



1. Project Data

Project ID P174220	Project Name Sudan Education COVID-19 Response	
Country Sudan	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-B3339	Closing Date (Original) 31-Dec-2021	Total Project Cost (USD) 4,703,520.32
Bank Approval Date 04-Aug-2020	Closing Date (Actual) 31-Dec-2021	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	10,650,000.00	10,650,000.00
Revised Commitment	10,650,000.00	10,650,000.00
Actual	4,703,520.32	4,703,520.32

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Grant Agreement (page 5) and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, page 11), the project objective was as follows:

- **To support learning continuity at the basic education level during the COVID-19 pandemic and school system shutdown and safe transition back to school during recovery.**



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

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

1. Supporting learning continuity at the basic education level during the COVID-19 pandemic and school system shutdown (Appraisal: US\$ 6.93 million; Actual: US\$ 2.63 million): This component aimed to make learning materials accessible to the basic education school population. Activities included: the adaptation of distance learning programs in math and Arabic to be broadcast through radio and television; development of Arabic and math columns for newspapers; student assignment and quizzes based on the distance learning material; teacher guides for grading and recording student assignments; radio awareness campaigns for COVID prevention; development and delivery of specialized distance learning materials for disadvantaged students such as girls and poor; training of community teachers to be assigned to each participating school to collect and grade assignments; provision of COVID grants to schools (to provide remuneration to community teachers, purchase cell phones for reporting grades and communicating with students, student rewards for completed assignments, purchase of hygiene and school supplies); and provision of radios and solar banks to households in communities with schools that lack electricity.

2. Supporting safe transition back to school during recovery (Appraisal: US\$ 3.27 million; Actual: US\$ 1.62 million): This component aimed to take actions to ensure a safe transition back to schools once they reopen. Activities included: communication campaigns to raise parental awareness on the importance of sending children back to school; rapid assessment of student learning needs to identify learning gaps; and provision of water tanks to schools without clean water

3. Program coordination and management (Appraisal: US\$ 0.45 million; Actual: US\$ 0.45 million): This component supported the Federal Ministry of Education in overall program coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

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

Project cost

- The project cost at appraisal was US\$ 10.65 million. The actual cost was US\$ 4.703 million.
- The exchange rate for the Sudanese pound relative to the US dollar depreciated by 300 percent between January 2019 and June 2020. However, the official exchange rate was not adjusted in a timely manner to reflect the local currency's high inflation rate, which caused a significant shortage of funds for project activities. After the Ministry of Education communicated with the Minister of Finance to compensate the exchange rate for the project as an exceptional case, the government provided top-up funding (approximately SDG 1 billion) to meet the difference between the two exchange rates. After the exchange rate liberalization in Sudan in February 2021, the project has earned savings of approximately US\$2 million for all the activities using local currency.



- Due to the military takeover in October 2021, all disbursements were stopped and the project did not complete all activities before closing on December 31, 2021. The project was not able to procure and distribute radios to disadvantaged households and the second installment of the COVID-19 school grants, which was ready to take place in November 2021. However, other key activities such as data collection and the assessment reports were completed.

Financing

- The project was financed entirely by a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant of US\$ 10.65 million, of which US\$ 4.703 million disbursed.

Borrower contribution

- There was no planned Borrower contribution.

Dates

- *October 2021*: The military takeover triggered the Bank's internal directive, OP 7.30 Dealings with De Facto Governments, and as a result, all disbursements for operations were paused.
- *December 2021*: The project closed as planned.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

Sudan is a lower middle-income country, characterized by a fast growing population, nearly half of whom are living in moderate poverty (46.1%, in 2009-2014), deteriorating economic performance, yet improvements in human capital developments including increasing access to basic education, and decreasing child mortality, maternal mortality, and youth illiteracy. The political and governance environment remains fragile, greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has led to adverse economic shocks that has negatively impacted family livelihoods and public spending on education, on top of directly impacting learning due to the school system shutdown starting in March 2020. With only a small percentage of households with school-age children engaged in some learning activities up until project approval, in addition to significant underfinancing of the education sector during the last decade and the worsening economic situation affecting the ability of families to pay for schooling going forward, there was an urgent need to provide alternative learning opportunities and additional financial support to schools and families.

The project objectives were directly responsive to the country's National COVID-19 Response Plan "Keeping Students Safe and Engaged in Learning in Sudan" which included measures for continuity of learning, student safety, and psycho-social well-being. Specifically, the plan focused on (i) promoting safe learning at home until schools reopen; (ii) preparing for schools to reopen safely; (iii) accelerating innovative approaches to reach the most vulnerable; and (iv) strengthening system capacity.



The project objectives were also consistent with the Bank's Interim Strategy Note for 2014-15, which identified equitable education service delivery, with improved access to quality basic education, as a relevant country result. The more recent Country Engagement Note for 2021-22 similarly included a sub-objective to strengthen service delivery and resilience, including in the basic education sector.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To support learning continuity at the basic education level during the COVID-19 pandemic and school system shutdown

Rationale

The theory of change for this objective was clear. The project activities included developing content for distance learning, identifying the most accessible mediums (radio, newspaper, and television (in urban areas) to deliver that content, and training teachers on using distance learning methods. These activities were likely to lead to the intended outcome to support learning continuity during the school system shutdown from March 2020 to February 2021.

Outputs

- Preparation of distance learning programs in math and Arabic to be disseminated by television, radio and newspapers, as well as through social media platforms, with assignments for students to complete. Radio programs targeted all school-aged children in all 18 states. Television lessons would be available in Khartoum and other urban areas. These programs were broadcast by radio two times per day and were adapted into sign language for students with hearing impairment.
- Provision of over 5.4 million booklets with content linked to the radio and television lessons. The ICR (page 13) noted that students from remote areas who did not have access to radio, newspapers or television were able to use the booklets to access the same material.
- Training of 33,000 community teachers to utilize the distance learning approaches and to grade and record results of students' assignments (target: 33,000). The ICR (pages 13-14) noted that the training-of-trainers capacity development plan for the community teachers who were to take over the distance learning responsibilities at the schools was not completed due to the triggering of OP 7.30.

However,



- It is not clear whether interactions between students and teachers - a key element of staying engaged in learning - took place as planned. The project design included for example, text messages and phone-ins, monitoring of results from assignments, purchase of cell phones for teachers to monitor assignments and communicate with students, submission of assignment results to the project M&E team, and rewards for students who complete the most assignments. Outcomes related to these activities were not reported in the ICR.
- Radios and solar power banks were not provided to disadvantaged households as planned (target: 100,000).

Outcomes

- 5,457,730 students received booklets with content linked to the radio and television lessons, surpassing the target of 5,000,000. This represented a 109% achievement of the target in terms of percentage of students supported in learning continuity, surpassing the target of 100%. As clarified by the project team, these were the only learning materials available to students and teachers during the school shutdown, as none were provided by the government. Moreover, the materials aided learning continuity once schools reopened, by supplying new lessons and remedial lessons for grades 1-8.
- The ICR (page 13) reported results from a school survey in which head teachers confirmed that at least 76 percent of basic school students "participated in the daily broadcasting of Arabic, mathematics, and English sessions." According to the project team, local organizations also provided anecdotal evidence that students were utilizing the materials in the classrooms.

Achievement is rated Substantial. Access to learning opportunities was achieved (provision of booklets and learning programs via radio), which was critical in the absence of any other learning materials during the school shutdown. In addition, the materials were used to support learning continuity once schools reopened.

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To support safe transition back to school during recovery.

Rationale

The theory of change for this objective was clear. Activities included providing protective measures for safe return to schools (clean water storage facilities, hygiene and handwashing supplies) and communication campaigns to ensure families sent their children back to school. In addition, the project supported rapid learning assessments to identify learning gaps. These activities were likely to lead to the intended outcome to support a safe transition back to school.



Schools were closed from March 2020 to February 2021. They had originally been expected to reopen in September 2020, but floods in Sudan (as well as concerns about COVID-19) delayed the school reopening.

Outputs

- Radio awareness and poster campaigns on COVID-19 safety protocols at the school level, with messages on hygiene, handwashing, and social distancing.
- Provision of school grants to 16,475 schools to purchase soap and cleaning items, face masks, and welcome packages (target: 16,500). The remaining 25 small schools (with 2–3 grades) were destroyed during the floods in 2020 and closed by the Federal MOE. The ICR (page 14) reported that school principals (88 percent) confirmed that new water tanks and school grants helped to significantly improve hygiene conditions in their schools to secure a safe and conducive learning environment; 77 percent of teachers, 76 percent of education authorities, and 73 percent of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members reported that the project helped to sustain parental engagement in schools and reduce risk of drop out, whether to due private education expenses or availability of hygiene and sanitation facilities and supplies, especially for girls. However, the second installment of the school grants did not take place in November 2021 due to the pause in disbursements under the OP 7.30 directive. The project team clarified that the prior Emergency Education project had provided similar school grants which were being used to cover operating costs to keep schools open, and that the liberalization of the exchange rate during the project period resulted in the actual amount of the first grant being significantly higher than the appraised amount; hence the project was able to deliver outputs and achieve targets despite the second part of the grants not being disbursed.
- Connectivity campaigns to promote safeguarding and health messages, in order to raise parental and community awareness of child protection of girls and the importance of staying in school. All headteachers and one PTA representative in each of the approximately 16,500 basic schools were trained in safety protocols for school reopening.
- Rapid assessment of students (from a representative sample of 500 government schools) to identify learning gaps. The ICR (page 15) reported that the findings provided the government with strategic information to help reduce learning losses due to the extended school closures.
- Provision of water tanks to 1,760 schools lacking water facilities (target: 1,760).

Outcomes

- 5,741,459 students were enrolled in schools following the reopening, surpassing the target of 5,400,000 students. This surpassed the target of 100% of previously enrolled students returning to school.

Achievement is rated High due to surpassing of targets in re-enrollment after school reopening, particularly in the context of shocks brought on by the political turnover, overlapping economic and COVID-19 crises, and floods.

Rating
High



OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Overall efficacy is rated Substantial due to Substantial achievement of the first objective to support learning continuity and High achievement of the second objective to support safe transition back to school.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

At project appraisal, the economic analysis (PAD, Annex 3) presented a cost-benefit analysis in which costs are represented by total project costs and the benefits are measured by higher retention rates (and decreased dropouts). The assumption was that without the project, a share of students currently enrolled in basic education would drop out and thus not complete primary education, particularly from the poorest households. Based on different scenarios on the ultimate impact of COVID on the level of dropouts, the range of net present value (NPV) was US\$15.2 million to US\$ 45.5 million, and the internal rate of return (IRR) ranged from 14% to 23%.

At project completion, the economic analysis (ICR, Annex 4) estimated reduced inefficiencies in public spending, mostly by reducing school drop outs/ increasing retention. This was estimated by multiplying the unit cost in basic education by the number of repeaters and drop-outs. Prior to the project intervention, the ongoing drop out rate resulted in costs equivalent to 27.6 percent of overall public expenditures in education. The estimate of inefficient public spending, between 2018/19 and 2020/21, decreased by 2.7 percentage points, or government savings of approximately US\$9.9 million. The updated cost benefit analysis showed that the NPV ranged from US\$10.3 million to US\$52.1 million, and the IRR between 14 percent and 32 percent, both of which are comparable to the appraisal estimates.

In terms of implementation efficiency, despite an extremely challenging environment, the project implemented most activities and appeared to achieve most intended outcomes with only 44 percent of the grant disbursed. This was due in part to savings from local currency exchange rate fluctuations. As noted previously, the local currency depreciated by 300 percent between January 2019 and June 2020 but the official exchange rate was not adjusted in a timely manner, which initially caused a significant shortage of funds for project activities. However, the Ministry of Finance subsequently agreed to compensate the exchange rate for the project as an exceptional case and provided top-up funding (approximately SDG 1 billion) to meet the difference between the two exchange rates.

Efficiency Rating

Substantial



a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal	✓	23.00	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	32.00	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Relevance is rated High due to strong alignment with country conditions, country COVID strategy, and Bank strategy. Overall efficacy is rated Substantial due to Substantial achievement of the first objective to support learning continuity and High achievement of the second objective to support safe transition back to school. Efficiency is rated Substantial due to favorable cost benefit analysis and positive indications of project implementation efficiency. These were achieved in a particularly challenging context in Sudan with extended school closures, floods, and the military takeover.

a. Outcome Rating

Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The risk to sustaining the development outcome is significant due to the uncertain political/governance situation, fragile environment, volatile economic conditions, and prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. Levels of public and private spending on basic education remain highly uncertain. However, institutional development outcomes are likely to be sustained, as one of the stated goals of the project was to build resilience in the education system for future shocks. The education materials were developed for distance learning, partnerships for broadcasting were established, and local community capacity for planning at the school level was strengthened.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

During project preparation, the Bank team drew upon two decades of engagement in the education sector in Sudan and substantial experience in responding to emergencies. This included utilizing the implementation structures and capacity built under the recent GPE projects. Fiduciary processes and key project management staff, including the program coordinator, remained in place. These factors,



along with the simple project design and streamlined implementation procedures allowed the project to withstand shocks brought on by the political turnover, overlapping economic and COVID-19 crises, floods, and continuous armed conflicts (ICR, page 17). The overall risk rating was Substantial due to the political/governance and macroeconomic uncertainties, but also the risks inherent in the post-COVID recovery phase; however, effective mitigation measures were identified both in the project interventions and in the institutional arrangements.

