



1. Project Data

Project ID P167432	Project Name Benin GPE Project Phase 3	
Country Benin	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-B0364	Closing Date (Original) 30-Sep-2023	Total Project Cost (USD) 18,797,604.86
Bank Approval Date 17-Jul-2019	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Sep-2023	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	18,900,000.00	18,900,000.00
Revised Commitment	18,900,000.00	18,900,000.00
Actual	18,797,604.86	18,797,604.86

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, page 16) and the Grant Agreement (page 6), the project objectives were as follows:

- **To improve the quality of teaching and learning in basic education with an emphasis on the early grades; and strengthen equity in primary education, particularly in four regions of the country.**



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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

1. Improving the quality of basic education (Appraisal: US\$ 12.0 million; Actual: US\$ 12.5 million): This component aimed to improve the curricula to enhance quality, improve teachers' knowledge and teaching practices, and strengthen pre-service teacher education. Activities included: revision of early grade French and mathematics curricula; revision of Lower Secondary French, mathematics, physics, and English curricula; provision of teacher guides and learning materials; monitoring of implementation of new materials; revision of teacher training modules; training of school directors on pedagogical support; and revision of pre-service teacher training curricula. Disbursement-linked indicators for these activities included: increase in the national average of students' promotion rate and implementation of at least 80% of newly revised Grades 1 and 2 curricula.
2. Improving equity in basic education (Appraisal: US\$ 3.1 million; Actual: US\$ 2.8 million): This component aimed to promote equitable access to schooling for Grades 1 and 2 students in deprived districts and children with disabilities. Activities included: awareness campaigns on the benefits of education; provision of uniforms; incentives for schools with greatest enrollment increases; awareness campaigns on schooling for children with disabilities; and medical consultations and physical aids for children with disabilities.
3. Strengthening the delivery of education services (Appraisal: US\$ 3.8 million; Actual: US\$ 3.5 million): This component aimed to strengthen institutional capacity of the implementing Ministries and also the monitoring and evaluation system. Activities included: grants to sub-regional inspectorates (linked to performance-based contracts) to improve pedagogical support; provision of tablets; data collection for primary and lower secondary schools; and project management support. Disbursement-linked indicators for these activities included: conducting of the first national learning assessment for Grades 1 and 2 and reduction in the difference between the highest student-teacher ratio by district and the national average.

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

Project cost

- The project cost at appraisal was US\$ 18.9 million. The actual cost at completion was US\$ 18.8 million.

Financing

- The project was financed by a Global Partnership for Education Trust Fund grant in the amount of US\$ 18.9 million, of which US\$ 18.8 million disbursed.



Borrower contribution

- There was no planned Borrower contribution.

Dates

- *July 17, 2019*: Project approval.
- *January 9, 2020*: Project effectiveness.
- *April 19, 2020*: Mid-term review.
- *September 30, 2023*: Project closing.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Benin is a low-income country with a population of about 11 million people. Despite recent steady economic growth, per capita income remains low (US\$ 860 in 2017) and human development outcomes are also low (ranked 127 out of 157 countries on the UN Human Development Index, 2018). In education, progress has been steady but slow, with a 67.5% primary completion rate in 2017/18, up from 65.0% in 2005/06. Challenges in the basic education sector include weak sector administration, inefficient teacher deployment and limited pedagogical capacity, low retention and high drop-out rates, low learning outcomes, and significant disparities in education service delivery along geographic and social divisions.

There were 2.3 million students in primary school and 0.9 million in general secondary school in the 2016-17 school year. The recent Education Sector Plan for 2018-30 set forth a new structure for basic education: two years in preschool, six years in primary school, and four years in lower secondary school), led by the Ministries of Pre- and Primary School (*Ministère des Enseignements Maternel et Primaire*, MEMP) and Secondary, Technical and Vocational Education (*Ministère des Enseignements Secondaire, Technique et de la Formation et Professionnelle*, MESFTP). The Plan included improving the quality of teaching and learning as one of four main priorities. Specific strategic actions included delivery of school kits, inclusion of children with special needs, and review of teacher training.

The Bank's Country Partnership Framework for FY2019-23 identified investing in human capital as a key focus area, with improved relevance of education as one of the objectives, noting the need to improve educational outcomes and address disparities in access. However, indicators measure youth employment and postsecondary education completion, rather than basic education outcomes. The recently closed GPE project (P129600, US\$ 42.3 million) focused interventions in targeted deprived districts, with the specific aim to improve access, equity, and quality of teaching, and included key activities of teacher training, provision of learning materials and classroom equipment, and school kits. This operation followed up by continuing the focus on improved learning and also extending the scope to lower secondary education.

Rating

High



4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To improve the quality of teaching in basic education with an emphasis on the early grades

Rationale

The theory of change was clear. Activities to improve teacher knowledge and capacity - specifically increasing technical training and pedagogical support for teachers – alongside revised curricula and teaching/ learning materials were likely to contribute to the intended outcome to enhance teaching.

Activities for this objective and the second objective below were implemented nationwide. Over 1.5 million students and 47,600 teachers and school heads were expected to benefit from all project activities.

Note: Project funds were pooled with contributions from other donors including Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement, AFD), the German Development Bank (Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, KfW) and The Netherlands.

Outputs

- Revision of Grades 1 and 2 curricula for French and mathematics. This included revision of the language immersion approach and phonics instruction.
- Revision of Lower Secondary curricula for French, mathematics, physics and English. The new curricula were reviewed, validated, and certified in December 2020, with implementation beginning with the 2021-22 school year and completed with the 2022-23 school year.
- Development of teaching and learning materials, including well-structured and explicit lessons plans that follow a systematic progression of learning throughout the school year. Distribution of 40,000 curricula guides, 49,800 pedagogical guides, and over 2.8 million reading booklets (target: 2.5 million), covering all Grades 1 and 2 students in public primary schools.
- Updated training modules for in-service teacher training on the new curricula and methods of instruction. 46,128 teachers in Grades 1 and 2 received the training (target: 43,600).
- Updated pre-service teacher training curricula for teacher training institutions. The new curricula was fully developed, including the competency, training, and evaluation framework. However, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the timeline and therefore the curricula were not yet being implemented by project closing as planned.
- Three cycles of teacher evaluations to monitor implementation of new teaching and learning materials through classroom observations. The evaluations were also used to identify strengths and weaknesses of teachers to further improve the teacher training program.

In addition,



- Provision of grants to sub-regional inspectorates, linked to performance-based contracts, to improve teachers' pedagogical support (through supporting actions such as classroom visits, enrollment increase incentives). Each inspectorate prepared a detailed action plan towards achievement of the results identified in the contract.
- Participation of 389 MEMP and 125 MESTFP pedagogical inspectors and advisers in workshops and training sessions on how to support teachers and gather data from classroom visits and observations. Provision of 400 tablets to collect data for the Kobo data collection system
- Operationalization of learning assessment system at the primary level. This included creating an evaluation division with permanent staff, disseminating results of the 2017 learning assessment, and analyzing the results of at least 60% of primary schools in the country.

Outcomes

- 80.3% of Grades 1 and 2 primary teachers were rated satisfactory by an external agency in the use of the new education kits developed under the project. This surpassed the target of 60.0%. The proportion increased steadily over the project period, from 66.3% in 2021 to 67.8% in 2022.
- 100% of Lower Secondary teachers in French, mathematics, physics and English were using the new curricula. This surpassed the target of 90%.
- The difference between the highest student-teacher ratio by district and the national average decreased from 52.9% in 2017 to 23.2% at project closing. This fell short of the target of 20.0%. The ICR (page 17) noted that this shortfall was due to the difficulty in deploying teachers to security-threatened communes bordering Burkina Faso and Nigeria.
- 100% of heads of sub-regional primary school inspectorates achieved at least 75% of their performance-based contract criteria. This surpassed the target of 85%.
- 83.8% of schools communicated school budget and student assessment results through community briefings at least once per year. This surpassed the target of 75.0%.

Achievement is rated Substantial due to evidence of the use of new curricula and training of existing teachers to upgrade knowledge and skills (in-service), but with a shortcoming in implementing new curricula to train new teachers (pre-service).

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To improve the quality of learning in basic education with an emphasis on the early grades.

Rationale

The theory of change was clear. As in the above objective, activities to improve curricula and teaching/learning materials, alongside improved teacher knowledge and capacity were likely to contribute to the intended outcome to enhance learning.



Outputs

See outputs reported above.

Outcomes

- The percentage of Grade 2 students who attained defined minimum standards on national learning assessments in reading increased from 17.4% in 2017 to 29.1% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 23.2%. Among girls, the percentage increased from 16.8% in 2017 to 34.7% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 22.8%.
- The percentage of Grade 2 students who attained defined minimum standards on national learning assessments in mathematics increased from 23.2% in 2017 to 34.7% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 31.2%. Among girls, the percentage increased from 22.8% in 2017 to 34.5% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 30.8%.
- The national average of students' promotion rate in public primary schools increased from 68.4% in 2017 to 77.5% at project closing. This achieved the target of 76.0%.

Achievement is rated Substantial due to evidence of increased scores on learning assessments.

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 3

Objective

To strengthen equity in primary education, particularly in four regions of the country.

Rationale

The theory of change was clear. Activities to increase awareness of the importance of education and to reduce financial-related barriers to enrolling in school, alongside providing specific support to specialized institutions for children with disabilities, were likely to contribute to the intended outcome of increased equity. The prior sector operation had provided school kits (comprised of school supplies, school bag, and uniform) to Grades 1 and 2 female students in 25 deprived districts, which resulted in increased student enrollment, as well as piloted activities to promote enrollment of children with disabilities. This project builds upon those interventions and focused on deprived districts in all of Alibori and five of eight districts in Borgou regions, and children with disabilities in Zou and Collines regions.

Outputs

- Communication campaigns, including through radio, press releases and posters, on the benefits of education to village and religious leaders, villagers, and parents, and to inform communities about the distribution of school kits.
- Provision of 302,751 uniforms for all Grades 1 and 2 students in the targeted districts (target: 273,600). UNICEF provided schools supplies and backpacks, as well as handled procurement of all above items to ensure timely delivery for the school year.



- School improvements grants awarded to five primary schools with greatest increases in enrollment rates, to be used for school improvement plans.
- Communication campaigns on schooling options for children with disabilities
- Community leader and teacher training and mentoring on inclusive education
- Provision of medical consultations and specialized equipment/ technical aids (including walking aids, hearing aids, visual aids, two mini-busses), school fees, and school kits for approximately 1,586 children with disabilities (target: 700)

Outcomes

- The intake rate in Grade 3 in the deprived districts of Alibori and Borgou regions increased from 67.0% in 2017 to 84.7% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 75.0%. Among girls, the percentage increased from 70.7% in 2017 to 79.7%, surpassing the target of 76.0%.
- The percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in primary school in Zou and Collines regions increased from 4.7% in 2017 to 12.2% at project closing. This surpassed the target of 10.0%.

Achievement is rated High due to evidence of increased access/enrollment of children in deprived districts and children with disabilities, which surpassed targets.

Rating

High

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Achievement of the first objective is rated Substantial due to evidence of the use of new curricula and training of existing teachers to upgrade knowledge and skills (in-service). Achievement of the second objective is rated Substantial due to evidence of increased scores on learning assessments. Achievement of the third objective is rated High due to evidence of increased access/enrollment of children in deprived districts and children with disabilities, which surpassed targets. Therefore, Overall Efficacy is rated Substantial.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

The economic analysis at appraisal (PAD, page 32) discussed the economic rationale for the project, such as benefits to school children in deprived districts and children with disabilities, and also the improved primary



completion rate and learning outcomes which would promote human development and economic growth. There was no quantitative analysis included.

The economic analysis at completion (ICR, Annex 4) presented a cost-efficiency analysis based on Components 1 and 2. The expected benefits were monetary gains due to improved teaching and learning conditions, which would lead to eventual increased incomes for beneficiaries. The costs were represented by actual project costs. The resulting net present value (NPV) was calculated as US\$ 144.0 million and the internal rate of return as 16.1%, based on a discount rate of 4.5%. The ICR (page 20) noted that although these figures cannot be compared to an appraisal estimate, they are “comparable to similar projects in the region and highlight a large and positive economic impact.” Also, a sensitivity analysis indicated that the project had a positive NPV and IRR in excess of the discount rate under scenarios with discount rates of 7.0% and 10.0%, and with half of the estimated impact.

Several aspects of project implementation also point to favorable efficiency: the project achieved its objectives and targets within the planned time frame with no extensions; all project implementation arrangements utilized the existing government systems and procedures rather than creating new ones; cost of learning materials was 42% lower than the forecasted amounts (US\$1,481,393 vs. US\$2,552,716; and 12 days training for 22,500 grade 1 and grade 2 teachers and school heads cost the same as the initially planned 6 days training (ICR, page 20).

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	✓	16.10	81.40 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Relevance of objectives is rated High due to strong alignment with country conditions, country sector strategy, and Bank strategy. Overall efficacy is rated Substantial due to evidence of achieved outcomes for all three objectives. Efficiency is rated Substantial due to favorable cost-efficiency and project implementation. Therefore, overall outcome is rated Satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating



Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Policies in support of improving quality and equity are embedded in current government sector strategies and likely to be sustained. Numerous key project activities were institutionalized in the relevant Ministries, such as curricula development, feedback loops from classroom observations to teacher training, pedagogical support, and support to children with disabilities. In addition, capacity development in the Ministries and teacher training institutions, as well as for pedagogical advisors, will likely be sustained. Follow on projects from GPE and the Bank are expected to continue funding in order to sustain support to the basic education sector.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project objectives were closely aligned with government and Bank sector education plans. The project built upon lessons learned from previous GPE operations, such as the effectiveness of well-structured and explicit lessons plans, emphasis on equity to attain universal primary education, and effectiveness of providing in-kind school support to families. The project's implementation arrangements utilized existing government systems and procedures, while aiming to strengthen them, which ensured smooth implementation start-up. The design also drew upon successful pilot activities from those prior operations and over a decade of experience in the education sector in Benin, including leading donor implementation efforts and producing analytic and strategic work. The inclusion of the results-based financing approach (reflected by the Disbursement-linked indicators and activities) was appropriate to set out incentives to strengthen governance and administration of the education sector including management of teachers and institutional structure for systemic assessment of student learning.

The overall risk was assessed as Substantial, primarily in the areas of political and governance risk, macroeconomic risk, technical design (i.e. curricula revision), institutional capacity, and fiduciary aspects. Significant implementation support was planned to mitigate these risks.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank team demonstrated adaptability as challenges arose, including due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as switching to virtual supervision meetings, expanding the gender focus to complement the parallel



COVID operation, and modifying DLI targets (due to COVID-related delays in implementing the new Grades 1 and 2 curricula). Other challenges such as price increases for materials and administrative bottlenecks in signing performance-based contracts were resolved in a timely manner with the support of the Bank team. Fiduciary and safeguards performance was monitored regularly and M&E was implemented effectively.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The objectives were clearly specified. The results chain of inputs, outputs and outcomes was clear and logical. The indicators were relevant and measurable, with clear baseline and target figures identified and mostly available. The M&E design and arrangements made use of the existing government system for reporting and data collection, thereby well-embedded institutionally. Additional M&E arrangements included the creation of a new M&E division, conducting of the first national learning assessment for Grades 1 and 2, use of a teacher observation tool, and use of performance-based contracts to incentivize critical actions.

b. M&E Implementation

The project indicators were tracked and reported regularly. Data for school yearbooks were collected on time with statistical yearbooks produced annually in 2021, 2022 and 2023. Learning assessments, including the grades 1 and 2 assessment and an Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessments, were conducted as planned, with the specialized M&E division created within the Ministry with support of the project. The teacher observation tool was implemented to measure utilization of new classroom materials by the teachers, although no assessment of actual improved teacher quality was planned or conducted.

c. M&E Utilization

As reported in the ICR (page 25-26), the statistical yearbook data were used for reporting the achievement of project indicators as well as to inform decision making by education administrators. The assessment results and teacher observations were also used to inform teacher training and student support needs.



M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was classified as an Environmental Category “C” project, as no adverse environmental impacts were expected. No safeguard policies were triggered. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental and social framework guidelines for COVID were adopted, including codes of professional ethics and sexual exploitation/abuse. All relevant staff received training on environmental and social aspects and prevention measures for COVID.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

Financial management: Financial reports and annual audits were produced in a timely manner. However, there were two instances when the audit reports had qualified opinions, due to confusion in the financial statements between what the government had invested to achieve the DLIs and the expected disbursement amounts for the project activities. Overall, financial management performance rating was Moderately Satisfactory or Satisfactory throughout the life of the Project

Procurement: The Bank conducted regular procurement missions. Procurement plans were updated and regularly submitted as required. The Bank provided specific support in consistently entering all the procurement steps into the procurement system. Project procurement was rated as Moderately Satisfactory throughout the project period, with no procurement irregularities reported in the ICR.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

d. Other

11. Ratings

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



Quality of ICR	---	Substantial
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12. Lessons

Lessons drawn from the ICR (pages 28-29), adapted by IEG:

- Curricula reform can be smoothly and effectively implemented by relying on technical expertise and timely feedback. In the case of this project, these steps included the early establishment of a competent and dedicated technical team, supported by national and international experts, relying on best practices and well-established research, piloting of the curricula and learning materials, and timely feedback loops to inform design and implementation issues.
- In-service teacher training can have increased impact by using structured and explicit lesson plans. In the case of this project, the training utilized scripted lessons for the training of teachers as well as for use in the classroom.
- Assessment tools that offer timely results can create a feedback loop to improve effectiveness. In the case of this project, the learning assessment results were disseminated in a timely manner to inform decision-making and the teacher observation tools offered immediate feedback to inform teacher training.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was internally consistent, concise, and consistent with guidelines. The quality of the evidence was strong, drawing upon the effective implementation of M&E arrangements and significant data collection. The lessons were clear and informative, providing specific and useful lessons for implementing curriculum reform and teacher training.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial

