

# GEARR-ing Up for Success After School Project, Uganda



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This Spotlight Brief is one of a series of Value for Money papers. It reviews the value for money of the GEARR-ing Up for Success After School (GEARR) programme in Uganda, implemented by Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) and partly funded by UK aid through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) between 2013 and 2021. It assesses the project's costs against the benefits delivered by exploring the intervention's relevancy, cost-effectiveness and sustainability. It is primarily aimed at GEC project partners, implementors and non-governmental organisations interested in assessing value for money and understanding which interventions provide good value for money in education programming.

**The GEARR model of low-cost private schools in marginalised areas offers very strong value for money in providing access and learning outcomes. It is cost-effective and likely to be 100% financially sustainable by 2026. Its work to strengthen government systems also shows cost-effectiveness and promising sustainability.**

## Why does value for money matter?

Value for money is an important way to think about any education project. It focuses on identifying the best way to use limited resources, which concerns everyone working in education programmes. Value for money is not necessarily about reducing costs – it is about identifying how we can deliver bigger or better results for a given level of resources. A key focus is effectiveness: whether an intervention delivered results whilst minimising costs. This paper aims to help others make decisions about maximising value for money in new projects and programmes.

The GEC has a Value for Money Framework, which systematically draws on evidence from evaluation findings, supplemented by interviews with project staff. Read more about the GEC Value for Money Framework and Review methodology in Annex 1. The Framework uses four of the OECD DAC criteria:

- 1. Relevance** – has the project invested in the right activities and modalities to respond to the needs and barriers of the girls identified? Has it allocated the right level of resources to them?
- 2. (Cost)-effectiveness** – has the project produced the results it was designed to deliver? Has it produced these results at an optimal cost?
- 3. Efficiency** – Was the project delivered well? What was the quality of its operations and processes? Was it delivered on time?
- 4. Sustainability** – have the results for girls and others reached by the project continued over time?

## Introduction

PEAS is a global education charity with offices in the UK, Uganda and Zambia, operating the GEARR-ing up for Success After School (GEARR) programme in Uganda to improve access to quality education for marginalised secondary school children. This Value for Money Assessment focuses on the programme in Uganda, measuring the project's success against two specific aims:

- **Schools:** Help children access quality, low-cost education through building and running private schools in areas deprived of secondary school education and improving marginalised girls' learning outcomes.
- **Systems strengthening:** Improve the capacity of 50 low-performing government schools (10 initially scaled up to 50 schools) by transferring knowledge of the PEAS school model into the government inspections approach. This was achieved through the Inspect and Improve pilot programme in partnership with Uganda's Directorate of Education Standards (DES) to improve school quality, leadership and management by PEAS and government schools working together.

To achieve these aims, PEAS established 28 schools across 21 districts and seven regions in Uganda, reaching 25,959 students (13,475 female students and 12,484 male students). The GEC element of the funding has focused on running the schools, implementing interventions targeting girls and the initial scale-up of government systems-strengthening activities (Inspect and Improve programme). Phase 1 (2013 to 2017) focussed on building schools and Phase 2 (2017 to 2021) focused on the day-to-day running of the schools and the government systems-strengthening pilot. This report assesses the programme as a whole, including non-GEC funded elements.

This report draws on evidence from the project's [endline](#) and [midline](#) evaluations, which followed a quasi-experimental approach and mix-methods design by drawing on evidence from project data, quantitative surveys with students and caregivers, and key informant interviews (KII) with students, teachers, headteachers, district inspectors and project staff. Due to constraints imposed by COVID-19, the endline evaluation has limited comparability with the [baseline](#) and midline evaluations due to methodological differences.<sup>1</sup> Other sources of evidence to inform this review include the project's independent evaluation of the PEAS-DES Inspect and Improve Project conducted by NFER, a PEAS internal Value for Money Framework Assessment, and interviews with the project team, FCDO Uganda and the project's independent evaluator, Jigsaw Consult.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW

- The GEARR programme offers very strong cost-effectiveness, relevance and sustainability through its core school programme activities. Their schools' annual cost per beneficiary is £202, which is 27% lower than the government equivalent and they target highly marginalised girls, thus reducing barriers to education.
- The school model is on track for 100% sustainability by 2026.
- Their systems-strengthening work shows promising cost-effectiveness, relevance and sustainability by generating positive spill overs to non-PEAS schools.
- The role of the senior women teacher in schools and literacy classes displayed excellent relevance by addressing barriers to girls' education (lack of female teacher presence, lower than average educational attainment) and displayed effective contributions towards improving girls' educational outcomes.
- PEAS' COVID-19 activities were also highly relevant and effective. For example, they could reach marginalised girls/students through learning packs radio lessons and maintained communications with girls and caregivers through the telephone tree system.