The results framework was simple and straightforward, with appropriately defined indicators to measure achievements. Monitoring arrangements were also appropriately designed, in anticipation of continued external shocks and uncertainty.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank team provided effective supervision in the highly fragile and restricted environment. Key project activities were implemented and outcomes mostly achieved, despite the prolonged school shutdown, floods, military action and government transition, and with less than half of the project funds disbursed. Project monitoring took place as planned to track outputs and indicators. Fiduciary functions were effectively carried out by the project team, with Bank support.

The Bank team made efforts to restructure the project (to extend the closing date to allow for completion of activities and to increase the scope of activities using savings) but the restructuring could not be processed due to uncertainty in the duration of the military takeover.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The results framework was clear and succinct with relevant and monitorable indicators and targets. These were well aligned with the emergency nature of the project. The project monitoring arrangements included staffing the PCU with an M&E specialist and utilizing the existing M&E system from recent GPE projects. Evaluative activities included beneficiary surveys to verify project impact.



b. M&E Implementation

The project coordinating unit implemented the M&E plan to collect and report key data (particularly through annual school census data), despite school closures and travel restrictions due to the COVID pandemic. A beneficiary school survey was conducted at the end of the project implementation to inform the project results.

c. M&E Utilization

Project monitoring, including the annual school census which provided information on student enrollment, number of teachers, and available school infrastructure, was effectively utilized to provide geospatial school information, target beneficiaries, and inform logistics. The ICR (page 21) noted that this approach prevented fragmentation of data collection as is often the case in many settings and allowed schools and the Ministry to monitor progress using a consolidated tool.

M&E Quality Rating

High

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The environmental risk rating at appraisal was Moderate, due to potential waste disposal issues with communication devices and solar banks. Mitigation measures included awareness raising on proper disposal and strengthening environmental monitoring systems at the school level. There were no civil works planned. Due to the emergency nature of the project, it utilized an updated version of the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) prepared under the prior Basic Education Emergency Project (P172812).

The ICR (page 22) noted that some of the activities agreed upon during the implementation support mission were not implemented in a timely manner, including the hiring of the Environmental and Social Specialist, partly due to the challenges associated with the pandemic and the emergency nature of the project. The project team clarified that a consultant was hired to oversee safeguards compliance and that other project management staff received safeguards training and were able to monitor compliance during school visits.

b. Fiduciary Compliance



Financial management: The financial management arrangements were built on the existing system of the prior GPE project. However, there were initial challenges mainly due to the weak capacity and the resignation of the Financial Management Specialist in the project coordinating unit. Delays in reappointing a new specialist and implementing the computerized accounting system led to delays in the preparation and submission of the financial reports. However, the secondment of fiduciary staff from the government led to significant improvements, with financial reports being submitted in a timely manner overall. The ICR (page 21) reported that audits were unqualified. However, the Bank requested revisions of the interim financial reports for the periods ending June 30, 2021, and September 30, 2021, due to some reporting irregularity. Financial management performance was rated Moderately Satisfactory throughout the implementation period.

Procurement: Procurement risk was rated High at appraisal, with mitigation measures identified such as intensive staff training and regular reporting on procurement activities. The Bank provided intensive fiduciary support and no major shortcomings were reported in the ICR. Procurement performance was rated Satisfactory throughout the implementation period.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

d. Other

11. Ratings

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

12. Lessons

Lessons drawn from the ICR (pages 24-25) and adapted by IEG:

- Television and radio broadcasts are useful and effective mediums to provide distance learning programs; however, two significant shortcomings of such approaches are the inability to measure levels of access/engagement and the inability to reach marginal populations (those that do not have access to television or radio). In the case of this project, complementary physical materials helped to mitigate those shortcomings, as well as surveys of beneficiaries to measure access.



- School grants are an effective mechanism to sustain enrollment during times of crisis as they mitigate the burden of attending school due to lost income and other economic opportunities. In the case of this project, although public education is free, households still contribute significantly to education costs because of uniforms, learning materials, and meals. The school grants provided by the project helped to mitigate these costs for households.

In addition,

- Effective project monitoring can still be carried out in a highly fragile context, even in an emergency situation. In the case of this project, the critical factors were the simple results framework with straightforward and easily monitorable indicators, the monitoring arrangements already established from the prior project, and the follow up beneficiary surveys to verify results.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was overall satisfactory, consistent with guidelines and concise. The evidence and analysis of achievements was straightforward and concise. Lessons were clearly drawn from project experience and provided useful lessons for implementing projects in emergency situations. However, there was limited discussion/ analysis of whether interactions between students and teachers - a key element of staying engaged in learning - took place as planned. Outcomes related to these activities were not reported in the ICR.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial