



# A selection of aid agency approaches to the design and delivery of outcome-orientated basic education programmes

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## Question

*Global evidence of effective outcome-driven approaches to the design of basic education interventions by aid agencies, including their responsiveness to need and context.*

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# 1. Overview

This report provides a global selection of case studies providing evidence of approaches to the design of basic education interventions by aid agencies. In keeping with the request, the scope of the report focusses as far as possible on outcome-driven approaches, and includes an analysis of any evidence of programmatic responsiveness to need and context.

The case studies include an example of large-scale project work providing a range of interventions operating across basic education delivery at a local level (DfID Bangladesh EIA 2008-2018), an example of a programmatic approach to support the decentralisation of educational management and decision-making in a low-resource setting (ADB Indonesia 2001-2009), an example of a multi-project programme targeting inclusion among marginalised learners (DfID Kenya Girls' Education Challenge, 2012-2017) and an example of programming for basic education in an unstable conflict-affected setting (GPE South Sudan 2013-2017).

In each case, the study provides a summary overview and analysis of the programme's key areas of focus, including any evidence of their effectiveness in meeting stated priorities, together with a discussion of the programme's responsiveness to need and context.

The study concludes with a summary of the major themes for basic education provision emerging from the selection of case studies.

Key findings from this study include:

- The importance of data use to manage the effective design and delivery of programme interventions
- The value of enabling localised and/or decentralised approaches to programming to enhance systemic capacity and identify and address localised contextual challenges
- The relative ineffectiveness of direct interventions to improve learning outcomes unless supported by parallel interventions to improve systemic quality at a local level
- The effectiveness of community and household financing and grants schemes as a means of overcoming basic poverty barriers and improving school enrolment and participation
- The relative value of systemic and community interventions to support school management at school and district level

The evidence provided is drawn from a broad range of international contexts, and is based on substantial system-level analysis. However, due to limitations in time and space allocated to this study, there are some limitations to the level of detail with which specific cases and implementation practices are discussed. The study includes findings from a number of examples of projects with a specific focus on gender in educational participation.

## 2. DfID Bangladesh: English In Action, 2008-2018

### 2.1. Programme background

English in Action (EIA) was a 10-year education programme, running from 2008 to 2018 with UK funding of £51 million. It was a discrete project under the Third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP3), a multi donor funded and government led sector-wide primary education programme. Overseen by DfID Bangladesh, BMB Mott McDonald were the lead managing agent, working in partnership with technical agents The Open University and BBC Media Action (Joynes 2018: p2).

EIA worked to improve the English language skills of 25 million Bangladeshis, with the aim of aiding economic growth. The programme was implemented through two main components:

- a school-based programme to improve English teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools
- an adult learning programme that uses electronic and print media e.g. television, website, mobile and newspaper to teach communicative English.

While EIA was a donor-funded project rather than a programme of systemic reform, the scale and scope of the project in terms of duration and funding, and its impact in terms of reach and school-level outcomes makes it highly relevant to this study. Of greatest relevance are EIA's activities associated with the schools-based component, which was designed to help teachers find ways to improve the teaching and learning practices in their classrooms. However, the adult learning component, which sought to engage the Bangladeshi population and raise public interest in and motivation for the learning of English, also had a significant impact on teachers and pupils in terms of their engagement with English language learning and accessing English language learning content (Joynes 2018: p2).

### 2.2. Areas of focus

The programme's key areas of focus of relevance to this study are as follows:

- ***Innovative approaches to improving school-level teaching practice***

EIA's schools component was designed to enable teachers to improve the teaching and learning practices in their classrooms through a one-year programme of in-service teacher professional development (Joynes 2018: p11).

In selecting delivery modes, the project took an innovative approach to the use of media, using readily available technology that many teachers and adult learners own and are familiar with. This enabled bringing learning to the learner in multiple and mobile settings (Joynes 2018: p8). Initially conceived as a programme of school-based interactive radio instruction (IRI) for pupils, at the design phase, this model was changed to an innovative school-based teacher development programme. This incorporated a model of teaching supported by classroom audio resources, thereby shifting the emphasis to advocating for the role of teachers as central to educational change (Joynes 2018: p11). The project also placed an emphasis on engaging with local-level stakeholders to influence change at school and community level, in particular through activities to support the development of sustainable local peer networks inside and outside of school (Joynes 2018: p9).

Through subsequent interventions, the design of the EIA schools component retained a largely school-based approach and grew to incorporate a number of key elements including: peer support; follow-up support and monitoring; support through headteachers; alignment of teacher training with curriculum and assessment; the use of offline Audio Visual (AV) materials and enabling technology (Joynes 2018: p11).

Cumulatively, these features all work to support teachers and provide guidance and an enabling environment for trying out new activities in their classrooms. From the teachers' perspectives, anecdotal evidence indicates that the offline access to AV materials (both for students and teachers), the role of TFs and peer support, and the staged approach of delivery and follow-up have been particularly effective in stimulating and extending changes in practice at classroom level (Joynes 2018: p11).

- ***School-level focus to ensure learner-centred outcomes***

Tasked with achieving high scale and high impact at low unit cost, the project design placed the teacher's classroom as the site of learning within the schools component. This learner-centred approach to outcomes remained the focus throughout the programme. This enabled learning based on individual contextual needs, increased project effectiveness, and over time ensured low marginal costs to aid scalability and sustainability (Joynes 2018: p8).

In addition, this approach also informed the localised approach to institutionalization and sustainability through the development of local networks of professional support. Additionally, the pedagogic instructional design principles of using of locally developed Mediated Authentic Video helped demonstrate successful, authentic and contextualised communicative language teaching (CLT) practice with embedded pedagogical guidance (Joynes 2018: p8).

The project's successful achievement of scale-up can be attributed to a large extent to this extension of decentralised approaches adopted at the level of sub-districts, including the engagement of local education authorities as delivery and support frameworks (Joynes 2018: p12).

- ***Use of research and data-gathering to inform project design and redesign***

The EIA programme implemented its activities in project design and delivery by drawing on a strong evidence base using existing research, its own baseline studies and ongoing evaluation studies to assess the overall context of and changes in the English teaching and learning environment in Bangladesh. Within the schools component in particular, the project's ongoing evaluation studies were directed at: understanding teacher and student views about their experiences of teaching and learning English; examining classroom practice; and measuring teachers' and students' English language proficiency. This focus on student learning outcomes was unusual for large-scale projects of this nature, which have tended to focus on teachers' experiences or at best classroom practices (Joynes 2018: p20).

This model underpinned a flexible and adaptive approach to project delivery that was fed by external and self-generated research, which enabled the project to respond well to external recommendations and suggestions, to pursue further contextual information and understanding when required, and to roll out new and additional interventions when there was evidence of their effectiveness in influencing change (Joynes 2018: p9).

In addition, the project sought to embed such approaches within the wider education system. The project's own large-scale quantitative evaluations were accompanied by more explanatory

qualitative studies, carried out by the Institute of Education and Research at Dhaka University (for perceptions and classroom practice) and by Trinity College London (English language proficiency). An additional research initiative within the schools component, undertaken by the project during the final project phase 2016-2017, was a pilot of 'Teachers' Voice', a programme of teacher-led action research as a school-level practice. The initiative was designed to encourage teachers to gain insight into the challenges they face at school, in classroom and in terms of their professional development, and to provide evidence of the role that teacher-based action research can play in informing improvements to the quality of educational delivery at school level (Joynes 2018: p21).

- ***An innovative donor-led model of programme design***

The project's activities and achievements are noteworthy in terms of the boldness of particular interventions and approaches, including DfID's decision to advocate for funding a programme this duration and scale.

From a programme design perspective, the 9-10 year delivery period (compared to usual project lives of 3-5 years) benefitted the project and its beneficiaries by enabling the project providers to: undertake extensive research to gain a thorough and detailed knowledge of context and learners; design and develop educational and media products closely aligned with learner expectations and needs; facilitate a continuous process of review and revision; and fully respond to emerging learner and programmatic requirements on an on-going basis (Joynes 2018: p7).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the project's status as a non-government programme enabled it a large amount of autonomy in proceeding with the design and implementation of key activities, and in engaging with stakeholders particularly at District, Upazila and school level. Had the project been delivered as a government programme, it is considered likely that government procedural frameworks would have greatly slowed the speed, scope and effectiveness of project interventions (Joynes 2018: p7). However, also partly as a result of this status, the project experienced regular challenges in establishing and maintaining practical relationships with key departments, resulting in generally low levels of government engagement with the programme's integration into the education system or uptake of key implementation tasks going forward, thereby impacting on the sustainability of project outcomes (Joynes 2018: p7).

## **2.3. Evidence of responsiveness to need and context**

The project's responsiveness to need and context stemmed primarily from, firstly, the focus on school-level outcomes, and secondly, the use of research and data-gathering to inform the design and direction of programme interventions, as well as the design and frequent re-design of learning materials and other resource outputs (Joynes 2018: p17). Both approaches enabled the project to engage directly with the concerns and challenges facing the programme's end-users and target beneficiaries. Additionally, there is some evidence that the impact of the localised approach to delivery through Upazila-level networks, together with Upazila-level recognition of the effectiveness of EIA approaches to teacher training, is resulting in local education officers taking autonomous responsibility for: co-ordinating the scheduling and delivery of follow-up support to teachers; incorporating of EIA-based materials, mechanisms and approaches into government-based primary teacher training delivery; co-ordinating the dissemination of key EIA resources (speakers; AV materials) to all schools and teachers throughout the Upazila (Joynes 2018: p12).

In design terms, the project duration enabled time and opportunity to thoroughly research beneficiary expectations, implement pilot interventions in order to test assumptions, facilitate scale-

up based on lessons learned, and respond to emerging priorities. Similarly, the project was in a position to amend and update its objectives as a result of the flexibility afforded by the long project lifetime and the adaptive management approach taken by DFID and the project consortium. Importantly, this adaptability enabled the project partners to make amendments when either the project attained and exceeded its annual goals, or when shortcomings in the original project design were identified, enabling the identification of, and realignment towards, new priority objectives (Joynes 2018: p7).

## **2.4. Programme outcomes**

In terms of achievements, the project exceeded targets in both numbers of teachers and students reached and use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches in teachers' classroom practice (Joynes 2018: p2). For outcomes in terms of student English language competence, primary achievement at lower grades is 14% above target and Secondary achievement is 2% above target. However, at the higher grade criteria, while there was a 2% improvement in both Primary and Secondary, outcomes were still 3% below the project target (Joynes 2018: p3). This possibly indicates that, in general, EIA's methodology is better in improving students at the lower grades.

In terms of the impact on teaching and learning, evidence presented in EIA's Sustainability Impact report details the levels of achievement in terms of: reach of EIA interventions; teachers' use of EIA approaches, resources and support mechanisms; changes in classroom practice and teacher motivation; changes in teachers' and students' perceptions of English language learning; and changes in student learning outcomes. The proportion of student talk time in EIA classrooms is a significant change in a context where most classrooms are typically teacher-centric with low levels of interaction with or between students (Joynes 2018: pp11-12).

In addition to these achievements, EIA has extended its reach beyond the original scope of the programme. For example, in the schools component, its teaching and learning materials are being used at the national level through institutionalisation into the government education system. This component has also led on the development of key design notes for the new primary sector-wide programme, and has created resource pools of local Upazila teacher facilitators in primary and secondary for use in future English teacher development (Joynes 2018: pp2-3).

Within the primary schools component, there is evidence that the project has created a 'critical momentum', as demonstrated by the level of professional change among teachers and schools reached by the project in its intervention Upazilas, and by the levels of commitment and motivation to continuing the use of EIA-based approaches expressed by the teachers and staff in those Upazilas (Joynes 2018: p9). However, within the secondary component, while the project has attained 'critical mass', as represented by numbers of secondary teachers reached, it is uncertain whether this has translated into the 'critical momentum' required to move things forward within the sector, as represented by the levels of pro-active engagement and understanding demonstrated by the local systemic stakeholders – secondary teachers, headteachers and local educational support staff (Joynes 2018: p6). In contrast with the primary sector, the secondary sector has a far more reduced local school support network for school management and teacher support. Partially as a result of this, project delivery has been seen to be more effective within the primary sector in contrast with the secondary sector (Joynes 2018: p9).



## 3. ADB Indonesia: Decentralized Basic Education Project, 2001-2009

### 3.1. Programme background

Since 2001, the Government of Indonesia has embarked on a programme to decentralize delivery of basic education, with the goal of making the education system more attuned to local needs in order to improve access to and quality of basic education in Indonesia.

To support this programme, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported a project to improve the participation in and completion of basic education in the provinces of Bali, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), and West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), targeted because of their gaps in basic education (ADB 2014: p4). It supported three outcomes:

- (i) improved participation, transition, completion, and performance in basic education among poor children in Bali, NTB, and NTT;
- (ii) implementation of school-based management in project schools;
- (iii) effective district education management in the three provinces.

To achieve these objectives, the project had three components: school development; district basic education development; and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

The project was financed by a combination of loan and grant. Of the \$138.4 million loan component, \$112.1 million was financed by ADB and \$26.3 million by the Government of Indonesia. The grant component totalled \$29.5 million, of which \$28.0 million was funded by the Government of the Netherlands and \$1.5 million by the Government of Indonesia (ADB 2014: pXI).

### 3.2. Areas of focus

The programme's key areas of focus of relevance to this study are as follows:

- ***implementation of school-based management in project schools***

The project's activities here included improving the schools' capacity in developing and implementing school development plans. Project schools were required to develop these plans to access project funds for scholarships for the poor, rehabilitation of classrooms and other facilities, and other activities. This School Development Fund support represented the second output provided under this component, accompanied by transparent auditing and public accountability systems.

Finally, also under public accountability, the project helped to strengthen community involvement in schools through the formation of school committees. In order to promote transparency and accountability as part of school-based management, schools inform communities of their school development plans, programs, and budget plans, as well as their School Development Fund and District Education Development Fund accounts (ADB 2014: p9).

In terms of achievement under these outputs, it was noted in the PCR that 97% of the 4,244 project schools drew up the school development plans, and 95% of schools reported to the School Development Fund with program and budget plans, and program and budget implementation. However, project schools were not required to report their achievements against their plans (2014: pp8-9).

- ***Improved effective district education management***

The project's activities and achievements in this field were designed to provide support to the government's nationwide programme of decentralisation in basic education. Prior to 2001, basic education was managed centrally through complex and compartmentalised structures in three ministries: the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of National Education (MONE), and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). Under Indonesia's new decentralised basic education system, the central government sets policies, the national curriculum, performance standards and a national examination and assessment system, but district governments are now responsible for planning, financing, managing, and delivering basic education. Their responsibilities also cover school staff appointments and transfers and school location planning (ADB 2014: p5). By supporting the establishment of a decentralised system in the target provinces, the project was also seen to respond to challenges in improving the equity in and quality of delivering basic education services (ADB 2014: p6).

The project's inputs under this component were designed to improved capacity of districts for managing provision of basic education. In doing so, firstly, the project established district education boards in compliance with ministerial regulations. The boards were provided training on education management, including budget analysis, and were tasked with monitoring district education programs, as well as school development plans.

Secondly, the project supported the boards in the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of strategic 5-year district education development plans and 5-year annual action plans by all districts. Under the plans, districts developed systems for planning, managing, financing, staffing, and monitoring teacher development; school supervision; recruitment, training, and performance review of school principals; facilities expansion; and district financing of education.

Thirdly, the district education development plans were then used as the basis for accessing District Education Development Fund support, which supported the implementation of priority district education development programs and capacity building activities. The project also required all districts to publish their education statistics annually and to complete their district education development plans.

In terms of outcomes, during the project, all districts published statistics annually and completed their district education development plans. Some districts continue to update their plans and publish their statistics beyond the project lifetime, but weaknesses in information systems make it difficult to keep the data current and for them to be able to publish the statistics on time (ADB 2014: pp8-9).

- ***improved participation, transition, completion, and performance in basic education among poor children***

In terms of improving access and participation in basic education for poor children, the project's school and district funding programmes were used to address specific local issues impacting on access to schools. For example, at a district level, grants were used in certain districts to build additional schools in locations with low numbers of schools or poor transport infrastructure (ADB 2014: p12). In reaching poor students at school level, school grants were used to enable enrolment for select 'in-need' children: in selecting poor students, schools usually obtained student socioeconomic data during enrolment, including household income and parents' employment status. Students who were orphans are often accorded priority, and school officials also conducted house visits to verify students' living conditions (ADB 2014: p19). However, since the grants



provided under the project are relatively small, it was considered imperative the project districts and schools be highly selective.

### **3.3. Evidence of responsiveness to need and context**

At a systemic level, the project is seen to be highly responsive to need and context, addressing a range of challenges Indonesia faced during its transition to a decentralized basic education system, including weak institutional capacity, particularly at district level; limited human and financial resources; and unclear delineation of roles, functions, and authority of central and local government agencies. The project's components for empowering schools and district governments in identifying and addressing education needs in their communities are seen to be appropriate to help address these gaps (ADB 2014: p12).

The flexibility in the use of the school-level grants also allowed project schools to determine priority needs and design innovative activities to address them, in contrast to other transfers from the central government which employ more rigid regulations regarding fundable activities. Emerging based on findings from ADB's decentralisation programme, the School Operational Assistance Program (BOS) grants are a key example of this (Al-Samarrai 2015).

While the Decentralisation programme's block grants were mostly used for rehabilitation of school facilities, some schools adopted innovative approaches for school improvement. For example, a school in Anjani, East Lombok used the block grant to address malnutrition among its students through a lunch-feeding programme. Some schools in Bangli, Bali used their block grants to dispatch teachers to teach in remote communities. Partly as a result of the project's approach, budget allocation is one of those areas where school principals perceived they have high autonomy in decision making. On average, 90.0% of principals said they had decision-making authority in allocating the school budget, recruiting teachers, setting the school vision and curriculum, and selecting textbooks and teaching materials (ADB 2014: p24).

### **3.4. Programme outcomes**

In terms of achievements around the first project outcome for children's performance in schools, analysis of data obtained during the evaluation indicates that statistically significant improvements in education outcomes including enrolment, completion, transition, and performance were observed in selected project districts after the project was implemented. Between 2001 and 2011, net enrolment rates at primary level increased in NTB and NTT but slightly decreased in Bali, while enrolment at the junior secondary level increased in all three provinces. Completion rates have also improved, although both primary and secondary completion rates in NTT and NTB remained below the national average in 2011, while Bali's were higher than the national average in that same year (ADB 2014: p19). National exam scores also improved, indicating better student performance, and there is sufficient evidence that average education outcomes in the selected districts were significantly higher after the project was implemented than before it was carried out (ADB 2014: pp21-23).

In continuing to address need, the central and district governments now provide the primary source of funding to help project schools deliver continued support for poor students through scholarships, transport allowances, remedial and catch-up programs, and tutoring for students missing school (ADB 2014: pXII).

Against the second project outcome associated with school management, the project also helped to improve school capacity by promoting an evidence-based approach to formulating school development plans; encouraging community involvement in education matters; and improving district capacity for basic education, particularly in teacher development and the evaluation of school development plans. It is reported that the formulation of school development plans, which was pioneered by the project, has become standard practice among schools, and school committees continue to participate in creating school strategies and budget plans (ADB 2014: pXII). The project has also effectively changed the mind-set of both school- and district-level officials in implementing school-based management (ADB 2014: p24).

Against the third project outcome, associated with district management of basic education, the project is rated as having a significant impact on enhancing local district level capacity for basic education management and improving education outcomes, as well as for shaping government policies related to decentralized basic education services. Furthermore, at a systemic level, school and district officials who received training under the project continue to impart knowledge to their counterparts who were not part of the project (ADB 2014: pXII).

In terms of achievements at a policy level, the project influenced the introduction of legally binding national education standards and minimum service standards for districts (introduced in 2010). Moreover, school-based management is now official policy and implemented in all schools nationwide. However, the school-managed model for rehabilitation utilised under the project has been discontinued under new legislation requiring a return to district contracting. Moreover, many districts now restrict parental and community financial support for schools, which was one of the project's achievements.

In addition, the project also influenced the School Operational Assistance Program (BOS), which was launched in 2005, and which adopted the project's block grant system, providing grants enhances the implementation of school-based management and lowers the cost of providing basic education. The disbursement of BOS funding is decided by school committees in a similar procedure established by the project. The central government permits local governments and parents to financially support schools if BOS funds are insufficient (ADB 2014: pp10-11).

However, in terms of project implementation and sustainability, the project reported a number of challenges that impacted on project effectiveness. Firstly, improved co-ordination and collaboration between government ministries is necessary to reinforce decentralisation of basic education. In the case of this project, structural misalignment combined with differing levels of technical and resource capacity hampered the coordination of those ministries jointly tasked with the provision and management of basic education. ADB's Madrasah Education Development Project, which worked with MORA following the implementation of the Decentralisation project, was designed in part to address the impact of some of these shortcomings, particularly within the Madrasah system at district and school level (ADB 2015).

Secondly, the project recognised and supported the importance of data-gathering to inform decision-making, especially at district and school level in a decentralised context. However, in delivering this, it is imperative that good technological infrastructure and technical capacity for data management is in place at the school and district levels. Although there is an existing online database for school-level data, in general schools have yet to fully maximize this tool because many lack internet access or appropriate levels of school staff capacity to utilise it effectively. In response, endeavours to enhance the delivery of basic education in Indonesia should be tied in with continued systemic investments in enhancing communications, technological infrastructure

and school facilities, particularly in order to facilitate continuous data updates through data-gathering systems (ADB 2014: pXIII).

Thirdly, fluidity of system staff placements, particularly among public sector staff at district level, was seen to disrupt efforts to promote decentralised basic education management, and impeded systemic capacity building. In particular, frequent staff changes among project officers and district governments hampered the transfer and sharing of knowledge, as well as communication and rapport-building among stakeholders (ADB 2014: pXII).

## 4. DfID Kenya: Girls' Education Challenge, 2012-2017

### 4.1. Programme background

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) is a worldwide DfID funded initiative designed to improve the learning opportunities and outcomes for up to one million of the world's most marginalised girls, on the basis that access to a good quality education will give these girls the chance of a better future for themselves, their families and their communities (DfID 2015: p4). The initiative is supporting a range of programmes and projects in countries around the world, including Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal, and 15 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.

This case study focusses on GEC's activities in Kenya, which span several project-based initiatives that exploit a range of approaches to address broadly similar issues. These initiatives include:

- the Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP), working with Somali and South Sudanese refugee communities to improve girl-friendly school environments by guaranteeing there are separate latrines for girls to ensure privacy and safety (GBP£14.6m);
- the Wasichana Wote Wasome (WWW - Let All Girls Read) project, working to sustain the capacity of schools and communities to support the education of marginalised girls (GBP£17.1m);
- an initiative for pioneering inclusive education strategies for disabled girls in Nyanza and Kisumu provinces (GBP£2.8m);
- an integrated intervention for improved school attendance and learning for vulnerable girls in Laikipia, Meru, Mombasa (GBP£1.9m);
- The iMlango Project, an initiative utilising innovative ICT technologies to address the financial and cultural issues affecting school attendance and drop out among girls marginalised by poverty (GBP£9.5m)

(DfID 2015: pp16-20).

### 4.2. Areas of focus

While each of the projects named above have their distinct activities, objectives and goals, they are united under the GEC Kenya programme by a number of common themes and approaches. Key programme-wide approaches include the following:

- ***Girl-friendly school environments and resourcing to improve participation in schooling***

The GEC Kenya programme included a number of activities associated with providing infrastructure and other resources to improve girls' participation. These included, firstly, increasing resources to improve the physical infrastructure of school buildings to provide a safe and supportive environment for girls' learning. Examples include guaranteeing there are separate latrines for girls to ensure privacy and safety (KEEP/WWW) (DfID 2015: pp16-17) and making schools physically accessible for disabled girls (DfID 2015: p18).

Further initiatives include providing individual girls with items they are lacking that will enable them to stay in school, such as uniforms, stationary, solar lamps, and sanitary wear (KEEP) (DfID 2015: p16).

In particular, the initiatives associated with the funding and provision of these resources focus on local support and financing programmes, and are strongly linked with project initiatives for the engagement and mobilisation of communities and families. These financial interventions can be seen as highly relevant to the range of issues surrounding the fragility of household-level funding for girls' education in this context (Terry et al. 2016: pp17-21).

- ***Targeted teaching and learning interventions to improve learning outcomes for girls***

The projects included under the GEC Kenya programme include a range of initiatives targeting interventions for improving teaching and learning for girls. These include targeted remedial academic support for female learners by providing remedial academic training (KEEP) (DfID 2015: p16), and training teachers in curriculum delivery, gender inclusive strategies, Kenyan sign language (DfID 2015: p18) and data analysis (DfID 2015: p19).

An important aspect of a number of projects is working to improving girls' self-confidence and aspirations to learn, including through holistic health-based interventions (WWW) (DfID 2015: p17), improving the positive portrayal of women, and by training secondary school students as life skills peer educators and establishing mentoring clubs. Other initiatives include hosting large motivational mentoring events for girls and their mothers (DfID 2015: p19). As with local-level financing described above, this thematic series of interventions is strongly linked with activities across all projects for community-based engagement through awareness raising.

However, in terms of targeted interventions to improve learning outcomes for girls, the iMlango project is particularly innovative. Focussing maths, literacy skills and life skills for marginalised girls, the project combines IT-led inputs including the provision of online educational content tailored to individual girls' needs, electronic attendance monitoring; and real-time project monitoring/measurement, including daily attendance statistics for over 100,000 children and, through the online portal, measurement of individual access and progress rates. However, these mechanisms are supported by investment in high speed internet connectivity to participating schools (DfID 2015: p20).

- ***Interventions to sustain community engagement, capacity and support for the education of marginalised girls***

The projects included under the GEC Kenya programme all include a strong range of components associated with community engagement to support girls' schooling. These include multi-media public awareness campaigns (SMS, films, radio) strategies to share information and generate discussion on girls' education (KEEP) (DfID 2015: p16), community behaviour change, including with a particular focus on men and boys (DfID 2015: p16, p19), and capacity building for communities and households to support girls' education, including through financial means (WWW) (DfID 2015: p17).

At a community level, there is a particular focus on the role of School Management Committees and parent groups in influencing and sustaining change at school and community level, and in raising funds to address infrastructure and resource needs (DfID 2015: p17, p19).

Across all projects, there is a common theme of community engagement designed to broaden the understanding of the contexts in which girls live, and to transform ways in which girls are seen by others and by themselves.

### 4.3. Evidence of responsiveness to need and context

In general terms, the range of projects currently being implemented under the GEC Kenya programme are designed to address need and context through a highly community-orientated focussed series of interventions, where engagement of stakeholders is designed to address context-specific social and cultural barriers to girls' education through awareness-raising and behaviour change among community and also girls. The projects are, in part, seeking to influence the context in order to create an enabling community environment that is responsive to girls' education, an intervention that responds to findings regarding community and girls' attitudes towards schooling (Terry et al. 2016: p32).

However, the extent to which the projects themselves respond to community-identified needs is open to further analysis. In design terms, the range of GEC Kenya projects are seen to prioritise innovative practice over responsiveness. For example, WWW's stated strength is innovation in bringing together a number of tested interventions, including behaviour change programmes, cash transfers and the use of health volunteers, into a more holistic programme where interventions work to reinforce each other and bring about cost savings through the sharing of roles (DfID 2015: p17). However, this project's interventions associated with financing of girls' education fees is seen as highly responsive to needs identified by the beneficiary stakeholders (Di Marco 2016: p10) as well as to the range of issues surrounding the fragility of household-level funding for girls' education in this context (Terry et al. 2016: pp17-25).

iMlango also prioritises innovative practice in terms of its selected range of interventions. However, within this, the online components for the teaching and learning of maths are designed to be highly responsive to individual learner needs, in the delivery of content designed to address their specific identified learning requirements (DfID 2015: p20).

### 4.4. Programme outcomes

Firstly, in terms of achievements to improve girls' participation in schooling, across the range of projects under the GEC Kenya programme, the effects of particular interventions on girls' attendance and learning was often inconclusive, due to a lack of sufficient and reliable evidence at the project level. This is partly due to the holistic approach taken by projects, which made it very difficult to quantitatively identify the effects of specific activities (Griffiths et al. 2017: pIII).

However, based on the available evidence, economic interventions (i.e. scholarships, bursaries and stipends) and provision of in-kind support helped to reduce the cost of schooling and led to improved attendance among girls by ensuring timely payment of school fees and increasing girls' motivation. Interventions facilitating access to loans and savings and supporting income-generation are encouraging caregivers to spend more on girls' education (Griffiths et al. 2017: p53-54). For example, WWW provided cash transfers to marginalised households, and qualitative evidence points to households' use of cash transfers to not only meet the costs of school expenses, but also to finance basic needs, such as food and electricity, which is helping to stave off hunger and improve girls' ability to complete homework in the evenings (Griffiths et al. 2017: p62). KEEP provided scholarships to girls that had a positive effect on their motivation to sit and perform well in their school leaving exams: the number of girls sitting and scoring well on the exam had risen among intervention areas since the project started in 2013 (Griffiths et al. 2017: p86).

In terms of resources for individuals, sanitary wear and menstrual supplies provided by projects encouraged more regular attendance (Griffiths et al. 2017: pV). WWW reported that the attendance



of girls who received back-to-school kits (which included uniforms) had increased, with attendance consistently higher than the attendance of girls in intervention schools who did not receive them (Griffiths et al. 2017: p60). Conversely, KEEP reported that girls saw the uniforms as 'ill-fitting, poorly crafted [and] religiously inappropriate', which was seen as deterring girls from attending school regularly (Griffiths et al. 2017: p61).

In terms of investment at school level, there is some evidence that infrastructure and facilities improvements are helping to encourage more regular attendance, although there are persistent concerns about the adequacy of sanitation facilities (Griffiths et al. 2017: p63). KEEP reported improvements and increased satisfaction with classroom infrastructure. However, none of the projects presented quantitative evidence about the impacts of these infrastructure interventions on attendance or learning outcomes (Griffiths et al. 2017: p63).

However, despite such interventions, across many contexts poverty remains a structural barrier to girls' education and underlies a range of different demand-side factors that prevent girls from accessing school and learning. For example, projects have had limited success in reducing the amount of time girls spend on household chores, or the effects of early marriage and pregnancies, which are often used by households as practical strategies for escaping poverty (Griffiths et al. 2017: pVI).

Secondly, in terms of interventions to improve learning outcomes for girls, the contribution made by extra-curricular activities such as mentoring schemes and girls' clubs have raised girls' self-esteem and confidence in their academic ability, with some improvements in learning outcomes, particularly from activities that directly targeted girls' learning such as tutoring and accelerated learning programmes (Griffiths et al. 2017: pIV, p63). The improved availability of learning materials is promoting independent learning, with positive effects on student motivation and learning outcomes, although the availability and supply of learning resources remains insufficient (Griffiths et al. 2017: p63). In terms of teacher training, although projects found improvements in the use of participatory teaching practices which are helping to engage girls in class, only one project demonstrated the link between these and improvements and learning outcomes (Griffiths et al. 2017: p63).

However, the projects did not manage to impact on learning at a sufficient magnitude across all contexts (Griffiths et al. 2017: pV). WWW is the only project which demonstrated a positive and significant increase in literacy between baseline and endline (Griffiths et al. 2017: p31). In this context, projects need to significantly adapt their designs and delivery processes to increase their effects on girls' literacy and numeracy, to enable them to effectively progress through their education (Griffiths et al. 2017: pVII).

Thirdly, in terms to sustain community engagement, capacity and support for the education of marginalised girls, while there is already strong support for girls' education across stakeholder communities in most projects, there were reported improvements in parental and community attitudes towards girls' education, with some evidence of positive effects on attendance. For example, mothers are acting as 'troubleshooters' and helping to mobilise resources to identify and overcome barriers to girls' enrolment in school. Classes, community workshops and radio messaging were all key in changing attitudes to girls' learning (Griffiths et al. 2017: p72). WWW found that community members and Community Health Workers were playing an active role in visiting parents and speaking to them about the importance of education, with some links to improved enrolment (Griffiths et al. 2017: p76).

However, community sensitisation activities have not been effective in reducing the amount of time spent on girls' housework commitments, with little evidence of attitudinal change towards girls' household responsibilities in terms of the equitable distribution of tasks or time available for study (Griffiths et al. 2017: p64). In addition, KEEP reported instances of jealousy and resentment among boys, with boys disrupting remedial classes as a result of feeling excluded from the programme (Griffiths et al. 2017: p85).

Finally, overall, the projects are reliant on schools, teachers and community volunteers to continue to implement activities without further support. While there is evidence of commitment to do this, in the longer-term it is unlikely that this will be possible, particularly for approaches and groups that are relatively new. Training (such as cascade training) undertaken by projects to facilitate the continuation of activities has also been carried out, but too late and there is little evidence of its use to develop the capacity of relatively new groups to continue delivering project activities (Griffiths et al. 2017: pIV).

The lack of evidence at a project level of the effectiveness of different types of interventions has hindered the project's capacity to evaluate what worked well (or less well) in improving girls' learning outcomes. It is reported that projects need to use their data and evidence to reassess the effectiveness of each intervention in the context of the institutions in which they are embedded (Griffiths et al. 2017: pVI).

## 5. GPEP: South Sudan, 2013-2017

### 5.1. Programme background

South Sudan's Global Partnership for Education Programme (GPEP) was a four-year government-led basic education programme funded by GPE and USAID with combined contributions of USD\$68.7m, which was implemented in support of the country's General Education Strategic Plan (2012-2017) (GPE 2016: pp4-5). Overseen by the GPE, UNICEF were the lead managing agent, with input from major donors including NORAD, DFID, UNESCO, the EU and the JICA as well as International NGOs (GPE 2018).

The GPEP South Sudan worked to establish an effective educational programme through focusing on improved literacy and numeracy skills of children affected by conflict, with the aim of encouraging and supporting the country's economic development (GPE 2012: p2).

### 5.2. Areas of focus

The programmes' key areas of focus were as follows:

- ***Improve community and school based education service delivery***

The primary focus of the GPE South Sudan programme was children's' access to quality education. Therefore, starting at the community level was seen as vital, since ensuring a sustainable education programme would inevitably depend on the support of the community.

This primarily involved the development and implementation of School Management Committees who could work to engage the local community, and train new teachers and support staff, thereby providing appropriate support to literacy and numeracy learning (GPE 2016: p22). This focus on community engagement also provided some scope for the development and implementation of a school inspection framework, which reinforced commitments to improving the physical infrastructure of schools with an end goal of enhanced learner outcomes (GPE 2016: p23).

This component also supported the practical training of teachers, school leaders, payam supervisors, county inspectors, County Education Managers and SMCs. 41 county and payam supervisors from various local districts (7 of which were female) were provided with training to enable them to oversee the PTAs and SMCs effectively (GPE 2016: p7).

To ensure that specific guidelines surrounding the management and training of SMCs were in place, the MoEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) in conjunction with the GESS (Girls Education South Sudan) project and with additional support from the GPEP collaborated in producing a School Management Handbook. The creation of the school management handbook provided the trained county & payam supervisors with a framework through which they could distribute and implement the necessary knowledge and skills to train additional SMCs in their local areas (GPE 2016: p22-23).

In parallel with these county and community-level interventions, the programme invested in County Education Centres (CECs), developing their expertise to carry out initial assessments of out-of-school children and informed practitioners of appropriate educational needs approaches to facilitating activities for out-of-school children (GPE 2016: p28). In addition, a total 10 CECs and 3 Teacher Training Institutes were selected as centres for capacity development, whereby newly qualified and existing teachers could enhance their capabilities and continue their professional

development. Additional training activities for the heads of schools were also made available in the participating payams: the programme sought to ensure that training activities were accessible to all schools within target areas (GPE 2016: p28).

According to the literature, the project's implementation strategy was primarily focused on capacity building and sustainability, based on community participation and ownership of the project and its activities and supported by government involvement (GPE 2016: p23). Engagement with SMCs stemmed from their involvement in the inception stage of the program, achieved through regular meetings with key stakeholders. SMC members were also given the opportunity to participate in additional training to support and manage the maintenance and sustainability of the school in relation to staffing and education delivery (GPE 2016: p23).

In terms of outcomes, this range of activities is seen to have increased enrolment in GPEP funded schools (GPE 2016: p28) and encouraged effective learning outcomes and school efficiency (GPE 2016: p22).

▪ ***A model for improving communication on lessons learned***

A key priority for the GPEP was to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and ensure that there was a structured platform to manage and track progress of the teachers and learners, and to enable evidence-based decision-making. This mainly involved the development of baseline and summative evaluation to determine factors in successful education programme delivery. In addition, action research was carried out with a specific focus on learning outcomes, enrolment, retention and progression of girls and boys, and participatory school management (GPE 2016: p22, p29).

The programme developed a sector-wide M&E strategy through a desk review covering the results frameworks of previous educational programs undertaken in South Sudan, plus M&E reports from within the GPEP and the General Education Strategic Plan. This enabled the programme to better ensure relevance of GPEP objectives in relation to the needs of the education sector, identify those areas which were seeing the most positive results, reassess target groups and, finally, refine the programme's data collection methods. The M&E strategy development also undertook semi structured interviews with key stakeholders in order to establish key issues surrounding the success, impact and the future of the program (GPE 2016: pp20-21).

The GPE baseline study was commissioned to the Africa Educational Trust (AET). However, due to delays during the programme's inception following political upheaval, the study was only undertaken in September 2014 and completed in March 2015 (GPE 2016: p29).

Experiences through the GPEP were documented for lesson and experience sharing. For example, first-hand accounts of learners, teachers and curriculum writers were developed for lesson sharing and publication through appropriate media articles and blogs (GPE 2016: p30). Mechanisms to communicate findings under each component were implemented with the publishing of articles via the GPE Blog, UNICEF South Sudan website and Twitter (GPE 2016: p29).

However, it is interesting to note that, based on the documentation accessed, the GPE South Sudan programme does not appear to have put in place mechanisms to support the formal and systematic gathering and use of data at national, county or school-level.

### **5.3. Evidence of responsiveness to need and context**

The project's responsiveness to need and context stems primarily from the focus on meeting the high demand for education in South Sudan by increasing learning achievement through classroom based initiatives in rural settings, and through the use of research and data-gathering into the social and humanitarian challenges facing South Sudan to inform the design and direction of programme interventions (GPE 2012: pp1-2).

However, in terms of the responsiveness of programme design and implementation, delaying the inception stage of the programme due to the eruption of the civil war in 2013 allowed for substantial progress to be made in terms of conducting a baseline study which strengthened the project's responsiveness to need and context in terms of gaining an understanding of the needs of the learner and the local environment (GPE 2016: p5). In addition, the low capacity for M&E and systemic management from state ministries led the program to have a community-led focus, with school management committees and supervisory inspection teams consisting of members of the local community (GPE 2016: p11).

Finally, responding to the poor availability of resources at school level, the GPEP ensured that priority was given to effective teacher training and the development of adequate learning and teaching materials (GPE 2016: p10). Investing in the scaling up of teacher and sufficient learning and teaching materials resulted in positively engaging out-of-school children which was an important part of the GPEP remit.

### **5.4. Programme outcomes**

Due to the scarcity of evaluative literature surrounding this programme, including the way in which data has been gathered, there are significant limitations in assessing the effectiveness of this intervention. Furthermore, within the literature that has been made available, there are some aspects within the key components of the programme which have not yet been initiated which makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive analysis.

There were multiple challenges that presented themselves in some areas of South Sudan, for example in terms of security and accessibility, which meant that the implementation of a basic education programme was significantly hindered. Moreover, the costs of construction for building the physical infrastructure were compromised due to cost and bureaucratic restrictions within the Bank of South Sudan (GPE 2016: p26).

At school level, project achievements record 25 schools receiving a minimum of 3 supportive supervisory visits from either inspectors or supervisors each year since the programme's inception. Although this has meant that these schools are able to commit to preparing and submitting school performance reports, for a national programme this appears to be very few. Regarding the support of out-of-school children, though there are some outputs to this component, in terms of tangible numbers of those accessing education it is limited due to the time it takes to train staff in undertaking and delivering the necessary diagnostic assessments.

Finally, within the action research and lessons learnt component of the programme, a programme baseline was established, whereby challenges were identified and findings were disseminated to schools, their communities and other stakeholders to promote knowledge management and consider action for the future (GPE 2016: pp10-29).

## 6. Conclusions

This concluding section draws out a number of thematic summaries of the approaches to basic education programming from aid agencies, based on the available evidence from across the selected cases.

### 6.1. Emerging themes

The case studies presented here include a range of approaches within programme design and implementation that are seen to be aligned with the attainment of outcomes in teaching and learning. They include the following:

- ***Interventions to improve learning outcomes***

Across the case studies, key interventions to improve learning outcomes include components such as targeted academic support, teacher training, and holistic inputs to encourage academic engagement among learners (DfID Kenya GEC, DfID Bangladesh EIA, GPE South Sudan). However, based on the available evidence, there are questions over the extent to which these interventions can be seen as wholly effective in enabling significant improvements in learning outcomes. The implications are that, in order to be effective, such interventions need to be provided in association with a range of parallel investment in infrastructure and resources, capacity development and engagement activities to improve the quality of schooling overall. However, within this, there is some evidence of the effectiveness of the innovative use of ICT to support teaching and learning, both at pilot level but also, importantly, at scale (as in the case of the DfID Bangladesh EIA programme).

- ***Interventions to improve participation***

The improvement of access to and participation in schooling, particularly for socially or economically marginalised children, is a key theme across a broad range of the projects covered under the programmes featured in this study. Interventions include basic investment in targeted building programmes in areas underserved by schools (GPE South Sudan, ADB Indonesia) and school infrastructural improvement (DfID Kenya GEC), but also local or individual financing and/or grants programmes to overcome a range of poverty-related barriers to school participation (DfID Kenya GEC). Based on findings, these have been seen as particularly effective in improving enrolment and participation rates among targeted groups of learners. Evidence also suggests that the relevance and effectiveness of participation outcomes associated with grants to schools is increased when accompanied by parallel measures for school or community-led decision-making (ADB Indonesia).

- ***Interventions for improved school management at school & district level***

The improvement of school management at school and district level is a major strand across the majority of cases featured in this study, and is reflective of a general recognition of the importance of school leadership, combined with localised problem-solving and community-level accountability, to improving the quality of educational delivery. Both the ADB Indonesia decentralized basic education project and the GPEP in South Sudan place importance on the scope for capacity development through adopting a localised approach. Due to the significant gaps in basic education within both country contexts, this initiative allows for increased accountability with respect to programme outcomes. Key interventions include the decentralised allocation of project funds for schools and districts to target specific areas of capacity



development, with transparency being a main priority (ADB Indonesia), and the mobilisation of community involvement through SMC capacity development (ADB Indonesia; GPE South Sudan).

On a district level, a number of programmes have implemented systems to improve the capacity of districts in managing the provision of basic education. Interventions include investment in the training of district education boards to coordinate targeted interventions based on local priorities, oversee capacity building activities, and strengthen children's access to basic education (ADB Indonesia; GPE South Sudan). While the DfID Bangladesh EIA programme did not include an intervention specifically to target district-level capacity building, the project attributes a significant proportion of its success to taking a localised approach to programme implementation, working with existing local educational networks to facilitate school- and district-level interventions (DfID Bangladesh EIA).

- ***Interventions for community engagement***

Across the majority of programmes featured here, the role of community engagement is seen as central to ensuring the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of any interventions at a local level. In the majority of cases, community engagement interventions focus on the mobilisation of support for school management and improvement. In this context, activities included the establishment or capacity-building of SMCs or similar bodies (GPE South Sudan, DfID Kenya GEC, ADB Indonesia), community engagement in school monitoring for transparency and accountability (ADB Indonesia, GPE South Sudan), and financing or fundraising for schools or pupils (DfID Kenya). In general terms, these interventions were seen as effective in establishing strengthened school management, as well as contributing to improved enrolment and participation rates for learners. However, the extent to which they contributed to improved teaching and learning outcomes is difficult to assess.

Additional community engagement interventions include those associated with community awareness raising around education (DfID Kenya GEC). However, in those projects where such interventions took place, evidence suggested that, while they were effective in contributing to or reinforcing positive attitudes towards education, they were less effective in mobilising practical change and did not help to overcome many of the more tangible barriers to participation in education.

- ***Use of data and evidence-based decision-making***

The influence of the use of data to support evidence-based decision-making is a common theme running throughout all case studies featured in this study. However, there is a differing range of outcomes that have resulted from the levels of use at a programme or project level. For example, DfID Bangladesh EIA utilised a rigorous approach to research and data usage to inform decision-making at all levels of programme design and delivery, and the project concludes that this approach enabled the continuous refinement of outputs and activities in order to ensure that the project was effective in meeting the needs of beneficiaries.

ADB Indonesia acknowledges the importance of data-gathering in supporting the effectiveness of its decentralised approaches to targeting educational support, but concludes that mechanisms for data-gathering and analysis at a district level require substantial investment before they will be in a position to operate effectively. Reviews of both the GPE South Sudan programme and the projects grouped under the DfID Kenya GEC programme highlight the fact that data-gathering across both programmes in general required significant further strengthening, and that available

evidence is not strong enough to help these programmes fully identify their achievements or their models of best practice.

In general terms, the absence of effective mechanisms for data-gathering and utilisation is seen to impact significantly on measures of programme effectiveness.

### **6.3. Evidence of responsiveness to need and context**

In general terms, the range of projects featured under the programmes included in this study display a range of responsiveness to need and context. Firstly, in general design terms, all programmes featured have been designed to respond to identified needs and to address identified challenges or contextual shortcomings within the existing provision of basic education.

However, secondly, in some cases, there is strong evidence that ‘responsiveness’ is a key element of the programme’s approach to delivery. The most pertinent example of this is DfID Bangladesh EIA’s commitment to a continual process of adapting and revising project outputs and delivery models in response to the broad range of findings generated by their internal data-gathering and action-based research.

Thirdly, in other cases, the programme’s responsiveness comes from a decentralised and localised focus that enables community-level decision-making for stakeholders and beneficiaries to identify and set their own priorities for intervention. ADB Indonesia, together with the financing components associated with certain projects within DfID Kenya GEC provide the clearest examples of this approach.

Finally, in other cases, there is a degree of evidence that that the programme’s levels of responsiveness are hampered to a certain extent by the poor availability of evidence regarding the impact of specific interventions.

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