RAPID REVIEW OF GENDER HARDWIRING IN THE GPE 2025 OPERATING MODEL

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ACRONYMS

CAR	Central African Republic
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EFA	Enabling Factors Analysis
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
EOL	Education Out Loud
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEA	Girls' Education Accelerator
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPE 2020	GPE 2020 Strategic Plan
GPE 2025	GPE 2025 Strategic Plan
ITAP	Independent Technical Advisory Panel
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KAP	Knowledge, attitudes, and practice indicator
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENPC	Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion (Chad)
MLT	Multiplier Grant
MoECHE	Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (Somalia)
QAR	Quality Assurance Review
SCG	System Capacity Grant
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment
SELD	School Education and Literacy Department (Pakistan (Sindh))
SESP&R	School and Education Sector Plan & Roadmap (Pakistan (Sindh))
SRGBV	School Related Gender Based Violence
STG	System Transformation Grant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), dedicated to transforming education in low- and middle-income countries, launched its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan (GPE 2025) which introduced a new approach to gender equality. GPE's goal is to accelerate access, learning outcomes, and gender equality through equitable, inclusive, and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century.

The "gender hardwiring" approach integrates gender equality into all GPE processes, from analysis and policy dialogue to grant development and implementation. To assess the initial stages of impact, an independent rapid review was commissioned in October 2024 to determine if the approach has strengthened country-level commitments to gender equality in access to, within, and through education.[1] The review also examined countries who were eligible for additional finance through the Girls' Education Accelerator (GEA) as well as shifts from the prior GPE 2020 strategy, using a multi-stage methodology. This included document reviews of eight countries (Cambodia, Central African Republic (CAR)*, Chad*, Nicaragua, Pakistan (Sindh), Senegal, Somalia (federal level)*[2], and Zimbabwe*, followed by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions in three focus countries (Chad, Pakistan (Sindh), and Somalia (federal level)) with GPE Country Engagement Leads, Local Education Group (LEG) members; Coordinating Agency representatives, Grant Agent Representatives, and government representatives. Data was analyzed through the **four country-level GPE Gender Equality 'Entry Points:**[3] 1) gender analysis and diagnosis; 2) gender considerations in policy dialogue; 3) gender lens in grant development; and 4) mutual accountability for gender hardwiring among national stakeholders. This review provides an independent perspective on learning to date and progress on GPE's gender hardwiring approach.

Some limitations emerged. This independent learning exercise was designed as a "rapid review" due to fixed monetary resources. This determined the sample sizes for the desk review and deep dive inquiry, respectively. Because the reviewed country programs had either recently started or were imminent, a full assessment of evidence on implementation and mutual accountability for gender was not possible. Despite limitations, this review's thorough desk review and comprehensive deep dive interviews provide early insights on the direction of travel on GPE's ambition on gender hardwiring.

KEY FINDINGS

The following table highlights the key findings that emerged across countries in each of the four Entry Points as well as those applicable to the GPE 2025 hardwiring approach and Girls' Education Accelerator:

Entry Point 1: Gender analysis and evidence-based diagnosis
• The GPE 2025 Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA) has provided more robust analysis of system-level gender-related barriers, facilitated a more holistic assessment of gender across the entire education system through

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[1] Please see *Going further together: A partnership approach to gender equality,* p. 7 for a definition of gender equality in access to, within, and through education.

[2] * indicates countries that received a Girls'' Education Accelerator grant.

[3] Please see *Going further together: A partnership approach to gender equality,* pp. 16-18.

	use of up-to-date data and acknowledgement of evidence gaps, and improved the identification of priorities than the GPE 2020 model.
•	Identification of barriers related to gender equality *through* education was more limited than those related to gender equality *in access to* and *within* education.
•	Gender-related barriers typically focused on inequalities primarily affecting girls versus boys, often related to either access, completion, and/or learning outcomes. When disparities that disadvantage boys were identified, sampled countries' priority reform, Compact, and/or program did not address them as comprehensively as disparities that impact girls.
•	Most gender-related barriers identified in EFAs were addressed in simultaneously applied STG, GEA, and Multiplier grants. Separately applied Multiplier grant programs, however, showed greater disconnect between identified barriers and activities in the final program documents.
•	Other donors and partners addressed gender-related barriers not covered by GPE funding with complementary programming, indicating evidence of shared accountability.

Entry Point 2: Gender within system policy dialogue
• Policy dialogue engagement of gender equality-focused organizations varied by country due to capacity and context, with positive examples of new actor engagement followed by inconsistent post-Compact participation..
• Gender expertise was brought in from varied sources—regional experts, country consultants, and expanded ministry involvement—showing an improvement from GPE 2020 to GPE 2025..
• Gaps in intersectional gender representation also existed. Few examples of participation of civil society organizations of, by, and for groups that face marginalization and/or underrepresentation[4] emerged in this review.
• Stakeholders perceived the dedicated funding stream as enabling the setting of ambitious goals and actions and focusing on system-level change during Compact development.
• The level of certainty that the GEA funding would be available at the time of Compact development may have contributed to the GEA's degree of influence on policy dialogue.

Entry Point 3: Gender and inclusion lens in grant development
• The process to develop and review the GPE 2025 GPE-financed grants, including MLT grants, primarily involved grant agents, with gender expertise from LEG and the government harnessed to some extent at key touchpoints, which was more limited under GPE 2020.
• Gender Hub QAR processes and other feedback from the Secretariat ensured stronger hardwiring in the final program document for all types of grants.
• Requirements for gender hardwiring under GPE 2025 have influenced the setting of gender-disaggregated targets in two of three reviewed grant program's results frameworks. This presented a difference to GPE 2020 for Chad and Somalia, although less so for Pakistan.
• Sex disaggregation existed, but indicators largely measured outputs (e.g., training numbers) rather than impact on gender equality, with some exceptions such as gender-disaggregated learning outcomes.
• Confusions arose about how to simultaneously hardwire gender and create a girl-focused component or sub-components for some countries when applying for GEA and STG, especially when there was more than one grant agent. Direct engagement with the Gender Hub or other Secretariat staff helped allay these confusions.
• SCG grants have had or will have positive impact on supporting gender hardwiring efforts in the country by strengthening gender capacity within ministries of education and helping close gaps in gender-related data and analyses.

Entry Point 4: Mutual accountability for gender
• Limited evidence of discussion or plans for mutual accountability for gender hardwiring in education emerged during this review.
• Central-level government staff are predominately responsible for mutual accountability for gender equality in the GPE 2025 partnership model with few examples of sub-national government units assuming this role.
• Top-up triggers were predominately tied to High Priority Enabling Factors, which did not have strong links to gender (Volume, Equity, and Efficiency of Domestic Financing and Coordinated Funding most common). The

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[4] Note that this term stems from inclusion-related, including disability rights, literature, and the principle of "nothing about us, without us" and "nothing without us." See for example, NDI. 2022 "Nothing About Us Without Us" to "Nothing Without Us".

review identified only two examples when a top-up trigger indicator was related to gender and only in the Compact phase. No variable part indicators related to gender were identified.
Stakeholder Feedback on Gender Hardwiring in GPE 2025 Model
• Consulted stakeholders largely believe that the GPE 2025 model represents a significant step forward in prioritizing gender equality in education in comparison with the GPE 2020 model. • Stakeholders had constructive suggestions for improvements to GPE 2025's gender hardwiring approach such as enhanced training, guidance resources, technical support, coordination, and accountability measures.

CONCLUSIONS

The GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model represents a significant improvement over GPE 2020, leading to better evidence use, deeper policy dialogue, and improved integration of gender equality in grant design. The following outlines progress and challenges to address in the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach:

PROGRESS:

- **Program Design Improved:** GPE hardwiring requirements, clearly outlined in GPE 2025 templates, combined with GPE Country Team engagement, helped countries to identify relevant data and evidence, form gender-equality focused Compact commitments, which eventually transformed into concrete, gender-hardwired program designs.

- **Policy Dialogue Related to Gender Strengthened:** GPE 2025 supported deeper gender equality-related education policy discussions which made better use of gender- and intersectional-disaggregated data and diagnostics. It also supported expanded gender expertise and participation of gender equality-focused organizations.

- **More Effective Quality Assurance:** QAR processes, which include use of specific gender QAR tools, and relationships between the Secretariat and country teams have been effective in advancing gender hardwiring. This highlights the importance of GPE's guidance, feedback, and instruments in promoting reflection and action on gender.

- **Greater Inclusion of Intersectionality through GEA Financing:** GEA financing advanced intersectional inclusion by supporting data-driven interventions for diverse learners based on gender and other characteristics like income, geography, and disability.

- **More Ambitious Gender-Related Goals and Activities through GEA Financing:** GEA financing led to more ambitious gender goals, especially related to redressing inequalities impacting girls, and planned initiatives. GEA also promoted more detailed costing, improving monitoring of progress on outcomes for girls' education specifically.

CHALLENGES:

- **Limited Government Ownership and Leadership for Gender Hardwiring:** Despite GPE's efforts, government ownership and leadership for gender equality in education remain largely lacking in the sampled countries, although slightly improved from the GPE 2020 model. This is largely related to insufficient gender technical capacity at the government level.

- **Continued Misunderstanding about Gender Hardwiring and Insufficient Gender Hardwiring Capacity:** Country-level partners continue to have varying degrees of understanding and technical capacity about what gender hardwiring means and how to implement it. There is also some continued confusion about the relationship to the GEA, where applicable.

- **Insufficient Country-Level Mechanisms to Ensure Mutal Accountability for Gender Equality:** Country-level mutual accountability for gender hardwiring faces several challenges, including insufficient mutual accountability planning and monitoring, systemic implementation and accountability deficiencies at the decentralized level, insufficient gender indicators in grant programs' results frameworks, and insufficient decentralization of LEG efforts.
- **Limited Relationship between Results-Based Financing (Variable Funding and Top-Ups) and Gender:** While gender is at the center of GPE's agenda and has been strongly integrated across programs, the review found very few top-up triggers related to gender and no variable part indicators related to gender.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The review proposes two key strategic considerations for the next phases of GPE's gender hardwiring approach:

- **Expanded partner-led gender hardwiring capacity-building and technical support at all stages of GPE partnerships:** Consider expanding the role of the new Regional Gender and Inclusion Advisors and other Gender and Inclusion Practice staff to facilitate shared ownership among all GPE partners to increase each other's capacity to effectively hardwire gender. Capacity-building support should target key government partners as well as Coordinating Agencies and Grants Agents to cascade the learning down to more decentralized partners. The Secretariat could support this shared capacity-building effort through additional gender hardwiring guidance and tools for country-level partners.
- **Increased focus on enhancing mutual accountability for gender hardwiring among all GPE partnership stakeholders, including the GPE Secretariat and country-level partners:** Consider exploring stronger mutual accountability mechanisms across the partnership landscape. This could include exploring the relationship between mutual accountability for gender hardwiring and gender-related variable funding indicators and top-up triggers. Some other potential actions are requiring more robust gender-responsive indicators in the results framework and nomination of a Gender Lead organization at the country level. GPE can also encourage stronger gender representation and responsibility in LEG and Task Teams and encourage strengthened mutual accountability for gender hardwiring at all levels, particularly at decentralized levels within partner countries' government structures.

While challenges persist in government ownership and capacity, the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model has demonstrably advanced gender equality in education, marked by improved program design, strengthened policy dialogue, more effective quality assurance, and the significant impact of GEA financing in driving ambitious gender goals and greater inclusion of intersectional considerations. Key findings reveal robust gender analyses, increased engagement of diverse gender expertise, and the positive role that SCG is playing to strengthen gender capacities and mutual accountability. Stakeholder feedback affirms these advancements, highlighting the model's significant step forward from GPE 2020. These achievements showcase a clear trajectory of improvement, establishing a strong foundation upon which to address remaining obstacles and further accelerate gender equality in education.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is dedicated to transforming education in low- and middle-income countries. GPE mobilizes partners and resources to ensure every child, and especially the most marginalized, receives quality education. Its goal is to accelerate access, learning outcomes, and gender equality through equitable, inclusive, and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century. The GPE 2021-2025 Strategic Plan (GPE 2025) prioritizes gender equality, aiming to dismantle barriers to education and empower girls. More specifically, GPE 2025 lays out the organization's ambitious 'gender hardwiring' approach which seeks to embed gender equality across all GPE systems and processes. Concretely, the approach focuses on integrating gender equality into sector analysis and diagnostics, policy dialogue, grant development, and mutual accountability during program implementation processes with the goal of ensuring gender equality in access to, within and through education.[5] The Girls' Education Accelerator (GEA) funding window acts as a complementary initiative for countries where girls fall furthest behind. GPE has found evidence of improved gender hardwiring among partner countries: nearly 70% of assessed concept notes were 'on track' for hardwiring gender equality at the initial program design stages in October 2024.[6]

PURPOSE

In October 2024, the GPE Secretariat commissioned a rapid review of the gender hardwiring approach to provide an independent perspective on the initial stages of the approach's implementation and answer the following key review question: *To what extent has the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring operating model helped to develop stronger country-level commitments to gender equality in access to, within, and through education?* The review will also examine any contributions of the GEA to the gender hardwiring approach in the review countries and will briefly outline major gender approach shifts from the prior organizational strategy, GPE 2020, to GPE 2025 in three countries selected for a "deep dive" review.

METHODOLOGY

The Rapid Review methodology involved a multi-stage process (See **Annex 4** for detailed methodology):

1) Reviewing GPE Secretariat internal and public documents related to gender hardwiring (**Annex 5**);
2) Analyzing country-level documents related to GPE 2025 for evidence of gender hardwiring for eight countries: **Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Nicaragua, Pakistan (Sindh), Senegal, Somalia (federal level), Zimbabwe** (**Annex 5** for document list, **Annex 8** for country overviews);
3) Developing key informant interview and focus group discussion (FGD) question guides (**Annex 7**);
4) Conducting interviews and FGDs with key informants from three countries for a "deep dive" review: **Chad, Pakistan (Sindh),** and **Somalia (federal level)** (Case studies in **Annexes 2, 3**, and **4**). These key informants included the GPE Country Engagement Leads, Local Education Group (LEG) members;

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[5] Please see *Going further together: A partnership approach to gender equality,* p. 7 for a definition of gender equality in access to, within, and through education.

[6] Performance, Impact, and Learning Committee (PILC). October 2024. PILC/2024/10 DOC 03.

Coordinating Agency representatives, Grant Agent Representatives, and government representatives.[7]

5) Data analysis using the **four country-level GPE Gender Equality 'Entry Points'** as opportunities to operationalize gender equality as the analytical framework: 1) *Gender analysis and evidence-based diagnosis; 2) Gender within system level policy dialogue; 3) Gender lens in grant development process, and; 4) Mutual accountability for gender through national level stakeholders*.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations emerged. This independent learning exercise was designed as a "rapid review" due to fixed monetary resources. This determined the sample sizes for the desk review, including the smaller number of GEA recipient countries reviewed than non-GEA recipients, and deep dive inquiry, respectively. It also limited the number of interviews for each deep dive country.   Because the reviewed country programs had either recently started or were imminent, a full assessment of evidence on implementation and mutual accountability for gender was not possible. Despite limitations, this review's thorough desk review and comprehensive deep dive interviews provides some early insights on the direction of travel on GPE's ambition on gender hardwiring.

FINDINGS

This section provides major findings with illustrative examples from the eight reviewed countries. **The first four sections provide findings organized by each of the four Entry Points**: 1) Gender analysis and evidence-based diagnosis; 2) Gender within system policy dialogue; 3) Program development with gender and inclusion lens; 4) Mutual accountability for gender through national stakeholders. The final sub-section outlines findings that cut across the four Entry Points of the gender hardwiring approach and highlights consulted stakeholders' assessment of strengths and how improve the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach. For examples of how reviewed country partners are putting **GPE Guiding Principles for Operationalizing Gender Equality** into action, see **Annex 1.**

ENTRY POINT 1: GENDER ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE-BASED DIAGNOSIS

This section addresses the extent to which gender-related barriers were identified in the Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA) across all factors, as well as in the Partnership Compact, and whether these barriers were subsequently addressed by GPE Grants or other partners. Evidence from deep dive case studies highlight differences related to gender analysis and diagnostics between GPE 2020 and 2025 (See Annexes 2-4).

In the eight sampled countries, the GPE 2025 EFA has provided more robust analysis of system-level gender-related barriers, facilitated a more holistic assessment of gender across the entire education system through use of up-to-date data and acknowledgement of evidence gaps, and improved the identification of priorities than the GPE 2020 model. This difference is also observed in the quality of discussion around gender and evidence-based solutions in the Compact.

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[7] Please note that source citations of data collected through interviews and focus groups discussions will be the following: Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024 to preserve anonymity to the extent possible.

- In **Chad,** the EFA and Compact more consistently used recent and robust gender-related evidence than the transitional Education Sector Plan (GPE 2020). A staff member of a grant agent organization expressed that "for previous programs, gender may have come up during implementation, but for the new [program], I think gender was an entry point. Gender was brought on board right from the start of the process and therefore right from when we identified priorities."[35] In their opinion, this led to stronger transversal integration of gender than in the past.[8]
- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) (GPE 2020) identified few system-level gender barriers, while the EFA gender analysis highlighted limited data use, weak gender unit capacity, and a lack of comprehensive gender analysis. Key informants and EFA documents also confirmed major gender barriers, such as significant disparities in girls' enrollment, transition, completion, and learning, were more prominently highlighted and prioritized in the EFA and Compact (e.g., through the priority reform focusing on equitable access to foundational learning and fostering transition to post-primary) than in the ESA and Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG). Consulted LEG members also mentioned that unlike during the ESA process, they spent many working sessions analyzing the gender-related and other education sector data and received gender hardwiring training related to preparing for the EFA.
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, compared to the processes under GPE 2020, stakeholders perceived the EFA to have made a significant difference in analyzing gender equality and identifying solutions. One LEG member described how the ESPIG relied on the sector plan as the basis for most gender activities whereas, for the GPE 2025 program there was "a deeper analysis and review of issues around gender that highlighted the need for comprehensive dialogue."[9] The dialogue that occurred led to more complex understandings of bottlenecks and solutions. For instance, one stakeholder recalled that "in 2017, gender was very clearly a gap, but it was essentially a discussion about increasing access…It's a game of numbers. It was a much less nuanced discussion… Now, it is a much more nuanced discussion."[10] In addition, the EFA required a higher degree of diagnostics and evidence than during the development of the ESPIG**,** which inconsistently applied gender disaggregated data from the 2018/2019 Education Statistics Yearbook, a 2017 Education Sector Analysis (ESA), and a 2019 Joint Review of the Education Sector (JRES).

In the EFA, countries reviewed identified gender-related barriers primarily for Data & Evidence and Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring with far fewer examples for Sector Coordination and Volume, Efficiency, and Equity of Domestic Funding.
- Reviewed countries commonly identified Data & Evidence barriers to conduct intersectional analysis beyond sex/gender variables, such as age (e.g., **Pakistan (Sindh)**), disability (e.g., **Cambodia, Pakistan (Sindh), Somalia (federal level), Zimbabwe**), geography or social inclusion (e.g., **Chad, Senegal**) and ethnic minority (e.g., **Cambodia, Nicaragua**).
- Other common Data & Evidence gender-related barriers identified were: insufficient capacity to analyze and use sex and other disaggregated data to make evidence-based decisions on

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[8] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

education policy and practice and, more specifically, to conduct nuanced analysis and response to gender inequalities in the system such as to gender norms and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) (e.g., **Cambodia, Chad, Pakistan (Sindh), Zimbabwe**).

