the evidence base for improved policy dialogue.

Indicator Name	Unit of Measure	Baseline	Original Target	Formally Revised Target	Actual Achieved at Completion
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Number of meetings of the education sector group (Component 3)	Number	0.00 28-Feb-2014	9.00 28-Feb-2017	7.00 30-Nov-2018	15.00 30-Nov-2018
<p>Comments (achievements against targets): Exceeded. The end target was formally revised to reflect progress made by the time of the restructuring approved on August 31, 2017.</p>					



B. KEY OUTPUTS BY COMPONENT

Objective/Outcome 1: Improved quality of pre-service teacher training in primary education	
Outcome Indicators	1. Proportion of ENI graduates mastering the minimum required competencies
Intermediate Results Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of ENI administrative staff trained 2. Number of ENI faculty trained 3. Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL 4. Availability of educational resources at ENIs
<p>Key Outputs by Component (linked to the achievement of the Objective/Outcome 1)</p> <p>Component 1</p> <p><u>Under Sub-component 1.1</u>, 101 ENI faculty in all four (4) ENIs have been trained on the new ENI standardized curriculum and the competency-based approach (<i>Approche par Competences</i>) and 41 ENI administrative staff have been trained in language. In addition, 70 faculty members of the ENIs of Nouakchott and Aïoun benefitted from a two-week training on learning assessments and 106 primary school teachers who supervised ENI students during their internships were trained in mentoring. The project had also contracted the CREL (<i>Centre de Recherche et d'Etudes des Langues</i>) to deliver language training for ENI students and faculty and to provide ongoing mentoring support to ENI faculty members during the last two academic years under the Project to ensure that they are building the required skills to deliver bilingual education to ENI students. By the project closure, 1,019 additional bilingual teachers supported by the project were certified by CREL. In addition to making educational resources available, the project also equipped all 4 ENIs with language and computer labs, office equipment, and libraries and provided hands on training to faculty members on the use of ICT for instruction delivery. And finally, the CNE (<i>Cellule Nationale d'Evaluation</i>) undertook four independent competency assessments (2014-2018) of the ENIs' first and last year students to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics, so that remedial programs can be designed to target students in needs of improvement. The last year assessments also allowed to measure knowledge acquired by the ENI students during their three-year pre-service training program or the ENI's value-added.</p> <p><u>Under Sub-component 1.2</u>, 445,437 pedagogical kits (backpacks, textbooks, pens, pencils) have been distributed to all primary school students in the six targeted <i>wilayas</i> and 4,000 pedagogical kits (manuals, supporting tools for geography and history such as charts, maps, geometrical</p>	



figures, etc.) have been distributed to all primary schools in these *wilayas*, improving the learning environment in the targeted regions.

Objective/Outcome 2: Increased equitable access to lower secondary education

Outcome Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the targeted <i>wilayas</i> 2. Enrollment of female students in lower secondary schools in the targeted <i>wilayas</i>
Intermediate Results Indicators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of classrooms constructed in the targeted <i>wilayas</i> 2. Number of girls receiving an award 3. Number of awareness-raising campaigns carried out to promote girls' education 4. Number of teachers, school inspectors and directors who attended awareness-raising training sessions

Key Outputs by Component
(linked to the achievement of the Objective/Outcome 2)

Under Sub-component 2.1, thirteen (13) lower secondary schools were built and equipped with reading rooms with books, desks, science labs, access to water and solar electricity and the government has staffed them with qualified civil servant teachers as originally committed. These civil works activities resulted in significant improvement in the participation in secondary education of students from disadvantaged rural communities. Fifty-two (52) additional classrooms were built, providing adequate space to nearly 3000 students currently enrolled in these middle schools.

Under Sub-component 2.2, the project contracted NGOs to assist with the organizing of awareness-raising campaigns to promote girls' education in each of the six targeted *wilayas* (*Adrar, Brakna, Gorgol, Guidimagha, Hodh Chargui, and Tagant*). Twelve (12) awareness campaigns were carried out during the life of the project, reaching 450 participants including school principals, representatives of parents' associations, civil society activists, and local media. Also, awareness-raising training sessions were delivered to more than 450 teachers, school inspectors and principals of lower secondary schools to discuss the issue of girls' education, based on a UNICEF report on cultural factors impeding girls' education. Participating educators were encouraged to share and reflect on their own experience and came up with actionable guidance for



teachers and school principals. In addition, the project also contracted an NGO to work with communities, women in particular, to identify the main socio-psychological hurdles to girls’ access to secondary education and to design an appropriate communication campaign to help address them. In addition, 574 high performing girls have received performance awards from the government as an incentive to continue to pursue their education. And lastly, about 19,000 girls enrolled in lower secondary schools in the six targeted *wilayas* have received pedagogical kits, further incentivizing their continued participation in school.

Strengthening management of the education sector:

Although not part of the formal PDO statement, strengthening management of the education sector was a critical part of the project design and implementation as reflected particularly in Component 3.

Intermediate Results Indicators

1. System of learning assessment established and functional
2. Integrated EMIS (network system) is operational within the MEE and the regional offices
3. Number of DRENs personnel trained in data collection and analysis
4. Number of staff trained on EMIS
5. Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey completed
6. Number of meetings of the education sector group

Key Outputs by Component

(linked to strengthening management of the education sector)

Under Component 3, the following key cross-cutting outputs were achieved, notably:

Student assessment. The project funded two national learning assessments in addition to the implementation of the SDI survey. The SDI survey has been implemented in a national representative sample of 300 primary schools and its findings are currently serving to inform the new investment operation in the education sector. In addition, the project supported the capacity-building of the CNE which undertook (i) three independent assessments of the ENIs’ first year students and, in 2016, of incoming second- and third-year students to evaluate their proficiency in Arabic, French, and Mathematics, which informed remedial actions in pre-service training during project implementation and (ii) three largescale national learning assessments for children in grades 3, 5, and 9 in 2014 et 2015. The project also supported the training of 917 primary school directors and 332 basic education inspectors in management and pedagogy, respectively.



Education Management Information System (EMIS). The project established an EMIS with three functional modules (Human resources, students, and schools) and deployed it on a pilot basis in the DREN of Nouakchott. The EMIS IT platform (hardware and software) is now in fully operational. In addition, 65 EMIS administrators and users were identified and trained. Not all identified administrators and users (285) could be trained during the life of the project given the extensive delays experienced. While the project did not achieve the originally planned objective of a fully integrated and functional EMIS, the achievements noted thus far constitute an important milestone for the potential expansion of strong EMIS, which is the backbone of an effective education system.

Education sector planning. The project supported four annual school censuses and TA was provided to the Ministry of Education in undertaking (a) the 2015 Education Country Status Report (RESEN), (b) the financial simulation model that served as a base for the development of the three-year budgeted action plan (2016-2018), (c) the evaluation of the implementation of the three-year national education plan (2016-18) and the update of the PNDSE II and its operationalization in the upcoming three-year action plan (2019-2021), and (d) the evaluation of the administration of the national system of examination. These achievements were timely in line with the preparation schedule of the new GPE operation. Moreover, throughout the life of the project, fifteen (15) education sector group meetings were held, contributing to more harmonized and coordinated education sector planning.

C. DETAILED RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND MAIN CHANGES

Table 1: PDO Level Indicators

Indicator	Original (2014)			Restructuring (Approved in August 2017)				Grant Closing (November 2018)	
	Unit of Measure	Original Baseline	End Target for Original Financing	Achievement as of August 31, 2017 (approval of restructuring)	Indicator Change	Revised for closing dates of restructuring of November 30, 2018		Overall Achievement	Notes
						Baseline	End Target		
Direct Project Beneficiaries	Number	0	76,500	281,810	No change ¹⁰	0	360,000	366,338	Target exceeded. Linked to all PDO objectives

¹⁰ Though this indicator has not been revised, direct project beneficiaries are specified to include: students and teachers in primary schools in the six targeted *wilayas*; girls in lower secondary in the six targeted *wilayas*; students in the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools; students, administrators, and teachers of the four teacher training centers (ENIs); ENIs students on internships in primary schools; participants in the awareness-raising campaigns; staff of local and regional education directorates (DREN and IDEN); staff of the DSPC and the CNE.



