



1. Project Data

Project ID P174206	Project Name ETH CERP	
Country Ethiopia	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-B3228	Closing Date (Original) 31-Dec-2021	Total Project Cost (USD) 14,320,844.01
Bank Approval Date 19-Aug-2020	Closing Date (Actual) 30-Dec-2022	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	14,850,000.00	14,850,000.00
Revised Commitment	14,750,000.00	14,320,844.01
Actual	14,644,174.12	14,320,844.01

Prepared by Rosen Asenov	Reviewed by Judyth L. Twigg	ICR Review Coordinator Eduardo Fernandez Maldonado	Group IEGHC (Unit 2)
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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

As stated in the Grant Agreement (Grant Number TF0B3228, p. 6) dated December 3, 2020, the project development objective (PDO) was “to maintain students' learning during school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and after school re-openings, and to enable education system recovery and resilience.” The Project Appraisal Document (PAD), dated August 19, 2020 (p. 11), articulated the same objective. As a result of the project’s second restructuring in September 2022, the PDO statement was amended due to the re-opening of schools, to: “support students’ learning following the closure and reopening of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to enable education system recovery and resilience.” This led to



dropping Objective 1: “maintain students’ learning during school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”; and, for greater clarity, renaming Objective 2 to: “support students’ learning following the closure and reopening of schools,” which was substantively identical to the original second objective. The dropping of the project’s first objective at the September 2022 restructuring requires a split rating methodology to be applied, as follows:

Original objectives:

- PDO 1 (maintain students’ learning during school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic)
- PDO 2 (maintain students’ learning after school re-openings/support students’ learning following the closure and reopening of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- PDO 3 (enable education system recovery and resilience)

Revised objectives:

- PDO 2 (maintain students’ learning after school re-openings/support students’ learning following the closure and reopening of schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- PDO 3 (enable education system recovery and resilience)

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

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

Yes

Date of Board Approval

14-Sep-2022

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

Yes

d. Components

Component 1. Maintaining learning trajectories and safety during school closure (original estimate: US\$3.59 million; actual cost: US\$ 0.00). This component was to support activities aimed to ensure learning continuity during the pandemic-related closure of schools through provision of distance learning and communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the reopening of schools.

- **Subcomponent 1.1: Remote Learning.** This subcomponent was to support learning continuity during school closures -- with a focus on reaching the most vulnerable, in particular girls and children with special needs – by (i) preparing and distributing printed learning materials, including specialized offline learning packages for disadvantaged students that included radio and tablet hardware for selected students; and (ii) using free radio and TV stations to broadcast lessons that were based on converted existing curricula.
- **Subcomponent 1.2: Communication on distance learning, safety, and psychosocial support during school closure.** This subcomponent was to support communication around the availability



of and how to access distance learning resources; messaging on safety, including guidance to communities on hygiene and cleanliness practices, sensitization messages regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, gender-based violence (SEA/GBV), underage pregnancy, and protection of children with special needs and unequal social norms; messages to support the psychosocial wellbeing of students during school closure; and carrying out a back-to-school campaign.

Component 2. Supporting readiness for school reopening and mitigating learning loss (original estimate: US\$10.76 million; actual cost: US\$ 13.72 million). This component was to support readiness for school reopening and mitigating learning losses.

- **Subcomponent 2.1: Support to catch-up learning** through: (i) accelerated learning, which was to include: (a) preparation and dissemination of guidelines for accelerated lessons to teachers in all public primary and secondary schools, and (b) adapting the curricula to be taught at an accelerated pace in the first few months after schools reopen; (ii) remedial instruction and tutorials; and (iii) support to teachers, which was to include: (a) provision of training for selected teachers in all public primary and secondary schools in conducting learning assessments to establish the need for remedial teaching as schools reopen, and delivering and monitoring progress in accelerated and remedial lessons; and (b) carrying out training to guide teachers on how to identify and protect vulnerable children, supporting their re-enrollment and monitoring their re-integration into school, and supporting school health and safety following the pandemic, including information on handwashing, sanitation, and recognizing possible cases of COVID-19.
- **Subcomponent 2.2: Enhancing hygiene and school environments** through providing: (i) support to schools for pandemic recovery that included (a) carrying out selected investments to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities and practices at schools, and (b) provision of health and personal protective equipment - including low-cost WASH equipment at all public primary and secondary schools (such as water tankers for water transportation, portable handwashing stations, disinfectants and sanitizing materials) - and health and personal protective equipment, such as face masks, thermometers, first aid kits, and menstrual health management materials; as well as (ii) community support for school cleanliness: support for preparation and dissemination to public schools of guidelines for School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), encouraging: (a) the use of school grants to improve the availability of handwashing materials (e.g. soap, disinfectant) at schools; and (b) SMC and PTA activities to encourage students to maintain good hygiene, including monitoring of student hygiene behavior in the period following schools' reopening.

Component 3. System-level resilience and project coordination (original estimate of US\$0.50 million; actual cost: US\$0.60 million).

- **Subcomponent 3.1: Emergency helpdesks.** Provision of support for setting up and staffing of centrally operated helpdesks, using a toll-free number, to support the recovery of schools by enabling school management and families to report school-related emergency situations or distress.
- **Subcomponent 3.2: Support to regional and local supervision capacity.** Provision of support for strengthening of monitoring capacity of Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) and selected woredas (districts representing the third level of the administrative divisions of Ethiopia, after zones and the regional states) to carry out increased frequency of school visits and low-cost remote monitoring through SMS and phone calls.
- **Subcomponent 3.3: Project coordination.** Provision of support for overall project management, coordination, and communication, including preparation and execution of the 18 months' annual



work plan and budget (AWPB) and procurement plan; monitoring of the results framework and quarterly reporting; facilitating project communication; and ensuring compliance with fiduciary and safeguards requirements.

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

Cost. The project's original estimated cost was US\$14.85 million. The revised total amount was US\$14.75 million, reflecting the cancelation of US\$100,000 due to the exclusion of the conflict-affected Tigray region from the project's scope. The project was almost fully disbursed at project closing, with the total disbursement being US\$14.64 million. Following refunding of financing for incomplete or undocumented activities, the actual cost was US\$14.32 million (97 percent), or near-full disbursement.

Financing and Borrower Contribution: The project was fully financed by a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant. Of the original grant in the amount of US\$14.85 million, US\$14.32 million (96.4 percent) was disbursed. No contribution from the Borrower was planned or delivered.

Key Dates: The project became effective on December 08, 2020, less than four months after its approval on August 19, 2020, but its implementation had been underway since March 31, 2020, as a result of the project's retroactive financing clause. The project was restructured twice, on December 23, 2021, and on September 14, 2022. The restructuring involved revising the PDO; changes in the Results Framework (RF), components, and costs; reallocation between disbursement categories; exclusion of the Tigray region from the project's scope due to the civil conflict that started there in November 2020; and extending the project's closing date twice by a total of one year (from December 31, 2021, to September 30, 2022, further extended to December 30, 2022).

Restructuring. The project's first restructuring, dated December 23, 2021, extended the project's closing date from December 31, 2021, to September 30, 2022, to allow time for completion of delayed activities, and added a corporate results indicator to the RF: "students benefitting from direct interventions to enhance learning (total and female)." At the time of the first restructuring, no Bank funds had been disbursed, as the documentation of the activities that had been completed by REBs was found inadequate to comply with WBG procurement procedures.

At the time of schools' reopening, the activity "provision of printed home learning kits" under Component 1 had not been completed, but it was no longer relevant. The activity and other activities under the component were formally dropped from the project; they had been completed, but the related documentation was inadequate for reimbursement. In total, US\$4.94 million was reallocated from both cancelled activities and completed but dropped activities. Following the completion of seven out of eight planned activities to support learning during school closures (Objective 1 / Component 1) and issues with documentation of these activities, and the reduction in the immediate risk of the COVID-19 pandemic but emergence of other crises, such as internal and external conflicts, food insecurity, and drought, among others, the government requested revision of the project to refocus on supporting safety and learning in reopened schools and building resilience for overlapping crises that the country was facing. This resulted in the project's second restructuring, dated September 14, 2022, which introduced a revision of the PDO, made various changes to the RF, dropped Component 1 (as no longer relevant), cancelled US\$100,000 of grant financing, and extended the closing date to December 30, 2022.



3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The PDO was relevant to current country conditions. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, an Ethiopian child could expect to complete only 4.5 years of learning; 3 million school-aged children were estimated to be out of school; learning outcomes were low (e.g., 90 percent of children at 10 were unable to read and understand a simple passage); and girls' dropout rates were consistently higher than boys'. In March 2020, as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Ethiopia closed indefinitely all schools. This threatened to negatively affect more than 26 million students' human capital development and earning potential in the longer term, while in the shorter term, it was expected to lead to learning losses, greater learning inequalities, deterioration of children's nutritional and health status, and higher rates of dropouts, particularly among girls and children from vulnerable households, especially in rural areas where early dropout was common even before the pandemic. While distance learning platforms could be used to ensure learning continuity and student engagement during school closures, in the case of Ethiopia, this form of alternative education was not accessible to around 38 percent of students who lacked access to broadcast media (TV and radio) or mobile phone media. Schools' reopening, on the other hand, could pose a risk of resurgence of COVID-19 infections due to inadequate availability of hygiene infrastructure and materials at schools. Additional support was required for teachers to deliver accelerated learning programs in order to support students to catch up lost learning following schools' reopening. Furthermore, low levels of connectivity between woredas, regions, and the government hindered the authorities' ability to provide fast and effective response to the COVID-19 crisis (PAD, pp. 7-8).

The project supported the government's COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response Plan, which aimed to address pandemic-related learning disruptions by delivering learning materials through broadcast and printed media; providing supplies necessary for the safe reopening of schools; and facilitating communications to support re-enrollment following schools' reopening, among other activities. The project directly supported the implementation of this Plan, in place during project implementation. Additionally, the project was expected to contribute to the country's ongoing education sector reforms aimed to address learning inequities and improve learning outcomes through the Ministry of Education's (MoE's) Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) V (2015/16 to 2019/20), and the successor program, ESDP VI, that was under development (PAD, p. 7).

Moreover, the PDO was consistent with the World Bank Group (WBG)'s Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Ethiopia FY18-22, in place during the project's life. More specifically, the project was expected to contribute to Focus Area 2's objective to improve basic education learning outcomes by addressing challenges of internal inefficiency, inequity, and poor quality (PAD, p. 10).