## Was the GEARR programme relevant?

### PEAS schools

[Evaluation](#) findings indicate that PEAS schools were **relevant** in targeting and enrolling marginalised children into their 28 schools within Uganda. Enrolment data shows (i) all PEAS school girls came from rural communities, (ii) 30% of girls came from households living under \$1.90 a day, (iii) 73% of girls' parents/carers were in informal employment, and (iv) PEAS girls were at risk of early marriage or pregnancy. Entry requirements into a PEAS school are also much lower than that of a government or private school. Thus, PEAS could reduce another barrier to education for marginalised children (or for those with lower average education attainment). However, it is likely that although PEAS targeted and enrolled marginalised children into their schools, employment and income attributes of parents/carers are better than expected for the regions that the project operated within, but the project is pro-poor nonetheless.

Other specific features of PEAS schools were the role of the senior women teachers, which was **highly relevant** in addressing barriers to girls' learning in schools. The [baseline](#) evaluation discovered that the lack of female teacher presence and support in schools is a significant barrier to education for marginalised girls. In addition, schools with predominantly male staff sometimes lacked understanding and awareness of the barriers faced by girls, leading to teachers discouraging girls' transition. PEAS addressed these barriers through senior women teachers, who were given ongoing training by PEAS to provide pastoral support and life skills coaching for the marginalised girls in PEAS schools.

<sup>1</sup> Methodological differences between evaluations include the lack of comparison schools in the endline evaluation and PEAS choosing to assess all 28 PEAS schools at endline, which is 16 more schools than at baseline and midline evaluations.

Literacy classes also demonstrated **good relevance**, as classes were used to improve/sustain the literacy scores of PEAS students and facilitated the learning of marginalised girls. Literacy classes were used to supplement existing classes in PEAS schools, mainly targeting those with lower-than-average educational attainment. Although literacy classes were relevant to the programme, PEAS students were already performing better in literacy than girls in comparison schools (at [baseline](#)).

Life skills training (including the livelihood programme) displayed **good relevance** in improving girls' skills and helping them develop entrepreneurial/workplace skills through hands-on learning opportunities. PEAS' theory of change suggests that those who receive life skills training are more likely to be resilient and better prepared for transition. At the same time, livelihood classes would help develop a wide range of girls' skills, including communication and interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving.

During COVID-19 school closures, PEAS adapted its activities to continue supporting learning out of school through the distribution of government-produced learning packs, hosted educational radio programmes, facilitated telephone calls from teachers to maintain contact with students, and sent SMS messages to the students and their families. These responses were **very relevant**, as PEAS recognised that the vast majority of caregivers did not have internet access and could adapt to the programme strategically to continue education for students at a distance.

### Systems strengthening – Inspect and Improve

The Inspect and Improve pilot programme is a **highly relevant** intervention. Its relevance was driven by the introduction of improvement plans, which closed a gap in the DES current inspection cycle that did not focus on long-term school improvements. In addition, the programme's foundation is built on the Ugandan government's efforts of shifting emphasis from increasing the provision of education to improving the quality of education (as referenced in the Inspect and Improve endline evaluation)<sup>2</sup>. With expertise in this area, PEAS can take lessons learned and practices from their network to support the government's ambitions to improve education quality.

## Was the GEARR programme effective?

### PEAS schools

The [midline](#) evaluation found significant improvements in students' literacy and numeracy scores in PEAS schools, showing that PEAS schools were highly effective in providing quality education to students. Between 2017 and 2019, PEAS schools had a higher percentage of students passing formal Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations<sup>3</sup> at the end of lower secondary school. The percentage of PEAS students passing the exam increased from 93% in 2017 to 95% in 2019, and PEAS students

achieving the top three grades was 12% higher than that of the national average.<sup>4</sup> Based on midline evaluation findings, PEAS treatment schools exceeded their target set out during the baseline evaluation by 2.6 times, compared to the control school target for UCE examination results. Furthermore, 11% more girls in PEAS schools passed English than girls in comparison schools, and 23% more girls in treatment schools passed Maths than girls in comparison schools. In addition, the proportion of children at PEAS schools achieving top grades at UCE has increased from 54% in 2017 to 63% in 2020, each year outperforming the national results.<sup>5</sup> It is also important to note that the [baseline](#) evaluation found no statistically significant differences for literacy and numeracy scores between treatment and comparison schools, therefore further strengthening the argument that PEAS were highly effective in providing quality education to students in PEAS schools.<sup>6</sup>

Evidence indicates that there was good attendance regarding literacy classes, with 74.3% of students at [endline](#) participating in these supplementary classes, therefore displaying **good effectiveness**. Qualitative data at endline also revealed that 98% of girls believed literacy classes were helping them to improve their ability to read and write, representing a 2.7 percentage point improvement on the 95.3% figure at [baseline](#). The endline evaluation also reports that engaging with literacy classes also increased a girl's odds of developing reading and writing skills by 166%.

The [endline](#) evaluation evidenced that senior women teachers' role was highly effective due to the activity's contribution and significant association with girls' development of reading and writing skills. Engagement with senior women teachers increased girls' chances of developing reading and writing skills by 264%; girls felt safer in school and were more motivated to enrol and stay in school as they had female role models to look up to.

Life skills training (including the livelihoods programme) displayed **good effectiveness**. At the [endline](#), evidence shows that girls value the skills they are learning through life skills training and that they see this as useful/helpful for their future. The endline study noted that students developed a wide range of useful skills during the pandemic, including keeping themselves safe and healthy, making decisions about their future, studying well by themselves, and adapting to learning from home. The majority of students through interviews also reported gaining communication skills (94.2%), study skills (92.5%), decision-making skills (90.9%), teamwork skills (88.2%), and organisational skills (88%) from PEAS activities. Other skills were less frequently reported as having been developed, including technical (61%), leadership (73%), and financial skills (78%), but there is a strong, positive, and overall perception of the value of life and livelihood skills from project school staff and students.

<sup>2</sup> Chu, J., Galvis, M.A. and Kotonya, J., 2021. Evaluation of the PEAS-DES Inspect and Improve Project. Final Evaluation Report. National Foundation for Educational Research [online]. Available: [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4621/evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_peas\\_des\\_inspect\\_and\\_improve\\_project\\_endline\\_report.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4621/evaluation_of_the_peas_des_inspect_and_improve_project_endline_report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Higher percentage of students passing Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) at a Division 1 – 4 score, which is equivalent to a 'pass'. UCE is equivalent to UK GCSEs.

<sup>4</sup> 2019 Uganda National UCE results (latest results): The proportion of PEAS students achieving the top 3 grades was 12% higher than national average.

<sup>5</sup> Source: PEAS internal monitoring

<sup>6</sup> SEGRA and SEGMA testing was used at baseline to measure literacy and numeracy levels of students in treatment and comparison schools. For literacy, scores were marginally higher in treatment schools, at 40.7, compared to 40.1 in comparison schools. For numeracy, scores were marginally lower in treatment schools, at 24.8, compared to 25.1 in comparison schools. However, there was no statistically significant difference found at the 5 percent confidence level for both literacy and numeracy score outcomes.



Additionally, the [midline](#) evaluation found a slight correlation between improvement on successful transition and higher life skills index scores, suggesting that the life skills training had a positive influence on transition outcomes. The activity most commonly cited by interviewees as the most valuable activity benefiting students in PEAS schools was the livelihoods and life skills training provided to the student. The most commonly reported uses for skills were keeping themselves safe and healthy, making decisions about their future, studying well by themselves and adapting to learning from home.

The PEAS programme was **effective** at supporting students to transition successfully.<sup>7</sup> The [midline](#) evaluation found 57% of treatment schools had a successful transition status compared to 38% of comparison school students. The rate of transition of the treatment group was 19% greater than the comparison, exceeding the original target (12%) set at baseline.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, while the PEAS programme may have been successful at making students aware of non-traditional learning opportunities for transition (71.1% of S4 students surveyed at [endline](#) indicated they wanted to study A-Levels), barriers remained that prevented girls from transitioning. The endline evaluation suggests that the barriers to learning and transition remain; gender attitudes embedded in cultural norms/practices and insufficient money/family support hinder girls' education. Boys were also more likely to aspire to study A-levels than girls, suggesting that additional work needs to be done to improve girls' transition outcomes further.