<i>Female beneficiaries</i>	Percentage	10%	12%	52%	As direct project beneficiaries have been specified, the end target value has been updated accordingly	0%	50%	48.40%	Partially achieved. Linked to all PDO objectives.
Proportion of graduates of ENIs who master the minimum required competencies	Percentage	0%	15%	32% ¹¹	End-of-project target revised to be more ambitious in line with progress made	0%	42%	35.6%	Partially achieved. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training
Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in targeted wilayas	Percentage	45%	50%	45%	Baseline value was incorrect and has been updated. The end-of-project target has been adjusted to include the six targeted wilayas	41.3%	47%	49.30%	Target exceeded. Linked to PDO objective of increasing equitable access
Number of females enrolled in lower secondary education in targeted wilayas	Number	7,800	8,736	21,168	Baseline value was incorrect and has been updated. The end-of-project target has been adjusted to include the six targeted wilayas	15,466	22,653	26,610	Target exceeded. Linked to PDO objective of increasing equitable access. Further update on this indicator is expected in June 2019 upon the availability of the results of the annual school census

¹¹ 'Mastering the minimum required competencies' is defined as: ENI students achieving a determined level of proficiency in language and mathematics in their third year. These students take a test administered by the CNE that evaluates their command of the curriculum taught in primary schools. The test was conducted in May 2016 for the first time, so no data was available for the previous years. Therefore, 32% achieved for Year 2 was calculated by: X/Y (X (191) = number of students in third year who scored 75% or more in Arabic and 50% or more in Mathematics for the Arabic teachers track OR 75% or more in French and 50% or more in Mathematics for the French teacher track OR 75% or more in Arabic and 75% or more in French and 50% or more in Mathematics for the bilingual teacher track; Y (602) = is the number of students in the third year.



Table 2: Intermediate-Level Indicators

Component 1 Intermediate-Level Indicators

Indicator	Original (2014)			Restructuring (Approved in August 2017)				Grant Closing (November 30, 2018)	
	Unit of Measure	Original Baseline	End Target for Original Financing	Achievement as of August 31, 2017 (approval of restructuring)	Indicator Change	Revised for closing dates of restructuring of November 30, 2018		Overall Achievement	Notes
					Baseline	End Target			
Number of ENI administrative staff trained	Number	0	70	41	Revised: Number of ENI administrative staff trained in language	0	41	41	Achieved. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training
Number of ENI faculty trained	Number	0	120	101	Revised: Number of ENI faculty trained in curriculum and instruction. End of project target adjusted accordingly	0	101	101	Achieved. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training
Educational resources available at ENIs	Yes/No	No	Yes	No	No change. ¹²	No	Yes	Yes	Achieved. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training
Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL supported by the project	Number	30	500	436	Revised: Number of ENI students certified bilingual by CREL supported by the project	0	1,019	1,019	Achieved. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training

¹² While the indicator has not been changed, the indicator now refers to 4 ENIs (instead of 2 as originally planned) and educational resources specifically refers to: office and class equipment, library books, computer lab, and language lab.



Proportion of students who received pedagogical kits in the targeted regions each year	Percentage	0	25	255,209	Revised: Number of pedagogical kits distributed in the targeted <i>wilayas</i> through the project	0	403,283	445,437	Exceeded. Linked to PDO objective of improving quality of pre-service training
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Component 2 Intermediate-Level Indicators

Indicator	Original (2014)			Restructuring (Approved in August 2017)			Grant Closing (November 30, 2018)		
	Unit of Measure	Original Baseline	End Target for Original Financing	Achievement as of August 31, 2017 (approval of restructuring)	Indicator Change	Revised for closing dates of restructuring of November 30, 2018		Overall Achievement	Notes
					Baseline	End Target			
Number of classrooms constructed in targeted <i>wilayas</i> with support from the project	Number	0	52	40	Revised: Number of classrooms in lower secondary constructed in targeted <i>wilayas</i> with support from the project	0	52	52	Achieved. Linked with PDO objective of increasing equitable access
Number of girls receiving an award	Number	0	480	352	Revised: Number of girls in lower secondary receiving a non-monetary award supported by the project in the six targeted <i>wilayas</i>	0	480	574	Exceeded. Linked with PDO objective of increasing equitable access
Number of awareness campaigns carried out to promote girls' education with NGOs	Number	0	9	6	Revised: Number of awareness campaigns carried out to promote girls' education with NGOs in each of the six targeted <i>wilayas</i>	0	9	12	Exceeded. Linked with PDO objective of increasing equitable access
Number of teachers, inspectors, and school directors	Number	0	690	0	The end-of-project target has been revised as the initial target was informed by the	0	250	450	Exceeded. Linked with PDO objective of



in rural schools who attended awareness-raising training sessions					total number of these staff in the targeted <i>wilayas</i>				increasing equitable access
Number of girls provided with kits in targeted <i>wilayas</i>	Number	0	72,407	18,879	Revised: Number of girls provided with pedagogical kits in targeted <i>wilayas</i>		18,879	18,879	Exceeded by far. Linked with PDO objective of increasing equitable access

Component 3 Intermediate-Level Indicators

Indicator	Original (2014)			Restructuring (Approved in August 2017)				Grant Closing (November 30, 2018)	
	Unit of Measure	Original Baseline	End Target for Original Financing	Achievement as of August 31, 2017 (approval of restructuring)	Indicator Change	Revised for closing dates of restructuring of November 30, 2018		Overall Achievement	Notes
					Baseline	End Target			
System of learning assessment established and functional	Yes/No	No	Yes	Yes	No change	No	Yes	Yes	Achieved.
Integrated EMIS (network system) is operational within the State Ministry of Education (MEE) and the regional offices	Yes/No	No	Yes	No	No change	No	Yes	Yes	Achieved
Number of DRENs personnel trained in data	Number	0	120	70	Annual targets modified to reflect the delay in the implementation of the EMIS activity	0	70	70 ¹³	Achieved.

¹³ The DPEF has informed the Bank team that, in addition to the planned 70 DREN staff to be trained, an additional 50 DREN personnel are trained in data collection and analysis with the support of the project. The ICR has documented the officially reported achievement in the latest ISR (Seq. 9).



collection and analysis									
Number of staff trained in EMIS	Number	0	285	0	No change	0	285	65	Partially achieved due to the delayed implementation of the EMIS intervention. The planned training is expected to take place during summer 2019.
Completion of early grade reading assessment	Yes/No	No	Yes	No	New: Service Delivery Indicators (SDI) survey completed. The SDI replaced the initially planned EGRA	No	Yes	Yes	Achieved.
Number of annual meetings of the education sector group	Number	0	9	12	Revised : Agreed that this indicator would include the annual sector reviews	12	7	15	Exceeded, including the annual sector reviews held since 2016

**ANNEX 2. BANK LENDING AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT/SUPERVISION****A. TASK TEAM MEMBERS**

Name	Role
Preparation	
Geraldo Joao Martins	Task Team Leader
Wolfgang Chadab	Senior Finance Office
Cherif Diallo	Previous Team Lead
Salamata Bal	Senior Social Development Specialist
Sukhdeep Brar	Senior Education Specialist
Laura S. McDonald	ET Consultant
Franco Russo	Operations Officer
Fatima Cherif	Program Assistant
Tshela Rose-Claire Pakabomba	Program Assistant
Helene Bertaud	Senior Counsel
Hamoud Abdel Wedoud Kamil	Senior Education Specialist
Africa Eshogba Olojoba	Senior Environmental Specialist
Saidou Diop	Senior Financial Management Specialist
Sandra Beemer	Consultant
Fatou Fall Samba	Financial Management Analyst
Mohamed El Hafedh Hendah	Procurement Specialist
Lalaina Noelinirina Rasoloharison	Program Assistant
Supervision/ICR	
Waly Wane	Task Team Leader(s)
Brahim Hamed	Procurement Specialist(s)
Fatou Fall Samba	Financial Management Specialist
Celine Gavach	Team Member
Yahya Ould Aly Jean	Team Member
Laura S. McDonald	Team Member



Nicolas Kotschoubey	Environmental Specialist
Batouly Dieng	Team Member
Maimouna Toure	Team Member
Ndeye Magatte Fatim Seck	Team Member
Mamata Tiendrebeogo	Team Member
Lalaina Noelinirina Rasoloharison	Team Member
Amina Debissa Denboba	Team Member
M'Bahly Maud-Andree Kouadio IV	Team Member
Mohamed Tolba	Team Member
Bernardo da Cruz Vasconcellos	Team Member
Tigist Guebreyes Yimer	Team Member
Mamadou Moustapha Ndoye	Social Specialist

A. STAFF TIME AND COST

Stage of Project Cycle	Staff Time and Cost	
	No. of staff weeks	US\$ (including travel and consultant costs)
Preparation		
FY12	9.724	128,999.17
FY13	20.473	140,204.70
FY14	13.700	28,733.17
Total	43.90	297,937.04
Supervision/ICR		
FY15	13.303	113,810.16
FY16	41.414	180,757.54
FY17	39.466	195,061.22
FY18	33.947	205,029.11
FY19	11.010	63,006.93
Total	139.14	757,664.96



ANNEX 3. PROJECT COST BY COMPONENT

Table 1: Costs and Expenditure by Component (US\$ million)

Components	Amount at Approval (US\$M)	Amount at Restructuring (US\$M)	Amount revised in 2018 (US\$M)	Actual at Grant Closing (US\$M)	Execution Rate (Percentage)
I. Improving the quality of teaching in primary education	3.88	4.00	3.88	3.82	98
II. Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education	4.36	4.70	4.36	4.28	98
III. Strengthening capacity of the education sector	4.17	3.70	4.17	4.02	96
Total	12.40	12.40	12.40	12.12	98



ANNEX 4. EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS

I. Introduction

1. This section provides an economic and financial analysis of the Mauritania Basic Education Sector Support Project (BESSP). The analysis provides an overview of the assessment undertaken at appraisal and examines the efficiency of gains observed over the life cycle of the BESSP. It also includes, an update of the analysis conducted at appraisal using the most recent information including actual costs and benefits incurred at grant closing.
2. The economic analysis conducted at appraisal was divided into five parts and focused on three types of benefits to assess the efficiency of the project. The analysis first described the macroeconomic context as well as trends in education expenditures in Mauritania. Secondly, benefits expected from each of the three project components were analyzed. Finally, a financial sustainability analysis of wage bill for incoming teachers was provided.
3. The first benefit associated with component 1 of the project was an increase in the quality of primary education. The project planned to allocate 40 percent of its financial resources to quality improvements and intended to decrease financial costs for families and increase learning outcomes through the distribution of pedagogical kits to 25 percent of primary school children. The Project also expect to train 900 new bilingual teachers during the period from 2013 to 2015. Through component 2, it was envisaged that the project will increase the access and equity in lower secondary school with the construction of 13 new lower secondary schools as well as purchase school furniture and books in selected regions or *wilayas* with highest rural population and with lowest girls' participation in secondary. This benefit was expected to be captured by a net increase in lower secondary enrollment. The project foresaw that by 2015, transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls would increase from 45 to 50 percent and girls' participation in lower secondary education girls would rise from 42 to 45 percent in the targeted *wilayas*. The third benefit of the project was to strengthen the management of the education sector with an improved computerized management information system, statistical center and training of administrative staff to lead to an efficient functioning of the sector.
4. In a similar vein, this analysis subsequent to project closing will include the following: (i) economic context presenting the education expenditures and framework for its development in Mauritania and the expected gains of BESSP; (ii) a trend analysis of the internal and external efficiency gains; (iii) cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis; (iv) efficiency of implementation and spending; and (v) an assessment of the financial sustainability of project achievements.

II. Economic Context

5. **Mauritania continues to experience a relatively good economic in the last two decades.** This growth was originally boosted by the start of oil production which surge the gross domestic product (GDP) growth from 5.4 percent in 2005 to 11.4 percent in 2006. The country has since maintained an encouraging economic growth despite the slight recession in 2009, when the GDP fell by -1.1 percent. Mauritania GDP growth reached 6.1 percent in 2013 which is really close to the International Monetary Funds (IMF) prediction at the time of appraisal. In fact, according to the IMF, Mauritania GDP growth was expected to reach 6.2 percent in 2012.



6. **This favorable macroeconomic context has positively impacted the education sector in Mauritania, with total government expenditures on education doubled over the last decade.** As shown in Table 1, over the first half of last decade, government expenditures on education significantly increased from 76.8 in 2006 to 158.1 US\$ million in 2011. Despite this increase of 25 percent after accounting for inflation, some irregularities in the trend have been observed after 2011 with education expenditures dropping to 145.1 US\$ million in 2012, then increasing to 168.1 US\$ million to again drop to 124.7 US\$ million in 2016. Similar trends are also observed in terms of the share of total government expenditures and share of GDP allocated to education. Indeed, after a steady increase from 2006 to 2010, there has been a substantial drop in both indicators since 2011. Moreover, the average expenditure on education as share of total government expenditure and share of GDP for the same period are 12.1 and 3 percent respectively. These do not meet the benchmark of the Global Partnerships for Education (GPE) which recommends that a country’s expenditure on education represents at least 15-20 percent of their total public expenditure and 4-6 percent of their GDP.

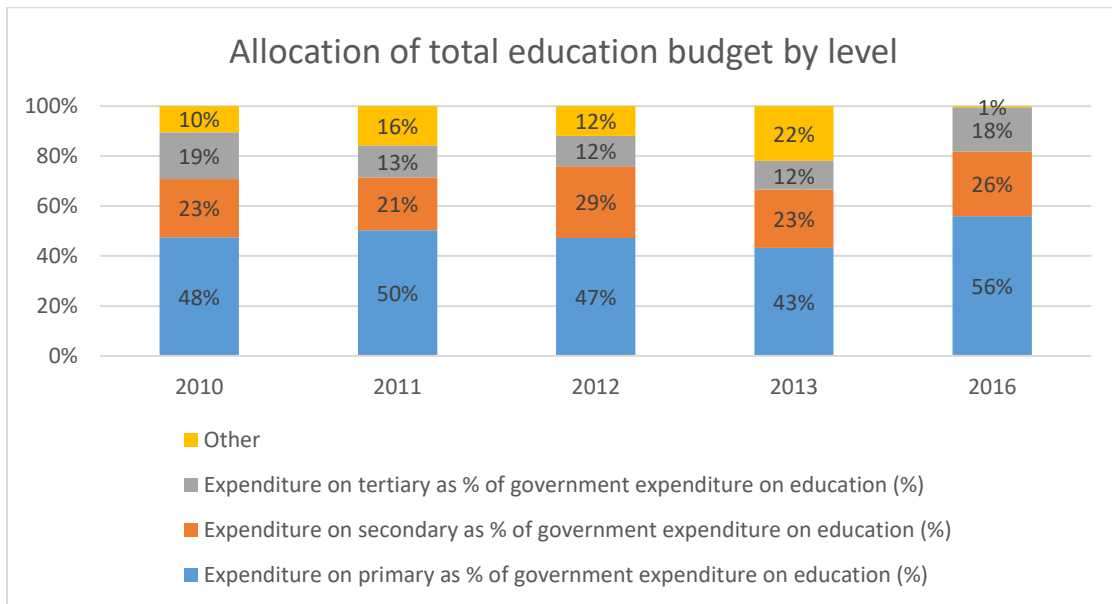
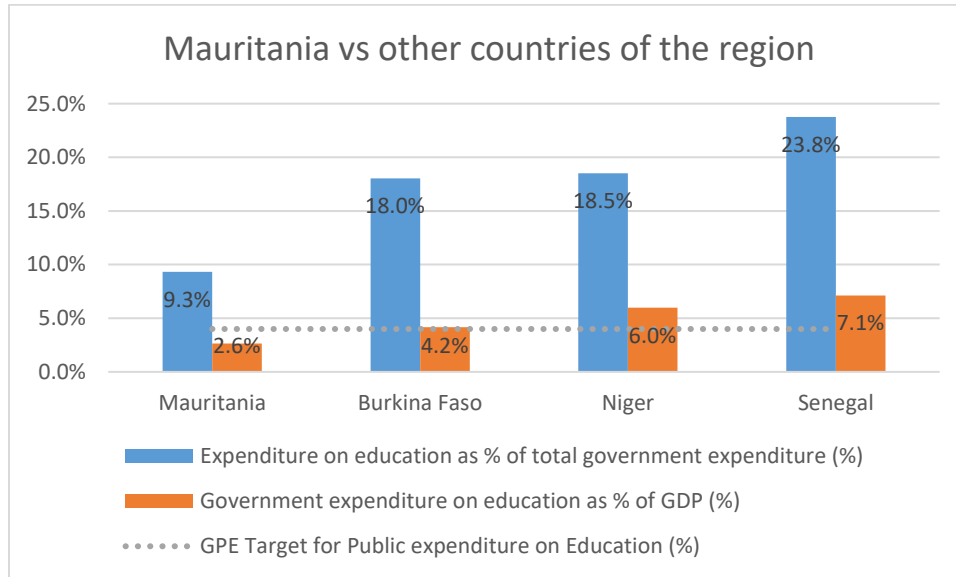
Table 1: Aggregate Education expenditure indicators in Mauritania, 2006-2016

Mauritania	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2016
Government expenditure on education in US\$ millions*	76.8	141.3	156.6	158.1	145.1	168.1	124.7
Expenditure on education as % of Total government expenditure*	10.31%	13.88%	16.04%	13.68%	10.02%	11.41%	9.33%
Expenditure on education as % of GDP	2.52%	3.55%	3.60%	3.05%	2.78%	2.94%	2.63%

7. **Although education expenditure has risen over the past decades, Mauritania’s total spending on education remains low by regional standards as observed at appraisal.** Like the analysis conducted at appraisal, this analysis also compared the share of government spending on education and the share of GDP on education expenditure in Mauritania with Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. (Figure 1) This comparison shows that despite the gradual increase in education spending over the last decade, Mauritania is still below those countries in terms of public spending in education. With regards to the GPE benchmark, all those countries have met the 15-20 percent benchmark for the share of government’s expenditure on education with share of 18 percent for Niger and Burkina; and 24 percent for Senegal. Mauritania however, remains significantly below the benchmark with a share of 9 percent. Similarly, in terms of education expenditure as share of GDP, Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal met the 4-6 percent benchmark with shares of 4, 6 and 7 percent respectively; while Mauritania remains at 2.6%.



Figure 1: Education Expenditure in Mauritania



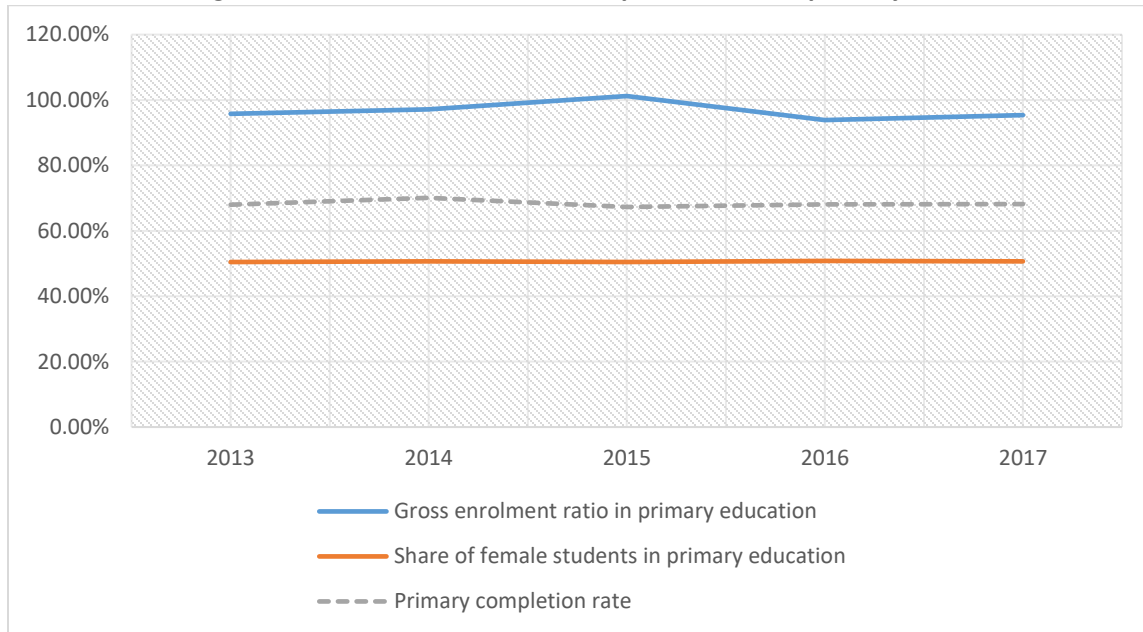
8. As identified as appraisal, primary education continues to receive particular attention within the education sector. Figure 1 shows that on average, at least 45 percent of Mauritania’s total budget on education has been devoted to primary education since 2010. When taking a closer look at the evolution, the share slightly dropped to 43 percent in 2013 but there were also peaks reached in 2011 and 2016 with share of education budget on primary education reaching 50 and 56 percent in 2011 and 2016, respectively. This is an achievement of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) benchmark set at 50 percent.

9. This continuous financial commitment to primary education by the government has help maintained the encouraging results identified at the time of appraisal, particularly in terms of enrollment and gender parity. As



illustrated in Figure 2 below, the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in Mauritania has been maintained at approximately 95 percent since 2013 and even reached 100 percent in 2015. Similarly, the share of girls enrolled in primary school also has remained largely the same over the last five years with an average of 50.6 percent. Over the same period, primary completion rate was on average about 68.3 percent which is an increase of 20 percent over the last decade. These results remain under the target of 79 percent the country aimed to achieve by 2015 but is still above the average of 66.8 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa.

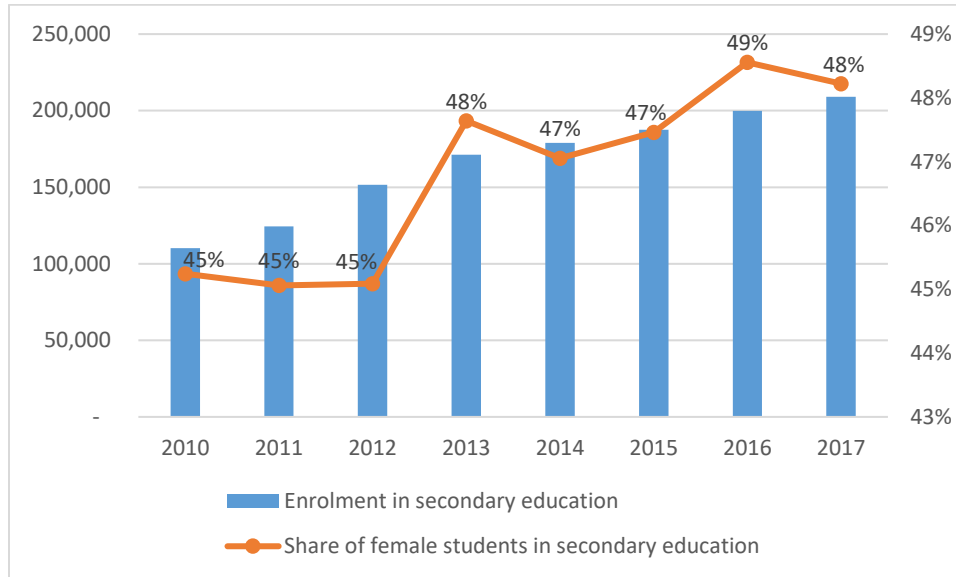
Figure 2: Evolution of GER and Completion Rate at primary level



10. **At appraisal, the education sector in Mauritania was confronting serious challenges that needed to be addressed.** As described in the PAD, internal and external inefficiencies were driven by: (i) lack of qualified and well-trained teachers; (ii) low learning outcomes at all levels of the education system with a decline in learning achievements at the primary level; and (iii) lack of adequate lower secondary schools to provide an incentive for families to keep children, especially girls in school. In terms of quality of teachers training, a recent study from the Student Evaluation Unit (*Cellule Nationale d’Evaluation des Acquis des Elèves – CNE*) on the graduates from the national teacher training schools showed that the share of graduates with the prerequisites required to properly teach in primary school improved increase by 6 percent from 2016 to 2017. Moreover, the proportion of graduates able to teach in both French and Arabic has increased successively from 3.5 percent in 2015 to 13.2 percent in 2018. In terms, enrollment in secondary education, an upward trend has been observed in Mauritania since 2012 (Figure 3). This encouraging trend is also accompanied by an increase in girls’ access to secondary education with the share of female students in secondary education rising from 45 percent in 2010 to 49 percent in 2016.



Figure 3: Share of girls in Secondary Education

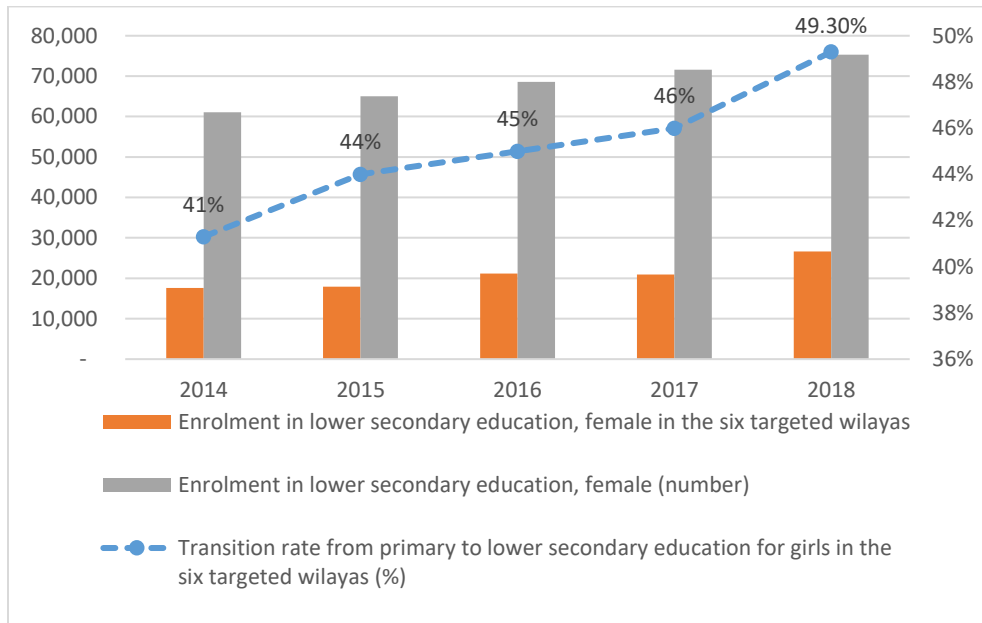


III. Internal and external Efficiency

11. Under the Mauritania BESSP, several activities were supported to improve access, equity and quality of the education system in Mauritania. These set of activities focusing on immediate goals on the Education sector, capture the internal efficiency which is concerned with the maximization of the relationship between the inputs and outputs. These activities included distribution of pedagogical and hygiene kits, construction of new lower secondary schools and development of education management information system (EMIS). The majority of indicators related to internal efficiency showed continuous progress toward the achievement of targets between 2014 and project completion in 2018. These results are summarized in table 2. The transition rate from primary to lower secondary for girls in the six targeted *wilayas* significantly increased from 41 percent in 2014 to 49 percent in 2018, which is an overachievement of the project target of 47 percent. A similar positive trend was also observed in the six targeted *wilayas* where girls' enrollment in lower secondary increase from 17,500 in 2014 to 26,600 in 2018 exceeding the project target of 22,650. Altogether, these six *wilayas* represents at least 30 percent of the national enrollment of girls in lower secondary.