The project was also part of the WBG's long-standing support to Ethiopia's education sector. The project's implementation was built on frameworks and implementation arrangements developed with the support of previous successive GPE-supported education programs, such as the General Education Quality Improvement Project (GEQIP, P106855, 2008-13) and GEQIP II (P129828, 2013-2018). The project also complemented and leveraged other relevant ongoing education projects supported by the WBG and other development partners, including the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E,



P163050), which aimed to assist the government in improving internal efficiency, equitable access, and quality in general education; the Ethiopia COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (P173750); and additional projects supporting resilience and human capital development, such as the Lowlands Livelihood Resilience Project (P164336), aiming to improve livelihood resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Ethiopia, and One WASH—Consolidated Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene Account Project (P167794), aiming to increase access to safe and reliable water supply and sanitation services and promote hygienic practices in selected rural woredas, among others. In addition, the project complemented investments in Ethiopia’s education sector by development partners, including UNICEF’s Education Cannot Wait, which supported a range of investments in education system capacity.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

To maintain students' learning during school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (dropped at the project’s second restructuring to reflect the reopening of schools)

Rationale

The theory of change presented in the ICR (p. 11 / Figure 1) is based on the assumption that learning continuity and safety during school closure can be maintained through the provision of distance learning and communication regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the reopening of schools.

Outputs and intermediate results

- 50 percent of school-age children were provided with access to programs and sensitization campaigns aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure (such as psychological impacts and gender-based violence), **exceeding the target of** 43 percent (dropped from the project since the related documentation was not adequate for reimbursement).
- 11 regions/states with radio and TV stations broadcasted emergency distance learning programs during school closures, **achieving the target of** 11 regions/states (dropped since the related documentation was not adequate for reimbursement).
- There were no children aged 6-18 provided with home learning kits, **not achieving the target of** 2,100,000 (dropped, as the activity had not been completed during school closures and was no longer relevant after schools reopened, although, as noted below, the government did distribute textbooks to students for home use).
- There were no children in Inclusive Education Resource Centers provided with radios/other distance learning equipment, **not achieving the target of** 15,000 disadvantaged children provided with radios (the provision of radios for disadvantaged students remained relevant throughout the project but was



moved to Component 2 and re-conceptualized as contributing to Objective 3 at the second restructuring prior to the implementation of the related activity).

The government completed additional activities that contributed to the achievement of Objective 1 but were not directly measured by RF indicators, notably:

- Materials were developed for the training of IERC staff to support students in the use of radios, preparing for the provision of radios (ultimately completed as part of Objective 3 following the reopening of schools and the second restructuring).
- 20 million textbooks were distributed to schools and woredas for home use by students during the closure of schools.

Outcomes

- 66 percent of school-age children were provided with access to COVID-19 distance/home-based learning programs, **exceeding the target of 43 percent** (dropped at second restructuring). In total, 17,296,837 school-age children were able to access distance or home-based learning programs during the closure of schools.

The assessment of the first objective's achievement was based mainly on outputs, such as meeting the target for children accessing distance or home-based learning programs during school closures. However, access does not equate to utilization or uptake. The ICR lacks evidence confirming that students' learning during school closures was maintained, whereas children actively participated in these programs or that they were delivered with acceptable quality. Therefore, the achievement of the first objective is rated Substantial.

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2

Objective

To maintain students' learning after school re-openings
(renamed for clarity at the second restructuring to: To support students' learning following the closure and reopening of schools)

Rationale

Originally, the project sought to contribute to maintaining students' learning after schools' reopening by supporting (i) remedial and accelerated learning activities and (ii) investments in WASH and health materials for schools' safe reopening. At the time of schools' reopening, economic pressure resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, recurrent drought, and ongoing internal and external conflicts increased unit costs and left many families unable to procure basic student learning materials (SLM) for their children. At the time of the second restructuring, the rationale for the second objective remained the same, while its financing increased from US\$10.76 million to US\$14.15 million to support key activities contributing to the achievement of the objective, such as providing priority support to disadvantaged students, procurement of more durable water tankers and handwashing facilities in order to ensure learning continuity for the most disadvantaged students.



This increased financing was intended to cover increased unit costs and support resilience. As a result of the reopening of schools, the second objective's statement was appropriately amended to: *To support students' learning following the closure and reopening of schools.*

Outputs and intermediate results

The project performance data in the latest ISR (June 2022) before the second restructuring was not up to date and referred to achievements by July/December 2021, around or over a year before the second restructuring. However, this information was in part updated by the TTL in a written interview, dated September 18, 2023, based on an update that the government had provided in November 2022.

- By July 2021, 22 percent of public schools were equipped with a minimum hygiene package for COVID-19 prevention, **partly achieving the original target** of 100 percent. At the second restructuring, the indicator was revised to number of schools and the target was revised downward (revised target: 1,423 public schools). 1,450 public schools were equipped by the project with improved WASH materials, **surpassing the revised target** of 1,423.
- 100 percent of grant-supported schools (excluding those in the conflict-affected Tigray region) were reopened, achieving the target of 100 percent.
- A total of 23,338 teachers were trained by the project to deliver remedial and accelerated learning programs to mitigate loss of learning during school closure, **partially achieving the original unchanged target** of 40,000 (58% achievement). The training provided was longer and more expensive than originally anticipated due to a change in the training modality from one-day in-school cascade to three-day zone-level training (required by government regulations and security concerns).
- By December 01, 2021, a total of 20,322,000 students had benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning, **partially achieving the target of** 26,222,509 students, out of whom 9,543,600 were female students, **partly achieving the target of** 12,431,688 female students. These new corporate results indicator and sub-indicator were added to the RF at the first restructuring.
- The percentage of children at grant-supported schools whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure **was not achieved** (this planned activity was not implemented as designed, and it was dropped as no longer feasible).
- Additionally, the project financed the procurement and distribution of around five million face masks, which was identified by the government as a key prerequisite for reopening of schools.
- 690,000 students at grant-supported schools received a minimum package of SLM (two pens and eight exercise books per student), **exceeding the target of** 600,000 students, as a result of an agreement with the supplier to waive delivery costs, enabling the use of savings for additional purchase of SLM. This was a new activity added at the second restructuring.
- A total of 26,635,127 students benefited from direct interventions to enhance learning, **exceeding the target of** 26,222,509 students, out of which 12,672,803 were female students, **exceeding the target of** 12,431,688 female students.

Outcomes

The government reported that, by November 01, 2022 (before the extended project closing date), 100 percent of school-aged children had returned to school, **achieving the target of** 100 percent; out of whom **47.6 percent were female students**.



The project fell short of the target for training teachers in remedial and accelerated learning programs, a key output. Furthermore, the ICR does not present evidence of identification of students with learning losses and proof that these students received remedial programs delivered by trained teachers as per guidelines or with acceptable quality. Also, the chosen outcome measure for assessing the achievement of the second objective seems distant from the project interventions – it is difficult to establish a direct link between the project's contribution and the post-COVID 100% enrollment in a country as vast as Ethiopia, where the project funding amounted to less than US\$14 million. Given that, the achievement of the second objective is rated Substantial.

Rating

Substantial

OBJECTIVE 3

Objective

To enable education system recovery and resilience

Rationale

The theory of change presented in the ICR is based on the assumption that providing radios to disadvantaged school-aged children with no access to radios, as well as support for establishing emergency helpdesks and strengthening regional and local supervision capacity, would contribute to the overall recovery of the education system and make it more resilient.

Outputs and intermediate results

- 3,500 radios were provided to children in Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs), **falling far short of the original target of** 15,000 radios. The reason for the underachievement of this target was that the party contracted to supply the radios, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), was unable to secure an adequate number of radios in the time prior to project closing as a result of supply constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic and to the conflicts in the Tigray region and in Ukraine.
- The activity “emergency helpdesk” was **dropped**.

Outcomes

There was no PDO-level indicator for Objective 3.

As noted in the ICR (p. 21), while not included in the Results Framework, additional outputs delivered with the support of the project that were expected to have contributed to Objective 3 included:

- 376 IERC staff trained to use radios to support students’ distance learning, including in the event of future disruptions to schooling as a result of COVID-19 or otherwise.
- First aid kits were provided to 4,015 primary schools, which helped ensure preparedness at the school level in the event of emergency and/or future pandemic.



- Guidelines were developed for regional and local officials on school partnership and coordination, and on accelerated school transformation, including guidance on how to maintain and utilize WASH facilities provided by the project. Training on these guidelines was provided to 740 officials, including school principals and REB staff.
- 395 officials from REBs and Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BOFED) zone and woreda offices participated in consultative meetings to enhance their procurement technical skills and implementation capacity.
- 62 Ministry of Education/REB officials were trained in environmental and social risk management and in procurement.
- A supervision exercise was conducted in 971 schools to ensure that schools were informed on protocols and procedures for COVID-19 prevention; assessing the impact of COVID-19 on teaching and learning; and evaluating the success of school and community efforts to prevent COVID-19 infections.

The achievement of Objective 3 is rated Modest based on the lack of PDO-level indicators and partial achievement of the associated output and intermediate outcome targets.

Rating
Modest

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

Overall efficacy under the original PDOs is rated Substantial, with PDO 1 and PDO 2 rated Substantial, and PDO 3 rated Modest.

Neither the Legal Agreement nor the PAD explicitly defined the relative importance of the different project objectives. The ICR (p. 12) defined Objective 3 as a secondary objective in terms of importance on the basis of the lack of RF indicators associated with it, as well as the fact that the financing associated with the component aligned with this objective (Component 3) was only four percent of total project financing. However, such de-weighting of Objective 3 is inconsistent with OPCS/IEG guidelines (p. 35): (i) If neither the Legal Agreement nor the PAD indicates the relative importance or weight of objectives, then the World Bank's ICR and IEG's ICR Review assume equal importance (or equal weight) for each of the objectives; and (ii) the amount of resources allocated to an objective should not be used to impute the relative importance (or weight) of that objective.

Attribution. As stated in the PAD (p. 10), the project complemented and leveraged other relevant ongoing education projects supported by the Bank and other development partners, such as UNICEF and the Education Cannot Wait United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, among others. As noted in the ICR (p. 19) and by the TTL, during the period of retroactive financing, the government successfully completed the majority of planned activities under Objective 1, contributing to learning continuity during the schools' closure and the return to school of all school-aged children once schools reopened. Although most Component 1 activities were eventually dropped from the project, it is



highly unlikely that they would have been completed if the project had not been implemented, given the government's expectation that these activities would be reimbursed as part of the project, the government's financial constraints, and the large financing gap in the COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response Plan. Also, despite the lack of PDO-level indicators for Objective 3, the project delivered outputs that were relevant for making the country's education system more resilient. Therefore, the project likely contributed to Objective 3, as well. Overall, the project-supported activities contributed to the achievement of the project objectives of ensuring learning continuity, safe reopening of schools, learning recovery, and strengthening the resilience of the education sector, although the exact contribution of the project to the PDO cannot be assessed given the lack of a counterfactual, and thus the achieved results cannot be entirely attributed to the project.

