

# **Synthesis Existing Evaluations of Dutch Spending on Education in ODA countries**

Synthesis Report for IOB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Meerssen, 7 November 2024

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This report has been commissioned by IOB and was prepared by an external consultant. The views expressed herein are those of the consultant and do not necessarily represent those of IOB.

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## Acronyms

AF	Acceleration Facility
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDE	Directie Duurzame Economische Ontwikkeling (Sustainable Economic Development Department) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
FER	First Emergency Response
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IOB	Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie (Policy and Operations Evaluation department)
MASP	Multi-Annual Strategic Plan
MENA	Middle East North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSP	Middle East and North Africa Scholarship Programme
MTR	Mid-term Review
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NICHE	Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education
NFP	Netherlands Fellowship Programmes
NSJP	Nexus Skills and Jobs Programme
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OKP	Orange Knowledge Programme
RVO	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (Netherlands Enterprise Agency)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound
STP	Shiraka Training Programme
TMT	Tailor-Made Training
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# 1 Review context and object

## 1.1 Introduction

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsvaluatie (IOB)) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Netherlands commissioned a synthesis study on Dutch support for education in Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries. An independent consultant conducted the study. The work started at the end of January 2024 and will continue until the end of July 2024.

## 1.2 Review context

As per the Strategic Evaluation Agenda, a synthesis study on education funding was to be undertaken.<sup>1</sup> This synthesis will contribute to the Periodic Review of Article 3, Social Progress, of the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation budget, which will be completed in 2025.<sup>2</sup>

## 1.3 Object of the synthesis

### 1.3.1 Dutch development cooperation policy on education

Dutch development cooperation policy on education has several objectives: to strengthen education in ODA recipient countries to contribute to increasing opportunities and prospects for young people; to increase the number of well-trained professionals; and to promote policy-relevant research.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve these goals, the Netherlands (co-)finances a number of global and bilateral funds and programmes. Between 2015 and 2023, the total development cooperation expenditure on education was over €800 million.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.3.2 Evaluations selected for synthesis

The Periodic Review of Article 3, of which the synthesis study is one of the building blocks, will cover the period from 2015 onwards. Therefore, the study includes evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives in education, published between 1 January 2015 and 31 of December 2023. Initially, 13 evaluation reports were identified for the synthesis study under the various global and bilateral programmes and funds. These reports were assessed by IOB on the basis of IOB's Quality Criteria for Evaluations. Thirteen criteria were used to decide whether an evaluation was of sufficient methodological quality to be included in the synthesis.<sup>5</sup> Two reports were rejected as they were not sufficiently independent; one or more members of the research- and writing team had been involved in the implementation of the intervention. In addition, in accordance with the ToR (p. 9), only evaluations at the level of the programme or fund have been included in the synthesis, not evaluations of individual projects or country-cases within the programme or fund. This is of particular relevance in the case of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Many GPE evaluations are available on the GPE website.<sup>6</sup> Only two of these, the independent evaluations of 2015 and 2020, which evaluate the working and strategy of GPE as a whole, have been included in the synthesis. The other evaluations cover specific elements of GPE and/or did not meet the criteria for independent evaluations and have thus not been included.

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<sup>1</sup> Synthesis of evaluation research on major initiatives (such as Education Cannot Wait and Global Partnership for Education) to which the Netherlands has contributed financially in recent years [...] Synthesis of existing evaluations" ([Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023](#), appendix 4, p. 84.)

<sup>2</sup> IOB, 2023. Terms of Reference. A Synthesis of Existing Evaluations of Dutch Spending on Education in ODA countries

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>4</sup> Source: IOB calculations. The sum is the aggregate of actual expenditure between 1 January 2015 and 12 December 2023 on education-related programmes and projects, but it excludes subsidies of less than €5 million, which are excluded from the synthesis study.

<sup>5</sup> [IOB Quality Criteria for Evaluations](#); see Annex 1 ToR for list of criteria used and how these have informed the selection.

<sup>6</sup> See Document library | Global Partnership for Education

Therefore, 9 out of the 13 evaluations involving the aforementioned global and bilateral education programmes and funds have been selected for the synthesis study. Still, of those 9, the methodology of some of the reports was deemed insufficiently robust to answer certain research questions, such as on impact and effectiveness. Those reports have only been used to answer the other research questions. Annex 3 provides further insight into the evaluations that have been selected, with additional details and the results of the quality assessment in the last columns. **Annex 4** provides an example of the quality assessment form used for each of the reports.

The findings from these 9 evaluation reports have been assessed in this report and their results have been synthesised along the selected DAC criteria (see section 4 on methodology). The interventions that were evaluated have covered over 100 countries in total. Whilst 16 countries were covered by five out of eight programmes,<sup>7</sup> Ethiopia and Burkina Faso were the only countries that were covered by six programmes. Annex 5 provides a list with details of the programme implementation per country.<sup>8</sup> The bibliography of the documents that have been used for this study has been included at the end of the report.

## 2 Purpose of the review and research questions

### 2.1 Purpose of the review

The aim of the research is to synthesise the findings of existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries, to account for the expenditure and to inform future policy choices.

### 2.2 Research questions

The overarching questions for the synthesis are:

1. What do existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries say about the extent to which the initiatives were effective in achieving their goals and why?
2. What do existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries say about the extent to which the initiatives were relevant, coherent, efficient, and sustainable, and why this was the case?
3. Based on this, what overarching lessons can be drawn?

The sub-questions to be used are clustered around six DAC criteria and overarching principles and will include a factual description. The synthesis study has looked into the following:

1. Description of the intervention and its intervention logic<sup>9</sup>
  - a. What were the goals of the initiative?
  - b. How/with which input and activities did the initiative try to achieve the goals?
2. Effectiveness
  - a. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, was the initiative effective? That is, to what extent did the initiative achieve its goals at the output and outcome level?
  - b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the effectiveness of the initiative?
  - c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the effectiveness of the initiative?
3. Impact
  - a. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, did the initiative contribute to achieving its goals at the impact level?
  - b. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, did the initiative have any unintended effects at impact level, positive or negative?

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<sup>7</sup> Since the four GPE interventions covered the same countries, they are taken as one.

<sup>8</sup> Please consider that the list serves as an illustration of the geographical diversity. No further interpretation could be made since there is no information of sizes or duration of activities in each country.

<sup>9</sup> Reformulated from ToR "Factual description"

- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the intended or unintended impact of the initiative?
  - d. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the impact of the initiative?
4. Efficiency
- a. To what extent was the initiative efficient according to existing evaluations? That is, to what extent did it deliver its results in an economic and timely way?
  - b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the efficiency of the initiative?
  - c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the efficiency of the initiative?
5. Relevance
- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative relevant? That is, to what extent did it meet the needs of the target group, was it focused on tackling the causes of the problem, did it adapt to changes in the context to remain relevant and was the approach based on what has been proven to be effective?
  - b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the relevance of the initiative?
  - c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the relevance of the initiative?
6. Coherence
- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative coherent with other interventions? That is, to what extent did other existing interventions support, undermine or duplicate efforts of the initiative, and vice versa?
  - b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the coherence of the initiative?
  - c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the coherence of the initiative?
7. Sustainability
- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative sustainable? That is, to what extent will the benefits of the programme or fund continue, or to what extent are they likely to continue, into the future?
  - b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the (likely) sustainability of the initiative?
  - c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the (likely) sustainability of the initiative?
8. Gender<sup>10</sup>
- a. Was the intervention based on a gender analysis and was this reflected in the design and activities?
  - b. Were gender-sensitive approaches and activities considered in targeting and implementation?
  - c. Were data collection, analysis, and reporting gender disaggregated, and were questions included that looked into gendered challenges and opportunities?
  - d. Were goals and achievements at the impact level equal for men and women?
9. Overarching
- a. Based on the findings for each of the initiatives, which overarching statements can be made about the degree of effectiveness, impact, relevance, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability of the initiatives funded by the Netherlands, and about the factors that contributed to or hindered this?
  - b. Based on the findings for each of the initiatives, which overarching lessons can be drawn?

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<sup>10</sup> Gender had not been included in the research design in the ToR and the consultant added it following the proposal that was submitted.

### **3 Approach to the analysis and limitations**

This section outlines the objectives, approach, and methodology of the review, as indicated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) provided by IOB (

Annex 1).

### 3.1 Approach to the analysis

Based on the research questions, the consultant conducted an in-depth desk review of the evaluation reports that had been provided by IOB. The reports were the main source used to inform the research and the consultant used very little information from other sources (indicated in references if so). In particular, the consultant looked for information relating to the description of the intervention, the Theory of Change (ToC), log frame indicators, the findings on the selected DAC criteria for this study and the overall conclusions of the evaluation teams. The consultant integrated the above information in a findings report under each of the selected DAC criteria. The consultant conducted a comparative analysis and assessed the information for common or diverging findings. Based on this, the consultant answered the overarching questions, in the conclusions, and provided lessons learned.

The ToR suggested separate questions on factors that were conducive to or hampered the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance etc. of each of the interventions. However, the report has merged these since they are often two sides of the same coin – when the presence of a certain aspect is conducive, the absence can be equally hampering.

A description of the research phases and the workplan has been included in Annex 2.

#### 3.1.1 Limitations

The synthesis study is desk-based and relies on 9 selected evaluation reports of 10 interventions (one evaluation report covers two interventions). It considers therefore only secondary data from a single type of source, which meant that triangulation of findings through primary data collection was not possible.

In the quality assessment of the evaluation reports, a number of limitations were identified. These included the findings only being based on the perception of stakeholders, absence of external stakeholders in data collection, no assessment of contribution and/or attribution, potential preselection of documents by organisations, too little time passed to allow assessment, and lack of random selection of respondents. These limitations may have led to bias in the reported results and have some bearing on the reliability and validity of the results presented in the synthesis study.

Even though the quality and rigorousness of the studies was for the most part assessed as positive (apart from the studies being mostly perception-based), the quality of the assessment of impact was deemed limited. Where the quality and rigorousness of the studies were not assessed as positive (as was the case for the findings on impact), the consultant left these findings out of this synthesis. See annex 3 for more details on how the quality of each of the reports was assessed for each of the DAC criteria.

Additionally, the topics in the evaluation reports did not always match the information needs of the synthesis study. For instance, not all reports include the six selected DAC criteria (see Annex 3); and even when they do, some evaluations merge certain criteria, answer similar questions under different criteria,<sup>11</sup> or include different questions altogether.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, it's important to acknowledge that while the programmes may have operated in the same subject area, they vary significantly in scope and size, and also, though to a lesser extent, in terms of design. For instance, the budgets of the bilateral programmes vary between EUR 4.7 million for a period of five years and 185 million for the entire programme, and the budgets of the global funds show even more variation (Annex 3). This has allowed for designs that are different in nature, making aggregation challenging.

Lastly, given that evaluation reports are included that were published between 2015 and 2023, some of the information in the synthesis may be dated. For example, it is possible that, in

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<sup>11</sup> Topics related to coordination and collaboration appeared under relevance, coherence as well as efficiency.

<sup>12</sup> See introductory text on Coherence and Impact.

response to findings in an evaluation report of a certain programme or fund, the working of that programme or fund was adjusted. Relevant evaluation reports that may have been published after 2023 have not been included.

## **4 Findings**

### **4.1 Description of the interventions and the intervention logic**

Nearly all findings in this report are drawn from the 9 evaluation reports and are referenced in short form in the table below, with the page number if relevant. Where other sources have been used, the full reference has been included. Table 1 provides an overview of the programmes targeted by the evaluations under consideration (full details can be found in Annex 3).

**Table 1: Interventions under the synthesis study and their high-level objectives**

	Project name	Duration	Short name	Budget <sup>13</sup>	Goal/objectives
<b>Multilateral funds</b>					
1	Global Partnership for Education (Evaluation 2015)	Ongoing since 2003	GPE Eva 1	Not in report	Objectives <sup>14</sup> 1. Fragile and conflict affected states able to develop and implement their education plans. 2. All girls in GPE-endorsed countries successfully complete primary school and go to secondary school in a safe, supportive learning environment. 3. Dramatic increase in the number of children learning and demonstrating mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills by Grade 3. 4. Improve teacher effectiveness by training, recruiting and retaining teachers and supporting them to provide a good quality education. 5. Expand the volume, effectiveness efficiency and equitable allocation of external and domestic funding and support to education in GPE-endorsed countries.
2	Global Partnership for Education (Evaluation 2020)	Ongoing since 2003	GPE Eva 2		Objectives <sup>15</sup> 1. Strengthen education sector planning and implementation 2. Support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring 3. Ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support 4. Mobilize more and better financing 5. Build a stronger partnership
3	Education Cannot Wait First Emergency Response Funding modality	Ongoing since 2016	ECW FER	Not in report	Purpose <sup>16</sup> 1. To restore the education function, especially access to and equitable inclusion in education. Objective <sup>17</sup> 1. To deliver rapid funding to restore education in emergencies
4	Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Plan modality		ECW MYRP		Collective outcomes <sup>18</sup> Attract predictable, multi-year funding that: 1. Promotes holistic learning outcomes. 2. Bridges the humanitarian – development nexus. 3. Aligns with existing plans and strategies. 4. Is based on joint analysis and programming.

<sup>13</sup> In million Euro

<sup>14</sup> GPE Eva 1, p.16

<sup>15</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 3

<sup>16</sup> ECW FER p.1

<sup>17</sup> ECW FER p.15

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/multi-year-resilience-programme-myrp-manual>"

					5. Acts as a finance and advocacy tool
5	Education Cannot Wait Acceleration Facility		ECW AF		Objectives <sup>19</sup> 1. Identify, foster and scale up innovations in programming and financing. 2. Strengthen systemic capacity at national, regional and global levels to prepare for and respond to sudden onset and protracted crises.
<b>Bilateral programmes</b>					
6	Middle East and North Africa Scholarship Programme	July 2013- June 2019	MSP	4.671 (2013-2017)	Objectives <sup>20</sup> 1. Individual and institutional capacity building 2. Creation and expansion of a network of alumni. (Contribute to sustainable transition in the Arab region)
7	Nexus Skills and Jobs Programme	2019-2024	NSJP	104.5	Aims <sup>21</sup> 1. Connect skills development with job opportunities, in a manner that integrates demand, supply and matching. 2. Provide the target groups of young men and women with foundational, transferable and technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills that allow to bridge gaps between education and work, boost employment or self-employment opportunities. Outcomes: 1. Empowerment through increased skills Increased opportunities for economic participation, including employment and self-employment
8	Netherlands Fellowship Programmes II and Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education II	NFP II 2013-2021 NICHE II 2014-2021 Last NFP II applications April 17	NFP NICHE	150.8	NFP II Overall aim <sup>22</sup> 1. To help alleviate quantitative and qualitative shortages of skilled manpower at mid-career level in developing countries NFP II Specific aim <sup>23</sup> 2. To sustainably strengthen post-secondary education and training capacity in developing countries, so as to give them a better chance of generating their own training institutes and manpower in the longer term NICHE II Specific aim <sup>24</sup> 1. To improve quality, relevance and gender sensitiveness of post-secondary education NFP II and NICHE II <sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> ECW ACF, p. 213

<sup>20</sup> MSP, p. 9

<sup>21</sup> NSJP, p. 1

<sup>22</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 2

<sup>23</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 1

<sup>24</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 6

<sup>25</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 62

					1. Contribute to objectives as set in the bilateral programmes as implemented or coordinated by the Netherlands embassies and to economic diplomacy.
9	Orange Knowledge Programme	Mid 2017- mid 2024	OKP	185	Objectives <sup>26</sup> 1. Contribute to sustainable and inclusive development by strengthening organisations that are key to sectoral development in OKP partner countries

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<sup>26</sup> OKP, p. 8

### What were the goals/objectives and inputs/activities of the assessed initiatives?

The interventions use different names to describe their high-level intervention goals, such as objectives, purpose, aim, and issues to address (Table 1). Even where the same terminology is used, Table 1 demonstrates that the content and level of detail of the goals vary considerably. One key difference between the two multilateral funds and the bilateral programmes is the level at which they are active. For the two multilateral funds under consideration, the goals are broader and aimed at national level improvements, for instance in terms of education planning, civil society strengthening, education functioning and political will. This, in turn, is intended to lead to improvements for individuals receiving education. The goals and activities of the bilateral programmes are mostly formulated at the level of institutional and individual capacity building, such as strengthened education institutions and skills development of individuals. This, in turn, is intended to lead to improvements at a higher-level, such as contributing to sustainable and inclusive development in the partner countries.

In addition, the planned goals, objectives, and results of the initiatives broadly range from improvements related to the education sector at country levels such as more financing and national education sector planning (especially for the multilateral funds) to capacity building of government partners and educational institutions (for all programmes) and capacity building of individuals and improving bilateral relations with the Netherlands (for the bilateral programmes). Some interventions mainly target education during humanitarian crises<sup>27</sup> or in countries in protracted crises,<sup>28</sup> whilst others do not. These differing aims and contexts require tailored approaches and programme designs, with corresponding objectives. Below is a concise description of the interventions that are part of the synthesis.

All of the initiatives have a role as “re-granter” and are not engaged in direct implementation. Organisations<sup>29</sup> and/or individuals<sup>30</sup> have to apply to the managing body or organisation for funding or grants for projects, activities or scholarships (for short courses or longer studies) that comply with predefined conditions and requirements. Multilateral funds tend to be larger in scale in terms of number of target countries and have a greater involvement from national governments.

### Global Partnership for Education

Two of the evaluations concerned the global fund “Global Partnership for Education” (GPE),<sup>31</sup> which is currently the largest global fund and partnership for education and is co-founded by the Netherlands. The fund is hosted by the World Bank. This initiative supports national governments<sup>32</sup> in around 90 countries in reforming primary and secondary education.

The Global Partnership for Education is a multilateral global partnership established in 2002 as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.<sup>33</sup> With its member countries, the partnership seeks to strengthen national education plans, improve aid effectiveness, coordinate donor support, and galvanize financing to achieve the Education for All goals. The Global Partnership comprises developing country partners, bilateral and multilateral donor and development agencies, as well as civil society organizations, private sector bodies, and philanthropic foundations.

The Partnership functions at both the country and global level with the intent to facilitate mutual positive influence between the two. Global level activities aim to support financially, guide, align, and assist GPE efforts at the country level. GPE does so by contributing to the availability of external financing, supporting collaboration and participation of national and international stakeholders, making available global knowledge on education policy processes. At the time of

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<sup>27</sup> ECW FER

<sup>28</sup> ECW MYRP and ECW ACF

<sup>29</sup> GPE and ECW programmes, NSJP and OKP

<sup>30</sup> MSP, NICHE, NFP and OKP

<sup>31</sup> [Global Partnership for Education](#)

<sup>32</sup> By providing funds through grant agents

<sup>33</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 6

the GPE evaluations, at country level, GPE provided technical assistance for education sector reform efforts and financial and technical support to member countries for the development and implementation of sound Education Sector Plans, strengthening Local Education Groups Reviews, and activities towards the achievement of national education goals and objectives.<sup>34</sup> The information presented here may in some instances no longer apply, as GPE updated its strategy in response to the 2020 evaluation".<sup>35</sup>

### Education Cannot Wait

Three of the evaluations concerned “Education Cannot Wait”. Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is a pooled global fund hosted by UNICEF.<sup>36</sup> The fund focuses on education in emergency situations, such as conflict, natural disasters, and epidemics. The fund provides emergency aid while also focusing on long-term solutions, aiming to prevent a 'lost generation'. Some donors (not the Netherlands) have specifically earmarked their contributions. In 2016, the ECW Fund was launched as a new funding mechanism to link humanitarian and development efforts made by various actors, to deliver a more collaborative and rapid response to education challenges in humanitarian crises. These actors include governments, the United Nations, bilateral and other public donors, NGOs, the private sector, philanthropy organizations, as well as affected communities. The ECW offers funding in three types of situations, referred to as three “funding windows”:

- The First Emergency Response (FER) investment window supports education programmes immediately in sudden onset or escalating emergencies.
- The Multi-Year Resilience Program (MYRP) investment window addresses longer-term needs through multi-year joint programmes in countries affected by protracted crises. This enables humanitarian and development actors to work together on delivering collective education outcomes.
- The Acceleration Facility (AF) invests in strategic initiatives that are to tackle systemic barriers to the effective provision of inclusive, quality education in emergencies and protracted crises. These are: insufficient funding; weak political will; policies and programmatic guidance; a lack of up-to-date quality data and analysis; and inadequate response and coordination capacities. The rationale is that the AF would contribute to the broader ECW strategy of addressing key systemic barriers to the delivery of high-quality education services in crises and complement the objectives of the FER and the MYRP.

The majority of ECW funding is allocated to support country-level programming through the FER and MYRP.

### Bilateral programmes

Four evaluations concerned five Dutch bilateral programmes. Four of those (not the Nexus Skills and Jobs Programme) focus on higher education/TVET (technical and vocational education and training).

The Nexus Skills and Jobs<sup>37</sup> programme is a fund for activities that aims to promote connections between education and employment. The budget is allocated through Dutch embassies in nine countries in focus regions.<sup>38</sup> It concentrates on supporting skills development that are suitable

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<sup>34</sup> GPE Eva 1, p.9

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/what-we-do/transforming-education> and <https://www.globalpartnership.org/what-we-do/how-we-work#our-approach>

<sup>36</sup> ECW is furthermore governed by its independent Executive Committee consisting of its donors and core partners, as well as overseen by the High-Level Steering Group. ECW is managed by the fund's Secretariat.

<sup>37</sup> In the name of this programme, “Nexus” indicates that the programme has interconnected results and links to sustainable development. This needs to be distinguished from the concept “nexus” (not capitalized) that is also used in this report, which refers to the humanitarian-development nexus.

<sup>38</sup> [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023](#), p. 44.

to created job opportunities. The Nexus Skills and Jobs programme consists of various projects in each target country. These projects aims to contribute to both skills development and the creation of job opportunities, including employment and self-employment. Under the NSJP, young women's and men's skills are strengthened in training, and they are supported in engaging in income generating activities, either through an employer or independently.<sup>39</sup> Support to increase access to finance and markets, enhanced skills and better information for entrepreneurs and SMEs, are meant to lead to increased business creation, expansion of businesses and more jobs among youth.<sup>40</sup>

The other four programmes were/are all managed by the same organisation, Nuffic.

The Middle East North Africa (MENA) scholarship programme (MSP)<sup>41</sup> is a programme for higher education aimed at the Middle East and North Africa. It grants scholarships to people from the Arab region. The aim is to use capacity building to contribute to a sustainable transition in the region, which includes support to democratisation, the rule of law and sustainable economic growth. The programme is aimed at mid-career professionals of up to 45 years of age, who are employed in governmental organisations, knowledge institutions, NGOs or the private sector in selected countries in the MENA region. The scholarships were for short courses and tailor-made training.

Two programmes for postsecondary education are covered in one evaluation: the Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE) and Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP).<sup>42</sup> The overall aim of both NFP and NICHE was to help reduce quantitative and qualitative shortages of trained professional staff in developing countries and to build sustainable capacity within the poverty reduction framework. NICHE aimed at building the institutional capacity of higher education and TVET organisations in partner countries. It did so by funding institutional collaboration projects that offered support for, amongst others, management development, staff development, curriculum development and investments in facilities such as libraries, laboratories and IT.<sup>43</sup>

NFP was a scholarship programme for people from partner countries to study in the Netherlands. It ran from 2002 to 2017, referred to as 'NFP II' in later years. NFP provided grants for individual scholarships and tailor-made trainings for working people from developing countries. These people could be working for a wide range of employers, such as education and research institutions, the government, small and medium-sized enterprises, network organisations and NGOs. Individual scholarships were for people to study in the Netherlands; tailor-made training could take place in the Netherlands and people's own geographical region. NFP also included an alumni programme. The evaluation included in the synthesis looks at NFP II and NICHE II, which started in 2014.

Finally, there is the Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP), the successor of the above NICHE and NFP programmes. OKP utilizes four types of interventions: i) Institutional Collaboration Projects to support capacity development of educational institutions; ii) Group Training through Tailor-Made Training (TMT) and refresher courses for professionals working in policy priority areas; iii) Individual Scholarships for professionals to study in the Netherlands; and iv) an Alumni programme.<sup>44</sup>

**Error! Reference source not found.** provides a quick insight into the timelines of the interventions under consideration; more details can be found in Annex 3.

### Chart 1: Timelines and date of evaluation report for evaluations under synthesis

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<sup>39</sup> NSJP, p. 1 and p. 68

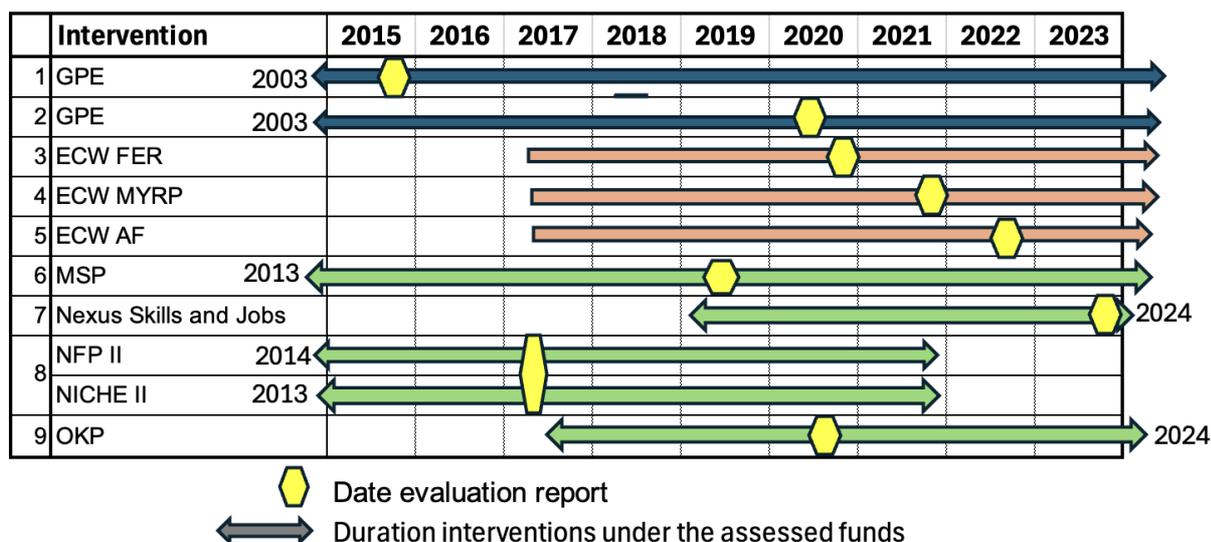
<sup>40</sup> NSJP, p. 13

<sup>41</sup> [MENA Scholarship Programme | Nuffic](#)

<sup>42</sup> [NFP and NICHE | Nuffic](#)

<sup>43</sup> [Nuffic Annual Report 2021](#)

<sup>44</sup> OKP, p. 9



#### 4.1 Effectiveness

Effectiveness was covered in all selected evaluation reports. Nonetheless, the MSP and the OKP evaluations are not covered in this section (see Annex 3, last column, for inclusion criteria). For NFP and NICHE,<sup>45</sup> impact was also dealt with under effectiveness but in this synthesis study the consultant, as per the requirements of the ToR, opted to single out impact as separate criterion. Under effectiveness, the evaluations measured achievements against planned objectives, and further along the results chain into outcomes and sometimes outputs. In particular achievements in the area of attracting financial resources, capacity building and planning were assessed.

**To what extent was the initiative effective? To what extent did the initiative achieve its goals at output and outcome level?**

In terms of achieving objectives, for the GPE, the evaluations that were included in this synthesis rated the effectiveness from limited to mixed and good, with improving effectiveness over the years. For the ECW, the evaluations assess the effectiveness of all three programmes reasonably positively, although not every evaluation assesses all aspects or objectives.

In the bilateral programmes, evaluators' assessments also varied considerably. For NSJP, objectives were partially achieved, the assessment was positive for employability but less so for linking trained youth to employment. The evaluation of NFP deemed the programme to have been effective at the individual as well as the organisational level. The evaluation of NICHE only looked at output level (which was assessed good) since the activities had only recently started. MSP and OKP were not assessed for effectiveness due to quality issues in their evaluation reports for this criterion.

The multilateral funds had increased the visibility of needs in the education sector, which helped making resources available. The multilateral funds were reported to have used capacity building to achieve their objectives and results at country and organisational level. For the bilateral funds, NFP was reported to have used capacity building to achieve objectives at individual and organisational level, whereas under NSJP, this was mainly at individual level, and less so at organisational level, even though this had been the aim as well.

<sup>45</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 26 and p. 62

## Achievements against objectives

### Effectiveness in the multilateral funds

#### **Global Partnership for Education**

For the GPE, the objectives can be found in Table 1; they have not remained the same but have evolved over time. The GPE evaluation reports assess the effectiveness against these objectives, and planning and achievement of outcomes is not described.

##### *GPE – General effectiveness*

In the first GPE evaluation that is part of this synthesis study (from 2015), the evaluators perceived progress to be limited because the GPE did not have sufficient funding to achieve its objectives.<sup>46</sup> They deemed the partnership to have “insufficiently defined how it will translate its mission of galvanizing and coordinating global efforts to deliver a good quality education into practice”.<sup>47</sup> Related to objective 1,<sup>48</sup> the GPE had made several attempts to cultivate and share knowledge, tools and best practices to help strengthen partner capacity, but with mixed results.<sup>49</sup> GPE helped strengthen education sector planning processes and contributed financially to the implementation of sector plans, but data was insufficient to assess the GPE’s longer term effects on national capacities for education sector planning and implementation. For a number of other objectives, evidence was not available either, notably those related to “all girls in GPE-endorsed countries successfully complete primary school” (objective 2) and “dramatic increase in the number of children learning and demonstrating mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills” (objective 3). Hence, effectiveness against these objectives could not be assessed.<sup>50</sup> As for the fifth objective on increased and more equitable allocation of funding, the evaluation found that by 2012, the GPE had established itself as the fifth largest financier of basic education, disbursing US\$ 354 million. Nonetheless, it did not find strong evidence to suggest that the GPE had generated significant additional donor funding for basic education. The evaluation did not elaborate on the achievement of objective 4 on teacher training.

In the 2020 report, evaluators found that the GPE’s achievement of objectives had been mixed to good. The evaluation saw sufficient results in creating more inclusive policy development processes (objective 2) resulting in good quality Education Sector plans (objective 1). GPE’s effectiveness towards Education Sector Plan implementation and its subsequent contribution to more effective and efficient education systems had remained a challenge though. Furthermore, at global level, targets for more financing had been achieved but progress in better financing had remained a challenge (objective 4). Related to objective 5, building a stronger partnership, the programme exceeded its targets.<sup>51</sup> (see Table 1 for objectives and numbering).

Below are a number of cross-cutting findings on effectiveness across the two GPE evaluations.

##### *GPE – Capacity building*

In both evaluations, GPE reported achievements in terms of capacity building at the levels of government, institutions, and individuals. Reforms since 2010 have positively impacted GPE contributions to strengthening country capacity for education sector planning,<sup>52</sup> even though technical capacity gaps within complex government systems for the delivery of education and data collection remained a constraint.<sup>53</sup> As per objective 5, which supports the main objectives

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<sup>46</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 9

<sup>47</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. x

<sup>48</sup> Fragile and conflict affected states able to develop and implement their education plans.

<sup>49</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 37

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 5

<sup>52</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 62

<sup>53</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 54

1-3,<sup>54</sup> GPE also fostered partnership building among actors at country level.<sup>55</sup> At the country level, the evaluation reports that GPE has been effective in creating more inclusive policy development processes.<sup>56</sup> In terms of planning, the first evaluation of GPE reports that the programme strengthened education sector planning processes and financially contributed to the implementation of sector plans.<sup>57</sup>

#### *GPE – Increasing visibility and availability of resources*

GPE had visibility and increasing the availability of resources for education as an important supportive aim, to help attract more financial resources for education, another aim of the GPE.<sup>58</sup> The evaluations of GPE achievements reported that the GPE had indeed enhanced the global visibility of education.<sup>59</sup> The GPE allocated an increasingly high proportion of its resources to fragile and conflict-affected states, mitigating the impact of the global decline in aid to basic education in these settings.<sup>60</sup> However, while targets for increased financing have been met, progress in improving financing (harmonization and alignment) remains limited.<sup>61</sup>

#### **Education Cannot Wait**

The ECW FER evaluation found that at global level the replenishment financing model has worked well (which is relevant to its objective: “To deliver rapid funding to restore education in emergencies”). At country level, one of the ECW evaluations found that FERs united stakeholders, especially in new emergencies, when there was strong leadership and capacity at country level.<sup>62</sup> In protracted emergencies, FER processes tend to initially reinforce poor cluster leadership dynamics, but ultimately strengthen coordination. This is relevant to the programme’s purpose: “To restore the education function, especially access to and equitable inclusion in education”.<sup>63</sup> As for one of the intended global outputs,<sup>64</sup> the evaluation of ECW FER also found that the fund had contributed to developing the coordination capacities of education in emergency groups, grantees, and local state actors. Especially in new emergencies, FERs strengthened the capacities of grantees to plan, implement and monitor responses.<sup>65</sup>

For the ECW MYRP, the evaluation did not set out to report on the extent to which goals in terms of education participation and levels of learning had been achieved. They remarked that it had been difficult to attribute achievements against all objectives to the ECW in general and the ECW MYRP in particular. They did find that the MYRP has promoted joint, inclusive, and evidence-based planning and coordination across the humanitarian–development nexus, particularly in contexts where there is strong government engagement, existing capacity at country level, and effective humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms. Moreover, they found that the modality had increased attention to and data about access and learning outcomes for internally displaced persons, refugees, and other vulnerable groups.<sup>66</sup> Assessing the extent to which funding has been attracted however proved difficult for the evaluation. Funding was mobilised through various means at global and country levels, but there is a lack of clarity about how much of it is ‘new’ financing that the MYRP has brought in

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<sup>54</sup> GPE Eva 1, p.18

<sup>55</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 21

<sup>56</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 5

<sup>57</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. xii

<sup>58</sup> The GPE Strategic Plan 2012-2015 notes that the Partnership aimed to increase the visibility not only of education in general, but specifically the role of education as a key “strategy for the health, wealth and stability of nations.”, GPE 1 p. 41

<sup>59</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 41

<sup>60</sup> GPE, Eva 1, p. 53

<sup>61</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 25

<sup>62</sup> ECW FER, p. v

<sup>63</sup> ECW FER, p. 4 & 5

<sup>64</sup> ECW FER, p. 114

<sup>65</sup> ECW FER, p. 81

<sup>66</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 4 & 5

as additional resources.<sup>67</sup> Within the ECW MYRP projects, the increased participation of donors and foundations on the Executive Committee effectively restored access to improved education and facilitated reaching more conflict-affected boys and girls.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst the ECW AF has its own objectives, the evaluation did not explicitly assess the results against those objectives. For objective 1, “Identify, foster and scale up innovations in programming and financing”, the evaluation did not provide a clear assessment at all. In relation to objective 2,<sup>69</sup> the evaluators reported that ECW had made definite contributions to strengthening systemic capacities for planning of education in emergencies at both global and country levels, but that strengthening local partner capacity had not received enough attention across ECW modalities of the Acceleration Facility.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the ECW strategy was intended to strengthen coordination in education, and the evaluation found evidence of success, particularly among established actors in education.<sup>71</sup>

## Effectiveness in the bilateral programmes

### **Nexus Skills and Jobs Programme**

The Nexus programme is so different in nature from the other programmes, that it is challenging to compare results. Whereas the other interventions under assessment focused primarily on education, NSJP aimed to stimulate local economies, the broader economic environment, and thereby the entrepreneurial ecosystems in order to create more youth employment.

However, levels of investment by the projects under NSJP varied from country to country and were deemed insufficient according to the evaluation.<sup>72</sup> The evaluators suggested that improvements be made in terms of market responsiveness, quality and institutionalisation of the skills programme to better achieve the goals. While respondents believed that the programme contributed to empowerment through increased skills of individuals, they perceived that the effect on increased opportunities for economic participation was less strong.<sup>73</sup> Still, the majority of beneficiaries reported that they gained better employment opportunities and higher monthly incomes after taking part in the programme, across all countries where case studies were conducted.<sup>74</sup>

Overall, the evaluation of the NSJP rated effectiveness as mixed. The evaluators found more evidence for empowerment through increased skills (outcome 1). The youth beneficiaries were generally positive about being empowered by the received training,<sup>75</sup> although disappointments were expressed in terms of duration, quality, and lack of post-training support to find employment or be self-employed.<sup>76</sup> The evaluation found less evidence for increased opportunities for economic participation (outcome 2), which includes employment and self-employment, and concluded that the results achieved so far under this outcome were weak, with few investments in increasing absorption capacities. Thus, whereas the NSJP had contributed to enhancing youth competencies and employability, results in terms of market responsiveness and quality of enhanced skills was limited. Also, evaluators found that stronger institutionalisation of the skills programmes was needed to enable effectiveness of NSJP.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> ECW MYRP, P. 16

<sup>68</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 16

<sup>69</sup> Strengthen systemic capacity at national, regional and global levels to prepare for and respond to sudden onset and protracted crises.

<sup>70</sup> ECW AF, p. 10

<sup>71</sup> ECW AF, p. 30

<sup>72</sup> NSJP, p. 52

<sup>73</sup> NSJP, p. 19

<sup>74</sup> NSJP, p. 51

<sup>75</sup> NSJP, p. 68

<sup>76</sup> NSJP, p. ii & iii

<sup>77</sup> NSJP, p. 69

## **NFP and NICHE**

For the bilateral programmes working in the area of postsecondary education, only the evaluations of NFP and NICHE were included.<sup>78</sup> For NICHE, the evaluation found that projects had been especially effective in producing outputs with regard to staff training, curricula development and investments in skill-building, thereby in contributing to the development of human resources and teaching skills.<sup>79</sup> As the projects had only run for 16 months at the time of the evaluation, the evaluators did not provide an assessment at the level of other objectives.<sup>80</sup>

As for NFP, the evaluators found the programme to be effective at individual level and the level of employing organisations.<sup>81</sup> An increasing proportion of trainees had completed their short and master courses. The evaluators reported that the NFP training had led to improvement of participants' professional knowledge and skills. As for results at organisation level, on average 76% of the 2015 tracer study respondents in the case study countries of the evaluation had remained with their NFP nominating organisations. Many interviewed alumni acknowledged to have transferred the knowledge they gained from NFP training at moderate or strong pace and having applied the acquired knowledge in their work.<sup>82</sup> This had contributed to the aim of NFP, to help alleviate quantitative and qualitative shortages of skilled manpower at mid-career level in developing countries.

The evaluation perceived that for NICHE and NFP, strengthening capacities at the individual level had been effective, but results for organisational capacity building under NICHE were less clear. On the other hand, the programmes were perceived to have contributed little to economic diplomacy or private sector development.<sup>83</sup>

### **What factors have contributed to or hampered the effectiveness of the initiative?**

Project management had its bearing on effectiveness, in particular having good structures, and providing clarity about roles, responsibilities, and processes, and design. Implementation-related factors, such as too short duration and quality of training also affected effectiveness. Additionally, evaluators found having a well-defined ToC and a high-quality results framework essential for tracking progress and providing information for potentially necessary adaptations. While most interventions had a solid ToC as their foundation, evaluations included quite some points of criticism regarding the monitoring frameworks. Moreover, the effectiveness of the initiatives was also influenced by external factors such as COVID-19.

### **Project management and design and implementation-related factors**

Evaluators found that the quality of the management of the intervention had an important influence on the effectiveness. The presence of good structures, providing clarity about roles, responsibilities, and processes for performance and financial monitoring and oversight at global and country level, was seen as conducive to effectiveness, while inadequate definition of responsibilities was a hampering factor.<sup>84</sup>

Implementation-related issues such as insufficient duration and quality of training in bilateral programmes were also brought up as hampering effectiveness.<sup>85</sup> Under MSP and OKP, though effectiveness itself was not described in this synthesis since IOB did not rate the evaluations' methodology as adequate, the factors brought up by the evaluations that hamper effectiveness are nonetheless interesting. The evaluations found that lack of trained staff in the partner organisations to use and maintain new equipment, as well as difficulties in identifying qualified

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<sup>78</sup> The IOB quality assessment found that for the OKP evaluation, too little time had passed to say anything about effectiveness and that the approach of both the MSP and the OKP evaluation had been insufficiently robust to produce credible findings in the area of effectiveness

<sup>79</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 39

<sup>80</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 26

<sup>81</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 76

<sup>82</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 62

<sup>83</sup> NFP NICHE, p.71

<sup>84</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 35

<sup>85</sup> NSJP, p. 96

candidates for academic training abroad, and lengthy accreditation phases for new curricula had been affecting effective implementation.<sup>86</sup>

In the MSP evaluation, embassies highlighted difficulties for the programme in engaging employers and ensuring that trainings fit their overall capacity building strategies.<sup>87</sup> As a result of the MSP not having a formalised alumni policy, the evaluation perceived embassies' lack of close relationships with alumni to also hamper results.<sup>88</sup> In addition, applications for scholarships under MSP were sometimes motivated more by individual/personal interests than by organisational or country needs.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, alumni that took part in a short-term training in the Netherlands were not always applying the knowledge they had learned, due to changes in jobs or career shifts,<sup>90</sup> or due to immediate continuation of studies or irrelevance of knowledge to the employers.<sup>91</sup> For NFP, the high competition of applications and the limited level of strategic selection of nominated candidates from a large number of countries remained a bottleneck for both the engaged educational institutes and the Netherlands embassies.<sup>92</sup>

Respondents of the OKP evaluation perceived that capacity-building requires a longer-term and flexible approach, that considers political, cultural, and social forces involving many individuals and entities. The evaluation perceived that the current timeframe was too short to effectively obtain sustainable changes at organisational and institutional change. The majority of OKP implementers experienced the short timeframe of OKP implementation to be frustrating.<sup>93</sup> In OKP, involving TVET institutes was encouraged, but in practice this was experienced as challenging. Stakeholders of the Institutional Collaboration Projects, one of the elements of OKP, perceived that Dutch TVET organisations had so far focused on delivering graduates to work in the Netherlands or in the region, with limited capacity (staff and language) and ambition regarding internationalization.<sup>94</sup>

### **Lacking a good quality ToC hampers measuring effectiveness**

The presence of a good-quality ToC was often highlighted as an important aspect for all kinds of interventions. In one programme, the absence of such a ToC was flagged as a weakness, because the intervention struggled to translate its goals into actionable steps for lack of a framework that described the steps in between.<sup>95</sup> Conversely, in other evaluations, having a good ToC at the core of an intervention was seen as conducive to effectiveness, as it outlines the connection between outputs, outcomes and objectives and contains a clear logic.<sup>96</sup>

The lack of a ToC had negatively affected one intervention's ability to demonstrate progress towards results (and hence assess effectiveness)<sup>97</sup> and was linked to the presence or absence of a well-defined and functional results framework. If the framework does not use appropriate indicators, it will not be possible to collect adequate information on progress and achievements.<sup>98</sup> For some interventions, the evaluators deemed the monitoring framework to be fit for purpose, with a sound design and useful monitoring paths. In the case of ECW MYRP, indicators were not always well formulated or suitable, which made it difficult to measure positive findings and report on them.<sup>99</sup> The ECW AF used indicators that were developed for FER and MYRP, which presented a challenge to assessing the AF's expected results as the majority did

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<sup>86</sup> OKP, p. 38

<sup>87</sup> MSP, p. 30

<sup>88</sup> MSP, p. 32

<sup>89</sup> MSP, p. 59

<sup>90</sup> OKP, p. 46

<sup>91</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 67

<sup>92</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 61

<sup>93</sup> OKP, p. 43

<sup>94</sup> OKP, p. 50

<sup>95</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 20

<sup>96</sup> GPE Eva 2, p.8; ECW FER, p.77; and OKP, p. 39

<sup>97</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 81

<sup>98</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 34

<sup>99</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 21

not apply to AF grants and their objectives.<sup>100</sup> For the ECW FER, insufficiently systematic in-year reporting to the Executive Committee was flagged as an issue, and improvement would potentially raise development donor support for the mechanism.<sup>101</sup>

For MSP, the evaluation remarked that measuring the contribution to a sustainable transition in the region was difficult and lacked evidence-based support. One of the reasons was that the choice and formulation of objectives was deemed to be difficult to measure and evidence was hence not available.<sup>102</sup> In the OKP, while the monitoring framework was overall of good quality, respondents highlighted that the targets set for the projects were sometimes too ambitious<sup>103</sup> and that using NUFFIC's reporting system was very complicated.<sup>104</sup>

### External factors

Respondents brought up external factors that influenced effectiveness, such as the absence of conflict, other security issues, and fragility and the presence of rule of law.<sup>105</sup> Socio-economic features like high population density, and low ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity appeared to be enabling factors for implementation.<sup>106</sup>

OKP, being implemented later than the other interventions, experienced considerable delays due to COVID-19<sup>107</sup>, and so did ECW MYRP.<sup>108</sup>

## 4.2 Impact

Under impact, evaluations measure the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. There are only a few evaluations that set out to measure impact, and the quality assessment prior to the synthesis study had indicated that in none of the reports, the methodology had been sufficiently robust to measure impact in a reliable manner. This synthesis study therefore cannot say to what extent the initiatives contributed to achieving their goals at impact level.

[To what extent, according to existing evaluations, did the initiative contribute to achieving its goals at impact level?](#)

In most of the evaluation reports, impact was not measured, and in those that measured it, the methodological quality was insufficiently robust, which aligns with the finding of the pre-study quality assessments. Hence, this synthesis study cannot report on the extent to which the initiatives contributed to achieving their goals at impact level.

In evaluations of interventions in emergency settings (in this case ECW), impact is rarely assessed, because a large part of such interventions is focused on addressing immediate needs. Additionally, for a credible measurement of impact, a sizeable study is needed, ideally with a baseline, an endline, and a counterfactual. These are very resource-intensive and methodologically complicated exercises. The OKP and NFP/NICHE evaluations intentionally assessed impact (as part of effectiveness) but did not include such elements but relied primarily on stakeholder interviews (and sometimes beneficiary interviews) and desk review.

[To what extent did the initiative have any unintended effects at impact level, positive or negative?](#)

Some positive unintended effects have been reported, most of these related to the intervention positively influencing and enhancing the effect of activities of others. Negative side effects were

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<sup>100</sup> ECW AF, p. 147

<sup>101</sup> ECW FER, p. iv

<sup>102</sup> MSP, p. 30

<sup>103</sup> OKP, p. 31

<sup>104</sup> OKP, p. 42

<sup>105</sup> GPE Eva 2, p 30, NSJP, p. 74

<sup>106</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 31

<sup>107</sup> OKP, p. 41

<sup>108</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 12

seen in terms of funding replacement, and the effect on conflict dynamics. The latter was reported in the NSJP evaluation, where respondents perceived that an uneven coverage of all IDPs' communities and districts had created a sentiment of exclusion. Nonetheless, with impact not being reliably measured in those evaluations, the value of these findings is only anecdotal.

For ECW FER, positive side effects included enhancing the impact of activities of other partners through ECW's exchange and sharing of experience with and between education stakeholders, and effects at sector level such as improved understanding of the sector needs among grantees of the fund. Spill-over effects were also noted, such as jobs for local communities.<sup>109</sup> As for negative effects, in ECW FER, grantees raised concerns that FER grants might displace other potential education in emergency funding.<sup>110</sup>

For NICHE, some southern universities that had been supported under the programme aimed to support other southern universities in developing similar programmes for students.<sup>111</sup> Also, Dutch service providers mentioned that good multidisciplinary collaboration under a NICHE project was seen as the basis for prolonged collaboration.<sup>112</sup>

In the Nexus programme, nearly half of the beneficiary and stakeholder respondents reported unintended effects on conflict dynamics. A light review as part of the evaluation brought out that in the case study countries, notably in Somalia and Somaliland, the respondents found that the project had an uneven coverage of all IDPs' communities and districts, creating a sentiment of exclusion and conflict in the community.<sup>113</sup>

### 4.3 Efficiency

Under efficiency, evaluations examine various aspects, not all of them related to cost effectiveness, which is often deemed to be the most important part of efficiency. Most programmes include the use of efficient processes, templates and human resources, and overall efficient management. Timeliness is also a focus, addressing both the implementation of activities and the disbursement of funds. Lastly, evaluations look into governance and oversight, and a few include transparency.

**To what extent was the initiative efficient and did it deliver its results in an economic and timely way?**

Findings on efficiency were generally positive, with some exceptions. Process and management received positive evaluations in almost all cases. Where interventions had not been timely, the reason was mostly found outside of the programme's scope of control, such as procurement complications. Under GPE and ECW, some respondents felt it too early to assess value for money. Though evaluators were generally positive about the relation between funds spent and achievements made, they did not provide clear conclusions related to cost efficiency and cost effectiveness. Governance was mostly assessed as positive or improved since previous evaluations.