Figure 4: Evolution of female transition rate from primary to secondary in Mauritania



External efficiency

12. External efficiency of the Mauritania BESSP is captured by the impact of the Education sector on the economic development in the country. In the context BESSP, several indicators captured the external efficiency of the project including proportion of graduates from the teacher's schools (*Ecole Normale des Instituteurs*) who master the minimum required competencies as well as number of additional bilingual teachers. The project substantially impacted the supply of primary school teachers with 1,019 new bilingual teachers (exceeding the target of 900). Conversely, the project fell short of the target for Proportion of graduates of ENIs who master the minimum required competencies with 35.6 percent at closing against the 42 percent targeted. Even though, the project did not meet the target, stability was observed with values remaining around 35 percent since 2018. This is mainly because trainees are being assigned to classrooms before completion of their training to fill the country's deficit of teachers. This target of 42 percent could be achieved only if the current recruitment process is reformed.



Table 2: Progress of Key Internal Efficiency Indicators

Indicators	Baseline (2014)	Project Targets (2017)	Actual (2016)	Actual at Completion (2018)	Percent of target (%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)=(4)/(2)
Transition rate from primary to lower secondary education for girls in the six targeted wilayas (%)	41%	47%	45%	49.3%	105%
Number of females enrolled in lower secondary education in the six targeted wilayas	15,466	22,653	21,168	26,610	117%
Proportion of graduates of ENIs who master the minimum required competencies (%)	0%	42%	32%	35.6	85%
Number of additional bilingual teachers certified by CREL supported by the Project	0	1,019	436	1,019	100%

Source: Constructed by author using project Results Framework.

Cost-effectiveness Analysis

13. The project was cost-effective with the cost of most activities kept under budget, except for some activities under component 3 which were underestimated at appraisal. However, some cost-saving observed under component 2 allowed for a revision of budgeted amount for component 3 (increased from 3.7 to US\$ 4.1 million in 2018). The cost-saving also resulted in an addition of new activities under each component of the project, including (i) the promotion of socio-cultural and sports' activities under component 1; (ii) extension and improvement of the tenders under component 2; and (iii) support to the steering structures under component 3.

14. At appraisal, the project planned to reduce financial costs for families and increase learning outcomes through the distribution of 403,283 pedagogical kits to both students and teachers. The project surpassed the target and distributed 445,437 kits at a cost lower than the budgeted cost. Indeed, the actual per beneficiary cost of pedagogical kit was US\$ 4.67 which is significantly lower than the unit cost estimated at US\$ 7.03 at appraisal. This actual cost lower than the budgeted amount by US\$ 2.34, resulted in a total cost saving of US\$ 746,663. The decline in the cost of the kits did not adversely affect quality but was achieved primarily through the use of more efficient procurement practices. Indeed, at appraisal, an international call for tender was anticipated, however the project proceeded to a national call for tender resulting in substantial savings. Despite the wide variety of kits content across projects, the cost of incentive kits under BESSP is lower than similar kits distributed in Ghana, Mali and Ghana which cost ranges from US\$ 6.73 to US\$50.

Table 3: Unit cost of pedagogical kits per beneficiary (USD)

Activity	At appraisal			At grant closing		
	Budgeted cost	Estimated number	Estimated Unit cost	Actual cost	Actual number	Actual Unit cost



Pedagogical kits	2,836,000	403,283	<u>\$ 7.03</u>	2,089,337	445,437	<u>\$ 4.69</u>
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15. The project also planned to efficiently increase the quality of teaching through pre-serving training of 900 new teachers. Indeed, literatures and evaluation reports on teachers’ competencies suggest that pre-service training has a higher positive impact on teacher quality than in-service training. Furthermore, the unit cost analysis at appraisal of the various options to training teachers in Mauritania showed that unit costs per student and per day for pre-serving teacher training was MRO 2,215 which was much lower than the unit cost for in-service training of MRO 3,800. Under the project, 1019 new teachers were trained (an overachievement of the target of 900). The training and material provision unit cost per teacher and per day for the training intervention was approximately MRO 3,097. The unit cost of pre-service teaching under the project was certainly higher than the unit cost at time of appraisal but remains lower than the unit cost for in-service teacher training. Moreover, the project conducted multiple training including the use of ICT and language tools and all the 1019 teachers trained through the project are CREL certified bilingual teachers. While pre-service teaching under the project generated some cost-saving when comparing to in-service training, it is worthwhile to mention that only a third of the teachers trained under project met the minimum teacher’s requirements which is significantly below the global standards.

16. However, the evaluations conducted by CNE showed that several challenges encountered during the training impacted the quality of the training. As such, the project with a share of new teacher meeting the minimum required competencies of 35.5 percent in 2018 did not meet the target of 42 percent. This was mainly due to: (i) the absence of an integrated strategy defining a standard profile for teachers; (ii) the lack of alignment between the ENI trainers and the recruitment of new teachers; (iii) irregularities in the effective duration of teachers’ training; and (iv) insufficient number of qualified ENI trainers and high enrollment in practical classes.

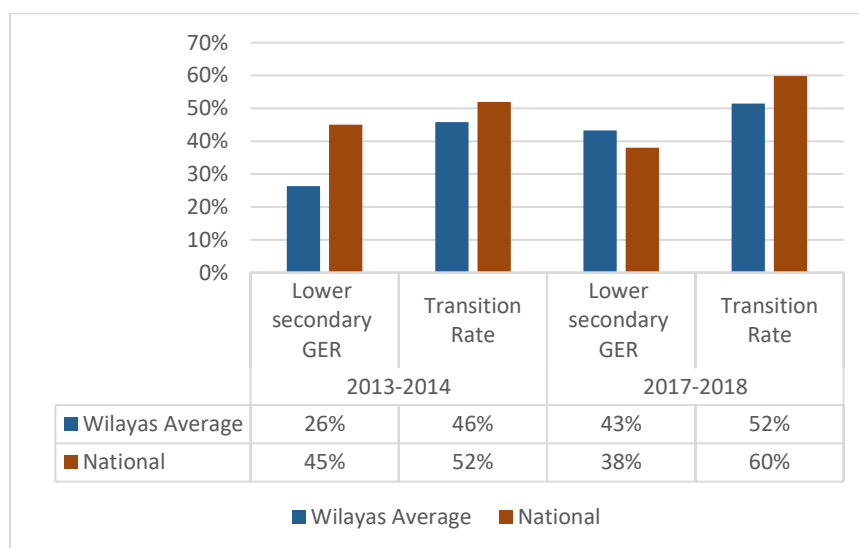
17. The project was substantially cost-effective for the construction of all 13 *collèges de proximité* and remained within the original project costing for school construction and provision of equipment planned under the civil works activities of the project. At appraisal, the total estimated cost was forecasted to be US\$3.7 million for all civil works activities as well as the provision of furniture and equipment of the 13 *collèges de proximité*. As presented in Table 4 below, by grant closing a total of US\$ 3,698,872 had been spent, which was slightly lower than the appraised estimates. On average, the cost of school was US\$ 205,000 (11 school out of the 13 cost less than \$200,000 while 4 schools cost between US\$ 203,000 to US\$ 287,000) which is relatively close to the cost of US\$ 200,000 estimated at appraisal. Despite challenges in the conception of the tender process as well as the low capacity of the construction firm that caused some delays in the expected delivery, these activities were efficiently completed before the closure of the project, and all 13 colleges have been fully operational since august 2017. These investments were instrumental in facilitating the access to secondary education in the targeted *wilayas*. As showing in Figure 5, the average enrollment in lower secondary for the 6 *wilayas* significantly increased from 26 percent in 2013/14 to 43 percent in 2017/18 surpassing the national average of 38 percent. A similar trend was also observed in terms of transition rate from primary to lower secondary education in the 6 *wilayas* with the average increasing from 46 percent in 2013/14 to 52 percent 2017/2018.



Table 4: Actual Expenditures for the construction of the 13 “collèges de proximité”

Beneficiary Institution	Civil Works	Supervision	Equipment supply	Furniture
Construction d'un collège à Feirenni	165,771.17	25,338.60	235,676.89	14,617.80
Construction collège à Kseir Torchane	181,587.59	27,756.18	258,163.10	16,012.50
Construction d'un collège Hassi Cheggar	192,783.28	29,467.47	274,080.01	16,999.74
Construction d'un collège à Bouanz	192,783.28	29,467.47	274,080.01	16,999.74
Construction collège à Oudey Mejbour	193,239.44	29,537.20	274,728.53	17,039.97
Construction collège Ould Birom (Boghé)	193,239.44	29,537.20	274,728.53	17,039.97
Construction collègede Koundel (Kaédi)	195,714.84	29,915.57	278,247.81	17,258.25
Construction collège Fom Gleita	195,714.84	29,915.57	278,247.81	17,258.25
Construction collège à Ain Savra	199,303.46	30,464.10	283,349.75	17,574.70
Construction collège El Vorah (Bababé)	202,761.65	30,992.70	288,266.27	17,879.64
Construction collège Tachott	207,990.58	31,791.95	295,700.23	18,340.73
Construction collège Mebdoua	262,800.10	40,169.74	373,622.93	23,173.87
Contruction collège Bangou	287,475.44	43,941.44	408,703.86	25,349.75
Total Amount	2,671,165.08	408,295.20	3,797,595.72	235,544.90

Figure 5: Evolution of Transition Rate and GER in lower Secondary during BESSP years



IV. Cost-benefit analysis

18. The cost-benefit analysis (CBA) has been conducted to estimate the net benefits generated by each component of the BESSP project on an incremental basis. These net benefits are equal to the difference between the incremental benefits and the project costs (both direct and indirect). The economic feasibility of the BESSP project was examined through the calculation of the Net Present Value (NPV) as well as the Internal Rate of Return (IRR). Given that a CBA was not conducted at appraisal, this CBA undertaken for the ICR consider the steps and assumptions used under similar projects conducted in Mauritania. The analysis focuses on the quantifiable portion of the project’s total



investment and evaluate the semi-quantifiable portion based upon global standards for similar interventions. In the case of BESSP project, the benefits stream estimates include quality and access.

19. The analysis separately computed the cost-benefit for the quality and the access components and then combined all two estimates considering the cost allocated to each of them to obtain the total cost-benefit of the project. Though some investments impact outcomes for beneficiaries of each component, it should not be considered that benefits are double counted. The first part of the CBA focused on the quality component of the project, estimates benefits associated with the direct interventions such as the distribution of learning materials as well as indirect intervention such as teachers and school management training. The second part of the CBA focused on the access component of the project, principally measures the benefits associated with construction of the “13 colleges de proximité” in the selected wilayas.

20. Several assumptions about the project and the associated costs such as opportunity and running costs) as well as benefits were considered in the CBA. Below is the summary of assumptions adopted:

- **The official exchange rate** – is set at 30.27 MRO per US\$ for this analysis (2014 official rate) while the latest exchange rate stands at 36.58 MRO per US\$ to ensure consistency with the project preparation stage.
- **Rates** – A 15% discount rate is used, the inflation rate assumed for the project lifetime is 5%, the maintenance cost assumed for the life time of the construction is 7.5%.
- **Earnings** – A wage rate is estimated for different levels of education and age, using the 2014 EPCV. The earning rate remains the same over the benefit time span;
- **Employment** – The probability of employment remains the same and it is estimated by level of education using the 2014 household surveys (*Enquête Permanente sur les Conditions de Vie des ménages*);
- **Unemployment rate** – by level of education will remain the same although quality improvement might increase the chance of employment;
- **Labor market entry** – the age considered for entry in the labor market is 18;
- **Life Span of the project** – The beneficiaries from access component of the project engage in the labor market for a period of 40 years and for 15 years for those benefiting from quality. The schools provide services for 40 years;
- **Project cost** – for both components represents 66 percent of total cost;
- **Running cost or maintenance costs** – there are costs associated to providing services including building maintenance fees throughout its life span. They are considered to remain the same after project interventions.

21. **Table 5 presents the estimated NPV and IRR for the project.** Table 5 presents the CBA Calculations of the IRRs and NPVs for combined estimates of the quantifiable components for the project which demonstrate that the project was economically viable. The present discounted value of benefits for the overall project is estimated to be US\$29.56 million. The corresponding NPV of program benefits is US\$11.91 million. The IRR associated with this NPV is 25.8 percent. Overall, the cost-benefit ratio estimated that for every US\$1 invested there is a return of US\$3.4. Consequently, while data to quantify all benefits are not available, the NPV derived from quantifiable benefits is greater than the NPV of costs. Given that a CBA was not conducted at appraisal, a comparative analysis of the above results at closing with appraisal estimate could not be performed. However, the IRR (25.8 percent) higher than the discount rate of 15 percent and the benefit-cost ratio of 3:1, demonstrate strong evidence of the efficiency of investments undertaken under the project.



Table 5: NPV and IRR for Quality and Access Components (USD)

	Quality	Access	Total
IRR	26.2%	24.9%	25.8%
Discounted cost (present value of costs)	\$1.79	\$4.82	\$6.61
O/w project cost	\$1.56	\$3.51	\$5.07
Maintained/incremental costs	\$0.00	\$1.31	\$1.31
Present value of incremental benefits	\$4.56	\$25.01	\$29.56
NPV	\$2.77	\$9.14	\$11.91
Benefit/cost ratio	2.5	5.2	3.4

V. Efficiency of implementation

22. **Despite a slight delay in the initial project implementation, no major factors challenged the project’s overall implementation.** Efficiency was observed in the implementation of the BESSP particularly in the use of resources with planned activities carried out on average with an overall execution rate of 98 percent. Table 6 shows the budget expenditures and execution rate by component and sub-component. Though allocation of project budget was slightly restructured across sub-component through the project life to ensure all activities planned are completed within the total budget allocated. Budget execution rate for some sub-components did not reached 100 percent not because the activities planned were not achieved but because some activities were completed at a cost lower than budgeted. When looking at budget execution for each component, both components 1 and 2 have execution rate of 98 percent with certain activities under some of the sub-components – such as short-term teacher training and the acquisitions of books for the libraries of the 13 colleges – costing as low as 70 percent of the budgeted amounts. Under component 1, only activities for the training of teachers exceeded the budget with an execution rate of 106 percent. Moreover, under component 2, most of the budgeted amounts for sub-components’ activities reached 99 to 100 percent, indicating efficiency of the project in the execution of the budget. However, the project was less efficient in the execution of the budget for component 3 with an overall rate 96 percent. Sub-components’ activities have execution rate ranging from 84 to 114 percent. Additionally, it is worthwhile to mention that the project benefited of a 19-months extension of its closing date which has allowed the project to achieved majority of the planned activities. In spite of this extension, some activities under component 3 such as technical assistance to Student Learning Assessment Unit and financial audits of GPE and IDA credits were not completed and remain in progress.



Table 6: Project budget compared to expenditure by project component and sub-component (USD)

Project Components	Budget at Appraisal (US\$ million) (1)	Budget at Restructuring (US\$ million) (2)	2018 revised Budget (US\$ million) (3)	Total Expenditures* at Closing (US\$ million) (4)	Budget Execution Rate (5)=(4)/(3)
Component 1: Improving quality of teaching in primary education	3.88	4.00	3.88	3.82	98%
Sub-component 1.1	2.01	2.00	2.01	1.96	98%
Sub-component 1.2	1.87	2.00	1.87	1.86	99%
Component 2 Promoting equitable access to lower secondary education	4.36	4.70	4.36	4.28	98%
Sub-component 2.1	3.79	3.70	3.79	3.74	99%
Sub-component 2.2	0.57	1.00	0.57	0.54	95%
Component 3: Strengthening management capacity of the education sector	4.17	3.70	4.17	4.02	96%
Sub-component 3.1	3.19	2.90	3.19	3.01	94%
Sub-component 3.2	0.97	0.80	0.97	1.00	103%
Total	12.40	12.40	12.40	12.12	98%

*Total Expenditure includes amounts disbursed and committed as of December 2018.

Source: Constructed by author using project documents

23. As of March 2019, a total amount of US\$12.1 million was disbursed out of the US\$12.4 million allocated to the project. This corresponds to 98 percent of the budgeted amount. It also is important to note that the total amount of the project allocation has been 100 percent committed with all activities expected to be completed and paid by March 2019. This indicates a strong move towards achieving a disbursement rate close to 100 percent at project closing. These positive results show that the project main activities have been efficiently implemented. As presented in table 7 below, the disbursement rate of the project increased significantly from 2014 to 2016. The low disbursement rate at the beginning of the project (2 percent in 2014) was principally due to the issues with the project designated account following bankruptcy of the Bank where the account was held. However, consistent supervision helped resolve the issue and ensure smooth flows of the funds throughout the project life cycle.