PEAS COVID-19 activities were **extremely effective**:

- Around 80% of students surveyed at [endline](#) reported receiving a learning pack from their school, which were deemed highly effective. The endline evaluation also evidenced students recurrently 'strongly' agreeing that the educational information contained within the pack was helpful for their learning (when analysing the most frequent response).<sup>9</sup> The learning packs also produced positive spill overs, as 80.4% of caregivers reported that other members of the households, friends or community members used the learning packs.
- Radio lessons also demonstrated high levels of effectiveness, with over 50% of PEAS students tuning in. The [endline](#) evaluation revealed that the most frequent response provided by students was that they strongly agreed that radio lessons were helpful and helped them retain knowledge.<sup>10</sup> A separate study also found that girls had significantly more interest in turning into broadcasts than boys.<sup>11</sup>
- The Telephone Tree system was also an extremely effective activity, as the [endline](#) evaluation demonstrates that teachers were reaching the majority of students through phone calls. In addition, education, safeguarding and health advice were shared with students, with most students agreeing that the phone calls were useful.

## Systems strengthening – Inspect and Improve

Building on an existing inspection process, the Inspect and Improve intervention was **extremely effective**. The Inspect and Improve approach builds on the premise that PEAS schools have better quality management and operations than government schools, as validated by an independent study conducted by the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE).<sup>12</sup> This enabled the project to lever good practice across to government schools.

Importantly, the same study showed that these higher levels of management quality were associated with higher learning outcomes via student value-added scores. A previous external evaluation of PEAS schools also identified several school management aspects that have set PEAS' performance apart from comparable government and private schools,<sup>13</sup> a key contributing factor being the high quality of school management in the PEAS' approach to school inspections and accompanying package of support and follow-up. These include teacher support and training, accountability measures, child protection, and support for the learning and development of strong school leaders.

The independent evaluation of the Inspect and Improve approach evidenced highly positive outcomes for all schools included in the pilot, showing that the systems strengthening work is **extremely effective**.<sup>14</sup> All schools' leadership and management practices improved, with the most significant improvements in target setting, better resource prioritisation, accountability, and transparency and people management. The programme helped school leaders understand the scope of their role and develop the skills required to monitor teaching and learning. They exhibited greater ownership in school improvement processes and evidenced better supervision of teachers and students.

This method of sharing the know-how and best practices across from PEAS schools to government schools is a promising way to maximise cost-effectiveness; the fixed costs of school improvement in PEAS schools are further spread across the government schools, thus creating even more value from the original PEAS investment.

The success of the Inspect and Improve programme led to PEAS and the DES scaling the programme to a total of 50 government secondary schools in 2021 and they are now growing the programme to a further 150 schools in 2022.

<sup>7</sup> In the PEAS baseline evaluation, PEAS defines successful transition as a girl moving through Senior 1 to Senior 4, completing Senior 4 and progressing to upper secondary (Senior 5); TVET or higher education or employment. Girls who complete Senior 4 and move household or community-based roles, which girls may prioritise for themselves over other pathways, such as getting married and having children, are also considered to have successfully transitioned.

<sup>8</sup> The transition rate target for treatment students at midline (set from baseline) is 12 percentage points above the comparison school students.

<sup>9</sup> The median student strongly agreed that the educational information contained within the pack was helpful for their learning.

<sup>10</sup> The median student strongly agreed that radio lessons were helpful and it helped them to retain knowledge.

<sup>11</sup> Damani, K., Daltry, R., Jordan, K., Hills, L. and Evans, L., 2022. EdTech for Ugandan girls: Affordances of different technologies for girls' secondary education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Development Policy Review, p.e12619 [online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12619>.

<sup>12</sup> Crawford, L., 2017. School management and public-private partnerships in Uganda. Journal of African Economies, 26(5), pp.539-560 [online]. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejx021>.

<sup>13</sup> Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) (2018) Evaluation of the PEAS network under the Uganda Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme: Endline Evaluation Survey Report [online]. Available: [https://www.peas.org.uk/s/PEAS\\_Endline\\_Final\\_Report\\_March\\_16\\_2018.pdf](https://www.peas.org.uk/s/PEAS_Endline_Final_Report_March_16_2018.pdf).

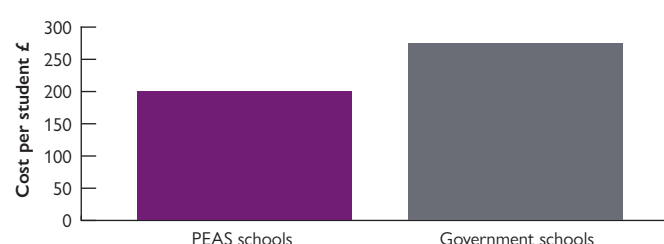
<sup>14</sup> Chu, J., Galvis, M.A. and Kotonya, J., 2021. Evaluation of the PEAS-DES Inspect and Improve Project. Final Evaluation Report. National Foundation for Educational Research [online]. Available: [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4621/evaluation\\_of\\_the\\_peas\\_des\\_inspect\\_and\\_improve\\_project\\_endline\\_report.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4621/evaluation_of_the_peas_des_inspect_and_improve_project_endline_report.pdf).

## Was the GEARR programme (cost) effective?

### PEAS schools

PEAS schools operate 27% more cost-effectively compared to government schools; external research shows government schools' cost-per student (total annual cost) is 1.39m UGX (£278)<sup>15</sup>, compared to the cost of 1.01m UGX (£202) in PEAS schools.<sup>16</sup> The cost per student in PEAS schools includes full-time day and boarding education for students in PEAS schools, including academic tuition, supplementary curricular activities, feeding, education supplies, school leadership development, teacher training and other school operations costs. This cost evidence, coupled with the evidence provided on literacy and numeracy outcomes for PEAS students, suggests that the PEAS low-cost operating model is highly **cost-effective** compared to other education programmes in Uganda.

Figure 1: Annual cost per student



PEAS can also construct schools and classrooms more cost-effectively than the Ugandan government; PEAS construct schools at a 17% lower cost than government schools<sup>17</sup> and classrooms at a cost that is 24% lower than that of a government school.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 2: School construction costs

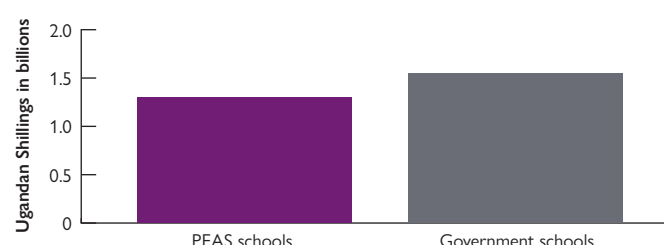
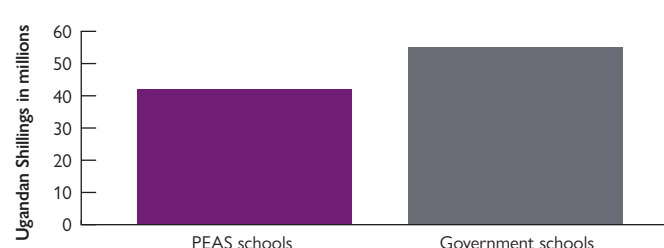


Figure 3: Classroom construction costs



### Systems strengthening – Inspect and Improve

PEAS' systems-strengthening work appear to be cost-effective. The cost-per-beneficiary of the Inspect and Improve work was £17 during the pilot programme (across 10 government schools and 6,118 students). The programme is supplemented by the government, mainly through DES staff time. This approach allows PEAS to keep the cost low enough to enable the government to bear the costs themselves at scale in the future. The Inspect and Improve pilot endline evaluation also disclosed that PEAS and DES stakeholders largely agree that the Inspect and Improve process demonstrated good value for money, and the benefits of the joint approach outweighed the costs. PEAS anticipates the cost-per-beneficiary to fall over time as the programme expands into 40 additional government schools, reaching an additional 20,286 students.

### Lesson learning across the PEAS network

PEAS has over 12 years' experience operating school networks in Africa and is currently running 35 schools across Uganda and Zambia. As a result, PEAS can share learning across both country programmes in their network, putting them in a stronger position to drive results and value for money. The PEAS network has contributed to some of the successes of the PEAS Uganda programme. For example, the success of the PEAS radio lessons intervention can be part-attributed to the support provided by teachers in Zambia and the UK in developing the radio scripts for the lessons. As explained in the effectiveness section of this report, these lessons were extremely effective.

## Is the GEARR programme sustainable?

### PEAS schools

The core school element of the GEARR programme in Uganda offers promising sustainability, with almost 60% (£166) of the cost-per student education covered in sustainable forms of revenue (school fees in 2019). As outlined in the PEAS Value for Money Assessment, PEAS Uganda aims to grow the network to 26,660 students by 2026 to achieve full sustainability. Currently, PEAS charge higher but still affordable boarding school fees, which help to keep the day fee as low as possible. Hence, if PEAS can maximise the income from boarding school fees, it will be possible to further cross-subsidise day students and keep costs low. To meet this target, PEAS are also planning to expand existing infrastructure, conduct enrolment drives and take over non-PEAS schools to increase fee income. As a result, PEAS have made progress towards achieving 100% sustainability; as projections show by 2026 external, donor financing will no longer be required. Instead, the cost of education will be solely funded by day and boarding fees.

<sup>15</sup> Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) (2018) Evaluation of the PEAS network under the Uganda Universal Secondary Education (USE) programme: Endline Evaluation Survey Report [online]. Available: [https://www.peas.org.uk/s/PEAS\\_Endline\\_Final\\_Report\\_March\\_16\\_2018.pdf](https://www.peas.org.uk/s/PEAS_Endline_Final_Report_March_16_2018.pdf). These figures only consider school-level costs as management, support and supervision cost from government are not publicly available. However, even after adding this on PEAS' side, PEAS' 2019 total school cost-per-student was 1.36m UGX, which is still lower than the government benchmark figure that only includes school costs.

<sup>16</sup> This is the total annual cost per child that PEAS schools incur at a school level. The breakdown of these costs includes salaries (approx. 40%), feeding costs (approx. 30%), and other costs, such as scholastic materials, exam fees, and training costs (approx. 30%). For the year this figure was estimated, 91% of school costs were self-funded through PEAS schools (fees), with only 9% being funded externally through a PEAS subsidy. These figures only consider school level costs as management, support and supervision cost from government are not publicly available. However, even after adding this on PEAS' side, PEAS' 2019 total school cost-per-student was 1.36m UGX, which is still lower than the government benchmark figure that only includes school costs.

<sup>17</sup> Uganda's 2017-20 Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) states that the construction of a seed school for 240 would cost the government 1.571bn UGX and the construction of an equivalent school by PEAS would cost 1.299bn UGX.

<sup>18</sup> PEAS' average cost to construct a classroom is 42.3m UGX; this is 24% lower than that of a government school, which can cost around 55.3m for a comparable sized classroom. Source: PEAS Uganda construction and expansion cost lists (2021) and UTSEP GPE Unit cost per facility document.

## Systems strengthening – Inspect and Improve

While it is too soon to report on sustainability with certainty for this intervention, PEAS have laid strong foundations in this regard. Currently, the systems-strengthening work is funded by various grants and PEAS income and funding requirements will increase in the short term. But after capacity within the government has been embedded, the intention is to withdraw funding as the government will be able to take forward these inspections solely. At the time of writing this report (February 2022), PEAS have expanded this intervention to 150 schools due to the strong uptake and enthusiasm shown by the government. This level of buy-in at this stage arguably suggests promising prospects for sustainability in the coming years. PEAS hope to maximise their chances of achieving sustainability through ensuring the following guiding principles; (a) design and deliver with ministries of education to ensure alignment to government goals and intentions, (b) use of existing government structures – e.g. working with district inspectors, (c) keeping costs low while balancing quality with a view for adoption, and (d) design and integrate technology where it has the potential to improve the efficiency of the government model.

## Conclusion

Findings from this review suggest that the GEARR project offers excellent value for money, especially in relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The project can reach marginalised girls through their low-cost private school operating model and fee structure, allowing it to keep day school fees low by charging higher but still affordable rates for boarding school fees. The programme's activities, including the role of the senior women teacher, literacy classes and COVID-19 interventions (learning packs, radio lessons and the telephone tree system), were all highly relevant and kept girls in school and learning throughout the pandemic. Life skills training (including the livelihood programme) also showed good relevance and effectiveness; girls' knowledge of transition opportunities remained high and their skills knowledge remained consistently high throughout the programme. The programme was extremely effective at improving the literacy and numeracy score of students; learning packs, radio lessons, the role of senior women teachers and literacy classes all contributed to this positive learning outcome. In addition to PEAS' effectiveness in running schools, the Inspect and Improve programme was a highly effective value-add activity, which offers promising long-term contributions to the education sector in Uganda. Although it is too soon to measure the sustainability of the Inspect and Improve intervention, PEAS have gained promising buy-in from the government so far, which suggests promising prospects for sustainability in the future.

Figure 4: Investment costs versus benefits of each intervention

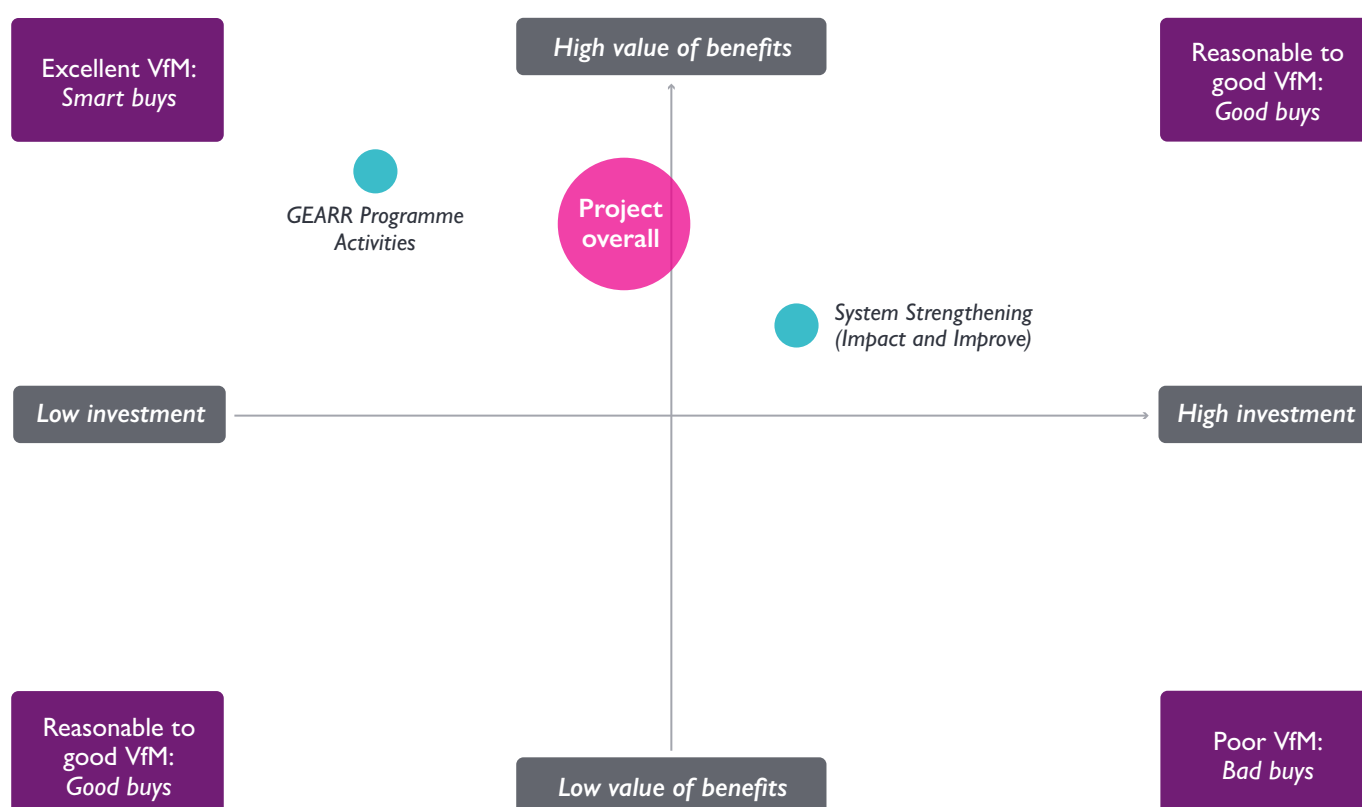


Table 1: Value for money ratings for interventions against value for money review criteria

	Relevance	Effectiveness	Cost-Effectiveness	Sustainability
<b>PEAS Schools and System Strengthening (Overall):</b>	High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High
<b>School Activities</b>	Medium/High	High	High	High
<b>Systems-Strengthening (Inspect and Improve)</b>	High	Medium/High	Medium	Medium

## Annex 1: GEC Value for Money Review methodology

The GEC Value for Money Framework aims to offer a quick, pragmatic methodology to review the value for money of a GEC project by using existing evaluation findings. The framework uses the OECD DAC criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability) and evaluation findings. Then, it reframes them through a value for money "lens", drawing out the key features of the findings that point to strong efficient value generation for the right people against optimal costs and resource allocation.

### Effectiveness

The GEC approach to value for money analysis relies on extracting effectiveness data from the evaluation reports (at midline and endline). This should include all the different types of outcomes assessed (learning, transition and sustainability) and the intermediate outcomes, such as wellbeing and life skills, self-esteem, social norms and behaviour changes. It should also include data on effective interventions for different targeted subgroups. All types of data used to demonstrate effectiveness are relevant for value for money purposes (quantitative or qualitative data, including the beneficiaries' voices on what they found most valuable).

Effectiveness can either be assessed for a GEC project as a whole or a separate component. Some projects' midlines or endlines may be able to disentangle the impact and causality of specific interventions on outcomes over and above others. This likely will only be feasible for evaluations with a comparison group.

### Cost-effectiveness

With activity-based budgeting, specific interventions can be assessed on cost-effectiveness. Costs can be presented in cost per girl format, with a narrative attached to it, explaining the overall cost per girl achieved in observed outcomes. The number of girls reached by interventions can differ, thus giving rise to very wide-ranging figures. These variances should be discussed within the value for money analysis. Benchmarking similar projects within the same context would be helpful.

Suppose there are strong, statistically significant findings, with a control group of girls displaying the counterfactual 'without project' learning achieved in a year of schooling. In that case, the analysis can be taken further to estimate the Cost-Effectiveness Ratio (CER): additional years of schooling per \$100 spent.

### Relevance

The GEC approach to value for money and relevance uses evaluation report findings to understand whether resources were allocated to meet the needs and objectives identified upfront and whether optimal resources were allocated across activities. If such needs changed over time, the Value for Money Review should consider whether resources were reallocated to reflect this to maintain the relevance of the programme.

An equity angle to relevance would determine whether or not the right beneficiaries were targeted by the project according to needs and if enough or optimal resources were allocated to various targeted groups. The analysis should consider whether, in retrospect, the budget would have been carved differently across activities to reflect relevance better and whether there was a correct allocation of funds for technical functions, monitoring and evaluation, management etc.

### Sustainability

Sustainability within the GEC is measured by:

1. A long-term continuation of outcomes for the direct beneficiaries themselves (including targeted schools and communities).
2. Replication and scale-up or adoption of project activities without the need for FCDO funding.

A project may have sound input costs (Economy), have a demonstrated ability to translate its activities into quality outputs (Efficiency), and achieve its targets concerning learning and attendance (Effectiveness), but may not have a strong sustainability case. Sustainability is not always covered in the conventional measures of value for money. But it is another factor to justify the expenditure.

The evidence of evaluation findings on contributions to sustainability should be integrated into a value for money narrative. Evidence of replication or scale-up beyond project funding would indicate very strong value for money. Sustainability intent may have been present from the start in specific design features or plans. But over time, as contexts have changed, contributions to sustainability may not have materialised. This may require projects to undertake additional activities targeting sustainability that increase their costs but do not necessarily improve their efficiency or effectiveness in the short term. These should be considered in a Value for Money Assessment. Another angle to considering costs and sustainability is defining the minimum spend for activities required to achieve sustainable outcomes. For example, determining the cost of a minimum amount of project exposure/duration or intensity necessary to achieve sustained outcomes based on findings.

### Efficiency

Taking a narrative approach, assessing efficiency involves understanding how smoothly processes and interventions have been delivered (speed, quality, cost). There are four aspects to efficiency:

1. Whether the project as a whole was delivered on time and budget
2. Assessment of the speed, quality and cost of the operating models for each intervention and the project as a whole
3. Assessing the efficiency of processes and management of the project as a whole
4. Assessing the efficiency of targeting girls (inclusion or exclusion errors).

### Limitations of the GEC value for money approach

The value for money analysis is dependent on the evaluation findings, so its efficacy depends on the efficacy of the evaluation findings. It is also dependent on projects' ability to produce expenditure data in relevant formats (activity-based budgeting). Value for Money Assessments such as these are not often appropriate for making comparisons with other projects due to differing contexts, cost structures and activities.

Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



*This Spotlight Brief was written by Valsa Shah (VfM Lead on the Girls' Education Challenge) and Shreena Sidhu (Programme coordinator) with the support of the GEARR-ing Up for Success After School Project team in PEAS.*

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