### Processes and management

#### Multilateral funds

The evaluations generally portrayed the efficiency of the interventions in a positive light, even though none of the evaluation reports incorporated provided clear conclusions on cost efficiency or cost effectiveness. Regarding timeliness, under the GPE, grant implementation was deemed efficient, with the majority of grants progressing as planned. However, some delays in

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<sup>109</sup> ECW FER, p. 164

<sup>110</sup> ECW FER, p. 44

<sup>111</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 32

<sup>112</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 32 and p. 44

<sup>113</sup> As an example, a project in Somaliland had an uneven coverage of all internally displaced person's (IDP's) communities and districts, creating a sentiment of exclusion and conflict in the community. NSJP, p. 56.

disbursements were also noted, primarily due to operational challenges (complications in procurement, which often lie beyond GPE's scope of control).<sup>114</sup>

The processes of ECW FER were considered efficient, with clear guidelines and easily applicable templates for global actors with sufficient capacity.<sup>115</sup> For ECW MYRP, there was an observed improvement in implementation efficiency due to tailored support provided to grantees in the implementation stage.<sup>116</sup> The ECW FER's programme design timeline struck a good balance between speed and quality. However, the tight timelines had repercussions for the scope of grantees that could apply, with national NGOs being excluded because they lacked the capacity for fast responses to proposals and/or did not have English as a first language. The limited timeframe also hampered including national NGOs into newly developed consortia.<sup>117</sup> In the ECW MYRP processes, improvements in timeliness and efficiency were observed at the global level. In some countries, fund disbursement to implementing partners was not timely, impacting the efficiency of MYRP processes and partners' ability to plan and respond on a multi-year basis.<sup>118</sup>

### Bilateral programmes

The Nexus evaluation reported that the programme had managed projects efficiently, with funds spent according to plan, committing to 70% at midterm.<sup>119</sup> The evaluation also reported that the Nexus programme had been timely in fund utilization.

For NICHE and NFP, the evaluation said that Nuffic managed the programme budget efficiently and spent the funds according to plan. However, for NFP, the evaluation highlighted the potential for increased efficiency by strategically concentrating funds in fewer countries.<sup>120</sup> For NICHE, the evaluation found that the programme improved its efficiency between NICHE I and II. NICHE II required less staff and resources than NICHE I. In NICHE and NFP, 98% of the total programme budget was committed according to plan. However, all NICHE projects faced challenges in implementing plans within the designated timeframe, often extending beyond the intended duration. OKP experienced significant delays; respondents perceived that COVID-19 had contributed to this to a certain extent in the countries under valuation.<sup>121</sup> The OKP evaluation reported delays in project start dates, progression, funding and auditing. As a consequence, the original target of disbursing 95% of the budget by December 31, 2021, was not met. For the MSP, Nuffic met its programme management and reporting obligations during the years under review.<sup>122</sup>

### Value for money and transaction costs

#### Multilateral funds

Not all evaluations assessed this topic, and a number of respondents for both GPE and ECW found it too early to assess value for money. For the ECW, FERs were found to be more efficient compared to funding modalities that require dedicated capacity at the country level. FERs were found to achieve cost efficiencies when they built on capacities and activities of grantees that had been built or started under earlier rounds of the programme. Nonetheless, the fragmentation of grants between grantees, sub-grantees, and sub-contractors was identified as a source of inefficiency due to increasing overhead costs.<sup>123</sup>

### Bilateral programmes

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<sup>114</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 7

<sup>115</sup> ECW FER, p. iv

<sup>116</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 13

<sup>117</sup> ECW FER, p.53

<sup>118</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 44

<sup>119</sup> NSJP, p. 33

<sup>120</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 62

<sup>121</sup> OKP, p. 41

<sup>122</sup> MSP, p. 36

<sup>123</sup> ECW FER, p. iv

For the bilateral programmes, the four evaluations reported little information on value for money. For MSP, the evaluation reported that slightly more than half of consulted stakeholders concurred that the projects produce value for money. On the other hand, there were reports of missed opportunities for co-financing investments that would lead to an improved entrepreneurial ecosystem.<sup>124</sup> For NICHE II, the evaluation reported that over 30% of Dutch and European experts' time was spent on project management.<sup>125</sup>

## Governance and transparency

### Multilateral funds

In terms of governance in the multilateral funds, significant changes within in the GPE have yielded positive effects on the legitimacy and efficiency of the Board. Since 2010, the GPE Board has become more representative, notably through increased participation of developing country partners.<sup>126</sup>

Some transparency issues arose in the multilateral funds. In GPE, accountability requirements were not always considered clear or consistently applied.<sup>127</sup> For the ECW, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is both a host and a grantee. This is not always well understood by stakeholders and has led to country processes that are insufficiently robust due to weak communication and poor documentation of decisions.<sup>128</sup> This has resulted in concerns that UNICEF monopolizes funding and opacity surrounding the determination of FER amounts.<sup>129</sup> Under the ECW MYRP, respondents perceived insufficient clarity regarding roles and responsibilities across stakeholders in implementation and monitoring processes. They found that duplication and fund displacement effects occurred and that transparency and coordination were often imperfect.<sup>130</sup> The ECW AF encountered a number of management, governance and accountability challenges from 2017-2020, in particular concerning limited transparency and competitive funding allocation processes.<sup>131</sup>

### Bilateral programmes

Among the bilateral programmes, in MSP, there was good coordination between the Dutch MFA Directorate for MENA as funder of the MSP, and programme administrator Nuffic.<sup>132</sup> For NICHE/NFP, the role of EP-Nuffic shifting from project monitoring to a less active role in the implementation of the projects, and a stronger focus on programme monitoring, had led to efficiency gains.<sup>133</sup> For OKP, the role division between Nuffic, the Dutch knowledge institutes and the embassies was well explained on paper. In practice however, the role division between Nuffic and Dutch Embassies has lacked clarity; according to the evaluation, the Dutch Embassies' involvement in the OKP was dependent on the number of projects the Embassy was dealing with and their size and affected by the personal commitment from embassy staff.<sup>134</sup>

### What factors contributed to or hampered efficiency of the interventions?

Having a clear division of roles and responsibilities was seen as conducive to efficiency. Lengthy and untransparent procedures and lack of availability of capable human resources had hampered efficiency.

For the multilateral funds, in the GPE, efforts to clarify roles, responsibilities, and key operational processes were viewed positively for enhancing efficiency. However, the GPE's 40-month

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<sup>124</sup> NSJP, p. 40

<sup>125</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 26

<sup>126</sup> GPE Eva 1, p82

<sup>127</sup> GPE EVA 1, p. 22

<sup>128</sup> ECW FER, p. 50

<sup>129</sup> ECW FER, p. 56

<sup>130</sup> ECW MYRP, p.10, 11

<sup>131</sup> ECW ACF, p. 225

<sup>132</sup> MSP, p. 34

<sup>133</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 75.

<sup>134</sup> OKP, p. 36

duration grant allocation process strained commitment among in-country actors.<sup>135</sup> The evaluation indicated that the global landscape for education development had become increasingly complex for the GPE, with developing countries graduating or demoting in income status or fragility, a changing web of traditional and newly-emerging donors, and other funding vehicles such as the ECW and the International Financing Facility for Education.<sup>136</sup>

In ECW, the establishment and strategic engagement of an External Review Panel in 2019 and an Education Technical Reference Group in 2020 helped;<sup>137</sup> but insufficient clarity on roles and responsibilities across stakeholders hindered implementation and monitoring.<sup>138</sup>

In the bilateral funds, NICHE II required less staff and resources than NICHE I, and having moved to more standardized, simplified and automated programme management,<sup>139</sup> is perceived to have helped transparency and efficiency.<sup>140</sup> Weak adaptation of project measures to the needs and capacity of the requesting organisation, availability problems of staff at the side of the service providers, and the lack of sufficient financial resources and staff time made available by the requesting organisations were seen as hampering efficiency. For OKP, the evaluation found that delays were caused by excessive bureaucratic and legal measures, lengthy and untransparent procedures for application, significant staff turnover and re-shuffling in the Nuffic programme management and confusion on the role division between the Dutch Embassies and Nuffic were perceived as hampering efficiency.<sup>141</sup>

For NICHE, efficiency gains were partly “neutralised” due to additional requests from the MFA and the fact that the programme has become very popular among a large group of service providers, which put an enormous pressure on the NUFFIC staff’s workload.<sup>142</sup> Under OKP, several respondents mentioned the low funding for staff in the Global South as challenging because it meant that people took on extra work to contribute to delivering project targets with no additional salary or very little financial remuneration.<sup>143</sup>

#### 4.4 Relevance

To what extent was the initiative relevant, i.e. did it meet the needs of the target group, was it focused on tackling the causes of the problem, did it adapt to changes in the context to remain relevant and was the approach based on what has been proven to be effective before?

The findings of all assessed evaluations are strikingly positive. Both the multilateral and the bilateral interventions were deemed highly relevant by the evaluations. According to the evaluators, all programmes responded to the country needs related to education and youth employment where applicable, as well as to the beneficiary needs. Still, it must also be considered that the needs were not always assessed in detail and alternative support channels were rarely discussed. Most programmes adapted well to changes at various levels.

##### Relevance in the multilateral funds

###### Global Partnership for Education

The evaluations perceive GPE as highly relevant to the overall education needs in the targeted emergency contexts. GPE programmes are mutually aligned at programme level in terms of objectives and targeting the priority policy or focus areas for system transformation. The GPE’s country-level approach, supporting the development and implementation of education sector plans, allows it to tailor its support to the needs of diverse national contexts, including in fragile

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<sup>135</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 62

<sup>136</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 7

<sup>137</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 63

<sup>138</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 3

<sup>139</sup> Which included digitalisation and automatization of the application and selection process, the restructuring of reporting formats, and the use of lump sums.

<sup>140</sup> NFP NICHE, p. iv

<sup>141</sup> OKP, p. 30

<sup>142</sup> NICHE NFP, p. 15 and p.25

<sup>143</sup> OKP, p. 31

and conflict-affected states.<sup>144</sup> Regarding adaptations, the 2015 evaluation of GPE underscores its sustained relevance through reformulating strategic priorities, establishing indicative country allocations, and revising its funding criteria.<sup>145</sup> Nevertheless, the summative evaluation recommends making programmatic adaptations and incorporating risk mitigation plans to accommodate changing contexts and to capture and share experiences in mitigating adaptations to external risks.<sup>146</sup>

In ECW MYRP, the need for more capacity building activities aimed at local-level education authorities and local CSOs was flagged.<sup>147</sup>

### **Education Cannot wait**

As for the ECW programmes, they were all perceived as highly relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (notably SDG 4, which has targets and indicators for basic education).

The ECW FER was perceived to be highly relevant to global education in emergency needs and is seen as critical to ensuring children's immediate safety and long-term education outcomes.<sup>148</sup> Also, ECW FER was reported to have contributed to repositioning education as a priority on the humanitarian agenda at global and country levels.<sup>149</sup> The evaluation found the ECW FER's interventions to be aligned to country response plans, in a sector that is underfunded as a whole and hence, most interventions are seen to be relevant to the address needs related to education in emergency settings.<sup>150</sup>

The ECW MYRP successfully adapted to country contexts and adjusted standard operating procedures and requirements to changing in-country needs.<sup>151</sup> There was recognition of the flexibility of the ECW AF and its ability to respond to emerging needs, as noted by AF grantees who highlighted the fund's flexibility in allowing context-specific adaptations to no-cost extensions, particularly in response to COVID-19.<sup>152</sup>

### **Relevance in the bilateral programmes**

For the bilateral programmes, the goal of the assessed interventions, high-quality post-secondary education, is regarded as one of the key determinants for sustainable development and economic growth,<sup>153</sup> as is underlined as part of life-long learning in SDG 4.

The Nexus programme was deemed relevant across targeted countries, given the high priority of youth employment and skills development in government policies and relevant sectoral strategies.<sup>154</sup> A high relevance related to the needs of the male and female youth was also perceived, including by beneficiaries. Still, though employability and entrepreneurial capacities increased, only few respondents found that the training was adapted to demands in the market.<sup>155</sup> This can also be linked to the finding that only half of respondents say that youth

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<sup>144</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 57

<sup>145</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 81

<sup>146</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 9

<sup>147</sup> This is in line with the Grand Bargain's commitment to 'increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders'

<sup>148</sup> ECW FER, p. 15

<sup>149</sup> ECW FER, p. 16

<sup>150</sup> ECW FER, p. ii

<sup>151</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 46. Examples included the depreciating currency and escalating violence in Syria, and rehabilitation of learning centers in Bangladesh.

<sup>152</sup> ECW AF, p. 62

<sup>153</sup> [Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 2023. Investing in Quality Education or Economic Development.](#)

<sup>154</sup> NSJP, p. 19

<sup>155</sup> NSJP, p. 21

were consulted during the design and implementation of the activities,<sup>156</sup> which does not align with MFA's striving to increasingly adopt meaningful youth participation.<sup>157</sup>

The evaluations of the bilateral programmes mentioned their relevance to the embassy priority themes in participating countries and to strengthening Dutch relations with other countries.<sup>158</sup> Still, embassies found MSP courses insufficiently custom-made to their priorities and the needs of their countries.<sup>159</sup> The MSP was perceived suitable to the needs of alumni, but their organisations did not always provide the enabling environment for applying their acquired knowledge or lacked the necessary technological infrastructure.<sup>160</sup> Alumni confirmed the relevance of improving their experience and knowledge, with courses aligning with knowledge needs and practical applicability. The MSP was considered by respondents as an important instrument to fulfil local knowledge gaps and enhance individual and organisational capacity building, acknowledging the serious lack of training and life-long learning opportunities in the MENA countries.<sup>161</sup>

Under NICHE, most projects were seen as demonstrating efforts to align with the national labour markets.<sup>162</sup> NICHE projects were found relevant for requesting organisations to build up capacities and establish networks, as the projects were in most cases sufficiently adapted to their needs. All partners agreed that projects implemented under NICHE adequately focus on the capacity demands of their respective organisations, concerning research, teaching and management capacities, professional and technical know-how, and infrastructure. Additionally, respondents brought up the relevance of soft-skills, improved working attitude and intercultural experience.<sup>163</sup> However, some respondents expressed concerns about certain projects being perceived as 'donor driven', based on the design and experiences from former projects the donor participated in.<sup>164</sup> For Dutch educational institutions, NICHE as well as OKP were found relevant as they feature great potential for gaining international experience and reputation, establishing and consolidating international networks.<sup>165</sup> Evaluation respondents regarded NFP as relevant for both the personal professional development of the participants as well as the improvement of organisational capacities of the employing organisations.<sup>166</sup> Also, a number of key informants considered NFP a valuable instrument for political diplomacy and preparing future economic collaboration, particularly for establishing personal relations with strategically important counterparts.<sup>167</sup>

OKP was reported to be a relevant programme in terms of having suitable instruments that address pertinent needs of capacity building and the labour market, thus aiming to contribute to achieving the SDGs.<sup>168</sup> The alignment of OKP with national priorities in the OKP partner countries through collaboration with the Dutch Embassies and with the Embassies' multi-annual strategic plan was also assessed – receiving a mixed outcome, since in only one country they were well-aligned, in two they were partly aligned and in two they were poorly aligned.<sup>169</sup> The OKP scholarships were regarded as highly relevant opportunities for both the personal and professional development of the OKP participants.<sup>170 171</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> NSJP, p. 23

<sup>157</sup> [MFA, Youth at Heart: Young people at the heart of Dutch development cooperation, May 2020](#), p 36.

<sup>158</sup> MSP, p. 10, p. 23, NFP NICHE p.10, p. 71, OKP p.8

<sup>159</sup> MSP, p. 23

<sup>160</sup> MSP, p. 38

<sup>161</sup> MSP, p. 23

<sup>162</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 7

<sup>163</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 50

<sup>164</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 62

<sup>165</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 12; OKP, p. 20

<sup>166</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 50

<sup>167</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 53

<sup>168</sup> OKP, p. 23

<sup>169</sup> OKP, p. 22

<sup>170</sup> OKP, p. 19

<sup>171</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 51

## What factors contributed to or hampered the relevance of the interventions?

Including participation of governments and local partners was considered crucial for the relevance of an intervention. One factor that hampered the relevance was dedicating insufficient time to programme preparation, which included not having conducted adequate analyses, such as baseline surveys and sectoral assessments at the onset of a programme or intervention. A positive factor was working with institutions that had already worked in a similar subject area and that thus had a certain experience, expertise and trained manpower.

### Participation of government and local partners

One important factor influencing relevance was the inclusion of local government actors. ECW FER processes were often found to be inclusive of government actors in many countries in substantive ways, with the potential to contribute to continuation of results.<sup>172</sup> In the MSP, however, government and beneficiaries had insufficiently participated in design, formulation, implementation, and monitoring. Engaging local partners was recognised as an aspect that could have contributed to relevance, but this engagement was often insufficiently pursued in the programmes. The ECW FER was perceived to have insufficiently included participation of national NGOs, and there was no scope to improve this under current ECW FER arrangements.<sup>173</sup>

In the Nexus programme, local partners were perceived to have little voice.<sup>174</sup> The MTR observed an absence of structured collaborations with local Public Employment Services that would have been needed to increase the likelihood of matching the employer's vacancy with the jobseeker's skills.<sup>175</sup> In the MSP, the demand to strengthen capacities in fields directly contributing to sustainable transition<sup>176</sup> was low among governmental institutions, possibly because MSP was insufficiently promoted with them.<sup>177</sup> In NICHE, feedback of the evaluation was more positive. Long-term partnerships between local and Dutch education institutes had benefited the establishment of trustful relationships with requesting organisations, involving higher-level decision makers. They had led to enhanced knowledge on topics like communication and soft-skills, knowledge about structures and procedures.<sup>178</sup>

### Dedicating sufficient time and conducting analyses at the programme onset

In ECW FER, the emphasis on speed sometimes led to shortcomings in adapting to local contexts, effectively targeting the most vulnerable, and delivering through a diverse and localized set of grantees.<sup>179</sup> ECW FER also utilized their modality in protracted crises but this had appeared to be a less suitable instrument due to its size, duration, and scope.<sup>180</sup> Financing immediate needs for a short period of time was not deemed a catalytic use of funding, particularly when FERs were used in protracted crises without being explicitly linked to MYRPs<sup>181</sup>.

The lack of assessments at the onset was a hampering factor in the Nexus programme. The skills demand by the private and public sector was not well developed, due to the absence of baseline studies and sectoral skills studies or establishment surveys.<sup>182</sup> In NICHE, it was seen

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<sup>172</sup> ECW FER, p. 5

<sup>173</sup> ECW FER, p. 62

<sup>174</sup> NSJP, p. 37

<sup>175</sup> NSJP, p. 54

<sup>176</sup> This includes humanities, social sciences, communications and arts, and law, public administration, public order and safety

<sup>177</sup> MSP, p. 30

<sup>178</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 12

<sup>179</sup> ECW FER, p. 28

<sup>180</sup> ECW FER, p. ii

<sup>181</sup> ECW FER, p. ii

<sup>182</sup> NSJP, p. 52

as conducive to relevance if projects built on organisational structures that had been supported previously (e.g. with regard to staffing level, training schemes, and equipment).<sup>183</sup>

## 4.5 Coherence

The main subjects that evaluators look into under coherence are compatibility with other interventions in the same geographical and subject areas; the extent to which there is coordination and harmonisation with other stakeholders, and, in the case of the bilateral programmes, the extent to which there is alignment with other interventions by the Netherlands. Under coherence, evaluations usually look into internal coherence and external coherence. Internal coherence relates to how well various interventions, projects, activities, programmes and policies of one donor (e.g. governments or institutions) fit together and complement each other, whereas under external coherence evaluators look at synergies, overlap and/or duplications with interventions from other actors that are active in the same country or context.<sup>184</sup>

To what extent was the initiative coherent with other interventions, i.e. to what extent did other existing interventions support, undermine or duplicate efforts of the initiative, and vice versa?

In the different evaluation reports, coherence was seen from various angles. GPE and ECW were found internally as well as externally reasonably coherent, be it with imperfections. There is potential for the combination of FER and MYRP to address the humanitarian-development nexus.<sup>185</sup> Among the respondents of the evaluations of the bilateral programmes, the evaluations observed some overlap between Dutch-funded interventions, but they were positive on the alignment with Dutch development objectives.

Some of the evaluations assessed coherence under relevance, but the synthesis study has captured findings that were deemed to belong under coherence in this section.

### Coherence in the GPE programmes

In the GPE, Local Education Groups have been effective in contributing to plans that meet GPE requirements but weaker in creating plans that are implementable in the budget, partly because not all stakeholders participate with the same voice and partly because of financing gaps.<sup>186</sup>

### Coherence in the ECW programmes

Related to internal coherence, there is consensus among evaluators about the complementarity of the three assessed ECW programme modalities. Key stakeholders broadly agree that a significant added value for the AF is its potential to complement FER and MYRP modalities.<sup>187</sup> Nonetheless, there has not been a consistent or systematic approach to ensuring country level complementarity. In the absence of a comprehensive mapping of the work of other funds and initiatives, it is difficult to assess complementarity.<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, the AF grant enabled developing guidance and standard operating procedures for global and country clusters as well as a structured support cycle with all Education Clusters, which has improved the consistency and quality of planning.<sup>189</sup> Still, the AF evaluation finds that AF grants should explicitly seek to strengthen the capacity of local civil society and local authorities within the education in emergencies ecosystem to contribute to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. It sees its absence currently as a critical gap in the AF Strategy.<sup>190</sup>

Because FERs are designed through existing country-based coordination mechanisms and draw on humanitarian sector plans, they are externally coherent and well-aligned with the

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<sup>183</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 8

<sup>184</sup> [4. Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges | Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

<sup>185</sup> Understood as ways of working that strengthen links between humanitarian aid and long-term development.

<sup>186</sup> GPE Eva 1, p. 52

<sup>187</sup> ECW AF, p. ix

<sup>188</sup> ECW AF, p. 214

<sup>189</sup> ECW AF, p. 54

<sup>190</sup> ECW AF, p. 214

humanitarian system.<sup>191</sup> The FERs are complementary to other sources of humanitarian education funding, though duplication and displacement can occur, and transparency and coordination are often imperfect.<sup>192</sup>

The MYRP modality allows for alignment of funding, but the extent to which MYRPs align and collaborate with other sources of funding varies based on context and how well the given MYRP is aligned with national humanitarian and development plans<sup>193</sup>. MYRPs are found to be broadly externally coherent with global humanitarian and development frameworks. They have evolved to better align with existing humanitarian and development plans and strategies, such as Education Cluster strategies, Refugee Response Plans, and national-level plans. External coherence has been facilitated by government ownership, the inclusion of emergency education in the national strategy, and the existence of strong humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms.<sup>194</sup>

ECW FERs have the potential to facilitate a stronger humanitarian/development nexus to provide a platform for longer-term solutions. However, they are often considered too small and rapid to effectively achieve this goal.<sup>195</sup> The MYRP modality has filled a gap in terms of providing an instrument that addresses the humanitarian–development nexus, and its design addresses the systemic obstacles. This was seen as especially valid in contexts where there is strong government engagement, existing capacity at country level, and effective humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms.<sup>196</sup> The direct linkage between FERs and MYRPs to support humanitarian-development coherence is critical, but in many cases FERs are not followed by MYRPs, and FERs are often not explicitly linked to (upcoming) MYRPs, to allow MYRPs to build on their achievements.<sup>197</sup>

As for coherence between the ECW modalities, though the aim of the acceleration facility was to make a key contribution to capacity building in the entire ECW programme, the evaluation found that ECW AF had not always been fully aligned with FERs and MYRPs.<sup>198</sup>

#### Coherence in the bilateral programmes

Here, the evaluations mainly focused on (external) coherence with Dutch policies and priorities. NICHE and NFP projects are widely seen as aligned with the thematic priorities of the Dutch development cooperation,<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup> as is the OKP.<sup>4</sup> Dutch cross-cutting themes such as gender, inclusive development, and climate, which apply in NICHE, NFP and OKP, are all integrated into the other objectives. Job creation and private sector development, additional overarching themes, are also priority themes for the MFA.<sup>199</sup>

The evaluation report of the Nexus programme found the programme to be largely coherent with Dutch national policies and compatible with other donor interventions. In the Nexus programme, relevance was observed in supporting youth employment through TVET,<sup>200</sup> as Dutch support to youth employment is meant to focus on a close match between vocational training and the labour market.<sup>201</sup> Both are based on the overarching Dutch development cooperation policy aiming at the promotion of “sustainable economic growth in developing countries” by working towards “global stability and security and to foster human rights.” Internal coherence with other Dutch interventions at country level was also observed. An example of

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<sup>191</sup> ECW FER, p. 41

<sup>192</sup> ECW FER, p. 79

<sup>193</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 11

<sup>194</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 52

<sup>195</sup> ECW FER, p. 79

<sup>196</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 41

<sup>197</sup> ECW FER, p. iii

<sup>198</sup> ECW AF, p. 231

<sup>199</sup> OKP, p. 9

<sup>200</sup> NJSP, p. 4

<sup>201</sup> [MFA, Policy Document for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation: Do what we do best](#) p 32.

this coherence is the collaboration with OKP in Somalia.<sup>202</sup> Coherence was especially found to be strong with projects being closely aligned with the programmes of Embassies which have a clear focus on private sector development or food security.<sup>203</sup>

MSP was operational in locations where more Dutch-funded interventions were implemented, and some overlap was observed. The STP<sup>204</sup> and MSP, for instance, partly overlapped in type of intervention (TMTs) and target group (civil servants), posing a risk of duplication of efforts.<sup>205</sup> While RVO (the manager of STP) and Nuffic had regular strategic meetings (including with the embassies) during which the STP and MSP were discussed, the evaluation reported a lack of structural collaboration and/or consultation between the coordinators of both programmes.<sup>206</sup> On the other hand, coordinated use of both instruments had also led to enhanced public diplomacy. When diplomatic representation was partly re-established in Tripoli in 2017, the coordinated use of STP and MSP helped the embassy reconnect with the (government) water sector.<sup>207</sup> Embassies also noted overlap between MSP and OKP, offering both individual scholarships for short courses (2 to 12 weeks) for mid-career professionals in similar fields of studies. Alumni on the other hand reported them as complementary since after having finished the STP course, they had managed to apply for OKP training opportunities as a continuation.<sup>208</sup>

There are also programmes funded by other countries operating in the same subject and geographical areas as the assessed bilateral programmes. The sections on coherence were concise though and did not provide information on this type of coherence.

#### What factors contributed to or hampered the coherence of the interventions?

For the GPE, participation of stakeholders from all levels was seen as a factor of positive influence for coherence. ECW evaluations deemed that lack of understanding and inclusion of the humanitarian-development nexus in the results framework hampered coherence. For the bilateral funds, no specific factors were identified in the evaluations.

In the GPE, the participation of all stakeholders (government agencies, service providers, non-governmental agencies, final beneficiaries, and donors) in Education Sector Plans should ensure that these are relevant, realistic, and owned.

For the ECW MYRP, strong coordination and collaboration between different partners was seen as conducive to coherence, but insufficient clarity on roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis major funds and coordination bodies could be a constraining factor. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis into the complementarity of the MYRP funding would have helped to align it better with existing funding at national level.<sup>209</sup> Working in a coordinated manner on the humanitarian-development nexus also helps achieve coherence. The evaluation of the ECW MYRP, found that having the explicit objective on the nexus “Close the gap between short term humanitarian and long-term development investments” had helped in achieving positive outcomes.<sup>210</sup> For the ECW FER however, the quick turnaround of proposals hampers contribution to the nexus; moreover the objective on the nexus lacks a clear definition, and stakeholders expressed uncertainty about how best bridge the nexus.<sup>211</sup> This gap was also observed in a recent evaluation of Dutch humanitarian funding, which noted that the policy objectives relating to the nexus have not been adequately thought through yet.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> NSJP, p. 30

<sup>203</sup> NSJP, p. 30

<sup>204</sup> Shiraka Training Programme, coordinated by de Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO).

<sup>205</sup> MSP, p. 24

<sup>206</sup> MSP, p. 25

<sup>207</sup> MSP, p. 24

<sup>208</sup> MSP, p. 25

<sup>209</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 3

<sup>210</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 34

<sup>211</sup> ECW FER, p. 180

<sup>212</sup> [IOB Evaluation, February 2023. Trust, Risk and Learn. Humanitarian Assistance Given by The Netherlands – Funding and Diplomacy 2015-2021](#), p12.

As for the bilateral programmes, in 2018, a new MFA policy placed more focus on fragile states and unstable regions near Europe, which required a shift in OKP. For Dutch higher education institutions, these changes created additional difficulties, for instance since developing Master courses in French was difficult and French-speaking students from African and Middle-Eastern countries were difficult to place in the Dutch higher education institutions.<sup>213</sup> Also, Dutch Embassies in the newly changed focus countries were not always interested in OKP and were reluctant to make time available for the facilitation of the OKP activities.<sup>214</sup> In the Nexus programme, lack of visibility with partners and insufficient policy dialogue with local governments and other stakeholders was reported as having hampered coherence.<sup>215</sup>

#### 4.6 Sustainability

Under sustainability, the evaluations assess strengthening of education systems, institutional sustainability, longevity of capacity building, and some look into financial sustainability and change in behaviour and sustainable skills. Five evaluation reports out of nine assessed sustainability.<sup>216</sup>

To what extent was the initiative sustainable, i.e. to what extent will the benefits of the programme or fund continue, or to what extent are they likely to continue, into the future?

In GPE, sustainability is not part of the ToC and whilst the fund strives to achieve sustainability as part of systems strengthening, this is challenged by the absence of explicit conditions. The two of the ECW interventions are directed at emergency situations, hence sustainability is not pursued. In the ECW MYRP, some first steps have been made but sustainability needs to be further defined and addressed. Under the evaluated bilateral programmes, positive observations were made in terms of sustainability of academic achievements of individuals, jobs created, behaviour change, and improvements in academic performance. Institutional sustainability was assessed positively in one programme and less so in another. All evaluations found financial sustainability of the interventions less likely.

#### Sustainability in the multilateral funds

While sustainability was not an explicit feature of GPE's ToC up to the 2020 evaluation of GPE, the evaluation acknowledged that GPE's emphasis on pursuing education system-wide improvements implied a recognition of the multi-faceted change process that is needed to achieve sustainable outcomes.<sup>217</sup> Under the multilateral funds, the evaluations report sustainability mainly in terms of systems strengthening. Under GPE, the Education Management Information System and other data-collection and reporting systems are supported as a priority for results-tracking and they support sustainability. Still, the absence of explicit conditions expected to be in place to ascertain that a particular system improvement remains, undermined the sustainability of outcomes. Sustainability was challenged by the lack of systematic attention under operational support, including funding and capacity constraints.<sup>218</sup> Under ECW FER, two programmes have not intentionally included sustainability in its design, as they are focussed on humanitarian support. For the ECW MYRP, the evaluation states that it is a concept that ECW has yet to define. The programme has addressed longer-term institutional and systematic change, but when addressing capacity building, localisation, and system strengthening, sustainability was not prioritised.<sup>219</sup>

#### Sustainability in the bilateral programmes

For the bilateral programmes, the original intention of the Nexus programme was strengthening the TVET sector. Most of the projects did not, however, directly support TVET institutions but

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<sup>213</sup> Dutch institutions lacked experience in these regions and did not have sufficient working knowledge of the French language. OKP. p. 19

<sup>214</sup> OKP, p. 19

<sup>215</sup> NSJP, p. 32

<sup>216</sup> GPE Eva 2, ECW MYR, NSJP, NFP NICHE and OKP

<sup>217</sup> In response to the 2020 evaluation, GPE's strategy has been adapted, resulting in the GPE2025 Strategy.

<sup>218</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 22

<sup>219</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 5

chose a more informal (though potentially less sustainable), professional skills training by private actors.<sup>220</sup> The most significant sustainable changes attributed to the programme are skills development, followed by a change in mentality/behaviour of youth, having become more able to properly function in a workplace environment or run a business. Most stakeholders involved in the programme consider the jobs and businesses created to be economically viable and potentially sustainable, provided that post-training support is enhanced and additional investments are directed towards the surrounding entrepreneurial ecosystems.<sup>221</sup> However, private sector respondents expressed less optimism about the sustainability of these outcomes.<sup>222</sup>

For NICHE, while academic sustainability (e.g. further use of revised curricula and introduced innovations) is generally perceived as assured, institutional sustainability (e.g. human resource development strategies, networking) and financial sustainability (ability of the receiving organisations to generate funds after a programme ends), are considerably weaker.<sup>223</sup> For OKP, academic sustainability was not assessed in the (mid-term) evaluation.

The institutional collaboration projects under OKP and NICHE required the formation of a partnership between higher education institutions and TVET institutions in the Netherlands and institutions in OKP and NICHE countries. In OKP, Dutch education institutions had mainly formed partnerships with institutions that they had already worked with previously, since they believed finding new partners time consuming, so the previously built partnerships had proved sustainable.<sup>224</sup> In NICHE, joint initiatives were established between Dutch and local education institutions, and Dutch education institutes expected this to be an adequate modality for long-term collaborations. The evaluators were doubtful however about the sustainability of these partnerships. They found the partnerships to be hierarchically organized and reported that the distribution of resources and responsibilities may pose challenges to such initiatives.<sup>225</sup>

For the MSP, the aim to contribute to sustainable transition in the Arab region had not been included yet in its design in 2013. It was added as a third objective to the MSP in 2014 only, in order to align with the objectives of the Matra South/Shiraka programmes, through which it was funded. Hence, sustainability was not measured in the evaluation.<sup>226</sup> For OKP, interviews also revealed that the short courses that were part of the individual scholarship element of the programme are likely to benefit individuals rather than the organisational level, which makes the results less sustainable.<sup>227</sup>

#### What factors contributed to or hampered the sustainability of the interventions?

According to one of the ECW evaluations, in order for sustainability to be achieved within a grant providing programme, sustainability needs to be addressed in applicants' proposals as well. In addition, collaboration and coordination with public stakeholders, and the capacity of public stakeholders and existence of strong regulatory frameworks are essential for institutional sustainability. At the same time, the evaluations highlighted the absence thereof as a constraint in both the multilateral and the bilateral programmes and funds. Furthermore, the evaluations did not indicate the existence of exit strategies.

#### Sustainability as a requirement for applicants' proposals

For sustainability to get adequate attention within a grant providing programme, evaluators acknowledge the need for applicants to describe in their proposal how they will ensure

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<sup>220</sup> NSJP, p. v

<sup>221</sup> NSJP, p. 64

<sup>222</sup> NSJP, p. 61

<sup>223</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 46

<sup>224</sup> OKP, p. 67

<sup>225</sup> NFP NICHE, p.11

<sup>226</sup> MSP, p. 10

<sup>227</sup> OKP, p. 70

sustainability. The evaluation observed this for the MYRP, where the MYRP Operational Manual (2020) indicates that proposals should demonstrate how sustainability will be pursued for the proposed programme, both for the duration of the MYRP period as well as beyond it.<sup>228</sup> Likewise, in OKP sustainability was set as a hard requirement in the application document for group training and institutional collaboration projects.<sup>229</sup>

### **Institutionalisation of changes**

Institutionalisation of changes is deemed crucial for sustainability and hence, capacity of and coordination with local public education institutions and government education bodies is essential. In the GPE, capacity constraints of local ministries of education at national and sub-national levels were found to be a challenge in creating sustainable outcomes.<sup>230</sup> In the ECW programme, lack of stakeholders' common understanding of what is meant by a resilient education system was challenging.<sup>231</sup>

In NICHE, the evaluation found that intended changes were written down in strategic plans and/or business plans, but that actual implementation of these policies after the project ends had been challenging.<sup>232</sup> Under OKP, formation of coalitions of local, regional and international institutions and organisations had been conducive to creating synergy in efforts to change mindsets and focus on future educational needs, which in turn facilitated institutionalisation of changes.<sup>233</sup> In the Nexus programme on the other hand, project implementers chose an approach to professional skills training by private actors instead of through public education institutions, which resulted in weak links and lack of collaboration with TVET institutions and other public educational institutions. The evaluation perceived that this had hampered sustainability. Other factors flagged by evaluations as hampering sustainability were unfavourable legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for youth entrepreneurship and lack of entrepreneurship culture in partner countries.<sup>234</sup>

### **Having an exit strategy**

Only the evaluation of the Nexus programme discusses the importance of having an exit strategy: a plan describing the steps that will be taken to ascertain longevity of the programme's results after its finalisation, as well as the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in this plan. While the majority of projects within the programme have developed an exit strategy detailing the transfer of project activities and products to other parties, the programme as a whole lacks a comprehensive exit strategy.<sup>235</sup>

## **4.7 Gender**

### **To what extent were the interventions gender sensitive and/or did they mainstream gender?**

The multilateral funds had the requirement that they targeted as many girls as boys, and they all met the requirement. Besides gender equal targeting, some included activities aimed at improved gender knowledge and awareness. The approach of the GPE was deemed gender sensitive, with Girls' Education Accelerator grants ensuring additional emphasis. While ECW has made significant efforts towards mainstreaming gender in design and strategies, implementation has been challenging. A consistent observation for the multilateral funds was the lack of attention to addressing specific needs of male and female students and staff. The evaluations assessed the bilateral programmes as gender sensitive, and most programmes also have a gender equal targeting requirement, among others in distributing scholarships, which were mostly met.<sup>236</sup> Under MSP, gender equality was not a requirement but it was nonetheless

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<sup>228</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 92

<sup>229</sup> OKP, p. 67

<sup>230</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 22

<sup>231</sup> ECW MYRP, p. 92

<sup>232</sup> NFP NICHE, p. 43

<sup>233</sup> OKP, p. 68

<sup>234</sup> NSJP, p. 60

<sup>235</sup> NSJP, p. 59

<sup>236</sup> NFP NICHE p. 31, OKP p. 24

achieved and gender needs were analysed and addressed. The Nexus Programme paid adequate attention to gender sensitivity (with a few shortcomings) and under NICHE, gender sensitivity has evolved positively over the years.

Only few of the evaluations discussed gender as an individual criterion<sup>237</sup> and thus, findings were scattered throughout other criteria and apart from targeted numbers of women and men, quantitative information was scant. Moreover, the evaluations differed in the extent to which they reported on gender. This synthesis has extracted these findings, aggregated them, and presented them together. It may, therefore, happen that certain findings are also covered by one or more of the criteria discussed above.

### Gender in the multilateral funds

Under the GPE, the evaluations included in the synthesis indicated that achieving gender parity in education was a goal<sup>238</sup> and balanced representation of men and women a requirement in intervention related mechanisms.<sup>239</sup> Nonetheless, the evaluations paid limited attention to describing details on what the fund had planned and achieved in terms of gender. For the ECW, significant attention to gender issues is evident across FERs, with grantees successfully reaching girls and sometimes proportionally more girls than boys. The fund aims and succeeds at reaching an equal number of girls and boys, with girls seen as a vulnerable group.<sup>240</sup> However, there is limited evidence of tailored efforts to specifically address boys' and girls' differentiated needs.<sup>241,242</sup> The AF Strategy includes an appropriate, though broad, focus on gender and inclusion, strengthening gender-responsive education in emergencies and a specific focus on gender mainstreaming for AF grants in design, monitoring and reporting. The Strategy identifies specific actions, including to “develop a mechanism for identifying and mobilizing gender expertise to support countries implementing MYRPs”. Still, the focus appeared to be more on making the design of approaches gender-responsive than on their implementation.<sup>243</sup> Products have been produced to enable sharing good practices, such as the education in emergency GenKit.<sup>244</sup> Under an AF grant with the Global Education Cluster (2022-2023), a full-time gender expert is being deployed.<sup>245</sup>

### Gender in the bilateral programmes

For the MSP, the evaluation found achieving gender balance at programme level a notable achievement. At programme level, a target was set of awarding 50% of scholarships to women. This target was met for the overall MSP portfolio, even though no binding requirements had been set for the individual countries and , there were large differences at country level.<sup>246</sup> Gender equality was also promoted through trainings that contribute to women empowerment on areas of gender inequalities that are country specific.<sup>247</sup> Embassies brought up some issues with the targets, such as the age limit of 45 years for MSP candidates, which is considered disadvantageous for women due to potential periods of maternity leave and limited ability to travel abroad during this period.<sup>248</sup>

Under the Nexus Programme, several projects invested resources in strengthening the capacity of the project teams and implementing partners to understand the concept of gender sensitivity,

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<sup>237</sup> NSJP includes it as a specific subject

<sup>238</sup> GPE 1, p. 13

<sup>239</sup> GPE 2, p. 81

<sup>240</sup> ECW FER, p. 36

<sup>241</sup> This includes support for and recruitment of female teachers in Muslim countries, availability of gender-sensitive toilets/latrines, provision of hygiene kits and promotion of girl enrolment.

<sup>242</sup> ECW FER, p. 75

<sup>243</sup> ECW AF, p. 73

<sup>244</sup> The GenKit provides practical tools, including checklists and assessment templates, to support practitioners to ensure that each phase of an EiE intervention is gender-responsive

<sup>245</sup> ECW AF, p. 224

<sup>246</sup> MSP, p. 6

<sup>247</sup> MSP, p. 31

<sup>248</sup> MSP, p. 31

thereby increasing the gender sensitivity of the Nexus programme. The programme also adheres to the DDE<sup>249</sup> guiding principles on beneficiaries being: “at least 50% women” as 58% were female.<sup>250</sup> However, several projects could not provide gender-disaggregated data on two of the three Nexus global indicators.<sup>251</sup> The evaluators perceived that activities are conceived, designed and implemented in a gender sensitive way, and equal opportunities for skills, employment and self-employment are granted to both young women and men.<sup>252</sup> Beneficiary respondents in Burkina Faso and Somalia voiced doubts about the relevance of the programme to the needs of women; the focus on women was acknowledged, but concerns were raised about whether these women would be able to generate a decent income.<sup>253</sup>

Both NFP and NICHE had gender-equal targets in recruitment and scholarships. In NICHE, over time, gender has evolved into an important pillar. All NICHE projects included considerable sensitisation efforts and reported on them accordingly.<sup>254</sup> Under OKP, women of equal capacity and background are given preference when applying for staff training and in recruitment.<sup>255</sup> MFA, and the implementing organisations and institutions all reported to be committed to contribute to achieving gender equality, yet the implementing organisations often struggle to translate their ambitions and results for gender equality into specific, contextual strategies.<sup>256</sup>

#### What factors contributed to or hampered gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming?

Evaluators of the multilateral funds found that including gender into programme goals, policy, result framework, policy and action plans was conducive to achieving contributions to gender equality. In the bilateral programmes, limited reporting of gender disaggregated data at outcome level have challenged creating fundamental changes.

#### Inclusion of gender into results frameworks and policy

In the GPE, formulating increased gender equity as a goal (beyond equal targeting only) and translating this into action plans and a (Gender Equality) Policy helped to achieve the goal.<sup>257</sup> However, specific objectives of the policy did not find their way into GPE’s overall results framework, which made it challenging to observe the effects of GPE’s gender strategy on GPE’s core results.<sup>258</sup>

In ECW, a more strategic approach to the MYRPs over the years has led to improvement in gender equality over the MYRP generations,<sup>259</sup> and gender was seen as well mainstreamed into the MYRP and the AF logframe at various levels.<sup>260</sup> The AF was perceived to need a more systematic focus on implementation and institutionalization of gender sensitive products through sustained capacity building and applied learning and use in the field.<sup>261</sup>

In the bilateral programmes, for the Nexus programme, a gender marker or gender-based budgeting had not been applied, and even though gender disaggregated data are produced, this is not always the case at outcome level.<sup>262</sup> The NICHE evaluation remarks that gender outcomes are reported as numbers or proportions only, and that Nuffic has limited capacity to provide support on gender mainstreaming beyond the checklists and number of female participants. The OKP evaluation remarks that gender policies and mainstreaming efforts run

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<sup>249</sup> Directie Duurzame Economische Ontwikkeling (Sustainable Economic Development Department) under MFA

<sup>250</sup> NSJP, p. iii

<sup>251</sup> NSJP, p. 65

<sup>252</sup> NSJP, p. 18

<sup>253</sup> NSJP, p. 119

<sup>254</sup> NFP NICHE, p. v

<sup>255</sup> OKP, p. 24

<sup>256</sup> OKP, p. 24

<sup>257</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 95

<sup>258</sup> GPE Eva 2, p. 104

<sup>259</sup> ECW p. 49

<sup>260</sup> [ECW, n.d. Acceleration Facility Strategy 2019-2021.](#)

<sup>261</sup> ECW AF, p. 224

<sup>262</sup> NSJP, p. 68

the risk of remaining superficial methodological measures and may fall short of creating fundamental changes in the approach to contribute to gender equality.<sup>263</sup>

## 5 Conclusions

The section below presents conclusions per specific areas of interest, as well as the lessons learned that were derived from the synthesised findings.

*Which overarching statements can be made about the degree of effectiveness, impact, relevance, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of the initiatives funded by the Netherlands, and about the factors that contributed to or hindered this?*<sup>264</sup>

It is crucial to acknowledge that the majority of findings in the assessed evaluations are based on the perception of stakeholders, in many cases internal stakeholders, and therefore lack sufficient, reliable and robust evidence for definitive findings or conclusions. Most of the evaluations have not been able to compare the achievements with the programme goals and objectives in a transparent manner. It is therefore not possible either to conduct a contribution or attribution analysis to judge goals attainment, or to provide a quantitative insight into the achievements.

Evaluators assessed **effectiveness** for the multilateral funds as mixed for GPE, though improving between earlier and later GPE evaluations. During the first evaluation of GPE, limited progress was attributed to the programme having faced a disconnect between its ambition and its financing base.<sup>265</sup> The evaluators also struggled with lack of evidence to assess and attribute effectiveness. Whilst the fund succeeded in coordinating stakeholders in their support to education sector plans, there was no strong evidence of additional funding for education in emergencies having been attracted. The second evaluation related GPE's achievement of objectives as mixed to good, with a number of objectives being achieved as per plan. The evaluations rated the effectiveness of ECW as reasonably good. They found that the fund has a well-working financing model and has successfully supported coordination on education. Yet they also found that ECW's programmes took more time to reach effectiveness in protracted crises than in emergency settings.

For the bilateral programmes, the evaluation of NJSP reported partial achievement of objectives, with good results on youth employability, but less so in ensuring youth actually gets access to market opportunities. NICHE was only evaluated at output level, since the projects' duration, at the time of evaluation, had been too short to evaluate against other objectives. The evaluation found that NICHE had contributed to the development of human resources and teaching skills. For NFP, the evaluators found the programme to be effective both at individual level and the level of employing organisations. As many trainees had continued using their acquired knowledge and skills in their organisations, the evaluation found that NFP had alleviated quantitative and qualitative shortages of skilled manpower at mid-career level in developing countries, addressing challenges to achieving better quality education.

Across the funds and programmes, capacity building was one of the main achievements reported, ranging from capacity building at country level (government agencies and education institutes) for both the multilateral and bilateral programmes to capacity building at organisational and individual level (staff and students) for bilateral programmes. GPE and ECW reported to have attracted more funding for education than before in emergency contexts, but there is no evidence that these funds would not have been dedicated to education through other interventions or organisations, had these funds not been operational.

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<sup>263</sup> OKP, p. 24

<sup>264</sup> This question was merged with the research question "What do existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries say about the extent to which the initiatives were relevant, coherent, efficient and sustainable and about why this was the case?" as they are similar.

<sup>265</sup> GPE Eva 1

Many factors influencing effectiveness were highlighted in the evaluation reports, such as socio-economic features, absence of conflict, fragility and security issues, and the presence of rule of law. Additionally, political factors in the target countries, and administrative capacity of the institutions receiving support had an influence on effectiveness. Another factor mentioned in the evaluations was the necessity of having sufficient time available to obtain organisational and institutional change. Also, most evaluations found that having a well-defined ToC and a good quality results framework was essential. The evaluators deemed that a good quality ToC was not only essential for measuring results, but also to allow adaptation to the programme and activities in a timely manner to help achieve the objectives.

Findings on **efficiency** were reasonably positive, with a few caveats. Some interventions had not been timely, due to reasons that were deemed external by the implementers. In the bilateral programmes, some evaluations tried to assess value for money but with few robust findings. For the multilateral interventions, evaluations assessed transparency and governance as mixed but improving. Evaluators deemed that a clear division of roles and responsibilities between key stakeholders was conducive to efficiency. On the other hand, they saw difficult procedures for grantees, and funding recipients' lack of capable human resources as hampering.

**Impact** assessment in the evaluations was limited. On the one hand, some of the evaluations did not cover impact. On the other hand, those who did report on impact had methodological shortcomings: their findings were highly anecdotal and at individual level, results were mainly perception-based, and the research did not include a baseline and counterfactual. The evaluations' methods were therefore deemed insufficiently robust to substantiate any claims on impact.

As for unintended effects, some positive effects have been reported in some of the evaluations, for instance for the ECW programme that had reached more beneficiaries than it had intended in the design. As for negative unintended effects, the Nexus Skills and Jobs programme evaluation brought out occasional effects on conflict dynamics.<sup>266</sup>

Related to **relevance**, education is widely acknowledged as crucial for human development in both the development and the humanitarian sector. Nonetheless, gaps in terms of available funds and capacity continue to exist, which makes all the interventions essentially relevant – provided their design is of good quality. The selected interventions were all perceived relevant or highly relevant, since they were seen to respond to the country needs related to education as well as the beneficiary needs and had adapted to changes in context. The evaluations of the Nexus programme did mention a point for improvement, namely that interventions did not always adequately include governments and local partners throughout the programme cycle.

**Coherence** was seen as contingent on stakeholder participation and, as under relevance, national and local government ownership was seen as crucial. Under coherence, the potential contribution of some programmes to the humanitarian-development nexus was assessed as positive. Though sufficient capacity of key stakeholders is important to allow for coherence, it is not always a sufficient condition; coordination and collaboration must also be a structural aspect of the intervention, as well as in-depth analyses, visibility of the project with stakeholders and pronounced policy dialogue with the government. As for Dutch government priorities, the bilateral programmes were reported to be aligned with those. None of the evaluations of bilateral programmes looked into coherence with programmes of other countries though.

Not all evaluations reported on **sustainability**. Most of the reported findings concerned institutional sustainability, and the findings on this were mixed. Collaboration with public education institutions and government bodies and their capacity and frameworks were reported as essential, but the absence thereof was also a constraint in both the multilateral and the bilateral programmes. Most of the evaluation reports indicated that financial sustainability was

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<sup>266</sup> As an example, a project in Somaliland project had an uneven coverage of all IDPs communities and districts, creating a sentiment of exclusion and conflict in the community

unlikely. In general, under emergency programmes sustainability is often not pursued, as was the case here in the multilateral programmes. For the bilateral programmes, positive observations were made on the sustainability of academic achievements, jobs created, and behaviour change. Nonetheless, the evaluations rated sustainability of institutional and sector improvements less positively. Although the intention of the Nexus programme had been to strengthen the links between youth employment and the TVET sector, the programme had chosen a more informal approach by working through private institutions, which the evaluation found less sustainable. In NICHE, the Dutch education institutions established partnerships with local educational institutions with the intention of these being long-term but the evaluators were doubtful about their sustainability. For OKP, the evaluation was positive, indicating that Dutch education institutions had mainly formed partnerships with institutions that they had already worked with previously, so that they benefited for a longer time from Dutch support and collaboration.

As for **gender**, the evaluations reported the approach of the GPE to be gender sensitive, with Girls' Education Accelerator grants ensuring additional emphasis. The ECW evaluations highlighted the ECW efforts towards mainstreaming gender in design and strategies, although implementation was sometimes challenging. Evaluations of the bilateral programmes were also positive. The programmes were assessed as gender sensitive and increasingly so over time, and even where gender equality had not been a requirement in the design, it was achieved and gender needs were observed.

All 10 evaluated programmes and funds managed to reach an equal number of girls'/women's and boys'/men's participation in most activities where this was relevant, and some programmes included activities aimed at gender knowledge and awareness. However, there was a notable lack of attention to differentiated gender needs in the designs and analyses of the projects. Evaluations indicated that including gender into programme goals, policy, results framework, and action plans is conducive to achieving contributions to gender equality. However, the lack of capacity and human resources of the recipients and implementing agencies hampered such contributions from moving beyond just equal targeting.

Table 2 provides readers with a quick insight into how each programme scored across the seven selected criteria. While there are differences between the ratings per criterion, overall, the differences are not significant. It is important to note that reflecting the results in this way involves a high level of extraction by the author of this synthesis, in which details in the various evaluation reports are not reflected. The aim of the table is to create an easy insight for the audience. However, comparison of the programmes based on the scores should be done with utmost care and may not always be valid, given that the programmes under evaluation are very different, as is the level of assessment and the level of detail of the evaluation reports and the methodological quality of the evaluations. Hence, the standard of what was considered 'effective', 'efficient' etc. was different from one evaluation to the next, as was the evidence base on which such judgments were based. Moreover, as the evaluation reports were largely based on stakeholder perceptions, the scoring in the table is also to a large extent based on the perceptions of the programmes' stakeholders consulted for the evaluations.

**Table 2: Overview of summarized conclusions of the selected evaluations per criterion**

	Project name	Effectiveness	Impact	Efficiency	Relevance	Coherence	Sustainability	Gender
<b>Multilateral funds</b>								
1	GPE-Evaluation 1	-	N.a.	+	++	+	N.a.	++
2	GPE-Evaluation 2	+/-	N.a.	+	+	+	+/-	++
3	ECW FER	++	N.a.	+	++	+	N.a.	+

4	ECW MYRP	Unclear	N.a.	+	++	+	+/-	+
5	ECW AF	+	N.a.	+	++	+	N.a.	+
<b>Bilateral programmes</b>								
6	MSP	+/-	N.a.	+	+	+	N.a.	++
7	NSJP	Mixed	N.a.	++	+	+	+/-	+
8	NFP/NICHE	+/-	N.a.	+	+	+	+/-	++
9	OKP	N.a.	N.a.	+/-	+	+	Unclear <sup>267</sup>	+

++ = Good

+ = Reasonable

+/- = Mixed

- = Limited

-- = Poor

N.a. = Not applicable/ measurement not done or not reliable

Based on the findings for each of the initiatives, which overarching lessons can be drawn?

### The importance of having a strong ToC and results framework

The evaluations of the multilateral funds highlight the importance of having a well-defined ToC and a high-quality results framework from the onset to measure achievement and fine-tune the approach, emphasizing that these are often lacking or inadequate. This deficiency has multiple effects, beginning with these frameworks enabling measurements of results (or the lack thereof) and facilitating timely adaptations. This, in turn, aids in achieving planned outcomes and objectives by addressing challenges promptly and tailoring activities to observed needs and gaps (effectiveness). Thus, a well-developed ToC and results framework enable better assessment of an intervention among donors and implementers and help ensure that the right target group is reached, that the approach is inclusive (relevance), and that appropriate steps are planned and taken that lead up to the envisaged objective. The latter will help ensure that planned results are achieved with the available investment (efficiency) and can be attractive to other donors, which is particularly important for the multi-lateral long-term funds.

### Measuring impact at beneficiary level or improvement of the education system is essential but not part of the independent evaluations under study

All stakeholders are keen to understand the ultimate impact of an intervention, particularly regarding accountability towards the beneficiary. However, attention to impact is limited in all the evaluations incorporated in this synthesis. While difficulties in measuring impact, especially in conflict-ridden locations, are acknowledged, there are still measurable aspects, such as the improvement of the national education system. To ensure that impact is adequately measured, it is crucial to plan and implement baseline and follow up studies that include counterfactuals. Additionally, studies measuring impact should be an intrinsic part of the design of the intervention, coupled with the allocation of sufficient funds to conduct such studies.

### Most interventions do not sufficiently engage local actors

Although localisation<sup>268</sup> is an explicit goal under the Grand Bargain,<sup>269</sup> it has come up as a weakness in some of the evaluations. The ECW programmes struggle to adequately engage local actors, in particular CSOs and national NGOs, as stakeholders throughout the project cycle, and also in providing them access as applicants for the funds. Nonetheless, research indicates that engaging local actors is beneficial across all DAC criteria and is crucial in achieving a link between shorter-term humanitarian support and longer-term objectives.

<sup>267</sup> At the time of the study that was included in the synthesis, OKP was still ongoing.

<sup>268</sup> [Localisation](#) means empowering local responders in affected countries to lead and deliver humanitarian aid. It aims at strengthening the capacity and resources of local organisations to respond to crises and promote long-term sustainability.

<sup>269</sup> [The Grand Bargain](#), launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, is an agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organisations, who have committed to get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action.

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## Annex 1: Terms of Reference

## **Specification of requirements**

# **A Synthesis of Existing Evaluations of Dutch Spending on Education in ODA countries**

19 January 2024

2024

Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## 1. Introduction

Dutch development cooperation policy on education has several objectives: to strengthen education in ODA countries in order to contribute to increasing opportunities and prospects for young people; to increase the number of well-trained professionals; and to promote policy-relevant research.<sup>270</sup>

To achieve these goals, the Netherlands (co-)finances a number of global and bilateral funds and programmes. In total, the planned development cooperation expenditure on education in the period 2022-2027 is almost 70 million euros per year.<sup>271</sup> The Strategic Evaluation Agenda announced that a synthesis study on education funding will be undertaken in 2023:

"Synthesis of evaluation research on major initiatives (such as Education Cannot Wait and Global Partnership for Education) to which the Netherlands has contributed financially in recent years [...] Synthesis of existing evaluations".<sup>272</sup>

The synthesis contributes to the Periodic Review of Article 3, Social Progress, of the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation budget. This Periodic Review will be completed in 2025. In addition to the synthesis research, a study on the impact of long-term support for higher education will be carried out<sup>273</sup> and will contribute to the Periodic Review.

This Specification of Requirements document gives a description of the synthesis research and sets out its requirements in terms of deliverables and time frame.

## 2. Purpose of research and research questions

### Purpose

The aim of the research is to make a synthesis of the findings of existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries, in order to account for the expenditure and to inform future policy choices.

### Main research questions

1. What do existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries say about the extent to which the initiatives were effective in achieving their goals and about why this was the case?
2. What do existing evaluations of Dutch-funded initiatives for education in ODA countries say about the extent to which the initiatives were relevant, coherent, efficient and sustainable and about why this was the case?
3. Based on this, what overarching lessons can be drawn?

### Sub-questions to be used for synthesizing the findings of the evaluations:

Per initiative (that is: per fund or programme):

#### 1. Factual description

- a. What were the goals of the initiative?
- b. How/with which input and activities did the initiative try to achieve the goals?

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<sup>270</sup> [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 57.

<sup>271</sup> This is the total estimated expenditure under Article 3.4 (Education) of the budget. There are also expenditures that contribute directly or indirectly to education goals but that fall under another budget article, such as the Nexus Education and Work Programme, which falls under Article 1.3 (Reinforced private sector and labour market in developing countries) of the budget. [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, Table 12, p. 57 and Table 8, p. 38.

<sup>272</sup> [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, appendix 4, p. 84.

<sup>273</sup> [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 57.

## 2. Effectiveness

- a. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, was the initiative effective? That is: to what extent did the initiative achieve its goals at output<sup>274</sup> and outcome<sup>275</sup> level?
- b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the effectiveness of the initiative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the effectiveness of the initiative?

## 3. Impact

- a. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, did the initiative contribute to achieving its goals at impact<sup>276</sup> level?
- b. To what extent, according to existing evaluations, did the initiative have any unintended effects at impact level, positive or negative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the intended or unintended impact of the initiative?
- d. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the impact of the initiative?

## 4. Efficiency

- a. To what extent was the initiative efficient according to existing evaluations? That is: to what extent did it deliver its results in an economic<sup>277</sup> and timely<sup>278</sup> way?
- b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the efficiency of the initiative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the efficiency of the initiative?

## 5. Relevance

- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative relevant? That is: to what extent did it meet the needs of the target group, was it focused on tackling the causes of the problem, did it adapt to changes in the context to remain relevant and was the approach based on what has been proven to be effective before?
- b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the relevance of the initiative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the relevance of the initiative?

## 6. Coherence

- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative coherent with other interventions? That is: to what extent did other existing interventions support, undermine or duplicate efforts of the initiative, and vice versa?<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> The products, capital goods and services which result from development interventions (OECD, [What are results?](#)).

<sup>275</sup> The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term change and effects of intervention outputs (OECD, [What are results?](#)).

<sup>276</sup> Primary and secondary, long-term, higher level effects produced by development interventions (OECD, [What are results?](#) and OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#)).

<sup>277</sup> 'Economic' refers to the conversion of inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) into outputs, outcomes and impacts, in the most cost-effective way possible, compared to feasible alternatives (OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#)).

<sup>278</sup> 'Timely' means within the intended timeframe, or a timeframe reasonably adjusted to the evolving context. This may include assessing operational efficiency: how well the initiative was managed (OECD, [Evaluation Criteria](#)).

<sup>279</sup> This includes both internal coherence and external coherence. Internal coherence is about the compatibility of the programme/fund with other interventions carried out by the same institution/government. (This also includes the question of to what extent the intervention was coherent with the Dutch Policy objectives at the time.) External coherence is about the consistency of the programme/fund with other actors' interventions in the same country, sector or institution.

- b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the coherence of the initiative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the coherence of the initiative?

### 7. Sustainability

- a. According to existing evaluations, to what extent was the initiative sustainable? That is: to what extent will the benefits of the programme or fund continue, or to what extent are they likely to continue, into the future?
- b. According to existing evaluations, which factors contributed to the (likely) sustainability of the initiative?
- c. According to existing evaluations, which factors hindered the (likely) sustainability of the initiative?

### 8. Overarching

- a. Based on the findings for each of the initiatives, which overarching statements can be made about the degree of effectiveness, impact, relevance, coherence, efficiency and sustainability of the initiatives funded by the Netherlands, and about the factors that contributed to or hindered this?
- b. Based on the findings for each of the initiatives, which overarching lessons can be drawn?

## **3. Scope: evaluation reports to include in the research**

IOB will provide the evaluation reports that are to be included in the research. These are 11 reports. This section provides a description of the reports included.

### **Research period**

The synthesis study will include evaluations published in the past nine years: from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2015 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2023.

### **Initiatives included**

The synthesis focusses on programmes and funds aimed at improving the provision or quality of education in ODA countries. This includes primary and secondary education, as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training/Higher Education (TVET/HE). It excludes programmes that are not primarily aimed at improving the provision or quality of education in ODA countries, but that involve providing training or education in order to further a different aim. For example, training programmes funded by the Netherlands on business skills, cyber security or human rights.

Within the ministry of Foreign Affairs, all subsidies above 5 million euros are required to be evaluated. The synthesis will include all evaluations (that meet the selection and quality criteria) of all funds and programmes aimed at improving education in ODA countries with Dutch contributions of more than 5 million euros. These are the following funds and programmes:

### **Global funds**

#### **Global Partnership for Education**

The largest global fund and partnership for education, co-founded by the Netherlands. It supports national governments in around 90 lower-income countries in reforming primary and secondary education. Funds are managed by the World Bank.<sup>280</sup>

- 4 evaluations that meet the selection- and quality criteria

#### **Education Cannot Wait**

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<sup>280</sup> [Global Partnership for Education](#)

A relatively new global fund that focuses on education in emergency situations, such as conflict, natural disasters and epidemics. The fund provides emergency aid but also focuses on the longer term, with the aim of preventing a 'lost generation'. UNICEF hosts the fund.<sup>281</sup>

- 3 evaluations that meet the selection- and quality criteria

### Bilateral programmes

#### MENA scholarship programme

A scholarship programme for higher education specifically aimed at the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>13</sup> The programme is managed by Nuffic.

- 1 evaluation that meets the selection- and quality criteria

#### Nexus Skills & Jobs

A fund for activities that promote links between education and employment. The available budget is allocated through Dutch embassies in nine countries in focus regions.<sup>282</sup>

- 1 evaluation that meets the selection- and quality criteria

#### Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP)

Successor of the NICHE and NFP programmes (see below). OKP involves both institutional collaboration projects and scholarships for mid-career professionals from partner countries. Its aims are capacity strengthening of TVET (technical and vocational education and training) and higher education systems, developing individual and institutional knowledge, and improving bilateral contacts and cooperation between higher education institutions in the Netherlands and those in the partner countries.<sup>283</sup> The programme is managed by Nuffic.

- 1 evaluation (mid-term review) that meets the selection- and quality criteria

#### Netherlands Initiative for Capacity development in Higher Education (NICHE) and Netherlands Fellowship Programmes (NFP)

NICHE and NFP were earlier programmes for higher education, also managed by Nuffic. The aim of NICHE was institutional strengthening of higher education in partner countries. 'NICHE I' started in 2008/2009, 'NICHE II' ran from 2013 to 2017.<sup>16</sup> NFP was a scholarship programme for people from partner countries. It ran from 2002 to 2017, referred to as 'NFP II' in later years.

- 1 evaluation (evaluating both programmes) that meets the selection- and quality criteria

### Quality criteria

The synthesis will only include evaluation reports that are of sufficient (methodological) quality. IOB will assess the quality of evaluation reports of the above programmes and funds, based on the 'knock-out criteria'<sup>284</sup> of IOB's [quality criteria for evaluations](#):

- Independence of evaluators
- Research design is clearly elaborated and methodology is transparent

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<sup>281</sup> [Education - Rijksportaal \(overheid-i.nl\)](#); [www.educationcannotwait.org/about-us/who-we-are](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/about-us/who-we-are) <sup>13</sup> [MENA Scholarship Programme \(MSP\) | Nuffic](#)

<sup>282</sup> [Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaat](#) voor Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking voor het jaar 2023, p. 44.

<sup>283</sup> [Education - Rijksportaal \(overheid-i.nl\)](#); [www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/orange-knowledge-programme](http://www.nuffic.nl/en/subjects/orange-knowledge-programme) <sup>16</sup> [NFP and NICHE | Nuffic](#)

<sup>284</sup> The original document lists thirteen knock-out criteria. Here, some of these have been combined, such as 'clearly elaborated research design' and 'transparent methodology'. Moreover, criterium 11, 'The methods are appropriate to evaluate effectiveness' and criterium 12 'The methods are appropriate to evaluate efficiency' have been combined into "The methods are appropriate to answer the research questions". Finally, criterium 22, which states that all research questions need to be answered, has been left out: if an evaluation does not answer one of its research questions, but its methodology is otherwise of high quality, its findings will be taken into account in the synthesis.

- The methods are appropriate to answer the research questions
- Indicators or result areas are appropriate to capture the planned results
- Sampling strategy minimizes selection bias
- Appropriate analyses for the chosen research design
- Adequate discussion of the limitations of the study
- Adequate description of the intervention and validation of assumptions of the ToC
- Use of independent information sources

All reports that score at least 'sufficient' on these criteria will be included in the synthesis. At the same time, *only* reports that score at least 'sufficient' on these criteria will be included. However, for the criterion 'The methods are appropriate to answer the research questions' four separate assessments will be made: for research questions on, respectively, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and all other research questions. This is because it is possible that an evaluation's methods are not appropriate to draw conclusions on e.g. effectiveness, while the methods are appropriate for drawing conclusions on e.g. relevance or coherence. In such situations, the synthesis should only incorporate the findings on the questions for which the methods are judged as suitable.

#### 4. Limitations

The study only consists of a synthesis of existing evaluation reports and no additional new (primary) research will be carried out. It will not be possible to check or triangulate findings from the evaluation reports. Consequently, the study depends on the quality of the existing evaluation reports and limitations of these reports will have implications for the limitations of the findings of the synthesis study.

The study also depends on the availability of evaluation reports of sufficient quality. For some of the described programmes, the number of reports available is limited or the number of reports with sufficient quality is limited.

Finally, the study depends on the scope of and the topics addressed in the existing evaluation reports. Consequently, it is possible that not all the questions mentioned in paragraph 2 can be answered in the synthesis report.

#### 5. Ethical considerations

Because the research only consists of a desk-based synthesis of existing reports, it is not associated with special research ethics risks. The reports incorporated in the study will all be publicly available. This also means that only the final published versions of reports will be used, not data sets on which findings in the reports were based.

#### 6. Deliverables: outputs and quality requirements

The synthesis should result in a report and a summary.

IOB will send both documents to the House of Representatives and publish them on its website. Requirements for the report and summary are:

- The report and the summary should be written in English.
- The report should include a section on the methodology used for the synthesis and the limitations of the research. Because IOB undertakes the quality assessment of reports, IOB will provide a description of these assessments to include in the methodology section of the report.
- IOB will conduct a quality assessment of the evaluation reports. For some reports, IOB may judge that the methodology used is sufficient to support findings on e.g. relevance and coherence, but not to support findings on e.g. impact or effectiveness. IOB will share the results of the quality assessments with the contractor. S/he should take them

into account when making the synthesis and only incorporate the findings on the questions for which the methods are judged suitable.

- The report and summary should answer only the research questions set out in section 2 and, as far as possible, all of these research questions. If a research question cannot be answered because the evaluation reports do not address the question sufficiently, this needs to be explained in the methodology section.
- No fixed word or page limit will be stipulated for the report, but IOB is looking for a document that is as short as possible, while still containing complete answers to the research questions. IOB expects that this is possible in a report of no more than 30 pages.
- The summary should be no longer than 3 pages A4, based on font 11 or 12.
- The report and summary need to be of publishable quality, in terms of both research standards and accessibility to the reader. This means, amongst other things:
  - The report needs to include adequate and complete referencing of the source material. The summary should not include references.
  - The report and summary should present an objective, well-supported and full representation of findings in the evaluation reports. They should not be based on the opinions of the contractor.
  - The synthesis report needs to include an actual synthesis. This means going beyond merely summarizing the main findings of each report and undertaking own analysis to bring together the information from the different reports into a cohesive text. This text should be organised topic-by-topic, based on the research questions, and not source-by-source, based on the evaluation reports.
  - Some of the evaluation reports may clearly give answers to the above research questions by explicitly using terms such as 'relevance' and 'effectiveness'. However, others may not use these terms but still describe findings that are relevant to answer the research questions of the synthesis. Moreover, some reports may use terms such as 'relevance' or 'effectiveness' but use them in a different meaning than what is meant in the research questions of the synthesis. That is: use them to describe findings that are not relevant for answering the research questions of the synthesis. The contractor should keep this in mind when producing the synthesis report, and should be guided by the research questions and explanation of terms as set out in this document; not by the interpretation of terms used in the various evaluation reports.
  - The report and summary should be logically and clearly structured.
  - The report and summary need to be understandable for non-experts. They should be written in plain English, avoiding overly long and complex sentences and avoiding jargon when possible.
  - The report and summary should be in correct English, edited for typos and grammatical mistakes.

## 7. Quality control and draft versions

IOB will give feedback on draft versions of the report and summary. Usually two or more draft versions are required before the final outputs can be approved.

As part of its quality control mechanisms, IOB projects always have a 'sounding board group', consisting of IOB researchers who are not directly involved in the project, as well as an advisory group, consisting of representatives of the relevant policy directorate(s) and one or more external experts. IOB will ask both groups to give feedback on at least one draft version of the report and summary.

IOB can only accept the report and summary as final if they meet the quality criteria set out in the previous section. In case a disagreement arises about whether the report and summary meet the quality requirements, IOB will be guided by the views of the advisory group.

## 8. Organization

The synthesis is commissioned by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This department has an independent position within the ministry of Foreign Affairs and operates independently of the ministry's policy directorates. The project manager and contact person for the synthesis is Wendy van der Neut at IOB ([wendyvander.neut@minbuza.nl](mailto:wendyvander.neut@minbuza.nl)).

## 9. Planning

Below is a provisional time frame for the study. The exact dates and milestones will be agreed between IOB and the contractor. In between these milestones, IOB will stay in regular contact about the work.

Date	Milestone
January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contract signed and work started</li></ul>
29 <sup>th</sup> of February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contractor has shared first draft report with IOB</li></ul>
8 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IOB has given feedback on first draft report</li></ul>
22 March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contractor has shared second draft report with IOB (who will share with advisory group)</li></ul>
5 April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IOB has given feedback on second draft report</li></ul>
31 May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Final version report approved by director IOB</li></ul>

## Annex 2: Deliverables and agreed timeline

### Deliverables

A number of deliverables are foreseen, namely:

1. A synthesis report, which will be developed in an iterative manner, with two draft versions and one final version. Each subsequent draft version will consider and address the feedback of IOB.
2. Executive summary, which will be developed and included after the second round of feedback to the synthesis report.

### Work plan

The synthesis study will take place starting as soon as possible (if the proposal is to be approved, by the end of January 2024) and will last until 30 May 2024 (provided it can start on time and IOB feedback arrives as planned).

Activities	Date	2024																					
		Jan			Feb					Mar					April				May				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Exploratory desk review	15/Feb				■	■																	
Analysis and report writing	31/Mar						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
Submit draft V01	31/Mar													*									
Feedback IOB Draft V01	17/Apr														■	■	■	■					
Revision V01 based on IOB feedback	22/Apr																	■					
Submit V02	26/Apr																	*					
Feedback IOB Draft V02	03/May																		■				
Addressing feedback V02	06/May																			■			
Development and inclusion executive summary	13/May																				■		
Submit version with executive summary	13/May																				*		
Final feedback IOB	24/May																					■	
Adaptation final version (if needed)	27/May																						■
Approval final version plus executive summary by IOB	30/May																						■
Number of days					2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3				2		2	3		1
Consultant input					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■									
IOB Input																							■

### Annex 3: Details of evaluated interventions

	Project name	Country	Implementing institutions	Duration	Direct target Group(s)	Budget (million EURO)	Evaluation conducted from	Type of evaluation	DAC criteria covered						# Quality of criteria met <sup>285</sup>							
									Effectiveness	Impact	Efficiency	Relevance	Coherence	Sustainability	Gender	Effectiveness	Impact	Efficiency	Relevance	Coherence	Sustainability	
1	Global Partnership for Education	60 partner countries	Grant agents: multilateral institutions, CSOs, private sector, to support partner country governments	Ongoing since 2003	Boys and girls for up to 12 years of education	No information in report. GPE website states for the entire fund (Jan-24) "For 2025 round, GPE	Sep14-Apr15	Interim evaluation	x		x	x					Y	na	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	Global Partnership for Education	60-90 partner countries (increasing over time)	Grant agents: multilateral institutions, CSOs, private sector, to support partner country governments	Ongoing since 2003	Boys and girls up to 12 years of education	has raised \$4 billion. <sup>286</sup> 2015-17: pledges \$2.1 billion. 2018-2020 \$2.8 billion <sup>287</sup> .	Aug19-Apr20	Summative evaluation	x		x						Yes/Unknown	na	Y	Y	Y	Y
3	Education Cannot Wait First Emergency Response Funding modality	Countries in emergencies and protracted crises (not predefined). 32 countries at the time of evaluation.	UN agencies, International NGOs, government agencies, (to a lesser extent) national NGOs	ECW founded at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and ongoing; inception phase in 2017	Boys, girls, and teachers in emergencies and protracted crises.	Not in report. \$41 million pre-2022, \$59 million in 2022 <sup>288</sup>	Report from Nov20; timeline not included.	Evaluation of ongoing programme	x		x	x	x				Partly	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Plan modality	26 countries	UN agencies, INGOs, government agencies, (to a		Boys, girls, and teachers in protracted crises.	No budget in report-website budget 2020-	Mar21-Dec21	Evaluation of ongoing programme	x		x	x	x	x			Partly	na	Y	Y	Y	Y

<sup>285</sup> Gender as a criterion was added later in the process and was thus not assessed

<sup>286</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/funding/replenishment> (

<sup>287</sup> <https://www.globalpartnership.org/funding/replenishment>

<sup>288</sup> [Education Cannot Wait, n.d. Annual Report 2022.](#)





**Annex 4: Template for the quality assessment form used to assess the evaluations for the synthesis study**

<b>Evaluation quality assessment form</b>			
Evaluation:			
<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Yes / No / Partly / Unknown / Not Applicable</b>	<b>Comments?</b>
2. Independence of evaluation	The evaluators and affiliated organisations have not been involved in the design or implementation of the intervention and have no interest in the evaluation's outcome.		
10. Research design 20. Methodology	The research design is clearly elaborated and shows how the research results will contribute to answering the evaluation questions. The description of the data collection and analysis is systematic, complete and transparent		
11. and 12. Research methods are appropriate to answer research questions	Are the methods used appropriate to answer the research questions?		
	For effectiveness:		
	For impact:		
	For efficiency:		-
	For other research questions:		
13. Indicators or result areas are appropriate to capture the planned results	Are the indicators or result areas appropriate to capture the planned results across the different levels in the ToC?		
14. Sampling strategy	The choice of sample, cases and information sources (e.g. countries, projects, organisations and persons) is justified. The sampling strategy or case selection minimises selection bias.		
15. Analysis	The analyses are appropriate for the chosen research design.		

17. Independent information sources	Information was sourced from other stakeholders than project implementers and staff from the responsible organisation. E.g. beneficiaries, independent experts or other local stakeholders. If so: no project implementers were present during interviews or focus groups.		
21. Acknowledgement of limitations	The evaluator discusses the limitations of the study, including its reliability, the relative contribution of the intervention and other external factors affecting the observed changes.		
4. and 5. Adequate description of the intervention and validation of assumptions of the ToC	The ToR or report should preferably include a ToC; if not, it should include an intervention logic, policy strategy, or result chain. If prior to the evaluation, a ToC of the intervention already exists, the evaluator should not take the project ToC for granted but should validate the ToC assumptions.		

## Annex 5: List of countries where the evaluated interventions have been implemented

Country	Total	Number of evaluation report <sup>295</sup>							
		1/2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Afghanistan	5	x		x	x			x	x
Albania	3	x						x	x
Algeria	1					x			
Angola	1	x							
Armenia	3			x				x	x
Bangladesh	5	x		x	x			x	x
Belize	1	x							
Benin	3	x						x	x
Bhutan	2	x							x
Bolivia	2							x	x
Brazil	2		x		x				
Burkina	6	x		x	x		x	x	x
Burundi	4	x		x				x	x
Cabo Verde	1	x							
Cambodia	3	x						x	x
Cameroon	3	x		x	x				
CAR	3	x		x	x				
Chad	3	x		x	x				
Colombia	4		x		x			x	x
Comoros	2	x			x				
Congo Rep	1	x							
Côte d'Ivoire	1	x							
Cuba	1								x
Djibouti	2	x						x	
Dominica	1	x							
DRC	5	x		x	x			x	x
Ecuador	4		x		x				x
Egypt	4	x				x		x	x
El Salvador	1	x							
Eritrea	4	x		x				x	x
Eswatini	1	x							
Ethiopia	6	x		x	x		x	x	x
Georgia	2							x	x
Ghana	2							x	x
Greece	2		x		x				
Guatemala	2							x	x

Country	Total	Number of evaluation report							
		1/2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Maldives	1	x							
Mali	5	x		x	x			x	x
Marshall Islands	1	x							
Mauritania	1	x							
Micronesia	1	x							
Moldova	2	x	x						
Mongolia	1	x							x
Morocco	1							x	
Mozambique	5	x	x		x			x	x
Myanmar	4	x						x	x
Nepal	5	x	x		x			x	x
Nicaragua	2	x							x
Niger	5	x		x	x			x	
Nigeria	5	x		x	x			x	x
Oman	1							x	
Pacific Region	1	x							
Pakistan	4	x		x					x
Palestine	4	x						x	x
Peru	4		x		x			x	x
Philippines	3	x							x
PNG	4	x	x		x				x
Rwanda	3	x							x
Saint Lucia	1	x							
Saint Vincent	1	x							
Samoa	1	x							
Sao Tomé	1	x							
Senegal	4	x						x	x
Sierra Leone	2	x							x
Solomon Is	1	x							
Somalia	4	x			x			x	x
South Africa	2								x
South Sudan	5	x		x	x				x
Sri Lanka	3	x							x
Sudan	5	x	x		x				x
Surinam	2								x
Syria	4	x		x	x	x			

<sup>295</sup> The numbers represent the number of the evaluation, see Annex 3 for details

Haiti	1			x				
India	3			x			x	x
Indonesia	5	x	x	x			x	x
Iran	1				x			
Iraq	4			x	x	x		x
Jordan	4				x	x	x	x
Kenya	5	x	x	x			x	x
Kiribati	1	x						
Kyrgyz Rep	1	x						
Lao PDR	1	x						
Lebanon	4			x	x	x		x
Lesotho	1	x						
Liberia	2	x						x
Libya	3			x	x	x		
Macedonia	2						x	x
Madagascar	3	x	x	x				
Malawi	3	x	x	x				

Tajikistan	1	x						
Tanzania	5	x	x		x			x
Thailand	2							x
Timor-Leste	1	x						
Togo	1	x						
Tunisia	4	x				x	x	
Tuvalu	1	x						
Uganda	5	x		x	x			x
Ukraine	3	x		x	x			
Uzbekistan	1	x						
Vanuatu	1	x						
Venezuela	2		x		x			
Vietnam	2	x						x
Yemen	5	x	x		x			x
Zambia	4	x	x		x			x
Zimbabwe	5	x	x		x			x