24. The highest disbursement rates throughout the project life cycle were reached in 2015 and 2016 with disbursement rates of 23 percent (or USD 2.8m) and 31 percent (or USD 3.9m) respectively. This increase reflects mainly the execution of the contracts for the construction of the 13 “collèges de proximité” in the targeted wilayas. Over the last two years of the project (2017 and 2018) disbursement rates gradually dropped and reached 1 percent



at grant closing. This irregularity in the disbursement trends does not necessarily indicates insufficiencies in the execution but are rather associated with normal evolution of project activities.

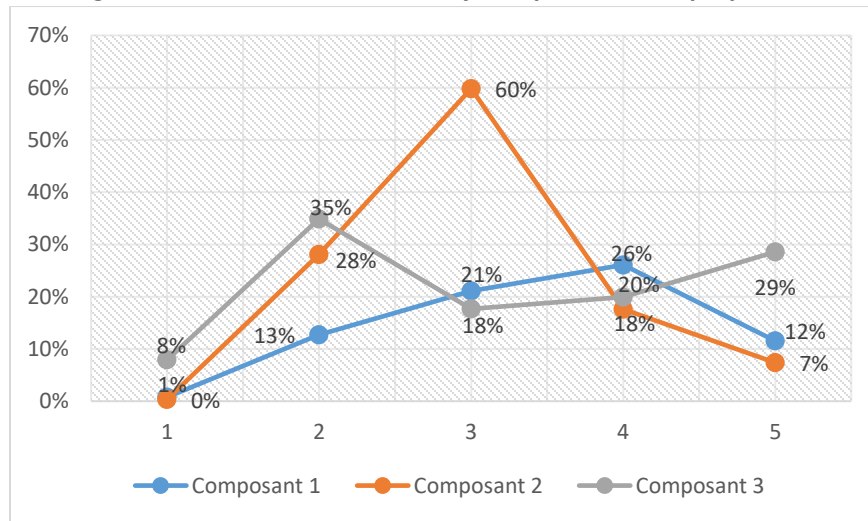
Table 7: Cumulative Disbursement of the US\$12.1 million over the project life

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
PAD Original Disbursement	1,000,000	5,000,000	5,900,000	500,000	n/a	n/a	12,400,000
Actual Disbursement	306,640	2,806,947	3,879,898	2,348,220	2,503,007	254,618	12,099,329
Component 1	27,904	652,321	1,474,257	929,968	734,366	17,535	3,818,817
Component 2	15,518	993,053	1,818,610	755,065	430,090	71,531	4,012,337
Component 3	263,218	1,161,572	587,030	663,186	1,338,551	165,553	4,013,557
Disbursement rate	2%	23%	31%	19%	20%	2%	98%

Source: DPEF Completion Report on Mauritania BESSP

25. A close analysis of the disbursement trends by component shows some disparities in terms of disbursement between components. (See Figure 6). As shown in the Figure 6 below, disbursement rate for component 3, consistently oscillates from one year to another throughout the project life with ups and downs. This irregularity in the trends was mainly due to variety of beneficiaries within the component, and to the specificity of the activities planned. The graph also clearly shows an increase in the disbursement from 2014 to 2017 for component 1 but also demonstrates constant low disbursement rate with highest rate of 26 percent in 2017.

Figure 6: Disbursement trends by component over project life



Source: Constructed by author using project documents

VI. Financial and Institutional sustainability

26. Overall, the decentralized activities supported by the project at the regional level including training of qualified teachers, rehabilitation of ENIs facilities, distribution of school kits, construction of the 13 “collèges de proximité”



as well as development EMIS system has boosted the dynamic of the education system in Mauritania. The inclusive approach of the project's activities fostered a strong engagement of regional staff in the analysis of the education challenges faced in their specific region (school enrollment, girls' schooling, drop-out). In addition, the project also contributed to improving the conditions of pupils' parents through the reduction of financial cost for families and increased their motivation to maintain their children in a less expensive school system and less demanding in terms of mobility.

27. The new Mauritania Education Sector Support Project (P163143) under preparation uses the same methods for categorization of "deprived" regions and will continue to support some of the project activities. Building on similar principles used under BESSP, this new project reconducted a categorization of the 15 *wilayas* in Mauritania. Following the new classification, four out of the six regions selected under BESSEP will be supported under the new GPE project.

28. Many of the project activities towards improving quality of education, particularly teacher trainings interventions will continue to be supported under the new GPE project. Under BESSP, the ENIs have acquired equipment and human resources that enabled the development of initial training for student teachers. The activities allowed for an increased in the number of new teachers meeting the required proficiency for bilingual teachers. However, results from the CNE evaluations show that a considerable number of new teachers did not meet teacher's minimum requirements. Building on the project activities, the new GPE project focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning through a strengthened pre-service teacher training at both in primary schools and secondary levels. A total of US\$2.8 million will be allocated to these activities under the new project.

29. In terms of improving access and gender equity, activities such as the construction of the 13 "*collèges de proximité*" which generated immediate results (significant increase in enrollment and transition rates for girls in the selected *wilayas*) will continue to benefit future cohort of students beyond the scope of the project at minimal maintenance costs. In order, to optimize the use of these schools and generate greater impact the new GPE project will focus on improving the delivery of education services in selected *wilayas* (including four of the *wilayas* supported under the project) through better allocation of resources and enhanced school-based management in six targeted regions

30. In the context of the implementation of the EMIS system, regional staffs have been trained and are expected to transfer their knowledge and trained their regional team and contribute to a reduction of training costs on the use of the EMIS system. The system fully operational and connected to all the DREN provides the Ministry with a unified database accessible to all authorized users and will benefit future project and government initiatives. Moreover, the new GPE project allocated a total of US\$5.2 million to support the extension of the EMIS system through the enhancement and expansion of the EMIS-HR module.

31. Additionally, following the evaluations conducted by the CNE on the learning outcomes of students that show a low passing rate in national exams, the government through the Department of National Education provided a capacity building TA in assessment of learning outcomes in Mauritania. The initiative provided an analysis of national examinations identifying key challenges and revised the examinations to ensure they are more reliable in the coming years. These activities show the government's commitment to capitalize the achievements realized through the



project. However, other activities under the project such as student competencies assessments and distribution of pedagogical and school kits will need to be sustained through continued financing.

VII. Efficiency Rating

32. With the NPV of the quantifiable benefits greater than the NPV costs, the project demonstrated strong efficiency in investments undertaken during implementation. Furthermore, substantial internal and external efficiency gains were observed over the life cycle of the project with majority of the PDO-level indicators successfully achieving and exceeding their targets. The project was cost-effective and significant cost-savings were observed with the cost of most activities kept under budget. Project activities were carried out on average with an overall execution rate of 98 percent. These significant achievements bring the efficiency rating at the borderline between Substantial and Modest. However, given that the targets for a few of the indicators were not achieved despite the project extension and considering the delays in the initial project implementation and in the delivery of the 13 colleges, the overall efficiency rating under the project is **Modest**.



ANNEX 5. BORROWER'S COMPLETION REPORT

Below is the executive summary of the borrower's completion report of the BESSP translated into English. The full completion report in French will be appended to the ICR.

Background and Rationale

BESSP is the product of an agreement signed between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which financed the implementation of the basic education sector plan. Thus, BESSP is an integral part of the implementation of the second 10-year sector plan (PNDSE, 2011-2020), which is structured around three fundamental objectives: (i) improving the quality and relevance of education; (ii) expanding access; and (iii) improving management and governance of the sector.

BESSP has three components: (i) improving the quality of primary education; (ii) improving equitable access to lower secondary education; and (iii) strengthening the management of the education sector. BESSP began in March 2014 for a period of 3 years, but as a result of external factors that led to implementation delays, a 19-month extension was granted, and the project ended on November 30, 2018. The budget mobilized for the financing of project activities is US \$12.4 million, entirely disbursed according to the initial plans that were amended during the MTR.

Main findings

Project design:

BESSP was conceived as an important program to boost quality of basic education and address inequalities in access to schooling, notably improving retention and completion of primary education, expanding access to lower secondary in particular for girls in rural areas in Mauritania. The project design was based on a model of structured pedagogy type with multiform interventions mainly: improvement of pre-service teacher training, school construction (13 *colleges*), continuous pedagogical support, resources and materials for teachers and students (equipment and educational kits), awareness campaigns and support for the quality of system management. The design of BESSP was based on an integrated, participatory, and multidimensional approach, taking into account national and local concerns through a dynamic of support for equity and quality education for all.

In terms of financial arrangements, measures were taken to enable the implementation of all the planned activities, resulting in a total disbursement rate of 99 percent by October 31, 2018. This rate is expected to increase by the end of the grace period when all payments are processed. This is despite the challenge caused by the bankruptcy of the Bank where the special account of the project was held, which prevented the project from using USD 919,775 in project accounts in its revolving account for 15 months before the Government provided a solution by transferring the amount to another bank.

However, the design has suffered from certain shortcomings related to the absence of an overall strategy for pooling the necessary synergies between the different actors, but also general constraints related to the underperformance of the education system in term of quality, the diversity of regional context, and the precarious economic conditions of families. The general data provided by the Directorate of Statistics, Planning, and Cooperation (DSPC) and international studies confirm the persistence of serious challenges related to the completion of the 9-year cycle of basic education correlated to a set of socio-economic factors (urban/rural; rich/poor; boy/girl etc.)



Relevance and coherence with national referents

BESSP is in line with the PNDSE II as it seeks to improve pre-service teacher training (for primary school teachers) and promote equitable access to lower secondary. The objectives of the BESSP are also relevant as they literally fit into the human capital needs formulated by the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (SCAPP, 2016-2030) and are aligned with the objectives of this strategy. Strategic priorities are set based on an in-depth analysis of the situation in various sub-sectors of the Mauritanian education system with the use of data to predict enrolments and simulate associated costs for different options.

Effectiveness and efficiency in achieving project objectives

Presumably the design of the project has favored a multifaceted model of intervention which generally is likely to correct certain dysfunctions of the system. A recent World Bank study, *Perspectives, Schools for Learning in Africa* (Sajitha Bashir et al, 2018) states that “to equip teachers with better knowledge and teaching practices, to provide students with more effective teaching hours, providing better teaching resources and school facilities have helped to improve learning outcomes in many countries, and these practices can overcome some of the problems encountered in schools attended by children whose socio-economic situation is precarious.”

The interventions carried out by BESSP had visible quantitative results. At the national level, transition to secondary rate increased significantly from 51.9% in 2014 to 59.8%, nearly 8 percentage points higher, which indicates a quantitative improvement. The average transition rate from primary to secondary in the 6 regions targeted by the project increased to 51.5%, exceeding the target (47%) by 4.5 points and confirming the achievement of the development objective of the project in term of expanding access to secondary education. Similarly, the total number of girls enrolled in lower secondary education reached 26,610 in 2018, well above the target of 22,653 set for 2018.

However, as mentioned above and despite these achievements, data provided by the DSPC and international studies confirm the persistence of serious challenges related to the completion of the 9-year cycle of basic education correlated with a set of socio-economic factors related to disparities between urban/rural, rich/poor, boy/girl etc.

Ownership and sustainability

The identification of needs and priorities has allowed each entity involved in the project’s implementation to progress in line with the set objectives and to improve the existing situation.

- ENIs have acquired the equipment and capacities to enable them to pursue the development of pre-service teacher training.
- DRENs and parents in targeted *wilayas* expressed with satisfaction the improvement of the learning environment, notably the value added by the 13 newly constructed lower secondary schools in term of access and completion of lower secondary education in rural areas.
- DSPC has strengthened its technical capacities in planning and in the collection and analysis of data to inform policy and decision making with the production of statistical yearbooks. The reliability of its data is demonstrated by their concordance with international surveys.
- CNE has the capacity to conduct independent evaluations with acceptable quality.



- An EMIS has been implemented at the central level with the development of a database and provision of equipment and on a pilot basis at the level of one *wilaya* (Nouakchott West). Its connection with the other regions was carried out and training on its operation was given in Nouakchott for the benefit of the DRENs and their staff. The trained staff will be able to duplicate their training in cascade, contributing to the reduction of training costs on the use of the EMIS.

More importantly, the decentralized activities of the project at the regional level (construction of nearby lower secondary schools, awareness campaigns, distribution of school kits, involvement of NGOs) have allowed to initiate a dynamic of reflection on the educational system at the regional level. Thanks to the activities of the project, regional staff feel more involved in the analysis of the educational problem at the level of their region (school enrollment, girls' schooling, out of school). Parents feel relieved of the costs of moving to the cities to ensure the education of their children (rents, transport, daily expenses, school supplies) and have more motivation to keep their children in a less expensive school system and less demanding in terms of mobility.

Performances of actors

Overall the performance of the borrower has been very satisfactory. For the GPE and the World Bank, non-objection periods and disbursement periods were respected as well as monitoring missions' recommendations, comments on audits and approval of annual PAABs. All planned activities were carried out despite successive extensions due to delays in the timing of disbursements at the beginning of the project caused by difficulties related to the bankruptcy of the Bank. Only the EGRA assessment activity was canceled and replaced by the SDI survey. The DPEF, which is the implementation agency, has adequately performed its fiduciary responsibilities while coordinating the various beneficiaries and administrative units involved in the implementation to ensure work is done. It has also maintained good working relationship with the donor, in this case the GPE. For M&E activities, quarterly implementation reports, audit reports and execution of procurement were prepared in accordance with established rules and schedules. At the procurement level, the Government has given DPEF a high threshold to reduce procurement processes, which saves a lot of time.

Analysis of the Results of Component 1: Improving the Quality and Internal Efficiency of Primary Education

The visit to the ENIs noted the satisfaction of all staff with the support provided by the project, particularly regarding in-service training of ENI's trainers, the support to the teaching of language, and improvement of the learning environment. Teaching kits and school kits were distributed to teachers and students of primary schools in targeted regions.

However, the two assessments carried out by the CNE respectively for the 2017 and 2018 graduates found that the proportion of ENIs' graduates who possess minimum competencies required to teach is 36.40 % and 35.60%, respectively, which is below the targets of 37 and 42. Presumably the targets of 37 and 42 were based on an exit test on a cohort released in 2013, working on an assumption of growth of 5% per year compared to the result of 2013, reference year. However, the class of 2013 benefited from a 3-year training in real time within the School. This is not the case for the two other cohorts subject of the evaluation of the outgoing profile by the CNE. These two cohorts were forced to shorten the training time to 2 years instead of 3 years, because they are assigned to the class at the opening of the 3rd year to fill the teacher gap and do not come back to school.

Analysis of the Results of Component 2: Promoting Equitable Access to Lower Secondary Education

BESSP has enabled the construction of 13 nearby lower secondary schools in the six target *wilayas*. Each college is composed of, among others, administration offices, classrooms, libraries, computer room, laboratory for science



education and toilets. Interventions programmed under this component have helped to increase access to lower secondary education, especially for girls, and improved gender equity in the six beneficiary *wilayas*.

Analysis of the Results of Component 3: Strengthening Education Sector Management.

BESSP has put in place a configuration geared towards management, planning and evaluation of the system within several departments of the Ministry. The support provided by BESSP in terms of management and governance is essential as it allows the system to be able to ensure its own M&E through the establishment of a necessary monitoring and reporting system.

- At the level of school statistics: the project has enabled the publication of statistical yearbooks for the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The 2016 yearbook was developed following a school census conducted under the patronage of the ONS to guarantee the reliability of the results. Training of central and regional school statistics services, reaching 70 people.
- At the level of capacity building for administrative and pedagogical staff: The training of school directors and inspectors of basic education.
- At the level of student assessment: Conducting several assessments, including two assessments of student achievement, one in 2014 for the 3rd and 5th year of the foundation, and the other in 2015 for the third year of the junior secondary program. An evaluation of the evaluations carried out by a technical assistance for the benefit of the CNE and the department of examinations. Two evaluations of ENI graduates in 2017 and 2018, and a Service Delivery Indicators.
- The first phase of EMIS started on November 29, 2018. It covers the Central Administration of the Ministry and the DREN of West Nouakchott, an IDEN and a high school. Its connection to the interior regions has been made.



ANNEX 6. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A. World Bank Project Documents

World Bank. 2013. *Country Partnership Strategy for the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the Period FY2014-2016*

World Bank. 2018. *Country Partnership Framework for Mauritania for the Period FY2018-2023*

World Bank. 2014. *Project Appraisal Document for a Basic Education Sector Support for the Islamic Republic of Mauritania*

World Bank. 2019. *Indicateurs de Prestation de Services en Éducation en Mauritanie.*

Aide Memoires for the Project's Implementation Support and Supervision Missions

Financing Agreement (GPEF Grant Number TF016390)

Implementation Status and Results Reports (ISRs) No. 1–9

Project Restructuring Paper (Report No. RES28244) dated August 31, 2017

B. Government's Documents

Ministère de l'Économiques et des Finances. 2018. *Rapport d'Achèvement du Projet d'Appui au Secteur de l'Éducation de Base. Financement GPE*

Ministère de l'Économiques et des Finances. Janvier 2018. *Rapport d'Exécution du Projet d'Appui au Secteur de l'Éducation de Base. Financement GPE*

Ministère de l'Économiques et des Finances. Juin 2018. *Rapport d'Exécution du Projet d'Appui au Secteur de l'Éducation de Base. Financement GPE*

Ministère de l'Économiques et des Finances. Décembre 2018. *Rapport de Suivi Financier. N°017/DPEF/GPE/2018. Projet d'Appui au Développement du Secteur de l'Éducation de Base. Financement Grant n° TF016390*

Ministère de l'Économiques et des Finances. 2011. *Programme National de Développement du Secteur de l'Éducation PNDSE II (2011-2020)*