



1. Project Data

Project ID P172812	Project Name Sudan GPE Accelerated Fund	
Country Sudan	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-B2664	Closing Date (Original) 28-Feb-2021	Total Project Cost (USD) 11,495,765.42
Bank Approval Date 14-May-2020	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Jul-2021	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	11,575,000.00	11,575,000.00
Revised Commitment	11,575,000.00	11,575,000.00
Actual	11,495,765.42	11,495,765.42

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Legal Agreement (page 6) and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, page 13), the project's objective was:

- to sustain enrollment in public basic education in Sudan during the transition school year.



"Transition year" refers to the one-year gap in funding due to the closing of the previous Global Partnership for Education (GPE) project and the one-year delay until effectiveness of the next GPE project.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

1. School Grants Program (Appraisal: US\$ 11.275 million; Actual: US\$ 11.280 million): This component aimed to improve learning environments and school planning. School grants were to be provided to all public primary schools in the country (based on a per capita formula), with the intent to incentivize parents' engagement to reduce the risk of students (especially girls) dropping out, support teachers to reduce absenteeism, and support the learning environment with materials. Capacity building support was also to be provided to develop participatory management structures at the school level; to support school improvement planning, budgeting, and monitoring of school grant utilization; and at the locality level to support school planning and grant supervision.

2. Program coordination and management (Appraisal: US\$ 0.3 million; Actual: US\$ 0.3 million): This component aimed to support the Ministry of Education (MOE) in overall program coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Project cost

- The project cost at appraisal was US\$ 11.575 million. The actual project cost was US\$ 11.496 million.
- The official exchange rate was not adjusted in a timely manner to reflect the local currency's high inflation rate, which caused a significant shortage of funds for project activities. The Minister of Finance therefore compensated the exchange rate for the project as an exceptional case and provided top-up funding (approximately SDG 1 billion) to meet the difference between the two exchange rates.

Financing

- The project was entirely financed by a GPE grant of US\$ 11.575 million, of which US\$ 11.496 million was disbursed.

Borrower contribution

- There was no planned Borrower contribution.



Dates

- *February 2021*: The project was restructured due to delays in school reopenings such that the government needed additional time to complete activities and report on outcomes. The closing date was extended from February 2021 to July 2021.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Sudan is a lower middle-income country with approximately half of its population living in poverty. At the time of project appraisal, school-aged children (ages 4-16) accounted for one-third of the population, contributing to rising demand for basic services including health and education. Between 2008/09 and 2017/18, the total number of schools (public and private) increased by 2,800, and the number of students completing primary education and proceeding to secondary school increased from 251,000 to 336,000. Gross enrollment rate in basic education had been stagnant at around 70% over the past decade, however, meaning the system was expanding only at the rate of the population growth of about 2.5% per year. Social spending by the government has continued to be threatened by macroeconomic instability, lack of access to international financial markets, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges to the education sector include inadequate learning environments (lack of instructional materials, poor infrastructure), low public spending, and high household costs of education.

The country's Education Sector Strategic Plan for FY18-22 prioritized the retention of students in basic education. The Bank's Interim Strategy Note for FY14-15, the most recent available, included equitable service delivery in education as a key focus area, with "improved access to quality basic education" identified as a relevant country result. Given the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions in the country, this project was designed as an emergency operation, providing critical financial support to all primary schools during the gap year between the closing GPE project and the next GPE project.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

Sustain enrollment in public basic education in Sudan during the transition year

Rationale



The theory of change was straightforward and clear, with the main goal to keep students in school during a year when the public budget was unable to finance basic school functioning. This was to be achieved through one main activity of providing school improvement plan grants to all schools, to fund operational expenditures or recurrent costs (such as learning materials, school facilities, and teacher incentives). Supportive activities included capacity building to schools and local communities to develop school improvement plans through participatory planning and management

The project was expected to directly benefit 5.4 million students in all 16,475 public primary schools in Sudan's 18 states.

In March 2020, schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and did not reopen fully until February 2021.

Outputs

- Provision of grants to 16,475 schools (target: 16,500). The ICR (page 15) noted that 25 small schools (with 2–3 grades) were destroyed during floods in 2020 and closed by the MOE. School improvement plans identified operational expenditures such as learning supplies, furniture, and equipment, and some recurrent costs such as water supply. The intent was to reduce the burden on communities paying for education out of their household funds. According to the survey (which covered 674 schools), 98 percent of schools used grants to buy student learning materials, such as stationeries, chalk, pens, pencils, and textbooks; 89 percent of head teachers said that they procured teaching materials, such as teacher guides, posters, stickers, and boards; 62 percent of schools bought new equipment and classroom furniture; and 56 percent purchased facilities for dormitories.
- Provision of training to school heads and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) in participatory planning and monitoring in order to improve learning conditions. 100 percent of schools with school management committees received training (target: 90 percent), including setting up school bank accounts, identifying and prioritizing school needs and items, and training on monitoring and recording of the delivery of items.
- Provision of training to local supervisors in school-based management.

Outcomes

- Student enrollment was maintained at 5,585,417 students, compared to the baseline of 5,400,000. This achieved the target of 5,535,000 enrolled students. Of these, 2,723,902 were female students, falling short of the target of 2,850,000. This achievement was despite school closure disruptions that were in place for much of the implementation time period. The ICR (pages 16-17) presented evidence to compare Sudan's situation with retention/drop-out rates from other countries in the region: Senegal and Ghana saw overall dropout rates of 1.6 percent and 2.0 percent; Ethiopia, by the end of June 2021, had 8.0 percent of students still missing from the education system; Kenya, by the end of June 2021, had 6.0 percent of students still missing from the system. The project team also provided additional data that, in comparison, 16% of girls in Kenya did not re-enroll when schools reopened in January 2021; also the updated enrollment for girls, since project closing in June 2021,



was 2,785,755 for September 2021. These data indicate sustained enrollment during a time of enrollment decreases elsewhere.

- According to the beneficiary survey, 98 percent of school principals confirmed that the grants helped to improve learning in their schools; 58 percent of school leaders and 75 percent of parents said that student retention increased. Representatives of education authorities at the state and local levels highlighted that grants helped schools to improve their facilities (91 percent), teaching and learning materials (89 percent), student retention (83 percent), and quality of teaching (77 percent).
- The ICR (page 11) also suggested that the project helped to lay the groundwork for future achievement of higher-level outcomes, such as improved and equitable access. Schools, including in disadvantaged areas, established participatory management structures, such as school committees, at the school level, which developed their capacity to identify needs for their particular schools, to supervise procurement and delivery of those items, and to report on grant utilization.

Achievement is rated High due to achieving the target for enrollment in basic education, including sustaining the enrollment for girls especially in the context of the unanticipated COVID pandemic, during which enrollment decreased elsewhere.

Rating
High

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Achievement of the sole project objective is rated High due to achieving the target for enrollment in basic education, including sustaining the enrollment for girls especially in the context of the unanticipated COVID pandemic, during which enrollment decreased elsewhere.

Overall Efficacy Rating

High

5. Efficiency

The economic analysis at appraisal (PAD, Annex 3) suggested that the proposed project interventions would increase the efficiency of the basic education sector by increasing the probability of a child completing primary education and transitioning to the secondary level. This, in turn, would yield gains in labor earnings. In addition, the provision of school grants aimed at incentivizing schools to make better use of existing resources to achieve improved learning would increase efficiency. The economic analysis presented estimates of the



efficiency gains in basic education by preventing drop-outs. According to the results of the analysis, the share of inefficient public spending in public schools (estimated by multiplying the unit cost in basic education by the number of repeaters and those students that drop out from school) is equivalent to 16 percent of overall public expenditures on education in Sudan. If all public schools sustained the current level of survival, the share of inefficient public spending would decrease by 0.6 percentage points by 2021 compared to the scenario where the enrollment numbers remain the same. This improvement in spending efficiency would translate into government savings in basic education equivalent to SDG 122 million (US\$ 2.6 million) in 2019-2021.

The economic analysis at completion (ICR, Annex 4) updated the estimate of internal efficiency gains using actual enrollment figures. According to the analysis, before the project started, the share of inefficient public spending was equivalent to 27.6 percent of overall public expenditures in education in Sudan. Between 2018/19 and 2020/21, the share of inefficient government spending decreased by 2.7 percentage points. In addition, the cost effectiveness analysis compared the benefits of one additional year of education - on average a 12.4 percent increase in expected income - with costs, which are represented by the total cost of the project (US\$11.8 million). The calculated net present value ranged from US\$8.8million to US\$61.1million, and internal rate of return between 13 percent and 29 percent.

There were some moderate indications of project inefficiency. As noted previously, the official exchange rate was not adjusted to reflect the local currency’s high inflation rate, which caused a significant shortage of funds for project activities. The Minister of Finance eventually agreed to compensate the project as an exceptional case and provided top-up funding (approximately SDG 1 billion) to meet the difference between the two exchange rates. In addition, there were delays in hiring the financial management specialist and implementing the computerized account system, and the school grants - the main activity and disbursement for the project - did not take place until the end of the original project period, due to school closures. However, there were other positive aspects of implementation efficiency, such as the quick one-month resolution of the exchange rate issue, the ongoing work at schools to prepare grants despite school closures, and use of existing institutional arrangements for project implementation. The overall efficiency of the project is considered Substantial due to these positive elements of implementation efficiency and the favorable cost effectiveness analysis.

Efficiency Rating

Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	13.00	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.



6. Outcome

Relevance of the objectives is rated High due to strong alignment with country conditions, country education priorities, and Bank strategy. Efficacy is rated High due to achieving the target for enrollment in basic education, including sustaining the enrollment for girls especially in the context of the unanticipated COVID pandemic, during which enrollment decreased elsewhere. Efficiency is rated Substantial due to favorable cost effectiveness and some evidence of implementation efficiency. Therefore, the overall outcome is rated Highly Satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating

Highly Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Capacity built at the community level is likely to be sustained, including the skills acquired at the school management committee, school leadership, and local supervision levels to plan, manage, and monitor school improvement plans. The follow-on GPE project will continue capacity building support of this nature. In addition, as noted in the ICR, community participation processes helped to lay the foundation for school grant financing (with funds directly sent to schools, transparent funding formulas, school needs assessments, etc.) that can be utilized in the future. However, significant macroeconomic risks remain, including the uncertain political environment, the economic crisis, and impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was appraised one month before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, with the original intent to help keep schools open for one year during an economic crisis (during which government financing and private capacity to cover costs of education would likely diminish). The simplicity of the project design was carried over to the COVID-affected conditions, albeit with added uncertainty and implementation delays. The Bank had been engaged in the education sector in the country for more than two decades, thus gaining familiarity with the political and operating environment and with the government's implementation capacity. The institutional structures (including key Project Coordination Unit (PCU) staff and fiduciary arrangements) drew directly from prior GPE projects in the country, which helped to facilitate implementation. Bank guidelines on rapid response to crises, according to OP/BP 8.0, were appropriately applied for this operation.

The overall risk level was appropriately assessed as Substantial due to challenging macroeconomic, governance, and fiduciary conditions. The use of a stand-alone PCU to oversee project activities, extensive capacity building support to local communities, and fiduciary experience gained from prior



operations were effective mitigation measures. Consistent with the project design, M&E design and arrangements were also straightforward and effective in measuring project progress.

Quality-at-Entry Rating Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank provided effective supervision despite challenging circumstances. The team arranged virtual biweekly meetings with the PCU once travel restrictions were in place due to COVID, and a virtual review and implementation support mission was conducted in January 2021. Schools were closed from March 2020 to February 2021; the distribution of school grants was therefore delayed and led to a project restructuring. The ICR noted that the restructuring did not take place until February 2021 (near the original project closing date) because the schedule for school reopening remained uncertain up until that time. There were also currency exchange rate issues that initially caused a significant shortage of funds for project activities. Subsequently, the government agreed to provide top-up funding (approximately SDG1 billion) to meet the difference between the two exchange rates, and then the new exchange rate was applied for the project, which resulted in more financial resources provided to schools in the second installment of grants that took place in May 2021.

Fiduciary and safeguard responsibilities were effectively carried out with no major problems reported. M&E responsibilities were also effectively conducted, enabling monitoring of project progress and assessment of project results.

Quality of Supervision Rating Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The theory of change was clear, matched by a simple and straightforward results framework. The key project indicator was relevant and measurable, given that the main intended outcome was attendance but not learning outcomes. Monitoring arrangements were clear, based on the previous GPE project's monitoring system and the existing annual school census information.



b. M&E Implementation

M&E activities were conducted as planned, with support from a dedicated M&E specialist in the PCU. The annual school census provided critical geospatial information to help targeting of project beneficiaries, project costing, and logistics. Evaluative activities, including beneficiary surveys, were conducted to supplement project monitoring data. These achievements are notable given the overall volatile environment, unexpected school closures, and COVID-19 shut-downs.

c. M&E Utilization

M&E information was used effectively to monitor implementation progress, survey beneficiaries, and assess project achievements. As noted in the lessons (Section 12), the M&E system collected detailed information on local and school expenditure priorities and needs, which was used at the state and federal MOE levels to inform policy and the design of education interventions.

M&E Quality Rating

High

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

Environmental and social risk was assessed as Moderate due to potential negative impacts from school improvement plans (water supply and sanitation supplies) and implementation in conflict-affected areas. Due to the emergency nature of the project, an updated Environmental and Social Management Framework from a prior education project was the only requirement. An environmental and social commitment plan was also prepared, as were mitigation measures such as use of third-party non-governmental organizations in conflict-affected areas and preparation of a labor management plan.

There was a delay in hiring an Environmental and Social Specialist in the PCU, partly due to the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergency nature of the project. The environmental and social performance rating was moderately satisfactory, with no major problems reported in the ICR.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial management: The financial management arrangements built on the existing system established under the prior GPE project. According to the ICR (page 27), there were initial challenges due to weak capacity, the resignation of the PCU's financial management specialist, and delays in implementing the computerized accounting system. These led to initial delays in preparation and submission of financial reports, which were eventually resolved. As the project operated only for two months in FY21 with zero disbursements, the National Audit Chamber was advised to combine that period with the FY22 audit. Therefore, the project obtained an exception to submit its project audit report for the fiscal year ending



December 31, 2020 together with the 2021 project audit report. An external audit report for the year ending December 31, 2020, expressed an unqualified/clean opinion with no major issues reported.

Procurement: During appraisal, procurement risk was rated as High. Risk mitigation measures were discussed and agreed upon with the PCU before project launch, including intensive training on the use of Bank processes for procurement of works, goods, and selection of consultants. The risk was also mitigated through regular reporting and continuous hands-on support from the Bank procurement team. The PTAs also received fiduciary training. Procurement was rated moderately satisfactory, with no major problems reported.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Highly Satisfactory	Highly Satisfactory	
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of M&E	High	High	
Quality of ICR	---	High	

12. Lessons

Lessons drawn from the ICR (pages 31-32), adapted by IEG:

- **An emergency operation that is intended to meet short-term needs can still contribute to longer-term outcomes by building capacity.** In the case of this project, the institutional mechanisms for funds transfer, monitoring, and reporting were put in place at the local level, thus laying a foundation for participatory school management that can be harnessed in the next phase of government programs.
- **Expenditure tracking at the local and school levels can provide valuable information on education needs.** In the case of this project, the M&E system collected detailed information on local and school expenditure priorities and needs, which was used by at the state and federal Ministry of Education levels to inform policy and the design of education interventions.



- **The use of a per capita formula (linked to school enrollment) for determining school grant allocations can fall short of meeting equity concerns.** Although equity was not a project objective, it is worth noting that small remote schools with low student enrollments received fewer resources but had higher needs compared with large urban schools that were already receiving greater support from both the government and PTAs.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was concise and consistent with guidelines. The quality of the data and evidence was satisfactory, enabling a straightforward analysis of the project objective to sustain school enrollment. In addition to reporting results for the project objective, the ICR provided information on additional successes such as capacity building for future developments, using monitoring systems to inform policy, and reinforcing the government policy of free basic education. Lessons were especially informative and useful for an emergency education operation in a low-capacity environment. The ICR was overall high quality in its analysis, presentation of evidence, and clearly written narrative.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

High