Counterfactual. As reported by the TTL, given the large financing gap in the government's COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response Plan, project-financed activities would not have been undertaken without the project. For example, the project enabled schools to reopen more quickly, as it financed goods enabling schools to reopen safely, such as face masks, first aid kits, soap, and sanitizers. Additionally, the project supported communication campaigns that contributed to high re-enrollment levels once schools reopened, and it financed measures aimed at reducing learning losses and strengthening the education system's resilience, all of which would not have taken place in the absence of the project. As noted in the PAD (p. 41), international evidence suggests that without coordinated emergency response efforts (with this project being part of such efforts), students would be more likely to drop out of school, learning may decrease, and long-term health and safety may also be at risk, particularly for girls and other disadvantaged students.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY REVISION 1

Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rationale

Overall efficacy under the revised PDOs was Substantial, given Substantial achievement of the second objective and Modest achievement of the third objective.

Overall Efficacy Revision 1 Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

Economic efficiency. The economic analysis at appraisal considered three scenarios, which did not exhaust all possibilities, given the uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Assuming that without the project, up to one year of learning could be lost, the economic analysis confirmed the viability of the project, with a Net Present Value (NPV) ranging from US\$142 million to US\$612 million, and Internal Rate of Return (IRR) ranging



from 27 to 39 percent, depending on whether the prevented or recovered learning loss was 25, 50, or 100 percent (PAD, pp. 42-43). Combining estimates of dropout prevention and the effectiveness of mitigation measures, the ICR's external efficiency analysis was based on three scenarios where the project enabled between 1 percent and 3 percent of students to reenroll who otherwise would not have done so, and the effectiveness of learning mitigation measures was between 2.5 percent and 10 percent. In line with the PAD and with other recently completed COVID-19 education response projects in the region, the ICR's economic analysis confirmed the economic rationale of the project, with the NPV ranging from US\$139 million to US\$624 million and an IRR between 17.1 percent and 23.8 percent. The project was also expected to contribute to poverty reduction in the short term by providing SLM for 690,000 students in disadvantaged areas, thus reducing costs related to education for disadvantaged households whose income had been negatively impacted by the pandemic and ongoing conflicts and associated inflation (ICR, pp. 26-29).

Implementation efficiency. The project's implementation efficiency experienced shortcomings due to a number of factors - within and outside the project's control - that affected the timeliness of delivery of this emergency project and the amount of support that was planned to be provided. The project's short preparation time and the country's internal conflict prevented implementation in Ethiopia's Tigray region and caused significant disruption and damage across much of the country during 2021-2022. Combined with the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, these factors contributed to supply constraints and higher than anticipated unit costs for a number of planned procurements under the project, significantly reducing the number of first aid kits and radios that the project was expected to provide. Additionally, due to regulations and security challenges, the number of teachers trained to deliver remedial and accelerated learning programs was significantly lower than planned.

These shortcomings were in part compensated by efficiency gains in terms of greater than planned provision of SLM and WASH materials. The project mobilized private sector financing by contracting a SLM supplier that agreed to provide free delivery of materials to the REB level. This resulted in savings equivalent to 15 percent of the contract value, enabling the procurement of SLM for an additional 90,000 students and thus exceeding the target for the related PDO indicator. By project closing, the majority of the planned activities were completed, despite the short window following the second restructuring (less than four months). In total, five activities with a total value of US\$12.9 million were completed following the second restructuring: provision of (i) SLM, (ii) radios, (iii) water tankers, and (iv) handwash facilities, as well as (v) training of teachers in delivering remedial and accelerated learning programs. In cases where activities could not be completed in the planned quantities, such as the procurement of radios, the unused funds were reallocated to support the underfunded training of teachers in delivering remedial and accelerated learning programs. The project was almost fully disbursed at project closing, with the total disbursement being US\$14.64 million, or 99 percent of the total financing of US\$14.75 million, and following refunding of financing for incomplete or undocumented activities, the final disbursement was expected to be US\$14.3 million (97 percent), which was near-full disbursement.

Importantly, however, while the project's retroactive financing enabled immediate actions to address emergency needs arising from the closure of schools, the decision for reallocation of the unutilized retroactive funding was made after lengthy discussions between the Task Team, the government, and GPE, during which time the government was unable to commence other activities under this emergency project, resulting in lack of approved AWPB and disbursement throughout 2021. Because of that, the project was unable to quickly address needs that emerged when schools reopened and when new crises threatened to affect the country's education sector. Moreover, despite the project's close alignment with the government's overall COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response Plan and the importance of the timely delivery of emergency projects, the government team, as reported in the ICR (p. 31), facing severe time and capacity constraints, placed a lower priority on the project than on GEQIP-E investments. This was exacerbated by the split-level implementation of the project, with REBs implementing most activities with oversight from MoE, which proved problematic during



implementation in the early stage of the project. A lack of both procurement specialists and understanding of the project’s investment project financing modality at the regional level contributed to challenges with documentation of REB procurements and activities. As a result, the project’s implementation progress was downgraded to Moderately Unsatisfactory in the ISR dated December 14, 2021 (two weeks before the project’s original closing date) as well as in the ISR that followed, dated June 23, 2022 (six months before the project’s extended closing date). Additionally, two regions rejected the federally derived procurement plan and restarted the process of market assessments, which delayed the completion of water tanker procurements and construction of handwashing facilities.

Overall, while the economic analysis results point to a sound investment and IRR, the project’s implementation efficiency experienced significant shortcomings due to delays in implementation of key activities, procurement issues and delays, delivery of less than the envisaged support under some key activities aimed to support catch-up learning and strengthening of the education system’s resilience, and a longer than planned actual project timeframe, justifying a **Modest** efficiency rating.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

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	✓	39.00	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	23.80	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

6. Outcome

Under the project’s original PDO: The relevance of the PDO is rated **High**; efficacy is rated **Substantial** for the first objective and the second objective, and **Modest** for the third objective; and efficiency is rated **Modest**. These ratings produce an Outcome rating under the original PDO of **Moderately Satisfactory**.

Under the project’s revised PDO: The relevance of the PDO is rated **high**; achievement of the second objective remained **substantial**, and achievement of the third objective remained **modest**; and efficiency is rated **modest**. These ratings also produce an Outcome rating under the revised PDO of **Moderately Satisfactory**.

The project's **overall Outcome rating is therefore Moderately Satisfactory**, reflecting moderate shortcomings in the operation’s achievement of its objectives and in its efficiency.



a. Outcome Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

Outputs delivered under this project, such as teachers trained to deliver remedial and accelerated learning programs, schools equipped with improved WASH materials, and vulnerable students provided with radios, as well as the provision of outputs expected to strengthen institutional capacities (Objective 3), all contributed to the education system's resilience to future shocks and the likelihood that the project results will be sustained in the longer term. At the same time, there are a number of risks to the achievements related to the PDO. These include ongoing or likely to reemerge internal and external conflicts, related political instability and inflation, and the impacts of the pandemic and macroeconomic shocks to education spending (e.g., as a result of the macroeconomic pressure of the pandemic and conflict, the share of public expenditure for education declined from 25 percent in 2019 to 22 percent in 2022). These risks pose a threat to the normal functioning of Ethiopia's education system and maintenance of the results of the project's investments, particularly with regard to improved WASH facilities in schools and procured radios. For example, these risks would make it more challenging to obtain parts for repairing of radios or WASH facilities due to deficits and higher prices, while increasing fuel prices would have indirect effects on all kinds of repairs and maintenance (ICR, p. 36).

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

This project was prepared as an emergency operation with short preparation time. The overall risk rating was Substantial, and appropriate measures were identified for risk mitigation, such as provision of close support, clear procedures and guidance, regular financial reports, and carrying out of semi-annual external interim audits, among others. The Bank's procurement team was well placed to provide the required emergency project hand-holding support, as the Bank's procurement assessment indicated that there were serious procurement capacity gaps at both MoE and the REBs, particularly in terms of manpower and knowledge and skills of public procurement procedures (PAD, p. 15). The project's design was evidence-based. The WBG brought expertise from across the globe on effective remote learning strategies and tools. Additionally, project design incorporated lessons from previous emergency responses such as those to the Ebola outbreak, as well as knowledge of Ethiopia's context generated through the Task Team's experience in designing the Additional Financing to the main education program, the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E). The project's activities complemented each other and were relevant to Ethiopia's current conditions; the Bank's CPF (FY18-22), in place during the project's life; the Bank's previous sector engagement; and the government's COVID-19 Education Sector Preparedness and Response Plan (which had been informed by extensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, including the federal and regional governments, development partners, and non-governmental organizations, among others). As noted in the ICR (p. 24), the project design appropriately enabled immediate actions during the closure of schools through a retroactive financing clause that allowed the government to swiftly implement actions for reducing learning losses during that time (Objective 1), while placing an emphasis on supporting the



reopening of schools and learning recovery by allocating the majority of project funding (72 percent) to the project's second objective. The project placed due emphasis on equity, ensuring that the support provided under the project would benefit areas and students most in need. More specifically, the project tried to achieve greater equity by providing SLM and radios to disadvantaged students, including specialized offline learning packages; strengthening national and regional system capacity; and investments in WASH facilities aimed to support reductions in dropout, particularly for girls (e.g. based on international evidence and as reported by school officials in Ethiopia, it was expected that the project-supported improvement of school sanitation and hygiene facilities would have particular benefits for preventing girls' dropout).

Project implementation was built on frameworks and implementation arrangements developed with the support of previous successive GPE-supported education programs. The project's financial coordination and the consolidation of related financial reports was to be carried out by the responsible for WBG-financed programs/projects Channel One Programs Coordination Directorate under the Ministry of Finance. The project was to use the existing structure of emergency Education Clusters for coordination with other COVID-19 response activities, and with other development partners, United Nations agencies, and stakeholders (PAD, p. 18).

However, there were shortcomings. Despite the lack of procurement specialists and understanding of the project's IPF modality at the regional level, it was envisaged that REBs would implement most activities with oversight from MoE (which eventually affected project implementation). Another shortcoming in the project's preparation was the lack of an outcome indicator for measuring achievement of the project's third objective (enabling education system recovery and resilience).

Quality-at-Entry Rating Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The project team was proactive in addressing implementation issues caused by internal and external challenges and was actively engaged in supporting the government in its implementation efforts. The project's ISRs were overall well documented, describing in detail implementation progress and informing project management, and were an important input to the ICR process. After schools reopened, the government and the Task Team worked together and flexibly to identify new activities that would respond to emerging needs and contribute to achievement of the PDO by focusing on support for disadvantaged students and their families who were most affected by different crises at the time, such as the pandemic, internal and external conflicts, drought, and food insecurity. For example, the retroactive financing that could not be used due to documentation issues was channeled instead to finance the provision of SLM to disadvantaged students, as well as the provision of more robust and longer-lasting materials to a smaller share of schools with shortages.

The split-level implementation of the project, with REBs implementing most activities with oversight from MoE, proved problematic during implementation in the early stage of the project due to a lack of procurement specialists and understanding of the IPF modality at the regional level. In response, following the second restructuring, the Task Team facilitated the creation of task forces from the federal to regional levels to strengthen cross-level coordination, contributing to the increased pace of implementation and



quality of documentation. In January 2022, the GPE informed the government that they would not approve the reallocation of US\$4.94 million to face masks. The Task Team then re-entered discussions with the government to urgently approve an AWPB for the outstanding activities while the issue was resolved. This was completed in March 2022, enabling disbursement of US\$1 million in reimbursement for face masks and an advance of US\$2.1 million for implementation of activities under Components 2 and 3, including training of IERC staff to support the use of radios for priority support to disadvantaged students, teacher training in delivering accelerated and remedial learning, and capacity building and supervision activities. As a result, the project's implementation progress was upgraded to Moderately Satisfactory.

In June 2022, the government proposed to reallocate the remaining unused amount to provision of SLM to disadvantaged students. This proposal was approved by GPE in September 2022, and this new activity was added at the second restructuring. In the several months between the second restructuring and the project closing, activities were implemented at an accelerated pace. The Task Team facilitated collaboration within MoE and with WASH experts to ensure a high-quality and efficient design of WASH facilities to be procured by the project. Also, the Task Team introduced weekly supervision meetings to accelerate project management and implementation, and supported implementation of regional- and federal-level capacity-building workshops to educate participants on procurement, proper documentation, and Environmental and Social (E&S) safeguard issues. Furthermore, the Task Team hired procurement consultants to support the MoE and REBs in implementing procurement-related activities. Additionally, following the second restructuring, while the majority of REBs moved quickly to implement the revised project activities, two regions, Benishangul-Gumuz Region and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, rejected the federally derived procurement plan and restarted the process of market assessments, delaying the completion of water tanker procurements and construction of handwashing facilities. The Task Team was proactive in resolving this issue as well by brokering an intervention by the Ministry of Finance, working through regional BOFEDs, whereby BOFED heads met directly with REB heads to resolve issues, which enabled initiation and acceleration of procurement and construction in these regions (ICR, pp. 30-31).

Quality of Supervision Rating

Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The theory of change as presented in Figure 1 (ICR, p. 18) was evidence-based and largely captured the key elements of the project's results chain supporting the second and third objectives, with the first objective being dropped. REBs had the main responsibility for M&E implementation, with oversight from MoE. The RF contained PDO-level indicators that were appropriate and well aligned with the project's second objective, with relevant and measurable intermediate results indicators supporting Objectives 2 and 3. At the same time, the RF had some shortcomings, including the lack of PDO-level indicators for measuring the achievement of the project's third objective, as well as a missing WBG corporate



requirement indicator at the time the project was prepared on the total number of students expected to benefit from direct interventions to enhance learning and a sub-indicator for the expected number of female student beneficiaries. These indicators were included in the RF only at the first restructuring (ICR, p. 32). The PAD identified baselines and targets, as well as data sources, frequency of reporting, data collection methodology, and responsible authorities for each indicator. Additionally, at appraisal, it was envisaged that the project's M&E would be strengthened by a high-frequency telephone survey to be conducted by the Bank. It was also envisaged (and eventually dropped) that project M&E would be complemented by a competency-based test of core subjects among a sample of students in selected grades in project-supported schools (PAD, p. 44)

b. M&E Implementation

Throughout most of the project, M&E was rated Satisfactory. There were, however, some M&E challenges at the regional level. IRI 2.4, "Percentage of children at grant-supported schools whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning during school closure," was not measured in a comprehensive and accurate way – despite assessments having been completed in the majority of schools – with the result that the indicator was still formally at zero when it was dropped at the second restructuring. Also, during the retroactive financing stage, REBs did not provide information for PDOI 1, "School age children with access to COVID-19 distance/home-based learning programs," or IRI 1.1, "Percentage of children provided access to programs and sensitization campaigns that aim at minimizing the negative impacts of school closure like psychological impacts and gender-based violence." Nevertheless, these indicators were measured using a telephone survey implemented by the Bank, which was originally intended as a secondary source for validation of the REB data (ICR, p. 32).

c. M&E Utilization

The project M&E data were used for assessing progress on project activities and indicators, keeping project implementation on track, informing the two project restructurings and reallocations, and serving as a basis for implementation support missions. Additionally, the project-supported strengthening of supervision capacity at federal and REB levels contributed to utilization of the M&E system. Also, following the second restructuring, in order to improve REBs' familiarity with the M&E design, the Task Team presented the RF and M&E findings to REB officials at a workshop that aimed to support both procurement and environmental and social management (ICR, pp. 32-33).

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The Environmental and Social (E&S) risk was rated Moderate throughout the project's life. The activities financed by the project were not expected to cause irreversible environmental and social impacts, conversion of natural habitats, degradation of biodiversity, or loss of forest resources, as neither large-scale



civil works nor construction of infrastructure took place. The project investments were expected to have positive environmental and health outcomes, as the provision of safe sanitation and hygienic conditions is essential for protecting human health during infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19, provided that water and sanitation services were safely managed and good hygiene practices were applied. The project also did not endanger cultural heritage. Potential environmental risks were associated with i) Component 2, which supported the improvement of hygiene and WASH facilities at selected schools, hand-washing stations, and buckets for hand-washing; and ii) Component 3, which financed targeted enhancements to information and communication technology infrastructure and provision of low-cost devices. The MoE undertook E&S screening for selected sites and took necessary measures to avoid and mitigate potential E&S impacts on health related to poor sanitation, stagnation of water, and soil and water contamination, among others. These measures included, for example, providing advice as per the Environment and Social Management Framework, selecting water point sites that were accessible to all users and had no major E&S concerns, ensuring that the installation of water tankers complied with safety practices, and building soakaway pits for water tanker bed construction. The Program Coordination Office E&S experts and the Task Team supervised the installation of WASH facilities in collaboration with different departments of REBs and MoE. The existing school-level Grievance Redress Mechanism for GEQIP-E supported the implementation. No incidents/accidents occurred, and none were reported to the Bank.

Also, the project did not lead to major social impacts caused by land acquisition or involuntary resettlement. Social risks were related to social exclusion of beneficiaries in remote areas and the pastoral community, people with disabilities, and/or girls; insufficient community engagement, elite capture, and social tension; and gender-based violence. No major issues related to social risks took place. The implementation of project activities was examined against the requirements indicated in the ESMF and other Environmental and Social Risk Management instruments, and it was rated Moderately Satisfactory (ICR, p. 33).

b. Fiduciary Compliance

The project's fiduciary compliance was rated Satisfactory throughout project implementation. Financial Management (FM) performance was rated Moderately Satisfactory at the last assessment made in December 2022. There were no FM activities for over a year, and thus, no financial reports or audit reports were required during that time, as there was no disbursement request due to delayed preparation of an AWPB that could be approved by the Bank, and there was a lack of adequate documentation for reimbursing expenditures made by REBs under retroactive financing. Once the initial disbursement started (in March 2022), quarterly financial reports were prepared on time, as was the first audit report of the project for the fiscal year ending July 7, 2022. The audit revealed the need to strengthen mechanisms of distribution of emergency goods, such as face masks, in an organized and traceable manner. To strengthen regional procurement capacity, a workshop was conducted under the project in August 2022, with 62 procurement and project coordination staff from the MoE and REBs. At closing, the project had disbursed 99.3 percent of the allocated funds. Out of the advance provided to the project for US\$12.2 million, documentation of expenditure was approved for US\$12.03 million. The remaining amount was expected to be returned to the Bank by September 21, 2023. Furthermore, a final financial report was submitted by UNOPS, documenting the advance of US\$500,000, out of which, as reported by the TTL, US\$110,828 was returned to the Bank. As a result, the actual final disbursement was US\$14.32 million (97.1 percent of the revised disbursed amount of US\$14.75 million). The project was also expected to submit the final audit report covering the period from July 8, 2022 to April 30, 2023, by June 30, 2023 (ICR, p. 33). As reported by the TTL in a written interview dated September 18, 2023, since the closing of



the undocumented designated account with an amount of US\$0.2 million not yet refunded by the government, the deadline for submission of the final audit report to the Bank was extended to October 31, 2023.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

Gender. International evidence suggests that a lack of sanitation in schools disproportionately affects girls' participation and learning, with some estimates suggesting that one in ten girls in Sub-Saharan Africa regularly misses school during their menstrual cycle. Therefore, the project's investments in WASH and health materials were expected to particularly benefit girls and thus contribute to gender equity. Additionally, the provision of radios to IERCs for vulnerable students was expected to particularly benefit girls, and more specifically girls from pastoralist communities and students from the poorest households with no access to radios, thus contributing to gender equity and equity in general.

11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderate shortcomings: (i) substantial achievement of the first and second objective; (ii) modest achievement of the third objective, which lacked an outcome indicator and achieved only partially its IRI; and (iii) aspects of design and implementation that reduced efficiency, including delays in implementation of key activities, procurement issues and delays, and longer than planned actual project timeframe.
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Based on moderate shortcomings in the quality at entry, mainly related to readiness for implementation at the regional level and the lack of outcome indicators for the project's third objective.



Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial

12. Lessons

Key lessons generated through this project and reported in the ICR (pp. 37-38) include:

- **Intensive Task Team support and flexibility with reallocation of funding towards more relevant and emerging needs can maximize a project’s impact.** In the case of this project, the Bank’s flexibility to reallocate the unutilized retroactive project financing, towards addressing the new needs that emerged after schools reopened, contributed to the project’s relevance and impact.
- **Where there are local implementation capacity gaps, effective decentralized implementation can be achieved through adequate support and supervision from the Bank and the government, and clear coordination between the different government levels.** Within this project, REBs conducted a number of procurements that achieved rapid supply of goods to schools but for which documentation was found to be inadequate. Following the second restructuring and the Bank’s and the government’s supervision and support for improving the REBs’ procurement capacity, the REBs were able to complete the required procurements of WASH facilities in less than four months and provide adequate procurement documentation, as confirmed by the procurement team and reported by the TTL in a written interview dated September 18, 2023. Also, during the same period, the Task Team facilitated the creation of task forces from federal to regional levels to strengthen cross-level coordination, which contributed significantly to improved pace of implementation and quality of documentation.
- **Concerted and coordinated community mobilization actions can contribute to re-enrollment.** Following the reopening of 98 percent of schools in October 2020, the project supported communication and community mobilization campaigns to encourage re-enrollment, which contributed to the re-enrollment of 92 percent of previously enrolled students by July 2021, even in remote areas.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

This ICR was well written, with its various parts logically linked and coherent. It was candid about implementation delays and provided an overall adequate and critical assessment of the project’s main achievements and shortcomings, as well as detailed explanations of the project’s changes introduced at restructuring. Key factors affecting implementation, Bank performance, and M&E were well assessed. The ICR contained a robust cost-benefit analysis and correctly opted for a split rating methodology. The lessons learned



were informative, relevant, and evidence-based, reflecting the project's specific experiences and findings. At the same time, the ICR was not in full compliance with the guidelines. Contrary to the guidelines, the ICR de-weighted the project's third objective even though the objective was not de-weighted in the Legal Agreement and the PAD. Also, there was some repetition in the ICR's presentation.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial