



1. Project Data

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| Project ID P167169 | Project Name Sudan GPE2 | | |
| Country Sudan | Practice Area(Lead) Education | | |
| L/C/TF Number(s) WBTF-B4198 | Closing Date (Original) 30-Apr-2025 | Total Project Cost (USD) 9,099,952.83 | |
| Bank Approval Date 10-Nov-2020 | Closing Date (Actual) 30-Apr-2025 | | |
| | IBRD/IDA (USD) | Grants (USD) | |
| Original Commitment | 0.00 | 61,500,000.00 | |
| Revised Commitment | 0.00 | 9,100,000.00 | |
| Actual | 0.00 | 9,099,952.83 | |
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As stated in the December 9, 2020, Grant Agreement (Schedule 1, p. 5), the project's development objective (PDO) was "to increase enrollment and retention and improve reading proficiency of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools." This statement is consistent with the one provided in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, pages 1 and 13). During implementation, the PDO statement remained unchanged.



Based on the PAD (p. 33, pp. 61–62), disadvantaged schools included those with poor learning environments and limited resources. Such conditions—including shortages of human resources, open-air classrooms, and lack of access to clean water and latrines—negatively affect students’ learning, particularly limiting girls’ enrollment and participation in school.

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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1: School Improvement Program (original estimate: US\$33.76 million; actual cost: US\$5.48 million, or 16 percent of estimate). Component 1 aimed to improve enrollment, retention, and learning conditions in Sudan’s basic education system through school-level interventions, including school grants, textbook provision, and reading support. The component’s focus included mitigating COVID-19-related economic shocks on the most vulnerable, reducing dropout—especially among girls—and addressing resource shortages in target disadvantaged schools.

- **Sub-Component 1.1: Provision of Public School Grants.** This subcomponent was designed to finance three annual rounds of school grants for selected public primary schools to promote enrollment and retention in basic education, particularly for girls and vulnerable children. A sample of schools for the Schools Improvement Grant (SIG) Program was identified through a multi-stage process using the national 2018/19 school census database. Eligibility was limited to public day schools with complete and reliable enrollment data and sufficient grade coverage to support pupil progression through Grades 1–6, thereby prioritizing schools capable of providing continuity of learning. To focus resources on areas with the highest concentrations of students and enable effective monitoring, localities within each state were selected so that the chosen schools together accounted for at least 50 percent of the state’s total student enrollment. Through this process, the SIG Program sample included 78 out of 189 localities, covering 8,362 public primary schools and serving approximately 3.5 million students, representing 56.5 percent of all pupils in Sudan, of whom half were girls. Of these schools, 4,891 (58.5 percent) were located in rural areas, serving 1.75 million students with 51.7 percent female enrollment, while 3,471 schools (41.5 percent) were in urban areas, serving 1.75 million students with 48.4 percent female enrollment. The grants were intended to: (i) encourage parental engagement and reduce the risk of dropout—especially for girls—by reducing education-related cost burdens during the COVID-19 crisis and providing basic gender-sensitive items (e.g., sanitary supplies); (ii) reduce volunteer-teacher absenteeism by stabilizing the volunteer-teacher workforce, which was affected by income shocks, through in-cash or in-kind support for volunteer teachers, who often serve in remote, understaffed schools; (iii) improve the learning environment in targeted schools by financing basic learning materials, stationery, notebooks, classroom furniture, and equipment; (iv) strengthen schools’ capacity for participatory planning, budgeting, and monitoring, including the preparation of school profile reports to support participatory evidence-based planning; and (v) promote equity in education by supporting children in disadvantaged situations, including internally displaced persons, refugees, and girls. School Improvement Plans were to be developed through a participatory process involving Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs), as well as the broader community surrounding the schools.



These plans were to be informed by key data on the schools and their localities (i.e., school profiles generated from the annual school census). To incentivize schools to improve pupil retention and facilitate transitions to upper grades, the second and third rounds of school grants were to include performance-based rewards. These rewards were linked to improvements in pupil and teacher attendance and student promotion rates, which were to be monitored quarterly by independent enumerators. Beneficiary schools that failed to demonstrate improvement in attendance were eligible to receive only a portion of the grant in the second and third years.

- **Sub-Component 1.2: Provision of Textbooks and Reading Support.** This sub-component was to support nationwide production, procurement, distribution, and school-level utilization of textbooks. Activities were to include: (i) launching a publicity campaign to prepare schools and communities for the arrival of textbooks; (ii) conducting training and communication campaigns to ensure timely delivery and strengthen monitoring and accountability for textbook distribution; (iii) providing supplementary reading materials (readers) to pupils in grades 1-3; and (iv) implementing a school-level reading support program in approximately 2,000 disadvantaged schools, selected from the SIG Program sample of 8,362 schools based on high repetition rates in Grades 1–6, identified through preliminary analysis of the 2014/15 National Learning Assessment combined with School Census data, and targeting at least one locality per state with the highest shares of repeaters. Under the reading program, teachers and community volunteers were to be trained to assess students' reading skills, deliver reading support to pupils in grades 2 and 3, and monitor progress; and (v) training local inspectors (school supervisors) to support schools in implementing the intensive reading intervention, with provision of allowances and resources for supervision activities.

Component 2: Systems Strengthening (original estimate: US\$7.4 million; actual cost: US\$37,440, or 0.5 percent of estimate). Component 2 aimed to strengthen the capacity of federal and state education systems to produce and use data for strategic and operational planning. It was to support three core areas: the national learning assessment, the annual school census, and education policy development.

- **Sub-Component 2.1: National Learning Assessment.** This subcomponent was intended to strengthen national capacity to implement National Learning Assessments (NLAs) on a three-year cycle and to use assessment data to inform policy formulation and implementation. It was to finance two assessment rounds beginning in 2020/21, with results expected to inform the design of the 2023-2027 education sector plan. It also aimed to promote analytical use of NLA data by national researchers through a competitive research fund.
- **Sub-Component 2.2: Sudan Annual School Census.** This sub-component was to continue the annual, tablet-based school census established under the earlier Basic Education Recovery Project (BERP, P128644, implemented between July 2013 and February 2019, cost: US\$76.5 million). Additionally, it was to introduce school profile “report cards” to provide schools and localities with feedback on their performance and development status relative to state and federal benchmarks. The profiles were to include key indicators such as infrastructure conditions, pupil-teacher ratios, class sizes, textbook ratios, student enrollment, number of qualified teachers, dropout rates, and pass rates.
- **Sub-Component 2.3: Education Policy Development.** This sub-component was to support Sudan's basic education policy reform and capacity building within the Federal Ministry of Education, following national priorities identified during the January 2020 Sudan International Education Conference. The policy development package under the project was to include (i) revision of the education system structure and its institutional arrangements; (ii) updating of the curriculum; (iii) teacher management and professional development; (iv) school infrastructure development and improvement; (v) reforms to education financing to promote equity and quality; (vi) strategies to



reach out-of-school children by mapping the school network and overlaying it with geo-tagged population data to better match education supply and demand; and (vii) promotion of gender equity through gender-focused analysis of barriers to girls' basic education enrollment, retention, and completion. The project was also to strengthen the Federal Ministry of Education's capacity for planning, monitoring and evaluation, and information management through training, equipment, and the placement of technical specialists to enhance the government's ability to plan and implement medium-term education reforms.

Component 3: Program Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (original estimate: US\$1.54 million; actual cost: US\$68,800, or 4.5 percent of estimate). This component was to support the Federal Ministry of Education in overall project coordination, monitoring, and evaluation, including planning, procurement, financial management, environmental and social safeguards, and verification of the achievement of performance-based conditions (PBCs); collection and analysis of school-level data through the annual school census; implementation of communication strategies to raise awareness of the project; and facilitation of state-to-state information sharing and exposure to lessons learned from other countries.

Component 4: Introduction of Results-Based Financing - Variable Part (original estimate: US\$18.8 million; actual cost: US\$0). Under this component, funds were to be disbursed upon verified achievement of pre-agreed PBCs designed to address key challenges in the basic education subsector identified in the government's 2018–2022 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). These challenges include limited and inequitable access to basic education driven by both supply-side and demand-side factors, low quality of education service delivery and weak student learning outcomes, and insufficient institutional capacity for efficient education system planning and management (PAD, p. 73). Accordingly, the PBCs targeted three priority reform areas—learning outcomes, equity, and efficiency—consistent with ESSP sector-wide priorities. Specifically, the PBCs supported: (i) the establishment of regular classroom-based assessments of student reading proficiency to address low learning levels and improve instructional quality, aligned with ESSP priorities on curriculum and assessment reform; (ii) an increase in the number of girls benefiting from improved learning environments to address inequities in access and retention and support expanded education access for children at risk of dropout; and (iii) the introduction of a national system for reporting on basic education financing to strengthen institutional capacity for efficient planning, coordination, and evidence-based decision-making in the basic education subsector. Gender equality was to be integrated across all project components, including support for girls at risk of dropout, provision of safe sanitation facilities, community training on gender and gender-based violence (GBV), distribution of gender-sensitive reading materials, and implementation of gender-sensitive school improvements.

The PBCs were designed to reinforce the project's theory of change by incentivizing reforms that directly or indirectly supported the three PDOs: (i) increasing enrollment of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools; (ii) increasing retention of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools; and (iii) improving early-grade reading proficiency of boys and girls in target disadvantaged schools.

- **PBC 1** (establishment of systems of regular classroom assessment of student reading proficiency) directly supported Objective 3 by strengthening teachers' capacity to regularly assess reading skills, identify struggling learners early, and tailor instructional support accordingly.
- **PBC 2** (increased number of girls benefiting from improved learning environments) was intended to support Objectives 1 and 2 by incentivizing improvements in school conditions that reduce gender-related barriers to enrollment and continued participation, including through providing sanitary napkins, constructing gender-sensitive facilities, supporting vulnerable children, and training school



management committee members in school safety, gender sensitivity, and gender-based violence prevention.

- **PBC 3** (introduction of a national system for reporting on basic education financing) supported all three objectives indirectly by addressing system-level efficiency and coordination constraints. By strengthening the availability and use of data for basic education financing, this PBC was intended to improve coordination of basic education programs through better monitoring of expenditures and more effective distribution of resources, and to support evidence-based planning and decision-making in the basic education subsector. Improved transparency and monitoring of education financing were expected to enable better alignment of resources with school-level needs identified through the Annual School Census (ASC) and School Improvement Plans, thereby strengthening the enabling environment for sustained improvements in enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes.

Taken together, the PBCs complemented the project's inputs and activities by linking financing to tangible system and school-level results, reinforcing the project's logic that improvements in learning outcomes, equity, and efficiency require both targeted interventions in disadvantaged schools and stronger system-wide policies, data, and institutional capacity.

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

Cost and financing. At appraisal, the project's total estimated cost was US\$61.5 million, fully financed through a grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The grant consisted of two parts: (i) a Fixed Part of US\$42.7 million, and (ii) a Variable Part of US\$18.8 million, designed to disburse against the achievement of pre-agreed performance indicators under a results-based financing modality. No government counterpart contribution was planned or provided. By project closing, the actual project cost amounted to US\$9.1 million, around 15 percent of the original estimate and equal to the revised 2024 allocation following the cancellation of US\$52.4 million from the initial GPE grant. Of the US\$9.1 million disbursed, around US\$5.6 million represented actual expenditures across project components (9 percent of the original estimate and 62 percent of the revised allocation of US\$9.1 million). The remaining US\$3.5 million equivalent (EUR 3 million), which had been deposited as an initial advance into the project's Designated Account to facilitate early implementation activities, remained unutilized and was to be returned. As of the preparation of this ICR Review (December 2025), the Bank continued to work with the de facto authorities to recover these funds.

Key dates. The project was approved on November 10, 2020, and became effective on December 10, 2020. Less than a year into implementation, on October 27, 2021, the Bank triggered OP 7.30 on "Dealing with De Facto Governments" following Sudan's military takeover of October 25, 2021, resulting in an immediate pause in disbursements and a halt to project activities. The project underwent one restructuring in February 2024 and closed as scheduled on April 30, 2025.

Restructuring. A Level 2 restructuring was undertaken in February 2024, resulting in the cancellation of US\$52.4 million from the original US\$61.5 million GPE grant. The restructuring was prompted by the continued application of OP 7.30 and consequent inability to resume implementation. It formed part of a broader portfolio-wide adjustment across all active World Bank operations in Sudan following the escalation of conflict in April 2023, with funds repurposed to support emergency response and alternative delivery mechanisms. The restructuring did not affect the PDO, results framework, components, or implementation arrangements. Of the US\$52.4 million canceled, US\$41.9 million (plus US\$0.5 million for World Bank



supervision) was reallocated to the Sudan Primary Education Emergency Support Project (SPEEP; P504621), implemented through a third party. The remaining US\$10 million was returned to GPE.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The PDOs were highly relevant to country conditions at the time of design, which persist today despite some improvements. Sudan faces significant and long-standing education challenges, including low and unequal access to basic education, high dropout rates, and deep socioeconomic and gender disparities that particularly affect children in rural and poor communities. At appraisal, nearly three million children remained out of school, and many who entered grade 1 did not progress to upper primary grades due to cost, distance, and weak school environments. Learning outcomes were also low, with national assessments revealing limited early-grade reading proficiency and widespread shortages of teaching and learning materials, inadequate school infrastructure, and incomplete schools that hindered retention and learning. These challenges were exacerbated by low public spending on education, heavy reliance on household contributions, and poor education system management capacity. Against this backdrop, the PDOs directly addressed the country's most critical education constraints at both design and closing.

The PDOs were fully aligned with Sudan's development priorities at design and remained so throughout implementation. The project directly supported the government's Basic Education Strategy and its 2018-2022 ESSP, which emphasized expanding equitable access to basic education, improving learning outcomes, and strengthening system management. The operation also aligned closely with Sudan's commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly Target 4.1 on ensuring completion of quality primary education and improving learning outcomes, and Target 4.a on providing safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments. Accordingly, the PDOs were well positioned within Sudan's education policy framework and remained relevant despite changes in the political context.

The PDOs were and remain highly relevant to the Bank's country priorities for Sudan. They aligned closely with the FY21-22 Country Engagement Note (CEN), particularly Focus Area 2: *Contributing to a renewed social contract*, through its emphasis on inclusive service delivery and strengthened institutional capacity. By prioritizing improved education outcomes nationwide, including in conflict-affected areas, the PDOs were also well aligned with the Bank's Poverty Reduction and Equity Strategy and the Human Capital Project's emphasis on foundational learning and retention. The project's focus further reflected the Bank's Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy, which underscores the need to sustain essential service delivery in fragile and conflict-affected settings such as Sudan. Although no new CEN or Country Partnership Framework was issued after FY22, the PDO remained relevant at project closing, as their core priorities—equitable access, improved learning outcomes, and systems strengthening—were reaffirmed in the Sudan Transitional Education Sector Plan, launched in 2025 by the Local Education Group, a multi-stakeholder coordination platform for government and international and local development partners that guides national education priorities. These priorities also shaped subsequent Bank-supported operations in Sudan's education sector, further confirming the continued relevance of the PDO at closing.

Rating



High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To increase enrollment of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools.

Rationale

Project implementation was affected by the pause of disbursements under Operational Policy 7.30 "Dealing with De Facto Governments," triggered on October 25, 2021. Only limited activities were carried out using remaining funds in the Designated Account. The printing and delivery of textbooks used the Direct Payment method through an exceptional approval by the Regional Vice President of the World Bank. Consequently, the rationale or theory of change for Objective 1—and the other two project objectives described below—remained largely theoretical, as most planned activities could not be implemented.

The project's theory of change for increasing enrollment of boys and girls in early grades in disadvantaged schools was based on strengthening school-level data, participatory planning, and targeted school-level interventions, financed through grants supporting context-specific activities aimed at increasing early-grade enrollment in targeted disadvantaged schools. Under the plan, the Ministry of Education was to continue implementing the Annual School Census, with schools uploading data using tablets, and to produce school profiles providing feedback to all schools on key indicators—such as learning conditions, staffing, student numbers, dropout rates, and pass rates—benchmarked against state and national levels. These data were to be used to identify and select the disadvantaged schools targeted by the project and to guide evidence-based school-level planning. Drawing on the school profile information and supported by training for school heads, members of PTAs, and locality supervisors, schools and their surrounding communities were to develop participatory School Improvement Plans that identified local barriers to enrollment, including financial, social, and safety-related constraints disproportionately affecting girls, and define priority interventions before the start of the school year. The project was then to provide school grants to implement these locally defined actions, including activities to incentivize parental engagement, (particularly for girls' continued schooling), reduce household cost burdens during the hard times following the COVID-19 crisis, and improve basic learning conditions through the provision of essential learning materials, furniture, equipment, and sanitary pads, and the construction of gender-sensitive facilities.

These activities were expected to generate **outputs** such as the regular implementation of the Annual School Census; timely preparation and dissemination of school-profile reports; strengthened PTA and school leadership capacity for participatory planning and monitoring of school performance; the development and execution of participatory School Improvement Plans; and improved availability of basic learning materials and equipment.

These outputs were anticipated to lead to **intermediate results** including reduced financial and social barriers to school entry, stronger school-community engagement to promote enrollment, an improved learning



environment, and increased parental awareness and willingness to enroll children (particularly girls and vulnerable groups).

Ultimately, these intermediate results—supported by gender-responsive measures on both the demand and supply sides—were expected to contribute to the **outcome** of increased enrollment of boys and girls in the early grades of primary education in targeted disadvantaged schools. On the demand side, school grants and participatory planning were intended to reduce financial and other barriers to school entry and to strengthen household incentives to enroll school-age children, particularly girls. On the supply side, investments in gender-sensitive facilities, the provision of sanitary pads, and improvements to school safety and inclusivity were designed to create a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for all students. Together, these measures were anticipated to address key barriers to enrollment, particularly in rural and underserved areas where, as noted in the ICR (p. 11), gender gaps were most pronounced. However, the theory of change illustration in the ICR (p. 3) does not explicitly articulate the assumptions underpinning it; in practice, it relied on an assumption of relative political stability, which did not materialize, limiting the effectiveness of planned interventions.

Outputs and intermediate results

- **Annual School Census (ASC):** Both ASC rounds were completed, **meeting the project target**. Implementation of the 2020/21 ASC was delayed due to COVID-19-related school closures and operational disruptions. As reported by the Bank team in a written interview dated December 10, 2025, while schools in some states began reopening in September 2020, many remained closed until February 2021, delaying data collection by several months. Preliminary results were received in March 2021, and the full dataset became available in the first half of 2021; however, data quality issues required additional cleaning, further extending the timeline. As a result, the cleaned dataset was shared with the Bank team only after the project pause and could not be used for school targeting. Despite these challenges, the 2020/21 ASC was successfully completed in 17 of Sudan's 18 states. Following the suspension of project implementation after the October 2021 military takeover, the continuity of the school census was nonetheless maintained. The 2021/22 ASC was conducted by the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) using local counterpart funding. The census applied the same structure and tools as in previous rounds to ensure data comparability. The PCU completed data entry in September 2022 and finalized the 2021/22 ASC.
- **School-profile feedback:** Before the project pause, no schools received feedback from the Annual School Census. The feedback envisioned under the project was intended to provide schools with ASC-derived information on learning environments, dropout rates, and pass rates, benchmarked against locality, state, and national data.
- As reported in the ICR (p. 27), awareness campaigns played a crucial role in mobilizing communities and encouraging school attendance.
- 100 percent of school heads and PTA members received training in School-Based Management (including participatory planning and monitoring of school activities), **exceeding the target of 90 percent**. Although implementation was paused before school grants could be disbursed, the project successfully delivered refresher training in early 2021 to around 33,000 school-level stakeholders, including head teachers, school management committee members, and community representatives. Using updated manuals that introduced participatory planning and accountability mechanisms—a completely new approach in Sudan's education sector—the training covered inclusive school planning, grievance redress, and accountability mechanisms. It also provided guidance on school safety, gender sensitivity, GBV prevention, and strategies to support vulnerable children, including



girls. The Bank team reported in a written interview on December 10, 2025, that the ICR for the subsequent Sudan Basic Education Emergency Support Project (P172812, implemented between May 2020 and July 2021; cost: US\$11.5 million) highlights the importance of this training for effective grant management, and the training materials are now being used under the follow-on Primary Education Emergency Support Project (SPEEP, P504621).

Outcomes

The selection of target schools for grants to increase overall and female early-grade enrollment depended on up-to-date data from the 2021/22 ASC, which was underway at the time of the project pause, with data collection planned for June 2022. Following the suspension of project disbursements in October 2021, this selection process could not proceed. Consequently, the school grants component was not implemented, resulting in a Negligible rating for PDO 1 achievement.

Data from seven states collected in 2025 under the follow-on SPEEP project indicate that enrollment in localities targeted under the current project increased by 19 percent between 2019 and 2025, despite a slight decline in the number of schools. This growth exceeded appraisal projections (3 percent annual growth versus 2.5 percent expected) and is consistent with national trends reported in the ICR (p. 9), which show that public school enrollment increased from 5.46 million in 2019 to 6.07 million in 2022 (an average of 3.6 percent annually). While multiple factors contributed to this positive trajectory, the observed increases likely reflect the combined impact of early project interventions and broader demographic dynamics. Key project interventions included: (i) training approximately 33,000 school management stakeholders in school-based management, empowering local education actors to make informed decisions and manage resources more effectively; (ii) community awareness campaigns aimed at encouraging early-grade enrollment; and (iii) nationwide provision of textbooks, which strengthened the learning environment, a key factor supporting improved student outcomes, including higher early-grade enrollment. While population growth and conflict-related displacement were likely the main drivers of enrollment increases, the project interventions implemented before the pause may have contributed to improving access and participation in early grades. Evidence from comparable FCV contexts, as highlighted in the ICR (pp. 9 and 28), indicates that in the absence of such targeted measures, enrollment and retention—particularly among girls and in rural areas—typically decline, underscoring the importance of the project's outputs.

Rating

Negligible

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To increase retention of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools.

Rationale

To improve retention of boys and girls in early grades in disadvantaged schools, the project's theory of change focused on addressing economic, instructional, and school-level factors contributing to early dropout. Retention-oriented interventions were to be implemented through school grants and strengthened school management systems. Grants were to finance locally defined actions identified through participatory planning based on school profiles derived from the Annual School Census. Key **activities** were to include: (i) training



school heads and PTAs in participatory planning and monitoring of school performance; (ii) training locality supervisors to provide targeted support to schools; (iii) updating the PTA manual to reinforce the PTA members' role in supporting school activities, including ensuring student and teacher attendance, and promoting efficient use of resources; (iv) incentivizing parental engagement to reduce dropout risk (particularly for girls) through reducing household education cost burdens and provision of gender-responsive items such as sanitary pads; (v) supporting volunteer teachers with in-kind or cash assistance to reduce absenteeism and departures; (vi) improving learning conditions through provision of new textbooks, essential materials, furniture, and equipment; and (vii) quarterly monitoring of pupil and teacher attendance by independent enumerators. To further encourage retention, the second and third rounds of school grants were to include performance-based rewards linked to improvements in attendance and student promotion rates.

These activities were expected to generate **outputs** such as: timely school-profile reports; functioning participatory School Improvement Plans; strengthened PTA and school leadership capacity for monitoring attendance; improved availability of learning materials and basic equipment; consistent support to volunteer teachers; and enhanced school environments.

These outputs were anticipated to lead to **intermediate results** including improved student and teacher attendance; reduced financial and gender-related barriers to continued participation; safer and more inclusive learning environments through investments in gender-sensitive facilities and provision of sanitary napkins, measures which, as noted in the ICR (p. 11), are associated with reducing dropout rates among adolescent girls; increased parental engagement to support the retention of girls and boys; and stronger school-level capacity to identify and support at-risk learners.

Ultimately, these intermediate results were expected to contribute to the **outcome** of increased retention of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in the targeted disadvantaged schools.

Outputs and intermediate results

- 100 percent of school heads and PTA members received training in School-Based Management, **exceeding the target of 90 percent**.
- No schools received Performance-Based Grants, **not achieving the target of 8,400 schools**, although preparatory work—including the performance-based grant manual and the training program—was completed before the October 2021 project pause. Nevertheless, the follow-on SPEEP project is now building on these foundational efforts, using the training materials and grant mechanisms developed under this operation to continue training PTA and school stakeholders and to support the distribution of school grants.

Outcomes

Following the project pause, no target schools were selected for student retention support, and student survival to grade 6 in target schools could not be assessed, resulting in a Negligible rating for the achievement of PDO 2.

Rating
Negligible



OBJECTIVE 3

Objective

To increase reading proficiency of boys and girls in early grades of primary education in target disadvantaged schools.

Rationale

The project's theory of change for improving early-grade reading proficiency among boys and girls in disadvantaged schools was based on expanding access to high-quality reading materials, strengthening instructional practices, and monitoring students' reading progress. The project planned to produce and distribute new curriculum-aligned textbooks, provide supplementary readers for grades 1-3, and support two rounds of a National Learning Assessment. In schools with high repetition rates, a pilot-informed Reading Program was to be implemented. This program was to involve training teachers and community volunteers to assess the reading skills of pupils in grades 2 and 3, conduct extracurricular reading activities, and track students' reading progress. Additionally, locality inspectors (school supervisors) were to receive training and tools to support schools in implementing the intensive reading interventions and monitoring improvements in reading proficiency. These activities were expected to produce **outputs** such as expanded access to and use of reading materials, training of teachers and volunteers in evidence-based reading instruction, completion of two rounds of the National Learning Assessment for early-grade reading, and strengthened capacity of inspectors to provide ongoing pedagogical support. These outputs, in turn, were anticipated to lead to **intermediate outcomes**, including more structured and effective reading instruction, earlier identification of struggling readers, stronger pedagogical support for teachers, and improved learning conditions in disadvantaged classrooms. Ultimately, these intermediate results were expected to contribute to the **outcome** of improved early-grade reading proficiency among boys and girls in targeted disadvantaged schools.

As noted in the PAD (p. 16), the project planned to support production, procurement, distribution, and utilization of newly developed textbooks for all schools in Sudan. This extended beyond the PDO's focus on improving outcomes in targeted disadvantaged schools. While the distribution of curriculum-aligned textbooks to all students in grades 2–5 was a major achievement, it highlights a misalignment between the more narrowly defined PDO and the nationwide coverage of this core activity.

Outputs and intermediate results

- A technical review of core textbooks (grades 2-5) was completed **as planned**.
- Textbook revisions for grades 1 and 6 were initiated but not printed or distributed, leaving this activity **partially achieved**.
- A total of 14.4 million textbooks aligned with the revised curriculum were provided to all basic school students in grades 2-5 (17 titles, including Math, Science, Arabic, and English), **exceeding the target of** 13.25 million textbooks. By October 2021, all planned textbooks for grades 2-5 had been produced and procured, with an additional 15 percent stored at the state level for replenishment. During the project pause and at the time of ICR preparation, the textbooks distributed under this project remained in active use. This support addressed gaps identified at appraisal, when textbook shortages persisted in specific subjects despite earlier gains under the predecessor BERP (P128644). At appraisal, four students shared a science textbook, while two and three students, respectively, shared textbooks in mathematics and Arabic. These shortages contributed to the poor learning environment in many primary schools at the time, affecting both teacher motivation and student outcomes (PAD, p. 11).



- No supplementary readers were supplied to targeted schools, **not achieving the target of 660,000**. Procurement had not begun before the project pause.
- No teachers were recruited or trained, **not achieving the target of 4,000**, which resulted in non-implementation of the planned structured reading program.
- The planned National Learning Assessment (NLA) to monitor early-grade reading outcomes was not conducted. Although the NLA tools had been developed and an assessment round was scheduled for February/March 2022, the activity was halted due to the project pause, and the target of completing two NLA rounds (one every three years) **was not achieved**.

Outcomes

While textbook distribution was a notable achievement, following the project pause no schools could be selected to benefit from other reading-related activities, including the complementary reading program, teacher training, supplementary readers, and the National Learning Assessment. Consequently, key interventions to improve reading proficiency were not implemented, and the project could not assess progress in overall and female early-grade reading proficiency in targeted schools, resulting in a Negligible rating for PDO 3 achievement.

Institutional strengthening

The project design incorporated cross-cutting activities under Component 2 (Systems Strengthening) and Component 4 (Results-Based Financing) aimed at improving governance, accountability, and resource allocation across the primary education subsector. These interventions were intended to support all three project objectives: expanded enrollment, improved retention, and enhanced reading proficiency.

Investments in education information systems—including the ASC, school profiles, the National Learning Assessment, and financial reporting tools—were designed to provide reliable, timely data for planning, targeting, and monitoring school-level performance. The project also aimed to build the capacity of Federal and State Ministries of Education to use education data for strategic and operational planning, thereby enhancing the government's ability to design and implement reforms in priority areas.

Component 4 included three PBCs to incentivize improved sector performance:

- **PBC 1:** Establishing systems for regular classroom assessment of student reading proficiency to support evidence-based instruction.
- **PBC 2:** Increasing the number of girls benefiting from improved learning environments to reduce gender disparities and encourage enrollment and retention.
- **PBC 3:** Introducing a national reporting system for basic education financing to strengthen transparency, efficiency, and accountability.

Collectively, these cross-cutting interventions were expected to enhance the effectiveness, equity, and efficiency of the primary education subsector.

Although some progress was made under Component 2 before the implementation pause, no disbursements occurred under Component 4, as none of the PBCs were achieved. Before the pause, the project supported institutional strengthening by building capacity for decentralized school management and strengthening education data systems. The project's training of around 33,000 school-level stakeholders in school-based



management, combined with the rollout of updated school grant manuals and planning templates across target areas, helped lay the foundation for decentralized school governance and performance-based funding. Capacity-building activities for the Federal Ministry of Education, delivered through an Advisory Services and Analytics activity under Sub-component 2.3 (Education Policy Development), strengthened the ministry's ability to plan and implement reforms and produced policy briefs that provided reform guidance in areas such as financing, institutional governance, teacher development, curriculum and assessment, gender equity, infrastructure, information and communication technology in education, higher education, and system resilience. At the system level, the project financed two rounds of the ASC (2020/21 and 2021/22), supporting routine data collection and evidence-based decision-making. These investments strengthened the administrative and technical capacity of the education sector. Project outputs also informed the design of the subsequent SPEEP through the transfer of core operational frameworks under this project, including the school grants mechanism, the reading program model, and the ASC methodology, which was adapted in the follow-on project for its rapid school survey component, enabling continued training of PTA and school stakeholders and the distribution of school grants.

Rating
Negligible

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

The project's overall efficacy is assessed as Negligible, primarily due to governance disruptions that ended project implementation before PDO-level outcomes could be achieved or measured. Despite its brief implementation period, the project delivered significant foundational outputs, including the nationwide distribution of 14.4 million textbooks aligned with the revised curriculum, training of 33,000 school heads and PTA members in school-based management, completion of the 2020/21 ASC in 17 states, and finalization of key tools such as the performance-based grant manual and National Learning Assessment instruments. While PDO indicators on student enrollment, retention, and reading proficiency were not met, these preparatory activities laid the groundwork for follow-on initiatives, including SPEEP, which continues to use the training materials and grant mechanisms developed under this project, enabling continued training of PTA and school stakeholders and distribution of school grants. Furthermore, the project's tangible achievements, together with complementary support under the Education COVID-19 Response Project (P174220), likely contributed to the sustained growth in public school enrollment between 2019 and 2022. Although outcome-level efficacy is negligible, these achievements preserved the potential for future improvements in Sudan's primary education system.

Based on information from the ICR and the Bank team, as shared in a written interview on December 10, 2025, the following discusses the project's contributions, the degree of attribution, and the likely counterfactual scenario.

Attribution. The key outputs documented in the ICR are directly attributable to project interventions: 14.4 million textbooks were procured and delivered through project financing; 33,000 stakeholders received capacity-building support funded by the project; and both ASC rounds were conducted with project support.



These outputs would not have occurred without the project, given Sudan’s fiscal constraints. At the outcome level, attribution is limited. Enrollment increased during the project period, but this trend reflected the combined influence of multiple factors, including population growth, conflict-related displacement, and likely interventions by other development partners, including UNICEF and other stakeholders coordinated through the Local Education Group. While project-supported activities such as school-based management training, community awareness campaigns, and textbook provision plausibly contributed to improved enrollment in targeted areas, their independent effect cannot be isolated. The project’s influence on enrollment is therefore best characterized as a partial contribution rather than direct attribution. The “conservative” assumption used in the ICR’s efficiency analysis that 25 percent of enrollment growth is attributable to the project is illustrative and intended for sensitivity analysis rather than as an evidence-based estimate. Overall, the project demonstrates strong attribution for outputs and a plausible but partial contribution to outcomes.

Counterfactual. Without the project, student enrollment would likely have declined, as the number of schools in project-targeted localities fell from 2,849 in 2019 to 2,837 in 2025. The project’s foundational investments provided critical system-strengthening measures that would have been delayed or not implemented, creating a platform for future scale-up despite exogenous shocks. Additionally, schools would have lacked basic management capacity and accountability structures, leaving the education system less prepared to respond to crises such as COVID-19 and ongoing conflict. Given Sudan’s fiscal constraints, key outputs—including 14.4 million textbooks, 33,000 trained stakeholders, and two ASC rounds—would not have been delivered without the project’s support.

Overall Efficacy Rating
Negligible

Primary Reason
External shock

5. Efficiency

Economic efficiency. At appraisal, the project was expected to generate substantial efficiency gains through improvements in student retention, reduced repetition, and enhanced reading proficiency in targeted schools. The economic analysis assumed that if interventions across 8,400 schools increased grade 6 survival rates by 10 percentage points (from 79 to 89 percent), the number of repeaters would fall by 51,000, or by 30 percent, by 2023. This reduction in internal inefficiency was expected to raise public spending efficiency by seven percentage points and generate government savings of SDG 474 million (US\$8.6 million) annually over 2019-2023, based on enrollment projections and the official exchange rate of 55 SDG/US\$. In addition, if all participating schools achieved the planned improvements in grade 3 reading proficiency, the share of inefficient public spending would be further reduced by two percentage points by 2023. These efficiency gains would translate into additional government savings of SDG 32.2 million (US\$0.6 million), bringing total estimated savings to SDG 514 million (US\$9.2 million) over 2019-2023. Even if the full targets were not reached, the project was still expected to generate economic returns for the government. Sensitivity analysis considered three scenarios with varying improvements in survival and repetition rates. Under the “Low” scenario—assuming only 0.5 and 2.5 percentage point increases in repetition and survival rates, respectively—the analysis still estimated government savings of US\$3.5 million over the project period, demonstrating the project’s robustness to lower-than-expected outcomes.

The ICR’s economic analysis notes that despite implementation challenges, which prevented full rollout of core interventions, available data from seven states, collected in 2025 under the follow-on SPEEP project, indicate that enrollment in localities targeted by the project increased by 19 percent between 2019 and 2025, despite a



slight decline in the number of schools. This growth exceeded appraisal projections (3 percent annual growth versus 2.5 percent expected) and reflects the combined influence of early project interventions—such as school-based management training, community awareness campaigns that likely encouraged enrollment and attendance, and textbook distribution that ensured students had access to essential learning materials—alongside other factors such as population growth and conflict-related displacement. Economic benefits were estimated using 2021 International Labor Organization data on average monthly earnings in purchasing power parity dollars: \$475.10 for employees with primary education or less and \$893.40 for those with lower secondary education, assuming a 10 percent return to education. Present value calculations assumed a 40-year working life, a 6 percent discount rate, an average 10-year delay before beneficiaries enter the labor market, total enrollment numbers adjusted by the adult survival rate from the Human Capital Index 2018 database, and average human capital utilization per Pennings (2019). The analysis considered different attribution scenarios for the project's contribution to enrollment gains. Under the conservative assumption that 25 percent of the enrollment increase was due to project interventions, the net present value of expected benefits was US\$460 million, with an internal rate of return of 21.7 percent, demonstrating strong economic viability. On a per-student basis, the present value of benefits for each student retained until completion was estimated at US\$16,325.

Implementation efficiency. During its brief implementation window, the project demonstrated strong early operational efficiency, but progress was quickly overtaken by escalating external shocks. Following effectiveness in December 2020, the PCU mobilized rapidly, and with early World Bank support in procurement, planning, and M&E, the project delivered substantial outputs within its first 10 months. Textbook procurement was a notable area of efficiency: 14.4 million textbooks were procured and distributed, exceeding the 13.25 million target by 11 percent within the same budget envelope, and completed just before the project pause. At the same time, COVID-19-related school closures and operational disruptions delayed implementation of key activities, including the 2020/21 ASC. Prolonged data collection and subsequent data quality issues meant that the cleaned ASC dataset became available only after the project pause and could not be used for school targeting, reducing the timeliness and operational utility of outputs. These constraints contributed to a deterioration in Implementation Status and Results Report (ISR) ratings from Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory as the implementation standstill persisted.

The Bank team also noted that the subsequent restructuring and transition to third-party implementation required navigating a complex sequence of political, procedural, and operational constraints. Under the activated OP 7.30, official communications with the de facto government were restricted, and the Country Management Unit (CMU) could engage only with the Minister of Finance. Procedurally, the Bank team had to: (i) secure agreement from the CMU and GPE to cancel the remaining amount through restructuring; (ii) design a new project in consultation with partners and GPE; (iii) conduct a competitive selection process to identify a third-party implementing agency; (iv) ensure that UNICEF prepared and obtained approval for relevant environmental and social documents prior to the Decision Meeting; (v) complete GPE's quality assurance and clearance procedures; and (vi) obtain consensus from the Sudan Local Education Group. Additional delays arose from corporate-level discussions between UNICEF and the Bank on environmental and social arrangements, requiring high-level engagement, and Sudan's arrears status required waiting until clearance before submission for Regional Vice Presidency approval. Despite these constraints, the Bank maintained proactive engagement with GPE, UNICEF, and other partners, ultimately completing the restructuring in February 2024 and preparing the follow-on SPEEP under third-party (UNICEF) implementation.

The economic analysis results point to a sound investment. However, overall efficiency is rated as Modest, reflecting efficiency gains achieved early on and the significant loss of implementation time caused primarily by exogenous factors beyond the control of the government or the Bank.



Efficiency Rating

Modest

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 | | 0 | 0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable |

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

6. Outcome

The relevance of the PDO is rated High, reflecting strong alignment with country priorities and sector needs. However, efficacy is rated Negligible, as the project was unable to achieve its intended outcomes. Project efficiency is rated Modest. These ratings are indicative of an overall Unsatisfactory Outcome rating, reflecting major shortcomings in the project's preparation, implementation, and results.

a. **Outcome Rating**
Unsatisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

According to the ICR (p. 17), the risk to sustaining the project's development outcome is High. The escalating armed conflict since April 2023, together with governance instability, institutional fragmentation, and a deepening fiscal crisis, has severely weakened the systems required to preserve project achievements. Although the project delivered important outputs, including 14.4 million textbooks, training for 33,000 school management committee members, and support for two rounds of the Annual School Census, these gains remain highly vulnerable without stable government structures and functional service delivery mechanisms. The follow-on SPEEP project provides some continuity by delivering support through third-party implementation, but even this alternative modality cannot overcome the severe instability and system disruptions in the country, making the long-term sustainability of project achievements highly uncertain.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance



a. Quality-at-Entry

The project's PDO and design were well-aligned with both Bank and government priorities. The technical design drew on national and international good practices and lessons learned from previous Bank-financed interventions, including the Sudan Basic Education Recovery Project (P128644). The design appropriately front-loaded key activities—such as textbook procurement—to accelerate delivery in a fragile context. The PDO was clear and outcome-focused, and the results chain effectively linked school-level investments with system-strengthening measures to improve early-grade enrollment, retention, and reading proficiency. The M&E design were adequate and reliant on data systems that proved vulnerable to disruption (ICR, p. 15). Environmental and fiduciary arrangements were generally sound and the project's strategic alignment and coordination with development partners provided a solid foundation for early progress. The project was designed for implementation through government systems and institutions, consistent with the principles of country ownership and the long-term goal of strengthening national capacity for basic education service delivery.

Political and governance risks were appropriately identified as High, reflecting uncertainties associated with Sudan's political transition and fragile macroeconomic context. The project also recognized the fragility of institutional capacity and the resulting risks to implementation. However, as noted in the ICR (p. 16), the quality-at-entry assessment did not explicitly examine implementation continuity risks, data availability for monitoring, or the minimum institutional capacity thresholds needed for sustained delivery. While the project relied on government administrative data and verification systems—particularly under the results-based financing mechanism—these arrangements were technically sound under the operating conditions prevailing at appraisal. The scale of the political disruption that followed the October 2021 military takeover, and the subsequent restrictions on engagement with government authorities under OP 7.30, went beyond what could reasonably have been anticipated or mitigated through project design.

Quality-at-Entry Rating Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

Quality of supervision is rated Moderately Satisfactory. At the outset, the Bank provided strong hands-on support that helped the project advance despite capacity gaps in the PCU. The Bank team strengthened procurement, planning, and monitoring tools and successfully front-loaded key activities, most notably the large-scale textbook procurement and distribution. Regular engagement with the Ministry of Education and coordination with development partners further supported early progress, including operationalization of key activities such as the ASC and school-based management training. However, supervision was soon constrained by external shocks. After the October 2021 military takeover triggered OP 7.30, the Bank was unable to conduct missions or provide in-country oversight. COVID-19 restrictions initially limited mobility and mission presence, and the later escalation of conflict in Sudan led to the closure of the Sudan Country Office in April 2023 and the evacuation of all staff to other countries. Within these severe constraints, the Bank maintained remote communication with the PCU and took a proactive role working with GPE, UNICEF, and other partners to explore options for third-party implementation. Progress toward restructuring was slow due to OP 7.30 restrictions and uncertainty over whether conditions could stabilize sufficiently to resume government-led implementation. The decision to retain the original project closing



date was also influenced by the need to recover the EUR 3 million outstanding in the Designated Account. Ultimately, the Bank and GPE agreed to repurpose the original project funds. Following the formal restructuring in February 2024, the Bank prepared a new World Bank-financed project, SPEEP, under a third-party implementation arrangement with UNICEF. Through this process, the Bank team successfully adapted the project to a new delivery modality, maintaining support for the country's education sector despite the challenging operating environment. The Bank consistently flagged implementation risks in its ISRs, providing candid assessments of emerging challenges. However, the PDO rating remained Satisfactory for more than two years after the October 2021 pause and was only downgraded to Unsatisfactory in January 2024. While this delay reflects the inherent difficulty of assessing outcome-level progress during a prolonged suspension of activities, it also indicates that supervision did not immediately capture the deteriorating implementation context. Overall, supervision was constrained by limited in-country oversight and delays in the PDO rating adjustments and was therefore only partially effective. Accordingly, the quality of supervision is rated Moderately Satisfactory.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The project's M&E design was generally sound and incorporated capacity-building measures across federal, state, and school levels. It included technical assistance to strengthen the Education Management Information System and enhance the Ministry of Education's capacity to generate and use data for school planning. The design envisaged training of state officers in planning and budgeting to support the timely preparation of monitorable annual plans with clear outputs. At the school level, localities were expected to train PTA members in participatory planning and in the use of school data for planning and monitoring. Locality officials were also to receive support to strengthen their supervision role, including coaching and monitoring of the early-grade reading program. The results framework included clear, measurable, and gender-disaggregated indicators, drawing on multiple data sources such as administrative data, the ASC, and the National Learning Assessment. For the variable part, the design incorporated independent verification of PBCs, with an external evaluation firm confirming government-reported achievements. The theory of change was coherent and logically linked investments in data systems, participatory school management, school grants, learning materials, and instructional support to expected improvements in enrollment, retention, and early-grade reading. However, the theory of change illustration in the ICR (p. 3) does not specify its underlying assumptions. It implicitly assumed relative political stability, which did not hold, reducing the effectiveness of planned interventions. The M&E design had important limitations in Sudan's fragile governance and low-capacity context, compounded by challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic that constrained mobility and in-person support. Although technically strong, the M&E approach relied heavily on functioning government administrative systems and timely data flows, assumptions that were overly optimistic given the country's fragility. Core elements, such as the timely implementation of the ASC and provision of school feedback profiles, and active, consistent engagement of PTAs, were unlikely



to be realized under these conditions. The independent verification agent also relied on government-reported data and could not serve as a parallel monitoring mechanism if administrative systems failed. The design did not incorporate contingency measures or alternative monitoring arrangements in the event that government structures became inaccessible, leaving the M&E system insufficiently resilient to withstand the severe political disruption that later occurred.

b. M&E Implementation

M&E implementation was limited due to the early pause of disbursements. Before OP 7.30 was applied, several activities were front-loaded, including completion of the 2020/21 ASC in 17 of Sudan's 18 states. However, delays in finalizing the 2020/21 ASC—due in part to COVID-19-related disruptions—meant that the data were not available in time to inform school targeting, and the subsequent suspension of disbursements in October 2021 halted implementation, rendering the ASC of limited operational use for the project. Approximately 33,000 stakeholders were also trained in school-based management and planning using updated templates and reporting tools that were part of the project's M&E design. The subsequent political crisis and closure of the World Bank office in Khartoum placed M&E activities beyond the Bank's direct oversight. As a result, the National Learning Assessment and textbook tracking survey were not carried out, planned enhancements to the EMIS were not implemented, and, since activities under the Variable Part/PBCs had not advanced to the stage requiring independent verification, the independent verification agent was not contracted. Consequently, systematic monitoring of most indicators could not be conducted beyond early outputs.

c. M&E Utilization

The project's short implementation window constrained the use of M&E data for decision-making. While data collection under the 2020/21 ASC was completed, COVID-19-related operational disruptions delayed finalization of the dataset, and the cleaned data were shared with the Bank team only after the October 2021 project pause. As a result, the ASC data were not available in time to inform school targeting and school grant allocations. The school-level planning tools and manuals developed under the project, along with associated capacity-building activities, may still provide a foundation for future monitoring and decentralized planning, including under the follow-on SPEEP. Overall, the M&E system remained only partially operationalized.

M&E Quality Rating

Modest

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

As reported by the Bank team in a written interview dated December 10, 2025, the project's performance in implementing environmental and social safeguards was rated Moderately Satisfactory, indicating overall compliance with Bank requirements. The project was classified as Category B (Partial Assessment), triggering Environmental Assessment (OP/BP 4.01) and Involuntary Resettlement (OP/BP 4.12). The



Ministry of Education prepared and disclosed the required Environmental and Social Management Framework and Resettlement Policy Framework prior to project effectiveness. Several safeguards missions monitored compliance with key commitments, including grievance redress, teacher training, classroom construction, school site selection, and disability inclusion. As reported by the Bank team, the main safeguards issue identified during early implementation was the need to recruit an environmental and social risk management specialist before school construction activities could begin. Before the pause, the PCU was in the process of hiring this specialist, and the recruitment was to be fast-tracked. The Bank team also noted that no activities with potential environmental or social impacts had commenced on the ground beyond preparatory works at the time disbursements were paused. Embedded within the school grants, the grievance redress mechanism allowed complaints to be registered at the school, locality, and state levels. Training on the mechanism was incorporated into the school grant manuals, and around 33,000 stakeholders, including school principals and PTA members, were trained on its use. No grievances were received or reported to the Bank during the implementation period. While initial safeguards-related activities progressed well, the application of OP 7.30 and the resulting pause in disbursements halted further implementation.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial Management (FM). The project's financial management performance declined from Satisfactory to Unsatisfactory, and remained so until closing, due to the suspension of disbursements and the escalation of conflict, both of which disrupted routine financial reporting and prevented the timely submission of audits. The project achieved a total disbursement of US\$9.1 million (14.8 percent of total planned financing), comprising an advance of US\$3.6 million (equivalent to EUR 3 million) deposited into the Designated Account and US\$5.5 million in direct payments under a waiver for contracts signed before October 27, 2021, primarily for printing and delivering 14.4 million textbooks. Given the conflict environment, the Bank adopted a multi-layered fiduciary oversight approach to manage FM risks and ensure funds were used appropriately. For all waiver payments, the PCU verified satisfactory delivery of goods and services, while the Bank's FM team reviewed contracts, invoices, and shipping documents to ensure that expenditures were eligible and to prevent duplication. Following the military takeover and activation of OP 7.30, enhanced FM measures were introduced, requiring monthly financial monitoring documentation and desk reviews of quarterly Interim Financial Reports. All 2021-2022 expenditures were verified as properly documented, eligible, and aligned with project purposes. At project closure, an outstanding EUR 3 million remained in the project's Designated Account, with ongoing recovery efforts conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education. Due to security constraints and escalating conflict, the project faced overdue Interim Financial Reports (October-December 2022), and audits for FY21-FY23 were not conducted. An audit waiver extended the submission deadline to June 30, 2025, and given the ongoing volatility, further consideration is being given to fully waiving audit requirements for this period. As reported by the Bank team in a written interview dated December 10, 2025, the Bank's Financial Management team, in consultation with the Operations Policy and Country Services (OPCS), has prepared a memo requesting approval from the Financial Management Operations Review Committee (FMORC) to waive the project's audit requirements for fiscal years 2021-2024. The memo has been cleared by OPCS and is ready for submission. However, based on experience with other countries, OPCS advised the FM team to wait until the outstanding Designated Account balance is fully refunded before FMORC approval is sought. The FM team and the Country Management Unit are actively



engaging with the de facto government to expedite the refund, after which the waiver request will be formally submitted.

Procurement. Procurement performance was rated Satisfactory to Moderately Satisfactory during the active implementation period. Following the application of OP 7.30 and the resulting suspension of project activities, the procurement rating was downgraded to Unsatisfactory in January 2024 to reflect the prolonged halt in procurement processes. The PCU’s single procurement officer faced substantial workload pressures, managing procurement for three World Bank projects simultaneously. Nonetheless, the team successfully processed the major textbook printing contract. However, limited staffing capacity meant that only one major ASC-related contract was procured before the implementation pause. Although the ASC data met the requirements for the first PBC disbursement, the activation of OP 7.30 prevented further processing. Additionally, procurement documents were not regularly uploaded to the Bank’s procurement system, reducing transparency and oversight. To mitigate capacity constraints, the PCU received regular procurement training on standard World Bank templates, and there was agreement to recruit a senior procurement specialist to accelerate implementation across all three projects.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The project generated positive spillovers beyond its direct objectives. Project outputs, including school grant manuals and ASC data, informed the design of new education interventions by other partners, such as GPE’s Accelerated Funding Programs. Additionally, policy briefs developed under the project to guide education reforms—covering financing, institutional strengthening, teacher development, curriculum and assessment, gender equity, and infrastructure—helped shape reform priorities in Sudan’s Transitional Education Plan (TEP) 2025-2027, with ASC data contributing to the TEP Results Framework.

d. Other

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11. Ratings

| Ratings | ICR | IEG | Reason for Disagreements/Comment |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Outcome | Unsatisfactory | Unsatisfactory | |
| Bank Performance | Moderately Satisfactory | Moderately Satisfactory | |
| Quality of M&E | Modest | Modest | |
| Quality of ICR | --- | Substantial | |

12. Lessons



The following lessons, slightly reworded by IEG, are drawn from the lessons and recommendations presented in the ICR.

Early implementation readiness and front-loading of key activities can help projects in FCV settings secure partial results before disruptions occur. Before the pause, the Bank team worked with the government to address initial bottlenecks and operationalize priority activities, including the nationwide distribution of textbooks, the Annual School Census, and school-based management training. Advancing these deliverables early enabled the project to achieve limited progress despite the subsequent interruption. This experience demonstrates that, in FCV settings, prioritizing implementation readiness and front-loading key activities within the first six to twelve months can help mitigate the impact of unforeseen shocks that may lead to pauses in project implementation.

FCV projects benefit from streamlined processes that enable rapid adjustments in project design and execution. Simplified procedures allow quicker transitions to alternative delivery mechanisms—such as engaging third-party implementers—when government-led approaches become unfeasible due to conflict or institutional fragility, helping ensure continuity of critical services and the sustainability of development outcomes even under challenging conditions. In this project, the restructuring took time to materialize due to the activation of OP 7.30 and the uncertainty surrounding the conflict, underscoring the importance of establishing flexible procedures from the outset.

Early and active coordination with donors and partners facilitates continuity when projects are disrupted. Following the pause in implementation, the project's collaboration with the Local Education Group and alignment with partner priorities enabled the adoption of alternative implementation arrangements under the follow-on project. This experience underscores that proactive, continuous coordination with development partners can translate into practical adaptability on the ground, providing alternative pathways to maintain services when government-led implementation is not feasible.

IEG's review offers an additional lesson:

Results-based financing is especially challenging in fragile, low-capacity settings when it relies on government data. In this project, data on the achievement of Performance-Based Conditions (PBCs) were to be provided by the Ministry of Education and verified by an independent third-party verification firm. However, as the project experience shows, when government administrative data becomes inaccessible due to political instability or institutional disruptions, even technically sound indicators and verification arrangements may fail, limiting the ability to track PBC results and trigger disbursements.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR



The ICR was well written, candid, and largely consistent with IEG guidelines, providing a clear discussion of implementation challenges and delays. The efficacy analysis was structured around the three PDOs and relied mainly on monitoring data for the limited outputs delivered. The early project interruption prevented key activities, including school grants and critical M&E exercises such as the National Learning Assessment, the textbook tracking survey, and independent verification under the results-based financing component, limiting the ability to measure or attribute PDO outcomes. The cost-effectiveness analysis used two methodological approaches; however, the “conservative” assumption that 25 percent of enrollment growth is attributable to the project is not supported by data and cannot be interpreted as a substantiated estimate. Lessons learned were grounded in project-specific evidence and offered relevant insights for other fragile contexts aiming to strengthen access, participation, and quality in primary education.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial