

Community Participation in How is My School Doing

Final Project Evaluation of Community Participation in How is My School Doing Project, Project ID: P167958]

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADP *Asociación Dominicana de Profesores* (Dominican Teachers' Association)

AOP Annual Operating Plans

APMAE *La Asociación de Padres, Madres, Tutores y Amigos de la Escuela* (Parent-Teacher Association)

COE – *Centro de Operaciones de Emergencias de República Dominicana* (Center for Emergency Operations)

CSO Civil Society Organization

CVA Citizen Voice and Action

CVME *Como Va Mi Escuela* (How is My School Doing)

FGD Focus Group Discussion

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GRM Grievance Redress Mechanism

GPSA Global Partnership for Social Accountability

IDEC Dominican Initiative for a Quality Education

INAFOCAM *Instituto Nacional de Formación y Capacitación del Magisterio* (National Institute for Teacher Training)

ISFODOSU *Instituto Superior de Formación Docente Salome Ureña* (Higher Teacher Training Institute Salome Ureña)

INTEC *Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo Technology Institute)

MPCVME *Mi Comunidad Participa en Como Va Mi Escuela* (My Community Participates in How is My School Doing)

MINERD *Ministerio de Educación de la República Dominicana* (Dominican Republic Ministry of Education)

MEPyD *Ministerio de Economía Planificación y Desarrollo* (Ministry of Economy and Planning)

NGO Non-governmental Organization

OCI *Oficina de Cooperación Internacional* (Office for International Aid)

PTA Parent-teacher Associations

PLD *Partido de Liberación Dominicana* (Dominican Liberation Party)

PRM *Partido Revolucionario Moderno* (Revolutionary Modern Party)

SGD Small Group Discussion

SIGERD Education Management Information System

TAME Transparency and Accountability in Mongolian Education

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USAID United States Agency for International Development

WDR World Development Report

Executive Summary

This report constitutes the final evaluation of the Community Participation in How is My School Doing Project (MPCVME), funded by the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) and implemented by World Vision in the Dominican Republic between the 4th of August 2019 and 30th of June 2023. The project built on learning from a previous GPSA project in the country and the Ministry of Education's (MINERD) World Bank-funded pilot *Como Va Mi Escuela* (CVME) – How is my school doing?

The project officially began on the 1st of January 2020, but schools were closed from the 17th of March 2020 until the end of the school year in July 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021-22 school year began online, and it was not until the 6th of April 2021 that the Ministry of Education approved the partial reopening of schools in 1/3 of municipalities, and on only 20th of September 2021 for the following school year did most students return to class in person. There was also an important political transition nationally as the *Partido Revolucionario Moderno* –Revolutionary Modern Party (PRM) put an end to the 16 years in power of the centre-left *Partido de Liberación Dominicana* – Dominican Liberation Party (PLD). This also had significant repercussions locally across the whole of the Corridor Duarte which entailed a change of government personnel across the board, and the creation of a new Vice-Ministry for Decentralization and Participation further slowed project implementation (Aston, 2022a).

The Community Participation in How is My School Doing project adapted World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach to social accountability in 60 target schools across the Corridor Duarte in partnership with school management committees, Parent Teacher Associations (APMAEs) and Education Ministry technicians (*técnicos*). The project hit or surpassed 80% of its targets in its logical framework, but its progress and lessons go far beyond the log frame.

Layering: World Vision was able to effectively layer on its previous programming and relationships established through a community mobilization model in the USAID-funded *Leer* (Read) project alongside elements of World Vision's CVA model in a proportion of project schools, but it struggled to build effectively on the World Bank's CVME project (or study) because various stakeholders (including several staff within the Bank) were regularly confused by the supposed similarities and differences between the two similarly-named projects and because evidence on what was achieved in CVME was not shared with the schools, except by the evaluator for this project at mid-term. This confusion and lack of transparency was an impediment to the MPCVME project.

Relationships: Accountability is chiefly about relationships rather than inputs and tools, and the evaluation found that while the project did learn from the How is My School Doing project's experience, it was better able to leverage its previous programming and individual relationships established by three of the World Vision project team in 9 schools through the USAID-funded *Leer* project, or through stakeholders' knowledge and experience of other past

World Vision programming. Despite otherwise crucial support from several World Bank staff connecting with the Ministry of Education during the MPCVME project, this reputational and relational background was of greater consequence than the inspiration from the tools and approach of the similarly named World Bank-funded CVME project itself, which had weak or even negative ties with the school community.

Representation: The evaluation also found that the project prompted greater representation of the voices of parents and children through the adapted CVA model in the schools than was observed previously. We lack comparable baseline and endline data to demonstrate the degree to which this was the case, because the evaluation relied on CVME endline data as project baseline data. However, mid-term and endline data from interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and small group discussions (SGD) in 9/60 schools bear this out. The degree to which the voices of minority groups were represented in the project was somewhat less clear, beyond a few illustrative cases (see Aston, 2022c).

Responsiveness: The MPCVME project was able to achieve responsiveness in resolving priority issues raised by schools through World Vision's adapted CVA model. This varied from improving infrastructure to improving the quality of food provision, school materials, and aspects of school performance. In total, the schools resolved 42% of action points at the time of the evaluation. It is likely more will be resolved by the end of the school year, or at the beginning of the following school year for actions in action plans that carry over.

Institutionalization: The project achieved some degree of institutionalization of the adapted CVA model in several different respects. First of all, the project was able to agree a protocol at national level with the Ministry of Education in consultation with 56 government technicians (*técnicos*). Secondly, community participation technicians from across the country's 31 provinces were sensitized in the CVA methodology and community participation more broadly, and 140 technicians were trained in greater depth, not simply in the 7 provinces of the Corredor Duarte covered by the project. This does not constitute radical institutionalization, but it suggests that there has been reasonable traction by the end of the project.

Scaling up: The MPCVME project was able to extend the project significantly beyond the 60 targeted schools, as the team was able to train 140 technicians across the nation. The evaluation was also able to see the replication of the adapted CVA model in two schools (Panamericana school and Matías Ramón Mella school) following training by the project team. The evaluation also found the replication of some aspects of the CVA model such as in the use of focus groups – learned by schools from the project – to address other issues such as violence in the school environment (Los Mameyes school). Several schools visited during the evaluation also noted that they intended to replicate the process whether the project is extended or not (Danilo Ginebra, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral De León, Los Mameyes schools).

However, the project also had several consequential limitations and barriers. In particular, the evaluation found that while the COVID-19 pandemic may have mobilized parents to take a more active role in their children's schooling than before, schools were shut for a very high

proportion of the project. There were also several changes of national and sub-national political and bureaucratic authorities and lengthy strikes from the ADP (teachers' union). In addition, World Vision and the World Bank's administrative procedures (and changes of these procedures during the project) significantly delayed some project actions, and for long periods of the project it could be argued that the team was understaffed relative to the number of schools, and this impeded the development of a full cycle of the adapted CVA model in all 60 schools. Initially, the aim was to conduct at least two full cycles of the CVA process, but it was only possible to complete one cycle in 58 targeted schools. Given this, and the sequential phasing of implementation in schools, while roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of schools were able to take actions in CVA action plans, just over $\frac{1}{3}$ schools (24) were able to complete over 50% of action points in CVA action plans.

The evaluation offers **seven key recommendations** for World Vision Dominican Republic based on consultations with key informants and experience from wider social accountability practice:

- **Carefully consider school caseloads for field staff facilitating CVA** and similar social accountability models;
- **Consider more thoroughly the issues of inclusion of marginalized and minority groups** and how their needs are attended to differently in the CVA process;
- **Develop and share a set of “good practices”** with community participation technicians and schools to effectively facilitate the process outlined in the protocol (e.g., tip sheet from practice for the 3 key phases);
- **Agree a sustainability plan with MINERD** for the implementation of the protocol by community participation technicians trained by the project;
- **Reconnect with IDEC's oversight committee** to promote transparency, accountability, and social participation in schools as part of decentralization efforts;
- **Share CVA materials with teacher training institutes** such as the *Instituto Superior de Formación Docente Salome Ureña* - Higher Teacher Training Institute Salome Ureña (ISFODOSU) and the *Instituto Nacional de Formación y Capacitación del Magisterio* - National Institute for Teacher Training (INAFOCAM) to improve staff inductions;
- **Synchronize CVA action plans and annual operating plans (AOPs)** in line with the school year to help institutionalize a more participatory action planning process.

These are recommendations with relatively limited resource implications for either World Vision or MINERD. In addition to these, many senior figures interviewed suggested that “*there is enough fruit there to continue* (Vice Minister of Decentralization and Participation),” and that the project might potentially be extended to other areas in the country such as the border regions. However, before assigning additional resources from donors or MINERD, it would be worth district technicians conducting a review in the 60 schools at the start of the 2023 – 2024 school year to see what proportion of action points in action plans have been completed after this evaluation is published. This would help inform future decisions regarding the promise of the protocol.

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1. Introduction

This report constitutes the final evaluation of the Community Participation in How is My School Doing Project (MPCVME), funded by the Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) and implemented by World Vision in the Dominican Republic between the 4th of August 2019 and 30th of June 2023 (World Bank, 2019a).

This evaluation report first provides an overview of what the wider literature says about social accountability in the education sector. It then explains the evaluation methodology, including a summary of the GPSA's theory of action, the project theory of change, key evaluation questions and sampling approach, data collection tools, evidence assessment, ethics, and limitations.

The report then presents the evaluation findings. In taking a realist approach, this begins with an appraisal of contextual factors and how these shaped project results. This includes a discussion of changes in political administration, the COVID-19 pandemic, and a review of previous social accountability programs in the Dominican Republic's education sector as well as how the World Vision project builds upon these experiences, and then outlines the key issues that needed to be addressed in the 60 project schools at the beginning of the project.

The evaluation then turns to answering the four key evaluation questions that were set out in the evaluation terms of reference. This includes an assessment of whether and how the project has achieved its intended outcomes and impacts outlined in its logical framework, the extent to which progress (or not) in the project validates the GPSA's theory of change and its grounding in the local context, unintended positive and negative effects of the project, and the prospects that the project's results will be sustainable (or not).

The report ends with conclusions and recommendations for future social accountability projects in the Dominican Republic's education sector by World Vision, the World Bank, the Ministry of Education, and beyond.

Albeit not the focus on the evaluation, the report also includes a brief annex on stakeholder engagement, environmental and social commitment, and the project's grievance redress mechanism.

2. Social Accountability in the Education Sector

Definitions of social accountability are not uniform (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012; Gaventa and McGee, 2013), however, the most commonly used definition which emerged from the World Bank is as an approach to accountability that ‘relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations that participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability (Malena *et al.* 2004: 2).’ These *citizen-driven* accountability processes such as participatory budgeting, social audits and community scorecards are designed to complement *conventional accountability mechanisms* such as political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules, and legal procedures.

School-based management and other decentralization reforms assume that citizens will engage, and power relations will not significantly affect their functioning. Yet, such assumptions often do not tend to hold, because both capacity gaps and power asymmetries often get in the way. Communities often lack incentives and appropriate processes to take part in school management (Devarajan *et al.* 2007; World Bank, 2017). Indeed, varying motivation and capacity of school stakeholders — community members, students, teachers, and school management — also affects the emergence of a culture of accountability (Bruns *et al.* 2011).

Experimental research, in particular, has focused on how projects address information asymmetries and strengthen the capacity of key actors to access and understand key information (Tsai *et al.* 2019). Some research such as Pandey *et al.*’s (2009) study in India indicates that interventions with positive impacts were more likely to involve service providers during both information sharing and community-led monitoring. Information campaigns targeting both providers and users generated a positive impact on teacher attendance and their activities. On the other hand, Banerjee *et al.*’s (2010) study in India uncovered that providing information to teachers and village education committee produced *no* impact on community participation to monitor educational quality or school performance. Andrabi *et al.*’s (2017) study in Pakistan on the impact of providing school report cards with test scores on subsequent test scores, prices, and enrolment in markets with multiple public and private providers suggests that information provision can facilitate better comparisons across providers and can improve market efficiency and child welfare through higher test scores, higher enrolment, and lower fees.

Several studies have focused on the relationship between school management and the quality of education and learning. Bloom *et al.* (2015) have shown that school management quality plays a crucial role in school performance across multiple contexts. Effective school leadership fairly distributed between headteachers and teachers can help improve the quality of teacher-learner interactions and it is associated with the highest levels of student learning. As the 2018 World Development Report (WDR) explains, learning may also be transformed through teachers’ increased skills and motivation (World Bank, 2018a). In Madagascar, Lassibille (2016) showed that clarifying the management roles of district officers, headteachers, and teachers as well as providing them with training, coaching, and supervision

improved student outcomes, but only in schools where the headteachers had good performance incentives. In Pakistan and Uganda, respectively, Andrabi *et al.* (2017) and Barr *et al.* (2012) found that school report cards and participatory school report cards – which allowed parents and communities to select indicators on school quality measures that they considered relevant – increased student test scores. A “laboratory game” by Barr *et al.* (2012) in Uganda suggested that the more participatory approach influenced group psychology because participants demonstrated a higher tendency to contribute to the process. However, there remain serious questions regarding taking a “best practice” approach and simply replicating a tool from one location to another (Pritchett, 2019; see Gaduh *et al.* 2020 for the persistence of this thinking).

The way in which social accountability is conducted also matters to the kinds of outcomes that are achieved. In 2019, the GPSA recommended its grantees to pursue what it termed “collaborative social accountability.” Collaborative social accountability can broadly be understood as a process that engages citizens, civil society groups, and public sector institutions in joint, iterative problem solving to improve service delivery, sector governance, and accountability (GPSA, 2019). Over the last decade, a substantial body of research has questioned the efficacy of confrontational approaches to social accountability and instead propose non-confrontational, or collaborative, approaches across a wide variety of contexts and implementing partners (see McGee and Kroeschell, 2013; Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg, 2015; Wild *et al.* 2015; Amakom *et al.* 2018; Piron *et al.* 2021 for examples in the education sector).

Alternatively, sanction-based approaches to accountability tend to have mixed effects in the education sector. Westhorp *et al.*’s (2014: 69) realist review of accountability in the education sector outlines several different mechanisms of change. They found ‘few examples where sanctions had actually been applied,’ and were uncertain whether this lack of evidence reflected an ‘actual lack of outcomes in this area, lack of research into the application of sanctions within community accountability and empowerment interventions, or gaps in the documents retrieved.’ Zeitlin *et al.* ’s (2011) evaluation of a World Vision social accountability project in Uganda noted that where human resourcing is a challenge, pressing to fire even underperforming staff may not be desirable in the absence of an alternative.

Aston and Zimmer Santos’ (2022) review of social accountability and sanctions found negative interaction effects in education programming. They found some evidence that administrative sanctions improved limited aspects of education service delivery in Kenya and Indonesia, for example, but improvements in test scores were accompanied by numerous negative effects related to the quality of the wider learning environment, the creativity of teaching, and level of trust between communities and teachers (Duflo *et al.* 2009; Gaduh *et al.* 2020; World Bank, 2020).¹ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – UNESCO (2017) came to a similar conclusion. The available evidence therefore raises questions regarding the trade-offs of employing a sanctions-focused approach in the education sector in general, but it may be appropriate and effective in some contexts.

¹ There are some examples of “hybrid,” or “sandwich,” approaches which acknowledge the importance of collaboration with government actors as part of a wider strategy (Fox, 2014; Joshi, 2017). However, scholars have struggled to demonstrate the value added empirically (Anderson *et al.* 2020; Fox *et al.* 2022; see Aston and Zimmer Santos, 2022 for a discussion).

Furthermore, the nature and politics of learning are different than those of schooling (Pritchett, 2013). Lant Pritchett notes that it is easier to design, enact, and control policies and programs to build schools or hire teacher than to “craft” feasible solutions to interpersonal and transactional challenges entailed in teaching and learning. Conflating the two seems to be a crucial misunderstanding in much of the experimental research cited above. It should also be noted that there is a difference between testing and learning, as test scores and learning are not always a perfect match, as a World Bank qualitative study in Indonesia demonstrates (World Bank, 2020), even though negative interaction effects were largely hidden in the test-score focused quantitative study (Gaduh *et al.* 2020). Levy *et al.* (2018) synthesize the messages of the WDR 2017 and WDR 2018 to “unstuck” a complex system in which children go to school but do not learn (World Bank, 2018a). According to the authors, achieving learning results calls for a renewed sense among multiple stakeholders, from the school level to the policy arena, that their proactive engagement can contribute — large or small — toward learning. In other words, education compacts such as those between PTAs, school management committees, and other relevant community stakeholders have to believe they can make a difference to address more sticky problems.

The sustainability of social accountability outcomes in the education sector is rarely studied and little is known. The GPSA’s Transparency and Accountability in Mongolian Education (TAME) project suggests that relational approaches can potentially achieve important progress. At project baseline, there were no functional spaces and/or relationships for parent, teachers, school headteachers and relevant sector authorities to engage together in addressing problems in school management. The main unit of engagement was parent-teacher associations (PTAs). TAME’s evaluation found that PTAs brought stakeholders together to solve common problems and also continued efforts after the project. The evaluation also confirmed that PTAs met frequently which was deemed to be a key factor to the success of multi-stakeholder compacts. The frequency of PTA interactions increased over time and progress was not linear, with some PTAs meeting more than others. The evaluation found that 31 PTAs were still functioning and carrying out activities several months after the end of project (Wadeson and Guerzovich, 2023).

Research suggests that school-level interventions are rarely sufficient on their own to achieve systemic changes. It is argued that it is important to create synergies with ongoing policies and public sector reforms (Tsai and Guerzovich, 2015; ePact 2016; Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016; Waddington *et al.* 2019). Some scholarship suggests that the success of accountability mechanisms in the education sector depends a great deal on the local political context into which they are introduced (Gaventa and McGee 2013; Hickey and King, 2016). Several contextual features are argued to come into play in the politics of education. Firstly, the type of political settlement (bargain among elites) and the ideological projects of powerful actors tend to shape what is possible. A good deal of work on elite perceptions and commitment has identified education as being an area that attracts a high level of consensus from ruling elites, as compared with other social policy areas (Hickey *et al.* 2019). Levy and Walton (2013) further show how different types of political settlement interact with and help shape

performance within sectors such as education. Research in the Dominican Republic on anti-corruption further stresses the need for a collective action approach (Kaufmann *et al.* 2015).

One evidence review concluded that three features of the politics of education are particularly relevant in analysing the prospects for reform: (i) strength of teacher unions compared with other education stakeholders; (ii) ‘opacity of the classroom’; and; (iii) slow or lagged nature of the results of quality reforms (Bruns and Schneider, 2016). The strength of teachers’ unions appears to have been an important component of reform within the Dominican Republic’s education sector over the last few decades as well as difficulties in shaping teacher behaviour in the classroom and the materialization of learning gains, despite an increase in budgets and the introduction of various performance metrics.

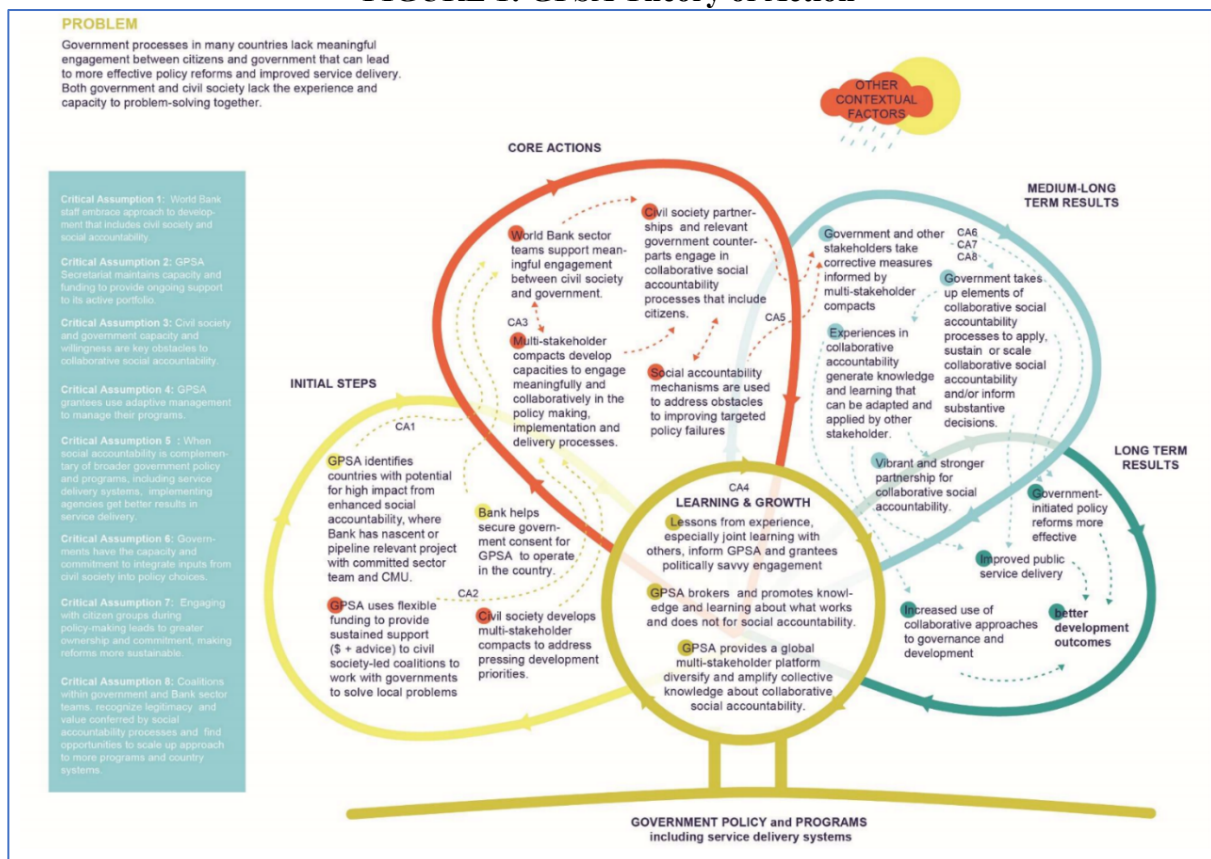
Social accountability efforts also need also to engage with the deeper and wider political economy of service provision (Goetz and Jenkins 2005; Booth, 2012; Joshi and Houtzager, 2012). It remains disputed precisely *how* projects ought to engage within this wider system, with relatively limited evidence of “what works” or under which conditions. However, some scholars have suggested greater concentration on approaches that work in a programmatic or operational space in the middle which aim to get traction locally first and then drive improvements at different levels. This “middle” is composed of ‘the many layers between top levels of policy making and the service provision frontline (Levy and Walton 2013: 8, see also Levy, 2014; Levy *et al.* 2018).’ However, Levy and Walton (2013) advise focusing on the most appropriate layers within a specific sector. Previous learning from the Dominican Republic’s education sector suggest that it is reasonable to consider which and how many layers it is feasible and beneficial to address in different administrative contexts, based on where there is likely leverage or not (Guerzovich and Poli, 2014, see also Fox, 2014, 2016 for a comparison).

3. Methodology

GPSA Theory of Action

On the 12th of June 2012, the World Bank's Board of Directors approved the GPSA. According to GPSA's Theory of Action, the GPSA seeks to contribute to country-level governance reforms and improved service delivery by: (a) generating knowledge, networking, and financing to build civil society's capacity to engage in evidence-based social accountability; (b) supporting Bank teams and government counterparts in embedding social accountability more strategically in their programs; and (c) drawing on the experience, knowledge, and resources of external partners to enable the Bank to scale up its engagement in this area. The Theory of Action is represented in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1: GPSA Theory of Action



Source: Guervovich *et al.* 2019

As of 2019, the GPSA had provided 52 grants ranging in size from \$400-\$900k across 34 countries, supporting over 300 partners to promote collaborative social accountability (GPSA, 2019). Collaborative social accountability processes are intended to build relationships and capacities for meaningful engagement in the policymaking and implementation and service delivery systems, fostering synergies between civil society-led social accountability processes and public sector management and reforms. This general theory of action was translated by the project team into a project-level theory of change.

Community Participation in How is My School Doing Theory of Change

The MPCVME project's design adapted the GPSA's theory of action to the Dominican Republic education context. By engaging multiple stakeholders, including central and subnational governments, to cooperate to better leverage the existing education delivery system, the project aimed to contribute to addressing problems of a lack of collaborative governance and the capacities needed for collective problem solving. The *goal* of the initiative was to support effective community participation and the generation of systematic feedback on the quality of education through a collaborative social accountability mechanism between the school community and the Ministry of Education. The hope was that this would contribute to improved education delivery and learning outcomes. A second key objective was positioning the practice of social accountability with the Ministry of Education in a useful way to prompt some degree of institutionalization.

The most relevant features of the GPSA's theory of action (core actions) are related to multi-stakeholder compacts, social accountability mechanisms, and strategic embedding of social accountability procedures and protocols within the Ministry of Education. Whether corrective measures are informed by multi-stakeholder compacts is also highly relevant to the Dominican Republic context. Both these features can be compared with the four main underlying challenges identified by the project which are considered to constrain the performance of the education system in the country.² Further information on the project's theory of change such as on [key assumptions](#) and [key stakeholders](#) can be found in the Methodology Report and on the [Kumu platform](#),³ however, the main interlocking pathways of change in the theory of change were the following:

- 1) Activating community participation within targeted schools;**
- 2) Replication and institutionalization of collaborative social accountability in school management;**
- 3) Linking school actions to the chain of management at district, regional and national levels;**
- 4) Learning, adaptation, and use of evidence.**

These proposed pathways guided the monitoring and evaluation framework for the project as well as baseline, mid-term, and end-line data collection.

The MPCVME project proposed to introduce social accountability activities by adapting World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) approach in 60 schools in partnership with school

² i) MINERD's capacity to recruit and train teachers according to quality standards; ii) MINERD's capacity to assess student learning, in particular in basic education, and the dissemination and use of that information by different actors in the system (i.e. teacher training institutions, schools, parents) for better decision making and accountability; iii) MINERD's capacity to evaluate and ensure the quality of service provided for initial education that contributes to school readiness of children entering basic education; and iv) MINERD's capacity to decentralize the school management system.

³ The evaluator is aware of the distinction made between theory of action and theory of change explained by Green (2017), however, as both are derived from the same root in program theory, the evaluation does not make this semantic distinction. For the purposes of the GPSA, what is termed a theory of change can be considered a theory of action. See Funnel and Rogers (2011) for further explanation of the origins of program theory.

management committees and the Ministry of Education (MINERD). As will be discussed in greater detail below, the project also intentionally built on MINERD's pilot with the World Bank, *Como Va Mi Escuela* (CVME) (How is my school doing?). The CVA model introduces a mixture of participatory appraisal tools, civic education, community scorecards, and advocacy. At the heart of the model is school interface meetings between students, PTAs (called APMAEs in the Dominican Republic), school management teams, and government technicians (*técnicos*). Agreements between stakeholder groups are turned into action plans with follow-up mechanisms to monitor actions at various management levels, from the schools to the Ministry. In conjunction with MINERD's Management Information System (SIGERD), the project also aimed to ensure that government stakeholders can access and receive reports from the schools through a database.

School staff and government technicians were encouraged to participate in the CVA process. The hope was that the project's social accountability efforts would also strengthen the capabilities of technicians to effectively promote community participation and oversight in school management (parents, students, APMAEs and school's *Junta de Centro* – Centre Committee). This included the development of an operational protocol for monitoring of school improvement plans (action plans) and systemic issues as well as collaboration with the *Iniciativa Dominicana por una Educación de Calidad* – Dominican Initiative for a Quality Education (IDEC) to establish links between project activities and national-level strategic planning.

The MPCVME project worked in collaboration with MINERD's Departments of Community Participation and the Decentralization, as well as the *Oficina de Cooperación Internacional* (OCI) – Office for International Cooperation within the Ministry of Education to establish oversight and monitoring mechanisms at school, district, and national level. At national level, the project aimed to generate easy and timely information that supports the resolution of specific problems identified. Since this is a project that involves the educational sector, stakeholders also included local councils, the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEPyD), civil society organizations and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) that support the education sector at national and local levels.

The evaluation will now outline the key evaluation questions that the final evaluation seeks to address.

Key Evaluation Questions

The key evaluation questions for this evaluation agreed by the GPSA were the following:

1. Did the project's strategy contribute to the intended outcomes and impacts? If so, for whom, to what extent, and in what circumstances?
2. What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) were produced, including spill-over effects?

3. To what extent do the results validate the GPSA’s theory of action and its adaptation to the Dominican Republic education, and governance contexts through the project?
4. Under what conditions will the results be sustainable? What is the risk that the outcomes achieved will not be sustainable?

The evaluation has been designed in line with GPSA guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning for GPSA Grant Partners and Consultants and from the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group (Vaessen *et al.* 2020; GPSA, 2022). The evaluation is also informed by the strength of evidence guidance outlined by the GPSA, as developed by the evaluator (Aston, 2020; GPSA, 2022).

Building on learning from World Vision’s GSPA evaluation in Indonesia (Ball and Westhorp, 2018), the evaluation is “realist-informed (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997).” The evaluation is therefore a theory-based evaluation and focuses on the connections between context, mechanisms, and outcomes. In realist evaluation, a “mechanism” refers to the underlying processes that cause an outcome. Program mechanisms involve an interaction between the resources and opportunities that programs provide and the “reasoning” of participants and stakeholders in response to those resources (Ball and Westhorp, 2018). In realist evaluation, mechanisms are afforded by contextual features – that is, these features enable stakeholders to make use of resources and opportunities. The evaluation did not develop explicit Context Mechanism, Outcome (CMO) configurations. However, likely contextual features and potential mechanisms from previous studies informed the project’s theory of change and sampling strategy to select schools at baseline, mid-term, and endline. To supplement primary data, from the mid-term onward, the project team also conducted Outcome Harvesting of both positive and negative outcomes.

In their realist review of education sector accountability, Westhorp *et al.* (2014) identified 11 mechanisms of change. To these, the evaluation added the 8 mechanisms identified by World Vision Indonesia’s evaluation (Ball and Westhorp, 2018). At project baseline, 6 of these mechanisms appeared to be most relevant, according to the theory of change. These were:

FIGURE 2: Comparing Theory of Change and Potential Mechanisms

MECHANISM	THEORY OF CHANGE COMPONENT
1) Increasing community capacity: Provision of training and “learning by doing” support communities to develop knowledge, skills, and self and collective efficacy.	Pathway 1: Capacity-building on CVA enables parent-teacher associations (APMAEs), school management committees (<i>Junta de Centro</i>) and education networks to increase their capacity to lead social accountability efforts with an increased sense of collective efficacy.
2) Increasing citizen engagement in monitoring and advocacy for education services, which both increases government awareness of service delivery issues and community concerns in relation to services and increases pressure for accountability by service providers and governments.	Pathway 1: Community participation in school management through CVA increases government awareness of service delivery issues and community concerns in relation to services and increases pressure for accountability by service providers and governments.

3) Mind the gap: Discrepancies between rights (or entitlements) and actual provision of surprise or concern to local citizens, who demand change in response.	Pathway 1: Capacity-building on CVA increases parents' awareness of their children's entitlements and discrepancies with actual provision prompts parents to demand change in response.
4) Eyes and ears: Community members act as local-data collectors for monitoring purposes, forwarding information to another party, which has the authority to act. The outcome of this mechanism is the action taken by the party that receives the information.	Pathway 2: Establishing oversight mechanisms at school level to monitor responses from government actors in CVA dialogues. Sharing information generated at school level with district and provincial level groups also allows them to act on issues which schools are unable to resolve themselves.
5) Mutual accountability: All parties agree to an action plan and monitor the performance of all others, building mutual accountability.	Pathways 2 & 3: CVA processes generate action plans with commitments from all parties and each stakeholder group monitor the performance of all others, building mutual accountability.
6) Aligning levels of the system so that local, sub-district and district education services are working towards common goals for education.	Pathways 2 & 3: Establishing oversight mechanisms at school level and networks at district and provincial level allows community members to monitor proposed responses from government actors in CVA dialogues. Sharing information generated at school level with sub-national and national level groups allows them to act on issues which schools are unable to resolve themselves.

Source: Own construction based on Westhorp *et al.* (2014) and Ball and Westhorp, 2018

The evaluation was guided by these *likely* mechanisms, as they fit with core elements of the project's initial theory of change but was not limited to these, allowing for potential emergence. It sought to refine these mechanisms and adapt them to local conditions, and search for other plausible mechanisms in line with the evidence that was uncovered during mid-term and endline data collection.

Westhorp *et al.* (2014) also identified 32 contextual features which were seen to contribute to education outcomes in accountability programming. The most relevant of these identified at project baseline adapted to local specifications were:

- (1) **Supportive political context:** This is understood as commitment from policymakers in the Ministry of Education and political leadership's sustained commitment to education nationally, but also in the case of the Dominican Republic, this would include provincial and district levels;
- (2) **Significant investment in mobilising local communities:** In the Dominican Republic, this could be investment in education from other government or civil society organizations in targeted provinces, districts, and neighbourhoods;
- (3) **Powers and responsibilities are clearly allocated to different levels of government and to all relevant stakeholders:** This would consist of the mandates of district and regional community participation and decentralization technicians and directors;

- (4) **School management committee role is clear, have formal authority and adequately resourced:** This would include whether schools receive budgets in full and in a timely manner, and how well APMAEs understand Ordinance 09-2000;
- (5) **School leaders actively support, promote and resource participation:** This would refer to supportive headteachers and school management teams and committees (i.e., *Junta de Centro*);
- (6) **Parents openly elect their representatives on school committees:** In the project, this refers to the parent-teacher associations (APMAEs) and school management team having a clear and transparent process established.

Westthorp *et al.* (2014) also referred to the following salient contextual features which bear some resemblance to the project's approach to citizen engagement through an adapted CVA model: (1) build constructive partnerships with shared goals; (2) local communities are actively engaged in defining what matters to them; (3) develop the capacity and confidence of community members; (4) community members are actively supported to develop agreed positions before they are required to negotiate with decision-makers; (5) actively facilitated by external organizations and communities present their views in constructive ways; (6) information provided is tailored to the particular change processes and effective systems for collecting and distributing accurate information incorporate specific strategies to engage communities and develop voice; (7) engage local leadership and leverage social capital and develop both bridging and bonding capital in communities, and; (8) take into account social norms, parent resources and parents' intrinsic motivations.

Stratified Purposive Sampling

Rather than a random sample searching for regularities and averages, realist evaluation's approach to sampling is purposeful. Sampling is driven by the evaluation questions and the ideas (or theories) about the social world the evaluation seeks to investigate, anchored to a particular context (Emmel, 2013). As such, selecting participants, activities, and events is done based on their relevance to the theories being developed, refined, or tested (Maxwell, 2012). So, cases, and units of analysis, are included *because* they display certain features, not despite those features, as their inclusion is intended to help provide explanations rather than because of what they are presumed to represent quantitatively. World Vision's GPSA evaluation in Indonesia sampled 24 villages for its qualitative data (Ball and Westthorp, 2018). With a significantly smaller budget, this evaluation selected a sample of 9 of the 60 project schools.

While there have been recent objections to sampling based on saturation point – information redundancy – i.e., how many interviews or focus groups will suffice because no additional data is found (Braun and Clarke, 2019), it is commonly viewed as the best way to estimate sample sizes in qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). The evaluation acknowledges that semantics, levels of abstraction, and even limited refinement of thematic or theoretical codes may play a role in reaching saturation point, and this may limit the representativeness of findings (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Nonetheless, numerous studies show that most new information is found in the first few interviews or focus groups, with

significant drop off in finding new information afterwards. It is commonly estimated that this theoretical saturation point of around 90% is found somewhere between 6 and 16 interviews for each stakeholder group (Guest *et al.* 2006; Hagaman and Wutich, 2017; Guest *et al.* 2020) and around 6 focus group discussions (Guest *et al.* 2017; Hennink and Kaiser, 2022, see also Cyr, 2019).

The supportive conditions outlined by Westhorp *et al.* (2014) guided the choice of criteria for selecting schools in a stratified purposive sample. These were: (i) supportive political context; (ii) significant investment in mobilising communities; (iii) powers and responsibilities clearly allocated; (iv) school management committees elect representatives; (v) school leaders actively support, promote and resource participation, and; (vi) parents elect committee representatives.

Based on available data from the World Bank's baseline survey for the CVME project, the criteria for selecting schools for the stratified purposive sample were the following:

1. **School performance:** Student level of retention, completion, and performance in standardized tests;
2. **School governance:** Level of budget execution and participatory involvement in creating the annual operating plan;
3. **Participation in governance:** Level of parental engagement in APMAE meetings and parent meetings.

Schools were divided into three strata (highest performing third, middle third, and lowest third), based on these indicators from CVME's baseline data, yet with the understanding that the precise measures in the baseline survey may be potentially misleading and may have changed by the start of the MPCVME project. The aim at baseline, mid-term, and endline was to include a mixture of these three strata to explore context and mechanisms that may have influenced outcomes.

At baseline, one school was selected from the top third of schools, two schools were selected from the middle stratum and one school was selected from the bottom stratum. At mid-term, there were two schools from the top stratum, and two schools from the middle stratum. At endline, there were three schools from the top stratum, and three schools from the middle stratum. To the extent possible, the aim was also to have a geographic distribution across provinces within the project.⁴ Figure 3 shows the schools that were included in baseline, mid-term, and endline evaluation phases.

⁴ At mid-term, we were able to select two of the schools from the baseline (Danilo Ginebra and Mauricio Baez) and as El Quemado and Emma Balaguer had only reached the first phase of the CVA model, these schools were substituted for two others (Liceo Los Jardines and San Ignacio, La Llanada). The evaluation did not, however, sample schools in the Monseñor Nouel, and San Pedro Nolasco provinces.

FIGURE 3: Schools Sampled in Evaluation Phases

SCHOOL	PROVINCE	ASSESSMENT	LEVEL
Danilo Ginebra	Villa Altagracia, San Cristóbal	Baseline, Mid-term, Endline	High
Los Jardines del Norte	Santo Domingo	Mid-term, Endline	High
Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León	Santiago	Endline	High
Mauricio Baez	Distrito Nacional	Baseline, Mid-term, Endline	Medium
El Quemado	La Vega	Baseline	Medium
San Ignacio, La Llanada	La Vega	Mid-term	Medium
Los Mameyes	Santo Domingo	Endline	Medium
Emma Balaguer	Santo Domingo	Baseline	Low
Ericilia Pepin	Santo Domingo	Endline	Low

Source: Own construction

As the figure above shows, data from these schools was collected at baseline, mid-term, and endline. The inconsistencies in which schools were selected for each assessment point can be explained chiefly due to the request from the evaluator at mid-term, given delays due to the pandemic, to visit schools which had undertaken more phases of World Vision's social accountability process as this would allow a more complete assessment. Further schools were added at the endline based on Outcome Harvesting from the project team which was designed increase the sample size and spotlight different experiences. Logistical problems impeded the evaluation from including a school from the bottom stratum (Emma Balaguer) at endline, but the evaluation was able to consult another school in this lower stratum (Ericilia Pepin), according to CVME data.⁵

In addition to the baseline survey conducted for the CVME endline evaluation, the main data collection tools used were key informant interviews, focus group, and small group discussions. These will be discussed below.

Data collection tools

According to Pawson and Tilly (1997), interview sampling should be based on context, mechanism, and outcome (CMO) investigation potential. Ana Manzano (2016) further recommends three phases for realist interviews. First, interview practitioners who know the program well (for theory gleaning). In essence, this was achieved in the design of the theory of change by the World Vision team, and interviews with government officials at baseline. The next step in the process which Manzano advises is to interview frontline practitioners for theory refinement. This took place at baseline and mid-term with sampled schools, district technicians, and national-level officials. Then, initial theories were refined at endline.

As the evaluation is concerned with school management, participation, and representation in the CVA process, at school level, school principals, APMAE presidents, student council

⁵ A visit was planned, but this was cancelled by the school the day before the visit.

presidents (or other student representatives – e.g., grade council), teachers, parents, students, and CSOs (depending on what issue is being addressed in CVA action plans) were interviewed.

Given that the project was also vertically integrated and requires the collaboration of district, province, and national level government officials, these stakeholders were also interviewed to understand how higher levels of administration could contribute to resolving problems which could not be solved at local level and required collective action at either sub-national or national levels.

The final evaluation conducted interviews or small group discussions (SGDs) with a total of 45 people. A total of 10 Ministry of Education representatives were interviewed. This included 2 representatives in the Vice-Ministry for Decentralization and Participation, 2 representatives from the Office for International Cooperation (OCI), 3 members from the unit for Orientation and Psychology in the Ministry of Education, and 1 other Ministry of Education technician who was World Vision’s previous head of education. At sub-national level, the evaluation interviewed 2 provincial or district technicians, and 1 other official. At school level, the final evaluation interviewed or held small group discussions with a total of 35 people. This is shown in figure 4 below.⁶

FIGURE 4: Interview and Small Group Discussion Sample

SCHOOLS	APMAE S	TEACHER S	MANAGEMENT TEAM	STUDENT S	OTHER S	TOTAL
JARDINES DEL NORTE	1	1	1	1	0	4
MAURICIO BAEZ	1	1	1	1	0	4
DANILO GINEBRA	4	2	2	1	1	10
EL QUEMADO	1	1	1	1	1	5
POLITÉCNICO O MERCEDES ALTAGRCIA CABRAL DE LEÓN	2	1	1	2	1	7
CENTRO EDUCTIVO LOS MAMAYES	1	1	1	1	0	4
ERICILIA PEPIN ESTRELLA	0	0	1	0	0	1

⁶ At baseline, the evaluation conducted 19 interviews with headteachers, APMAE representatives, student council representatives, CSOs, district technicians, and ministerial representatives, and 4 focus group discussions with 23 representatives from AMPAEs. At mid-term, the evaluation conducted 18 interviews with headteachers, APAME representatives, and parents, and district technicians, and 4 focus group discussions with 24 representatives from AMPAEs. This evidence was incorporated into the final evaluation.

TOTAL	10	7	8	7	3	35
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Source: Own construction

During the baseline and mid-term, focus group discussions were used. The aim of focus groups was to understand the dynamics of school management between parents and teachers. The evaluation conducted four focus groups with APMAEs at baseline and four focus groups with APMAEs at mid-term. However, in the final evaluation, it was considered more efficient to employ small group discussions with AMPAEs or individual interviews rather than focus groups.

Interview, focus groups, and small group discussions at baseline, mid-term, and endline centered attention on three key themes: (1) the external context and enabling environment for schools; (2) school management, and; (3) community participation in relation to school management.

Survey data was collected by the World Bank at baseline but given resource constraints of both the World Vision team and evaluation team it was not feasible nor desirable to collect this data at endline. Doing so would have impeded the project team from completing the CVA process in more project schools and would have added an additional burden on school stakeholders in a busy period towards the end of the school year. So, the value added of this data was not sufficiently important given the tradeoff of potentially jeopardizing other project efforts. However, interview and focus group data at mid-term and endline took account of many of the most relevant survey questions, and the project team did conduct a mini survey during a national congress, but the response rate overall was low.

Outcome and impact-level analysis

Data analysis took place in three main ways. Firstly, the evaluation reviewed outcomes against the project's theory of change and analyzed the validity of assumptions in the theory of change. This assessment went beyond log frame targets, as these were mostly at output level. Assessing assumptions comprised a traffic light system of red, amber, and green for invalid, partially valid, and valid. Justifications for this rating can be found in Figure 18, but no unified description was provided for each rating level. Secondly, the evaluation assessed contribution in terms of the level (or degree) of plausibility of the contribution of the project to the outcome through a four-point rubric, presented in Figure 5 below:

FIGURE 5: Contribution Rubric

Level	Description
No contribution	The outcome would have happened without the project's efforts. There was no clear role.
Small contribution	The outcome would likely have happened anyway, but the project made a small contribution to some aspects of the quantity or quality of the outcome.
Medium contribution	The outcome may have happened in some form, but it was significantly improved by the contributions of the project.
High contribution	The outcome would not have happened without the project's efforts.

Source: Own construction

In terms of assessing the quality of evidence, the evaluation also employed an evidence rubric which focuses chiefly on credibility and the quality of triangulation of evidence of high probative (i.e., proof) value. This is presented as three levels of evidence in Figure 6 below:

FIGURE 6: Evidence Rubric

Level	Description
1	A single line of evidence or weak evidence connecting project contributions and the outcome of interest (i.e., the evidence has limited bearing on the project-outcome connection).
2	Few lines of moderate quality evidence connecting project contributions and the outcome of interest (i.e., the evidence has some bearing on the project-outcome connection).
3	Multiple lines of high-quality evidence connecting project contributions and the outcome of interest (i.e., the evidence has a decisive on the project-outcome connection).

Source: Own construction

The evaluation also analyzed the evidence at outcome and impact level against the 6 potential realist mechanisms identified above, among others which emerged throughout the evaluation process. This enabled the evaluation to consider potential evidence of the reasoning of stakeholders for taking particular actions.

Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in line with United Nations Evaluation Group guidelines (UNEG, 2020). This included efforts to reduce any potential conflicts of interest for the evaluators such as any connections to the project or other related programming in-country. Formal ethical approval from a third party was not deemed necessary for the evaluation. Instead, the evaluator sought approval from World Vision staff to talk to different stakeholders in the baseline, mid-term, and endline evaluation phases. The evaluator shared their proposed sampling methodology and case study format with the World Vision team before data collection and kept team members informed regarding what information was being asked from schools and other public officials in case there were any potential sensitivities that needed to be addressed. The evaluator informed key informants regarding the purpose of the evaluation, that their participation was voluntary, explained how their data would be used, and asked for their verbal consent directly. The evaluation also explained issues of confidentiality and, where appropriate, identifiability issues, and it also considered any potential benefits and harms of information that will be shared publicly as part of the evaluation.

Limitations

Evidently, there was significant disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This not only affected the direct implementation of the project, including the number of phases of CVA that were possible to implement and the number of action plans and action points that were

delivered, it also affected the volume of data collected and the frequency of data collection, and thus the quantitative data available at the time of the final evaluation.

There were also limits to comparisons that could be made between the baseline and endline. In the baseline, with additional financial resources and staff earmarked for the purpose, the World Bank was able to collect survey data in all 60 schools as part of their endline evaluation of the CVME project. However, resource constraints and concerns regarding over-burdening the schools at the end of the school year meant that it was not possible to collect endline survey data in all 60 schools.

Having accompanied the project team for three years and playing a role in providing monitoring and evaluation advice to the team, this accompaniment has increased the evaluator's understanding of and arguably increased sympathies with the project team. This accompaniment was stipulated in the evaluation terms of reference, and recommended in the GPSA MEL guidance, but these sympathies raise the degree of potential positive bias to some degree. Similarly, the logistical issues mentioned above related to school access at endline and the generally positive orientation of Outcome Harvesting cases meant that there was some degree of accidental sampling bias towards better performing schools. Yet, significant efforts were made to discuss internal project issues and the challenges of poor performing schools to counteract such potential biases.

The availability and quality of monitoring data has also been a challenge for the evaluation. World Vision and the World Bank agreed and monitored slightly different indicators than those agreed with the evaluator at baseline and assessed at mid-term. It is unclear why this was the case. In several cases, the units of analysis were different from those being tracked by the project team. Moreover, the World Vision team reported on different indicators to the GPSA in their Annual Technical Report to those reported to the World Bank in Implementation Status and Results Report. Therefore, the evaluation sought to reconcile these differences, where possible, and to change units of analysis when necessary. Moreover, as the project did not create a unique beneficiary register, the evaluation has not been able to present a final cumulative number of participants and beneficiaries.

The availability and quality of monitoring data also has implications in the capacity for the evaluation to be realist-informed, given that realist analysis is applied to materialized outcomes, and not all schools had monitored action points in CVA action plans (a key source of outcomes) at the time of the evaluation. Limiting the quantity of outcome data therefore reduced the capacity of the evaluation to develop convincing context-mechanism-outcome explanations in some cases.

4. Evaluation Findings

The evaluation will first outline the most significant **macro-level contextual features** that shaped what the project was able to achieve between 2020 and 2023.

Politics in Transition (2020 – 2022)

General elections were held in the Dominican Republic on 5th of July 2020 to elect a president, vice-president, 32 senators and 190 deputies. The incumbent President Danilo Medina was ineligible to stand for re-election, having served two consecutive terms since 2012. The social democratic *Partido de Liberación Dominicana* – Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) has been a major player in the Dominican political landscape for many years. Since its founding in 1973, it won 5 of the last 7 presidential elections.

The opposition candidate of the social democratic *Partido Revolucionario Moderno* – Revolutionary Modern Party (PRM), Luis Abinader, won the presidential election in the first round, with 52.5% of the vote.

By 2021 all of PLD senators in the Duarte Corridor that had been in place since 2016 were deposed by opposition parties, with the PRM taking the Distrito Nacional, Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, Monseñor Nouel, and San Cristóbal was taken by *Fuerza del Pueblo* (FP) and Santiago was taken by the *Partido Dominicanos por el Cambio* (DXC). This fundamental shift in the political landscape therefore meant that there was a change of the guard in various important positions within the state at both national and local level during the project.

The new government's plan put citizen participation, transparency, and accountability as crosscutting themes in their government vision (2015 – 2020). This was reflected in the Government Program (2020 – 2024) (*Partido Revolucionario Moderno*, 2020).

The Vice-Minister for Decentralization and Participation at the start of the project, Julio Cesar de los Santos, had good connections with Mery de Valerio who designed the World Bank-supported How is My School Doing (CVME) project. This therefore established some degree of receptiveness for the new World Vision project with a similar project name. Despite this, by the mid-term, the World Vision team argued that there was a slightly less supportive political context than at the start of the project. In general, the Vice-Minister for Decentralization and Participation in place at mid-term was not considered to be especially supportive as they were not in place for long, but the new Vice-Minister, Ligia Pérez, who took over in September 2022 was widely argued to have been more supportive (Interview National Technician, Santo Domingo; Interview Ex-World Vision Manager, Santo Domingo). She had prior experience with World Vision in her previous vice-ministerial post. The new Director for Community Participation, Miguel Ramirez, was also considered to be especially supportive. Both clearly saw value in the project and can be considered enablers. Both met with World Vision almost immediately after they assumed their positions and co-organized events with the project,

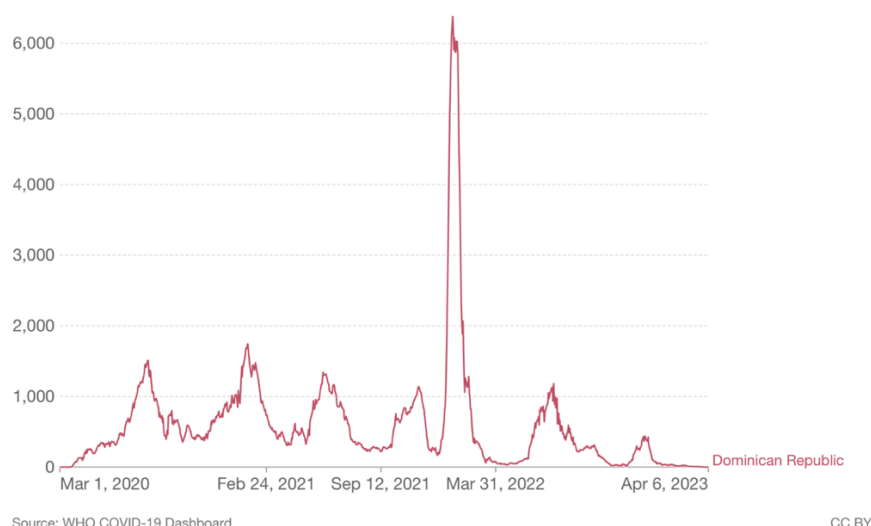
something that the ministry had not done previously. Some stakeholders interviewed suggested that there was a newfound ownership, and this seems to be credible. For example, the Director had a well-thumbed copy of the CVA guide on their desk, there was a project poster just outside the office of the Vice-Minister and the Vice-Ministry asked to send out the invitations to workshop participants together, rather than being initiated by World Vision. Several Ministerial officials interviewed also recognised the importance of World Vision’s support in forging the link between school-family-community, something which not all projects were focused on in their view (Interview National Technician, Santo Domingo; Interview Vice-Minister, Santo Domingo).

Environmental and Health Factors in the Dominican Republic (2020 – 2023)

School closures due to COVID-19 meant that project activities were significantly delayed, and social distancing measures meant that in-person meetings were a challenge for many schools in the country more generally. UNICEF Dominican Republic, for example, estimated that 3 out of 5 children in the world lost a year of schooling. The Dominican Republic’s experience broadly fits within this context (UNICEF, 2021).

By the time of the presidential elections, the Dominican Republic was one of the worst-affected countries by the pandemic in the Caribbean. In the baseline report, it was noted that the country reached a peak of 1,740 cases on the 21st of January 2021. The cumulative number of confirmed cases reached 254,603. Cumulative, cases confirmed by the 16th of May 2022 were more than 580,000. Indeed, there were at least five waves of the pandemic, with the zenith at the beginning of 2022 (14th of January 2022), as can be seen in Figure 7 below.

FIGRUE 7. Daily New Confirmed COVID-19 Cases



Source: Our World in Data, 2023

By the 16th of May 2022, the total number of confirmed deaths was 4,376. Over 141 vaccination doses were administered per 100 people, and 2/3 of the population had received more than one

dose (mostly between the summer and autumn of 2021). The case fatality rate was quite low. The cumulative number of deaths reached 3,355 by the 6th of April 2021 (one of the lowest death rates in the region).

The Dominican Republic's Congress declared a state of emergency across the country for 25 days on multiple occasions, on the 19th of March 2020 (Decree No. 134-20), on the 14th of April 2020 for 17 days (Decree No. 148-20), on the 1st of May 2020 for 17 days (Decree No. 153-20), from the 20th of July for 45 days (Decree No. 265-20). Schools were closed on the 17th of March 2020 and did not reopen for the rest of the school year (UNICEF, 2021). The Ministry of Education passed a resolution (No. 08-2020) to establish the end of the 2019/2020 school year and guidance for the 2020/21 school year. This included establishing the start of the school year on the 18th of September 2020, training teachers on how to use technology to impart distance learning.

In practice, the 2020/21 school year started on the 2nd of November 2020. Schooling began online for the country's 2.8 million students. From the 6th of April 2021, the Ministry of Education approved the partial opening of schools in 48 of the country's 158 municipalities. On the 20th of September 2021, more than 2 million students returned to class in person (Observatorio Regional de SICA-COVID-19, 2022). Most schools reopened on the 11th of January 2022 for the second quarter of the 2021-2022 school year, just three days before the peak of COVID-19 cases in the country. The Ministry of Education stressed that all schools had biosecurity materials for COVID-19 to guarantee health protocols established by the Joint Working Group for the Health Cabinet and the Ministry of Education (MINERD, 2022).

The most fundamental infrastructural issue noted by schools at baseline was in relation to internet networks and issues of connectivity. For instance, the headteacher of El Quemado school noted that the school itself did not have internet access. They had to pay for internet separately. There are likely to be some repercussions in learning gaps in areas which had connectivity issues in the 2020/21 school year, and some children may have fallen behind their fellow students. Internet connection was a particular problem in rural areas such as in the Danilo Ginebra school, for example.

In each of the sampled schools at baseline it was argued that most children were able to access virtual learning. However, not all children had equal access to online platforms, given that not all students had access to the internet or even televisions. As a result, some had to access virtual schooling at the houses of other students in their schools. In such cases, many children had to rely on textbooks. Furthermore, given that not all areas had energy 24 hours per day, some afternoon schools lacked connection, especially in the north of the country. The previous administration also made commitments to purchase students' laptops or tablets. However, not all students received these under the new government by baseline (Interview Civil Society Organization Representative, Santiago). While COVID-19 created many impediments, several of those interviewed in schools suggested that the pandemic also helped to get parents more involved in schooling (Interview Teacher, Los Mameyes; Interview Teacher, El Quemado; SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra).

The government took the decision to vaccinate all teachers across the country's 48 regions to ensure an effective progressive opening of schools on the 6th of April 2021. This decision was, in part, argued to have been prompted by calls from civil society to open schools, with a working group having been established within the Ministry to take this forward. Students themselves were not vaccinated at the same time, and this has prompted fears from some parents to send their children back to school and concomitant concerns about the readiness of schools to re-open, and whether the physical infrastructure was adequately adapted for this during a pandemic where the virus was airborne (Interview Civil Society Organization Representative, Santiago; FGD APMAE, Mauricio Baez; FGD APMAE President, Danilo Ginebra). For instance, due to the level of COVID-19 in La Vega, the in-person school year did not start on time.

Environmental factors also affected progress at certain moments of the project. World Vision's emergency team sent out an alert in the news which came from the Dominican Republic's Centre for Emergency Operations (COE) related to the cyclone in the Dominican Republic and Central America in cyclone season between the 1st of June and the 30th of November 2022. This led to project delays in the northern zone of the country. MINERD also stipulated no usage of vehicles in schools due to the tragic death of three students in a road accident on the 30th of May 2023.

Accountability in the Dominican Republic's Education Sector (1997 – 2023)

The Dominican Republic government established several key reforms to address weaknesses in the education sector. The 1997 *Ley General de Educación* (General Education Act) included the stipulation that 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had to be allocated to pre-university education, but the law was not implemented as intended (Dotel, Lafontaine, and Melgen, 2015). In 2008, the teachers' union, *Asociación Dominicana de Profesores* (ADP), tried to raise awareness about the budgetary constraints in the sector but was unable to mobilize other stakeholders (Dotel *et al.* 2015). Since 2013, the main reform in the education sector included the doubling of the education budget to 4% of GDP and the establishment of the National Education Pact, aligned with the National Development Strategy 2010-2030 and the 10-Year Education Plan (World Bank, 2015a).

Government strategy in the education sector in the last decade has been wide ranging, covering improvements to teacher salaries, training and standards, new evaluation processes, infrastructure improvements to more than 28,000 schools and decentralization of funding, including 2.5% of overall education budget to school management committees to increase local level oversight and accountability. In 2015, the World Bank Board of Directors approved US\$50 million to support the Government's efforts to improve the quality of pre-university education through a National Pact for Education and in 2018 additional financing of US\$100 million was also approved (World Bank, 2015b; World Bank, 2018b).

Education reforms were partly implemented in partnership with civil society and the private sector under the Dominican Initiative for Quality Education (*Iniciativa Dominicana por una Educación de Calidad*, IDEC). While the World Vision project aimed to collaborate closely with IDEC and to establish links between project activities and national-level strategic planning, the institutional foundations were weaker than anticipated at project inception. Staff noted that IDEC’s Oversight Committee was effectively disbanded in 2019 and was inactive for most of the project. Though it did still produce reports in 2021 and 2022. IDEC presented its 2022 report on the 4th of July 2023. This highlighted the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic which triggered a fall in student attendance which have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. It thus advocated policies to accelerate the return of students to prior levels as well as focusing actions to develop the capacity of schools and delegation of certain functions to regions, districts, and schools. Social accountability may perhaps play a role in this process, especially noting IDEC’s emphasis on transparency, accountability, and social participation to improve the quality of education (IDEC, 2023).

The new government was keen to stamp its own mark on the education sector, and this delayed certain activities at national level. For example, at the time of the mid-term evaluation, the Ministry was unavailable, it was noted by the project team, because they were conducting a wider consultation process linked to global priorities from the United Nations. The new government proposed a new Strategic Plan for Education (2021-2024) and a new Vice-Ministry for Decentralization and Participation was created in late 2021 (Senado República Dominicana, 2020; MINERD, 2021). Over the long-run, this may be positive, but in the short-run it entailed a discontinuity of actions in the Ministry and a period where power and responsibilities were somewhat unclear. A common assumption expressed in project theories of change is that there will *not* be staff rotation. However, it is almost always the case that there *is* staff rotation. This project is no exception. The project saw various important changes of personnel in the Ministry of Education since the start, from top to bottom.

Notwithstanding, the Ministry has been keen to conduct oversight of the Formation of Course Committees and APMAEs. Figure 8 below illustrates the total number of schools (centres) and within these the number and proportion of course committees and APMAEs that were formed as a proportion of the total number of schools.

FIGURE 8: Formation of Course Committees in Public Schools

TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
CENTERS	6,715	
COURSE COMMITTEES FORMED	59,844	94.39
COMMITTEES VALIDATED	58,736	98.14
APMAES FORMED	5,837	86.9
AMPAES VALIDATED	5,807	99.4

Source: MINERD, 2023

During the course of the project, despite these positive efforts connecting the Ministry with schools, the ADP conducted several strikes which disrupted activities in many project schools. It was estimated that the strikes cost \$13,686,131 in 2023 (Diario Libre, 2023). They were

somewhat more disruptive in some regions than other, most notably in the north of the country. Relatedly, in line with the Labor Management Procedures (01/01/2023), to ensure the security of the team during May 2023 on three occasions school operations were delayed.

Civil society groups and other stakeholders formed the *Coalición Educación Digna* (CED, Coalition for Education with Dignity) in 2010. The goal was to achieve compliance with the 1997 Education Law's requirement that 4% GDP be allocated for the sector (Dotel *et al.* 2015). The CED quickly grew to include more than 200 CSOs and turned into a form of social movement called “the 4% Campaign.” The movement also had the backing of unions, professional associations, businesses, community-based groups, youth, religious, and Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups, a portion of the press, and national celebrities. The movement was considered to be successful in that period because of the following factors:

- **To mobilize the citizenry and elites, the CED tapped into a range of contextual opportunities.** For example, it used the law and built a sound legal basis for the claim. Underlying these choices was a new understanding by civil society groups that their claims had to also strengthen institutions and the rule of law — another legacy of the earlier phases of governance work. The CED also took advantage of windows of opportunity opened by the presidential elections campaign.
- **The CED built on the know-how brought to the table by different types of stakeholders.** Some members were skilled in strategic litigation. Other members had negotiating skills and experience working with political party campaign committees. Others were savvy in communications. The campaign was coproduced by these stakeholders, and it was argued that it benefited from dynamics that are common to collaborative social accountability processes (Guerzovich and Schommer, 2016).
- **The CED targeted the MINERD and the executive at the national level** – where financial resources, information, decisions around budget allocation is rooted. Many schools established direct informal communications with the ministry — bypassing district- and regional-level offices (Hobbs *et al.* 2010). Hence, a national-level, multi-stakeholder effort paid off more than subnational efforts.

This groundwork led to the funding of several programs funded by the World Bank to promote social accountability in the education sector. Some of the most relevant are summarized below.

Community Reports in Progresando con Solidaridad (2010 – 2015)

The World Bank's experience in developing “*Reportes Comunitarios*” (Community Reports) in the government's *Progresando con Solidaridad* program is highly relevant to World Vision's CVA adaptation (Aston and Cavatore, 2015). Community Reports were an adaptation of community scorecards, which are a key component of World Vision's CVA model. They also included focus group discussions, action plans, and multi-level problem resolution structures. So, the model was similar to the social accountability model reviewed in this evaluation. However, it was designed for a cash transfer program which included the

inclusion of a social accountability model in education, health, and subsidies (through *colmados* – community stores).

Community Reports were first piloted in 2010 in Cibao and later expanded to several other regions.⁷ Lessons from various program reviews suggest that community reports were successful in detecting the problems of users and providers, they increased participants' knowledge, increased the transparency and efficiency of the *Progresando con Solidaridad* program. The development of action plans also contributed to the resolution of those problems identified. A review by Aston and Cavatore (2015) of the education sector component of the Community Reports initiative in 2014 identified 1,208 problems. The most common problems included issues with infrastructure (e.g., inadequate classrooms, poor condition of bathrooms), school materials (e.g., books) student security, among others. At the time of the review, 237 of these had been resolved, 681 were in process and 290 were not resolved (i.e., ~ 20% of problems were resolved). The Community Reports were able to resolve issues with books, hygiene, the low parental participation, poor quality of school food, among others.

Vigilantes (Good Governance Practices in the Dominican Republic – 2013 - 2017)

The Good Governance Practices in the Dominican Republic, or *Vigilantes* (Watchers), project was funded by the GPSA and implemented Oxfam between 2013 and 2017. It aimed to encourage civil society participation in ensuring transparency of the national budget and public expenditure through a series of interventions, including building CSO capacity to interact with the state and creating an education observatory. Yet, *Vigilantes* faced several key challenges. The project relied on the CED and wider social movement around the 4% Campaign, but this demobilized as diverse actors had increasingly contradictory goals. It was difficult to align World Bank expectations with civil society partners who were not used to a collaborative approach to social accountability. Despite contributing to improving the organization and transparency of the budget, *Vigilantes* struggled to integrate civil society in education policy-making processes (Guerzovich, 2015).

***Vigilantes* pivoted the focus of the project following a midterm evaluation.** This included a focus on improving civil society coordination, the relationship with *Foro Socioeducativo* (Socio-educational Forum), adopting a more constructive engagement approach and a new focus on subnational action and specific sectoral problems. In 2016, *Vigilantes* prioritized a partnership with an existing program of the Physical Accessibility Unit of the National Council for Disabilities (CONADIS) to integrate the needs of disabled students in schools. *Vigilantes* focused on collecting data about accessibility in 51 schools across 6 provinces and disseminated it widely in the national press. Two years later, citizens reported improvements in the enforcement of accessibility rules in schools (Blomeyer and Sanz, 2017). Oxfam and its partners also developed a national budget observatory and an education observatory to facilitate the dialogue among relevant government and nongovernment actors on national budget

⁷ Distrito Nacional, Santo Domingo, Este, Cibao Central, Cibao Norcentral, Noroeste, Nordeste, Valdesia, El Valle, and Enriquillo

decisions and evidence-based policy making. They also organized workshops between government service providers and citizens to facilitate discussions on budget proposals and recommendations for the education sector. These workshops resulted in sector action plans (World Bank, 2016).⁸

Yet, there was little trace of Oxfam’s programming by 2020. The evaluation found no memory of Oxfam and their past efforts from any person consulted in the baseline, mid-term, or endline evaluations. While we might not expect Oxfam’s efforts to be mentioned by schools themselves, as the World Vision project staff confirmed, it was more of a surprise not to hear any mention of past efforts at either district or national level, given that Oxfam claims its efforts benefited close to 20% of the population in the Dominican Republic (Oxfam Intermón, n.d.).

Como Va Mi Escuela (How Is My School Doing – 2018 – 2020)

One key part of World Bank support came through the Ministry of Education’s How Is My School Doing” (CVME) project.⁹ CVME took place between 2018 and 2020 and focused on improving government accountability in 180 public schools in the Corredor Duarte (Puerto Plaza, Santiago, La Vega, Monseñor Nouel, San Cristóbal, Santo Domingo, and the Distrito Nacional). CVME was funded by the World Bank and USAID. 60 of these schools were part of World Vision’s MPCVME project. One focus area was to use school-generated information to assess progress against the goals established by the National Education Pact, in collaboration with the Pact’s Oversight Committee, and with other organizations from civil society and the private sector. To be eligible, schools had to be relatively large (more than 100 students), have primary and/or secondary classes and classes had to be held during the day (no evening classes). The project had two treatment arms evaluated as a multi-arm trial:

1. Scorecards + interface (CVME) in 180 schools;
2. CVME + direct communication with parents via SMS in 60 schools.

The CVME scorecards (or report cards) scored pedagogical dimensions such as matriculation and completion of the school year as well as learning levels (taken from SIGERD), administrative dimensions including infrastructure, safety, mutual respect, basic services, cleanliness, school feeding, the punctuality, attendance, performance of leadership, teachers and students, planning dimensions, including the level of information provided to families, students, teachers, headteachers, and participation dimensions, including the level of participation and empowerment, achievements, challenges and investment priorities for each school. This was partly appraised through a 13-question survey to members of the school

⁸ This meant making use of the National Education Pact and reform efforts focused on quality education. The Pact was signed in 2014 and is valid until 2030. It is aligned with the National Development Strategy 2010–2030 and the 10-year education plan. implementation has been supported by the World Bank (World Bank, 2015a).

⁹ This is also known as the Strengthening Parents’ Engagement and Coalitions for Learning in Dominican Republic Schools project in the impact evaluation.

community and schools developed action plans (World Bank, 2019b; MINERD, 2019).¹⁰ To date, it is unclear what the results of the CVME study/project were. While some of the data from the 60 World Vision schools were shared by the World Bank team with the evaluator, they have yet to be shared with the 60 project schools.

Leer (Read) (2016 – 2020)

In addition to World Bank-funded programming, it is also important to note World Vision's experience in the USAID-funded *Leer* project, led by the *Univerisdad Iberoamericana* (UNIBE). The project took place between 2015 and 2020. It worked across 8 regions (San Cristóbal, La Vega, Santiago, Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo, Mao, and Cotuí) and 47 districts in 387 schools the Corredor Duarte, reaching 136,975 primary school students (UNIBE, n.d.). 9 of the 60 schools in the MPCVME project were part of the *Leer* project.¹¹ One of World Vision's key roles in the *Leer* project was leading the community mobilization component. This focused on strengthening the leadership of APMAEs, accompaniment to the execution of action plans, and sensitization campaigns to parents about children's rights and the importance of reading.

The accompaniment process started with the sensitization of APMAEs on the Ordinance 09-2000, which also forms the first step of the adapted CVA process outlined below, alongside other issues of interest related to community participation. The action plan format in the *Leer* project formed the basis of the MPCVME project's action plan. 7,469 members of APMAEs and Centre Committees were trained in how to develop an action plan, 4,980 participated in talks regarding the roles and functions of APMAEs, 2,311 participated in talks about the importance of education and the role of the family, and 197 APMAEs developed action plans to promote the participation of families in school planning. Therefore, some of the schools had developed some form of action plan in both CVME and *Leer* in the same year prior to the MPCVME project. Three of the World Vision field team were part of the field team in the *Leer* project, and they conducted accompaniment in 12 schools each.¹²

Project Layering and Interconnections

Several interviewees were not aware of the difference between the previous World Bank-funded CVME project and the GPSA-funded MPCVME project. However, when the differences were explained, the relevance of connections and disconnections came out more clearly. Whether schools had a positive or negative experience with CVME had a bearing on

¹⁰ See Post *et al.* n.d. and TAP Network (2019) for a discussion of similarities and differences between social accountability tools.

¹¹ Emma Balaguer, Mauricio Baez, Danilo Ginebra, El Quemado, Club Rotario Km 4, Aníbal Ponce, Cabirmota, Alma Rosa Choten, and Los Conucos. Brisas del Este and Ericilia Pepin were also part of the project, but not the community component.

¹² Two of the 60 schools (Camila Enríquez Fe y Alegría; Politécnico Sor Ángeles Vall Fe y Alegría) were also part of the Movimiento Fe y Alegría and part of a convention funded by *Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (AECID) called *Educación Transformadora en América Latina*.

how they viewed the *Community Participation* in How is My School Doing (MPCVME) project. At least two schools (Danilo Ginebra and Mauricio Baez) said that they had a relatively positive experience with CVME. But many other schools had either wholly indifferent or negative experiences. Tellingly, headteachers interviewed in the mid-term evaluation referred to the World Bank-funded project as a “study” rather than a project. For example, both Los Jardines and San Ignacio, La Llanada had notably negative experiences with the previous World Bank project (Aston, 2022a), the management team from Ercilia Pepin Estrella could hardly remember the project at all. So, it left hardly any impression. World Bank project management of the integration between the project and the CVME project was considered to be problematic. Several members of the Bank confused the two projects (SGD OCI, Santo Domingo; see also Aston, 2022a).

Adding to the confusion, the prior World Bank project took place between 2018 and 2020, but the World Bank conducted endline data collection in June 2021, roughly 18 months into the MPCVME. This survey was used as part of the baseline data for the World Vision project. However, as mentioned above, the World Bank has not yet disseminated the study findings with the schools. This evaluator did share the baseline results for this project which included some of the World Bank’s survey data, but the Bank itself has not yet done so. Several of the schools consulted said that they felt “abandoned” by the CVME project. The project team therefore argued that these misunderstandings and potential suspicion from schools had made project implementation more challenging.

Less than half of parents and guardians felt that the CVME action plans made a positive difference. This low return was also underpinned by limited sustainability of the use of CVME scorecards. Asked when the last scorecard was presented, half of headteachers said they did not know, or did not answer. Only one school had presented an action plan in the first quarter of 2021 (San Isidro Labrador) and two schools (Clardilla Cepin and Celestina Patria Grullon Franco – Banegas) presented scorecards in 2020. 10 schools last presented scorecards in 2019 when the project was still running. 13 schools last presented scorecards in 2018 (so had stopped implementing scorecards before the end of the project), and two schools (Juan Pablo Pina and Nido de Amor) presented scorecards for the last time in 2017. This therefore suggests that CVME scorecards were not in regular use in most schools. As CVME was not operating in 2017, it seems likely that these action plans refer to some alternative process. 11 of the 60 schools reportedly held their last action plan meeting in 2021, 11 schools had their last action plan meeting in 2020, and the remaining schools had their last action plan meetings before the end of the CVME project. It seems reasonable to suggest that a lack of accompaniment is one reason that parents and guardians thought relatively poorly of the CVME action plans.

Conversely, relationships established by World Vision before the project were notably helpful. In some of the 60 schools, World Vision has had as much as 15 years of previous contact. In particular, World Vision’s community mobilization efforts from the USAID-funded *Leer* (Read) project was an important supportive factor which likely enabled access and trust in various targeted schools or at least buffered resistance created through the CVME project, including 3 schools sampled in the baseline –Mauricio Baez, Emma Balaguer, and Danilo

Ginebra. Less clear in the 4 schools visited at mid-term was World Vision's background in relation to the Protection Network for Boys, Girls, and Adolescents. While the project feedback line was visible in several schools visited, the role of protection networks themselves were not mentioned by those interviewed. These also did not feature clearly in responses from schools in the endline.

At mid-term, the World Vision project team noted that there have been power struggles in the education sector. As described in the baseline, the teachers' union is a powerful player at national and local level. The strength of teachers' unions appears to have been an important component of reform within the Dominican Republic's education sector over the last few decades. However, with the new government there has been some friction. The Ministry of Education is aligned with the current government in power (PRM) and the union is still aligned with the PLD party. This is one reason why there have been frequent teachers' strikes during the project, and this too has significantly impeded implementation at times in certain parts of the country.

Key Challenges in Project Schools

Funding was identified as a common issue during the baseline evaluation. All schools must have a Centre Committee (*Junta de Centro*) which should receive funding from MINERD. All local stakeholders need to be represented - the principal, the teachers, the parents through their own organization (APMAE) as well as the students and actors from the local community. However, at baseline, less than 20% of schools were receiving funding through the *Junta*. A lack of funds clearly diminished the power of the APMAE and Centre Committees to resolve problems. School management stakeholders interviewed argued that the full allocation of these resources was a significant challenge in 2020-21, and this was said to have impeded various planned initiatives. School leaders noted that they were either not receiving resources or that only a portion of these resources had been received (Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra; Interview, Headteacher Emma Balaguer; FGD APMAE, El Quemado). Provincial and district officials suggested that the late or incomplete disbursement of decentralized funding was not a significant issue, but those in the school community disagreed (Aston, 2021). The mid-term evaluation suggested that this was still a critical issue in schools in the Corridor Duarte in 2022 (Aston, 2022), but it was less frequently mentioned by schools at endline in 2023.

Some key infrastructure in schools was also in disrepair. These include play areas such as football courts which were deemed too dangerous for use. There have also been some concerns about vandalism of school infrastructure during the pandemic (Interview APMAE President, Emma Balaguer; Outcome Harvest). At baseline, one interviewee argued that community-based organizations were typically more engaged when it came to infrastructure issue such as in relation to water and sanitation (Interview APMAE President, Mauricio Baez). To some degree, this was borne out in the mid-term and endline evaluations (e.g., Danilo Ginebra and Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León schools).

School lunches were argued to be a ministerial priority for improvement. The poor quality and limited quantity of school lunches was a key issue raised by participants in the CVA process (e.g., Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León school). At baseline, one interviewee complained that the quantity of school lunches provided was very limited (Interview Civil Society Organization Representative, Santiago), another headteacher also pointed to shortcomings in quality (Interview Headteacher, El Quemado), and another complained about the timeliness of the distribution (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez). The provision of school lunches was particularly important because various families were hard hit by the pandemic and depended heavily on social protection from the government (FGD APMAE, Emma Balaguer).

The quantity of school management meetings fell during the first half of the project due to the pandemic. According to headteachers across the 60 schools, the *Junta de Centro* met on average just less than 5 times per year (4.9) in 2019-2020. There was a wide range from a high of 16 (e.g., Mauricio Baez) to a low of 0 (Nandita, Cienfuego Abajo). This fell to just less than 3 times per year (2.9) in 2020-2021. Only 25 APMAEs met in person in 2020/21. Surprisingly, only 16 APMAEs met virtually (e.g., by Skype) in 2020/21. Yet, a relatively high proportion (23) communicated by WhatsApp. This suggests that in the first year of the project there was limited activity to integrate school stakeholders in school decision-making.

APMAE presidents had been in place for 18 months on average, ranging from brand new to four years at baseline. AMPAE's met on average ~ 5 times in 2019/20. This ranged from do not know (i.e., perhaps 0) to 24 times (i.e., every fortnight). This reduced to an average of just under 3 times per year in 2020/21, yet, still ranged from 0 to 20. While APMAEs typically had direct (episodic) access to the headteacher, there was also more periodic engagement. APMAE members consulted generally referred to bi-weekly meetings. In general, members mentioned that things were not happening as usual due to the pandemic (Interview President APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). In Mauricio Baez, these had been temporarily paused, despite very regular contact with the headteacher (FGD APMAE, Mauricio Baez). While the evaluation does not have data across all 60 schools for the mid-term, all four schools consulted had returned to a normal rhythm of engagement. In La Nandita, there was no meeting for at least 24 months. However, the evaluation visited La Nantita at mid-term, and there was a meeting between the headteacher and members of the APMAE on that day.

The baseline survey showed that the participation of headteachers and teachers in the development of Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) was high, and the participation of other stakeholders in the educational community was low. Two thirds of teacher representatives in the baseline survey reported having participated in the design of schools' AOPs, including all four sampled schools at baseline. There was participation of district technicians in the AOP development in only 11/60 schools, and as low as 6 for parents and guardians, and even as low as 3 for the wider community. 32 headteachers and 7 APMAE presidents saw that there was low community participation in AOP development. The mid-term evaluation found no reason to contest these data.

Community participation in school management and education quality varied at baseline.

In the headteachers' survey, community participation in developing the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) was low, but some of the sampled schools in the baseline had some degree of participation in the process (Interview Headteacher, El Quemado; Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez; FGD AMPAE, Mauricio Baez; FGD APMAE, Emma Baleguar).

Some community members did not participate in school management due to a lack of interest.

One district official asserted that they *"don't want to assume the responsibility and leave it to the schools to do all"* (Interview, District Technician, Bonaio). The wider population was argued to be quite passive, and thus there was a desire to better include the wider population and ensure that they are more actively engaged (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez). Yet, in some cases, the pandemic prompted parents to take a keener interest in their children's education, due to the requirement of virtual learning at distance. In Danilo Ginebra, for example, the APMAE argued that it had enabled a more direct connection with parents, given that they have had to have a more direct relationship with their children's schooling and learning needs (FGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra).

Community members consulted in the baseline assessment advocated for increased participation of families and efforts to help raise their interest.

In El Quemado, at baseline the focus group argued there has been integration and a good interaction with other school bodies, and this is evidenced in a well-structured quarterly review process, and consultation process of different school grades in planning to consolidate interests in a generally participatory manner (FGD APMAE, El Quemado). Engagement was restricted to virtual meetings during the pandemic and Zoom calls during the pandemic were not able to include everyone (Interview Headteacher, El Quemado; Interview APMAE President, Danilo Ginebra).

Several other community-based organizations had some potential to contribute to school management.

The most important organizations were local churches and neighbourhood committees. In Emma Balaguer, for example, the headteacher asserted that before the pandemic the neighbourhood association was quite engaged, but this had declined. The headteacher of El Quemado said that she could not complain about the community: *"when the school needs it, they help 100%"* (Interview Headteacher, El Quemado). Here, it was argued that there was some relationship with neighbourhood associations, most commonly related to infrastructure (FGD AMPMAE, El Quemado).

Two challenges with community capacity to engage were noteworthy at baseline: literacy and limited financial resources.

The first of these was that some parents are either functionally illiterate or illiterate. This evidently impedes their capacity to support children with their homework (Interview District Technician; Interview Headteacher, El Quemado). Another related impediment was a lack of financial resources and parents managing various jobs to get by (FGD APMAE, El Quemado). Together, these meant that parents and other guardians may have limited capacity to supervise their children's education and this homework. In Danilo Ginebra, for example, some parents were argued not to have adequately fulfilled their

role because they were unable to supervise the classes of their children. Most parents worked in the community, but some mothers worked in a nearby town and only came back to the community at the weekend. This meant that, in effect, this supervision was left to other family members such as grandparents who were less up to speed with digital learning and paid limited attention to homework (FGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra).

The baseline surveys revealed that most parents and guardians believed the relationship with the headteacher was good or very good. Only one parental representative considered the relationship to be poor across the 60 schools. While there was likely to be some positive bias in the survey, this suggests that the project had relatively favourable circumstances for promoting collaborative social accountability when the project started in-person activities in 2021.

Overall, funding and the quality of infrastructure were key concerns. Most AMPAEs had been in place for longer than legally stipulated due to the pandemic, so many would have to change their composition during the project. The frequency of Central Committee and APMAE meetings was low due to the pandemic, and these were slowly starting to pick up by mid-term. Most teachers felt that their views were represented, and the parents and guardians was already relatively high. There were a few spaces in which participation was still low such as the development of AOPs. Relationships were generally considered to be good or very good across most schools. Hence, there were relatively few areas which the project could target that required substantial improvement.

Did the project's strategy contribute to the intended outcomes and impacts? If so, for whom, to what extent and in what circumstances?

To answer these questions, the evaluation was guided by the project's theory of change and logical framework.¹³ This section will be organized around the four main domains of change in the project's theory of change.

As discussed in the baseline and mid-term evaluations, the project was significantly delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the change of government administration. This substantially affected when and how the project has been able to work with the 60 schools and with MINERD and caused delays of roughly 18 months to what the project originally planned. The COVID-19 pandemic alone accounted for perhaps a whole year of delays. The change in government likely contributed a further 3 months of delays, and internal administrative factors within the project such as the change in purchasing system may account for another 3 months or so. Up to mid-term, delays were mostly due to external factors beyond the control of the project (Aston, 2021, Aston, 2022a).

World Vision staffing to deliver on intended outcomes and impacts fluctuated over the course of the project, and this affected the speed of delivery. It is worth pointing out that the project started with a team of 3. It upscaled to 4 after the mid-term to complete the CVA process more quickly in the 60 schools, but as one of the field team left after several months the project scaled down again to 3. In each of the 60 schools, there are three main phases of the CVA model. This requires at least five meetings with each school community for project start up, awareness raising, focus groups, action planning, and follow up. In addition to these meetings, there was a need for various meetings to plan and follow up. This constitutes a total of at least 300 in-person meetings within less than two full school years implemented across seven provinces. This is a high volume of meetings per capita for only 2 field staff, and a significantly higher per capita caseload than in the *Leer* project by comparison. However, this distribution of the team was made based on the Labor Management Procedures (01/01/2023) guidance the team developed.

The project met most, but not all, of its targets. At mid-term, a review of progress against key indicators in the project logical framework revealed that the project had met 20% of indicator targets and the project was on track to meet most (but not all) of its targets. By endline, the project had achieved or surpassed 80% of its targets.

The project had various start up activities when the COVID-19 pandemic was in full swing. These cut across the domains in the project's theory of change. On the 17th of June 2020, World Vision and the Ministry of Education signed a Collaboration Agreement to work

¹³ As noted above, what was agreed as indicators with the evaluator at the baseline were different to those World Vision agreed with the World Bank, and there are different indicators reported to the World Bank and GPSA. At mid-term, the evaluation recommended to cut several indicators because the project team did not collect baseline data on these. Therefore, there are some discrepancies in terms of what were intended outcomes and impacts, including targets.

on several education issues over the course of five years, including supporting the work of APAMEs through the project. In April and May 2021, the team presented a roadmap for the new district directors of education in La Vega (06), Santiago (08), Puerto Plata (11), San Cristóbal (04) and Santo Domingo (10). World Vision also submitted an adaptation strategy to the World Bank in June 2021. This was several months prior to schools fully reopening in late September 2021. The main adaptations proposed in the COVID-19 plan were the integration of community volunteers in the project and the development of a virtual platform to disseminate CVA information at different levels of the education system (Aston, 2021).

Promoting community participation in school management

Building on learning from the World Bank-funded CVME project and from World Vision's community mobilization experience in the USAID-funded *Leer* project, the team developed tailored social accountability training plans and materials for the 60 selected schools. The project's implementation plan was developed through focus group interviews with headteachers, students, teachers, APMAEs, and Ministry of Education staff. The project focused on building the capacity of stakeholders to manage community participation in school decisions through workshops for members of the APMAEs, and training activities for support staff from the Vice Ministry of Decentralization and the Participation within the Ministry of Education.

According to World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action Field Guide (2016), CVA has three main phases:

- 1) Enabling citizen engagement;
- 2) Engagement via community gathering;
- 3) Improving services and influencing policy.

Based on the formal CVA model, and the limited knowledge that government entities had regarding their roles and responsibilities outlined in Ordinance 09-2000, the project developed four modules to help ensure more active participation in school planning and oversight:

- Module 1: Quality education from the heart of the education community;
- Module 2: Social and school participation;
- Module 3: How we participate in the school;
- Module 4: Citizenship, voice, and action for quality education.

Module 4 was focused on the details of the adapted CVA methodology. The project team produced a guide to accompany the training which was shared with schools in physical copy. Module details can be found on the project's website.¹⁴

¹⁴ See here: <https://micomunidadparticipaencomovamiescuela.org.do/cursos/mi-comunidad-participa-en-como-va-mi-escuela/>

Originally, the project planned to have several full cycles of the CVA process (phases 1 – 3). However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan was adapted to support all 60 schools to implement one single full cycle of the CVA process.

By the end of the project, 58/60 target schools implemented all three phases of the CVA model. While all target schools, except 1,¹⁵ participated in the CVME project, the CVA model was new to the 60 schools. In reviewing project records and other sources of evidence provided by the project (e.g., photos), the evaluation can confirm that the following number and proportion of schools have completed the three phases of the adapted CVA model, presented in Figure 9 below.

FIGURE 9: Number and Proportion of Schools Implementing CVA Phases

PHASE	PHASE 1		PHASE 2		PHASE 3	
CATEGORY	#	%	#	%	#	%
SCHOOLS	60	100	58	97	58	97

Source: Own construction

Therefore, the project surpassed the GPSA’s target of 40 schools, but did not reach the World Bank’s target of 60 schools.¹⁶ However, as the following section will show, additional schools and one neighbourhood association was incorporated into the project. So, in another sense the project did meet this target.

Based on school registry data, the project team estimates that 21,000 students were reached in the project. Participant data compiled by the project shows that at least 2,860 people participated in the different phases of the CVA process. This significantly surpassed the project target of 500 people, a target that was always likely to exceeded given standard expectations of the number of participants in CVA processes. The breakdown of participants is presented in Figure 10 below. These numbers reflect the total number of participants in the final year of the project rather than a cumulative number because the project did not have a unique beneficiary registry. The real number is likely to be higher, given that some participants in 2022 may not have also participated in 2023.

FIGURE 10: Number of Participants in the CVA Process

CATEGORY	NUMBER
MEN	467
WOMEN	1,561
ADOLESCENT MEN	200
ADOLESCENT WOMEN	320
BOYS	112
GIRLS	200
TOTAL	2,860

Source: Own construction

¹⁵ This was the Military School Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro, but another school substituted this school (Ramón Emilio Jiménez).

¹⁶ It is unclear why different targets were agreed with different parts of the World Bank.

As part of this number, the project trained 58 community volunteers in the CVA methodology. The aim was that these student volunteers will help to incentivise the participation of others in the CVA process. The evaluation team met a few of these volunteers when visiting the schools at mid-term and endline, so the evaluation can confirm that these volunteers engaged with the process and played a supportive role (e.g., Interview Student, Jardines del Norte; SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León).

The World Vision team also conducted regional forums on CVA for headteachers at the 60 schools. Forums to sensitize school leadership on the CVA model were held on the 28th of April 2022 in Santiago and 6th of May 2022 in Santo Domingo. The evaluator participated in these forums, presenting the baseline findings for the project, and listening to the discussion. So, the evaluation can confirm that headteachers were briefed on the basics of the CVA model, watched a video on the process, and there was also clarifying discussion on some of the key points in the proposed model and the implications for schools. The facilitator's presentation to headteachers in regional forums also clearly stressed *collaborative* social accountability as part of expectations management for headteachers.

The project team argued that there were 4 months of delays in project activities due to a change in the World Bank's purchasing system between November 2021 and February 2022. This meant that certain project activities could not be approved during this period. While the evaluation did not verify the length of the delay for specific purchases, the project team showed the evaluator the purchasing system and it is likely that changes in purchasing systems could well account for several months of delays related to delivering the CVA model (e.g., hiring consultants). In a meeting on the endline evaluation, the World Bank team confirmed that there were significant delays due to this transition and that it was unfortunate that the project had not started with the new system. Nonetheless, according to the World Vision team, the project was able to commence training workshops in some of the schools from December 2021. These workshops continued until the end of the school year in July 2022, and then restarted in the next school year in September 2022 and were delivered until May 2023.

On the 3rd of March 2021 and also on the same day in 2022, the project held celebrations of the APMAE's day in the schools. The aim of this celebration was to motivate AMPAE members to participate actively in school planning and recognize their value addition in promoting better school management. As we will see in the case of the replication of the CVA model described in the unanticipated results section, this event served as a space for government technicians to discuss the relative merits of the CVA model and its potential utility beyond the intervention schools. On the 5th of September 2022, the project team also participated in a radio program to motivate the use of the CVA methodology, the protocol, and the project tools promote the participation of families in the following school year (2022 – 2023).

In terms of results, the evaluation demonstrates that the CVA process helped community members to identify the priority collective needs in schools. Unfortunately, the project team did not conduct a pre and post-test to participants during the training in CVA, so it is impossible

to estimate what proportion of the those trained improved their knowledge and skills. However, the mid-term and endline evaluations were both able to uncover substantial evidence of collective needs assessment through the revision of many action plans, interviews, focus groups, and small group discussions.

Interviews and focus group discussions with four schools at mid-term demonstrated that participants had acquired some new knowledge regarding service standards, civic participation, and skills to participate in the CVA process (see Aston, 2022a). To illustrate, at endline, as one district technician said that “*the dynamic is very good. It helps understand the reality* (Interview, Regional Technician).” A teacher echoed this sentiment: “*it allowed us to know the social reality* (Interview Teacher, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León).” And a student expressed a similar sentiment: “*it’s helpful to identify what we really need... It helped me to see things in a different light* (Interview Student, Mauricio Baez).”

The evidence collected in the endline evaluation suggests that the CVA process enabled a more systematic and inclusive needs appraisal in project schools. It should be recalled that all schools had some means of appraising needs prior to the project, and various APMAEs had developed some form action plan previously. The evaluation also lacks baseline evidence on this across all 60 schools because this was not directly covered in the CVME endline survey. However, many stakeholders consulted in the 9 schools in the mid-term and endline evaluations sustained that the way in which needs were assessed and monitored had improved through the CVA process. Part of this change was attributed to World Vision’s *style* of facilitation by schools consulted (e.g., Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León; Los Mamayes). This will be discussed in more detail below. In the 7 schools visited at endline, the needs identified in action plans were wide-ranging. However, they can be broadly grouped into five areas:

FIGURE 11: Main Types of Issues Addressed in Schools Visited

AREA	EXAMPLES
INFRASTRUCTURE	Inadequate space for classrooms, lack of eating spaces, lack of space for computer room, broken railings, leaky roof (e.g., Danilo Ginebra; El Quemado; Mauricio Baez; Los Mameyes; María Teresa Hernández; Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León)
MAINTAINANCE	Leaks in bathrooms, problems with electricity, rubbish, vandalism (e.g., Jardines del Norte; El Quemado; Emma Balaguer)
FOOD PROVISION	Poor quality or late delivery of food (e.g., Los Mameyes; San Ignacio, La Llanada)
SCHOOL MATERIALS	Computers and internet, books (e.g., Jardines del Norte; Mauricio Baez)
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	Performance, punctuality, reading (e.g., Mauricio Baez, Ercilia Pepin Estrella)

Source: Own construction

Focus groups are a key step in identifying school community needs through the CVA model, and these were viewed very positively by those interviewed at endline. Some mention of social accountability nomenclature is noteworthy. Several respondents referred to the scorecard as “the survey,” or the diagnosis, for example (SGD Management Team, Jardines del Norte). The nomenclature itself may not matter greatly, but it should be noted that different

social accountability initiatives in the Dominican Republic have used several different terms (e.g., *reportes comunitarios*, *scorecards*, *auditoria social*, *veeduría social*) and none of these have clearly stuck. The use of these terms seems to come from the nature of the individual assessment prior to the focus group discussions and the language that the team and school psychologists used (*diagnóstico*).

Various AMPAE representatives consulted at mid-term considered that the focus groups were a valuable exercise (FGD APMAE, El Quemado; FGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). At endline, one AMPAE president pointed out that the discussions has an effect on the children and stated: “*I loved working in a team with the focus groups* (Interview APMAE President, Jardines del Norte).” Several students echoed this sentiment, noting that the focus groups in phase 2 of the CVA model had provided them with a better way to express themselves (Interview Student, Jardines del Norte; SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León).

However, there were some limitations with regards to the continuity of stakeholder engagement in schools visited. Partly because APMAEs tend to change their composition on an annual basis, and partly because teachers and headteachers also change jobs, not all the same stakeholders participated consistently in the three main phases of the CVA process. For example, in the mid-term evaluation, the AMPAE in San Ignacio, La Llanada recalled the activities in the first phase of CVA and the focus groups but not all of them participated in both the first two phases. Indeed, typically only one representative from each main stakeholder group (e.g., APMAE, school management team, teachers, students) participates in the third phase. So, not all participants have the same knowledge of the whole process. The discontinuity of participants was further complicated by the fact that most schools had not developed action plans by the end of the 2021-2022 school year. This meant that some AMPAE representatives had to be inducted to the process anew in the following school year. At endline, the evaluation found that there was still some discontinuity in terms of who participated in the phases of the process (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Similarly, district technicians play more of a role in the first and third phase of the process. The project team suggested that this is where they can add the most value based on their knowledge and responsibilities. Though this means that their understanding on the second phase is mostly second-hand.

Stakeholders consulted in at endline commonly asserted that the CVA process had enhanced their motivation to resolve priority problems. Many stakeholders noted that there was increased motivation of families (Interview Teacher, Mauricio Baez; FGD APMAE, El Quemado), teachers (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra), and students (Interview Student, Jardines del Norte; Interview Teacher, Los Mameyes; Interview APMAE President, Los Mameyes) to resolve priority problems. On several occasions, this motivation was triggered directly by World Vision staff, materials, and events (Interview APMAE President, El Quemado, SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). As one national technician pointed out, parents told them that they liked the materials they were given, and several expressed that they enjoyed the Congress on Good Practices in March 2023 (Interview National Technician, Santo Domingo). This was also confirmed by parents in various schools visited at mid-term and

endline (Interview APMAE President, El Quemado; Interview APMAE President, Mauricio Baez).

Developing action plans was also considered a key trigger for stakeholder motivation in schools consulted. As one APMAE representative mentioned, “*the action plan motivated us to do something* (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). Indeed, this action plan was found clearly displayed on the wall of the school’s library during endline data collection. So, it served as a regular reminder for the school management team and APMAE to continue efforts. The headteacher sustained that “*World Vision taught us that one has to look for a solution* (Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra)” even for issues that were previously considered intractable such as the school’s damaged roof (illustrated in Figure 13 below; see also Aston, 2022a). Part of this motivation relates to perceptions of accompaniment in the school by World Vision, who had also supported the school to develop similar action plans previously in the *Leer* project.

As a result of increased motivation and skills, there was an increase in community participation and perceptions of empowerment in many schools. While the evaluation lacks valid baseline participation numbers across all 60 targeted schools, as these were not tracked in full in the baseline survey, by design, the introduction of the CVA model has increased the number of opportunities for community participation in school management. In addition to APMAE meetings, APMAEs also participated in focus group discussions and interface meetings, as well as action planning meetings, and additional follow up meetings. This therefore increased the frequency of engagement between APMAEs, Centre Committees, teachers, student councils, and members of the wider school community. For instance, the headteacher of Jamo Arriba school noted that the different participation entities in the school had “*formed part of the actions that the school is carrying out to support the growth of the community and its wider environment* (Correspondence with Project Team, Jamo Arriba school, n.d.).” In Cabirmota school, the headteacher noted that the project has “*helped to integrate the school and families, in a participatory way for the school community* (Correspondence with Project Team, Cabirmota school, n.d.).”

Many of those consulted at endline noted that parents had “taken up their role (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra; SGD Teachers, Danilo Ginebra).” This is not to say that *all* parents were necessarily uncommitted before. However, most of those consulted sustained sentiments similar to the following: “*parents are now more committed* (Interview Teacher, Los Mameyes)” and there “*had been an increase in parents’ participation in the school* (Interview APMAE President, Los Mameyes).” The headteacher of Jamo Arriba school echoed this in correspondence with the project team: “*the project has been very important, given that the community and different participation entities have been empowered to take up their role in the school to support and collaborate to benefit students* (Correspondence with Project Team, Jamo Arriba school, n.d.).” In the San Ignacio school, the headteacher noted that the project has “*achieved greater integration and collaboration between the different citizen participation entities in the activities carried out at the school* (Correspondence with Project Team, San Ignacio school, n.d.).”

In some (but not all) cases studied, neighbourhood associations (e.g., Interview APMAE President, El Quemado, Interview Headteacher, Ercilia Pepin Estrella) and churches (e.g., SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra) played a more prominent role than before. There was only one exception to this in either the mid-term or endline evaluations – the headteacher of Mauricio Baez – who acknowledged that one reason for this was that the school had failed to engage the neighbourhood association meaningfully in the process. They noted that “*I haven’t seen lots of energy from the families. We don’t have support from the family* (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez).” Yet, all other stakeholders consulted in the same school disagreed with this assessment and suggested that, while modest, there *had* been an increase in parental engagement.

Action planning is at the heart of the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) model. Interviews and small group discussions in the six schools visited at endline suggest that they saw considerable value in action planning. First of all, it is worth pointing out that, in theory, all APMAEs have some form of plans. Yet, in practice, both national-level and local level technicians, as well as several APMAEs consulted, suggested that APMAEs did not necessarily have action plans in all cases. While technicians gather and log data nationally on whether APMAEs have been formed (see Figure 8), they do not gather data systematically on whether APMAEs have developed or implemented plans (i.e., proxies for whether they were functional).

The form of action planning and accompaniment in the adapted CVA process was viewed positively. All schools had some background in action planning in the CVME and *Leer* projects, and perceptions of their effectiveness appear to have influenced action planning in this project. Yet, perceptions of the new process were mostly positive. For example, one director in San Pedro Nolasco school noted that “*we feel very comfortable and happy with our link Carol, her explanations and aptitude to urge our education community to resolve and search for solutions to every situation found, and this impacted our students and the parents* (Correspondence with Project Team, San Pedro Nolasco school).” As one psychologist in Los Mamayes pointed out, “*we learned the action planning process from World Vision* (Interview Psychologist, Los Mamayes).” It appears that there were also some advantages of the particular type of action planning proposed in World Vision’s adapted CVA process when compared with previous experience in CVME. The APMAE president from Los Mamayes affirmed that they learned how to do action planning better and what their rights were as an APMAE – i.e., roles and functions (Interview APMAE President, Los Mamayes). Another psychologist in Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León noted that “*the methodology helped us... [It was] important to structure a plan* (Interview Psychologist, Los Mamayes).” So, while the notion of an action plan was not new to all participants, the collective development of plans through collaborative engagement with a wider variety of stakeholders was seen to add value by many participants. In María Teresa Hernández school, for example, phase 2 helped to reinforce the demand to improve school infrastructure, and in the monitoring efforts of the APMAE in phase 3 identified the need to find a new engineer. The district participation technician was reported to have committed to carry out oversight of the process (Outcome Harvest).

Most of those consulted in the endline argued that there was good interaction and exchange in action planning events (e.g., Interview APMAE President, Jardines del Norte; Interview Psychologist, El Quemado). However, there were some limitations in terms of who was involved in carrying out the plans. This had much to do with what specific action points were agreed and who had the mandate to do what in relation to these. For example, in Jardines del Norte, it was argued that teachers were not involved in the action plan (Interview Teacher, Jardines del Norte). However, the school management team and the APMAE clearly were engaged in developing and implementing the plan together, as they were presenting a joint letter to the district the day of the endline evaluation visit.

Another limitation in a couple of schools visited which had made less progress was that the action points agreed in the plan were somewhat unrealistic to achieve in a short period of time. As one headteacher put it, action points “*weren’t impossible to achieve, but it’s long term* (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez).” The plans are supposed to prioritise the most important problems the school community wants to address, but these are not always the easiest problems to address. In some cases, they require considerable financial and human resources. Ultimately, action plans are owned by school stakeholders – it is their plan rather than World Vision’s – though this finding suggests that it can be challenging to guide stakeholders to find an adequate balance between the importance and urgency of problems to be addressed on one hand, and which are most feasible to address over the short-to-medium term on the other.

The evaluation found that the action plans, at least those that had been in place for several months, had the capacity to trigger greater collective action in targeted schools. Several schools visited at endline showed that the action planning process convinced new combinations of stakeholders to collaborate and take actions (Interview APMAE President, Jardines del Norte; Interview Teacher, Jardines del Norte). In various schools consulted, parents collaborated more than previously, and stakeholders “*worked more as a team than before* (Interview Headteacher, El Quemado; SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra).” Collective actions taken in the target schools vary significantly, but notably they included APMAE’s making videos of a leaky roof and sharing these with the media – i.e., monitoring (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra), organizing a Parents’ Day to mobilize additional resources to upgrade dangerous iron railings of school buildings (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León), sending out letters to local organizations to provide funding (Interview Psychologist, El Quemado), and sending joint petitions to the district to improve the quality of infrastructure (Interview APMAE President, Jardines del Norte; SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra; Interview Teacher, El Quemado; Outcome Harvest).

The project introduced new ideas into schools to think creatively about how to address priority problems. Not all actions were entirely new because many schools had conducted some similar actions in the past. However, the CVA process does appear to have accelerated or scaled up activities in various schools, as stakeholders have a new resolve to address priority problems with a better appreciation of which problems are the joint priorities within the schools and a clear action plan and process to take collective action (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). Indeed, some actions, such as the Parents’ Day and writing petitions to the district, can be

directly attributed to World Vision's recommendations (SGD AMPAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León; Interview APMAE President, Jardines del Norte).

By the mid-term evaluation, only 1 school had developed an action plan, but by endline 58 schools had developed action plans. Moreover, by mid-term, none of the schools had implemented the follow-up protocol to monitor CVME improvement plans. However, by endline, 58 schools had developed an action plan and 44 schools had conducted actions and monitoring efforts after developing action plans. So, the final evaluation demonstrates rapid progress in the 2022-2023 school year. Though it is unfortunate that such limited progress had been made in the previous school year.

There is some evidence to suggest that stakeholder relationships have improved. It should be noted that in some of the schools visited at endline there were good working relationships at project baseline (e.g., Danilo Ginebra, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Yet, even in contexts where there were clearly positive relationships, those consulted suggested that relationships with the wider school community and also within schools had improved. The evaluation cannot demonstrate this directly for all schools. However, several of those interviewed noted that in addition to greater parental or guardian ownership, there was greater dynamism among the four central groups – APMAEs, centre committees, student councils, and teachers (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León), and greater unity among these groups (Interview APMAE President, Los Mameyes).

It should perhaps be pointed out that these three examples were in schools that might be argued to have had the greatest degree of progress in their action plans. This was felt in other schools consulted, but to a lesser degree. For instance, the management team in Jardines del Norte said that “*the APMAE is more attentive than before.*” There were similar, yet vaguer, perceptions from the school management team in El Quemado and San Ignacio, La Llanada (FGD APMAE, San Ignacio, La Llanada). This sentiment was somewhat less clear in the case of Mauricio Baez at least in the eyes of some members of school management (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez). Yet, one student council member in that school asserted that “*the APMAE has changed a lot – they're a lot closer than before* (Interview Student, Mauricio Baez).” This appears to be credible testimony, given the evaluation's experience with the school at baseline and mid-term. Though overall, it appears that there are feedback loops between action plan progress, motivation, and improved working relationships in schools and with the wider school community.

There is also some evidence that students had been empowered to play a more active role in school management than previously (Interview Student, Danilo Ginebra; Interview Student, Los Mamayes; SGD Students, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Firstly, there were typically high levels of support from parents and teachers related to the increased consultation and involvement of students in the CVA process. For example, one teacher in Los Mameyes pointed out that “*I loved the process with the students* (Interview Teacher, Los Mameyes).” Students were able to participate in school management to some degree through the school council and grade councils where several students represented their peers. Yet, there

were discernible improvements during the project. One AMPAE representative noted that “*the action planning was a great activity... The children became more creative... The participation was great* (Interview APMAE President, Los Mameyes).” Students themselves were positive about the process. One student noted that the process enabled them to express themselves better (Interview Student, Los Mamayes). Others saw substantial value in the process through the opportunities they were provided to identify priority issues for the school to address (SGD Students, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Both cases, this was *not* something they felt had been provided previously, and none of the 9 schools consulted at mid-term and endline identified comparable processes, despite the fact that both the CVME and *Leer* projects included some form of action plan. It is possible that some of this was merely forgotten or those consulted were unaware of these previous processes.

However, in relatively few cases was the evaluation able to demonstrate evidence that students were actively involved in monitoring the *implementation* of action plans. This is something that some students felt they *could* play more of a role in, in theory (SGD Students, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Yet, in the schools visited, it was suggested that the shortcoming was mostly due to the problems that were selected and who should be responsible for oversight of these (e.g., engagement with districts on school budgets). Very few in school management teams were somewhat circumspect regarding the relative added value of additional student input (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez), and these views were from school contexts that were discernibly more top down in decision-making style than other schools (e.g., Danilo Ginebra, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León were more horizontal).

Several other stakeholder groups made significant contributions to resolving priority problems in the 60 project schools. In Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León, for example, there were several important supportive efforts. Stakeholders noted that the school leadership team contributed a lot (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). In fact, at endline, the headteacher had just returned from the district, having received an award for best school in the district. The AMPAE also underscored that one of the leaders from the student council was especially mature and that the student council had more of a long-term vision than the APMAE, so APMAE representatives said that they learned from the students, and it was evident from the student’s body language that they had a close relationship with the APMAE (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). Similarly, in Danilo Ginebra, as discussed in the baseline and mid-term evaluations (Aston, 2021; Aston, 2022a), relationships between the school management team and APMAE were strong. So, in several cases, the project was already building on firm foundations and sought to amplify these.

New stakeholders beyond the immediate school community were also mobilized to support efforts in several cases. These stakeholders notably included neighbourhood associations, teachers’ unions, and churches. Danilo Ginebra’s headteacher, for example, mentioned that “*we have to say it is important how community representative’s participation matters, that they are interested in the school and that they are aware of the need to participate* (Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra). At baseline, the APMAE said that there was more the church could do to support children (FGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). In other schools,

churches were seen in a positive light, motivating children, and even providing additional spaces for classrooms due to infrastructure limitations (Interview Headteacher, Emma Balaguer; site visit Los Mameyes). There were five focus groups conducted in Danilo Ginebra as part of the CVA process.¹⁷ The centre committee noted that new community stakeholders had participated in the focus groups. These actors included both protestant and catholic churches as well as members of the neighbourhood association (Aston, 2022a). This demonstrates that the CVA process has contributed to increased interest from wider community actors to some degree. As the case of Danilo Ginebra's roof below shows, other stakeholders were also brought in to support the resolution of particular problems in some cases. Not all of this can, however, be attributed to project actions. Danilo Ginebra's biggest success written at the top of its three-point action plan was addressing a leaky roof on the second and first floors of the school building. The role of new stakeholders contributing to outcomes is explained in Figure 12 below.

FIGURE 12: Danilo Ginebra School Fixing the Roof

The Danilo Ginebra school is situated in rural Villa Altagracia, La Vega. The World Vision team had worked in the school in the USAID-funded *Leer* Project (2016 – 2020). So, the team knew school stakeholders and their issues well. One problem that had been identified years before was a broken roof which leaked on the first and second floors during rainy periods. The leaks were so bad that classes had to abandon the classrooms when it rained. The weakness in the construction of the roof was identified as the first of three main problems to address in the CVA action plan.

As one APMAE representative mentioned, “*the action plan motivated us to do something* (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra).” Indeed, this action plan was clearly displayed on the wall of the school's library. So, as mentioned above, it served as a regular reminder for the school management team and APMAE to press on. The headteacher said that “*World Vision taught us that one has to look for a solution* (Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra).”

The evaluator visited the school and saw the problems of the roof at mid-term. Several months after the action plan was developed on the 12th of July 2022, and a few months into the school year, in January 2023 part of the roof fell through. In the action plan, the school identified the following activities for January and February 2023: studies, a commission to go to the district, and to go to MINERD “if necessary.”

Interviews and small group discussions with school stakeholders at endline revealed various steps in the process following the development of the action plan. The school management team first discussed the issue with the APMAE and then consulted other community organizations such as the neighbourhood committee. The school management team and the APMAE reached out to the district to outline their concerns. The school management team and APMAE then had a meeting with families, and went to discuss with the district once more. Noting that there had been slow progress, several teachers reached out to their teachers' association – the *Asociación Dominicana de Profesores* (ADP) because the broken roof constituted an unsafe work environment also affected teachers. The ADP has considerable weight in the Dominican Republic and good connections with MINERD. Those interviewed noted that the ADP had another meeting with families. The teachers then went on strike for three days. It is unclear that the strike made any difference, but the school management team and the APMAE then presented their evidence to the district. As suggested in the action plan, the school formed a commission and the APMAE and the ADP had a discussion to plan what to share with MINERD in the capital.

¹⁷ More commonly, the model entailed four groups: parents, students, teachers, and school management.

This commission of four people went to the Ministry of Education in Santo Domingo to discuss the issue of the roof with the Departmental Directorate for Building Rehabilitation and brought evidence with them to share. They shared a photo as evidence of the visit. This is the first time the school had presented evidence on problems they wanted to address in the capital. APMAE representatives then made a video of the leaky roof and shared this with CNN. The evaluation has been unable to locate this video. However, those interviewed argued that while the evidence presented made a difference the video also played a role in prompting MINERD to respond. We cannot independently confirm that the video played a role, but it seems likely that (as those interviewed noted), it *may* have expedited central government response. Several weeks later the headteacher received correspondence from MINERD on additional budget to fix the roof.

Sources: Action plan, photos, interviews, SGD, site visit¹⁸

Two weeks prior to the endline evaluation’s visit, builders started work on the roof, as is shown in the photo in Figure 13. In the period, classes were suspended for safety reasons, but the school was expected to reopen within weeks.

FIGURE 13: Danilo Ginebra Roof under Construction



Source: Evaluator’s photo

¹⁸ The quality of evidence to support this case is medium because the evaluation cannot confirm the latter steps in the process such as the influence of the video. World Vision’s contribution to this is considered high, because they played a crucial role in the early phases of the process.

However, promoting greater citizen participation and oversight in school management has not been straightforward in all the 60 project schools. In a couple of occasions, it has been particularly difficult. This was the case in Emma Balaguer, for example. The school scored among the lowest in the CVME baseline, but it was also a school in the *Leer* project and had been considered by some key informants as a “model school.” Arguably, there are several model schools in the project, but different stakeholders appear to have substantially different criteria. In CVME, Emma Balaguer was one of only 11 schools that had their last action plan meeting in 2021. The APMAE president at the start of the project was an ex-student at the school had a long relationship with school management. Unusually, the APMAE had participated in the development of the AOP during CVME. So, there were certainly some positive foundations, despite scoring among the lowest in key performance indicators in the CVME baseline. Emma Balaguer was not visited in the endline evaluation due to last minute scheduling issues with the school. It was one of the last schools to complete the CVA process. However, the evaluation can confirm that they developed an action plan with 4 action points. Part of the reason for this delay was argued by the project team to be because the physical infrastructure was shared between several schools. There was thus an additional layer of coordination problems that only a handful of schools had to face in the project (Correspondence with Project Manager, 28/05/23).

Since 2020, the project had significant barriers to implementing the project in the Alma Rosa Chothén school in Santo Domingo Este. The school was also part of the *Leer* project, yet in the baseline, the school was also among the lowest performing schools on key indicators for school performance, school governance, and participation in school governance. So, the project had an uphill battle. On the 18th of November 2022, the project carried out a meeting on Family, Citizenship, Voice, and Action with the school community. The project team reports that following an arduous process of sensitization and socialization on the benefits of action plans and on the increased participation that other schools had achieved through the CVA process, the school opened its doors to the project and was able to carry out all three phases of the model (Correspondence with Project Manager, 12/05/23). The evaluation can also confirm that they developed an action plan with 4 action points.

Another case of limited progress was in the Military School Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro. The project team reports that the school management team has not been receptive to World Vision’s requests for engagement in the project even though, in theory, their participation had been agreed with MINERD (Correspondence with Project Manager, 12/05/23). It seems likely that the school’s different status as a military school has some bearing on why they chose not to participate in the project.

One further area of limited progress when compared with the original project design was in mobilizing the Protection Network for Boys, Girls, and Adolescents (*Red de Protección de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes*) that were established in the *Leer* project. Originally, the hope within the project was that these networks related to child protection might provide a launchpad for collective action in the 9 schools that had previously been part of the *Leer* project. As the field team was stretched very thinly across roughly 30 schools for a large

proportion of the project, so additional efforts to mobilize and sustain the mobilization of wider community stakeholders were challenging. The project locations also did not overlap with World Vision's area programs where World Vision has a stronger community base in particular communities or neighbourhoods. So, there were limited efficiencies that could be made.

Despite the team being stretched, schools considered World Vision's accompaniment and follow up of the CVA process to be appropriate and proportional (e.g., Interview Psychologist, Los Mamayes). None of those consulted expressed direct criticisms of World Vision and when pressed for what might have been done differently, most struggled to identify clear recommendations. For example, one student affirmed that "*World Vision treated us very well* (Interview Student, Jardines del Norte)." A headteacher offered a commonly held view that most forms of support were valued in general: "*their support means that we don't feel alone.*" They noted that "*the experience with World Vision has been excellent. It was very positive, and we want it to continue* (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez)." The sentiment that the project should be continued was quite widely held (e.g., Interview Psychologist, El Quemado; SGD Students, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León; Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez). These sentiments are likely to be coloured by courtesy and project extension bias. There may also be a blinkered view of potential feasible alternatives to the support that was provided, but it is nonetheless reasonable to suggest that a high level of perceived value in World Vision's accompaniment of the process.

The individual relationships, interpersonal skills, and dispositions of individual members of World Vision staff clearly had a bearing on levels of trust within schools. Those consulted suggested that the team were very nice (Interview Teacher, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León), clear, accessible (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León), charismatic (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez), and attentive (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra). One person in a small group discussion affirmed that "*there was a lot of support from World Vision – they were always there for us* [on the phone] (SGD APMAE, Danilo Ginebra)." This was echoed to some degree in all the schools visited at endline, and at national level one senior official also contended that "*relations with World Vision are better than ever* (Interview National Technician, Santo Domingo)." It should be noted that relations with MINERD was already good early on in the project. World Vision's capacity to access and engage senior government officials and ministers is clear evidence of this.

Replication and institutionalization of collaborative social accountability in school management

The project carried out numerous activities designed to institutionalize and scale up (or out) at least some aspects of the adapted CVA model in school management. The team worked with a variety of stakeholders at national and subnational level to achieve institutionalization. Most notably, the project engaged the *Oficina de Cooperación Internacional* (OCI) within MINERD which was an important ally throughout the project. OCI helped to make connections with the key parts of MINERD. Initially, the key stakeholder

targets at national level was the Oversight Committee within IDEC and the Socio-educational Forum. Neither of these have been particularly supportive throughout the project. World Vision had several meetings with IDEC between 2020 and 2022, yet the Oversight Committee was disbanded since 2019 and throughout much of the project. So, it played no meaningfully supportive role.

World Vision’s head of education noted in the mid-term evaluation that the Socio-educational Forum comprises 14 institutions and World Vision co-leads it. The forum aims to influence MINERD with position papers, research and media and press releases. It conducted a campaign to bring children and teachers back to the classroom after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. They also conducted a study on internet coverage in the schools. However, there was a significant oversight challenge and how they might operationalize the proposed draft protocol linked to the CVA process. During the pandemic, the forum only met to discuss the Education Pact (Interview Director, Santo Domingo). Hence, rather than submitting progress reports to the Oversight Committee, the project submitted several reports to OCI, and a group discussion with OCI leadership demonstrated that they have been both highly supportive of the project and pleased with progress (SGD OCI, Santo Domingo).

More promising in terms of promoting institutionalization was World Vision’s engagement with the Vice-Ministry for Decentralization and Participation. As mentioned above, while leadership in the Ministry was somewhat unstable and indifferent to project activities between 2020 and mid-2022, from September 2022 onwards, the project saw significant support from the Vice-Minister for Decentralization and Participation and the Director for Community Participation. On the 25th of August 2022, the project carried out a socialization meeting with the Director General for Community Participation, Pablo Miguel Ramirez Ogando, in coordination with OCI and the World Bank. This was the director’s first contact with the project, and it was publicised on the Community Participation department’s Facebook page.¹⁹

In addition to local level training, the project carried out several events with regional and national-level MINERD stakeholders to support social accountability efforts. One point made in the mid-term evaluation workshop by the project team was that not all technicians were aware of progress on implementing the CVA model in all the 60 schools. As a result, the team ramped up efforts to bring technicians into the process more explicitly. Between the 27th of October and the 10th of November 2022, the project carried out 4 regional workshops on CVA in school management. The workshops included the participation of 140 technicians from the departments of community participation, school decentralization, orientation, and psychology, and from private schools. The project also carried out a national-level workshop on Social and School Participation with 306 regional and district community participation technicians between the 9th and 24th of November 2021. In the workshop, the project team

¹⁹ See here:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3439302499681792&id=100008062261299&paipv=0&eav=AfbIqRCivPKTMRV5ZMH0CBbW4nAREExsvGG4tbA1Pv9U8F1QvUWL4FECueE8vg2xRro&_rdr

reported that the Director for Community Participation expressed their interest in following up on the capacity-building of local-level groups.

The final protocol for the Oversight of School Participation Entities was co-developed with MINERD and is currently in place. The project carried out a meeting to discuss the protocol for the school participation entities with 56 technicians in Santo Domingo on the 25th of August 2022. The project team note that the first meeting to design the protocol was challenging. The evaluator was able to attend part of the session. The project's progress and achievements were presented to the Vice-Minister of Decentralization and Participation in November 2022. It was reported that the Vice-Minister requested that the team explore the possibility of scaling up the dissemination of the social accountability tools implemented by the project (World Bank, Implementation Status and Results Report, 2023). On the 1st of December 2022, the project had a follow up meeting with the Directorate of Decentralization and Participation. This was also reported on the directorate's Facebook page.²⁰

In general, the process of developing the protocol was deemed to be participatory and inclusive by MINERD colleagues on the main substance (Interview Vice Minister, Santo Domingo). On the 3rd of December 2022, the Vice-Minister officially received the protocol. According to the Vice-Ministry of Decentralization and Participation's Instagram page on the 10th February 2023,²¹ the Vice-Minister of Decentralization and Participation Ligia Pérez Peña received the director of World Vision Dominican Republic, Juan Carlo Ramírez, and project manager, Wanda Karina de Jesús Pozo, to discuss World Vision's experience of social accountability, connecting families to school management, and contributing to decentralization and community participation, in their words. A key part of the conversation was the draft protocol. One version of the protocol reviewed by the evaluation demonstrates that the Vice-Minister made comments, and as the project's website shows the Vice-Minister officially approved the protocol on the 14th of February 2023, as demonstrated by photos on the project website.²²

The World Vision team noted that government counterparts demonstrated substantial interest in the information captured in phase 2 and proposed to support the team in adapting a more accessible version of the scorecard (Correspondence with Project Manager, 21/02/23). World Vision since met with the Vice-Minister of Decentralization and Participation and OCI to coordinate the design of the scorecard to make it more accessible. However, the CVME impact evaluation team at the World Bank was not disposed to share further information, given that this was in English, and they suggested that it was in a highly academic format. Therefore, no further progress towards alignment was possible.

²⁰ See here:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3522475658031142&id=100008062261299&sfnsn=mo&mibextid=RUBZ1f&paipv=0&eav=Afa3JuWKnQRHIBPQebeeypv1hZS0zsLVNJx3fMTvuu9gV5jeiAqSM6qAUfXAcO9UIU&_rdr

²¹ See here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CofdOdiONvj/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D>

²² See here: <https://micomunidadparticipaencomovamiescuela.org.do/sobre-nosotros#resultados>

Commitment from MINERD to implement the protocol seems credible. One senior figure put it thus: “*we’re interested in having APMAEs that work... We didn’t have instruments for monitoring and follow up [before]; the protocol gave us that... We are committed to applying the protocol* (Interview Director, Santo Domingo).” This endorsement is evidently promising; it shows that the process and tools provided through the CVA process fulfil an existing need and desire within the Ministry and it is directly in line with the Ministry’s existing mandate and that of AMPAEs expressed in the Ordinance 09-2000. While the protocol is clear on the steps to take and official roles and responsibilities, what is somewhat less clear whether and how technicians will facilitate all three phases of the model without World Vision’s support. To date, despite senior officials’ interest in phase 2 of the model, technicians have more commonly participated more in phases 1 and 3 of the model. As mentioned above, the project team believes that these are the most important phases where they can add the most value, but it leaves open whether for example, psychologists in the school management team or perhaps APMAEs should lead step 2 in the process, for example. While these district technicians are vital to institutionalization of the CVA model or a later adaptation yet to be seen, they have relatively limited resources and staff which allows them to visit all schools in their district regularly. Without additional resources, applying the protocol in full may therefore prove challenging.

With regards to institutionalization in the 60 schools themselves, the evaluation can confirm that 58 schools were using the protocol to monitor action plans. For example, the evaluation saw how the action plan was being used in the APMAE notebook in Los Mamayes (Interview APMAE President, Los Mamayes), and the action plan in Danilo Ginebra was still on the wall of the library in a prominent location at the time of the evaluation. Both cases clearly demonstrate that there was *active* use of the protocol in several schools that the evaluation was able to assess in person. The evaluation can have somewhat lesser confidence in the schools not visited in mid-term or endline evaluations but given the superabundance of photographic evidence of action plans and action plan registry shared with the evaluator, as well as the known frequency of meetings in schools there is little reason to doubt that all schools, except the military school, Nuestra Señora del Perpetuo Socorro, were actively using the protocol by the end of the project.

There is some degree of variation in the level of results achieved through the implementation of the protocol and action plans. Some of those consulted noted that “*things have improved a little* (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez).” Others affirmed that “*there were very good results from the plan* (Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra),” and some even asserted that there had been “*a deep change* (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León).” Even in the cases reviewed where some within school management were somewhat more sceptical about the contributions from the wider community of parents and other local organizations (e.g., neighbourhood committee in the case of Mauricio Baez), they were able to resolve at least some of the problems identified in the CVA action plan. Mauricio Baez, for example, had identified the need for audio-visual screens, and these had been procured at the time of the evaluation (Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez). Though it is unclear whether this might have been resolved anyway. In Jardines del Norte, while the bigger issues of

inadequate school space had not yet been addressed by local or national authorities (they were sending a letter to the district to address the issue on the day of evaluation interviews), they had been able to resolve more minor issues identified in the action plan such as flooding in the bathrooms (Interview Student, Jardines del Norte). Again, it is possible that these issues might well have been achieved without the CVA process.

As Figure 14 below shows, at the time of writing, schools had identified an average of 4 action points per action plan and had implemented 42% of planned actions.

FIGURE 14. Action Points in in CVA Action Plans

UNIT	TOTAL ACTION POINTS IN 60 SCHOOLS	ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED	% PLANNED ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED
Number/Percentage	254	110	42%

Source: World Vision Action Plan Registry, 2023

Just over a third of schools had implemented the majority of issues raised in their action plans by the end of the project. Specifically, 24/60 schools had implemented more than half of the action points identified in action plans. This was the case in El Quemado (3/6 planned actions), Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León (5/6), Danilo Ginebra (4/6) and Los Mamayes (4/5).²³ Most notable among these in Los Mamayes was the procurement of 3 mobile classrooms to expand the space of the school (deemed inadequate for 98 students). These had not arrived at the time of the evaluation visit. However, the school reported that engineers had come to visit the school for the purpose (Interview Psychologist, Los Mamayes; Outcome Harvest). The level of implementation of action plans in *Leer*-supported schools was roughly the same as the average, though several had very high rates of resolution. Paradoxically, schools which the project considered had least support from the government had a resolution rate very slightly higher than the average. Yet, this may well represent the fact that they were most receptive to any new intervention.

Infrastructure issues were among the most important ones identified by schools. The second most important issue identified by schools was the quality of school food. The case of the Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León in Figure 15 below illustrates how the CVA process helped school stakeholders to resolve the problem of poor-quality food supply.

FIGURE 15: Changing Food Suppliers in Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León

For some time prior to the project, students at the Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León school had complained about the poor quality of food from local providers.

On the 14th of July 2022, the project implemented phase 2 of the CVA process where participants evaluated the basic services at the school through focus groups. These focus groups revealed that all groups saw a big problem with the food provided, and in the APMAE group they agreed that they would take actions to address this problem. Interviews and small group discussions with parents and

²³ Jardines del Norte had implemented 2/6 and Mauricio Baez 1/3 action points at the time of writing.

teachers at endline also revealed the poor quality of food, lack of variety on the menu and that the portions became smaller over time.

According to the World Vision project team, the APMAE committed to visit the school during lunch hours to try the food each week and test food quality. This was confirmed by APMAE representatives. This action, which the APMAE had not conducted previously, motivated them to request that the school change providers, as the quality had not improved after they tested it, and students were increasingly bringing their own food to eat at school instead. A small group discussion with students at endline also confirmed this.

On the 13th of October 2022, the school developed the CVA action plan. Given the concerns over the provider identified in phase 2, in the meeting the school management team shared that the school has chosen a new supplier. Though it was also revealed in interviews at endline that it was not wholly uncommon to change food providers. The action plan included an activity to conduct spot checks of the quality of food with the new supplier and the evaluation can confirm that the APMAE had continued doing this. The students consulted mentioned that while previously they had not had lunch at the school and brought their own food, they were now eating at the canteen. The evaluation could confirm this in person, and the evaluator was even able to taste the food with the APMAE. Those consulted argued that the quality had improved, and at least in the view of the evaluator, the quality of food was decent.

Sources: Outcome Harvest, interviews, SGD, site visit²⁴

In Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León, in addition to the case of school food described above, there were several changes that school stakeholders considered to be significant. Indeed, it was noted that immediately after making the action plan there were changes (Interview Teacher, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). The World Vision team recommended holding a “Parents’ Day” on a Sunday to mobilize funds to procure new (safer) iron railings on the first floor of classrooms (SGD APMAE, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León). By the time of the evaluation, these railings had already been put up.

Several of the schools have incorporated action plans from the CVA process directly into AOPs, though likely not as many as originally planned. It is difficult to assess what proportion of schools made progress in this regard due to data limitations. World Vision could potentially gain access to this data, but AOPs are typically defined at the end of the school year, and the school year had not ended at the time of the evaluation. The Ercilia Pepin Estrella – Villa Pompa school, for example, was known by the project team to have incorporated action points into their AOP (Interview Headteacher, Ercilia Pepin Estrella). This underscores some important learning in the project regarding whether the CVA process and the AOP planning process can be adequately aligned. The evaluation found that these two processes were not particularly well synchronized. This was mostly due to exogenous reasons rather than planning failures. COVID-19 caused the main actions of the project with schools to be significantly delayed. By mid-term (July 2022), only a very small proportion of schools (3/60) had conducted all three phases of the model. However, by endline, 58 schools had developed action plans. This suggests that there is some potential for further integration between the protocol

²⁴ The evidence to support this case is high and World Vision’s contribution to this is considered medium.

and AOPs. Yet, it will be difficult to perceive this integration until the next school year in September 2023, by which time the project will have ended.

Linking school actions to the chain of management at district, regional and national levels

At baseline, MINERD staff interviewed argued that regional and district technicians were empowered and had been mobilizing APMAEs. District and provincial community participation technicians also made efforts to conduct oversight of school committees' activities and deliver training to them. District technicians interviewed sustained that they were *already* conducting various events and, save for the pandemic, were visiting schools with some degree of regularity. Some noted that they were able to provide some training on APMAE's roles and functions and continued guidance to headteachers virtually, and another suggested that the APMAE's level of understanding was relatively high (Aston, 2021). School stakeholders noted that communication was often via WhatsApp and by phone, and occasionally in person. Various headteachers confirmed that there was a high level of accompaniment from district technicians (e.g., Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra; Headteacher, Emma Balaguer). However, these technicians have no mandate to channel financial resources. So, there were (and remain) significant limits to what issues they can resolve directly, and which need to be coordinated and agreed with higher-level authorities.

At mid-term, the evaluation found that there was a high level of receptiveness to the World Vision project from district technicians. District technicians interviewed in Bonao and in Santo Domingo were clearly supportive and were keen to engage in the project (Interview District Technician, Bonao; Interview District Technician, Santo Domingo). Both were informed in broad terms about the project and were clearly supportive of World Vision in general. However, neither were particularly well informed about the specifics of the project, nor how and when they should engage. By mid-term, only 2 of the CVA interface meetings had been co-facilitated by governmental actors, for example.

By endline, with the training of 140 technicians in the CVA methodology and a protocol co-developed with technicians, they were better prepared to conduct oversight of the process and help to link school actions to the chain of management at district, regional, and national levels. By endline, 48 technicians were supporting the 60 schools and were taking actions to implement action points. Not all of these had the capacity to co-facilitate the CVA process and the World Vision team noted that some would require additional support, but some were co-facilitating the process. The evaluation unfortunately lacks data on the number of visits by technicians across the 60 schools, as this is currently unavailable.

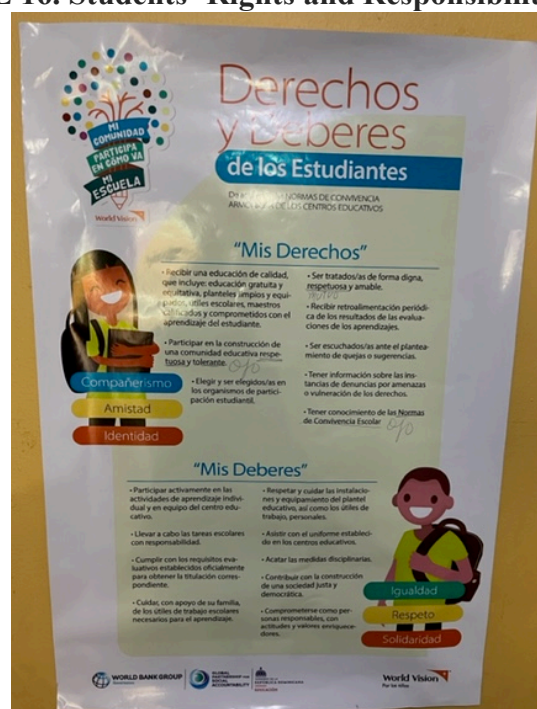
The protocol potentially enables technicians to conduct more effective school oversight at distance. In addition to providing new instruments for monitoring and follow up, as the Director of Community Participation expressed it, what the protocol provides is a means for district technicians to conduct a greater degree of oversight and support at distance. Not only did the project train a high number of district technicians, with scope well beyond the 60 project schools, the project team also shared the action plans of the 60 schools with district technicians.

This provides them useful information regarding which priority issues in schools need to be addressed and potentially what support they can provide to resolving these with the support of school psychologists, the school management team, APMAEs, and students.

There is also some evidence of wider uptake of the CVA process beyond the 60 project schools. On the 6th of February 2023, the Director of Education for Region 15 in Santo Domingo wrote to the project team requesting support to the Unión Panamericana school, to provide guidance regarding the role and administration of oversight spaces for teachers and managers (Correspondence with World Vision, 06/02/23). The National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology asked World Vision to conduct a workshop on the 8th of March 2013 for 16 national technicians. This demonstrates that information about the CVA process spread beyond the 60 schools and the project intervention districts. A similar process of wider uptake was also found in the Matías Ramón Mella school. Both cases are described in more detail in the next section.

Another case of uptake relates to the project’s poster on the rights and responsibilities of students. The project poster on rights and responsibilities which was designed to sensitize students about issues of participation was shared with all 60 schools. The example below was in a visible location in Los Jardines and it was even annotated (see Figure 16 below). The same applies to the complaints line for issues of abuse. That these posters were placed in visible locations, and this suggests that these materials are considered useful. While it was unclear who annotated this “Students’ Rights and Responsibilities” poster (when students were asked at mid-term), it seems likely that a teacher annotated it with the words “pay attention” (*ojo*) on key areas related to mutual respect. Figure 16 below is a good demonstration that project materials were in use by the end of the project.

FIGURE 16. Students’ Rights and Responsibilities Poster



Source: Evaluator’s photo in Aston, 2022a

This poster was visible in several other schools visited at endline. The specific poster above was still in place in Los Jardines at endline, and the evaluator also saw several copies visibly displayed in Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León, Los Mamayes, and Danilo Ginebra, for example. This suggests that these materials are likely to be widely in use.

These materials were also considered to be useful by national-level authorities. This poster was also seen in a visible location in the Vice-ministry of Decentralization and Participation just outside the Vice-Minister's office when the evaluation visited the Ministry. So, there is clear demonstration that some of the project's materials are deemed to be highly useful by MINERD. Pablo Miguel Ramirez Ogando, the Director General of Community Participation requested World Vision to share 3,050 of these posters to be distributed in each of the country's districts (Director General of Community Participation Correspondence with World Vision, 01/12/22).

The World Vision project team suggested that they *may* have potentially influenced a Departmental Order which created Regional and District Dialogue Platforms for School Management. However, on closer investigation, we can confirm a separate origin and rationale for the *Mesas de Diálogo*. The *Mesas de Diálogo* are mostly considered to be a political bargain to prevent issues like teachers' strikes (Vice Minister for Decentralization and Participation). It should also be noted that there are previous experiences in the country establishing sub-national multi-stakeholder platforms for accountability and responsiveness such as in Community Reports (*Reportes Comunitarios*) in the *Solidaridad* cash transfer program.

The project also developed an online citizen engagement platform where stakeholders (government, parents, school administrators and teachers) can participate in the monitoring of the school performance and exchange views and experiences. When the evaluator visited the Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, one of their team mentioned that they were using the platform. So, it is clear that at least some government technicians are using the platform.

More speculatively, a number of stakeholders noted that there might be potential future links to other government efforts. Those consulted in MINERD suggested that there might be further links that could be made in relation to a World Bank project that supported centre committees (Interview Vice Minister for Decentralization and Participation). Yet, World Bank officials in the evaluation workshop noted that this project had already finished. There was also commentary on the potential links with Annual Operating Plans (AOPs), as discussed above and also on links with the Parents' School (*Escuela de Padres*). These recently changed institutional location to the Directorate of Orientation and Psychology. Given that the project has trained all of these staff, there seems to be a credible link. In Los Mamayes school, for example, it was argued that these links were already being made independently of the Directorate (Interview Psychologist, Los Mamayes).

Learning, adaptation, and use of evidence

The project has made several contributions to knowledge on collaborative social accountability. Between the 10th and 13th of May 2021 the project manager virtually attended the 7th Global Forum of the Global Partnership Social Accountability. The project manager at the time, Genedis Vicente, made a presentation as a panellist at the 2022 GPSA conference²⁵ and wrote a blog that was published on the GPSA's website on establishing collaborative work through social accountability.²⁶ This therefore demonstrates that the project has contributed to knowledge production on collaborative social accountability for a global audience.

To a lesser extent, the project also produced knowledge for a national audience. The project's website also includes three short blogs²⁷ in Spanish related to the challenges of COVID-19, the national youth day, and a World Vision study on literacy levels, and another blog on World Vision's website on MINERD and World Vision related to an event for national technicians.

In terms of promoting learning on collaborative social accountability with a national audience the project conducted a National Congress on Good Practices in Community Participation to Support the Quality of Education on the 28th March 2023 (Panorama TV, 2023). There were over one hundred participants, including 60 representatives from regional schools, 18 school headteachers, 18 community participation technicians, 18 teaching link technicians and representatives from the USAID, the World Bank, and World Vision. The event gave Cabirmota school the opportunity to share their experience with the participants, and it also offered an opportunity to share project materials with those present. The event was widely reported in the media in [Diario Digital](#), [Puerto Plata Digital](#), [El Caribe](#), [Diario Libre](#), [El Día](#), and [Diario Social RD](#), and [Noticias RNN](#).

The evaluation also found several examples in which project learning has contributed to an improvement of project operational strategies. The project team has conducted two internal learning moments. One of these was related to COVID-19 planning (*Plan de Intervención del Proyecto Mi Comunidad Participa en Cómo Va Mi Escuela CVME 2020*). This was designed to adapt the project during the peak of COVID-19 and adapt the CVA methodology to include an online platform. The mid-term evaluation was also a key reflection moment for the project team, and it promoted several important adaptations.

There were two indicators that World Vision was reporting to the World Bank without having gathered baseline data during the CVA process. Initially, the plan was to collect data on these two indicators because they are common questions in the CVA guide. These indicators were:

²⁵ See the list of panellists here: <https://thegpsa.org/8th-global-partners-forum-panelists/>

²⁶ See here: <https://thegpsa.org/story/vision-mundial-fomenta-el-trabajo-colaborativo-a-traves-de-la-auditoria-social/>

²⁷ See here: <https://micomunidadparticipaencomovamiescuela.org.do/blog/>

- The proportion of parents who can identify at least one role of the APMAE
- Parents who report that service providers resolve the priority problems in their school

However, the project therefore has not valid data to report on these two indicators.

Nonetheless, the CVA guide does list relevant standards expected by law and CVA action plans also provide a proxy of the capacity of the CVA model to contribute to the resolution of priority problems identified by parents in focus groups during phase 2 of the CVA process. So, even absent these data, there is some evidence of parents' increased knowledge and of service providers resolving priority problems in schools.

To what extent do the results validate the GPSA's theory of action and its adaptation to the Dominican Republic education, and governance contexts through the project?

To not merely repeat what has been documented previously, this section will provide a brief review of the project's theory of change, realist mechanisms of change,²⁸ and the validity of key assumptions. It will then consider the validity of key aspects of the GPSA's broader theory of action upon which the project's theory of change was based.

Recall that the main pathways of change identified in the project's theory of change were the following:

- 1) Activating community participation within targeted schools;**
- 2) Replication and institutionalization of collaborative social accountability in school management;**
- 3) Linking school actions to the chain of management at district, regional and national levels;**
- 4) Learning, adaptation, and use of evidence.**

The following section will be organized along these interlocking pathways.

Activating community participation within targeted schools

The evaluation can confirm that there was active community participation in most of the 60 project schools. The project's online platform demonstrated that there were some significant limitations in participants' knowledge of decentralisation, civic participation, and school management processes. However, as there was no post-test conducted after the CVA trainings, the evaluation cannot confirm precisely which knowledge increased across all 60 schools, only in the 9 schools consulted in mid-term and endline evaluations.

58 schools participated in capacity building activities, comprising 2,860 people. This included the mobilization of new stakeholders such as neighbourhood associations, churches, and even the teachers' unions. There is evidence from both the mid-term and endline evaluations that many school community stakeholders acquired new knowledge and skills to conduct collaborative social accountability processes through multi-stakeholder compacts. Interviews and FGDs with community members in 4 schools at mid-term demonstrated that there were some increases in awareness and knowledge of school management processes and civic engagement. Interviews and SGDs at endline in 7 schools further demonstrated that participants had acquired some new knowledge regarding service standards, civic participation, and skills to participate in the CVA process. There is also evidence in various cases that the process enhanced the motivation of various school stakeholder groups (particularly APMAEs and students) to resolve priority problems, and the interactions between stakeholder groups was generally viewed positively in schools visited. Indeed, the

²⁸ This will be done by drawing on mechanisms from Westhorp et al. (2014); Ball and Westhorp (2018) and Aston and Zimmer Santos (2022) in particular.

development and implementation of CVA action plans in 58/60 schools and taking actions in 44 of these are good proxies of active participation in most targeted schools.

However, stakeholder participation was not necessarily continuous throughout all three phases of CVA or across school years, as there was fluidity in who formed part of APMAEs, which parents had children in school and which teachers were in place during the three years of the project. Moreover, some stakeholder groups played a more limited role in monitoring the implementation of action plans (notably teachers and students). So, there were still opportunities for the process to be more inclusive and for some stakeholder groups to play a more meaningful role throughout some phases of the adapted CVA process.

The evaluation found evidence for three mechanisms of change under this domain of change in the theory of change:

- Community capacity
- Increasing citizen engagement
- Eyes and ears

Community capacity: There was relatively widespread evidence of an increasing community capacity mechanism (see Ball and Westhorp, 2018). The evaluation found some evidence across all 7 schools visited at endline that knowledge and skills had improved and there was an increased sense of self and collective efficacy, most notably for APMAEs and students. On one hand, the sense of motivation, and self and collective efficacy was frequently linked to valuation of the *style* of World Vision’s facilitation and to the personal characteristics of the project team. On the other hand, skills and “learning by doing” typically related directly to the perceived utility of CVA *tools*. Many stakeholders consulted affirmed the practical value of focus group discussions and clear action plans for stakeholder groups to represent their interests and to collectively resolve priority problems.

Increasing citizen engagement: The evaluation also found some evidence of an increasing citizen engagement mechanism (see Ball and Westhorp, 2018). As some schools have only recently completed phase 3 of the CVA model, at the time of writing, there has been relatively limited time for this mechanism to fire in the majority of schools. However, in several cases studied, the evaluation found that school community stakeholders had increased monitoring and advocacy for education services. This, in turn, increased government awareness of service delivery issues and community concerns in relation to services and increases pressure for accountability by service providers and governments. This mechanism can be said to have fired in the case of Danilo Ginebra’s advocacy to repair the school’s roof and in the case of Los Mamayes’ mobile classrooms, for example. In both cases, community members brought their concerns on infrastructure directly to the district and beyond.

Eyes and ears: The evaluation also found evidence of an eyes and ears mechanism in the case of the Danilo Ginebra school alongside an increasing citizen engagement mechanism (see Westhorp *et al.* 2014), because AMPAE representatives acted as local data collectors related

to the leaky roof and this information was then forwarded to both district and national level authorities which had the authority to mobilize the resources to rebuild the school roof.

It is possible that there was also what we might call a “spotlight” mechanism because the video being released to CNN may well have expedited the procurement process to rebuild the roof. Yet, the evaluation has not been able to view this evidence or how it was received by MINERD officials. A “spotlight” mechanism would differ from either a “sticks” mechanism, as there was no actual application of sanctions, or a “big brother is watching” mechanism, as it is unclear that those in the Ministry acted in anticipation of the fear that senior figures within MINERD would punish them (see Aston and Zimmer Santos, 2022). Here a “spotlight” mechanism would be where civil society groups raise public awareness of their issues through the media (a form of public plea), yet without the clear intention to name, blame, and shame public authorities into action.

Replication and institutionalization of collaborative social accountability in school management

The project had important MINERD champions that supported replication and institutionalization. These included the OCI and later the Director General of Community Participation and Vice Minister for Decentralization and Participation, but there was limited support from IDEC’s Oversight Committee, as had been originally planned. As mentioned previously, the project trained 140 technicians and sensitized 306 regional and district community participation technicians.²⁹ Project reach therefore went far beyond the 60 targeted schools. The final protocol for the Oversight of School Participation Entities was co-developed with MINERD and is currently in place. The commitment from the MINERD seems credible, but there are political economy challenges ahead to secure substantive institutionalization and/or replication. 58 schools are using the protocol to monitor action plans and 44 of these have implemented actions, though there is variation in the level of results achieved through the implementation of the protocol and action plans.

There were several means by which the project was able to promote replication or institutionalization. In Figure 17 below the evaluation also added reproduction as it is related to dissemination of materials rather than the CVA model or protocol per se.

FIGURE 17: Types of Institutionalization

Institutionalization	Replication	Reproduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools incorporate CVA action plan items into AOPs (e.g., Ercilia Pepin Estrella). National government authorities request to roll out CVA training beyond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools propose to replicate the CVA process independently (Los Mamayes, Danilo Ginebra, and Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National government champions request printing of Ordinance 09-2000 (Director General of Community Participation).

²⁹ It is presently unclear what degree of overlap there is between these two figures, because these data have not yet been fully systematized to identify such overlaps.

<p>the 60 intervention schools and 7 regions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government representatives request training for the whole unit (Directorate of Orientation and Psychology). • Co-developing an informal policy instrument to implement and adapt the CVA process (i.e., protocol). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New school asked to be included in project (Ramón Emilio Jiménez). • New school replicated 3 phases of the CVA process (Matías Ramón Mella). • Local government champions (e.g., district or provincial technicians) recommend the CVA model to other schools in their locations (e.g., Unión Panamericana). • The neighbourhood association Juan Maria Beato of the District of Jayaco in Bonao replicated the action planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National government champions request reprinting of rights and responsibilities poster (Director General of Community Participation).
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In terms of mechanisms of change, the evaluation found evidence for 3 mechanisms under this domain of change in the theory of change:

- Activating leadership
- It's working!
- Mutual accountability

Several of the changes above reflect an “activating leadership” mechanism of some form (see Ball and Westhorp, 2018), as leaders such as the Vice Minister for Decentralization and Participation, Director General of Community Participation, and Director for the Directorate of Orientation and Psychology were prompted to take the initiative to expand the reach of the CVA process and underpinning policy architecture. This was through: (1) requesting an expansion in the reach of CVA training and sensitization, (2) deciding to replicate the model in non-project schools, and; (3) requesting the printing or reprinting of accountability materials. These are therefore examples of scaling out, but from the top down, rather than trickle up, as in World Vision’s Nobo Jatra project in Bangladesh (Long and Panday, 2020).

It’s working! The evaluation also found something resembling an “it’s working!” mechanism (see Westhorp *et al.* 2014). The commitments to replicate the CVA process in the next school year in Danilo Ginebra, Los Mamayes, and Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León seem to reflect the motivation of an “it’s working!” mechanism because the reasons these schools provided for wanting to continue the process was typically related to the results that they had achieved in the first usage, as demonstrated by high action plan resolution rate. Each of these schools had implemented more than half of action points in these plans. In the case of the Unión Panamericana school described below, a district technician also saw value in the CVA model and that it was working in other schools in the district and recommended it to the Directorate

of Orientation and Psychology who, in turn, saw it as a potential solution to some of the school's problems. This was a form of scaling out horizontally. Similarly, in Matías Ramón Mella the project team reported that the school's headteacher became interested in the methodology because another regional technician explained to them about how the CVA process worked and the positive reception that they saw in several other schools in the area.

Mutual accountability: One of the project team was able to replicate the CVA process in the neighbourhood association, Juan Maria Beato, in the District of Jayaco in Bonao. This neighbourhood association was not directly connected to one of the 60 project schools, but to another school (Padre Betancourt). Instead, the rationale for conducting the process was because the project team member came from the community and convinced the neighbourhood association to implement the process. According to the team member and photo documentation, the neighbourhood association was able to implement all three phases of the CVA process and they were able to include numerous members of the wider municipality. The priorities to address were related to improving the local road, the materials of the health clinic, among others (Interview, World Vision Team). The mechanism of change in this case most closely resembles “mutual accountability (Westhorp *et al.* 2014),” in which all parties to an agreed action plan monitor the performance of all others. Though in this particular case, what initiated the process in the first place was that the team member was already active in the neighbourhood association and was considering what from her work might benefit her community. They felt that the action planning process would be particularly useful, and this was discussed with the secretary of the neighbourhood committee, who accompanied the process. As with several other examples, this case demonstrates that relationships matter at least as much as tools and techniques, because action plans do not sell and implement themselves.

The evaluation found relatively limited mechanistic evidence underpinning schools incorporating CVA action plans in AOPs, in part because most plans for the 2022-2023 year had not been developed at the time of data collection, and as only 3 schools had developed action plans at mid-term, there was limited evidence on the reasoning of those schools at that time (Aston, 2022a). However, the evaluation can confirm that the Ercilia Pepin Estrella school, for example, did incorporate action points into their AOP. In this case, the reasons provided for incorporating elements of the work in the AOP was as a means of recognising the continued support from World Vision. They valued the workshops that World Vision had provided and wanted these to continue, even though the project was set to end at the end of the school year (Interview Headteacher, Ercilia Pepin Estrella). So, this demonstrates that the project was able to help facilitate this form of institutionalization. It also seems highly likely that several other schools have done the same, but the evaluation lacks empirical support at the time of writing.

Linking school actions to the chain of management at district, regional and national levels

Linking district, regional, and national levels was originally assumed to be a likely strength of the project when it was first co-designed by the GPSA, but until mid-2022 this was, in fact, a key weakness. The absence of the Oversight Committee and limited substantive

support from the Vice Ministries for Participation and Decentralization until September 2022 meant that there was a gap in support at the highest level. With delays due to COVID-19 and changes in political authorities, between late 2021 and mid-2022 the project team instead focused attention at getting buy in at school level. District-level technicians were supportive at mid-term but were not well informed about the details of the CVA process and their potential role in this (Aston, 2022a). So, the project pivoted attention to onboard district community participation technicians, sensitizing them to the role they could play, particularly in phase 3 of the CVA process. By late 2022, the project gained substantial support from national level authorities to co-convene sensitization and training events with community participation technicians, and this allowed the project to expand its reach beyond the 60 schools. Engaging these technicians in the development and adaptation of the protocol also raises the potential that community participation technicians will be able to implement the protocol.

It is possible that the online platform may play some role in streamlining relevant information and the task of oversight, if the information produced is sufficiently complete (i.e., representative) and displayed in an accessible and convincing way. However, at the time of writing, this activity of displaying this information in a visibly appealing way had not been completed.

In terms of mechanisms of change, the evaluation found evidence for two mechanisms under this domain of change in the theory of change:

- Aligning levels in the system
- Activating leadership

Aligning levels of the system: There is some evidence of a mechanism of aligning levels of the system (see Ball and Westhorp, 2018). This mechanism was in evidence in the case of the development of the protocol. The protocol offered national-level authorities the opportunity to align school-level, district-level, province-level, and national-level procedures alongside the Ordinance 09-2000 which legislates the roles of APMAEs. While there are some other cases of vertical integration in schools visited at endline (e.g., Danilo Ginebra, Los Mamayes), there has been limited evidence to date of a trickle up process such as that found in World Vision's Nobo Jatra GPSA evaluation (Long and Pandey, 2020). Instead, we see technicians convincing other schools within their catchment areas to undertake the CVA process (Unión Panamericana and Matías Ramón Mella). The evaluation also found evidence for an activating leadership mechanism in the examples provided above. These were top-down linking between levels.

Learning, adaptation, and use of evidence

For the fourth pathway, several of the mid-term recommendations were clearly taken on board and appear to have contributed to improved results. Particular recommendations acted on included: (a) involving psychologists more explicitly in the process to play a more central role at school level, and (b) ensuring that district participation technicians are sufficiently informed about the CVA process and to position the relevance of the CVA model

and protocol at district level, especially in Regions 15 and 16.³⁰ However, as the project focused on accelerating implementation of phase 3 in all schools by the end of May 2023, the team has had limited time to reflect except through the process of the final evaluation. It will be important for the project to reflect collectively with both World Bank and MINERD colleagues regarding issues of sustainability. Some of these will be discussed in the following section.

By mid-term, there was limited evidence to demonstrate the uptake by the World Bank or other donor/development actors. The evaluator conducted an interview with one technical advisor at the World Bank who revealed that the project had been included as a “good practice” case in a document the Citizen Engagement department at the World Bank had produced. In this sense, there was some clear interest demonstrated by parts of the World Bank. However, there were various misunderstandings in the document which unknowingly conflated the model in the CVME project and the World Vision project. So, the “good practice” documented was largely erroneous.

By endline, the World Bank team which had conducted several project visits and continued to express support, and with the CVA model more advanced and its institutionalization more likely through the protocol, there is perhaps another opportunity for the World Bank to reflect on what support can reasonably be offered to support wider uptake and adaptation of such a model within Bank projects in the country, where relevant. The GPSA-funded Collaborative Social Accountability for Improved Governance in Protecting Biodiversity Hotspots project implemented by *Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo* (INTEC) in the Dominican Republic also employs scorecards. So, there is at least some potential learning on the value addition of similar tools in different sectors.

As the fourth theory of change pathway is internal to the project, the evaluation has not presented mechanisms of change.

In Figure 18 below, the evaluation presents an update of the mid-term evaluation’s appraisal of the validity of key assumptions in the theory of change.

FIGURE 18: Validity of Theory of Change Assumptions

ASSUMPTION	VALIDITY
<i>Activating leadership of different actors enabled to participate in school management:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteachers and leadership team • APMAE leaders • District and provincial technicians for participation 	Valid: While the evaluation cannot make a fully reliable judgement across all 60 schools, the 4 schools visited in the midterm evaluation and 7 schools visited at endline demonstrated that, for this sample of schools and district technicians consulted, there was sufficiently committed (or active) leadership. In one school, this commitment was borderline by the headteacher, but other members of the school management team seemed sufficiently committed. The project team has acknowledged that district and provincial technicians needed further information before the start of the 2022/23 school year so that they could

³⁰ The evaluation can also confirm that key administrative tasks were delivered: agreement with MINERD, audit report in line with expectations, baseline, and mid-term evaluations (and this endline evaluation) were delivered, and a COVID-19 adaptation plan was submitted to the World Bank (see Aston, 2022a, for further details).

	participate actively in interface meetings. This issue was addressed.
<p><i>Active community participation in focus groups and interface meetings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Local networks who do not currently participate 	<p>Valid: At mid-term, it was premature to make a judgement on active community participation in interface meetings as only 3/60 schools had reached phase 3 of the CVA process by that point. By endline, the evaluation is more confident that the project triggered active community participation as 58/60 schools reached phase 3 and 44 schools has implemented action points. We can establish that there was an increase in the number of people who participated in school management processes through the focus groups and interface meetings. This is also confirmed in the 7 schools consulted at endline.</p> <p>Data on the participation of parents in focus groups demonstrate that brute participation has surpassed project targets. The evaluation also has some limited information on the participation of local networks such as several neighbourhood associations, foundations (e.g., Fé y Alegria), churches, and local clubs. While there were various examples across schools, not all schools were able to secure the participation of networks such as neighbourhood associations.</p>
<p><i>Coherence between existing school management processes and new processes promoted by the project:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of action plans • No/low duplication of efforts between processes <p><i>A level of cooperation with local networks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base organizations • NGOs 	<p>Partial: It might reasonably be argued that the project's main efforts to ensure coherence was at national level with the co-construction of the protocol with national, provincial, and district technicians and other ministerial decision-makers.</p> <p>At local level, all headteachers interviewed at mid-term expressed the need to coordinate any new plans with existing school plans. Various efforts were made by the project to ensure coherence with existing school management processes and with the interests of different stakeholders directly linked to school management (centre committees, AMPAEs, student councils) and those indirectly linked to school management such as neighbourhood associations, foundations, churches, and local clubs. Focus groups in phase 2 of the CVA process reflected the views and interests of these different groups. So, they were offered with the opportunity to align existing efforts and new plans.</p> <p>One potentially important limitation was that the level of coherence between CVA action plans and school AOPs. The level of coherence is not known across all 60 schools. The evaluation has some evidence that action points have been included in AOPs, but the timing of the CVA process was not synchronized perfectly with the AOP planning process, given delays from COVID-19 and the change of government authorities between 2020 and the last quarter of 2022.</p> <p>In addition, the overhang of the CVME project (or study) was largely an inhibiting influence for the project, so there were negative interaction effects rather than productive coordination.</p>
<p><i>School information available on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency to enable informed 	<p>Partial: Overall, schools provided some level of information on most key issues in relation to standards (phase 1 of the CVA model) and action plans (phase 3). There are, however, data gaps for the evaluation to make a firm judgement on the validity of this</p>

<p>dialogue to solve problems (e.g., AOPs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgets and school materials 	<p>assumption across all 60 schools. The World Bank did not share the scorecard data from all the 60 schools with the project. So, the project lacked this baseline information on school performance. Similarly, in the baseline, mid-term and endline, the evaluation found that not all school management teams shared substantial information with other stakeholders on budgets. So, this assumption is only partially valid.</p>
<p>Coordination between different levels of oversight, from the management teams, regional and district technicians, and the central oversight committee and national coalition</p>	<p>Valid: The national Oversight Committee was not functional between 2019 and mid-2022, and despite various efforts from World Vision, coordination with stakeholders at national level was relatively shallow until the mid-term (July 2022). Few district technicians had been briefed on the CVA model by that point. However, this significantly improved during the 2022-2023 school year with the arrival of new leadership in MINERD. Since September 2022, in particular, there was a noticeable shift from MINERD in supporting project efforts and enhancing the chances of sustaining parts of the CVA model through the protocol agreed in February 2023. There was also substantially greater coordination between national and district-level technicians in relation to the protocol.</p>
<p>The accessibility, quality, and utility of information in action plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggregation of information from each of the 60 schools at district and national level. 	<p>Partial: The evaluation cannot systematically appraise the accessibility, quality, and utility of information in action plans aggregated at district and national level. 58/60 schools developed action plans and monitored their implementation. These plans were disseminated at district level with district technicians, and aggregated scorecard data will also be presented at national level. The endline assessment in 7 schools demonstrates that the information in action plans was accessible and useful to several of the schools. The scorecard format was also discussed at length with MINERD colleagues. So, it likely responds to their needs to a high degree. Though the evaluation was not able to confirm this with them directly as aggregated scorecard data was not available at the time of primary data collection.</p>

Validity of the GPSA's Broader Theory of Action

With regards to the GPSA's broader theory of action illustrated in Figure 1, under **initial steps**, support from the GPSA technical team was very strong at project inception (initial steps for identifying high impact potential) but fell significantly following the exit of a key member of technical staff. There was continued and substantial support in relation to financial resources and project management, but technical advice was limited until the endline evaluation where the GPSA team reengaged more substantively in relation to advice on the format for dissemination of the scorecard. There was abundant evidence of multi-stakeholder compacts developing capacities to engage meaningfully and collaboratively in the policymaking, implementation, and delivery process. Though this only materialized after at least 18 months of project implementation.

In terms of **core actions**, regarding civil society partnerships and relevant government counterparts engaging in collaborative social accountability processes, the evaluation can confirm by endline that there was meaningful engagement from many government and civil society stakeholders at all relevant levels. This was not comprehensively in place by mid-term. So, there was a substantial improvement in progress since mid-2022. As mentioned elsewhere,

a large part of this was due to increased support from ministerial counterparts, something which was largely absent previously from key parts of the Ministry. The evaluation found that the World Bank supported meaningful engagement between World Vision and the Ministry of Education. While World Vision had excellent connections to the Ministry of Education already, it is without doubt that the World Bank, which has provided tens of millions of dollars to the education sector, carries considerable weight and was a supportive influence behind the concept of the protocol. World Bank project management staff were also considered to be highly supportive by the project team. Support from World Bank sector teams was less in evidence. This is likely due to the fact that the World Bank's team in the Dominican Republic is relatively small. The evaluation also found several strong examples where social accountability mechanisms were used to address obstacles to improving targeted policy failures. Most notably among these were those related to the problems of infrastructure and school food which were felt in many schools.

With regards to **learning and growth**, lessons from other contexts within the GPSA portfolio, or the World Bank more broadly, appeared to have had only a very minor bearing on project design or adaptation. The World Vision team presented at one GPSA conference, but it is less clear that there was a highly useful feedback loop from wider learning at the conference into the project. The same applies to the role of GPSA knowledge brokers. While the World Vision team was grateful for the space to present at the GPSA conference in 2021 and to writing a blog on the GPSA website, the feedback loop from other projects on what works was less evident in adaptations to the project approach or tools. Language barriers for the project team were an issue. But the team also commented that Dominicans do not consider it appropriate for them to be compared to non-Latin American countries, given stark institutional and cultural differences. So, the task remains to identify which contexts (including another GPSA project in the Dominican Republic) and sectors are a useful fit for meaningful comparative learning. The evaluator shared some World Vision and wider sectoral experience with the project team both in the baseline assessment and shared World Vision tools used outside Latin America and the Caribbean but was very careful to limit technical recommendations, as this would compromise the independence of the evaluation.

With respect to **medium-term results** (beyond the official scope of the project), there is relatively limited evidence that governments have yet taken corrective measures at scale, but at school level there are several examples of school stakeholders taking such measures in addressing problems identified in CVA action plans. The experiences from the project do provide some lessons that are of wider relevance to social accountability efforts in the Dominican Republic, and beyond (some of these are discussed further in the conclusion below). The Dominican Republic government has taken up some elements of collaborative social accountability through the co-development of the protocol, and some government stakeholders argued that there was a stronger partnership with World Vision was stronger than ever. So, this offers some promise. Though whether strong partnerships will be sustained depend upon the political economy of resource allocation in the coming months and years.

The evaluation did not cover **long term results** in any depth as this was out of scope. Though several examples of responsiveness documented in the evaluation have the potential to improve public service delivery and other education outcomes in the future.

What unintended outcomes (positive and negative) were produced, including spill-over effects?

The MPCVME project's theory of change was a compass for the kinds of intended outcomes that might be produced. However, the evaluation was also able to find some positive spillover effects that were not directly intended.

The clearest example of positive spillover effects outside of the 60 project schools is in the case of the the Unión Panamericana school. After receiving information on World Vision, the regional technician for region 15 and MNIERD's National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology asked World Vision to provide guidance regarding the role and administration of oversight spaces for teachers and managers (World Vision Correspondence 14/02/23; World Vision Correspondence, 06/02/23). Further information on the case is presented in Figure 19 below:

FIGURE 19: Replication of the CVA Model in the Unión Panamericana School

The Unión Panamericana school was previously considered to be a model school, but it had fallen from grace in recent years. In the 2021/22 school year, there had been complaints of indiscipline, and low participation from families. In the first week of February 2023, the regional technician and the orientation and psychology colleagues from region 15 were alerted to the fact that a student had shared a video of himself having sex with another under-age student wearing school clothing, and thus led to the rumour that this had taken place at the school during school hours. The school was widely criticised in the media (Educación sin Fronteras, 2023). The Ministry of Education mandated an intervention by the National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology. It was argued that the children felt ashamed of their school and often took off their uniform when going to their neighbourhoods (SGD National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, Santo Domingo).

During the APMAE day celebration event, the regional technician for region 15 shared with colleagues from MINERD's National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology about the CVA process (SGD National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, Santo Domingo; Interview District Technician, Santo Domingo).

On the 6th of February 2023, the Regional Director of Education for Santo Domingo's region 15 wrote to the project team requesting support to the Unión Panamericana school and to provide guidance regarding the role and administration of oversight spaces for teachers and managers (World Vision Correspondence, 06/02/23). Members of the National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology said that want to restore the school to its previous glory over the short to medium term, and they believed that the CVA process could play a role in that. The staff interviewed said that they liked the idea of an action plan, and they saw that the CVA process was very flexible and thus could be adapted to their needs (SGD National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, Santo Domingo).

In response, the World Vision team met with the National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, which invited World Vision to share the project's social accountability tools and process. World Vision's presentation focused on sharing the methodology, project progress, and the action plans that schools had developed with inputs from students, families, community leaders, teachers, technicians. The National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology then invited World Vision to conduct a workshop on the 8th of March 2013 for 16 national technicians. In the eyes of the project team, this was a large bet on project sustainability by MINERD (SGD National

Directorate of Orientation and Psychology, Santo Domingo). The staff interviewed were planning to start the first phase of CVA the day after the interview.

Sources: World Vision Correspondence; SGD, Interview, video³¹

While this result was certainly hoped for by the project, it was not anticipated. There was a hope that the project might trigger some form of replication, but it was certainly not anticipated that the National Directorate of Orientation and Psychology would employ the CVA process in the Unión Panamericana school independently. Initially, the project had direct engagement in 14 schools in Santo Domingo's region 15 across several districts but had had relatively limited engagement with district technicians (see Aston, 2022a). Following the mid-term evaluation, the team concentrated additional attention on engaging these technicians to play a more active role in the CVA process in schools, and the case above illustrates how, if these district technicians see value in the approach, they can play an important supportive or even catalysing role to promote greater accountability in other schools across their district.

In addition, at least two other schools in a surrounding area asked to be included in the project. When the project team were conducting the baseline for the project and the endline for the CVME project, they visited the school Ramón Emilio Jiménez. Following the visit, the headteacher asked if the school could also be included in project. Since then, the school has participated alongside the other schools in the process. The Matías Ramón Mella school appears to be a similar story to the Unión Panamericana school in terms of how it was included. The project team reported that the headteacher became interested in the methodology because the technician of region 16-06 explained to them about how CVA worked and the positive reception that they saw in several schools. This then prompted the team to carry out a workshop with school stakeholders who then carried out the three phases of CVA independently but had some accompaniment and received further materials from a member of the project team (Correspondence with Team Member, 28/06/23).

Furthermore, as described above, there were various requests from MINERD to expand project reach that were hoped for but unanticipated. The project did not anticipate that it would have the opportunity to sensitize 310 regional and district community participation technicians through a national level workshop or that it would be able to train as many as 140 technicians in the CVA methodology community participation and thus extend the project reach and potential impact far beyond the 60 project schools. Similarly, the requests to publish 5,300 copies of the Ordinance 09-2000 legislating for the roles and responsibilities of AMPAEs and to re-publish the project's students' rights and responsibilities poster produced by the project were both unanticipated.

There were also some examples of the innovative reuse of CVA tools that were unanticipated. As the psychologist in Los Mamayes sustained, they had not used focus groups before in the school and in addition to using them as part of the CVA process they saw value

³¹ The evidence to support this case is high and World Vision's contribution to this is considered high.

in the tool and have used them to resolve other issues in the school such as conflicts between students at school. This was an action point in the CVA action plan, but this shows that tools from phase 2 were used to resolve the problem. So, it is clear that they have been viewed as a useful tool by various project participants. Similarly, the replication of the action planning process by the neighbourhood association Juan Maria Beato of the District of Jayaco in Bonao was also unanticipated but arose from emergent opportunities due to the relationships of the project team and their connection to the community (Interview, Project Team).

There were relatively few negative spill-over effects in the project uncovered by the evaluation. The most prominent negative spill-over effects related to the overlaps between MPCVME project and the CVME project. Given the pandemic, the evaluation for the CVME project and the baseline for the MPCVME project were both delayed. As discussed in the mid-term evaluation (Aston, 2022a), in some schools there was confusion between the two projects and concerns that the findings of the CVME “study,” as they called it, were not shared with them. At the time of the final evaluation, it remains unclear why the findings of the study were not shared with the 60 schools by the World Bank evaluation team. This created some degree of resistance in some schools and made positioning the World Vision project more difficult. What was initially intended to be a highly complementary interaction between the two projects was viewed more as a negative than positive in the eyes of several schools, the World Vision project team, OCI, and some concerns were also expressed by World Bank staff. This therefore suggests that when the World Bank undertakes such studies in the future it will be important to communicate more clearly and responsibly with school stakeholders about project exit and, at a bare minimum, share information on project results back with the schools, as these schools committed substantial time to the study process.

Under what conditions will the results be sustainable? What is the risk that the outcomes achieved will not be sustainable?

To answer this question, the evaluation draws on the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee’s (OECD-DAC) notion of “prospective sustainability”³² which the GPSA has adopted. Guerzovich and Wadeson (forthcoming: 3) note that:

‘During the lifetime of a project and at its closure, it is not possible to have *certainty* about the future in a complex system. However, it is both possible and desirable to focus on the *likelihood* of sustainability and scale-up given uncertainty.’³³

The GPSA developed a 5-point rubric for sustainability based on this notion of prospective sustainability. So, the evaluation will use this rubric as the evaluation’s guide to assess the likelihood that outcomes may be sustainable.

It should first be noted that there was no trace of the GPSA’s *Vigilantes* project and little trace of the CVME project by the mid-term evaluation (Aston, 2022), and there have been further challenges in the sustainability of similar social accountability models in the country under previous political administrations (Aston and Cavatore, 2015). Based on these experiences, the likelihood of sustainability seemed quite low *a priori*.

Despite this history, with the GPSA’s rubric for sustainability, the available evidence suggests that the project has reached at least level 4 of 5 potential levels at the time of writing. Level 4 is where there is:

Evidence of dialogue with priority stakeholders and/or public sector institutions on how to adopt, adapt and/or sustain elements of the collaborative social accountability process in future operations, policies, or programs.

As various sections of the evaluation illustrate, there has been dialogue with priority stakeholders in public sector institutions (i.e., MINERD) on how to adopt, adapt and/or sustain elements of the CVA model. Most notably, this appears through the co-development and agreement of the protocol, which was largely based on the CVA model. From the start, the project focused on gaining support from the highest level within the MINERD, and the evaluation revealed strong, in principle, support for implementing the protocol at the highest levels of MINERD. Yet, several senior officials interviewed also noted that there were

³² This ‘assesses how likely it is that any planned or current positive effects of the intervention will continue, usually assuming that current conditions hold... the stability and relative permanence of any positive effects realized, and conditions for their continuation, such as institutional sustainability, economic and financial sustainability, environmental sustainability, political sustainability, social sustainability and cultural sustainability (OECD-DAC, 2020).’

³³ For World Vision (see Guerzovich, 2022), sustainability is ‘the ability to maintain and improve upon the outcomes and goals, including the contributions to well-being of children, achieved with external support continue or are likely to continue after that support has ended.’

challenges in terms of human and financial resources to support implementation (Interview National Technician, Santo Domingo; Interview Vice-Minister, Santo Domingo). These are both likely to be substantial impediments to sustainability at scale. Without attention to the school caseloads for district and provincial technicians and adequate financial resources for them to travel to schools, they will struggle to implement the protocol at scale without at least some further support from the World Bank, World Vision, or other civil society organizations.

It is likely that at least a small proportion of the 60 project schools will repeat the CVA process after the project ends. In Los Mamayes, Danilo Ginebra, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León, and Ercilia Pepin Estrella schools, for example, it seems highly likely that APMAEs and school management teams will repeat the process, with or without support from World Vision. Evidence from several interviews and small group discussions in these schools suggests that they will continue the process in some form in the next school year. Each of these schools made substantial progress in their CVA action plans. So, a reasonable hypothesis would be that other schools which have made substantial progress in their action plans by the end of the school year in June 2023 (e.g., in excess of 50%)³⁴ and which had reasonable levels of support from district or provincial technicians might also replicate part of the CVA model (e.g., focus group discussions and action plans) in the next school year. This could be perhaps a third of project schools.

One key tactic employed by the project at school level to promote sustainability was involving school psychologists more explicitly in the process to play a more central role at school level. This likely emerged, in part, because most of the World Vision team were themselves psychologists by training. In addition, the team noted that school psychologists are often the key school link to families and are typically a key part of school management. In several of the schools visited at both mid-term and endline they were certainly playing a central role. So, this seems a promising route for MINERD to explore.

However, in other project schools, independent replication without the support of World Vision seems less likely. It is difficult to judge how widely the model may be replicated (or adapted) at this stage, as a high proportion of the 60 schools have only recently developed their action plans at the time of the evaluation. Some schools only developed action plans in May 2023 and thus will only likely see limited progress on action points before the end of the school year in June 2023. It seems premature to judge the possibilities of these schools repeating the process in the next calendar year. Though it is less likely that they will repeat the process than in schools which developed action plans earlier and have seen good progress, such as those mentioned above.

There are also some schools which developed action plans many months prior to the evaluation but had still made relatively limited progress. It also seems less likely that these

³⁴ 18/60 schools had implemented more than half of the action points identified in action plans at the time of writing, including Los Mamayes, Danilo Ginebra, and Mercedes Altagracia Cabral de León. So, this seems to be a reasonable ceiling for independent replication in the next school year. More likely, perhaps one in ten schools will replicate the model without technical and financial support.

schools will replicate the process. In some cases, the action plans developed seem overly ambitious to achieve progress in a short period of time (e.g., within the school year) and as the evaluation saw in Mauricio Baez some members of senior management expressed relatively lukewarm support, given their perceptions of relatively limited progress related to a change in the contributions of parents to school management. In such cases, without accompaniment from the World Vision team, substantial additional energy and effort from district technicians, and some financial resources to support the phases, it seems unlikely that such schools will continue efforts beyond the close of the project.

Nonetheless, substantial support at national and sub-national levels suggests that there may yet be some prospects for replication and sustainability beyond the project's 60 schools. The example of the Unión Panamericana and Matías Ramón Mella schools described above illustrates how some aspects of the CVA methodology may be adopted and adapted beyond the 60 schools where district technicians see value in the protocol (or parts of the methodology) for resolving particular problems. The other main tactic employed was ensuring that district participation technicians were sufficiently informed about the CVA process and to position the relevance of the CVA model and protocol at district level. With 140 technicians trained in the CVA methodology nationally and a protocol agreed nationally with the Vice-Ministry of Community Participation, and high levels of support from senior public officials at the time of the evaluation, there are also good foundations for some degree of optimism regarding partial replication. The project team notes that some technicians have better knowledge of and experience with the protocol than others, so some may require further support going forward to be sufficiently confident and capable to lead the process in their districts. Whether these foundations can be meaningfully built upon will depend upon conversations between the MINERD, the World Bank and World Vision (and possibly USAID) regarding lessons learned and next steps once the project has closed.

As mentioned above, Westhorp *et al.* (2014) identified 32 contextual features in their realist review which were seen to contribute to education outcomes. Those which are most relevant to sustainability, which have been adapted to the Dominican context, are the following:

- (1) **Continued supportive political context** particularly from leadership positions within the Ministry of Education to provide the political will and (human and financial) resources to implement the protocol in line with Ordinance 09 – 2000;
- (2) **Investment in mobilizing local communities:** This might comprise ensuring that there are a sufficient number of district technicians and financial resources to visit schools to facilitate the implementation of the protocol;
- (3) **School leaders actively support, promote and resource participation:** In this case, this would refer to school management teams and APMAEs continuing efforts to ensure the participation of parents, students and teachers in implementing the protocol;
- (4) **School management committee role is clear, have formal authority and is adequately resourced:** This may include whether schools receive budgets in full and in a timely manner, and APMAEs are clearly constituted and set up;
- (5) **Build (or sustain) constructive partnerships with shared goals** between school management teams and APMAEs.

Two additional contextual conditions appear to be important support (or amplifying) factors: (a) the presence of district technicians who champion the protocol and CVA model; and (b) schools which had a positive previous experience in the *Leer* project and/or CVME project and thus trust the process (i.e., layering).

Conversely, if political leadership reduces its support for the protocol, fails to invest to adequately support technicians implement the protocol, and if either school management teams or APMAEs lose significant motivation with the exit of World Vision, if school management teams do not receive sufficient resources to facilitate the implementation of protocol, or if relationships between school management teams and AMPAEs break down, then the full potential of the protocol will not be realized in the following school year.

5. Conclusions

The Community Participation in How is My School Doing (MPCVME) project was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the change of political authorities and related staff across the Corridor Duarte. As discussed in the midterm evaluation (Aston, 2022a), alongside several administrative challenges related to procurement processes within World Vision and the World Bank, these factors delayed project efforts by 12 and 18 months between early 2020 and mid-2021.

The project built on learning from the CVME and *Leer* projects and adapted World Vision's CVA approach to social accountability to 60 schools across the Corridor Duarte in partnership with school management committees, APMAEs and Ministry of Education staff.

The project hit 80% of its targets. Though, whether the project hit its targets is of lesser consequence than the nature of some of the project's achievements and a credible appraisal regarding the prospects of sustaining part of the CVA process in the 60 schools and possibly beyond. The targets that the project did not hit were typically of lesser importance. The two exceptions, which were important, were the level of co-facilitation of CVA meetings by district technicians and whether AOPs incorporated and implemented action points from the CVA process. There is some information on each of these, but it was not collected across all target schools.

Layering: One key element of learning which was not entirely foreseen at project inception was related to layering on previous social accountability experiences in the Dominican Republic's education sector. Initially, the main aim – as evident in similar naming – was for the *Community Participation* in How is My School Doing project to layer efforts on the experience of the World Bank-funded How is My School Doing project. This was more difficult than anticipated because similar naming and a lack of understanding of the specifics of social accountability models by both World Bank and Ministerial staff led to confusion, and a lack of transparency from the CVME researchers on sharing the results of the study back with schools made it difficult for the project to get off on the right foot in some cases. Moreover, simply plugging in “community participation” to what was perceived by several schools to be an extractive “study” was not on the cards and reflects a misguided epistemic position expressed in earlier social accountability Randomized Control Trial (RCT) experiments.

Relationships: Accountability is chiefly about relationships rather than inputs, and the evaluation found that while the project did learn from the How is My School Doing project's experience, it was better able to leverage its previous programming and individual relationships established by three of the World Vision project team in 9 of the schools through the USAID-funded *Leer* project, or more loosely in some cases, through stakeholders' knowledge and experience of other past World Vision programming. Despite otherwise very useful support from several World Bank staff during the project, this reputational and relational background was of greater consequence than the inspiration from the similarly named World Bank-funded CVME project itself, which had weak or even negative school community ties.

Representation: We also found that there was greater representation of the voices of parents and children in the schools through the adapted CVA model than was observed previously. We lack clear baseline and endline data to demonstrate the degree to which this was the case, as we relied on CVME endline data as project baseline quantitative data. However, mid-term and endline data from interviews, focus groups, and small group discussions in 9/60 schools bear this out. The degree to which the voices of minority groups were represented in the project was somewhat less clear, beyond a few illustrative cases (see Aston, 2022c).

Responsiveness: The project was able to achieve responsiveness in resolving priority issues raised by schools through World Vision's adapted CVA model. This varied from improving physical infrastructure, to improving the quality of food provided in schools, school materials, and aspects of school performance. In total, the schools resolved 42% of action points at the time of the evaluation. It is likely more will be resolved by the end of the school year or at the beginning of the following school year for actions in action plans that carry over. By comparison, this was roughly twice as high as the annual resolution rate in the *Progresando en Solidaridad* program.³⁵ In part, this likely reflects an emphasis on identifying fewer action points per school, as well as a closer accompaniment from APMAEs and World Vision.

Institutionalization: The project achieved some degree of institutionalization of the adapted CVA model in several different respects. First of all, the project was able to agree a protocol at national level with the Ministry of Education in consultation with 56 government technicians (*técnicos*). Secondly, community participation technicians from across the country's 31 provinces were sensitized in the CVA methodology and community participation more broadly, and 140 technicians were trained in greater depth, not simply in the 7 provinces of the Corredor Duarte covered by the project. This does not constitute radical institutionalization, but it suggests that there has been reasonable traction by the end of the project.

Scaling up: The MPCVME project was able to extend the project significantly beyond the 60 targeted schools, as the team was able to train 140 technicians across the nation. The MPCVME project was able to extend the project significantly beyond the 60 targeted schools, as the team was able to train 140 technicians across the nation. The evaluation was also able to see the replication of the adapted CVA model in two schools (Panamericana school and Matías Ramón Mella school) following training by the project team. The evaluation also found the replication of some aspects of the CVA model such as in the use of focus groups – learned by schools from the project – to address other issues such as violence in the school environment (Los Mameyes school). Several schools visited during the evaluation also noted that they intended to replicate the process whether the project is extended or not (Danilo Ginebra, Mercedes Altagracia Cabral De León, Los Mameyes schools).

However, the project also had several consequential limitations and barriers. Some of these were unique to a pandemic context and are thus difficult to learn from. Others are more

³⁵ Though it was lower than the overall resolution rate in the education sector between 2012 and 2014 - 51% and 72% (Vicepresidencia de la República Dominicana, 2016).

general limitations that also apply to non-pandemic contexts. Outside the control of the project, COVID-19 pandemic meant that schools were shut for a very high proportion of the project. There were also several key changes of national and sub-national political and bureaucratic authorities and strikes from the teachers' union (ADP) was also highly disruptive. Within the project's sphere of influence the World Bank's administrative procedures (and change of said procedures) significantly delayed some project actions. Within World Vision's sphere of control, its own administrative procedure further delayed project actions and project understaffing relative to the requirements of the CVA model in 60 schools frustrated the project's efforts to implement a full cycle of the CVA model in all 60 schools. It was only possible to complete the majority of the one cycle in most of the project schools and relatively just over a third were able to complete more than 50% of action points in CVA action plans. Indeed, it might well have been very difficult to conduct two full cycles of the CVA process, as originally planned.

Incomplete implementation of action plans in several project schools may well limit the potential for wider institutionalization of the CVA model or scale up of the model. On one hand, a high number of national, regional, and district-level technicians were trained in the model and consulted in the development of the protocol, and there is substantial support from high-level ministerial staff. However, technicians might reasonably question whether the model has sufficiently passed proof of concept stage in the intervention regions and whether the model can be replicated as is, or effectively adapted to implement the protocol nationally as high-level ministerial staff suggested they intended to. Undoubtedly, such commitments are also contingent on funding to implement this oversight. District technicians have the formal mandates to conduct oversight of the formation of APMAEs and on community participation more broadly, but it has been argued that they lack the staff and resources to regularly visit all schools. A social accountability model such as CVA carries some of the load for them, and with the World Vision project ending questions will be raised regarding what can be implemented with and without additional costs.

Similar forms of community scorecard model have been implemented in the education sector across most of the country's regions over the last decade and a half. Each of them has struggled to sustain funding, especially as funding came from either the World Bank or USAID. So, the sustainability challenge goes beyond a bilateral discussion between World Vision and MINERD. Instead, both the World Bank and USAID ought to have a stake in learning lessons from these experiences and provide recommendations for what kinds of models are appropriate and feasible to implement in the Dominican Republic's education sector. *Progresando con Solidaridad* (2010 – 2014), *Vigilantes* (2013 – 2017), *Leer* (2015 – 2019), *How is My School Doing* (2018 – 2020) and *Community Participation in How is My School Doing* (2020 – 2023) have comparable, but not identical, social accountability models (see Guerzovich *et al.* 2020).

There has been some variation between the intensity of local level engagement, what administrative levels models worked at, and what sectors they focused on. All these social accountability models included some form of participatory needs appraisal and action planning.

However, these social accountability efforts range from thin, locally-bounded engagement with limited accompaniment in the case of *How is My School Doing* through a combination of citizen reports cards (called scorecards) developed through a 13-question surveys, an interface meeting, and SMS messages, to citizen report cards and Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) and social media engagement with multi-sectoral and multi-level models but which had limited local-level accompaniment in the case of *Vigilantes* (see Blomeyer and Sanz, 2017), to report cards through a 50-question surveys with relatively intensive multi-sector oversight at local-level with multi-level triage mechanisms in *Progresando con Solidaridad* (see Aston and Cavarore, 2015), to community scorecards with relatively intensive local level accompaniment and oversight at local level paired with multi-level engagement in the case of *Mi Comunidad Participa en Como Va Mi Escuela* (MPCVME). Some core differences are illustrated below:

FIGURE 20: Comparing Key Components of Social Accountability Models

PROGRAM	ACTION PLANS	INTENSIVE LOCAL-LEVEL OVERSIGHT	MULTI-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT	MULTI-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT
<i>PROGRESANDO CON SOLIDARIDAD</i>				
<i>VIGILANTES</i>				
<i>LEER</i>				
<i>COMO VA MI ESCUELA</i>				
<i>MI COMUNIDAD PARTICIPA EN COMO VA MI ESCUELA</i>				

Sources: Aston and Cavarore, 2015; Blomeyer and Sanz, 2017; Guertzovich *et al.* 2020

Cumulatively, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that moderately intensive social oversight processes in the education sector with some degree of multi-level oversight at district, provincial, and national level are able to deliver results.³⁶ They have the capacity to improve transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and improve policies. As Guervovich (2022) notes, drawing on previous experience in the Dominican Republic, ‘to be relevant, social accountability interventions had to meet the challenge and the circumstances of their time and be different than their predecessors.’ The MPCVME project demonstrates that even though it was not implemented fully in all schools, World Vision Dominican Republic’s version of the CVA model in the project has the capacity to resolve priority operational, relational, and institutional problems in schools in the Corredor Duarte. Experience from other programs implemented by the World Bank in the last decade suggest that similar models have also been capable of contributing to an improvement of school management processes and

³⁶ Some stakeholders may yet raise questions regarding what types of evidence there is available and how credible this evidence is. Most of the evidence is not in the form of an RCT, which is the preference of some evaluators and policymakers. However, it should be noted that RCTs are inappropriate for assessing complex change processes with multi-level engagement. See Aston (2022b) and Aston (2023) for a discussion.

potentially to improved student attainment. This therefore shows that there is likely a reasonable level of external validity to results.

On a technical level, the key features of CVA expressed in the protocol are practical to replicate. The core elements of the CVA model include: (1) a review of government policies and standards, (2) community mobilization, (3) developing community scorecards through focus group discussions and interface between focus group representatives, (4) developing and action plan, (5) implementing and monitoring the action plan, and (6) collective action and advocacy on issues that need to be addressed beyond school level.

More challenging perhaps is to consider to what degree the relationships which were cultivated by the World Vision team over several years can be so easily transferred. District technicians are already stretched and have limited capacity to visit all schools in their districts. So, they can clearly benefit from contributions from community-based organizations and NGOs, like World Vision. Moreover, there are clearly benefits to an organization such as World Vision not being perceived as politically partisan, as this gives school communities the perception of independence. This is more difficult to achieve directly through state actors. Yet, it is possible that the greater emphasis on the role of school psychologists – who are also a key link to families – will be an important support for district technicians, and they may be able to share tasks for implementing the protocol.

Finally, there are evident considerations regarding the political economy of financing to sustain any cost-bearing efforts which the protocol agreed with MINERD implies. The Dominican Republic has a history of small-scale social accountability program pilots which historically depended on the World Bank, and this project is no exception. Many of those interviewed in MINERD, in particular, recognized that funding constraints were an impediment to expansion of social accountability in border regions for example. Despite the country's upper-middle income status funding for formal social accountability efforts has commonly come from international cooperation. Part of the challenge that emerges from this evaluation is for the World Bank and the MINERD to discuss cumulative learning about how and under what conditions social accountability efforts work (or not) and the evidence available to demonstrate this. It is also crucial to discuss what form of financial and human resources are truly required to adopt a social accountability model such as the protocol developed through this project. Several MINERD staff interviewed argued that implementing this was now the responsibility of the Ministry itself, rather than an NGO like World Vision, and as implementing the protocol implies certain costs and staff time, the time seems ripe to have a deeper conversation regarding what resources can be mobilized to live up to the commitment made to implement the protocol.

6. Recommendations

The evaluation offers **seven key recommendations** for World Vision Dominican Republic based on consultations with key informants and experience from wider social accountability practice. These are divided into recommendations related to the accountability model at school level and for institutionalization.

Accountability model recommendations:

- **Carefully consider caseloads for field staff facilitating CVA and similar social accountability models.** The evaluation revealed that a caseload for field staff of 30 schools is too much, particularly when spread across various districts and provinces. Caseloads should not exceed 20 schools per member of field staff unless this is in a highly concentrated geographic area. So, for district technicians, similar ceilings should be considered if they are to play a meaningful role in several phases of the protocol.
- **Consider more thoroughly the issues of inclusion of marginalized and minority groups** and how their needs are attended to in the process. The evaluation uncovered occasional episodes in which the needs and participation of minority groups were reflected in schools, but not systematically. Several of those interviewed highlighted that a more explicit focus on social inclusion might constitute a key plus to any future iteration of the CVA model or adaptations of the model.
- **Develop and share a set of “good practices”** with community participation technicians and schools to effectively facilitate the process within the protocol (e.g., tip sheet from practice for the key phases).

Top tips derived from the experience might include some of the following:

FIGURE 21. Top Tips for Implementing the Adapted CVA Model

- (1) Phase the process to synchronise with the school year to maximise potential synergies with existing school management processes (e.g., annual operating plans);
- (2) ensure that the same stakeholders commit to participate in the three phases of the CVA process;
- (3) Train district technicians in CVA action planning so that they can support the implementation of action plans and triage problems which need to be resolved at district level or above;
- (4) Limit the number of action points in action plans to a manageable number in the calendar year (e.g., 4 – 6);
- (5) Ensure that at least some of the action points are easy enough to resolve to demonstrate progress;
- (6) Ensure that students are directly involved in the oversight of action plan commitments, where possible;
- (7) Carefully manage expectations regarding what can be resolved in what period of time and what cannot;
- (8) Celebrate successes in a special meeting at the close of the school year;
- (9) Make scorecard data publicly accessible in an easy-to-use platform.

Institutionalization recommendations:

- **Agree a sustainability plan with MINERD** for the implementation of the protocol by community participation technicians trained by the project. Senior ministerial officials demonstrated a high level of support for the project and the CVA model's value added expressed through the protocol. It was recommended by several of those interviewed that World Vision, the World Bank, and MINERD have a meeting to discuss the transition of responsibilities to the Ministry. One potentially important input to that discussion could be a costing of the key elements of the CVA model and realistic staffing requirements from ministerial staff and potentially for CSOs. For example, Community Reports were estimated to have a cost of USD 26 per household for a 7-month cycle, or 5-6 dollars per service user. It might be able to make a comparison for the protocol.
- **Reconnect with IDEC's oversight committee.** A key part of sustainability plans ought to be reconnecting with IDEC's oversight committee. Given IDEC's continued emphasis on transparency, accountability, and social participation in schools as part of decentralization efforts, social accountability efforts such as that expressed through the protocol may play an important role going forwards;
- **Share CVA materials with teacher training institutes** such as ISFODOSU and INAFOCAM to feed accountability practices into staff inductions. It was argued by MINERD staff that there was more that could be done to institutionalize aspects of the CVA model and related learning into teacher training directly. ISFODOSU and INAFOCAM were identified as the most relevant institutes to achieve this. So, it seems worth having a conversation with these institutes to see what might (and what might not) be viable.
- **Synchronize CVA action plans and annual operating plans (POAs).** One key expectation of the project prior to COVID-19 with several cycles of CVA was that it would be possible to influence schools AOPs in a systematic way. This was not possible due to the loss of effectively two years of the school year. There has only been the opportunity to influence some AOPs in the 2022-2023 school year. Efforts could be made to align CVA action planning cycles more clearly, in schools where efforts are sustained, in line with the school year to help institutionalize a more inclusive and participatory action planning process to enhance school management. In particular, CVA action planning should commence at the start of the school year, and as annual operating plans are typically drafted at the end of the school year, issues that are not resolved in the CVA action planning process can be carried over into the annual operating plan for the following year.

These are recommendations with relatively limited resource implications for either World Vision or MINERD. In addition to these, many of those interviewed suggested that “*there is enough fruit there to continue* (Vice Minister of Community Participation),” and that the project might be extended to other areas in the country such as the border regions. However,

before assigning additional resources from donors or MINERD it would be worth conducting a review in the 60 schools at the start of the 2023 – 2024 school year by district technicians to see what proportion of action points in action plans have been completed since this evaluation is published.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning recommendations:

In addition to these 6 core programmatic recommendations to improve the model and progressively adapt and institutionalize it, the evaluation recommends that World Vision Dominican Republic team:

- **Adopt case-based approaches to reporting significant outcomes more systematically.** In addition to quantitative administrative data and human-interest stories which are amenable to donors and the public, World Vision Dominican Republic would benefit from introducing some form of most significant change or outcome harvesting. These formed the basis for several of the most significant changes in the project. However, these were done more on an ad hoc basis, so these could have been done in a more systematic way. This would ensure that significant changes are not lost because they do not fit what are often uninformative quantitative indicators.
- **Develop a database of World Vision-affected schools** so that future World Vision projects can identify what foundations have been laid and how learning can be built into future project reporting and evaluation in the way that the community mobilization efforts from the *Leer* project featured in Community Participation in How is my School Doing.

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Interview District Technician, Santo Domingo.

Interview Civil Society Organization Representative, Santiago.

Interview Headteacher, El Quemado.

Interview Headteacher, Mauricio Baez.

Interview Headteacher, Danilo Ginebra.

Interview Headteacher, Emma Balaguer.

Interview Headteacher, Ercilia Pepin Estrella.

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Interview Teacher, El Quemado.

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Annex 1: Stakeholder Engagement, Environmental and Social Commitment, and Grievance Redress Mechanisms

As these features are not part of the evaluation terms of reference or directly relevant to the GPSA's evaluation questions, information on Stakeholder Engagement, and Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) have been included as an annex.

World Vision developed a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) for the project written on the 6th of February 2019. It then drafted an Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP) in March 2019. This was designed to ensure that the project was implemented in accordance with the Association Environmental and Social Standards (ESSs). World Vision also wrote a document on Labor Management Procedures (01/01/2023) which describes the team implementing the Project, recruitment, responsibilities, intervention areas, labor risks, relevant labor laws, among others.

The SEP included a GRM. This is readably accessible through the project's page on World Vision's webpage (worldvision.ethicspoint.com) and operated by NAVEX Global, a third-party provider. The GRM is accesible to staff, the school committee, volunteers, members of the school committee, and students through the World Vision Partnership. The GRM is active, and this was demonstrated during the July 2021 supervision mission. Further information was printed and placed in visible locations at the 60 project schools, as in the graphic below.

FIGURE 22: Project Grievance Redress Mechanism Poster



Source: World Vision, 2021

The evaluator also saw these in schools visited at mid-term and endline. However, according to the project team, no complaints have so far been received. The evaluation has also reviewed World Vision's reports for the Completion of Social and Environmental Commitments and independent auditors report. It can confirm that these were produced. The evaluation has a partial view of contracting processes which were shared by the project team. So, we can say that what has been reported is likely to be accurate. However, as this is not an audit (which would be a separate terms of reference), the focus of the evaluation was not on organizational compliance.