- Many gender-related barriers in the sampled country were identified under Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring (e.g., gender disparities in enrollment and learning outcomes with girls typically disadvantaged, like in **Pakistan (Sindh), Zimbabwe, Somalia (federal level), Chad**, and **CAR** *or* for boys, like in **Cambodia, Nicaragua,** and **Senegal**).Only **Pakistan (Sindh)** and **Senegal** presented concrete examples of barriers for Sector Coordination and/or Domestic Funding.
    - o For Sector Coordination, **Pakistan (Sindh)** identified insufficient use of its Local Education Group (LEG) to analyze, problem-solve, and/or strategize on gender-specific issues such as grade-to-grade transition and improved post-primary transition amongst girls. For Volume, Efficiency, and Equity of Domestic Funding, the EFA indicated two major gender-related barriers: 1) a need for gender and geographical equity in budget allocations and 2) insufficient budgeting and resourcing of programs for strengthening gender equality.
    - o In **Senegal**, the Gender Equality Policy Outcome section of the EFA highlights the absence of a partnership framework for gender to ensure coordination, however this is not addressed further in the Sector Coordination analysis or in other documentation.

Identification of barriers related to gender equality *through* education was more limited than those related to gender equality *in access to* and *within* education.[11] However, some examples of barriers related to gender equality *through* education emerged:

- In **Cambodia**, the EFA included data pointing to underrepresentation of girls/women in technical/vocational and STEM fields at secondary and tertiary levels as well overrepresentation of women in teaching positions and their underrepresentation in leadership roles such as school directors and mentors.
- In **Chad,** the EFA and Compact included an analysis of labor force and skills, and an attempt to improve both formal and non-formal education pathways to better empower girls and women to join the workforce.
- In **Nicaragua**, the EFA identified "persistent sexism" characterized by discrimination and persistent gender-based violence (GBV) both in, around, and outside of school as a key gender-related barrier.
- In **Zimbabwe**, identified barriers were lack of sexual and reproductive health information at school, especially for girls, insufficient female leadership in the education system, harmful gender norms, and school-related GBV.

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[11] Please see *Going further together: A partnership approach to gender equality,* p. 7 for a definition of gender equality in access to, within, and through education.

Gender-related barriers typically focused on inequalities primarily affecting girls versus boys, often related to either access, completion, and/or learning outcomes. When disparities that disadvantage boys were identified, sampled countries' priority reform, Compact, and/or program did not address them as comprehensively as barriers that impact girls. For example:

- In **Cambodia**, despite clear evidence of boys' disadvantage in retention and learning vis-à-vis girls, GPE grants (STG, UNICEF-MLT, and World Bank-MLT) contained few specific interventions that intentionally targeted boys and typically involved broader interventions that sought gender equality in access to and within education (e.g., the UNICEF-MLT program document mentions "specific interventions focused on gender will be implemented through gender-responsive teacher training curricula, EGL [early grade learning], and Local Life Skills (LSE)"[12] without specifying how these activities would tackle the gender-specific barriers to boys' education.) Furthermore, the life skills activities include a specific component targeting girls (leadership development) but none specifically for boys despite the evidence of disparities facing boys.[13]
- In **Senegal**, girls had higher enrolment rates in primary and lower secondary, though girls were more likely to drop out at both levels of education. However, the program's proposed actions focused more on addressing root causes impacting girls' access, with a significant focus on GBV violence and social norms as opposed to addressing root causes for boys' low enrolment.[14]
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the Compact and STG Program Document acknowledge that child recruitment and armed violence may contribute to boys' low enrolment rates. Yet, there were no sub-components or activities that specifically addressed this root cause, although boys were addressed broadly through capitation grants and other activities.

The Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) did not typically assess Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring as high priority or any enabling factors that include significant gender-related barriers; in a case when the country did assess this enabling factor as high priority, the ITAP disagreed, downgrading it to medium priority. For example:

- In **CAR**, ITAP and EFA concurred that Gender-Responsive Sector Planning, Policy, and Monitoring was a high priority. ITAP observed strong sector policies inclusive of gender, but a lack of implementation overall and with specific regard to gender. However, most of the analysis related to sector-wide issues as opposed to gender-specific ones.
- In **Pakistan (Sindh),** the EFA assessed Gender-Responsive Sector Planning, Policy, and Monitoring as a high priority for achieving its priority reform, while the ITAP downgraded the enabling factor to medium. The government believed this to be an unfortunate and inaccurate assessment of the priority level based on the existing data and their contextual understanding of the education sector in Sindh province. They did not feel, however, there was any recourse to this downgrade.[15]
- In **Cambodia** and **Zimbabwe**, for example, ITAP assessed Domestic Public Expenditure as high priority, in which the EFA had no gender-related barriers or discussion.

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[12] GPE5 Multiplier Program Document for Cambodia. p. 21.
[13] Ibid., p. 51.
[14] PADES II Program Document, p. 38; QAR 3 Form, pp. 8-9.
[15] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

Most gender-related barriers identified in the EFA process were generally addressed in simultaneously applied STG, GEA, and Multiplier grants (e.g., CAR and Senegal). Some separately applied Multiplier grants (e.g., Cambodia and Zimbabwe), however, showed greater disconnect between identified barriers and activities in the final program documents.

- In **Cambodia,** the country applied for a MLT separately after applying for the STG. Despite proposing to tackle one of the key gender-related barriers in the EFA—boys' underachievement in retention and learning—the final MLT program document does not provide a clear explanation of how the proposed activities will do so despite having received related Gender Hub feedback

- In **Cambodia,** the country also applied for a standalone MLT under GPE 2025 as additional funds for the countries' existing GPE 2020 grant. Despite extensive Gender Hub feedback, the final program document still did not fully address key gender-related barriers identified in the EFA (e.g., underrepresentation of women in leadership and boy's high dropout).

- In **CAR**, some gender-related barriers highlighted in the EFA were absent from the final program document. For example, in the EFA and ITAP stage, barriers to gender equality included the lack of a comprehensive policy or plan focused on gender and education gender and education "with targets, monitoring mechanisms and discrete well-funded programs."[16] The final Program Document did not include any type of "gender-responsive" policy or plan, or evidence that another partner had taken this on.

- In **Chad**, the EFA highlighted a strong policy environment but a lack of concrete implementation plans and strategies and that human resource management did not consider the need to recruit and support more female teachers and school leaders. EFA and ITAP rated Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring as a medium priority. The STG and GEA programs addressed the need to hire and support more female teachers and school leaders and to strengthen systems around managing deployment.

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the EFA and ITAP concurred that Data & Evidence was a high priority, noting a lack of system-level gender and social inclusion analyses as a barrier to progress on "access, learning, retention, and completion."[17] In particular, ITAP called for more nuanced analyses of intersectional issues, such as disparities between urban and rural, the overall high proportion of out-of-school children, and the tendency for education data to skew towards wealthier urban families. The eventual GPE programs focused on a range of intersectional issues, including rural-urban inequalities but also disability; an SCG grant also supported strengthening of EMIS data.

- In **Zimbabwe,** the country applied for additional MLT funding after receiving an STG. The final MLT program document was essentially the original STG program document with additional activities added in tracked changes. However, new activities did not hardwire gender equality and did not incorporate final QAR 3 Gender Hub feedback. For instance, the MLT included a new "Training for ECD teachers on basic parenting skills" which did not have a gender-responsive design, an element which could have supported critical reflection and dialogue on gender norms in early years which impact girls' and boys' education experiences. The lack of gender hardwiring may

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[16] CAR, ITAP Report, p. 3.
[17] Somalia, EFA, p. 32.

be linked to absence of gender-related feedback provided on the MLT program in the Secretariat QAR feedback.

Other donors and partners addressed gender-related barriers not covered by GPE funding with complementary programming, indicating evidence of shared accountability. For example:

- In **Chad,** the government, with support from UNICEF, developed a "Strategy to Accelerate Girls' Education" which corresponded to one of the bottlenecks identified in the EFA.[18] UNESCO-IIEP also supported the MENPC through decentralized trainings on gender equality, GBV, and re-enrolling girls in school.[19]
- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the government with support from development partners like UNICEF and Japan International Cooperation Agency have advanced on finalizing the Out-Of-School Children Roadmap that outline a comprehensive plan to reduce the approximately 7.8 million OOSC, whom are predominantly girls, by half over the next five years.
- In **Senegal**, the GPE program is delivered primarily through direct budgetary support and the GPE 2025 program was closely coordinated with financing from Global Affairs Canada which was supporting a 5-year plan for institutionalizing gender equality within the Ministry of Education and decentralized authorities, including measures to increase female educational leadership.[20]
- In **Somalia (federal level),** the GEA program did not address all sector needs but infused critical support to centralized and decentralized government authorities that subsequently benefited the roll-out of NGO and other donor-led initiatives on gender.[21]

> **"In 2017, gender was very clearly a gap, but it was essentially a discussion about increasing access. You see a lot of this in the ESA and the ESSP. It's a game of numbers. It was a much less nuanced discussion... Now [under GPE 2025], it is a much more nuanced discussion, and in large parts it's because of having gender-focused funding [GEA]."**
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> - Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia

ENTRY POINT 2: GENDER WITHIN SYSTEM POLICY DIALOGUE

This section addresses if and how the process to develop the Partnership Compact included gender-focused stakeholders and to what extent the gender-focused stakeholders had been engaged in education discussion processes. In addition, this section explores to what extent the GEA modified sector-wide dialogue and Compact development.

Policy dialogue engagement of gender equality-focused organizations varied by country due to capacity and context, with positive examples of new actor engagement followed by inconsistent post-Compact participation.

- In **Cambodia**, most of the country-level and/or regional-level gender-related expertise came

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[18] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[19] See for example UNESCO IIEP. FGD, MENPC, December 19, 2024.
[20] PADES II Program Document, pp. 74-75.
[21] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

from donor partners, including UNICEF, World Bank, and USAID. The only specific reference to a national gender equality-focused participation was the consultation of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports Gender Working Group during Compact development. The Compact development process included only one representative from civil society organizations.[22]

- In **Nicaragua**, the LEG included several organizations working on gender equality, and the Ministry of Education convoked its LEG for two special sessions to discuss advances and challenges in early childhood education and gender equity as part of the EFA process.[23]

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the process was very inclusive of women-led national organizations with long-term engagement in the education sector, the gender unit from the Province of Sindh's School Education and Literacy Department (SELD), a gender consultant commissioned by SELD and funded by GIZ, multiple international organizations with gender expertise (JICA, UNICEF, Right to Play, World Bank), and significant participation by female representatives from the different stakeholder organizations, including the SELD units that participated.[24]

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, in-country stakeholders found that although civil society was engaged, such as through teachers' organizations and unions, the voices of women, girls, and marginalized groups remained underrepresented in these groups and, consequently, in the LEG itself; international donors often uplifted the voices of local organizations.[25]

- In **Zimbabwe,** policy dialogue was very inclusive of country- and regional-level gender expertise through its LEG, composed of development partners with gender expertise like the UK Government (FCDO), UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, and civil society organizations, including several gender-equality focused organizations like the Forum for African Women Educationalists, Girls' and Women's Empowerment Network, and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) from the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe. The latter Coalition's Gender and Inclusion Thematic Committee was active in the discussions related to the EFA and Compact development. This process also involved consultations with actors not typically involved that included focus group discussions and surveys of female and male caregivers to school-age children, female and male learners, female and male teachers, and decentralized female and male education officials.[26]

Gender expertise was brought in from varied sources—regional experts, country consultants, and expanded ministry involvement—showing an improvement from GPE 2020 to GPE 2025..
- In **Chad**, as compared to the GPE 2020 process, regional gender expertise contributed more to the EFA and Compact. This came through UNESCO-IIEP which was providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Civic Promotion (MENPC), as well as a Gender at the Center Initiative (GCI) mission during the process.[27] In the time between the GPE 2020 and GPE 2025

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[22] Compact Annex 11: Consultative Groups, Cambodia, p. 46.
[23] EFA, Nicaragua, p. 6.
[24] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[25] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[26] EFA & Compact, Zimbabwe, 2023.
[27] GCI is a global alliance of civil society and international organizations including GPE working in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa to galvanize political leadership and expertise for gender equality in and through education.

processes, gender capacity and staffing had also strengthened within the government which positively contributed to policy dialogue.[28]

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, although the ESPIG under GPE 2020 had significant gender integration, the process itself lacked dedicated government gender expertise (internal or consultant), unlike the GPE 2025 process, which benefited from the SELD's gender unit and an external gender consultant. Consequently, GPE 2020 gender integration in the ESPIG was largely driven by development partners, a trend partially reversed in GPE 2025 during the development of the Compact.[29] While similar gender equality-focused organizations participated in both processes via the LEG,[30] their engagement with in-depth dialogue on the ESPIG was more limited than during the Compact development under GPE 2025.[31]
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the process to develop the EFA and Compact involved country-level stakeholders focused on gender equality; in general, these stakeholders were already involved in the LEG (known as the Education Sector Committee) and Education Donor Group and contributed to past GPE grants under GPE 2020. However, some new government gender and inclusion expertise did contribute, including Somalia's Ministry of Women and Human Rights and the Disability Agency which took part in consultations for the EFA and Compact, but did not otherwise engage in the LEG.[32] Also, changes within the Federal Ministry of Education and in the LEG supported a greater involvement overall by partners, including some gender equality-focused ones, than in the period of the GPE 2020 grant. [33]

Gaps in intersectional gender representation also existed. Only a few examples of participation of civil society organizations of, by, and for groups that face marginalization and/or underrepresentation[34] emerged in this review:

- In **Nicaragua,** the ITAP specifically noted the absence of organizations of, by, and for Indigenous groups in policy dialogue. In response, the Compact mentions a commitment to invite organizations of, by, and for Indigenous groups to become part of the LEG.
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, one women-led civil society organization, the Somali Institute of Special Educational Needs and Disability, was involved in the EFA and Compact through the LEG and was perceived to have a strong voice.[35] Also, as mentioned above, the Disability Agency took part in the Compact and EFA consultations.

In sampled GEA countries, stakeholders perceived the dedicated funding stream as enabling the setting of ambitious goals and actions and a focus on system-level change during the Compact development.

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[28] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[29] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[30] Pakistan (Sindh) ESPIG LEG Minutes 2021; Pakistan (Sindh) LEG Endorsement of Compact Minutes May 2023.

[31] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[32] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[33] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[34] Note that this term stems from inclusion-related, including disability rights, literature, and the principle of "nothing about us, without us" and "nothing without us." See for example, NDI. 2022 "Nothing About Us Without Us" to "Nothing Without Us".

[35] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

- In **Chad**, a grant agent expressed that GEA eliminated the need for the government and partners to "bargain" to fund gender within the program, since resources were already allocated.[36]
- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, stakeholders were already keenly aware of the need to tackle gender disparities in enrollment and transition at post-primary for girls. However, some stakeholders noted that GEA – and potential to access significant additional funds for girls' education - was an extra motivation for the entire GPE process. It also provided impetus to conceive potential new pilot programs to tackle root causes that would not have been considered without the funding (i.e., transportation for girls to secondary schools which was included in the Compact but dropped once partners became aware of GEA's lack of funding).[37]
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, one LEG member felt that it was unlikely that a similar focus would have existed had the country only received an STG, "mainly because of the social norm barriers and cultural barriers. if you don't have a stand-alone program, the risk for girls' education issue getting lost is quite high."[38] In a context where gender equality could be sensitive or deprioritized, it made girls' education a non-negotiable within policy dialogue.
- In **Zimbabwe**, GEA may have encouraged greater gender expertise, especially related to girls' education, as part of the EFA and Compact development process as the Secretariat Assessment of Strategic Parameters in Partnership Compact assessment highlighted that "The inclusion on the task force of individuals with technical and advocacy expertise in the area of girls' education added value to the consultation process.[39] See above for additional details of Zimbabwe's inclusive policy dialogue related to gender-equality related organizations in Zimbabwe.

> **"I think we could be more ambitious with actions than we probably would have been if we'd done [the Compact] without any prospect of funding set aside for girls."**
> – Consulted Stakeholder, Chad

The level of certainty that the funding would be available at the time of Compact development may have contributed to the GEA's degree of influence on policy dialogue.
- **Chad's** Compact evidenced strong influence by the GEA, including a textbox with analyses of gender inequalities in education, a stand-alone GEA theory of change, and clearly proposed activities to be funded with GEA directly linking to a recent gender analysis. Grant Agents in Chad expressed that the GEA specifically influenced the crafting of ambitious goals and actions within the Compact and program.[40] Following the Compact, the Board invited Chad, part of Cohort 3,[41] to apply for $25 million in September 2023.
- In contrast, in **CAR**, which was initially eligible for a $17 million GEA grant later capped at $10 million, partners may have had less certainty of GEA funding.[42] For instance, the Compact, which was

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[36] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[37] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[38] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..
[39] Secretariat Assessment of Strategic Parameters in Partnership Compact, Zimbabwe, p. 2.
[40] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[41] See List of countries eligible for GPE support and indicative grant allocations.
[42] Ibid.

released in August 2023, made no mention of the GEA grant; gender priorities were addressed; however, many appear 'hardwired' as opposed to standalone activities targeting girls. Following the Compact, GPE Board communicated that CAR was invited to apply for GEA funding "Subject to the Secretariat's confirmation of available GEA resources" in October 2023. At the time of its submission for Board Approval in May 2024, the Program Document noted that the GEA allocation would be announced the next month and that the program would scale back gender activities if it did not receive the full amount. The Board approved the $10 million GEA grant in June 2024.

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, during Compact development, partners thought that the GEA funds would be available. Accordingly, they ambitiously identified girls' transportation provision as a key use of GEA funds to tackle an underlying cause of girls' significantly lower transition rate post-primary. During the preliminary planning sessions for the program outline, the Grant Agent and government partners still did not know that GEA funds would become unavailable, spending several hours-long sessions and research time on different pilot models of girls' transportation that they could potentially propose as part of the GEA concept note. This researched and evidence-based intervention was lost from the program because GEA funds were no longer available...[43]

ENTRY POINT 3: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WITH GENDER AND INCLUSION LENS

This section addresses the grant development process, exploring the evolution of gender from Compact to concept note to the final application, including whether the GEA may have impacted decisions related to gender and girls' education during the grant development, as well as whether the EFA, Compact, and QAR processes led to stronger gender hardwiring in the final grant design.

The process to develop and review the GPE 2025 grants, including MLT grants, primarily involved Grant Agents, with gender expertise from LEG and the government harnessed to some extent at key touchpoints. For example:

- In **Chad,** the Ministry of Education selected UNESCO and UNICEF as grant agents, with UNICEF managing the GEA and a portion of the STG and UNESCO managing the remaining STG amount. One of the six criteria established for grant agent selection by the government and LEG was "capacity to mobilize gender expertise."[44] Both UNICEF and UNESCO relied on internal staffing to develop the program. UNICEF had support from an in-country consultant that was working on another gender product, and both organizations also engaged regional gender expertise. Support from Ministry of Education and LEG primarily came for endorsement, review, and continued consultation around QAR. In March and June 2024, grant agents and government held two workshops involving 80 members of government, CSO, partners, and NGOs, to develop and finalize the proposal, although there was no indication of gender-equality organizations' participation.

- During **Pakistan (Sindh)**'s GPE 2025 grant development process, LEG members, including those with gender equality expertise, participated but in a much more limited way during program

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[43] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[44] Republic of Chad. "Terms of Reference for the Grant Agent selection process for GPE financing [Termes de référence relatifs au processus de sélection d'un agent partenaire pour les financements GPE," p.3.

development than during the Compact stage because of short submission timeline. Typically, UNICEF engaged them by sending out program design components and/or sections of the draft program documents for feedback, which was relevant to both gender-related and non-gender-related aspects of the program design.[45] However, this engagement through requests from LEG members did not occur during the GPE 2020 ESPIG grant development.[84] Despite efforts to encourage government leadership and ownership of the grant development process, including related to gender hardwiring, the technical capacity was very limited, leading to their very limited inputs into the content of the final grant program.[46]

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, country-level stakeholders, including government and national CSOs, had an active role in discussions around gender in the EFA and Compact development but, in the program development phase, were only called upon at key moments during QAR and endorsement. However, since the government felt that it had set gender equality priorities in its Education Sector Strategic Plan, EFA, and Compact, they were satisfied with the GAs' adhesion to their priorities in the STG and GEA and felt that their level of involvement was sufficient.[47]

- **Zimbabwe** presented a uniquely participatory example, having consulted with male and female provincial education directors; district school inspectors; school heads; teachers; and learners at the program development stage in the development of the grant program. Please also see Entry Point 2 for more details of the participatory nature of the EFA and Compact that harnessed country-level and regional-level gender expertise. Although reviewed documents did not specifically mention these same organizations' participation at the grant development stage, their strong participation was very likely as the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) was the GEA grant agent as well as member of the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe, which represents civil society in the country's LEG.

Gender Hub QAR processes and other feedback from the Secretariat ensured strong hardwiring in the final program document for all types of grants (STG, GEA, and MLT--both simultaneously and separately applied) despite some difficulties experienced by several countries to translate gender hardwiring found in their Partnership Compacts into their grant Concept Notes. For example:

- In **CAR, Pakistan (Sindh), Somalia (federal level)**, and **Cambodia** (STG), the gender-hub QAR 1 feedback on the concept note indicated an obvious lack of addressing the gender-related barriers identified in the EFA and the Compact. Formal QAR 2 processes in Somalia, and an informal QAR 2 in the case of Pakistan (Sindh), both that included gender-hub feedback using the gender hardwiring QAR tools, ensured the barriers were addressed to the best extent possible in the final program document. Similarly, in the case of Cambodia's (World Bank MLT) grant, extensive gender-hub feedback at QAR 1 supported greater alignment with the Compact even though the funding was intended to support the existing ESPIG. Another round of detailed gender-hub feedback at QAR 3 along with additional final feedback via email that requested specific final language related to additional components to tackle GBV in and out of school informed the final program document.

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[45] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

- Discrepancies in gender hardwiring between Compact and Concept Note often occurred due to insufficient technical capacity on the part of the government and/or a loss of expertise or institutional knowledge between developing the two documents, especially if key staff or gender champions left their posts. For example, in **Chad**, the Education Chief at a Grant Agent changed between Compact and Program development which contributed to loss of expertise.[48] Secondly, external consultants were often brought on to lead either the Compact or Program Development which led to inconsistent input and lack of continuity to bring through certain priorities. Like, for example, in **Pakistan (Sindh)** where not only did the provincial government's education department tasked with grant development lack gender hardwiring technical capacity but also did not benefit from an external gender expert at the grant development stage as it did during the Compact development.

Requirements for gender hardwiring under GPE 2025 have influenced the setting of gender-disaggregated targets in two of three reviewed grant programs' results frameworks. This presented a difference to GPE 2020 for Chad and Somalia, although less so for Pakistan.

- In **Chad**, the GPE 2025 program included many of the same activities as the ESPIG, such as teacher recruitment and training and latrine construction, but with a gender-hardwired approach that led to more gender-disaggregated targets in the results framework. In contrast, the ESPIG (GPE 2020) program had only one gender-specific indicator related to adult literacy.[49] The GPE 2020 results framework did not include any gender-disaggregated target on teacher recruitment or training, whereas the GPE 2025 program has four different indicators tracking aspects of training and recruitment of female teachers.[50]
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, gender hardwiring requirements influenced some program objectives. For instance, the ESPIG and the GPE 2025 grants both had an activity related to teacher recruitment drives. However, in the past model, where gender was not hardwired, no gender requirements or targets were set; in 2023, only 8% of teachers recruited were female. In the GPE 2025 program, the STG identified a need to analyze barriers to recruiting women and address these and set an ambitious target to recruit 30% female teachers. Initial implementation in 2024 resulted in over 30% female teacher recruitment; although, some challenges with training and deployment may persist.[51]
- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, however, all relevant indicators in the ESPIG results framework included gender-disaggregated targets.

Sex disaggregation existed, but indicators largely measured outputs (e.g., training numbers) rather than impact on gender equality, with some exceptions showing a move towards gender-disaggregated learning outcomes. For example:

- In **Cambodia**, the STG M&E framework did include gender equality-related outcome indicators for its overall objective to improve student learning outcomes. For example, it included % of

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[48] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[49] PREAT Program Document, p. 81.
[50] PRET Program Document, p. 112.
[51] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

students that improved on EGL [Early Grade Learning] assessments, disaggregated by gender. However, the framework largely focused on output-oriented indicators linked to activities with teachers (e.g., # teachers trained in gender equality, etc.). There were no gender-related outcome indicators that measure change in knowledge, attitude, and practices for teachers who participated in gender equality related training and/or continued professional development activities.

- In **CAR**, gender disaggregated learning outcomes for Grade 6 reading and math were included in the program's monitoring framework, as was the percentage of female teachers contracted into the civil service. The number of female teachers trained and certified was also tracked.[52]

- In **Zimbabwe**, indicators were output focused. For example, the indicator related to teacher trainings with gender equality-focused content only included sex-disaggregated number of teachers participating as opposed to gender equality indicators that measure changes to knowledge, attitudes, and practice.

- In **Nicaragua,** the Compact included two knowledge, attitudes, and practices-related indicators that sought to measure changes among teachers; however, these outcome indicators were not carried through to the final program document.

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the GEA program included several strong indicators to measure improved gender equality. For one, the results framework measured reading at grade 3 disaggregated by sex and disability status. Furthermore, to measure the impact of gender-responsive teacher trainings and materials, the framework included an output indicator on the percentage of teachers using gender responsive and inclusive approaches in class. As a baseline, the results framework used a knowledge, attitude and practice-type proxy indicator measuring the percentage of female students that perceived that teachers treat boys and girls differently in class.[53]

- In **Senegal,** only one gender-disaggregated indicator, on primary learning outcomes, was included in the program document, despite an overall priority reform focused on reducing vulnerabilities and inequalities.[54]

Confusions arose about how to simultaneously hardwire gender and create a girl-focused component or sub-components for some countries when applying for GEA and STG, especially when there was more than one grant agent. Direct engagement with the Gender Hub or other Secretariat staff helped allay these confusions. For example:

- For **Chad**, which applied simultaneously for a GEA and STG, the Compact strongly hardwired gender, however, the Concept Note grouped all gender-related activities into one program component as opposed to hardwiring across. QAR 1 feedback largely helped to resolve this challenge and promote synergies between the STG and GEA. A grant agent voiced that "GPE's guidance was not always very clear and sometimes contradictory, because at one point we were told...because the country is going to get US $25 million, we need to see specific activities that address gender, and at another point we were told, no, gender has to be cross-cutting."[55]

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[52] PARE Program Document, pp. 29-33.
[53] GEA Program Document, p. 90-91.
[54] PADES II Program Document, p. 38.
[55] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

Although the grant agents indicated that GPE provided consistent support via phone and email, in addition to formal QAR, confusions could potentially be prevented through clarifying differences between hardwiring and the GEA within tools and guidance.

- For **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the confusion pertained to relating systems-level actions required to achieve the three dimensions of gender equality (e.g., education sector gender analysis; strengthening of the gender unit of the provincial government's education department; a gender equality policy and plan for the education sector) with girls' education only and not the larger education reform. This was evident in the presentation of final activities earmarked for funding by the GEA in the final Compact. The Final Secretariat Assessment of Strategic Parameters in Partnership Compact indicated this was a confusion and strongly recommended moving those system-level action to the STG, reflecting their important to gender hardwiring overall and not just girls' education.

SCG have had or will have positive impact on supporting gender hardwiring efforts in the country by, for example, strengthening gender capacity within ministries of education and helping to close gaps in gender-related data and analyses.

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, UNICEF as Grant Agent, plans to apply for the SCG to support its priority reform, focusing on system-level gender equality transformation (e.g., a gender equality strategy, district-level Gender Action Plans, SELD capacity building, and gender analysis). Due to time constraints, the SCG application was not submitted concurrently with the STG, but a draft is forthcoming.[92]
- **Somalia (federal level)** received an SCG which contributed to better gender hardwiring within the STG and support to GEA. The SCG included support for education sector coordination, including paying for staffing, and gender-related budgetary technical assistance. The SCG also financed a first-ever education sector gender analysis. As a result, the EMIS has improved disaggregated reporting on gender and disability. Furthermore, the gender analysis supported the GEA and STG needs assessments that were conducted in mid-2024 to inform the development of tools for both grant programs.[56]
- In **Chad,** the country did not access an SCG; however, another GPE lever, GCI Phase 2, a pilot technical assistance supported by GPE, UNGEI, UNESCO-IIEP, began in 2024 to support gender mainstreaming through capacity strengthening and improved gender hardwiring and implementation of plans and policies.[57]

Available data was insufficient to analyze the relationship between GPE assets, Education Out Loud and Knowledge Innovation Exchange, and the gender hardwiring approach.

ENTRY POINT 4: MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER THROUGH NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

This section assesses how other stakeholders in the country (CSOs, government, development partners, other donors) engaged in supporting the country's priority reform with regards to gender equality. GPE views mutual accountability for gender equality as a decentralized function requiring all partners to hold

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[56] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[57] GPE. Technical Assistance Initiatives.

each other accountable for achieving shared goals and objectives. These partners include government, LEG (including Coordinating Agency), technical partners, and civil society, as well as the GPE Secretariat and Board at the country level, there is a strong emphasis on LEG or other stakeholder platforms; other mechanisms include the Joint Review of the Education Sector to ensure transparent stock-taking of progress towards gender goals.[58]

Limited evidence of discussion or plans for mutual accountability for gender hardwiring in education emerged during this review. Since the reviewed country programs had either recently started or were imminent, a full assessment of evidence on mutual accountability for gender was not possible. However, consulted stakeholders and document review revealed few details on plans for how gender equality-focused partners would ensure mutual accountability for the gender equality components of the Partnership Compacts and grant program. That said, some actions by governments and partners reveal some commitments to gender hardwiring in their respective country's priority reform.

- The strongest evidence for future mutual accountability came from **Somalia (federal level)** and **Chad** and were strongly linked to the GEA. In both countries, country-level stakeholders anticipated that future JRES would strongly link to gender by tracking spending and progress on the GEA.[59] In Somalia, an output indicator in the GEA results framework also tracks the number of annual gender and inclusion reviews conducted as part of the JRES (one annually over the three-year program from a baseline of zero), which also built in accountability to conduct gender-specific reviews as part of the wider sectoral one. [60]
- Based on available information, no evidence emerged that any of the countries reviewed had nominated a Gender Lead organization during the GPE partnership process despite a recommendation from GPE's *Going Further Together* paper, although country teams may not have been made aware of this recommendation.[61] The absence of this important accountability mechanism is notable given the importance of this entry point to the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach.
- **Pakistan (Sindh)** provides an example of government commitments to advancing gender-equality aspects of its priority reform without having begun STG implementation. The government (SELD) has completed the first draft of the education sector gender analysis (slated for completion with SCG funding) and the development of a draft Gender-Responsive Education Reform Action Plan.[62] See above under Entry Point 1 for more examples from Pakistan (Sindh) and other reviewed countries.

Central-level government staff are predominately responsible for mutual accountability for gender equality in the GPE 2025 partnership model with few examples of sub-national government units assuming this role.

- In review of documents, by and large only central-level government staff participated in the EFA,

[58] See "Going Further Together: A Partnership Approach to Gender Equality,"pp. 28-30.
[59] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[60] Somalia federal level GEA Program Document, p. 92.
[61] GPE. "Going Further Together: A Partnership Approach to Gender Equality," p. 30.
[62] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

Compact, and Grant development process. Furthermore, there is little focus on how gender hardwiring knowledge and capacity trickles down to ensure accountability starts at schools and moves up through all levels. Ultimately, however, government staff who will have practical responsibility for this are staff at district and school levels (e.g., district pedagogical supervisors, school directors, etc.).

- However, there are some cases, such as in Somalia and Senegal, where GEA or STG funding was used to strengthen the gender capacity of sub-national education units. For example:
  - In **Senegal**, one of the main axes of the GPE program was to promote inclusive, decentralized sectoral governance, including at the departmental and school levels, and including strengthening gender capacity. However, no information was included on how decentralized stakeholders would support mutual accountability and the LEG minutes from the program validation did not indicate the presence of decentralized representation.
  - In this review, only **Somalia (federal level)** included gender equality-related continued professional development at the decentralized level. There, the GEA supported District Education Officers and State Gender and Inclusion Focal Points to carry out several gender-related program functions including monitoring, girls' education awareness raising campaigns, and conducting school-based coaching on gender and inclusion.[63]

"There is a push for investing heavily in policy in systems and a bit less of a push about decentralized capacity. And education systems often have better policies than they have decentralized capacity, particularly in the lowest performing areas of countries [...] This has a lot to do with gender because gender capacity tends to be among the weakest when you look at underserved areas, particularly those that are severely either conflict- or disaster-affected. If we are looking at the future, think about how much of the funding actually supports decentralized capacity, where it's needed the most to *implement* policy." – Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia (federal level)

Top-up triggers were predominately tied to High Priority Enabling Factors, which as discussed in the previous section, did not have strong links to gender (Volume, Equity, and Efficiency of Domestic Financing and Coordinated Funding most common). The review identified only two examples when a top-up trigger indicator was related to gender and only in the Compact phase. No variable part indicators related to gender were identified.

- In **CAR**, the High Priorities in EFA and top-up triggers related to Data and Evidence and Gender-Responsive Sector Planning; however, the latter did not actually have an explicit tie to gender. For Data and Evidence, one proposed top-up indicator in the Compact suggested using performance indicators to track progress on equity and inclusion; however, this was removed in the eventual Program Document.[64]
- In **Chad**, the Compact did include a gender-disaggregated trigger linked to 10% of the total STG grant which required contracting 500 existing teachers (50% women) annually, despite stronger targets on increasing the number of new female teachers and school leaders elsewhere in the

[63] Somalia federal level GEA Program Document, p. 42.
[64] CAR Partnership Compact, p. 34; PARE Program Document, p. 9.

Compact.[65] However, gender disaggregation was dropped from top-up trigger indicator in the final Program Document.

This review found no discussion of potential gender-related implications of not meeting certain top-up triggers. This leaves open the risk of reduced funding negatively impacting gender-related interventions and ultimately outcomes either directly or inadvertently.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK ON GENDER HARDWIRING IN THE GPE 2025 MODEL

This section provides consulted stakeholder feedback on the positive aspects of the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach and recommendations for its improvement.

Consulted stakeholders largely believe that the GPE 2025 model represents a significant step forward in prioritizing gender equality in education in comparison with the GPE 2020 model. They have had a positive experience with the overall gender hardwiring approach and found the following aspects particularly helpful to ensuring that gender is fully integrated throughout the partnership process and as key improvements since GPE 2020:

- The templates with gender hardwiring prompts for the EFA, Compact, and Grant Application/Program Document were comprehensive and supportive.
- GPE requires countries to use up-to-date evidence on gender or to identify and fill data gaps as a first step in identifying priorities and designing actions. This promotes evidence-based actions for gender equality.
- The QAR process and both formal and informal support from the Secretariat - either directly from the Gender Hub or via the Country Team - played a key role in the hardwiring of gender in programs.
- The new model encourages greater participation from various stakeholders, including civil society organizations, leading to a more diverse range of perspectives.
- The new model emphasizes the importance of building capacity within education departments, particularly in gender-related areas.
- GPE's flexibility as a donor was mentioned as one of the greatest strengths, including in linking GEA and gender to inclusion and other priority areas.
- Ring-fenced funding through the GEA further promoted gender within GPE programs and supported gender hardwiring.

> *"When you [GPE] make an intentional shift, when you make it very clear that this is a priority, we will change our ways and approaches. We will go the extra mile. You can really see the difference gender hardwiring makes in standard routine activities like teacher recruitment. So yes, so I think it's made a real difference when [gender] is a requirement and we're all very intentional about it."* – Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia federal level

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[65] Chad Partnership Compact, pp. 12, 30.

Based on their experience with the GPE 2025 operating model, consulted stakeholders had constructive suggestions for improvement:

- Clarify key concepts like "*gender equality in access to, within, and through education*," "*gender hardwiring*," and *"gender equality entry points"* and how they relate to each other across all GPE material.

- Conduct more outreach and capacity-building at the country-level related to GPE's broad and comprehensive key concepts, approaches, and definitions on intersectionality, gender equality, and other aspects of "gender hardwiring" as gender hardwiring technical and implementation capacity is often limited at the country-level. This could include presenting more tangible examples of what the three dimensions of gender equality, especially gender equality through education, look like through country case study videos, and write ups.

- Develop additional guidance documents and/or templates that explicitly address gender hardwiring-related topics that include gender equality in financing/gender-responsive budgeting, mutual accountability for gender hardwiring, and participation of gender-equality oriented or female-led organizations within LEG. While GPE has strongly bolstered the voices of teachers' unions and CSOs more broadly, these organizations can exclude female voices in some contexts.

- Provide consistent, long-term, and discussion-based gender expert support, including during implementation in future processes to ensure a lasting focus on gender equality.

- Prioritize support to national and sub-national coordination efforts related to gender equality in challenging coordination contexts like Somalia (federal level) and Pakistan (Sindh).

- Where appropriate, create gender-related requirements within results-based financing, including gender-disaggregated targets, to promote more accountability to set and achieve objectives related to gender equality.

CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The GPE 2025 gender hardwiring strategy represents a significant advancement over the GPE 2020 model in developing stronger country-level commitments to gender equality in access to, within, and through education. The use of Entry Points for hardwiring gender, notably related to gender analysis and diagnostics, inclusive policy dialogue, and gender in grant development has led to better evidence use, deeper education sector dialogue on gender equality, and better integration of gender equality in grant design. The GPE 2025 has achieved this through a stronger mandate for gender at the Secretariat level, empowering GPE Secretariat gender focal points with enhanced tools for holding country partners accountable, and the creation of comprehensive guidance documents, training materials, gender hardwiring question prompts, and quality assurance assessment tools. However, opportunities exist to address challenges identified in this review.

Progress:

- **Program Design Improved:** Overall, GPE 2025 hardwiring requirements that are outlined in the GPE 2025 templates (i.e., EFA, Compact, Grant Application, etc.), combined with Country Team engagement, helped sampled countries to translate gender-related data and evidence into

strong Compact commitments, which eventually led to gender-hardwired program designs. The reviewed country programs generally addressed aspects of gender equality across all components, tackled some of the root causes of gender inequalities at a systems level, and had monitoring and evaluation frameworks containing disaggregated indicators (mostly at output level) and targets. Some frequently observed examples of hardwired actions across countries include activities meant to improve female representation in the education workforce, community engagement with men and boys on social norms, and developing and implementing gender-responsive curriculum reforms.

- **Policy Dialogue Related to Gender Strengthened**: GPE 2025 supported deeper and more comprehensive gender equality-related education policy discussions which made better use of gender- and intersectional-disaggregated data and diagnostics and expertise to identify strategic directions. Findings also illustrate that despite some variation across reviewed countries, the GPE 2025 focus on inclusive policy dialogue created the context that led to greater participation of gender equality and girls' education related organizations in the policy discussions at each stage of the partnership process, especially at the EFA and Compact development stages. Furthermore, reviewed countries provided examples of how GPE 2025 brought in different types of gender expertise and in different ways (e.g., mobilizing regional expertise, hiring country-level consultants, and involving line ministries not typically involved in LEG).

- **More Effective Quality Assurance:** QAR processes, which include use of specific gender QAR tools, and relationships between the Secretariat and country teams have been effective in advancing gender hardwiring. This highlights the importance of GPE's guidance and feedback in promoting reflection and action on gender, which ultimately is acted upon in subsequent versions of required partnership documents such as the EFA, the Compact, and the final grant program document.

- **Greater Inclusion of Intersectionality through GEA Financing**: GEA financing had some promising impacts, including ensuring a focus on intersectional considerations such as use of data disaggregated by gender and other characteristics like income, geography, and disability to more accurately design targeted interventions for learners with diverse and intersecting identities. Several examples emerged that illustrate this progress: 1) Chad's inclusion of intersectional disaggregation, along geography, income, and handicap where possible in the GEA grant program in response to QAR1 feedback, 2) the use of GEA funds in Somalia to fund education grants for 900 children (60% girls, 40% boys) with severe disabilities, and 3) Zimbabwe's GEA grant program's targeted interventions for young mothers and girls with disabilities including catch-up, alternative education pathways and non-formal education in response to evidence collected through the EFA process that indicated that barriers to accessing quality, equitable, and inclusive education were intersectional with many learners facing multiple constraints, challenges, and disadvantages, based on household poverty, gender, disability, abuse, and long distances to school.

- **More Ambitious Gender-Related Goals and Activities through GEA Financing:** As findings indicate, consulted stakeholders felt that ringfenced funding led to more ambitious gender goals and planned initiatives. These tended to strengthen gender within STG programs as well by

strengthening systems which supported overall hardwiring within implementation. GEA also ensured consistent funding for girls' education initiatives and promoted more detailed costing breakdowns, improving accountability and monitoring. This also raised the profile of gender within future JRES. Indeed, when GEA funding became unavailable, ambitious, evidence-based programming to support girls' education were dropped from the program as the case of Pakistan (Sindh) indicated.

Challenges:

- **Limited Government Ownership and Leadership for Gender Hardwiring:** Despite GPE's efforts, government ownership and leadership for gender equality in education remain weak, although slightly improved from the GPE 2020 model. While some governments demonstrated strong ownership during different stages of the Compact development process, gender hardwiring is largely driven by the GPE Secretariat, the Grant Agent, and/or other country-level partners. This is largely related to insufficient gender integration technical capacity at the government level.

- **Continued Misunderstanding about Gender Hardwiring and Insufficient Gender Hardwiring Capacity:** Despite important awareness-raising and knowledge-building efforts by the Gender Hub and Country Engagement Leads, country partners and their representatives continue to have varying degrees of understanding about what gender hardwiring means and how to achieve it. Several findings specifically point to persistent misunderstanding and limited technical capacity. For example, stakeholder feedback indicated confusion around the word "hardwiring" itself as well as how to simultaneously create a girl-focused component or sub-component and hardwire gender beyond just addressing the gender-specific barriers for girls and the "Entry Points for gender hardwiring." Stakeholder feedback also included requests for more gender hardwiring guidance and "how-to" support for achieving the three dimensions of gender equality and education. Other findings also point to incomplete understanding of gender hardwiring, such as the interpretation that gender hardwiring relates more often to "girls" or "women, and minimal focus on the concept of gender equality *through* education as a core part of analysis or interventions in the EFA, Compact, and/or Program Documents.

- **Insufficient Country-Level Mechanisms to Ensure Mutal Accountability for Gender Equality:** Country-level mutual accountability for gender hardwiring faces several risks including insufficient mutual accountability planning and monitoring. Uneven or weak plans for provincial, district, and school-level engagement in gender hardwiring also pose a serious risk to policy translation into action. Systemic implementation challenges, particularly at decentralized levels, threaten not only the effective implementation of gender-transformative education but also mutual accountability for gender hardwiring as most of the programmatic work takes place at the decentralized levels in partnership countries. Likewise, results frameworks tend to lack robust gender indicators beyond gender disaggregation. Capacity building and resource allocation at these levels are crucial, as is the decentralizing of LEG to ensure consistent coordination of gender hardwiring efforts in support of the priority reform at these levels.[66] On a final note, this review

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[66] The Rapid Review team recognizes that some challenges like insufficient focus on mutual accountability and implementation may relate to wider GPE processes beyond the gender hardwiring approach of the GPE 2025 model.

found no evidence that any of the countries had nominated a Gender Lead organization during the GPE partnership process despite a recommendation from GPE's *Going Further Together* paper; although country teams may not have been made aware of this recommendation.[67]

- **Limited Relationship between Two Core Features of the GPE 2025 Partnership Model and Gender Hardwiring—Results-Based Financing (Variable Funding and Top-Ups) and ITAP Enabling Factors Prioritization:** While gender is at the center of the GPE 2025 partnership model and has strongly been integrated across programs, the review found two instances where opportunities exist for greater gender integration. First, this review found very few top-up triggers related to gender and no variable part indicators related to gender. Furthermore, there are no mechanisms for analyzing the potential impact of not meeting targets of variable funding and top-up triggers on gender equality-related education programming when variable funding indicators and/or top-up triggers are not met. Second, this review found that ITAP does not typically give a high priority rating to Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring or any enabling factors that include significant gender-related barriers. Insufficient evidence, exists, however, to fully understand the implications on GPE's gender hardwiring goals, especially mutual accountability for gender hardwiring.

Strategic Considerations:

The review proposes two key strategic considerations for the next phases of GPE's gender hardwiring approach based on the above conclusions:

- **Expanded partner-led gender hardwiring capacity-building and technical support at all stages of GPE partnerships:** Consider expanding the role of the new Regional Gender and Inclusion Advisors and other Gender and Inclusion Practice staff to facilitate shared ownership among all GPE partners to increase each other's capacity to effectively hardwire gender. This could include organizing co-learning sessions and sharing of relevant organization-specific gender equality tools. Capacity-building support should target key government partners as well as Coordinating Agencies and Grants Agents to cascade the learning down to more decentralized partners.

    The Secretariat could support this shared capacity-building effort through additional gender hardwiring guidance and tools for country-level partners. Building on the existing gender hardwiring guidance (e.g., primarily through gender-related prompts and instructions in templates), findings of this review, and other learnings from GPE 2025, GPE could consider developing additional tools like an exemplary list of recommended gender hardwiring features in common priority reform interventions (e.g., curricula revisions to include a gender equality and inclusion review to eliminate gender bias; teacher trainings designed with a gender equality lens; gender and inclusion sector review, etc.). Other potential ways could include developing more case studies, success story videos, and/or written reports that showcase gender equality in access to, within, and through education in action. An importance focus of new guidance and tools should be both program development and implementation post-grant development.

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[67] GPE. "Going Further Together: A Partnership Approach to Gender Equality," p. 30.

- **Increased focus on enhancing mutual accountability for gender hardwiring among all GPE partnership stakeholders, including the GPE Secretariat and country-level partners:** Consider exploring stronger mutual accountability mechanisms across the partnership landscape. For example, the Secretariat could explore how variable funding indicators and top-up triggers linked to gender outcomes could lead to greater country-level accountability and whether countries' failure to meet top-up triggers and/or variable funding indicator targets could have unintended consequences on gender equality programming. The Secretariat may consider requiring more robust gender-responsive indicators in the grant programs' results frameworks and build in a requirement to nominate a Gender Lead organization during the GPE partnership process per current recommendations from GPE's *Going Further Together* paper[68] to encourage greater mutual accountability for gender hardwiring. The Secretariat should consider harnessing the mid-term review processes as an opportunity to take stock of progress against gender and inclusion goals and hold partners accountable by including more gender-related indicators for the next phase of implementation. At the country-level, GPE can promote stronger gender representation and responsibility in LEG and Task Teams and encourage strengthened mutual accountability for gender hardwiring at all levels, particularly at decentralized levels within partner countries' government structures.

While challenges persist in government ownership and capacity, the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model has demonstrably advanced gender equality in education, marked by improved program design, strengthened policy dialogue, more effective quality assurance, and the significant impact of GEA financing in driving ambitious gender goals and greater inclusion of intersectional considerations. Key findings reveal robust gender analyses, increased engagement of diverse gender expertise, and the positive role that SCG is playing to strengthen gender capacities and mutual accountability. Stakeholder feedback affirms these advancements, highlighting the model's significant step forward from GPE 2020. These achievements showcase a clear trajectory of improvement, establishing a strong foundation upon which to address remaining obstacles and further accelerate gender equality in education.

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[68] GPE. "Going Further Together: A Partnership Approach to Gender Equality," p. 30.

ANNEX 1. GPE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR OPERATIONALIZING GENDER EQUALITY: EVIDENCE IN ACTION

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: LEADERSHIP

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the provincial government and its School, Education, and Literacy Department (SELD) have prioritized strengthening the capacity of SELD's gender unit to lead its gender equality commitments outlined in the Compact and STG grant. This is evidenced by SELD's recent completion of a draft desk review-based gender analysis and Gender Responsive Education Reform Action Plan (GRAP) prior to receiving the GPE-STG grant earmarked funds for these activities. Furthermore, the GRAP outlines not only the need for sufficient budget for the gender unit and the GRAP actions but also the vision of the SELD gender unit as a key leader in ensuring gender equality in access to, within, and through education.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: GENDER ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE

- In **Cambodia**, existing data collected by the government indicates that boys have lower enrollment and retention rates than girls at primary and secondary level and are underperforming academically in comparison with their female counterparts. However, insufficient data exists to understand the underlying causes of their gender-specific disparities. In response, the compact and STG identified conducting a gender analysis to better understand the roots of boys' disadvantage with the end goal of using the evidence to design target interventions.
- In **Zimbabwe**, the GPE STG and GEA programs have complementary monitoring plans that includes conducting both a rapid gender analysis at the grant project inception and another at the endline to provide comparative data on progress of gender hardwiring outcomes.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: INTERSECTIONALITY

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the GEA was used to fund education grants for 900 children (60% girls, 40% boys) with severe disabilities; an enabling factor for intersectional work on gender was the Inclusive Education unit within the Ministry of Education that included Gender, Disability, Displaced Children, and other vulnerable groups. The GPE Secretariat also demonstrated flexibility and context sensitivity by understanding the intersectional challenge and the risks to only supporting disabled girls.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: CAPACITY

- In **Central African Republic**, the Education Sector Plan, the EFA, and the Partnership Compact identified gender-based violence and harassment as one of the barriers to girls' enrolment and progression in education; in addition, a bottleneck was observed in the lack of accountability for perpetrators. Aligning with this, the STG and MLT funding contributed to creating a role within the MoE for a dedicated gender GBV/SEA/SH specialist to specifically address this issue.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5: SYSTEM SOLUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY

- In **Chad**, the EFA and Partnership Compact analyzed gender disparities outside of the formal education system, including harmful social norms and overarching inequalities between men and women, and their impacts on girls' education. With this evidence base, the STG took a systems approach to investing in community awareness raising, positive parenting, and adult literacy classes and non-formal education, as well as digital skills for women.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 6: INCLUSIVE PROCESSES

- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, LEG members who participated in the compact policy dialogue working group, included several international organizations and donors with gender expertise (UNICEF, JICA, etc.), national women-led organizations, and representatives from the SELD's gender unit. The representatives of most organizations, including from the government, were overwhelmingly women. LEG members mentioned these policy dialogues as being the first time to sit down with all partners for significant amounts of time to dig deep into the various education issues, including gender equality.
- In **Nicaragua**, the ITAP reported noted the absence of organizations of, by, and for Indigenous communities in the education sector dialogue. The Compact responded to this feedback, adding the intentional inclusion of these groups in the LEG moving forward.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 7: DO NO HARM

- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the STG aimed to recruit, train, and deploy more female teachers annually. QAR 1 Feedback from the Secretariat to the STG Grant Agent suggested including enhanced risk assessment and safeguarding measures to ensure the security of newly recruited and deployed teachers; this helped to minimize inadvertent risks to female teachers within the final GPE program.
- **Chad** identified SRGBV as a bottleneck for girls' access to and progress within education in the EFA and Compact development. To address this, the STG will establish a referral mechanism within schools.
- In **Pakistan (Sindh)**, the Grant Agent selection committee included a selection criterion on capacity/expertise in putting in place prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment safeguards.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 8: ACCOUNTABILITY

- In **Senegal**, the GPE program promotes accountability for gender at regional, district, and school levels. The program will pilot an initiative to fund school management committees to develop and deploy innovative approaches to tackling gender inequality at the school and community level. This pilot will engage community members in developing the initiatives and holding local actors to account. Furthermore, the funding window will be run through regional offices to promote decentralization of funding and management of resources with an aim to further promote local engagement and accountability of local actors in relation to gender and system transformation.
- In **Somalia (federal level)**, the GEA Monitoring and Evaluation framework includes a commitment for annual Gender and Inclusion review to occur alongside the Joint Review of the Education Sector (JRES) to ensure an improved and sustained focus on intersectoral gender commitments.

ANNEX 2. DEEP DIVE CASE STUDY: CHAD

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT & GPE PARTNERSHIP

Chad, a GPE partner since 2012, ranks among the poorest performing countries with regards to education outcomes and gender equity within education. Only 36% of girls complete a primary cycle of education as compared to 56% of boys.[69] Chad faces multiple security and climate threats that hinder progress in education system strengthening.

In 2019, Chad received a four-year US$50 million Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) through the Maximum Country Allocation (MCA) window of the GPE 2020 Operating Model. Under GPE 2025, Chad received a System Transformation Grant (STG) ($80,520,000) and Girls Education Accelerator Grant (GEA) ($25,000,000) grant for a total of $105,520,000 for the PRET program (2025-2028); UNICEF is the Grant Agent (GA) for the GEA portion and both UNESCO and UNICEF manage a portion of the STG (UNICEF: $36,476,505 and UNESCO: $44,043,495). The EFA was submitted in December 2022 and the ITAP report was shared in March 2023. A Concept Note was submitted in February 2024 with a final board decision in September 2024. The program was scheduled to start on January 1, 2025, with World Food Programme acting as Coordinating Agency, although Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD) served in this capacity until August 2024.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION GPE 2025

Entry Point 1: Gender Analysis and Diagnostics
The Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA) used recent data to analyze a range of factors related to gender equality and education, including sociocultural forces, harmful norms, conflict, gender-based violence. Some of this data was available due to ESPIG investments in data systems. The EFA used the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Education Statistical Yearbooks and the 2019 PASEC learning assessment; LEG members and GA also cited the use of a Gender at the Center Initiative (GCI) baseline study.[70]

Gender-related barriers were identified in the enabling factors analysis and compact, primarily related to data and gender-responsive planning:
- **Gender-disaggregated data was an enabling factor,** especially for analysis of the intersection with geographic disparities, although less intersectional data was available, such as for disability, refugee/displaced status, nomad, or poverty. The EFA identified bottlenecks to *using* the data to effectively allocate resources and noted a lack of teaching/learning data and data-driven teacher evaluation. EFA and Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP) rated Data and Evidence as a Medium priority.
- **EFA found that Chad had a strong policy environment but lacked concrete implementation plans and strategies and that human resource management did not consider the need to recruit and support more female teachers and school leaders**. EFA and ITAP rated gender-responsive planning, policy, and monitoring as a medium priority.
- **Gender was not probed and therefore not substantially discussed in relation to the two high priority domains: Volume, Equity, and Efficiency of Domestic Funding or in Sector-wide Coordination**. Gender is only mentioned in relation to the need to increase funding to

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[69] PRET, p. 13.
[70] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..

"operationalize government strategic commitments towards the educational needs of girls and other vulnerable groups and to fund interventions geared towards quality learning."[71]

The ITAP report broadly agreed with the main bottlenecks identified by EFA, stating that **the country required in-depth studies on major issues such as poor learning outcomes, girls' access and retention, teacher quality, and financing**. ITAP noted that lack of progress on gender equality related to lack of "a **comprehensive policy and plan that specifically focuses on gender and education with targets, monitoring mechanisms and well-funded** programs" as well as limited funding for equity.[72]

Many barriers identified in EFA were either addressed through STG and GEA grants or through complementary initiatives. Gender-related barriers in EGA included sociocultural norms, early marriage and pregnancy, insecurity, and gender-based violence, lack of appropriate facilities, lack of female teachers, targeted financing, and strategies. The STG included: community-level awareness-raising activities (3.7), establishing a school-based referral mechanism for GBV (3.2), increasing female teachers (2.1), and improving latrine/WASH facilities (3.2). The GEA focused on awareness raising and promoting a favorable environment for girls through scholarships and supplemental activities (4.1).

Some barriers included in EFA were addressed by the Grant Agents' own organizations as opposed to the GPE program, demonstrating complementarity and coordination. For instance, the need for a comprehensive policy and plan focused on gender and education was addressed by the Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion (MENPC) and UNICEF through its "Strategy to Accelerate Girls' Education." Furthermore, UNICEF addressed a need for research through multiple studies including the Women in Learning Leadership (WiLL) study and the Data Must Speak series.[73] UNESCO IIEP and the MENPC also held decentralized trainings on gender equality, GBV, and re-enrolling girls in school, in part through the GCI.[74]

> **"Gender may have been an issue that came up during implementation in the past, but for the project starting in January (GPE 2025), I think gender was an entry point. Gender was brought on board right from the start, right from when we identified priorities. Whereas with the old funding, I think it was in the implementation that they tried to catch up with gender by saying no, you have to integrate such and such a variable, you have to highlight such and such an aspect of gender."** – Consulted Stakeholder, Chad

In comparing the GPE 2020 and 2025 processes, EFA's focus on assessing data from the outset was seen as a positive change. A consulted stakeholder in-country expressed that "for previous programs, gender may have come up during implementation, but for the specific project starting in January, I think, gender was an entry point. Gender was brought on board right from the start of the process and therefore right from when we identified priorities."[75] Similarly, another grant agent organization expressed that the EFA and the requirements of GPE required more nuanced approaches to gender.[76]

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[71] Chad ITAP Report, p. 4.
[72] Chad ITAP Report, p. 10.
[73] See for example: WiLL and Data Must Speak. Also, FGD, December 18, 2024.
[74] See for example UNESCO IIEP. FGD, December 19, 2024.
[75] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[76] ibid.

Entry Point 2: Gender within system level policy dialogue

The process to develop the Compact involved some country-level and regional stakeholders focused on gender equality, primarily within government and international organizations. LEG minutes and other documentation did not mention any organizations specifically contributing gender expertise to the Compact or the selection of a Gender Lead. However, stakeholders agreed that the MENPC had strong gender expertise, particularly through its Directorate for the Development of Girls' Education and Gender Promotion (DDEFPG).[77] International organizations also contributed to gender discussions within the EFA and Compact process.[78] Civil society engagement was primarily through teachers' unions and national parent associations,[79] Including the national Association of Mother-Educators which mobilizes mothers to promote girls' education.[80] More so, LEG generally viewed its role as supporting the government's priorities, as opposed to setting the agenda, including in relation to gender.[81]

Regional gender expertise contributed to the EFA and Compact through UNESCO-IIEP which was providing technical assistance to MENPC, as well as a GCI mission during the processes.[82] MENPC, through the DDEFPG, coordinated synergies between GPE and other gender-focused initiatives. Furthermore, the Secretariat Team provided support to the country during the Compact development, including by ensuring complementarity between GPE and other initiatives.**[83]**

The Compact generally aligned with the EFA in its diagnostics and proposed solutions related to gender equality and girls' education. The Compact demonstrated a high degree of gender hardwiring across all four Components. The Compact's priority reform of "**Teachers and teaching**" aligned broadly with the EFA's identification of gender-related issues such as girls' access, feminization of the teacher workforce, adult female literacy, and sociocultural norms and behavior change. Stakeholders reported a consensus on the importance of gender equality and noted that opinions tended to diverge when identifying solutions.[84] For example, GPE Secretariat found that MENPC had not sufficiently "drawn lessons from the previous project, what has worked, what does not work, what we will do differently" based on up-to-date evidence.[85] To remedy this, the Secretariat shared evidence from other countries with MENPC to illustrate existing good practices.[86]

By ensuring significant ring-fenced financing for girls' education, the GEA influenced sector dialogue during the Compact development. Stakeholders in Chad expressed that while gender was already a high priority, the gender-specific financing window influenced the crafting of ambitious goals and actions within the Compact and, later, in the program itself.[87] One stakeholder expressed that it eliminated the need for the government and partners to have to "bargain" to fund girls' education, since the resources were already allocated.[88]

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] See also PRET Program Document, p. 27.

[80] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[81] Ibid.

[82] GCI is a global alliance of civil society and international organizations including GPE working in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa to galvanize political leadership and expertise for gender equality in and through education.

[83] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

> **"I think we could be more ambitious with actions than we probably would have been if we'd done [the Compact] without any prospect of funding set aside for girls."** – Consulted Stakeholder, Chad

The Compact evidenced strong influence by the GEA, including a textbox with analyses of gender inequalities in education, a stand-alone GEA theory of change, and clearly proposed activities to be funded with GEA directly linking to the gender analysis. The GEA benefitted from the recent Gender and Education Snapshot analysis conducted by GCI and the Strategy to Accelerate Girls Education which helped to build consensus on bottlenecks and priority actions on gender. Country-level stakeholders also perceived a higher degree of certainty that the funding would be available which may have heightened GEA's degree of influence in the Compact.[89]

In comparison to the GPE 2020 model, the Compact demonstrated a higher degree of gender hardwiring when establishing sector-wide priorities, according to stakeholders and document analysis. Many of the proposed activities in the Compact continued from the prior program (e.g., teacher training and recruitment; improved infrastructure), however the Compact more robustly referenced gender inequality across all components and better employed data and evidence. For example, a discussion of the teacher core used up-to-date disaggregated data, while gender-segregated toilets were discussed in relation to their potential to improve gender equality. These advances may have been possible because of better available data and new momentum, such as the GCI analysis.

A LEG member also noted that the improvements with regards to gender between the GPE 2025 and GPE 2020 programs also reflected changes at the domestic policy level including a new transitional education plan which had a stronger gender lens.[90] In comparison, the previous ESPIG program supported a plan that had a broader approach to gender, with one of its priorities to pursue quality universal primary education including through reducing disparities in "regions, gender, area, environment."[91]

Entry Point 3: Gender lens in grant development process

The process to develop and review the GPE-financed grants involved some country-level stakeholders focused on gender equality, but not necessarily throughout the whole grant development process. MENPC selected UNESCO and UNICEF as grant agents, with UNICEF managing the GEA and a portion of the STG and UNESCO managing the remaining STG amount; the GAs developed a single program for the STG and GEA. One of the six criteria established for GA selection by the government and LEG was "capacity to mobilize gender expertise"[92] and both organizations felt they were assessed on this aspect. Both UNICEF and UNESCO relied on internal staffing to develop the program; support from MENPC and LEG primarily came for endorsement, review, and continued consultation around QAR. Both GAs received $200,000 in 2024 as part of a GPE Program Development grant. In March and June 2024, GAs and government held two workshops involving 80 members of government, CSO, partners, and NGOs, though no mention of gender-equality related organizations. to develop and finalize the proposal; however, no indication of gender-equality related organizations was made.[93]

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid.

[91] PIET, p. 27.

[92] Republic of Chad. "Terms of Reference for the Grant Agent selection process for GPE financing [*Termes de référence relatifs au processus de sélection d'un agent partenaire pour les financements GPE*]," p.3

[93] PRET Program Document, p. 26.

The Concept Note, submitted in February 2024, did not maintain much of the gender hardwiring or evidence present in the Compact. In fact, document placed all gender-related activities into one sub-component for the GEA (4.1), moving away from hardwiring, and removed some activities or created duplications between GEA and STG. In one example, Components 1 and 2 addressed professional development and human resources generally; then, similar activities but with a gender-related focus were also included Sub-component 4.1 such as "feminization of the teacher workforce and female leadership in learning."

QAR 1 explicitly addressed the overall lack of gender hardwiring and pointed to gaps in proposed activities in the Concept Note as compared to the EFA and Compact. QAR 1 cited "an absence of Gender Analysis or intention to conduct further research and gender does not feature as a cross-cutting component." The Secretariat requested that the GA "include more gender expertise for a more detailed gender analysis and design input into the next phase."[94] The Secretariat and CA explained that one reason for the discrepancy between the Concept Note and the work done prior related to a loss of technical expertise due to staffing changes at the Grant Agent, as well as timing constraints.[95] One grant agent said that to address this, they did not hire external support and capitalized on another consultant supporting the development of the Strategy to Accelerate Girls Education.

Through quality assurance feedback, both GAs better harnessed evidence on gender and better integrated gender equality into the overall grant design and took on feedback from the Secretariat in a first draft of the Program Document for QAR 2. The draft Program Document evidenced gender across all four components and, as per QAR 1 feedback, had a distinct GEA theory of change. While maintaining a GEA subcomponent, gender-related activities also featured across the other three components. In QAR 2, the Gender Hub urged the country to include more gender-specific indicators based on the GEA Core Indicators. General QAR 1 feedback also asked for more gender-specific indicators for all other components and urged for more intersectional disaggregation, along geography, income, handicap where possible. The GEA included mapping and coordination of girls' education-related projects specifically, which QAR 2 deemed sufficient. QAR 2 also requested more details on SEAH and identified one area of unaddressed feedback QAR 1 on research and evidence generation on girls' education.

In QAR 3, the Secretariat expressed satisfaction with gender hardwiring and GEA, although minor discrepancies existed between the compact, the QAR process, and the final program. For example, one point of QAR 2 feedback requesting to include new research on root causes and solutions related to girls' education did not appear to be implemented; however, it was not raised in feedback again.

> **"At the beginning, it was not clear for the Chadian team to what extent gender should be transversal rather than specific. [...] GPE's guidance was not always very clear and sometimes contradictory, because at one point we were told...because the country is going to get US $25 million, we need to see specific activities that address gender, and at another point we were told, no, gender has to be cross-cutting."** – Consulted Stakeholder

While the grant agents generally found the Secretariat feedback useful, one grant agent found GPE's instructions related to gender hardwiring were confusing. This may have also contributed to the divergence between the Compact and QAR 1. For instance, a GA staff voiced that "GPE's guidance was not always very clear and sometimes contradictory, because at one point we were told...because the

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[94] QAR 1 - Gender Assessment Tool.
[95] Ibid.

country is going to get US $25 million, we need to see specific activities that address gender, and at another point we were told, no, gender has to be cross-cutting." Further guidance on how to operationalize GEA within the broader STG framework may have alleviated confusion on how to accomplish both hardwiring and girl-specific activities at once.

Overall, the GEA overall supported conversations on gender equality during grant development and ensured that commitments to girls' education made during the Compact were followed through. From a budgetary perspective, the GEA made it easier to track investments in girls' education and gender which might lead to better tracking during the implementation phase. The Secretariat also observed that Chad's STG budget was generally structured in a way which facilitated the identification of gender equality-related spending. Several subcomponents had specific gender targets which were clearly indicated and easy to separate, such as the feminization of the teaching force (Activity 2.1.4) and menstrual hygiene (Activity 3.5.5).

In comparing the two operating models, the GPE 2025 and GPE 2020 programs included many of the same components and activities, however, the latter one (PRET) demonstrated more attention to gender. Within PREAT (GPE 2020), few project activities targeted a specific gender or had a reporting component related to gender; *only* adult literacy was specifically targeted to women and capacity building with newly literate women. In PRET, teacher recruitment and capacity strengthening were more richly discussed in terms of gender, whereas PREAT had a more gender-blind approach to teacher recruitment and training. Also, PREAT did not significantly rely upon gender-disaggregated data and up-to-date gender analysis and most data was more than three years old at program development.

Entry Point 4: Mutual accountability for gender through national level stakeholders
Stakeholders moderately engaged in supporting the country's priority reform vis-à-vis gender equality. While the PRET program has not yet begun, the most active stakeholders in preparing and launching the program were the grant agents and MENPC gender and GPE Secretariat focal points. The Government also mentioned that it issued an official order for LEG members to participate in the EFA and Compact development;[96] this may indicate that broad participation is generally low. During the GPE 2025 processes, LEG participation lists did not specify which members had gender-specific representation, and the former coordinating agency expressed that the civil society space related to girls' education was limited.[97] MENPC was exploring a restructuring of the LEG to include decentralized LEG in provinces targeted by the program, which could better include local civil society including girls and women's rights groups.[98]

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[96] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.

ANNEX 3. DEEP DIVE CASE STUDY: PAKISTAN (SINDH)

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT & GPE PARTNERSHIP

In 2012, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) partnered directly with Pakistani provincial education departments, including Sindh's School Education Literacy Department (SELD), following the 2010 constitutional devolution of education responsibilities. Sindh has Pakistan's second highest out-of-school child rate (over 30%),[99] with disparities in access and learning outcomes based on gender, language, disability, income, and location, disproportionately impacting girls, Sindhi speakers, low-income children, those with disabilities, and rural residents.

Between 2017-2019, the GPE Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG) supported the completion of the Situational Analysis of the Education Sector and the School and Education Sector Plan & Roadmap (SESP&R). In 2021, the Province of Sindh in Pakistan received a five-year Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG) and Multiplier Grant (MLT) through the Maximum Country Allocation window of the GPE 2020 Operating Model. The ESPIG and MLT are currently funding the Sindh Early Learning Enhancement Through Classroom Transformation (SELECT) program (May 2021-April 2026). As part of GPE 2025, SELD and partners completed the Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA) in February 2023; the Compact in December 2023; and final Systems Transformation Grant (STG) grant application and program document in August 2024. In October 2024, the GPE Board approved the STG grant allocation in the amount of USD 28,964,000 for the Sindh Learning Program (April 2025-March 2029). Pakistan is eligible for the Girls' Education Accelerator grant, but funds are currently unavailable.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION: GPE 2025

Entry Point 1: Gender Analysis and Diagnostics

The EFA was completed using recent data that analyzed many factors related to gender equality in access to, within, and through education. This included using qualitative data to understand some root causes of gender gaps in access, notably impacting girls. Data sources included 2019 Situation Analysis of the Education Sector; sex-disaggregated data from the Province of Sindh Annual Status of Education Report (ASER); Provincial Achievement Test (PAT) 2021-22; Profiling for Government Schools/Annual School Census; and a gender analysis conducted by a local organization, among others.

The EFA and Compact identified gender barriers to priority reform, primarily in Evidence & Data and Gender-Responsive Planning, Policy, and Monitoring, with fewer barriers noted in Sector Coordination and Domestic Funding. Evidence & Data issues included insufficient use of sex-disaggregated data for gender-transformative planning, lack of data on teaching quality and learning environments, no recent gender analysis, and missing age/disability data. In Planning, Policy, and Monitoring, barriers included policy frameworks not translating into action, insufficient resources for the SELD's gender unit, and gender imbalance in staffing (few female teachers and women in leadership). Sector Coordination and Domestic Funding barriers were limited to insufficient LEG use for gender dialogue, inadequate equity-based budgeting, and insufficient funding for gender equality.

Like the ESA funded under GPE 2020, the enabling factor analysis identified gender barriers addressed in the SESP&R. However, the EFA, informed by GPE 2025 Gender Hub resources, provided a more focused analysis of system-level obstacles and prioritized these barriers more strongly than the ESA and

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[99] Global Partnership for Education. <u>Transforming Education in Pakistan-Sindh</u> .

SESP&R. The ESA (GPE 2020 model) identified few such barriers, while the EFA's gender analysis (informing the Compact and related programs) highlighted key issues like limited use of disaggregated data for evidence-based decisions, limited gender unit capacity, and the absence of comprehensive gender analysis. While the ESA focused on identifying existing disparities, including gender-related ones, it lacked analysis of underlying causes and key barriers to addressing them. Key informants and EFA documents confirmed that major gender disparities in Sindh are significant gaps in girls' enrollment, transition, completion, and learning, especially in specific districts. These disparities were more prominently highlighted and prioritized in the EFA and Compact (e.g., through the priority reform focusing on equitable access to foundational learning and fostering transition to post-primary) than in the ESA and SESP&R.

According to LEG members, the GPE EFA template with gender-related prompts was identified as especially helpful and a "driving force for digging deeper [into gender equality]" than previously done with the Education Section Analysis under GPE 2020.[100] Participating LEG members also received comprehensive training on gender hardwiring in the GPE partnership process (conducting the EFA, how to identify gender-related barriers, and how to address the latter in the Compact), which supported this deeper gender-related systems-level analysis.[101]

The ITAP largely agreed with the EFA but identified additional gender barriers to the priority reform, including insufficient gender-responsive sector monitoring and reporting. It cited the lack of gender-sensitive targets in the SESP&R's 15 key performance indicators and limited data on the large out-of-school population and intersectional marginalization (based on gender, location, language, and/or ethnicity) in accessing education.

While both the EFA (GPE 2025) and ESA (GPE 2020) addressed some gender equality barriers in education, both failed to identify key issues, including some that act as barriers to gender equality through education: These omissions included school related and other GBV, with the ESA only briefly mentioning child sexual abuse and corporal punishment without analyzing their impact on the three dimensions of gender equality and education. Harmful gender norms and their specific effects on different learner groups (e.g., child marriage's impact on girls in Sindh) and gender-related barriers for boys were also excluded. Notably, neither process addressed barriers for gender-diverse individuals, despite Sindh's 2024 Transgender Education Policy.[102]

Entry Point 2: Gender within system level policy dialogue
Pakistan (Sindh)'s GPE 2025 policy dialogue engaged international and national gender experts and organizations (e.g., Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi, Indus Resource Centre, Teachers' Resource Center, UNICEF, UNESCO, Right to Play, JICA) and enabled meaningful discussion on gender equality and education that informed the EFA and Compact development. The SELD's nascent Gender Unit and GIZ-funded gender consultants also contributed.[103] However, the LEG noted the lack of participation from other stakeholders (e.g., district-level partners, parents, informal activists), limiting broader understanding of gender barriers and opportunities. While there was general agreement on gender-related targets related

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[100] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Review of LEG Meeting Minutes and Attendance Sheets; LEG Compact Endorsement letter; Secretariat Assessment of Strategic Parameters in Partnership Compact; Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..

to access, discussions about gender equality versus simply increasing girls' enrollment helped shift the policy focus beyond access to encompass gender equality within and through education.[104]

> **"I appreciated that the GPE 2025 process drove these larger policy discussions. The government is very fragmented, so very difficult. The Compact development was the first time that I had time to spend long hours with partners to discuss priorities on gender and others. It really worked."** — International LEG Member Pakistan (Sindh)

Challenges in gender equality policy dialogue included: the SELD Gender Unit's limited capacity to lead technical discussions;[105] evolving GPE "gender hardwiring" expectations for the Compact that caused some confusion for partners;[106] feedback being limited to email communication with GPE, rather than face-to-face interactions; and insufficient time for in-depth discussions.[69] Additionally, organizations with gender expertise often sent general representatives rather than dedicated gender experts.[107]

Both the GPE Secretariat's Country Team Lead and the Coordinating Agency, UNICEF, played key roles in addressing gender-related challenges, emphasizing gender equality and its integration. The GPE CTL provided significant informal guidance to the contracted gender consultant and formal guidance to the LEG members and UNICEF through a gender hardwiring-specific meeting and multi-stakeholder workshop on the EFA informal guidance,[108] while UNICEF offered gender hardwiring support in LEG and bilateral meetings, stressing the need for SELD's and its gender unit's expertise to ensure government ownership. Recognizing the gender unit's limited capacity, capacity-building for the unit became a key gender-related action.[109]

The Secretariat and Gender Hub also ensured gender was hardwired into the Compact. Pakistan (Sindh) received three rounds of feedback. The first focused on integrating gender across all program components, not just in a stand-alone section addressing girls' disadvantage in enrollment and post-primary transition (a key barrier from the EFA). The second round, noting improvement, urged moving beyond access to include other dimensions of gender equality and to prominently feature gender hardwiring in the Theory of Change (inputs, outputs, and outcomes). The final Compact incorporated this feedback with interventions focused on gender equality within education (e.g., increasing female teachers, improving teacher training with gender sensitivity) and through education (e.g., community participation promoting gender equality and transforming perceptions on the value of education for girls and boys; developing school leadership with focus on inclusion and gender sensitivity "to attract a diverse set of qualified candidates, with an emphasis on increasing female recruitment at the school level and also at the education officer level.").[110]

Compared to the GPE 2020 process (ESA/SESP&R), the GPE 2025 process (EFA/Compact), showed more government ownership of gender integration, more participation from key LEG members, and more comprehensive Secretariat gender feedback. The GPE 2020 process lacked dedicated government gender expertise (internal or consultant), unlike the GPE 2025 process, which benefited from the SELD's

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[104] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[105] FGD, December 2024.
[106] FGD, December 11, 2024.
[107] FGD, December 5, 2024.
[108] Interview, December 1, 2024.
[109] FGD, December 5, 2024; Interview, December 29, 2024.
[110] Pakistan (Sindh) Compact, p. 13.

gender unit and an external consultant. Consequently, gender integration under GPE 2020 was largely driven by development partners, a trend partially reversed in GPE 2025.[111] While similar gender experts participated in both processes via the LEG,[112] their engagement in in-depth dialogue on the ESA/SESP&R was limited in GPE 2020.[113] GPE 2020 gender feedback focused solely on "gender equity in access and learning" (equivalent to GPE 2025's "gender equality to and within education"), recommending gender-sensitive strategies and disaggregated data.[114] Unlike GPE 2025 feedback, it lacked recommendations on gender equality *through* education (see above).

The existence of the GEA influenced some of the Compact's gender-related content, particularly system-level actions (gender hardwiring) and interventions addressing girls' educational disadvantages. Stakeholders believed the GEA would amplify the impact on girls' post-grade 5 dropout rates. However, it did not significantly alter policy dialogue on girls' education, as this was already a priority.[115] Conversely, the GEA influenced the initial Compact draft by earmarking funding for key gender hardwiring actions (e.g., gender policy, analysis, action plan, and gender unit strengthening), highlighting their importance for achieving gender equality in education. The GEA also led to the inclusion of interventions like a girls' transportation pilot program, later dropped when GEA funding became unavailable.[116]

Entry Point 3: Grant Development with Gender and Inclusion Lens

While the Compact comprehensively addressed gender equality per the EFA, the initial Concept Note (CN) did not. Securing adequate gender integration in the final STG program document, aligned with the EFA and Compact, proved challenging but ultimately successful. Despite strong Compact alignment with the EFA, the CN initially focused narrowly on access (e.g., school upgrades, attendance monitoring). July 2024 Gender Hub feedback (QAR 1) urged alignment with the Compact, including interventions within (e.g., gender-sensitive materials), through (e.g., community advocacy), and at the system level (e.g., capacity building, gender analysis, responsive M&E). The Grant Agent reported difficulty engaging government representatives in program development, with limited input on gender activities despite UNICEF's efforts.[117] Consulted stakeholders emphasized that the Grant Agent strived to respect the GPE's emphasis on government ownership of the grant development process, including related to gender hardwiring, but there was insufficient gender capacity to do so.[118] Another consulted stakeholder further explained that there was an initial disconnect between the Compact and the program outline because the government often focused on one thing at a time, forgetting to link back to the Compact.[119] Informal QAR 2 feedback from the Gender Hub requested more detail on gender integration in teacher training/curriculum (Component 2) and transitions (Component 3), including prioritizing female teachers. The final Program Document addressed all feedback, with QAR 3 confirming full gender integration. The Secretariat CTL/gender focal point also provided ongoing feedback.[120] Despite challenges, stakeholders agreed that the EFA, GPE training, template questions, and continuous feedback

[111] FGD, December 5, 2024; Interview, December 29, 2024.

[112] Pakistan (Sindh) ESPIG LEG Minutes 2021; Pakistan (Sindh) LEG Endorsement of Compact Minutes May 2023.

[113] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..

[114] Secretariat's comments on the initial ESP draft – Pakistan/ Sindh Annex 1: Initial ESP Assessment, pp. 3, 6.

[115] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid..

[120] Ibid.

from the Gender Hub and CTL drove a deeper data analysis and comprehensive gender equality in the final grant design.[121]

> **"You know, the interesting part is that there is a lot of discussion about gender…but mainly because I think the development partners focus on it. So, the government is quite aware of the importance of talking about gender. There was a lot of discussion about girls, but when it actually comes to narrowing it down to something you can put in a concept note it wasn't there."**
>
> – Consulted Stakeholder, Pakistan (Sindh)

Given the vast scale of gender-related barriers, particularly the large number of out-of-school girls, GPE funding alone is insufficient. Other partners, including the government, are addressing these gaps. For example, UNICEF and JICA support school upgrades, and UNICEF is working with the government to implement double shifts for adolescent girls. With LEG members, UNICEF helped SELD finalize an OOSC Roadmap aiming to enroll 50% of the 7.8 million out-of-school children (mostly girls) over five years and is planning a workshop to map partner contributions.[122] The GPE 2025 partnership process, including the unavailability of GEA funding, has spurred the government to not only prioritize girls' education but also gender equality.[123] Evidence of this includes SELD's completion of a draft gender analysis, a Gender-Responsive Education Reform Action Plan, and a Transgender Education Policy all completed without GEA funding and prior to receiving STG grant funds and applying for the SCG grant.[124]

While the 2021 ESPIG Project Appraisal Document (PAD) and Maximum Country Allocation Multiplier (MCAM) used ESA gender analysis to inform interventions, they lacked comprehensive gender mainstreaming, unlike the GPE 2025 STG program document. The GPE 2020 ESPIG PAD only referenced ESA data on gender disparities in enrollment, dropout, and transition, briefly identifying barriers like parental reluctance, inadequate WASH facilities, and insufficient secondary schools for girls. While some interventions addressed access by upgrading primary schools, there was a disconnect between this brief diagnostic and the early grade reading focus, which lacked gender-specific data on reading levels and barriers. The MCAM application, which was an add-on to the ESPIG grant program, partially addressed these gaps by analyzing data on girls' disadvantages in enrollment, transition, retention, and learning and using this this data to propose relevant interventions to redress these gender-related barriers. However, like the PAD, it did not address gender equality *through* education or systemic gender-related changes, unlike the GPE 2025 STG (see above).

The GPE 2025 STG grant development process was more gender participatory than the GPE 2020 process but was still limited. While input was solicited from the same LEG members and development partners related to gender equality and beyond, time constraints limited the depth of dialogue compared to the EFA and Compact processes. Even so, the STG grant agent (UNICEF) shared program sections for partner feedback, including on gender equality, which did not occur during the GPE 2020 ESPIG grant development.[125]

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[121] Ibid.

[122] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.; Drafts of the gender analysis and Gender-Responsive Education Reform Plan shared with review team.

[125] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

Entry Point 4: Mutual accountability for gender through national level stakeholders

Unlike the GPE 2020 model, GPE 2025 empowers the gender focal point/CTL to hold governments and partners accountable for gender integration. Pakistan (Sindh)'s Country Engagement Lead (CEL), who also serves as the gender focal point, explained that GPE 2025's approach provides a formal mandate for gender integration, which was lacking under GPE 2020. Previously, with only an informal Secretariat-level gender group, CELs faced resistance from governments and grant agents who cited the lack of formal requirements, hindering further gender integration efforts.[126]

Stakeholders, including the government, are engaged in supporting Sindh's priority reform vis-à-vis gender equality, particularly at the policy and planning level. Although the GPE 2025 STG-supported program begins in 2025, significant planning and policy work (e.g., OOSC Roadmap, Transgender Education Policy, and Gender-Responsive initiatives) is already underway (see EP3).

Despite gender hardwiring efforts, no plans for mutual accountability exist within Pakistan (Sindh)'s GPE partnership. Review of key documents, including the Compact and STG program, revealed no specific plans for ensuring continued gender hardwiring during implementation, nor was a national "gender lead partner" nominated. One LEG member noted that without a shared plan, including gender equality indicators tied to the priority reform, and given each organization's distinct programming cycles, shared responsibility for gender is unlikely.[127]

Stakeholders, including government interviewees, expressed concern about long-term accountability, particularly regarding decentralized implementation. One LEG member doubted the priority reform's feasibility without a complete overhaul of SELD's implementation capacity, citing approximately $1.5 billion in unspent national funds earmarked for related interventions (e.g., girls' school construction, scholarships). This stakeholder noted Sindh's progressive policies but weak implementation capacity.[128] The Grant Agent corroborated this, citing underutilization of SELD district and sub-district staff as a key implementation gap, including regarding gender equality.[129] A government stakeholder further emphasized that while district-level SELD staff are crucial for GPE intervention implementation, they have not been targeted for gender equality training, which is primarily reserved for the provincial SELD gender unit. While this unit is important for policy, planning, and oversight, those responsible for on-the-ground implementation typically lack gender expertise.[130]

> *"I feel like if I struggle as a relatively gender sensitive person, not as an expert, but if I struggle to understand some of the specifics, I can well imagine the people who are doing implementation tasks in a day would also struggle...A lot of times we end up seeing that we need more girls in school and that's what it [gender hardwiring] is as opposed to every part of the process needs to feel gender sensitive and that recognition is obviously there in places like the Reform Support Unit [at SELD] and in the LEG, but increasing capacity at the implementation level for these decisions and for this type of thinking....I think that would be really instrumental in changing how gender is reflected...on a day-to-day level."*
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> --Consulted Stakeholder, Pakistan (Sindh)

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[126] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

However, the government is addressing the gender equality accountability gap. Based on the draft education sector gender analysis (see above), which identified the need to extend gender equality capacity building to district and lower-level education officials, SELD's Reform Support Unit has developed a comprehensive capacity-building program for district and provincial officials. This program, currently under discussion, aims to equip staff with the skills to integrate a gender perspective into budgeting, planning, implementation, data management, monitoring, and reporting.[131]

The GPE 2020 ESPIG grant program progress reports have almost no discussion of gender-related outcomes. Although a comparison of progress reports between the GPE 2025 STG grant program and the GPE 2020 ESPIG program is not possible, the notable absence of reporting and/or discussion on progress towards implementation of gender equality-related activities and/or other aspects of the program in the two available ESPIG progress reports appears to be an important accountability gap.[132]

GPE 2020 ESPIG progress reports lack discussion of gender-related outcomes. While direct comparison with the GPE 2025 STG program is not possible, this absence in the available ESPIG reports suggests the GPE and/or grant agent have less responsibility vis-a-vis monitoring gender equality progress than under the GPE 2025 model.

Pakistan (Sindh), with UNICEF as grant agent, plans to apply for the SCG to support the province's priority reform vis-a-vis gender equality. The SCG will support its priority reform, focusing on system-level gender equality transformation (e.g., a gender equality strategy, district-level Gender Action Plans, SELD capacity building, and gender analysis). Due to time constraints, the SCG application was not submitted concurrently with the STG, but a draft is forthcoming.[133]

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[131] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[132] Sindh Early Learning Enhancement through Classroom Transformation Implementation Status & Results Report, May 2023; Sindh Early Learning Enhancement through Classroom Transformation Implementation Status & Results Report, June 2024.
[133] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

ANNEX 4. DEEP DIVE CASE STUDY: SOMALIA (FEDERAL LEVEL)

COUNTRY SNAPSHOT & GPE PARTNERSHIP

A GPE partner since 2012, Somalia is marked by high levels of fragility and violence which impact safe access to education and service delivery. In addition to pervasive gender inequalities, severe disparities between urban and rural populations, displaced children, nomads, and disabled children also exist. GPE support to Somalia has historically covered Puntland; Somaliland; and Federal Government of Somalia (encompassing the federal member states of Southwest, Jubaland, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, plus Benadir Regional Administration. The present study covers Federal Government of Somalia only (hereafter referred to simply as 'Somalia').

GPE funding for Somalia's Education Sector for the period of 2018 - 2022 totaled $109.56m and included 4 main GPE grants: the Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG), the ESPIG/Maximum Country Allocation, Accelerated Funding, and the COVID-19 Response funding. In January 2024, under GPE 2025, Somalia successfully applied for a System Transformation Grant (STG) for $60.76m and a Girls Education Accelerator (GEA) for $18.76m for 2024-2027. In addition, Somalia received a System Capacity Grant (SCG) in two tranches for a total of $2.86m, a portion of which was used for gender analysis and to strengthen gender capacity. CARE USA is the Grant Agent (GA) for the GEA and SCG, Save the Children is the GA for STG and the European Union (EU) is the Coordinating Agency (CA).

An EFA took place in late 2022, a final Compact was validated in June 2023, and GA selection occurred in September 2023. The programs were submitted for Board approval in January 2024 and implementation commenced in mid-2024.

GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION: GPE 2025

Entry Point 1: Gender Analysis and Diagnostics

To complete the Enabling Factors Analysis (EFA), the working groups relied on recent gender-disaggregated data, including from a range of projects run by Education Sector Committee (ESC – which acts as the Local Education Group) members. This included a recent education sector analysis (2021) and baseline studies and project evaluations covering Federal Member States (FMS) and national levels,[134] which provided key evidence on what worked for girls in Somalia.[135] The EFA occurred following completion of the Federal Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (MoECHE) 2022-2026 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP).

EFA identified gender-related barriers primarily related to data and evidence and gender-responsive sector planning. In particular, the lack of a sector-wide gender analysis was among the key bottlenecks. The EFA recognized a strong gender-responsive policy context which required further implementation, including the ESSP, the Gender Policy for the Education Sector (2020), and the Special Educational Needs, Disability, and Inclusive Education Policy (2018). The EFA also identified a need to increase the numbers of female teachers to improve girls' progression and completion, including in higher education. Somalia used an older version of the EFA Template (November 2021) which included fewer gender prompts. Within Sector Coordination and Volume, Equity, and Efficiency of Domestic Public Expenditure on Education, gender was not probed and so not mentioned.

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[134] Enabling Factors Analysis; Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..
[135] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..

The EFA and ITAP concurred that Data and Evidence was High priority, noting a lack of system-level gender and social inclusion analyses as a barrier to progress on "access, learning, retention, and completion."[136] In particular, ITAP called for more nuanced analyses of intersectional issues, such as disparities between urban and rural, the overall high proportion of out-of-school children, and the tendency for education data to skew towards wealthier urban families. Gender-Responsive Sector Planning was rated a medium priority by both ITAP and EFA.

The gender-related barriers and accompanying solutions identified in the EFA were carried through to the Compact and the final program. The Compact outlined strategies to respond to girls' access and retention barriers (Section 4.4 and Outcome 1), which consider supply and demand side barriers, pedagogical approaches, the presence of female teachers, responsiveness to specific social and economic barriers facing girls. These strategies were widely adopted in the STG and GEA programs; however, some bottlenecks related to boys' access and retention were less comprehensively addressed in the final program. Country-level stakeholders also agreed that the EFA reflected the priorities and proposed actions set forth in the recent ESSP and sector analysis.[137] A country-level stakeholder expressed that the **GEA infused important funding to support systems, such as the local level gender and inclusion focal points, which supported the success of girls' education projects led by partner organizations.**

Compared to the ESPIG processes under GPE 2020, stakeholders perceived the EFA to have made a significant difference in analyzing gender equality and identifying solutions. A LEG member described how the former grant relied on the sector plan as the basis for most gender activities whereas, for the GPE 2025 program there was "a deeper analysis and review of issues around gender that highlighted the need for comprehensive dialogue around gender equality."[138] The dialogue that occurred led to more complex understandings of bottlenecks and solutions. For instance, a grant agent recalled that "in 2017, gender was very clearly a gap, but it was essentially a discussion about increasing access. You see a lot of this in the ESA and the ESSP. It's a game of numbers. It was a much less nuanced discussion... Now, it is a much more nuanced discussion, and in large parts it's because of having gender-focused funding."[139] This indicates that the GEA and the focus on gender hardwiring had a degree of influence on dialogue at even as early as the EFA stage. **In addition, the EFA required a higher degree of diagnostics and evidence than during the development of the ESPIG,** which inconsistently applied gender disaggregated data from the 2018/2019 Education Statistics Yearbook, a 2017 Education Sector Analysis (ESA), and a 2019 Joint Review of the Education Sector (JRES).

Entry Point 2: Gender Within System Policy Dialogue

The process to develop the EFA and Compact involved country-level stakeholders focused on gender equality; in general, these stakeholders were already involved in the ESC and Education Donor Group (EDG) and contributed to past GPE grants. An SCG supported the Compact development, and the grant aimed to foster a strong gender and inclusion lens within the Compact.[140] The Secretariat and country-level stakeholders recalled that international organizations such as FCDO (EDG lead) as well as CARE (ESPIG and GEA grant agent), contributed significant gender expertise to both EFA and Compact, as well

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[136] EFA, p. 32.
[137] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] SCG Application Form.

as a women-led CSO focused on disability and inclusion in education.[141] Meeting minutes and members' accounts describe an inclusive process,[142] and that international organizations helped to uplift the voices of national CSOs focused on gender equality.[143]

Line ministries related to gender and inclusion were also involved in the EFA and Compact although they did not consistently engage with the ESC – these constituted a change from the GPE 2020 process when they were not involved .[144] ESC members also noted that the National Education Conference, funded by SCG and occurring in parallel to the Compact development, facilitated sector-wide dialogue including on topics of gender as well as the recent process to develop the ESSP.[145] **ESC meeting minutes also reveal gaps in harnessing gender expertise**; for example, while the ESC had created 10 technical working groups at the time of the EFA to support tracking of the ESSP 2022-2026, there was no Gender Working Group.[146]

According to country-level partners, the GEA allocation enabled a greater focus on gender equality and girls' education within the Compact development, as well as the transformation of established priorities into concrete, funded actions. One LEG member believed that it was unlikely that a similar focus would have existed with a STG alone, "mainly because of the social norm barriers and cultural barriers. If you don't have a stand-alone program, the risk for girls' education issues getting lost is quite high."[147] A Grant Agent also expressed that "The GEA provides a rallying point and really the funding that enables the gender and inclusion units to make some of that work more actionable considering that they operate under a very limited budget." In other words, the GEA funding to system strengthening, including at decentralized levels, ensured that gender and inclusion work was included.

Secretariat feedback on the draft Compact encouraged specific changes to better position the country to receive the GEA, such as clarity on improving access and retention for girls; elaborating on how the GEA could support system strengthening; hardwiring gender into some systems interventions; linkages to Gender Policy and progress to date; considering gender composition for the Teacher Commission task team .[148] **Secretariat feedback on the draft Compact also supported stronger gender hardwiring,** including encouraging further analysis of challenges facing marginalized boys, and the potential role of boys and men as allies."[149]

Entry Point 3: Grant Development with Gender and Inclusion Lens
While the process to develop and review the GPE-financed grants involved country-level stakeholders focused on gender equality, the GAs primarily led the process, with MoECHE, ESC, and EDG providing inputs. Regarding GA selection, MoECHE, ESC, and GPE Secretariat generally agreed that gender expertise was a key criterion, even though this capacity was not explicitly mentioned in the Expression of Interest.[150] The GPE Board had also previously urged Somalia to select a GA with significant gender expertise in its decision for funding allocation to Somalia.[151] After MoECHE awarded the STG to Save the Children and the

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[141] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[142] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid.
[146] ESC Coordination Meeting Minutes, November 30, 2022.
[147] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..
[148] Secretariat Review of the Strategic Parameters of the Draft Partnership Compact, p. 6.
[149] Secretariat Review of the Strategic Parameters of the Draft Partnership Compact, p. 6.
[150] Federal Government of Somalia (federal level), Call for EOIs for Grant Agent(s) to manage the GPE Grant(s).
[151] Board of Directors, BOD/AV/2023/06 DOC 02, June 15, 2023.

GEA and SCG to Care, both organizations relied on in-country and international staff focused on gender to support program development. While the double GA model created more work for the Secretariat in terms of document review and oversight, it ultimately benefited the country's progress towards its priority reform according to several consulted stakeholders.[152]

The QAR process supported stronger gender hardwiring, particularly for the STG, and supported coherence between the GEA and STG programs. In the QAR 1 process, the STG was flagged for additional guidance from the Secretariat due to weak gender hardwiring and a lack of gender evidence or consideration of safeguarding or conflict-sensitive risk assessment. QAR 1 feedback on the GEA related to harmonization with STG and suggested to further exploration of bottlenecks and solutions related to recruitment and retention of female teachers as raised in the Compact. The QAR process ultimately led to better use of evidence, hardwiring, and coherence between the two programs. GAs also felt that some of the gender-responsive approaches requested by GPE, such as disaggregation of data by gender and disability, were already part of their ways of working, and supported their ability to meet GPE requirements.[153]

In its final version, the GEA and STG programs broadly reflected the Compact's Theory of Change and key objectives. The GEA program aligned with the Compact and its broader focus on disability and social inclusion, improving access and retention, expanding infrastructure, and gender-responsive teaching, including through hiring and supporting more female teachers. For example, the GEA targeted 900 children, including 40% boys, living with severe disabilities. The final STG program also aligned with the Compact and ESSP, with hardwiring across the 3 outcomes and use of evidence and gender-disaggregated data. STG activities included improving education infrastructure, capitation grants reaching girls and other marginalized children, and community awareness raising including the engagement of men and boys, increasing the recruitment, training, and deployment of female teachers, and revision of teachers' training materials to include gender equality content.

> **"It was nice how the GEA lifted the overall technical engagement by investing in the targeted products, which could then be transferred over to the STG to be mainstreamed at a systems level. I think it was a really interesting story to see not only the technical engagement with this brilliant cross fertilization, but how the two Grant Agents complemented each other by the time they got to the QAR3 stage."** – Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia (federal level)

Overall, the GEA complemented the gender hardwiring of STG activities. For instance, the GEA developed many of the gender-responsive teacher training tools and products that were then used in the STG to run trainings with educators. GEA and STG also coordinated training in-service teachers and Regional and District Education Officers as well as Quality Assurance Officers and FMS MoE gender and inclusion focal points. The STG also planned to adopt the guidelines for gender and inclusion monitoring in school supervision processes developed by the GEA.

In Somalia (federal level), the GEA program included several strong indicators to measure improved gender equality. For one, the framework measured reading at grade 3 disaggregated by sex and disability status. Furthermore, to measure the impact of gender-responsive teacher trainings and

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[152] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[153] Ibid.

materials, the framework included an output indicator on the percentage of teachers using gender responsive and inclusive approaches in class. As a baseline, the results framework used an indicator measuring the percentage of female students that perceived that teachers treat boys and girls differently in class.[154]

While the EFA and Compact generally aligned with the final program, challenges affecting boys' access and completion and safeguarding were less addressed despite QAR feedback. Boys are reached through capitation grants in the STG; however, the proposed program activities did not address root causes impacting boys (forced recruitment, child labor, transition from Quranic schools), and risks related to violence were less substantially addressed in the STG than in the GEA.[155]

A comparison of the GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 models reveals more robust gender hardwiring in the final program design in the latter. For example, in the ESPIG grant, gender was not systematically integrated or hardwired. Only Components 1 and 2 included some gender focus related to access and WASH, whereas Components 3 and 4 did not specify any relation to gender equality, even though certain activities could be understood to benefit female students. This is similar for other activities like teacher training and textbook development. Only two program indicators mentioned gender: number of gender segregated WASH facilities and number of grade 8 students (disaggregated) who registered and sat leaving exams. The QAR deemed this level of gender equity appropriate and sufficient. In comparison, GPE 2025 requirements call for transversality across all components, a focus on social norms and system transformation, and tackling root causes of gender inequality in education, including systems approaches to addressing violence. Awareness of violence as a barrier to education and engagement with safeguarding and protection efforts engages more deeply with root causes of gender inequality than 'access' issues dealt with under previous GPE models.

> **"When you [GPE] make an intentional shift, when you make it very clear that this is a priority, we will change our ways and approaches. We will go the extra mile. You can really see the difference gender hardwiring makes in standard routine activities like teacher recruitment. So yes, so I think it's made a real difference when [gender] is a requirement and we're all very intentional about it."** – Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia (federal level)

Emergent evidence also shows that the gender hardwiring approach has made an initial impact on recruiting female teachers. Concerted efforts in the 2024 teacher recruitment drive led to over 30% of new teachers recruited being female, as opposed to only 8% in the previous year. However, stakeholders cautioned that continued monitoring of retention are required to gauge lasting change.

Entry Point 4: Mutual accountability for gender through national stakeholders
Partners generally fulfilled their obligations with regards to mutual accountability including for gender. In one promising example, the GEA monitoring framework included an indicator to track annual gender and inclusion reviews to strengthen gender within annual JRES.[156] Also, Somalia (federal level) included gender equality-related continued professional development at the decentralized level within the program design, which has promising implications. There, the GEA supported District Education Officers and State Gender and Inclusion Focal Points to carry out several gender-related program functions including monitoring, designing, and carrying out girls' education awareness raising

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[154] GEA Program Document, p. 90-91.
[155] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024..
[156] GEA Program Document, p. 90-91.

campaigns, and conducting school-based coaching on gender and inclusion. To support this, the GEA will roll out a training package for Gender and Inclusion focal points on gender-responsive and inclusive teaching practices and safeguarding.[157]

However certain aspects of ESC structure and government transparency hindered accountability processes. Some of these challenges included:

- **MoECHE does not publish data and reporting to support mutual accountability on gender.** JRES reports for the last year were not published and annual statistical yearbooks have not been made publicly available which hamper ability of ESC members to hold partners to account on gender and impedes sector coordination.[158]
- **While gender-equality organizations were brought into ESC and the country task team, many did not speak up in a critical or active way according to some stakeholders.**[159] This related to the general structure of the ESC, which was perceived as an information-sharing and rubber-stamping platform by some, as well as the strong role of government in the ESC platform. Sometimes, national CSOs with gender expertise were also excluded from key processes; for example, no CSO representative was included on the GA selection panel.[160]
- **GPE Secretariat and country-level actors' ability to hold the partners including the government accountable is constrained by the severe security restrictions.** GPE has not been able to regularly visit the country and cannot meet with local or national civil society in-person. Country-level actors also have challenges to verify district-level reporting.
- Some stakeholders voiced concerns about long-term government buy-in and accountability at the decentralized levels such as the **institutionalization and funding of gender and inclusion positions**.[161] While the GEA and STG also committed funding to building decentralized gender capacity at the state level, persistent gaps still existed.

Somalia (federal level) also has a decentralized ESC at the state level which may have had some role in mutual accountability for gender commitments. The decentralized ESC in the federal member states had reportedly played a role in holding the government accountable for their commitment to not only recruit but to train and deploy female teachers and demanding more evidence on progress.[162]

> **"There is a push for investing heavily in policy in systems and a bit less of a push about decentralized capacity. And education systems often have better policies than they have decentralized capacity, particularly in the lowest performing areas of countries [...] This has a lot to do with gender because gender capacity tends to be among the weakest when you look at underserved areas, particularly those that are severely either conflict- or disaster-affected. If we are looking at the future, think about how much of the funding actually supports decentralized capacity, where it's needed the most to *implement* policy."** – Consulted Stakeholder, Somalia (federal level)

Coordination on gender and girls' education also required strengthening. One ESC member found that GPE's requirements to ensure sector coordination were largely done at the central levels as opposed to local levels including in relation to girls' education. Greater requirements for district level mapping of girls' education programs could support this.

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[157] Somalia federal level GEA Program Document, p. 42.
[158] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Interview, December 16, 2024; GPE Checklist: Grant Agent Selection Process, p. 1.
[161] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[162] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

The System Capacity Grant was used to strengthen gender equality within the GPE processes and programs, further enhanced by engaging CARE as both the SCG and GEA grant agent. The SCG was leveraged to support gender and inclusion through supporting a gender and social-inclusion focused compact, strengthening gender-disaggregated data and enhancing its use for planning and school-level support, and conducting a first national Gender Analysis in Education.[163] The gender analysis was completed in 2024 and was utilized in the first stages of the GEA and STG to conduct a needs assessment ahead of the teacher training.[164]

Due to the late start of the programs in mid-2024, it is difficult to assess differences in mutual accountability for results between the GPE 2025 and GPE 2020 operating models. However, some ESC members expected that given the GEA focus, and the large funding dedicated to girls' education, gender would play a bigger role, with one member saying that "next time we have the annual Joint Review of Education, I'm sure issues around gender will sort of take center stage."[165]

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[163] SCG Application Form.
[164] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.
[165] Stakeholder Consultation, December 2024.

ANNEX 5: METHODOLOGY

The aim of this Rapid Review is to provide an independent perspective on the initial stages of the GPE 2025 strategy to hardwire gender equality, as well as the Girls' Education Accelerator (GEA) for eligible countries. The review will focus on how gender equality has been addressed through hardwiring and the GEA in policy dialogue, compact, and grant development and will provide insights to develop future strategy and operational guidance.

The review will be guided by the following question:

> To what extent has the GPE2025 gender hardwiring operating model helped to develop stronger country-level commitments to gender equality in access to, within, and through education?

The review team will organize the review sub-questions found in Table 1: Review Matrix below around the four country Entry Points for mainstreaming gender equality in access to, within, and through education identified by GPE, which comprises the GPE2025 gender hardwiring operating model. These Entry Points for mainstreaming gender equality in access to, within, and through education also serve as the review's analytical framework:

1) gender analysis and evidence-based diagnostics
2) gender within system level change policy dialogue
3) gender lens in grant development process, and
4) mutual accountability for gender through national level stakeholders.

For each sub-question, Annex 1 also includes 1) potential strategies for answering the question; 2) key documents to review to answer the question; 3) potential information gaps to be filled by interviews (for deep dive countries only); 4) whom to interview, as relevant; and 5) illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring. Illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring is tagged with one or more of GPE's 8 Guiding Principles for Operationalizing Gender Equality as a basis for defining "quality".

For each research sub- question, the review team will:

- Explore the 'how and how well', 'why or why not', and 'so what' aspects to understand the root causes and relative importance of the evidence, to the extent data allows.
- Examine the consequences of not-so-successful aspects of hardwiring gender equality, and the GEA as relevant, and what could be concretely improved.
- Provide the findings for the review as a whole as well as illustrative examples ('vignettes,' 'boxes' etc.) to provide a contextualized compare/contrast approach. An example is a table contrasting language from GEA and non-GEA compacts/programs to highlight any differences in approaches, types of language, and/or other evidence that indicates that the inclusion of the GEA contributes to better hardwiring of gender into compact/program design in comparison to non-GEA compacts/programs.

Country Selection

The review team, in close consultation with the GPE Secretariat, selected eight countries for in-depth documentary review. Three of the eight will undergo a "deep dive" analysis that will include answering additional review questions and primary data collection through key informant interviews and focus group discussions. To ensure a representative sample of GPE Partners, the proposed selection criteria include the following:

- Regional representation

- Context representation: Low or middle-income, crisis context
- Grant type representation
- Grant amount representation
- Grant/QAR 3 Board approved prior to start of review

Final selection of countries: Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Nicaragua, Pakistan (Sindh), Senegal, Somalia (federal level), Zimbabwe

Deep dive countries: Somalia (federal level), Chad, and Pakistan (Sindh)

Desk Review

The documentary analysis will include two categories:

- Public and internal GPE Secretariat documents
- Country-specific Documents

The following are key documents to review by category: For each category, different types of documents will be consulted, including the following:

Public and internal GPE Secretariat Documents	Country Specific Documents (8 countries) (<mark>in yellow</mark> = additional documents for deep dive countries only)
- GPE Strategy and Policy Documents (GPE 2025, Gender Policy Paper) - Evaluation Reports (TCLE synthesis' gender chapter) - Application Guidance (STG guidelines, MLT guidelines) - QAR Tools	- Enabling Factors Analysis - ITAP report - Partnership Compact - QAR Forms + Checklist + Gender Hub Tools (completed) - Grant Application Documents - Application Form -Program Document -Budget -Monitoring and Evaluation Framework -Donor support mapping if annexed (or to be requested via Coordinating Agency) <mark>Reporting documents (e.g., progress reports, as available)</mark> <mark>LEG Minutes (for timeframe of GPE 2025 processes)</mark> <mark>Sector plan and/or related gender strategy (current and previous, if available)</mark> <mark>Other non-GPE country-level documents that can help understand a country's approach to gender in the education sector</mark> <mark>Previous ESPIG application and program document, if required information is unavailable from other sources.</mark>

The review team will review each document against the analytical framework, which comprises the four gender hardwiring Entry Points. The team will identify key words and themes related to the four Entry Points

that will be searched across the documents to explore the inclusion of gender throughout the compact development, grant-making process, and program/reform implementation in the selected countries.

For the GPE Secretariat public and internal documents, the review team will conduct a rapid review to establish background and context needed for the review team to draw conclusions about the success of the gender hardwiring approach in increasing gender integration in the overall compact, grant development, program implementation, and sector reform in the selected countries. It will also provide the review team with information about the consistency in messaging related to the four Entry Points and guiding principles across GPE Secretariat documents. The review team will prioritize review of GPE Secretariat tools, templates and guidance developed for use by countries to support analysis of national partners' use of the GPE Secretariat products.

For the country-specific documents, the review team will conduct a more in-depth analysis of content to identify answers to the key review questions organized largely by the four Entry Points. In each country, the analysis will also explore interconnections across the four Entry Points. For instance, the review will consider if and how gender is prioritized within the enabling factors analysis and how this evolves during the compact and eventual grant program document, including top-up and variable portions, and implementation, as described in documents that include the Quality Assurance Reviews and Mid-Term Reviews (as available). Comparisons between these processes in countries with and without a GEA grant will also take place to better understand and draw conclusions about whether the existence of the GEA modified the discussion around gender equality and ultimately influenced the level of engagement of actors, ownership, and/or commitment on hardwiring gender equality.

While systematic comparisons between GPE 2020 and GPE 20205's approach to gender equality hardwiring will not be undertaken, the review report will briefly mention what have been major gender approach shifts from GPE 2020 to GPE 2025 in the three deep-dive countries. In addition, the review report will examine, through the three deep-dive countries only, differences in approaches to gender-focused dialogue and in specific country contexts (entry point 1 question 2; entry point 3 questions 1, 2, and 3).

Interviews
Following the document review, the team will conduct interviews with relevant key informants from the selected countries–Somalia (federal level), Chad, and Pakistan (Sindh)–for a more in-depth analysis of gender hardwiring across the four Entry Points. To obtain a diverse range of perspectives, the review team proposes individuals and/or small focus groups discussions with the following GPE partners and actors:

- Focus group discussion (FGD) with relevant Ministry of Education staff (including the GPE focal point), including as available the gender advisor or point of contact (2-3 people)
- FGD with Grant Agent staff assigned to the GPE grant
- FGD with relevant LEG members, including Coordinating Agency. To include those involved in the compact development previously if already left LEG and those currently involved, including gender specialists from standalone gender-related Ministries whether they sit on the LEG or not)
- FGD with GPE Secretariat Country Lead, GPE Secretariat gender focal point, education specialist, and grant operations specialist

Interviews and FGDs will provide complementary information on decision making during all stages of compact and program development, including QAR. In addition, they will shed light on barriers and opportunities for mutual accountability with multi-sector stakeholders across the program development process.

The team will follow ethical data collection practices, adhering to the principles of informed consent and confidentiality. The review team will develop adapted interview/FGD questionnaires for each partner type

and country, depending on the information gaps identified during the desk review. The review team will take detailed notes during the calls and analyze the content against the four Entry Points and related review questions. In addition to integrating these findings into the review report, an anonymized database of quotes will be shared with GPE.

Table 1: Review Matrix					
Entry Point 1: Strengthening Gender Analysis and Evidence-Based Diagnosis					
Key questions:	**Potential strategies for answering key questions:**	**Key documents to answer the questions:**	**Potential information gaps to be filled by interviews:**	**Whom to interview, as relevant:**	**Illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring:**
To what extent are gender-related barriers identified in the enabling factors analysis across all factors (gender-responsive data and evidence, volume, equity and efficiency of domestic finance, gender-responsive sector planning and sector coordination) and in the compact? What are these barriers?	Document review for 8 countries; 3 deep-dive country case studies	Partnership compact; EFA; ITAP report	Answered with desk review, unless some information is missing in documents	N/A	Evidence of availability and use of up-to-date evidence on the status of gender equality in the compact *(Guiding Principle 2: Gender Analysis and Evidence)*
How is this different from what was happening in the country before (under GPE 2020)? If not, why? [Question only to be answered through deep dive]	Document review for 3 deep-dive country case studies, including review of pre-GPE 2025 education sector strategy Interviews	Partnership compact, Enabling factors assessment; Education sector plan Gender strategy prior / after to GPE 2025	Build on desk review and probe accordingly to dig deeper during the interviews, particularly on the "If not, why?" aspect	**Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG **Secretariat level:** GPE gender focal point, and country team lead	Evidence of data-focused discussions on barriers to gender beyond parity in access by country stakeholders as part of the compact development process; Drivers for these data-focused discussions beyond parity in access *(Guiding Principle 2: Gender analysis and evidence; Guiding principle 3: Intersectionality)*
Were the barriers identified addressed through GPE grants? If yes, how?	Document review for 8 countries 3 deep-dive	GPE grant application documents; QAR	Build on desk review and probe accordingly to dig deeper	**Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent,	Extent to which gender strategies presented in the compact and grant document directly respond to the evidence

| If the barriers identified were not addressed by GPE grants, is there any indication they are being supported by financing from the government or other partners? [Only to be answered through deep dive] | country case studies if relevant to subquestion 2. | checklists & reports | during the interviews, particularly on the "If not, how?" aspect | Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG

Secretariat level: GPE gender focal point, and country team lead | presented in the enabling factors analysis.

(Guiding Principle 2: Gender analysis and evidence) |

| **Entry Point 2: Strengthening Gender within System Policy Dialogue** |

Key questions:	**Potential strategies for answering key questions:**	**Key documents to answer the questions:**	**Potential information gaps to be filled by interviews:**	**Whom to interview, as relevant:**	**Illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring:**
Did the process to develop the compact involve country-level (or regional) stakeholders focused on gender equality? (for both STG, MLT, and GEA where applicable)

(MLT: 3 deep dives + desk review for all MLT countries in sample)

(for deep dives – also look at how it was different under GPE 2020 (ESPIGs)) | Desk review to pull out any references to stakeholders that were included in the compact development processes | Minutes of LEG meetings that relate to the partnership compact development process; EFA; QAR documents Interviews (in deep dive countries) | List of organizations engaged, and the degree to which they were involved in the program discussion may not be fully reflected in LEG, QAR and program documents. Interviews can help the team elucidate the role of these organizations. | **Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG

Secretariat level: GPE gender focal point, and country team lead

For 3 deep-dive countries: Include Task Team members as these in many cases were separate from the LEG | Evidence of how stakeholder groups (esp. CSO/TA, gender line ministries, etc.) involved in compact development contributed to a focus on gender equality

(Guiding Principle 6: Inclusive Processes; Guiding Principle 8: Accountability) |

How did the existence of the GEA modify the Compact development?	Analysis of grant program documents, especially the required justification for how the GEA investment will make a system change not otherwise possible (e.g., table showing all other sector investments). Deep-dive studies: comparative review of GEA recipient/GEA eligible countries with similar characteristics. GEA-eligible countries to be included in the portfolio as well as interview sample;	GEA / grant application; Progress reports, as available	Processes and discussions during the compact development, reasons why GEA may have modified outcomes	**Country level:** Grant agent **Secretariat:** Gender focal point and Country team, especially to provide insights on the "before" aspect **For 3 deep dive countries:** Include Task Team members	Evidence of increased/ improved focus on gender and girls' education in GEA-recipient countries during compact and grant development; and during compact and grant implementation (gender dialogue, gender-focused planning and monitoring) (Guiding Principle 4: Capacity; Guiding Principle 5: System Solutions to Gender Equality)
To what extent had these actors been engaged in education discussions before this process? [Question only to be answered through deep dive]	N/A	N/A	Some engagement might only be documented via commenting of documents - beyond just LEG or task team membership - or via email. Country team or CA may be asked to provide internal documentation from email exchanges.	**Country level: Grant agent** **Secretariat:** Gender focal point and Country team, especially to provide insights on the "before" aspect **For 3 deep dive countries:** Include Task Team members as these in many cases were	Stakeholder groups (esp. CSO/TA, gender line ministries, etc.) involved in compact development who (a) were or (b) were not previously involved in gender-related planning decisions; (b) stakeholders who were previously involved in gender-related planning decisions but were not involved in compact/grant development; Perceived degree of quality, intensity, and usefulness of this involvement by different parties involved, contrasting

				separate from the LEG	previous/compact-grant development processes (Guiding Principle 6: Inclusive Processes)

Entry Point 3: Integrating a Gender and Inclusion Lens in Grant Development Processes					
Key questions:	**Potential strategies for answering key questions:**	**Key documents to answer the questions:**	**Potential information gaps to be filled by interviews:**	**Whom to interview, as relevant:**	**Illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring:**
Did the process to develop and review the GPE-financed grants involve country-level (or regional) stakeholders focused on gender equality? (for both STG, MLT, and GEA where applicable) (MLT: 3 deep dives + desk review for all MLT countries in sample) (for deep dives – also look at how it was different under GPE 2020 (ESPIGs))	Desk review to pull out any references to stakeholders that were included in the compact and the grant development processes Interviews for deep dive countries only	Minutes of LEG meetings that relate to the Partnership Compact development process; EFA; QAR documents	List of organizations engaged, and the degree to which they were involved in the program discussion may not be fully reflected in LEG, QAR and program documents. Interviews can help the team elucidate the role of these organizations.	**Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG **Secretariat level:** GPE gender focal point, and country team lead **For 3 deep-dive countries:** Include Task Team members as these in many cases were separate from the LEG	Evidence of how stakeholder groups (esp. CSO/TA, gender line ministries, etc.) involved in compact development contributed to a focus on gender equality (Guiding Principle 6: Inclusive Processes; Guiding Principle 8: Accountability)

How did the existence of the GEA modify the discussion around gender equality during grant development / implementation and the level of engagement of actors focused on gender? (for countries eligible to the GEA) (for both STG and MLT, and GEA where applicable) (MLT: 3 deep dives + desk review for all MLT countries in sample) (for deep dives – also look at how it was different under GPE 2020 (ESPIGs))	Grant program documents especially required justification for how the GEA investment will make a system change not otherwise possible (e.g., table showing other sector investments). Deep-dive countries: comparative review of GEA recipient/GEA eligible countries with similar characteristics; Interviews	GEA / Grant Application; Progress reports if available	The level of engagement and focus of discussions around gender may not be fully reflected in program documents or LEG minutes. Interviews can help the team elucidate the nature of discussions and level of engagement of organizations.	**Country Level:** Grant agent, CA **Secretariat team:** Country team	Evidence of increased/ improved focus on gender and girls' education in GEA-recipient countries during compact and grant development; and during compact and grant implementation (gender dialogue, gender-focused planning and monitoring) (Guiding Principle 4: Capacity; Guiding Principle 5: System Solutions to Gender Equality; Principle 7: Do No Harm)
Has the focus on gender through enabling factors analysis, compact development, quality assurance feedback led to better use of evidence on and better integration of gender equality in the grant design? How? (for both STG and MLT, and GEA where applicable) To what extent was Secretariat feedback followed through and did this have impact on the grant design? (MLT: 3 deep dives + desk review for all MLT countries in sample)	Linkages and comparisons between Entry Point Question 1 on EFA and Compact, to what extent evidence is used in the grant documents to suggest strategies to overcome gender-related barriers. The question will focus on what is in the GPE grants and how the QAR process has helped/can be improved	Grant document; QAR checklists & reports	Interviews can establish whether the improved use of evidence on gender equality was related to the heightened focus on gender in EFA/compact process/QAR process	**Country Level:** Grant agent **Secretariat team:** Gender focal point and Country team	Evidence that the findings from the EFA have been used in the grant documents to suggest strategies to overcome gender-related barriers. (Guiding Principle 2: Gender analysis and evidence; Guiding Principle 3: Intersectionality)

(for deep dives – also look at how it was different under GPE 2020 (ESPIGs))					
Entry Point 4: Promoting Mutual Accountability for Gender through National Stakeholders					
Key questions:	**Potential strategies for answering key questions:**	**Key documents to answer the questions:**	**Potential information gaps to be filled by interviews:**	**Whom to interview, as relevant:**	**Illustrative evidence of quality gender hardwiring:**
How are other stakeholders in the country (CSOs, Gov., Development partners, etc..) engaged in supporting the country's priority reform vis-à-vis gender equality? What can be improved and how can GPE assets/levers support this (through SCG, EOL, KIX, etc.)? (SCG, EOL and KIX only in deep dives)	Desk review; Interviews in 3 deep-dive countries	Compact document; donor support mapping if annexed in compact (or to be requested via CA)	Information on other stakeholders may only be made available through interviews or through CA sharing internal emails or other information	**Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG	Evidence that other compact stakeholders have committed to advancing gender equality through the compact in terms of their strategies, programming, and funding; Evidence that there are no "orphaned" (i.e., non-supported) gender equality areas in the compact (Guiding Principle 8: Accountability)
What has been the role of these gender-equality focused stakeholders after the compact and grant development process? [Question only to be answered through deep dive]	Desk review; Interviews in 3 deep-dive countries	LEG minutes	Detailed accounts of stakeholders' roles may not yet be formally reported	**Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG	Evidence that these stakeholders are fulfilling their gender commitments after compact and grant development; Evidence that their role is perceived by these stakeholders as substantive and impactful (Guiding Principle 6: Inclusive Processes; Guiding Principle 8: Accountability)

| To what extent are all partners (local education groups, coordinating agencies, civil society, governments, GPE Secretariat, GPE Board, grant agents and development partners) fulfilling their specific role related to mutual accountability? [Question only to be answered through deep dive] | Interviews in 3 deep-dive countries | N/A | The roles and expectations for each group may not be clearly outlined in any public document

Detailed accounts of partners' fulfilment of roles related to mutual accountability may not yet be formally reported | **Country level:** Coordinating Agency, Grant Agent, Ministry focal point, key development partners in LEG

Secretariat level: GPE gender focal point, and country team lead | Evidence that partners are fulfilling their gender commitments related to mutual accountability per specific roles/responsibilities outlined by partner in Section 3.3 of the Going Further Together paper; Perceived degree of quality of involvement of partners related to their roles

(Guiding Principle 1: Leadership; Guiding Principle 8: Accountability) |

ANNEX 6: ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVIEW AND FGD QUESTIONNAIRES BY STAKEHOLDER TYPE

<u>Illustrative Questions for Grant Agent:</u>

Program Development
- As grant agent, do you think you were specifically assessed on gender criteria during the selection process? How so? (EP3)
- Were there any changes in gender priorities during the process (e.g., from compact to concept note to final program)? If yes, why? Did the existence of the GEA modify the discussion around gender equality during grant development? (EP2-3)
    o At the grant development stage, were you aware that funding might not be available for the GEA? If yes, how did this impact the design? If not, would that knowledge have impacted the design in any way differently?
- Were there any tensions between the grant agent and LEG or other partners related to gender during the program development? As the grant agent, how did you engage other stakeholders in the grant development process?
- Did you experience challenges with translating evidence on gender (i.e., from the EFA and Compact into grant design at each stage (concept note/program outline to final program document)? If yes, what, and why? If not, what facilitated that?
- Are there any gender-related aspects of the program that you think were underfunded? Or orphaned? Why? Are other donors contributing to those gaps? Which ones?
- What is the status of development of the application for the SCG?

GPE's feedback/ QAR process:
- How did you find GPE's involvement during PD? What tools and resources from GPE were most helpful in developing the grant application with regards to gender? What tools and resources did you find missing?
- In your opinion, are there any needed changes to the GPE 2025 quality assurance/feedback process to encourage better gender hardwiring by country teams/grant agents at each stage of the process? If yes, what?
- Are there other areas to improve in the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach with an eye towards its contribution to achieving not only greater commitments but concrete action to achieve greater gender hardwiring across all stages of the process (EFA; compact; grant development; implementation/mutual accountability) and ultimately to achieve gender equality in access to, within, and through education? If yes, what?

Mutual accountability
- The new program financed by the STG grant under GPE 2025 is slated to begin in _____. Based on your knowledge of all stakeholders involved, have roles/responsibilities been devised/discussed in regard to mutual accountability for all aspects of the education reform, but include related to gender equality/gender hardwiring?
- How well do you think partners will fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities to hold each other accountable for achieving shared goals and objectives on gender equality?
- Any concerns (e.g., any capacity gaps in realizing the GEA or other gender-related subcomponents, etc.)? (EP4)

Comparison with GPE 2020
To what extent is there stronger integration of gender through the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model for the current STG grant process at all stages (EFA/compact/grant development) in comparison with the GPE 2020 model for the ESPIG grant?

Illustrative Questions for Secretariat

Programme Development/QAR
- To what extent did the GEA modify the compact and grant development, respectively? (EP2/EP3)
- Did the Country Task Team for _ _ _ _ _ experience challenges with translating evidence on gender (i.e., from the EFA) into the compact and then in turn into grant design at each stage (concept note/program outline to final program document)? If yes, what, and why? If not, what facilitated that?
- To what extent was Secretariat feedback on gender followed through at each stage of the GPE 2025 model process (EFA, compact, grant development) for both GEA and STG by both GA? How did this have an impact on the final EFA, compact, and grant design? How does this compare to the GPE 2020 model?
  - Was any lack of follow through due to resistance by stakeholders? Lack of gender expertise?
- In your opinion, are there any needed changes to the GPE 2025 quality assurance/feedback process to encourage better gender hardwiring by country teams/grant agents at each stage of the process. If yes, what?
     Probe for any potential disadvantages to the gender hardwiring strategy
     Probe for any consistent areas of weakness related to gender that come up in PD, Compact, EFA that you think could be remedied with better guidance or engagement from the Secretariat; etc.
     Probe for how well the gender hardwiring approach takes an intersectional lens
- What are other donors/partners supporting in relationship to gender-related barriers identified in EFA?

Mutual Accountability
- To what extent were country-level and/or regional gender equality-focused stakeholders involved in related education policy and planning dialogue at different stages of the GPE 2025 process?
- Did the Secretariat country team play any role in advising on KIX/EOL investments? If yes, what role?
- Based on your knowledge of all stakeholders involved, how well do you think partners will fulfill their specific role related to mutual accountability on gender hardwiring? Any concerns so far?
- To what extent were these country-level/regional gender-equality focused or organizations involved before (e.g., with the GPE 2020 (ESPIG project) process)?
- Did the country-level GPE Secretariat engagement enable broader conversations on gender equality during these education planning/policy dialogues at each stage of the process for the GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 models of gender integration, respectively? How so?

Comparison with GPE 2020
- To what extent is there stronger integration of gender through the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model for the current grants process at all stages (EFA/compact/grant development) in comparison with the GPE 2020 model for the ESPIG? How?
  Broadly, probe for differences between GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 gender integration models at each stage of the process from Education Sector Analysis/EFA to Education Sector Plan/compact to grant design/development; implementation.

Illustrative Questions for LEG

Program Development
*Explain that understanding is that each organization provided gender expertise to the GPE 2025.
- To what extent were other country-level and/or regional gender equality-focused stakeholders (e.g., SELD gender unit; CSOs with gender equality focus) involved in related education policy and planning dialogue at different stages of the GPE 2025 process (EFA, Compact, grant development and review) for Pakistan (Sindh)?
- To what extent were you and other country-level/regional gender-equality focused organizations involved before (e.g., with the GPE 2020)
- Were there any challenges in establishing a consensus among stakeholders about gender within the EFA, compact, and eventually grant development? If yes, why, and how was this overcome?

- To what extent did LEG members share the same priorities related to gender equality as other partners (e.g., GA, SELD/government) through the GPE 2025 partnership development process from EFA to Compact to grant development?
- Did you feel that LEG - and particularly members contributing gender expertise - were given sufficient opportunity to review and contribute to the program development process? Why?
- Did the Country Task Team experience challenges with translating evidence on gender (i.e., from the EFA) into the compact and then in turn into grant design at each stage (concept note/program outline to final program document)? If yes, what, and why? If not, what facilitated that?
- To what extent did the GEA modify the compact and grant development, respectively?
  - *Probe for any tension/incoherence/incompatibility between requirements for Girls' Education Accelerator and the gender hardwiring approach.*
  - *Probe for ways that the GEA requirements may have facilitated gender hardwiring.*
- Do you feel any of the gender-related barriers and commitments to gender equality in access, within, and through education found in the compact are not being addressed with the STG grant or the future SCG and/or potential GEA grant? Is yes, what? Are other donors/partners supporting these gender-related aspects needed for achieving the priority reform not covered by GPE grants? Which donors?

QAR/Gender Hardwiring

- In your opinion, are there any needed changes to the GPE 2025 quality assurance/feedback process to encourage better gender hardwiring by country teams/grant agents at each stage of the process. If yes, what? Was there sufficient gender-related guidance and support from the GPE secretariat during the compact development and grant development processes, respectively? If not, how could the Secretariat better support gender integration?
- In your opinion, are there other areas to improve in the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring approach with an eye towards its contribution to achieving not only greater commitments but concrete action to achieve greater gender hardwiring across all stages of the process (EFA; compact; grant development; implementation/mutual accountability) and ultimately to achieve gender equality in access to, within, and through education? If yes, what?
- Did the country-level GPE Secretariat enable broader conversations on gender equality during these education planning/policy dialogues at each stage of the process for the GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 models of gender integration, respectively? How so?

Mutual Accountability

The new program financed by the STG grant under GPE 2025 is slated to begin in April 2025. Based on your knowledge of all stakeholders involved:
- How well do you think partners will fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities to hold each other accountable for achieving shared goals and objectives on gender equality?
- Any concerns (e.g., any capacity gaps in realizing the GEA or other gender-related subcomponents, etc.)?

GPE 2020 Comparison
- My understanding is that all of your organizations participated in both the GPE 2020 partnership process that led to the development of _____. To what extent is there stronger integration of gender through the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model for the current STG grant process at all stages (EFA/compact/grant development) in comparison with the GPE 2020 model for the ESPIG grant? How?

  Probe for differences between GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 gender integration models at each stage of the process from Education Sector Analysis/EFA to Education Sector Plan/compact to grant design/development; implementation.
  Specifically, probe to what extent has GPE 2025's specific focus on gender through quality assurance feedback where applicable)?

Government/Ministry of Education

Program Development
- Did the Country Task Team experience challenges with translating evidence on gender (i.e., from the EFA) into the compact and then in turn into grant design at each stage (concept note/program outline to final program document)? If yes, what, and why? If not, what facilitated that?
- To what extent did the government have ownership on how gender was integrated throughout the GPE partnership process (EFA, compact, grant development)? To what extent were MoE gender equality priorities represented in the final program document of the grant? Were there any priorities that were not shared?
- How did MoE bring gender expertise to the GPE partnership process? How was the government's gender expertise funded? Did they collaborate with any other line ministries working on Gender?
- How did MoE assess gender expertise of grant agents?
- Do you think the barriers identified in EFA were later addressed through GPE grants? If yes, how? If the barriers identified were not addressed by GPE grants, is there any indication they are being supported by financing from the government or other partners? What are other donors/partners supporting in relationship to gender-related barriers identified in the EFA?

QAR/Hardwiring

- To what extent was MoE involved in drafting the program and going through GPE feedback? In your opinion, are there any needed changes to the GPE 2025 quality assurance/feedback process to encourage better gender hardwiring by country teams/grant agents at each stage of the process. If yes, what?
- In your opinion, are there other areas to improve in the GPE 2025 model based on your experience working to achieve greater gender hardwiring across all stages of the process (EFA; compact; grant development; implementation/mutual accountability)? If yes, what?
- Did the country-level GPE Secretariat enable broader conversations on gender equality during these education planning/policy dialogues at each stage of the process for the GPE 2020 and GPE 2025 models of gender integration, respectively? How so? (Cross-cutting)

Mutual Accountability
- The new program financed by the STG/GEA grants under GPE 2025 began in April 2025. Based on your knowledge of all stakeholders involved, how well do you think partners will fulfill their specific role related to mutual accountability on gender hardwiring? Any concerns?

QAR/Gender hardwiring
- To what extent was Secretariat feedback on gender followed through at each stage of the GPE 2025 model process (EFA, compact, grant development)? Were there any challenges with incorporating GPE feedback related to gender? If yes, what were they and how did you overcome this? How did this have an impact on the final EFA, compact, and grant design? How does this compare to the GPE 2020 model?

GPE 2020 comparison
- To what extent is there stronger integration of gender through the GPE 2025 gender hardwiring model for the current STG grant process at all stages (EFA/compact/grant development) in comparison with the GPE 2020 model for the ESPIG grant?

ANNEX 7: KEY INFORMANTS

Key Informant	Organization	Title
Chad		
Blandine Ledoux	GPE	Country Engagement Lead
Charlotte Lebas	GPE	Education Specialist
Souad Hamlaoui	GPE	Senior Operations Assistant
Marina Mancinelli	GPE	Gender Focal Point
Beridabaye Ndilkodje	AFD (CA)	Education Specialist
Josue Djekernom	UNESCO	Education Program Administrator
Remy Habou	UNESCO	Education and Literacy Specialist
Francis Ndem	UNICEF	Chief of Education (former)
Ibrahim Diallo	UNICEF	Chief of Education (current)
Hissein Djaba	UNICEF	Education Specialist
Youssouf Ahmat	MENPC	GPE Coordinator
Fatime Gattibé	MENPC	Gender Focal Point/ Director of Gender Unit
Pakistan (Sindh)		
Hoa Tran Ringrose	GPE	Country Engagement Lead/Gender Focal Point
Junaid Samo	SELD	Chief Program Manager, Reform Support Unit
Maruam Asad	SELD	Education Consultant (Compact Development)
Nasreen Gul	SELD	Gender Consultant (Compact Development)
Abeer Maqbool	UNICEF-Sindh	Education Manager
Asif Abrar	UNICEF	
Noreen Hasan	UNICEF	Education Specialist
Baela Jamil	Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)	Chief Executive Officer
Atta Muhammad Soomro	Program Manager	Right-to-Play
Akiko Hanaya	Senior Education Advisor	JICA
Somalia, federal level		
Morten Sigsgaard	GPE	Country Engagement Lead
Rachel Booth	GPE	Gender Focal Point
Ciara Rivera	GPE	Education Specialist
Faiza Hassan	Save the Children	Chief of Party
Claire Taylor	Save the Children	Program Development Quality Director
Deborah Garcia	Save the Children	Lead Advisor, Education Programs
Abdirizak Ibrahim	MoECHE	GPE M&E Advisor
Sumaya Mohamed	MoECHE	Senior Gender Advisor/GEA Gender Focal Point
Goli Whittaker	FCDO	Education Donor Group lead
Mohamed Sabul	EU	ESC Coordinator/ Education PM for EU Delegation to Somalia
Adam Mohamed	Somali Coalition for Education (EFASOM)	National Coordinator (EOL Grant recipient and ESC member)

ANNEX 8: REVIEW COUNTRY GPE 2025 GRANTS OVERVIEW

Country	Region	Income group (WB 2023)	GEA Eligible	GPE 2025 Grants and amounts	Cohort	GPE2025 Grant Start Date
Cambodia	3	Lower middle	No	STG: $15.42m SCG: $2.7m MLT (WB): $20m MLT (UNICEF): $10m	2	Jan 2024 Jul 2024 Jul 2024
Central African Republic	2	Low	Yes	STG: $35.95m MLT: $10m GEA: $10m	5	Oct 2024
Chad	2	Low	Yes	STG: $80.52m GEA: $25m	3	Jan 2025
Pakistan (Sindh)	3	Lower middle	Yes	STG: $28.964m	5	Apr 2025
Nicaragua	3	Lower middle	No	STG: $5m	4	Oct 2024
Senegal	2	Lower middle	No	STG: $35.76m MLT: $37.44m	2	Oct 2024
Somalia (federal level)	1	Low	Yes	STG: $80.76m GEA: $18.76m SCG: $2.8m	2	Apr 2024
Zimbabwe	1	Lower middle	Yes	STG: $19.864m GEA: $12,415m MLT: $8.66m	2	Feb 2024