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External Evaluation Services:
2023 GEM Report external evaluation

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UNESCO GEM Report

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Abstract

This report presents findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the UNESCO GEM Report in the period 2019-2023. The evaluation aimed to determine how effectively the GEM Report fulfils its mandate, and to inform its next six-year strategy 2025-2030. The evaluation combines a theory of change with mixed methods and concludes that the GEM Report products and outputs are highly valued and relevant, and that they influence the work of partners. The evidence points to broadening expectations from stakeholders and donors on the role of the GEM Report, including a move towards policy influence rather than solely reporting on SDG4. In a crowded global education environment, this adds a challenge to the GEM Report's position as the global public good for education. In addition, an increasing variety of GEM report products risks to diminish stakeholders' perception regarding the focus of its core mandate. Coupled with the lack of assurance of longer-term funding, this poses important questions for the near future of the GEM Report in terms of definition of its outputs, resource mobilisation, and connection to broader impact in the education sector. Based on these conclusions, the evaluation provides four recommendations to strengthen the GEM Report in the future.

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Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
AB	Advisory Board
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADG	(UNESCO) Assistant Director-General
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AU	African Union
BAICE	British Association for International and Comparative Education
DACCEE	Center for Excellence in Education
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
COVID	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
ED	(UNESCO) Education Sector
EFA	Education For All
ERIC	Education Resources Information Center
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESPH	Educational Science Publishing House
FCDO	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
G20	Group of Twenty
G7	Group of Seven
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GEM / GEMR	Global Education Monitoring (Report)
GMR	Global Monitoring Reports
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HLSC	High-Level Steering Committee
HQ	Headquarters
IAEG	Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators
IBE	International Bureau of Education
IESALC	International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
IIEP	International Institute for Education Planning
IITE	Institute for Information Technologies in Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOS	UNESCO Division of Internal Oversight Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LSE	London School of Economics
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
NA	Not Available
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEER	Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
RISE	Research on Improving Systems of Education
RO	Regional Office
SCOPE	Scoping Progress in Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related (indicator)

Abbreviation	Definition
TES	Transforming Education Summit
TOR	Terms of Reference
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UKFIET	United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VIEW	Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World
WEF	World Education Forum
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education

Executive summary

Overview of the evaluation object. The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report), hosted and published by UNESCO, is mandated to monitor progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in the realm of education. For over 20 years, it has offered essential evidence to assess and monitor the commitment to inclusive, equitable, and quality education worldwide. Since 2015, it has offered a range of online and print publications, including global reports, regional and thematic reports, and online databases. Supported by an Advisory Board, in the last five years its actions were guided by the GEM Report Strategy 2019-2024.

Evaluation objectives and intended audience. This evaluation has the double purpose of i) determining how effectively the GEM Report fulfils its mandate; and ii) informing the updating of the GEM Report's strategy. It includes all GEM Report activities between 2018 and mid-2023, excluding the 2023 GEM Report on technology but including the global report editions up to 2021/2022 and the other GEM Report products.

Key elements of the evaluation methodology. Methodologically, the evaluation covers all revised OECD/DAC criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness (including pathways towards impact[1]), Efficiency, and Sustainability. It combines the reconstruction of a Theory of Change with a mixed-method approach. Data collection methods include a desk review, semi-structured interviews with representatives from various groups of stakeholders, an online survey of GEM Report users, and bibliometric, citation and social media analysis. A total of 585 individual stakeholders were consulted during the evaluation (44 through interviews, 541 through the online survey). Given the large stakeholder ecosystem surrounding the GEM Report, it is important to recognize some limitations of the evaluation's methodology in terms of representativeness and generalizability. To address these, the report distinguishes between perceptions, expert analysis, and objectively verifiable evidence in its conclusions. An Evaluation Reference Group and the GEM Advisory Board contributed to quality assurance of the evaluation process and the validation of the report.

A reconstructed theory of change for the GEM Report. The evaluation reconstructed the change process envisaged by the GEM Report, not only identifying the logical linkages between problems, activities, outputs, outcome and impact, but also reflecting on its underlying lines of reasoning, working mechanisms and assumptions. The 2015 Incheon Declaration formalised the GEM Report mandate as including two parts:

- monitoring and reporting on progresses related to SDG 4 and education;
- reporting on the implementation of national and international education strategies.

Reflecting on available documentation, the evaluation summarised the problem addressed by the GEM Report as a lack of insights among decision makers in data, evidence and recommendation that can stimulate reflection and allow accountability for education commitments towards SDG 4. Against this, the goal of the GEM Report is to provide the monitoring mechanism, the accountability measures, data, evidence, research and recommendations to stimulate reflection and dialogue at national, regional and global level allowing education systems, plans, policies and budgets to move towards achieving SDG 4.

The associated change process includes several steps:
1) Obtain trustworthy data and analyses on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs;
2) Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences;
3) Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups;

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[1] By applying a theory-based approach, the evaluation's methodology foresees to assess the impact of the GEM Report towards both contributing to monitoring of SDG 4 and to enhanced uptake of messages at policy level.

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4) Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4;

5) Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

The GEM Report is directly accountable for reaching the first three steps of the change process (activities and outputs), and indirectly accountable to the two higher levels change (outcomes and impact). In turn, the activities and outputs of the GEM Report include different processes and types of outputs. As detailed in the GEM Report Strategy 2019-2024, besides evidence, research and data these include communication and outreach, as well as policy advocacy and knowledge sharing.

Key findings

Relevance. The evaluation confirms that the GEM Report activities and associated products, including their format and delivery mechanisms, are to a large extent relevant to contribute to its envisaged change process. The majority of stakeholders confirms that GEM publications and related activities are serving both a monitoring and an analytic purpose. In contrast, the balance between the thematic and the monitoring sections of the main report generated much discussion across stakeholders. On one side, GEM Report Team and Advisory Board respondents consider both as equally important to the mandate of the GEM Report; conversely, other respondents showed mixed perceptions of their *relative* importance compared to SDG 4 monitoring, stressing in particular their definition, their relationship with SDG 4, and their prominence in the Global Report. While the Global Report remains the foundation of the GEM Report mandate, other products (including those created during this evaluation period) could benefit from a clearer identification and communication of their relevance to the mandate and its change processes. In this context, the regional reports and the country profiles received particular praise. However, since 2018, the format and delivery mechanisms have become more complex and would benefit from a revision of the online presentation to enhance clarity.

Stakeholders see the thematic discussions in the GEM Report as relevant for the change process, providing research on a critical set of areas which are important to the global education community. At the same time, the engaged stakeholders expressed differing opinions and concerns on the scope of the themes and their relevance for SDG 4 monitoring. While this is understandable in light of the global mandate of the GEM Report, of the complexity and diversity of stakeholders' priorities among education issues, it again emphasises the challenge of aligning themes with monitoring goals.

Coherence. The SDG 4 monitoring landscape in which the GEM Report operates includes various agenda setting and monitoring initiatives, be it at global, regional or national level.[2] In this diverse environment, the various organisational mandates are not always perceived as clear or lived by. This creates space that can be taken by additional initiatives, prioritising specific aspects of the SDG framework. The evaluation found that such fragmentation negatively affects the position of the GEM Report as the mandated organisation for providing the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the SDG 4, and thus its value as a global public good. At the same time, against this background, respondents also highlighted the complementarity of the GEM Report and associated products rather than overlaps, with the GEM Report being overall well aligned to other initiatives and working with some of them in partnership. At the outcome and impact level, it is more challenging to find clear evidence on whether the GEM Report's position and recognition enable it to fully contribute to the conducive environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4. This might be linked to the broader SDG4 architecture envisaged by the Incheon declaration, which does not provide such optimal conducive environment.

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[2] E.g. UNDESA SDG Monitoring, SDG Monitoring by "Our World in Data", OECD initiatives (including PISA), UNESCO/UNICEF SDG4 Progress Review of SDG 4 in Asia/Pacific.

Effectiveness. Stakeholders confirm that the GEM Report publications are highly credible, authoritative and supported by extensive consultations and by a solid conceptual framework. The review of sources shows the solidity and high-quality of the evidence base used in the GEM Report, with its diversity and strength increasing since 2018. The high regard in which stakeholders hold GEM Report publications indicates that they can meaningfully contribute to monitoring global progress on education goals, offering new and innovative tools to education communities to compare and review national, regional or global progress to SDG 4. Stakeholders consistently reported to have used GEM Report's evidence (e.g., 80% of survey respondents indicated that they either cited GEM Reports in their work, or used GERM Report data). At the same time, the evaluation identified room for more targeted dissemination of GEM products and tools to specific audiences. The growth in numbers and diversification of available tools, publications and outreach activities underline the GEM Report's commitment to engage a variety of stakeholders and stimulate discussion on education policies. This was also corroborated by stakeholders who confirmed usage of GEM Report findings among their partners. At the same time, expectations towards the GEM Report's direct contribution to policy change need to be carefully managed. Overall, the perceptions of stakeholders suggest that its unique value lies more in its ability to provide independent, high quality and relevant research. The evaluation finds that the databases (WIDE, VIEW, SCOPE) and the SDG 4 Scorecard primarily contribute to the first part of GEM Report's mandate, while Global Report, SCOPE, Spotlight support the second. The Global Report, the SDG 4 Scorecard, the Regional Reports and the Policy papers are likely to contribute primarily to the change process leading to reflections and dialogue among target stakeholder groups through providing insights on data and policy. The Youth and Gender reports, PEER, and Education Finance Watch products, are less strongly perceived to be linked to the second part of the mandate.

Efficiency. The evaluation confirms that the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities are conducted efficiently: The GEM Report delivers results in an economic and timely way. Both GEM Report staff members and external stakeholders expressed concerns about intense workloads, suggesting an imbalance between the increasing number and diversification of GEM Report products, available budget and staff resources. Furthermore, resources are also stretched in view of an enhanced need for investment in resource mobilisation. At the same time there are concerns on the coordination with UNESCO in the publishing and communication of products and reports. Considering the overall governance structure (i.e., how the GEM Report aligns to the High-level Steering Committee), respondents are overall slightly critical, as they do not always see how the GEM Report gets the best out of this positioning. A critical issue remains on how the governance arrangements and the Advisory Board support the GEM Report to interact and align with the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism. Zooming in on the structure, quality and composition of the Advisory Board, respondents are generally satisfied. They indicate that the meetings are well organised, that the discussions that take place are informative and that the GEM Report team is well-prepared. This being said, as mentioned by some interviewees, the Advisory Board could be more engaged in more strategic and organisational discussions (being discussed in the GEM Report funders' meeting) instead of the focus on themes and content.

Sustainability. The GEM Report funding landscape has improved considerably compared to the period before 2018, both in terms of the scale of support, as well as in ensuring the commitment of a more diverse base of donors, and not least through increasingly including private foundations. However, the evaluation identified a noticeable omission in the donor landscape of the GEM Report: organisations, other than UNESCO, which play a key role at global and regional levels to support countries reaching the SDG4 but that do not appear among the contributors to the GEM Report. These are in particular other UN organisations and other multilateral organisations who are part of the SDG 4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee and who could be expected to support the GEM Report as a global public good and contribute to the sustainability of the GEM Report and its mandate. The continued reliance on primarily short-term

funding commitments from donors constitutes another challenge. While the GEM report team's efforts to secure an increasing share of longer-term financial support has led to some improvements, persistent short-term funding commitments by most donors poses challenges for the longer-term planning of GEM Report activities. Considerations of environmental sustainability, such as reduced printing and online events have overall lowered the GEM Report's carbon footprint. At the same time, physical attendance of the GEM Report team members at launch events and meetings are considered as necessary. Environmental considerations resulting from GEM related travel needs could be reassessed and balanced against the benefits to the envisaged change process.

Conclusions

1. The GEM Report and associated products are highly valued, relevant and influence the work of partners. The GEM Report and its products are widely respected, authoritative. deemed relevant, and have influenced partners' work. They provide valuable insights into global education progress, with regional reports and interactive tools breathing new life in education communities. Potential remains for more targeted dissemination and streamlining these tools for specific audiences. Interviewed stakeholders hold differing opinions on the importance of the thematic versus the monitoring aspects of the GEM Report. For a number of stakeholders, moving closer towards 2030 calls for increased focus on the monitoring aspects to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments towards 2030.

2. Stakeholders' and donors' expectations of the role and ambitions of the GEM Report have been moving towards expecting the GEM Report to support policy implementation and influence policy change, which lies beyond the GEM Report mandate and beyond what can reasonably be expected from its theory of change. The mandate does not call explicitly upon the GEM Report to improve policymaking or countries progressing towards the SDGs. The GEM Report provides an institutional framework for discussions and reflections and provides the data to feed such discussions. Improved policymaking is however fully dependent on the countries themselves and to some extent on organisations that support them. This being said, there are expectations, especially among some donors, that the GEM Report contributes more directly to policy change. Hence, the expectations need be managed carefully. The unique value added of the GEM Report in the busy field of international education policy community is not its ability to influence national policies – which could divert it away from its mandate if it starts engaging with individual policies in individual countries – but primarily its ability to provide independent, high quality and 'policy relevant research and analysis.

3. GEM Report's position as a global public good is challenged in the global education environment marked by proliferating initiatives and competition. The fragmented environment around SDG 4 monitoring has led to various organizations launching additional initiatives, requiring heightened efforts for the report to assert its significance and authority as a global public good.

4. The expanded variety of GEM Report products since 2018 has been comprehensive and structured, but the overall contribution of a number of the additional products to the GEM Report core mandate ('monitoring' and 'holding stakeholders to account') remains less clear, while they do contribute to a perceived overstretching of GEM Report staff. Since 2018, the GEM Report has seen a considerable shift in focus, most visibly observed in the increasing range of publications and tools developed. While this expansion has been comprehensive and structured, its overall contribution to its core mandate remains less clear. Overall, the Global Report, the databases (WIDE, VIEW, SCOPE) and the SDG 4 Scorecard are most contributing to the first part of the mandate (monitoring). The second part of the mandate is best supported by the Global Report, SCOPE, Spotlight and the SDG 4 Scorecard (holding to account). The Youth and Gender reports, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), and Education Finance Watch products, while serving their specific purpose, are less strongly linked to the

mandate and contributing to the envisaged change process. Furthermore, these additional products, while also attracting additional donors, also put pressure on the GEM Report staff, who have seen the amount and variety of work across these publications increase substantially.

5. Short-term financial commitments from its donors continue to limit the longer-term sustainability of the GEM Report. By 2023, the concerns about the GEM Report's long-term sustainability remain unresolved, with heavy dependence on short-term funding, and consequent implications on long-term planning.

Recommendations

On the basis of its conclusions and the suggestions from engaged stakeholders, the evaluation developed the following four recommendations:

A. **Consider rebalancing the monitoring and thematic part of the GEM Report:** while the evaluation team recognises that the thematic parts of the global report are highly valued, with only seven years from 2030, the monitoring part could receive more prominence in the global report and other products so as to increase an overall sense of urgency in relation to progress towards SDG 4. The GEM Report could more actively take up its mandate to help hold countries and stakeholders to account for their commitments. This could mean to move beyond passively publishing the data available on the indicators, but building on the mechanism that allows countries to set their own priorities and agree on which indicators they are monitored (in line with steps already taken together with UIS on the benchmarking). This would also better link the monitoring and the policy part of the mandate. The mandate of the GEM Report allows for its publications and team to be bolder and more critical about the lack of progress when presenting country data, in an effort to encourage debates and reflections on the way forward. The following actions could be considered:
   1) Prioritise a selection of the SDG 4 indicators and targets that are disruptive enough for governments to act as proxy for progress.
   2) Focus the thematic part of the GEM Report more on the underlying dynamics of why countries do not progress towards the SDG 4.

B. **Consider streamlining and better integrating the number of GEM Report products to better fulfil the mandate of monitoring progress and help holding partners to account on their commitments**: While the different GEM Report products are appreciated, they differ in their connection and relevance in relation to the GEM Report mandate concerning monitoring progress and help holding partners to account on their commitments. In relation to this, it is recommended to streamline and better integrate the GEM Report products and activities in line with the GEM Report mandate and to streamline and integrate the work processes leading to the GEM Report products better to reduce the experienced workload of the GEM Report staff. The following action could be considered:
   1) Further improve the links between GEM Report products and bring them in line so they together in the best way contribute to fulfilling the GEM Report mandate (in line with the available funding).

C. **Better mobilise partners working directly in countries to use GEM Report products for impact and policy change**: The evaluation showed the limits of what can be expected from the GEM Report in terms of reaching actual policy change. It should be up to other organisations – those that work directly with stakeholders in countries – to use the GEM Report's findings and analysis to support countries in developing and implementing policies by which they progress towards the SDGs. This requires the GEM Report to clarify its envisaged change process and identify which other organisations can play a role in bringing the GEM Report messages to impact at the policy level. This implies better knowing how the GEM Report and related products are used and by whom. It also

requires building more operational partnerships with organisations active in the countries. This work is not limited to building partnerships, it should also strengthen the communication, active outreach, and follow-up activities to keep partners working in countries engaged. Through enhanced cooperation with such organisations, the GEM Report will be able to complete its envisaged change process, and as such make its contribution to moving countries in the direction of SDG 4 (noting that such movement remains outside the GEM Reports' accountability). The following action could be considered:

1) Further strengthen operational partnerships with organisations active in the countries (i.e., UN Country teams, UNESCO and regional organisations) and involve them already in the preparation of reports and in planning activities after the reports are published and mobilise them to engage in discussions at country/regional level.

2) Further strengthen the communication and outreach activities to keep all partners, at global, regional and national levels engaged in the GEM Report related discussions so that they bring the messages to the ministerial and programmatic levels.

D. **Adopt a strategic vision that reflects on the envisaged change process and that demands from the community sustainable funding to function as global public good**: The evaluation found that the mandate of the GEM Report is still highly relevant and coherent to what can be expected from the GEM Report. However, it seems to lack the power to position GEM Report well in the changing landscape. A reflection on the mandate in this changing landscape and reaffirmation of the position of the GEM Report in the wider infrastructure related to SDG 4, could help to strengthen the recognition by international organisations and countries of the GEM Report as a global public good. This reflection could inform the development of a new strategy prioritising the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of requiring long-term financial commitments from those organisations that acknowledge that the GEM Report is a global public good and worthwhile funding (without earmarking). The following actions could be considered:

1) Develop a new strategy taking into account the above recommendations and considerations.

2) Further seek long-term financial support to better secure the GEM Report as global public good by approaching the global community (including explicitly organisations in the UN family).

3) Refine the value-for-money indicators in line with the new production and dissemination strategies.

4) Further monitor the carbon footprint of the report production cycle, including travel, printing and other activities following the 2021 UNESCO Environmental Sustainability and Management Policy.

Management response

Overall Management Response

The GEM Report team welcomes the conclusions of this fifth independent external evaluation, which covers the entire period of implementation of the project strategy that was launched in 2019. The strategy, which had also been partly informed by the results of the fourth evaluation concluded in 2018, had strived to respond to calls from the Advisory Board and funders to build on the Report's reputation for independence and quality in order to increase its influence on policy. This issue is also central to this evaluation.

During the course of the strategy, the GEM Report team diversified its outputs to attract broader audiences and made conscious efforts to engage stakeholders at regional level (mainly through its regional reports) and even at national level (in the case of its Spotlight regional edition on Africa, the PEER website, and the partnership with the UIS, especially in the case of the national SDG 4 benchmarks and the SDG 4 Scorecard).

We welcome the finding that the quality of the Report's outputs remains high and that the Report fulfils its mandate to monitor progress on education in the SDGs in a context where the number of publications from other organizations covering aspects of the global education landscape increased, especially during COVID-19. We also note that the quality of the GEM Report team's products has been maintained high at the same time that the range of these products has expanded. The Report has also gradually repositioned itself to fully reflect its mandate to monitor an agenda that has been re-defined as universal after 2015. It has drawn attention to the common elements of education challenges around the world, even if contexts can be very different.

Evaluating a project like the GEM Report is a difficult task for any external evaluator. In a very short period of time, the evaluation team needs to familiarize itself with the history, context, activities and audiences of a global public good. It needs to develop its own interpretation of the project's theory of change and its understanding of the conflicting perceptions of different stakeholders to evaluate the nuances. The influence of the GEM Report is often invisible and discreet, while the evaluation is asked to present it in clear and explicit terms. The evaluation team needed to accommodate a large volume of opinions and assess which ones were well informed.

The GEM Report team would therefore like to thank the evaluation team for its effort to seek balance in identifying successes and challenges in our work to deliver the mandated monitoring and reporting service to national, regional and global SDG 4 community. We also appreciate its engagement with and responsiveness to comments made by the team and the reference group. The recommendations will help fine-tune priorities and implementation strategies, as outlined in the following specific responses to each recommendation.

One aspect that deserved more space is resourcing. The evaluation mentions but downplays the GEM Report team's success in meeting its fundraising targets: the volume of funding between 2011-16 and 2017-22 increased by 50%, even including 2022, which was a year of turmoil before the situation improved again in 2023. The evaluation could have ascribed the overall progress of the project to the improvements in funding conditions and in human resource management.

Recommendations	Management response
Recommendation A **Consider rebalancing the monitoring and thematic part of the GEM Report.** The following actions could be considered: 1) Prioritise a selection of the SDG 4 indicators and targets that are disruptive enough for governments to act as proxy for progress. 2) Focus the thematic part of the GEM Report	***Accepted*** The increasing focus placed on the Report theme has been raised in Advisory Board meetings in recent years and it is appropriate that the evaluation has picked on it. The evaluation could perhaps have provided more context that would explain why this is the case. A theme has been present ever since the second report on gender in 2003, while the idea of a theme other than one of the official targets was soon inevitable and started in 2009 with the report on governance. Already

more on the underlying dynamics of why countries do not progress towards the SDG 4. *Addressed to: GEM Report team and Advisory Board* *By (date TBC)*	then, priority was given to theme messages, but the focus on the theme at the expense of monitoring has strengthened since 2015. Education indicators are progressing slowly from year to year and cannot attract the same amount of media attention, a fact clearly demonstrated with the 2023 GEM Report theme of technology. As the project performance monitoring framework focuses on communication indicators and as the GEM Report has been called upon to influence policy change, it is therefore logical that the Report team has gradually focused more its communication on the theme. However, the point that monitoring should receive more attention in coming years and should drive the report is well-taken and was part of the discussion in the 2023 Advisory Board. It would be warranted and timely to attempt a switch from synthetic, thematic reports to analytic reports, which use the monitoring results to identify countries that have made very fast or very slow progress over the past 10-15 years and explain why certain trends are observed. Such a switch can build on a few important developments: the progress with the national SDG 4 benchmarks; the increased availability of data, at least on some indicators; and the growing database on policies that the report team has accumulated. With respect to the two specific recommended actions: 1) While it would be beneficial if focus indicators were 'disruptive', analysis has to be driven first by data availability to make country comparisons fair. Benchmark indicators have an advantage in both being relevant and having good coverage. 2) If the Report is analytic and driven by monitoring results, it is not as straightforward to have a thematic focus, as the drivers of progress are multiple and cannot be reduced to one theme. In practice, rather than a 'theme', the types of indicators on which the Report will focus will set the tone of the Report. This would need to be done without losing track of the Report's responsibility to monitor all SDG 4 targets. We do not expect that a focus on monitoring can be sustained in the long term for the reasons outlined above. Subject to the shape of the post-2030 agenda, and assuming the report will receive an extension of its mandate to continue serving its role after 2030, it is anticipated that it would switch back to a theme focus, which gives more flexibility to also contribute to the shaping of the international education agenda.
Recommendation B **Consider streamlining and better integrating the number of GEM Report products to better fulfil the mandate of monitoring progress and help holding**	***Accepted*** The variety of GEM Report outputs has expanded considerably in the course of the past five years. The evaluation does not fully explain why this happened and why these outputs have taken these forms. This is not a criticism, as it is difficult to both understand and

partners to account on their commitments.

The following action could be considered:

1) Further improve the links between GEM Report products and bring them in line so they together in the best way contribute to fulfilling the GEM Report mandate (in line with the available funding).

Addressed to: GEM Report team and Advisory Board

By (date TBC)

explain the considerations and the context in which the team developed each output. The team also operated under several constraints, notably related to the website, which have called for some particular solutions.

Many of these innovations are recent and audiences coming to them from different angles may miss some of the links, which we have described in the 2023 GEM Report. Also, users attracted to some outputs may be indifferent toward others and it is important to look at the full range of products as a set. The mandate of the report is also perceived differently by different users and we need to be responsive to such expectations. We are reassured that a majority of respondents to the evaluation survey found each product relevant.

At the same time, this has been an intensive phase of innovation. The end of the strategy implementation phase means that this is the time to evaluate whether the rollout of these outputs has gone to plan and the development of the new strategy will focus precisely on the improvements that can be made. Many of the points raised for individual outputs are well taken and we are grateful to the evaluation team for having collected those views.

Recommendation C

Better mobilise partners working directly in countries to use GEM Report products for impact and policy change.

The following action could be considered:

1) Further strengthen operational partnerships with organisations active in the countries (i.e., UN Country teams, UNESCO and regional organisations) and involve them already in the preparation of reports and in planning activities after the reports are published and mobilise them to engage in discussions at country/regional level.

2) Further strengthen the communication and outreach activities to keep all partners, at global, regional and national levels engaged in the GEM Report related discussions so that they bring the messages to the ministerial and programmatic levels.

Addressed to: GEM Report team, Advisory Board, Donors

By (date TBC)

Partially accepted

The GEM Report team made partnerships a central part of its strategy in 2019. This was a departure from past practice and led to partnerships for regional and thematic reports, policy papers, online outputs and processes, such as on benchmarks and indicator estimation with UIS or the Spotlight series on Africa with the African Union and ADEA, as well as governments. We have developed links especially with regional organizations that have joined the Advisory Board as members since 2018 on a two-year rotating basis, offering valuable inputs. We read the recommendation as an endorsement of this strategy and as an encouragement to continue.

It is important at the same time to recognize limits to partnerships. Various organizations come to them with different objectives not all of which are compatible with the mandate of the report and its editorial independence, which is its raison d'être. We are grateful to our partners for having shown great sensitivity in working with the GEM Report. The partnerships have focused on strengthening the report's credentials as a global public good that covers all world regions in a balanced way and have aimed to improve the relevance of the outputs.

It should be mentioned that our partnerships have focused on outputs other than the global report. The core characteristics of the global report preparation process cannot change if the report is to continue having its distinct message and credibility. But in recent

years the report team has searched for opportunities to open up this process: it opened the call for background paper proposals; it expanded the range and duration of consultations; and it invited organizations active on the theme of the report to react to draft recommendations and explore the possibility for joint dissemination activities.

However, on the latter issue, it is difficult to predict whether and which organizations with global reach capabilities would be willing to carry the report's messages on its behalf and unconditionally.

Ultimately, the precondition for effective outreach and communication partnerships is that potential partners find the GEM Report team's outputs relevant, of high quality and accessible. Ensuring this will remain our primary focus.

Recommendation D	*Accepted*
Adopt a strategic vision that reflects on the envisaged change process and that demands from the community sustainable funding to function as global public good.	We will review the change process as restated by the evaluation team. With respect to the specific actions:
The following actions could be considered:	1) The evaluation findings, the feedback provided by Advisory Board members, and the team's own assessment of strengths and weaknesses, will be the building blocks for the development of its strategy from 2024 to the end of its current mandate. A draft will be shared at the 2024 Advisory Board meeting.
1) Develop a new strategy taking into account the above recommendations and considerations.	
2) Further seek long-term financial support to better secure the GEM Report as global public good by approaching the global community (including explicitly organisations in the UN family).	2) Fundraising is likely to be a major risk in coming years as the international landscape is shifting and bilateral donors increasingly view multilateral initiatives serving global public good aims with more scepticism. It would be legitimate to approach members of the UN family, especially those that endorsed the Education 2030 Framework for Action, to support the GEM Report, an issue that has not been raised since 2015. However, in our assessment the chances of such a strategy succeeding are slim.
3) Refine the value-for-money indicators in line with the new production and dissemination strategies.	3) The GEM Report has been reporting on value-for-money indicators in its biannual management report but these were based on events and publications whose rollout was severely affected by COVID-19. These indicators therefore need to be reconsidered and we will seek advice, as several organizations have experienced such changes to their operations.
4) Further monitor the carbon footprint of the report production cycle, including travel, printing and other activities following the 2021 UNESCO Environmental Sustainability and Management Policy.	4) The Report adjusted its printing policy, reducing the number of global report copies to the absolute minimum and developing a brochure template to be used at events. While prompted by COVID, we believe this was a good decision that we will keep reviewing. We will review travel – of the team and of the audiences – although this needs to be in the context of key performance indicators that expect the team to achieve high levels of attendance in physical events.
Addressed to: GEM Report team and Advisory Board	
By (date TBC)	

1. Introduction

1.1. Evaluation object, objective and scope

Object of the evaluation

The Global Education Monitoring Report (the GEM Report), is an editorially independent, authoritative and evidence-based annual report published by UNESCO. The international community granted the GEM Report with the main mandate to monitor progress towards the education targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework (SDG 4).[3] As part of this mandate, the report is expected to consider global mechanisms and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including international and national strategies. As such, for 20 years the GEM Report and its associated products provide crucial evidence to assess progress towards the international commitment to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The GEM Report team released a multi-year strategy for 2019-2024[4], which was informed by the previous external evaluation.[5]

The GEM Report team's main output is the annual report, which, to date, totals 17 Reports since 2002. Before the definition of the SDG in 2015, progress towards meeting the Education for All goals was reported by annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports (GMR). In addition to reporting on the progress to each of the six EFA targets, the 12 GMR Reports published between 2002 and 2015 offered an in-depth thematic focus which varied per year (as per the title of the Report), providing evidence supported by policy and data analyses. Since 2015, the renamed Global Education Monitoring Report reflects its new mandate. UNESCO's Member States stated that the new mandate would give "due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".[6]

Since 2015, the six global editions of the GEM Report have focused on the following themes: education and the other development goals in 2016, accountability in 2017/8, migration and displacement in 2019, inclusion in 2020 and the role of non-state actors in 2021/2. The latest global edition on technology was published in July 2023. In recent years, as a result of high costs, environmental considerations, and greater access to the internet, fewer publications are available in print. The Reports are published in five of the six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Arabic, with the exception of Russian[7]). The summaries are published in multiple languages including the six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic) and a wide range of other languages. The 2021/22 GEM Report on the role of non-state actors was for instance released in five of the six UN languages and the report summary in a total of 24 different languages[8]

In addition to the annual global reports, the GEM Report team publishes a diverse set of related products and resources available in print and online, including Regional Reports, Gender and Youth Reports, policy papers on various themes, and technical background papers.[9]

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[3] The mandate was awarded during two high-level meetings in 2015: the World Education Forum in Incheon (Education 2030, Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4) and during the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris for the validation of the GEM Report's role in the Education 2030 Framework for Action.

[4] GEM Report (2018), Global Education Monitoring Report: a multi-year strategy 2019-2024.

[5] IPSOS MORI (2018), Evaluation of the Global Education Monitoring Report.

[6] UNESCO (2015). General Conference 38th session. "UNESCO's role in the Implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda." https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235206.locale=en.

[7] The last global report to be translated in Russian was Report on Education and the Other Development Goals in 2016; although the 2021 Regional Report on Eastern Europe was also translated in Russian.

[8] See https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/non-state-actors

[9] Accessible at https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/publications . It is worthy to note that background papers are not available in this website, but rather in the individual pages of each global (or regional) report.

Furthermore, in partnership with other organisations the team has developed a series of additional publications:
- **the Education Finance Watch,** an annual series developed in collaboration with the World Bank, first published in 2021 and bringing on board the UIS as a third partner in 2022;
- **the Spotlight series** reviewing progress on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa developed in cooperation with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the African Union (AU) since 2022 and
- **the SDG 4 Scorecard**, which measures, in the context of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which countries called for benchmarks to be set, how countries are progressing towards their national benchmarks and developed in cooperation with UIS.

To these, the GEM Report also added a series of online products:

- the [World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)](#) offering comparative insights on education enrolment and outcomes, introduced in 2012 but revised and relaunched in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2019;
- [Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER)](#) describing countries' laws and policies on the theme of the global report and on selected key themes in education, launched in 2020;
- [Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE)](#), combining statistical insights on key SDG indicators to offer an interactive alternative to the monitoring part, launched in 2020;
- the [Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW)](#) tool, offering global timeseries estimates on out-of-school and completion rates per country based on new methods developed with the UIS that enable the use of multiple data sources, launched in 2021.
- The GEM Report team also regularly publishes on social media (Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook) as well as blogs hosted on the Report's website.[10]

For the purpose of this evaluation, a distinction can be made between those products the GEM Report team released already prior to 2018 (GEM Global report, Gender and Youth Reports, policy papers on various themes, and technical background papers, WIDE) and those that were developed and published more recently (PEER, SCOPE, Regional reports, Education Finance Watch and Spotlight).

The GEM Report is hosted by UNESCO, but its governance structure is led by an Advisory Board composed of representatives from its several constituencies: the chair, Ex-officio (UNESCO Assistant Director General for Education ADG/ED, and Director of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, DIR/UIS), multilateral organisations, UNESCO, donors, regional experts, regional organisations, civil society organisations, and independent experts from developing countries.[11]

The 2018 evaluation[12] found that the GEM Report effectively fulfilled its mandate to monitor SDG 4. It provided valuable insights and data on education, is highly regarded by stakeholders, and has a significant impact on monitoring progress. However, there was a need for a long-term outreach strategy and secured financial commitment to sustain its work. The report's independence, quality, and relevance were appreciated, but resource constraints limited its capacity to produce additional outputs. The table below presents the recommendations and management responses.[13]

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[10] In particular, see https://world-education-blog.org/
[11] GEM Report (2018), Global Education Monitoring Report: a multi-year strategy 2019-2024.
[12] IPSOS MORI (2018), Evaluation of the Global Education Monitoring Report, p. 3-4
[13] While not an evaluation question, the current evaluation will additionally reflect on the extent to which recommendations from prior evaluations were taken into account. What lessons learned / recommendation were (not) followed and why?

Table 1: Recommendations 2018 evaluation and management responses

Recommendation	Management response[14]	Brief comment on following action
1: Develop a multi-year strategy to better align resource allocation with the Report's mandate and other objectives, and to better measure achievements.	Accepted. Following the expansion of the Report's expected results beyond its traditional mandate, the project strategy must be updated to increase the chances of policy impact at the national level. Budget options will be made transparent for donors. However, care should be taken to keep the cost of measuring achievements low.	GEM Report Strategy 2019-2024 developed. The strategy refines the Report's strategic direction, identifies financing objectives and strategy, and matches expected results with specific indicators.
2: Make the Report even more relevant for readers in the Global South.	Accepted. The GEM Report is committed to strengthen its relevance by bridging the global and national level through outputs targeted at the regional level. Targeted fundraising will be pursued for this purpose. However, it cannot renege on its universal mandate and cannot appear to more relevant for some countries than others.	Four Regional Reports and six Spotlight reports published since 2019.
3: Revise the composition and the role played by the Advisory Board to get better value from their expertise.	Partially accepted. Improvements can be made to composition and operations of the Advisory Board within its existing rules and terms of reference. However, substantive changes to Board operations to support the implementation of the strategy will require a wider consultation, which the team will carry out at the next Advisory Board meeting.	Within the Board's ToRs, actions were taken to reactivate constituency of developing country representatives, to improve coordination among donors, and to introduce new members.
4: Engage the Report's potential readership at the early stages of the Report production to further improve its relevance.	Partially accepted. The GEM Report team notes that the issues raised in this recommendation have not been major constraints to its visibility, relevance and development but will look at using its website and social media to encourage greater public engagement and participation in the future.	The GEM Report extensively engaged potential readership audiences through systematic online consultations and increasing presence in social media.

Objective and scope of the assignment

As per the evaluation ToRs, the purpose of the 2023 evaluation of the GEM report is twofold:

i.   to determine how effectively the GEM Report fulfils its mandate; and
ii. to inform the updating of the GEM Report's strategy.

The evaluation scope includes all GEM Report activities between 2018 and mid-2023, excluding the dissemination of latest GEM Report on technology but including its development, the global report editions up to 2021/2022, and the other GEM Report products. Designed to build on the findings and recommendations of the previous external evaluations, the evaluation is summative in nature but also includes formative elements: while its focus is to provide assessment of what has been achieved in the past, it also aims at informing a learning process on behalf of the GEM Report.

In this perspective, the evaluation aims at analysing the GEM Report achievements within the current context of Agenda 2030, identify lessons learned and make recommendations on how to improve future editions, considering the comparative strengths of the GEM Report and the multi-stakeholder environment within an evolving global context within which it operates. The evaluation focuses on the main evaluation questions presented in the box below (further operationalised in the evaluation matrix, annex 4).

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[14] GEM Report (2019), Fourth external evaluation of the GEM Report – Management response.

Box 1: Evaluation questions

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1 Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?

- Does the format and delivery mechanisms of the GEM Report and its associated products remain relevant for measuring progress towards SDG 4 globally?
- Have the themes addressed in the GEM Report and its outputs been relevant for the global, regional and national education communities to monitor progress on education in the SDGs?

2 Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?

- Given its mandate as a global public good, to what extent are the GEM Report and its associated products coherent with other global, regional and national initiatives in the area of monitoring progress in education?
- What are the GEM Report's comparative strengths?

3 Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?1

- To what extent have the GEM Report and associated products helped the global, regional and national education communities monitor progress on education in the SDGs?
- To what extent are the GEM Report and its research outputs credible? What measures have been undertaken to ensure a high level of quality? What aspects can be improved?
- How successful have the GEM Report's outreach and dissemination efforts been in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences?

4 Efficiency: How well are resources being used?

- How efficiently are planning and implementation activities carried out?
- Are management arrangements efficient for the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities?
- How efficient are the governance structures? Are there any grounds to revise the governance mechanisms and the role of the Advisory Board?

5 Sustainability

- What measures have been taken to strengthen the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of financial and human resources (partnerships and resource mobilisation)?
- How efficient is the GEM Report development and production process in terms of environmental considerations?

Source: Terms of Reference (see annex 1)

Given the broad audience of the GEM Report, the evaluation targets a wide spectrum of users and covers a consequent wide range of uses:[15]

- the GEM Report team, to gain deeper insights and to develop its new strategy;
- its Advisory Board members, to inform their guidance to the GEM Report team;
- its existing and potential funders, to assess their past and inform their future financing decisions;
- UNESCO, to assess how to improve the hosting arrangement; and
- Member States, to whom the GEM Report is ultimately accountable.

1.2. Methodological approach

Summary of the methodological approach[16]

The evaluation is theory-based and non-experimental and follows a mixed method approach combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research approach is based on the

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[15] See Terms of Reference (see annex)
[16] An elaborated presentation of the methodological approach can be found in the annex.

alignment between a reconstructed Theory of Change for the GEM Report and the six revised OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness (including pathways to impact), efficiency and sustainability.

The methodological approach is based on a continuous reconstruction and testing of a Theory of Change along the evaluation process. In turn, this is supported by an inception workshop and informed by a range of complementary data collection and analysis methods.

These data collection methods adopted by the evaluation include:

- A desk review of relevant GEM Report documentation, including the GEM Reports themselves and additional products, websites, documents and guidelines published or issued in the course of implementation, but also grey literature, progress reports to donors, administrative documentation, and previous evaluations;
- Remote and in-person semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the GEM Report, UNESCO and other UN agencies, governments, donors, foundations, academia and civil society;
- An online survey targeting the GEM Report users and stakeholders informed about its products.
- A bibliometric analysis of both sources used by GEM Reports and citation and social media analysis of the GEM Report and its products.

At least 585 individuals were consulted in this evaluation. The table below summarises the evidence body collected during the evaluation, by data collection method.

Table 2: Summary of evidence collected

Data collection method	Data points
Desk review	56 sources analysed (see Annex 7)
Semi-structured interviews	47 interviews conducted (50% females)
Online survey	541 responses collected
Bibliometric analysis	2 types of analysis, 14 indicators analysed

Figure 1: Distribution of conducted interviews, by type of partner
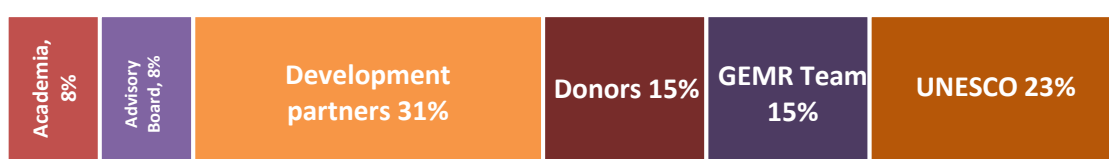
Figure 2: Distribution of conducted interviews, by region of interviewed stakeholder

The list of interviewees and stakeholders to engage with was developed in close collaboration with the GEM Report Team and on the basis of a preliminary stakeholder mapping (for more detail, see Annex 5). In the selection of interviewees, purposive sampling aimed at maximising

variation among stakeholders, but also at targeting the individuals and organisations with the most knowledge about the GEM Report activities. As for the survey, it was shared by the GEM Report team with its very extensive email database.

To ensure robustness of evaluation findings, the evidence collected was triangulated by both sources and methods, and then matched to the structure of the evaluation matrix (see Annex 4) to formulate findings. In the formulation of conclusions answering the evaluation questions, this report clearly distinguishes between perceptions, (expert) analysis, or objectively verifiable evidence.

The findings, conclusions and recommendations included in this report have been extensively discussed and validated by the Evaluation Reference Group, including during a validation workshop in October 2023 in Paris. Based on the findings and conclusions, the evaluation team developed targeted recommendations in particular addressed to the GEM Report team. These were further refined in discussion with the ERG members and in consideration of comments and discussions during the GEM Advisory Group meeting in October 2023.

Strengths and limitations of the methodology

The adopted methodology presents several strengths. It merges both quantitative and qualitative methods amplifying the breadth and depth of gathered insights; it aligns OECD/DAC criteria with the continuous reconstruction of a Theory of Change, to ensure strong theoretical foundation across the evaluation process; and engages rich and varied perspectives on the work of the GEM Report, including those of its Advisory Board and of the evaluation users.

However, it is important to note the limitations on the validity and reliability of the evaluation findings. The evaluation faced some challenges in the availability of informants and because of the types of analyses that could be performed.

A total of 68 individuals and organisations were reached for interviews. Out of these, 47 were available and willing to participate in the evaluation; 21 were not available. Among interviewees, 51% were female, and 60% worked at the global level.

Among the reasons for not being available some mentioned lack of interest, or the perception that they felt not sufficiently informed about the GEM Report activities. It is also important to note limitations on the survey data. The survey was disseminated through an open link to the GEM Report newsletter contact list (about 25,000 email addresses, including stakeholders who had demonstrated interested in the work of the GEM Report). 541 responses were received, for a maximum response rate of 2.2%. As such, it is hard to verify the representativeness of the survey in relation to the broader community of the GEM Report stakeholders.

At the same time, the timing of the data collection phase (between July and September 2023) might have negatively affected survey response rate and participation to interviews. For these reasons, only limited generalisations can be made about the position of a group of stakeholders, and careful contextualisation and triangulation of findings had to be applied.

Generally speaking, given the resources available to the evaluation and the size of the GEM Report stakeholder community, it is important to keep in mind that the sample of actors engaged is inevitably insufficient to capture the totality of voices and perspectives regarding the GEM Report.

The evaluation design envisages a sound quality assurance process by which both conclusions and recommendations are extensively validated by an Evaluation Reference Group and discussed by the Advisory Board.

Structure of the evaluation report

Including this introduction (section 1), this report is structured in five sections:

2. Description and reconstruction of the GEM Report Theory of Change
3. Assessment against the evaluation criteria (evaluation findings)
4. Overall assessment, conclusions and recommendations
5. Annexes

2. Description of the GEM Report and reconstruction of theory of change (summary)

This Chapter serves as background information for the assessment of the GEM Report actions and achievements against the evaluation criteria in Chapter 3. It summarises the reconstruction of the theory of change and provides a brief description of the activities and arrangements (governance/funding) of the GEM Report.

The reconstruction of a Theory of Change mapping and linking a problem statement to the logical sequence of expected changes and to the contextual factors has two purposes:

- To document the development of the GEM Report and to expose the logic and assumptions underlying its approach over time;
- To identify lessons learned and recommendations in a prospective way.

In reconstructing the theory of change, the evaluation team went beyond the usual linking of objectives to activities, outcomes and results, but aims at understanding what are the underlying lines of reasoning, working mechanisms and assumptions of the change process[17]. The reconstructed theory of change was developed based on desk research, then discussed with the evaluation reference group, the GEM Report team. Furthermore, additional reflections from interviewees were used to fine-tune the Theory of Change. The full reconstruction of the ToC is presented in Annex 2, while methodological details on the ToC reconstruction are available in Annex 3.

2.1. Overall goal of the GEM Report and the 'problem' it seeks to solve

The 2015 Incheon Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum (WEF) formalised the informal arrangement of the then EFA Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR) into a mandate for the GEM Report *as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs, within the mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the proposed SDGs.*"[18] It will be the "mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs, with due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Education 2030 Framework for Action Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also *report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to*

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[17] Van Stolk, C., Ling, T. and Reding, A. (2011). Monitoring and evaluation in stabilisation interventions: Reviewing the state of the art and suggesting ways forward. RAND Europe, prepared for DFID Stabilisation Unit. Taken from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, . 7. Cited from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, p. 13.

[18] Full paragraph 18: "We resolve to develop comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems in order to generate sound evidence for policy formulation and the management of education systems as well as to ensure accountability. We further request the WEF 2015 co-convenors and partners to support capacity development in data collection, analysis and reporting at the country level. Countries should seek to improve the quality, levels of disaggregation and timeliness of reporting to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. We also request that the Education for All Global Monitoring Report be continued as an independent Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, hosted and published by UNESCO, as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs, within the mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the proposed SDGs" World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library

account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review"[19] The mandate expanded on the existing EFA GMR monitoring mandate: the SDGs now included education as a stand-alone goal as well across a set of other SDGs. The 2019-2024 strategy provides other hints to a potential problem statement. The long-term outcome is "GEM Report evidence and recommendations are used to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4"[20] Bringing together the mandate and the strategy, the underlying problem statement for the GEM Report could be that **while countries and stakeholders committed themselves to achieving the SDG 4 and work on education in the other proposed SDGs, the decision makers at national, regional and global levels lack insight in data, evidence, research and recommendations that can stimulate a level of reflection and dialogue that allows holding relevant partners to account for their commitments to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4.**[21]

The overall goal reflected in the GEM Report documents[22] suggests that it is closely related to the mandate of establishing a "mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs, with due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Education 2030 Framework for Action Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review"[23] Both the Performance Management Framework and the 2019-2024 strategy suggest more emphasis on impacting national education systems through the GEM Report actions.[24] When sticking to the mandate and the suggested problem statement, the reconstructed goal could be that **GEM Report is providing the monitoring mechanism, the accountability measures, data, evidence, research and recommendations to stimulate reflection and dialogue at national, regional and global level allowing education systems, plans, policies and budgets to move towards achieving SDG 4.**

2.2.   Envisaged change process of GEM Report

The change process associated with the GEM Report consists – in line with the above problem statement and overall goal – of several aspects. Some that can be directly controlled by the GEM Report, others that are out of direct influence of GEM Report. The following steps could be identified:

6) Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs;
7) Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences;
8) Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy;

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[19] Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library
[20] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 6.
[21] NB: it is not (anymore) a problem of a lack of sources that is the main obstacle for using research evidence in education, but knowing how to use sources to stimulate discussions and policy development. See NORRAG (2022), Strategic review of global and regional evidence and knowledge initiatives, networks and platforms in education.
[22] Financial regulations of the Special Account Global Education Monitoring Report; GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024
[23] Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library
[24] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 6: "GEM Report evidence and recommendations are used to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4"

9) Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4;

10) Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

The first three steps are in direct control of the GEM Report team, step 4 and 5 not so much. These two steps are also not included in the mandate. The performance framework and the 2019-2024 strategy however express the ambition to inform policy dialogue and contribute to achieving the SDG 4. The 2019-2024 strategy also provides a further exploration of the role of the GEM Report in this. It states that the strategy "maintains the GEM Report's core products while aiming to focus more closely on informing policy dialogue and strengthening partnerships to increase the GEM Report's relevance to decision makers at regional and national levels."[25]

This could be interpreted as suggesting that the GEM Report plays a specific role in a wider environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4. This environment consists of global, regional and national commitments, peer learning, advocacy, awareness-raising, partnerships, comparison (data), provision of technical and financial support etc.

Theoretically reflecting from criteria for success on supporting progress on a common agenda[26], the evaluation team identified a number of criteria to further conceptualise the role of the GEM Report; which is to support the institutionalisation of processes for progressing towards the SDGs, to work on the monitoring of progress; and finally helping highlight creative tension to stimulate reflections and policy development. This soft-law environment is further supported by many other organisations, most notably, the UN, UNESCO, UIS, donor organisations and civil society organisations. Hence, **the GEM Report is directly accountable for reaching the first three steps of the change process and contributes by supporting institutionalisation and working on monitoring and stimulating discussions and reflections. The GEM Report is indirectly accountable to the two higher levels change processes by supporting establishing a conducive environment for countries to work towards the SDG 4.**

The underlying meta-theory of GEM Report envisaged change process is not straightforward. A simple knowledge uptake and utilisation framework does not do justice to the GEM Report's unique character as these models look at how a knowledge product is in the end used and applied in practice. The GEM Report is a wider initiative that seeks to help bring about a conducive environment for countries to progress on their commitments. It is therefore not only the 'knowledge' that is published that plays a role, but the whole function of regularly monitoring countries and reporting on their progress that adds to the institutional framework that establishes that conducive environment for countries and development partners to work towards the SDGs. For this reason, we broaden our understanding with known criteria for success in

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[25] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 2.

[26] See: Broek , Simon, Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Hake, Barry, Impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on the adult learning sector (2nd phase), 2011. Reapplied in Broek S. et al (2012), State of play of the European Qualifications Framework implementation. The overviews were based on previous research on OMC in other policy fields: See: Gornitzka, Ase, Coordinating Policies for a "Europe of Knowledge" Emerging practices of the "Open Method of Coordination" in education and research. Oslo: Centre for European Studies. Working paper No.16. March 2005, 2005; Humburg, Martin, The Open Method of Coordination and European Integration. The Example of European Educational Policy. Berlin: Jean Monnet Chair for European Integration and the Freie Universität Berlin. Working paper No.8, 2008; Newgov, Classifying and mapping OMC in different policy areas. Reference number: 02/D09. Dublin: University College Dublin, 2005; Ruiter, de, Rik, 'Variations on a Theme. Governing the Knowledge-Based Society in the EU through Methods of Open Coordination in Education and R&D'. European Integration. Vol.32. No.2: 157-173, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010; Tholoniat, Luc, 'The Career of the Open Method of Coordination: Lessons from a ' Soft' EU Instrument'. West European Politics. Vol.33. No.1: 93-117. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010; Regent, Sabrina, 'The Open method of Coordination: A New Supranational Form of Governance?'. European Law Journal. Vol.9. No.2: 190-214. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003.

working towards common objectives in an intergovernmental context. According to this framework, and applied to the GEM Report context, the GEM Report plays a role in the institutionalisation of discussions around progress towards SDG 4 and education-related interlinkages with other SDGs of learning from each other, as well as developing a creative, or critical tension for countries to maintain momentum, reflect on policy development and improve policy making.

2.3. Description of the GEM report's actions, structures and partnerships

The strategy for the GEM Report describes three outputs that support the change process. These concern:

1) **Evidence, research and data**: The GEM Report identifies, compiles, synthesises and analyses the latest and most compelling research in international education, with an emphasis on cross-country and over-time comparisons informed by national contexts.

2) **Communication and outreach**: Based on its research and data, the GEM Report distils key findings, formulates clear messages and develops global communication and outreach outputs that can be further developed into regional and national policy and programmatic responses.

3) **Policy advocacy and knowledge sharing**: The launch of the GEM Report in various international, regional and national fora is the key strategic tool used to inform and influence policy. A critical lever to further improve the GEM Report's visibility will be the development of strategic partnerships, especially at regional level (such as ADEA, SEAMEO, SUMMA, EASNIE, NEPC), and the engagement of the GEM Report in regional policy dialogue mechanisms and peer learning exchanges. By bringing together expertise, assets and resources from across the United Nations system, the education architecture, civil society (academia, NGOs, individual champions of relevant causes), and by collaborating closely with regional bodies in support of national governments, the GEM Report seeks to be able to inform policy dialogue and change at national and regional levels.

To deliver on these outputs, the GEM Report implemented a large range of different, but connected activities. The box below provides a concise overview of the activities implemented and products delivered. They function as an integrated set of products focused on specific education themes to support the evidence, research and data mandate.

Box 2: Overview of GEM Report key outputs and activities

The core products of the GEM Report are its **global reports**, which are published every 1.5 year. The Reports are organised into two main sections: a specific theme of global importance and monitoring of the education goals. The themes covered accountability in 2017/8, migration and displacement in 2019, inclusion in 2020 and the role of non-state actors in 2021/2. The upcoming two reports are foreseen to be on technology in 2023 and leadership in 2024/5. These core flagship products are accompanied by a range of associated products, including dedicated **regional, youth** and **gender** reports, which are published as companions to the flagship report. The regional reports in particular were introduced during the evaluation period, contributing to its significance and visibility among regional partners.

To these resources, the production of the GEM Report includes the following printed publications:

- **the Education Finance Watch**, an annual series developed in collaboration with the World Bank, first published in 2021 and bringing on board the UIS as a third partner in 2022;
- **the Spotlight series** reviewing progress on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa developed in cooperation with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the African Union (AU) since 2022 and
- **the SDG 4 Scorecard**, which measures, in the context of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which countries called for benchmarks to be set, how countries are progressing towards their national benchmarks and developed in cooperation with UIS.

And the following online resources:

- the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) offering comparative insights on education enrolment and outcomes, revised and relaunched in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2019;
- Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER) describing countries' laws and policies on the theme of the global report (supporting a basis for the drafting the global report) and on selected key themes in education, launched in 2020;
- Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE), combining statistical insights on key SDG indicators to offer an interactive alternative to the monitoring part, launched in 2020;
- the Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW) tool, offering global timeseries estimates on out-of-school and completion rates per country based on new methods developed with the UIS that enable the use of multiple data sources, launched in 2021;

In addition to these, the GEM Report team also publishes the background papers that provide the empirical basis of the GEM Report. Finally, between 3-5 brief policy papers are published online annually, providing practical policy perspectives on themes related to the main thematic reports and beyond.

It is important to note how these products are intended to function as in an integrated way rather than be isolated outputs. A distinction can be made between those products the GEM Report team released already prior to 2018 (GEM Global report, Gender and Youth Reports, policy papers on various themes, and technical background papers, WIDE) and those that were developed and published more recently (PEER, SCOPE, Regional reports, Education Finance Watch and Spotlight). In particular the regional reports, the spotlight series and the SDG 4 scorecard deserve more detail.

Since 2019, the GEM Report included **Regional Reports** in its publications. The reports contextualise the global findings of the core flagship publication within specific regional contexts, providing localised insights into education systems, policies and practices. Four regional reports were published during the evaluation period (2019 Arab States, 2020 Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021 Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, 2022 South Asia), with a fifth (2023 Southeast Asia) being launched on 30 November.

In 2022, the first results of a new strand of work around progress on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa were published. The **Spotlight** series bundles such insights, developed in cooperation with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). For each cycle, one focus country per region is selected for which in-depth review of the education sector is conducted, on the basis of a specifically developed analytical framework. This is complemented by thematic background papers and case studies from other countries, which are combined together in a continental report. The work is conducted with

the purpose to stimulate peer learning and offer more in-depth insights in (the quality of) education policies in Africa. For this purpose, work is ongoing to embed its process in existing structures of the African Union.

In 2023, the first **SDG 4 Scorecard** was published in cooperation with UIS. The report compiles, in the context of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which countries called for benchmarks to be set, national benchmark values from national education and policy documents and measures how countries are progressing towards their national benchmarks. This first report also analyses progress made on early childhood participation rate with reference to national policies and private provision.

The knowledge products and tools developed by the GEM Report as described above form part of its overall toolkit of activities, within which specific **communication and outreach** activities as well as **partnership and advocacy** work form an integrated part. The publication of the various knowledge products of the GEM Report series are accompanied by series of specific **launch events** that seek to garner attention to the topics and bring together both high-level decision makers and civil society. It also publishes regular **blogs** in multiple languages to engage with online audience around its knowledge products. It seeks to brand its work through regular and targeted presence in print, electronic and social media.

Its partnerships and advocacy work are specifically visible through its involvement in relevant global **policy fora and committees**, through which the GEM Report team highlights its knowledge products, in an effort to serve the needs of national, regional and global actors for comprehensive, independent and comparative evidence on education to inform policy dialogue and decision-making. This includes regular participation in events such as the G7 and G20 policy fora, as well as those more specifically in relation to SDG 4, such as High-level Political Forum[27], Transforming Education Summit, the SDG 4 High-level Steering Committee, Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 Indicators, and its shared leadership with UIS on data and monitoring in the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism.

In terms of inputs, as specified in paragraph 101 of the Incheon Declaration, the GEM Report is prepared by an independent team, hosted and published by UNESCO. The Director of the team is appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO. The GEM Report does not have an own executive board but has an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board consists of members representing a diverse array of organisations and individuals such as the chair, Ex-officio (UNESCO ADG/ED, DIR/UIS), multilateral organisations, UNESCO, donors, regional experts, regional organisations, civil society organisations, and independent experts from developing countries.[28] This board convenes annually to offer guidance and constructive feedback to the report team. The topics discussed during these meetings span from outlining the content of forthcoming editions to shaping the overall trajectory of the report. Additionally, discussions include planning for future themes and communication strategies to effectively disseminate the report's findings[29]. Attention is paid to geographical balance in the Advisory Board.[30]

The GEM Report is supported by a wide range of donors (annually around 15 donors). The average contribution between 2018 and 2023 was 6.07 million USD, which is an increase from

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[27] GEM Report special publications: UIS, GEM Report (2019), Meeting commitments: are countries on track to achieve SDG 4? GEM Report (2019), Beyond commitments 2019: how countries implement SDG 4; UIS, GEM Report (2022), Setting commitments: National SDG 4 benchmarks to transform education.
[28] GEM Report (2018), Global Education Monitoring Report: a multi-year strategy 2019-2024.
[29] See: https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/advisory-board
[30] Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library

the average contribution for 2011- 2017 being 4.4 Million USD. The GEM Report team hence managed to substantially improve the funding position compared to the past. The highest donor contribution was reported in 2023 being 7.1 million USD, up from 4.6 million USD in 2022, but closer to 6.1 million in 2021. With all probability, the 2022 drop in revenues was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, involving funding delays, reallocation of multilateral aid, and a shift in funding priorities from the donor community. Furthermore, the annual donor contributions in some cases cover more than one year (see coloured cells in table below). For instance, Australia's contribution was for four years (2018-2021) and Canada's contribution in 2019 also covered 2020. Similarly, the EU contribution in 2020 was for 2021 and the William and Flora Hewlett foundation funding was for 3 years 2018 to 2020. Over the years the donors and their contributions change. The table below provides an overview of the various donors and their contributions in the period 2018-2023.

Table 3: Overview of donor contributions 2018-2022 (in USD)[31]

Donor	Type of donor	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Australia	Bilateral	1.113.885					325.945
Canada	Bilateral		225.825		235.083	233.769	219.195
Denmark	Bilateral						
Finland	Bilateral						
France	Bilateral	35.378	568.830	325.734	605.325	527.983	531.350
Germany	Bilateral	114.286	166.667	176.057	174.419	145.349	
Germany MoE	Bilateral		218.818				
Ireland	Bilateral	216.628	340.908	542.890	605.325	547.645	535.332
Israel	Bilateral						
Italy	Bilateral	110.610	110.610	55.000			
Netherlands	Bilateral						
Norway	Bilateral	367.918	503.678	488.986	509.532	197.200	351.603
Principality of Monaco	Bilateral	51.195					16.112
Sweden	Bilateral	550.018	519.009	531.783	572.150	500.000	588.000
Switzerland	Bilateral	1.008.081	1.437.224	551.876	542.888	300.903	325.027
United Kingdom	Bilateral	1.025.396	1.008.320	1.038.040	1.080.713	164.775	789.006
Bill and Melinda Gates foundation	Foundation				1.000.000	500.000	1.500.000
Education Above All Foundation	Foundation		150.000	350.000			
Education Above All Foundation	Foundation		50.000				
Foundation to Promote Open Society	Foundation	249.935	550.000	250.000	600.000	400.000	
MasterCard Foundation	Foundation		249.985				
Porticus	Foundation	299.980		383.005			
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	Foundation	850.000					
Wellspring Philantropic Fund	Foundation		100.000	200.000			
European Union	Multilateral			672.438		762.980	1.646.065
Global Partnerhisp for Education (GPE)	Multilateral			172.526	146.499	122.625	122.625
Education International	Other						
GCE-US	Other						
Results for Development Institute	Other						
The Malala Fund	Other		25.000			50.000	
World Food Programme	UN			20.000			
UNESCO Regular Program	UNESCO	50.000	50.000	50.000	50.000	60.000	40.000
UNICEF Additional Appropriation	UNESCO	60.000	30.000				
TOTAL		6.103.309	6.304.874	5.808.335	6.121.933	4.513.229	6.990.260
Including interests		6.200.616	6.447.642	5.906.758	6.131.472	4.625.087	7.126.565

Source: GEM Report donor overviews

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[31] Coloured cells indicate that the donor contribution covered multiple years.

The distribution of expenditure fluctuated slightly between 2018 and 2022, with research making up the bulk of expenditure and increasing (from 44% to 54%), followed by production and distribution (decreasing from 25% in 2018 to 12%, possibly also because of the pandemic). Management and administration expenditures also decreased from 16% to 12%.[32]

Figure 3: Expenditure distribution 2018-2022
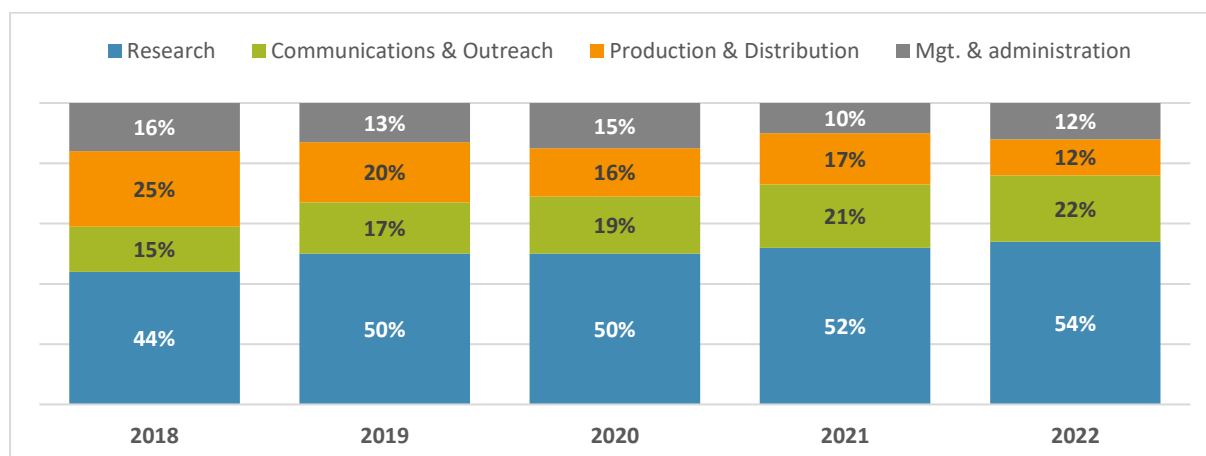
Source: GEM Report expenditure overview

In terms of staffing, in 2022 the GEM Report was made of 23 staff members, supported by 11 additional consultants and one volunteer. In 2018 the GEM Report team consisted of 18 staff members. In addition to this core team, external experts are contracted to draft specific background notes to inform the preparation of the GEM global and other reports. Furthermore, the GEM Report closely works with different partners at global and regional level.[33]

2.4.   Overview of ToC

The full reconstruction of the ToC (see annex 2) led to a number of reflections and observations on how the change process envisaged by the GEM Report could work. This is captured in the following overview figure, listing how the problem statement, overall goal, GEM Report role in the wider context, the change process and change markers are connected and, furthermore, how the overall line of reasoning is supported by the GEM Report outputs and inputs.

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[32] GEM Report own data (2023)
[33] See annex stakeholder mapping

Figure 4: Schematic overview of the reconstructed Theory of Change

Line of Reasoning

2015: agreement on SDGs on education

Wider conducive environment to work towards SDGs building on: preparatory political involvement; common concern; high level of institutionalisation; availability of specific objectives, benchmarks and indicators; involvement and cooperation of stakeholders; presence of creative tension between countries with incentive to act.

No mechanism to monitor on progress

No reporting on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments

Decision makers at national, regional and global levels lack data, evidence, research and recommendations

GEMR is providing the monitoring mechanism, the accountability measures, data, evidence, research and recommendations to stimulate reflection and dialogue at national, regional and global level allowing education systems, plans, policies and budgets to more towards achieving SDG 4.

- To support the **institutionalisation** of processes for progressing towards the SDGs
- To work on the **monitoring** of progress
- To help highlight **creative tension** to stimulate reflections and policy development

Direct influence

Indirect influence

1) Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs;
2) Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences;
3) Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy;
4) Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG4;
5) Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

- Whether GEMR supports the institutionalization of discussions around global and country-specific progress towards the SDG and ways to get there*.
- Whether the momentum from 2015 is maintained to work towards the SDGs;
- Whether the monitoring and reporting on progress is stimulating reflections and discussions;
- Whether the GEMR provide creative tensions to act for countries and stakeholders;
- Whether countries are progressing towards the SDGs.

| Problem statement | | Overall goal | | GEMR role in wider context | | GEMR change process | | GEMR change markers |

Practical implementation

GEMR strategy describes **three outputs** to support the change process, consisting of a number of activities:
- Evidence, research and data
- Communication and outreach
- Policy advocacy and knowledge sharing

Input:
- independent team
- hosted by UNESCO
- total annual budget fluctuates around 6 Million USD
- working closely with different partners

* With institutionalization we refer to having a trusted, reliable infrastructure that provide knowledge and information on progress. This institutionalization complements other types of institutionalization such as the UN structure, UNESCO, Specific Committees etc..

Source: Authors

3. Assessment against evaluation criteria

This Chapter presents the evaluation findings. The evaluation questions are answered through analysis and triangulation of the information gathered through the desk research, interviews, survey and bibliometric analysis. At the start of each evaluation criterion, a concise summative assessment is provided. In this summative assessment, the evaluation team, based on the gathered information and analysis provides an overall judgement in relation to the evaluation issue (see evaluation matrix). This judgement is presented as text at the end of each sub-section and the visual representation of this judgement is presented at the beginning of each sub-section. The judgement is visually represented by five symbols:

- ◯ Not at all in place
- ◔ To a limited extent in place
- ◑ To a modest extent in place
- ◕ To a large extent in place
- ● Fully in place

3.1.   Relevance (Is the intervention doing the right things?)

This section of the evaluation report addresses the evaluation questions which consider the relevance of the GEM Report and its activities. It first examines the relevance of the GEM Report and its associated products in relation to its mandate for measuring progress towards SDG 4 globally. It then considers the function of the report themes to monitor progress in education for the global, regional and national education communities. Table 4 provides a concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings.

Table 4: Relevance: concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings

Evaluation issue	Assessment (from not at all in place to fully in place)
The GEM Report activities and associated products, their format and delivery mechanisms are relevant in the light of the envisaged change process.	◔
The themes covered are relevant in the context of monitoring and progressing towards the SDGs	◔

Relevance of report activities and products

This section looks at what are the user needs regarding the measurement of progress towards SDG 4. It examines whether the GEM Report activities supported the envisaged change process and supported the delivery of the mandate, whether the format and delivery mechanism of the GEM Report changed over time since 2018, and to what extent the data sources of the report changed over the years. It also assesses to what extent the GEM Report activities and associated products, their format and delivery mechanisms were relevant in the light of the envisaged change process.

The delivery of the GEM Report's mandate and the change process for the GEM Report are based on five steps, three of which are directly attributed to the team's work (as described in Section 2) The relevance and utility of the GEM Report and its associated products receive highly positive feedback across most interviewees and survey respondents.[34] The report clearly meets its mandate through the following direct change processes, which were mentioned across a majority

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[34] On average, about 3% of respondents found the Reports and its products "not useful" or "not useful at all".

of interviews. The fulfilment of the mandate is succinctly summarised by one global-level stakeholder as follows:

> "*The UNESCO GEM Report stands out due to its holistic assessment, global comparative analysis, policy recommendations, and annual publication. While other reporting tools may focus on specific elements of education or operate on different timelines, the GEM Report provides a comprehensive overview of progress towards SDG 4 and offers valuable guidance for policymakers and stakeholders*."

During this evaluation period, the GEM Report expanded its production to multiple websites[35] and new publications in addition to continuing the publication of the global report, gender and youth reports, policy papers, blogs and social media. The direct change process was discussed during interviews. Some respondents pointed unprompted to specific examples of GEM Report team products as fulfilling objectives (see Table 5 below). The main Report remains the most frequently reported document related to SDG 4 and all three direct change processes.

Table 5: Links between change process and GEM Report team production

Direct change process	Products and activities mentioned in interviews*	
Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs	Global report Regional reports WIDE	SDG 4 Benchmarks Education Finance Watch
Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences	Global report Regional reports WIDE Gender report Youth reports	Policy papers Spotlight reports SDG 4 Benchmarks Education Finance Watch
Provide insights on data and policy that stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups	Global report Regional reports	Policy papers SDG 4 Benchmarks

* Mentions were included in responses related to questions around the three change processes. One mention was sufficient to be included in the table. There was no mention of VIEW or its component work (on out-of-school children and completion rates).

Finding the right balance between the thematic and the monitoring sections of the main report generates much discussion across evaluation interviews. Among those respondents who are members of the GEM Report team or Advisory Board, monitoring data and trends related to SDG 4 targets are considered central to the GEM Report as are the themes which highlight global issues. Yet, many respondents raise the tension between the two sections in terms of their *relative* relevance in the global report. Three points emerge in these discussions:

- A strict interpretation of the mandate – to report on indicators and policies – would imply that themes need to be more closely related and defined narrowly around SDG 4 goals and targets, and some interviewees do not feel that is the case.
- Other stakeholders see the past themes as relevant for the global education community, but as being too broad, taking over too much space at the expense of monitoring SDG 4 and requiring a greater concentration of human resources.
- The positioning of the thematic section at the front of the report, with the monitoring section moved to the second half of the report, was interpreted and perceived as increasing the importance of the thematic section, at the expense of the monitoring section.[36]

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[35] All publications available at https://en.unesco.org/gem-report. See also WIDE- https://www.education-inequalities.org/; SCOPE https://www.education-progress.org/en/; PEER https://education-profiles.org/.
[36] Under the EFA Reports, the monitoring section was always the first section of the global report.

The relevance of the diverse set of GEM Report products receives less clear-cut endorsement, with both positive and negative impressions on the products' relevance to the GEM Report's mandate.

The positive feedback expresses the validity and relevance of the different products, and mainly on how they improve knowledge around the subject. Different stakeholders express overall satisfaction with the diverse set of outputs, identifying those which are most relevant to their work. As such, over all the products, the GEM Report has reached relevance across a broad audience. The Regional reports were particularly well-received within regions, because they were adapted and responded to specific challenges of the region with regards to the theme. Qualitative and quantitative information on countries made available under different products (i.e., WIDE, PEER, Spotlight Series) were described as positive additions to the Report, especially when they relate directly to monitoring SDG 4, because they are independent, comparative products.

The most negative comments around the relevance of all GEM Report products during this evaluation period relate to the coherence (how are products linked to each other), effectiveness (e.g. diluting evidence, how to manoeuvre various websites) and efficiency (in terms of staff high workloads and short deadlines). The assessment of the relevance of the Spotlight series was more nuanced. The country-based reports are interesting for comparative purposes and for monitoring progress on SDG 4, but the focus on foundational learning was less well received by certain global education actors who favour a broader educational debate on learning outcomes.[37] The expansion of products is considered by a few global stakeholders as "diluting" the main report, and suggesting the need to pay careful attention to the selection of products related to SDG 4 monitoring. In short, the diverse nature of products has reinforced the tension between the narrow and broad interpretation of the mandate.

The format and delivery mechanisms of the report are primarily online, which generated little comment in the interviews. Accessibility to the main report and its associated products is facilitated, although persons with low internet speeds might be more penalised. The main report is seen as a reference tool, with few readers going through the whole document. Criticism of the delivery mechanisms revolve around the numerous websites and products (i.e., PEER, SCOPE, VIEW, WIDE), and needing to help stakeholders navigate with a reorganisation of the main website. This is the result of the constraints of the UNESCO website and knowledge management. Under that framework, it is not possible to improve the visibility of all products, for example, organising them around a single website.

This evaluation also examines the relevance as measured by perceived utility of the reports by types of respondents (Figure 5). The main report and the regional reports were very well received across all groups. About 80% of all survey respondents, regardless of their professional affiliation, indicated that the main report was "very useful" or "useful". The Regional Reports were nearly as highly received, especially by national and local government agencies. UNESCO and its affiliated organisations find that thematic regional reports are less relevant to their work compared to the PEER and WIDE sites. Donors are particularly fond of the WIDE database.

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[37] In short, the argument states that "foundational learning" refers to a rather narrow perspective on learning – namely literacy and numeracy. Holistic learning in the SDGs has been interpreted more broadly including education for global citizenship, for climate change, etc.

Figure 5: Perceived utility of the GEM Report, Regional reports, WIDE and PEER (%)

How do you assess the utility of GEM Report? (N=420)

How do you assess the utility of Regional Reports accompanying the thematic GEM report? (N=398)

How do you assess the utility of the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)? (N=363)

How do you assess the utility of the Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER)? (N=369)

Legend: Very useful, Useful, Somewhat useful, Not useful, Not useful at all, Don't know | NA
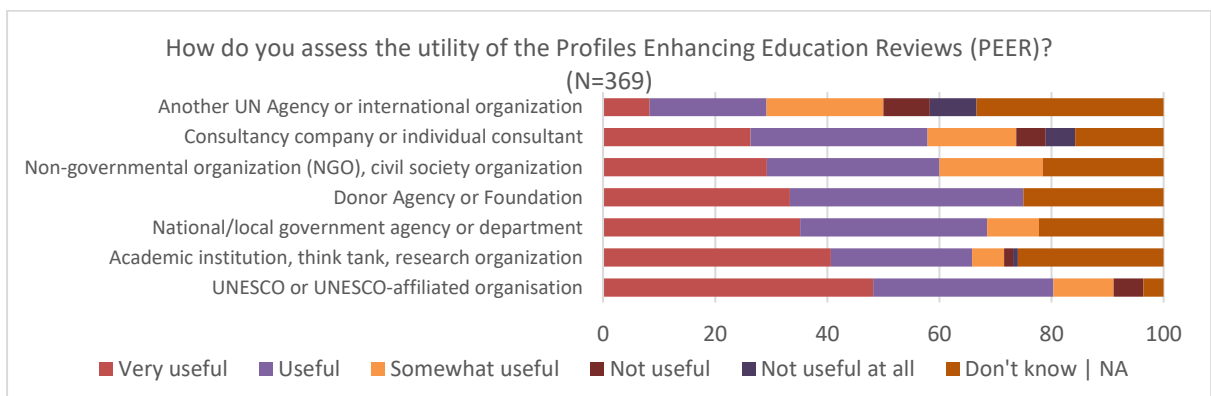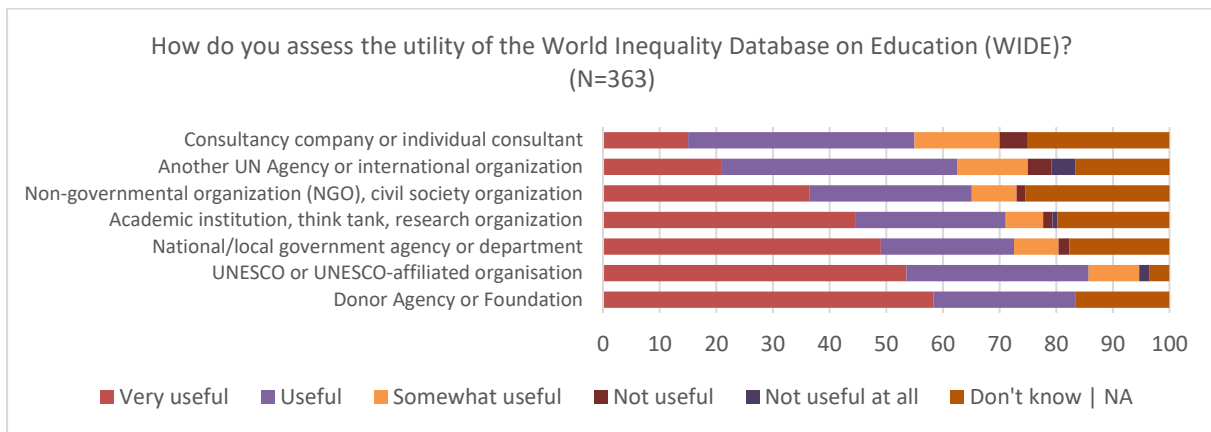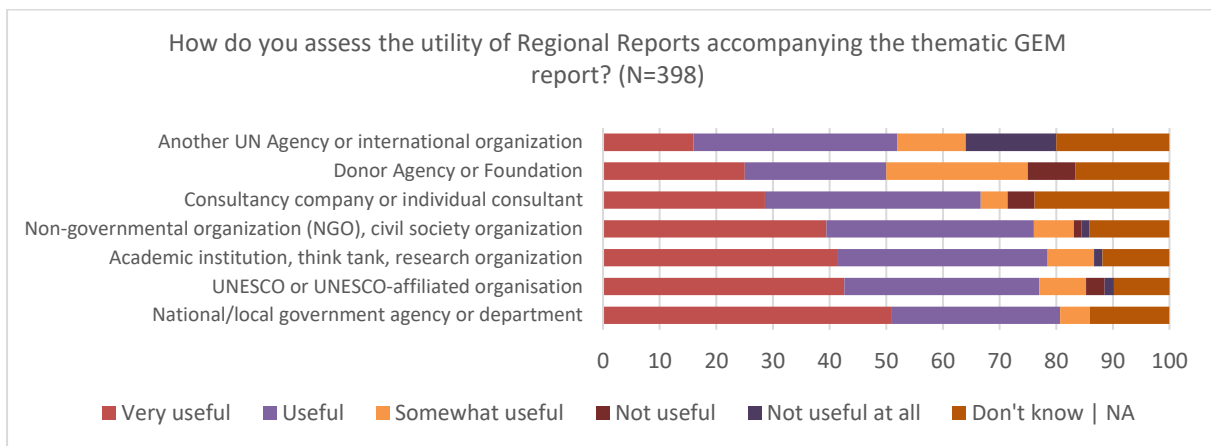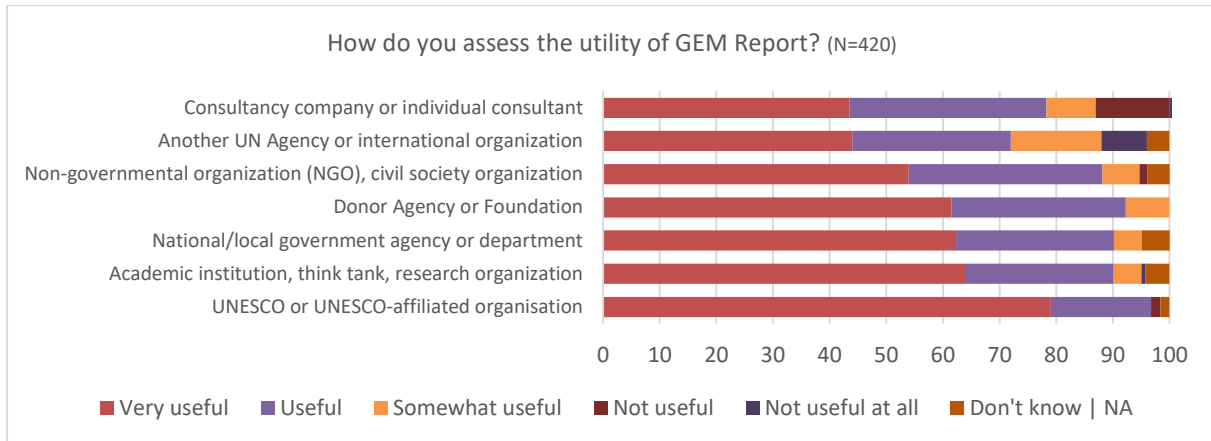
The evaluation examined the relevance of the GEM Report products in the respondents' work by asking how the report was utilised (Figure 6). By far, the most common use of the report is as a reference document providing support to the respondent's work. Two-thirds of national level government users were also highly likely to use the Report as supporting material for policy development, strategy development, programming and planning as well as for identifying good practices. Among 60% of academic users, the Report is an important source of vetted policy practices.

Figure 6: Typology of GEM Report usage by selected respondent types (%)
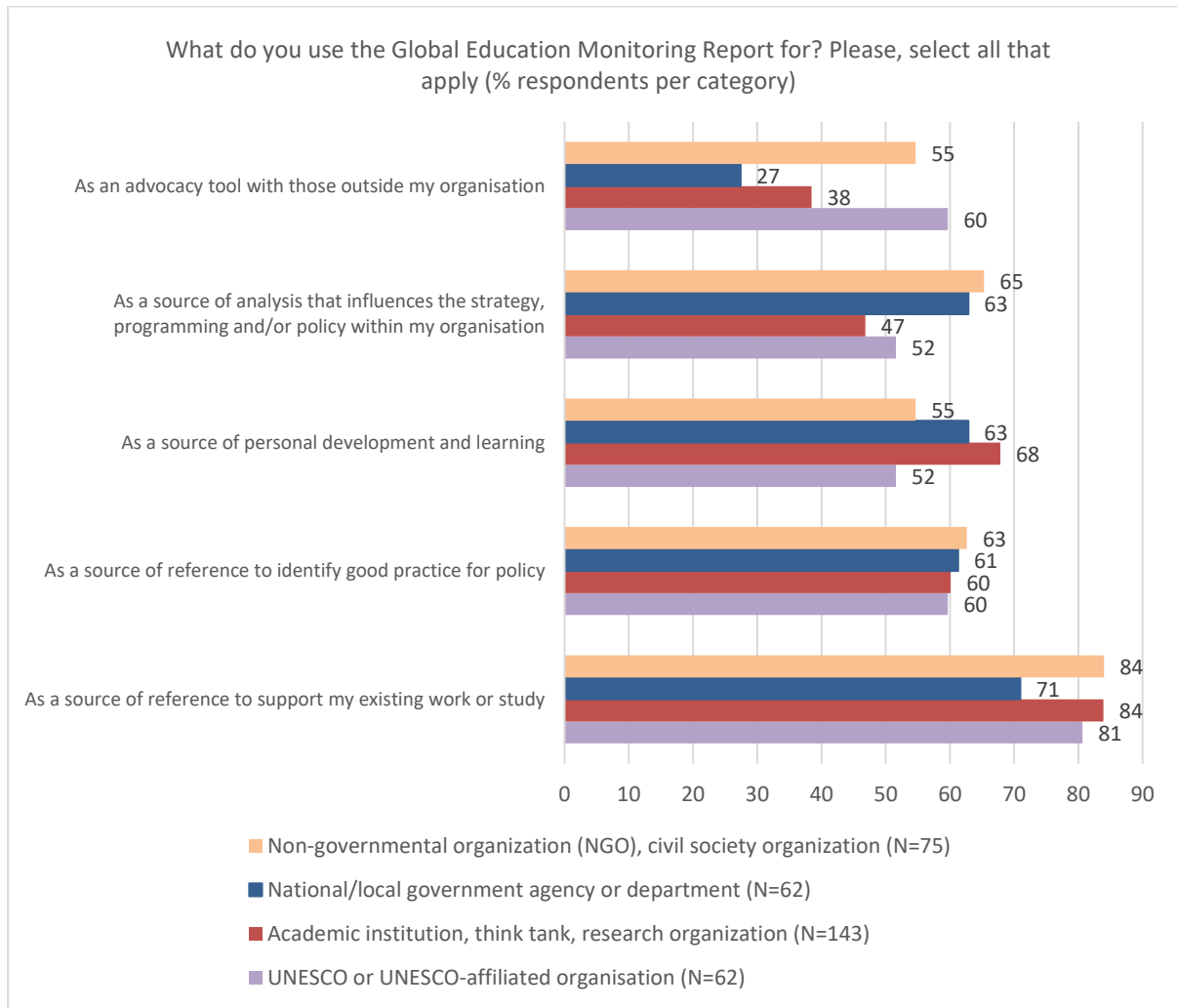
All in all, the GEM Report's mandate in the global education architecture is relevant: most of the publications and related activities are seen by all stakeholders as serving a monitoring and analytic purpose. The tension between the narrow and broad interpretation of the Report's mandate remains a concern and is associated with the recent themes and the expansion of products described in positive and negative terms. The global Report remains the foundation of the GEM Report team's mandate. The other products – many of which are created during this evaluation period – could benefit from a clearer identification of their relevance to the mandate and its change processes. The format and delivery mechanisms since 2018 have become more complex and, perhaps, could benefit from a revision of the online organisation.

Relevance of report themes

This section looks more closely at the relevance of the GEM Report themes, what role the thematic approach plays in the overall change process and how the decision-making process is working concerning the selection of themes. It finally assesses whether the themes covered are relevant in the context of monitoring and progressing towards the SDGs.

The thematic approach has two main phases: the selection and the production phases. The selection phase involves the Advisory Board and the GEM Report team, which proposes thematic subjects for discussions to the Advisory Board. An open vote is cast at the end of an open discussion period and the process is generally considered transparent by most GEM Report team staff and Advisory Board members interviewed. A few noted the difficulty in proposing new or alternative themes to those presented during the meetings. An open consultation was held in 2019 for soliciting proposals for potential future themes.

Once the theme is selected, the GEM Report commissions a think piece to an external expert in the field, to highlight the main aspects to be addressed in the report. The team then issues a Concept Note, which is included in an online consultation process to receive feedback on the theme and to collect evidence. Background papers are then commissioned in an open invitation process, with a final selection made across several criteria (including relevance, geographic coverage, scope, cost, research quality) by the senior management team. Previously, the research members of the team selected commissions based on research gaps for the report and developed their own research networks. Many team members were responsible for selecting and overseeing the background paper selection process.

The recent addition of self-standing regional reports developed together with regional partners has been a strong value-added to increasing the relevance of themes at the regional level. It departs from the previous set of regional overview (summary) reports under the Education for All era. To date, four regional reports have been issued: Arab States for the 2019 Report on Migration; Latin America and the Caribbean and CEE, Caucasus and Central Asia for the 2020 Report on Inclusion; South Asia for the 2021/2 Report on non-state actors. Two more are underway for the technology theme (Southeast Asia and Pacific). If one includes the Africa Spotlight reports, the Report has covered nearly all world regions, with the exception of Western Europe and North America.

Since the 2020 Report cycle, the GEM Report team has partnered with regional organisations for the regional reports on the thematic topic. The idea behind the regional reports was grounded in the GEM Report's strategy to strengthen ties with countries and make the Report's content more relevant at the national level.[38] Region-specific research frameworks, adaptations to the theme and recommendations were noted to be of high value, especially when these were different from the global report. Regional stakeholders and partners interviewed for this evaluation found that these reports were useful documents to take to policy stakeholders at national levels, although interpretation for policy dialogue and planning was less clear. One regional stakeholder also pointed to the benefits of adding specific research from the Global South through the development of these regional reports.

The question on the relevance of the themes with regards to supporting the monitoring and progress towards SDG 4 received a diverse set of responses during the interviews. Overall, the report themes are seen as providing research on a critical set of areas which are important to the global education community. Specific evaluation questions delved into the themes' relevance with regards to SDG 4 monitoring. The responses highlighted a broad set of differing views and are listed in Box 3 as informative. Furthermore, this evaluation finds that some quotes are contradictory, thereby not resolving perceptions regarding the themes. The issue of linking themes to monitoring the SDG 4 goals was directly mentioned by a number of respondents, with

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[38] Manos Antoninis, 2021 Advisory Board minutes.

different expectations. Some indicated that the thematic part should not cover a theme, but more an issue with which countries struggle. Another respondent indicated that more focus could be placed on reasons why countries are not progressing, despite having data, analysis, policy recommendations and good practices widely available.

Box 3: Selected survey quotes on the thematic approach

- *"The themes do not fill a research gap in the global education community. For example, they are sometimes behind the OECD in terms of covering a theme."*
- *"The themes are sometimes timely (e.g. migration with Syrian refugee crisis in Europe).*
- *"The themes are very relevant to all contexts."*
- *"The themes are usually only relevant to the Global South and donor communities, but not ministries of education in high-level income countries."*
- *"The topics are selected because of their urgency and relevance to the SDG 4 agenda."*
- *"The themes no longer consider equity as much as in past, despite the relevance for reaching SDG 4."*
- *"Themes are quite expansive, perhaps too broad."*
- *"Greater focus on operationalisation of SDG 4, including financing and implementation, are needed."*
- *"The previous reports used a straightforward approach to selecting intertwining thematic and monitoring goals. Without this link, it is more difficult to see the theme's relevance to SDG 4 specifically."*

All in all, the themes selected for the global GEM Report are relevant to the change process. Nonetheless, there are diverse views on the themes themselves, with some considering the themes to be too broad and others finding themes not specifically tied to SDG 4 monitoring. The specificity of the regional reports and the partnerships used to develop them make these reports particularly useful for regional and national-level stakeholders.

3.2.   Coherence (How well does the intervention fit?)

In this section, we provide an assessment based on the questions:

- to what extent are the GEM Report and its associated products coherent with other global, regional and national initiatives in the area of monitoring progress in education; and
- what are the GEM Report's comparative strengths?

We then assess whether the GEM Report is aligned to other initiatives and contributes to a conducive environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4. Table 6 provides a concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings.

Table 6: Coherence: concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings

Evaluation issue	Assessment (from not at all in place to fully in place)
GEM Report is aligned to other initiatives and contributes to a conducive environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4.	◑

As explained in the section on the Theory of Change, the mandate of the GEM Report is to provide the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the SDG 4. This mandate is positioned in a wider architecture of custodianship and monitoring for SDG 4 in which UNESCO plays a key role, but that is supported by all co-convenors (UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, the World Bank and ILO), Member States and other partners. In the context of the Global Education

Cooperation Mechanism[39], in order to promote effective global cooperation, UNESCO set a multi-stakeholder body known as the High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC). The primary objective of this steering committee is to assist Member States and partners in attaining the goals outlined in SDG 4-Education 2030. To achieve this goal, the committee engages in various activities, including offering strategic guidance, assessing progress using the GEM Report as a reference, and presenting recommendations to the education community regarding essential priorities and pivotal steps required to fulfil the SDG agenda. Additionally, it monitors and advocates for sufficient funding while also promoting alignment and coordination among partner initiatives. A recent review of the Functional Areas of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism concluded that the GEM Report' information is insufficiently by the existing architecture.[40] One of the three functional areas of the Steering Committee focuses on monitoring progress and improve the availability/use of data. Here, GEM Report is the technical co-lead with UIS.[41]

At global level, agenda setting in the area of education is driven not only by the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism. As part of the UN Common Agenda,[42] in 2022 the Transforming Education Summit took place during the 77th session of the UN General Assembly to prioritize education on the global political stage. Its aim was also to foster ambition and unity while rallying support and innovative solutions to address the learning setbacks caused by the pandemic and lay the foundation for reshaping education in an ever-evolving world.[43] The HLSC has the task of overseeing the outcomes of the Transforming Education Summit.[44] Its ongoing responsibilities involve tracking advancements, encouraging and enabling the sharing of knowledge and best practices, involving young people, and advocating for collaborative efforts across sectors and among multiple nations.

Furthermore, other organisations launch initiatives that aim to prioritise education. An example is the Learning Poverty concept developed by the World Bank to spotlight the crisis in foundational learning. The initiative developed a composed indicator of school attendance and learning despite the fact that no such role has been assigned to the World Bank by the United Nations and these indicators already exist in the SDG 4 monitoring framework. The 2022 report was developed by the World Bank, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with UNESCO.[45]

In terms of monitoring progress in education, while the GEM Report, together with UIS has a global mandate, there are a number of other related initiatives. At global level[46], there is the UN DESA overall report on monitoring SDGs.[47] and there are non-formal initiatives such as the SDG Tracker of 'Our World in Data',[48] using existing data to visualise progress. Comparing these initiatives, the GEM Report plays an important role providing the most comprehensive overview of information and also offers an analysis of the data. At regional level, there are some region-

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[39] See for an overview of the Global Education Mechanism: www.unesco.org/SDG 4education2030/en/who-we-are

[40] See Incheon Declaration, article 94.

[41] https://www.unesco.org/SDG 4education2030/en/technical-committees. The Functional Areas of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism saw a revision in 2021 as several challenges were identified. In specific on the use of data for accountability, "although one of the tasks of the Steering Committee assigned to it in the Framework for Action, has been to 'review progress drawing on the GEM Report' (§94), the information contained in the report and its multiple documents has not been used sufficiently by the existing architecture, while the accountability element has been weak" (See Education 2030 (2021), Concept Note Functional Areas of the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism Monitoring progress and improving the availability and use of SDG 4-related data). One strategy to improve the use of data is to further develop SDG 4 benchmarking process, extended by a limited number of additional indicators that capture the Education Summit's priorities.

[42] https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda

[43] https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/about

[44] See overview of commitments:
https://www.unesco.org/SDG 4education2030/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2023/09/Technical%20Note%20Dashboard%20v2.pdf

[45] World Bank (2022), The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update:
https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf

[46] From the perspective of searching online for 'monitoring progress SDG 4'.

[47] UN (2022), The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022

[48] https://ourworldindata.org/sdgs

specific initiatives outside the GEM Report that have a high standing. For instance, the work of the OECD in monitoring educational quality in OECD countries is having more traction in policy discussions (most notably PISA limitedly related to SDG indicator 4.1.1 [49]). Furthermore, as UN regional economic commissions have a mandate to report on SDGs, there are regional reports on progress towards SDG 4 developed by others outside the GEM Report. An example is the be the UN Economic and Social Commission on Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report.[50] Another example, presenting a regional equivalent of the GEM Report (but not being editorially independent) is the UNESCO/UNICEF publication on 5-Year Progress Review of SDG 4 – Education 2030 in Asia-Pacific.[51] At national level, huge amounts of data are gathered and analysed for specific project/programme purposes. Examples of this are the country background reports for World Bank interventions, or the GPE compacts. Respondents, when reflecting on monitoring and data reports at regional and national level, emphasise the complementarity of the GEM Report and associated products in relation to those regional and national reports instead of overlaps. As expressed by respondents, the purpose of the GEM Report is to provide oversight and structure, whereas other reports and initiatives can zoom in to specific topics or countries. Furthermore, compared to other initiatives, GEM Report is editorially independent in its presentation and analysis of data.

Against this background, however, respondents indicate that they lose oversight of who is responsible for what and who is doing what in terms of monitoring SDGs at global level. This is not to be blamed on the GEM Report, but on the fact that multiple organisations develop products and approaches to present the state of play of development on a specific part of SDG 4. More specifically on the role of the GEM Report in the wider architecture around monitoring the education SDG, the respondents' perceptions differ a lot. There are some that indicate that the GEM Report should be restricted to a more limited set of activities and focus on the monitoring aspect. Similarly, some respondents indicate that the GEM Report is conducting part of UNESCO's role within the Global Cooperation Mechanism (based on common agreement). Others indicate that the GEM Report is "punching below its weight" and that it should act more as a convenor, bringing the right people at the table at global, regional and national levels to stimulate discussions on reaching the SDGs and specific topics. From the diversity of views it becomes clear that key stakeholders have very different perspectives on the role and function of GEM Report in the overall architecture around monitoring SDG 4. Having formally agreed on the global mandate for monitoring and reporting on the SDG 4 does not suffice to practically clarify and demarcate the role of the GEM Report within the overall architecture.

In terms of the functioning and use of the GEM Report, there is however broad consensus that the GEM Report stands out due to its holistic assessment, global comparative analysis, policy recommendations, and annual publication. While other reporting tools may focus on specific elements of education or operate on different timelines, the GEM Report provides a comprehensive overview of progress towards SDG 4 and offers valuable guidance for policymakers and stakeholders. The GEM Report is perceived as the legitimate, trustworthy, and comprehensive source for SDG 4 monitoring. As stated by respondents, there is "*nothing comparable on an international scale or global scale in education*", or "*it is the most comprehensive source of information available, that is why it is so important. It is a very unique document, you cannot find any similar document*".

Respondents indicate however that this holistic and global perspective also has the challenge of remaining relevant for policy makers working on specific education-related topics. For them, the

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[49] https://www.oecd.org/pisa/ ; Breakspear, S. (2012), "The Policy Impact of PISA: An Exploration of the Normative Effects of International Benchmarking in School System Performance", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 71, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/5k9fdfqffr28-en.

[50] For instance: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (2023), Asia and the Pacific SDG progress report 2023: championing sustainability despite adversities: https://data.unescap.org/publications/0000016

[51] UNESCO, UNICEF (2021), 5-Year Progress Review of SDG 4 – Education 2030 in Asia-Pacific: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379173

GEM Report might not offer enough detail, analysis, insight and stimulus for action. This perspective is also visible in the respondents' view on how the GEM Report is recognised as global public good. While respondents acknowledge the GEM Report as global public good, they indicate that this perception might not be universally understood due to the presence of numerous alternative sources of education-related data that are seemingly better suited to be used in policy discussions, policy development and monitoring SDG progress. When looking for specific data on education SDG progress, respondents indicate that the GEM Report is often not the first source that is found and from which information is easily accessible.

In terms of partnerships, the respondents indicate that GEM Report is active in pursuing partnerships that benefit the monitoring and use of monitoring analysis and policy analysis at regional and national levels. The GEM Report actively cooperates with regional organisations (such as SEAMEO on the Southeast Asia regional report and AU, for instance, in working on the Spotlight report) and with UNESCO offices and institutes such as UIS and IIEP. The interviews, while acknowledging the value of these partnerships, also refer to challenges for instance on the positioning of the GEM Report in relation to UNESCO, based on the interviews it seems that there is some lack of clarity, confusion, and possibly also missed opportunities. For instance, some respondents refer to the follow-up of the UN Transforming Education Summit (TES) by the High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) in UNESCO, pointing that it would make sense that the GEM Report plays a more active role in it, since the TES is about supporting progression towards the SDGs and the monitoring of the policy commitments of Member States. This reflection from respondents might not be fully correct as GEM Report and UIS play an active role through the benchmarking process, but these respondent reflections do point to challenges in the alignment of initiatives within the global infrastructure related to monitoring progress on the SDG 4 and policy commitments. Other respondents indicate that the involvement of UNESCO field offices in validating country information or preparing the launch of reports is also regarded as something where better synergies could be sought.

All in all, in monitoring SDG 4 there is a lot of fragmentation, and organisational mandates are not always perceived as clear or lived by. This created an environment in which organisations feel there is space that can be taken by additional initiatives, prioritising specific aspects of the SDG framework. This makes the monitoring landscape even more fragmented and threatens the position of the GEM Report positioning as the mandated organisation for providing the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the SDG 4, and thus its value as a global public good. Overall, the GEM Report is well aligned to other initiatives and works with some of them in partnership. But it is more challenging to find hard evidence on whether the GEM Report, as positioned in the wider education SDG architecture, is enabled to fully contribute to developing the conducive environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4.

An overall reflection on the education SDG architecture is that the structure envisaged by the Incheon declaration and the consequent position of the GEM Report does not provide an optimal conducive environment for 'data and independent analysis' to stimulate progress at country level.

3.3. Effectiveness (Is the intervention achieving its objectives?)

The effectiveness section reviews whether the GEM Report reached its objectives. It discusses the credibility of the GEM Report products, the contribution to the ability of global, regional and national education communities to monitor progress, and finally, the success of outreach and dissemination efforts in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences. Table 7 provides a concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings.

Table 7: Effectiveness: concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings

Evaluation issue	Assessment (from not at all in place to fully in place)
The GEM Report evidence, research and data, as well as its policy messages are credible as judged by stakeholders and supported by evidence	●
The GEM report contributes to global monitoring of progress on education in the SDG	◕
The GEM Report and the outreach and dissemination strategy supported the uptake and use of policy messages	◕

Credibility of the GEM Report and its research outputs

This section reviews whether the GEM Report and its research outputs are credible, what measures have been undertaken to ensure a high level of quality, and finally, what aspects can be improved.

The development of the GEM Report and associated products is first of all reviewed against its dual mandate, which establishes the GEM Report as the "*mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4*" and calls for it to also report on the "*implementation of national and international strategies* [towards these objectives]". For the GEM Report to do so effectively, the reconstructed theory of change defines the provision of *trustworthy data and analysis* on progress to SDG 4 as a first condition for the GEM Report to meaningfully contribute to its overall objectives.

The analytical rigour, and the high quality of the research associated with the GEM Report publications ensures that the first marker for change in the reconstructed theory of change is in place. None of the interviewed stakeholders question the quality of the research or data presented; stakeholders hold the quality of GEM Report publications in high regard, of which the open comments collected in the survey in the box are an illustration.

Box 4: Selected survey quotes on the reliability of the GEM Report

- *"Good analysis and useful information"*
- *"GEMR products always provide a good overview over a topic/ state of the art"*.
- *"Solid source of data and analysis"*
- *"Objectivity and accuracy"*
- *"C'est une bonne source d'abord d'inspiration, mais aussi une référence bibliographique crédible" (it is a good source of inspiration, but also a credible bibliographical reference)*
- *"تقدم بنية تحاتية معلوماتية ذات موثوقية" (it provides a reliable information infrastructure)*
- *"They have provided a reliable source of data and information that informs our own studies."*
- *"Trusted statistics and tracking progress toward SDG 4"*

The extensive process put in place when developing the flagship GEM Report helps ensure the quality and relevance of the GEM Report data and analysis. The extensive preparatory steps, as described in section 3.1, start more than two years before publication with the development of a think piece and concept note. The think piece is developed with support from external authors that are renowned in their field. It serves as the starting point of an extensive process of consultations among academic and policy stakeholders relevant to the specific theme selected. These consultations contribute to further finetuning of the overall conceptual framework, aligning key definitions with the state-of-the-art to ensure that the broader research that underpins the report has firm academic footing and connects to policy discussions on the theme.

Through such consultations, as well as the contracting of experts to support the GEM Report with background papers, the GEM Report works actively to achieve the involvement of a large number of experts with substantially diverse backgrounds on each report's specific theme. This helps ensure that the GEM Reports are able to reflect the latest research and knowledge. This is an important explanation that stakeholders active in the area of education generally consider the GEM Report as a prestigious publication in the education world.

All these findings are brought together into the thematic section of the flagship GEM Report, for which draft versions also undergo various rounds on internal and external consultations before publication. The extensive process of consultations and review that underpins the thematic section of the GEM Report and high-quality research output contributes to an equally positive assessment of the credibility and quality of GEM Report broader range of publications, such as the regional reports, or specific thematic report on Gender. These reports are published as self-standing reports in addition to the main thematic report and provide a more specific perspective to that year's theme.

Both through the main report and through these publications, the GEM Report consistently showed a high level of commitment to inclusivity. Besides the 2020 Report focused on Inclusion and Education, the gender and youth exemplify this commitment, and the recognition of the pivotal role of inclusive education in reaching SDG 4.

The positive assessment of the quality of data and analysis also extends to the reporting of progress on SDG 4 indicators, both in the main flagship report, where this is presented as a dedicated section, as well as in the broader range of GEM Report publications and websites. Together, the range of GEM Report publications informs readers on the progress identified by the key indicators for SDG 4, as published by UIS with more qualitative reflections on progress and regional and national differences, supported by additional literature and explanations. The use of statistical data from UIS as input for its monitoring on progress to SDG 4 indicators further provides a quality label through which the GEM Report ensures high-quality and reliable data to stakeholders.

The evaluation finds that substantial efforts have been taken since 2018 to further strengthen the evidence base of GEM Reports. The number of sources cited has increased by 68% from 2019 to 2021/2 and the share of peer-reviewed journal articles has increased as well, which can be seen as a positive trend with respect to the quality of sources used.[52] Moreover, the diversity in terms of language and geographic origin of the sources has also slightly increased, even though the strong structural dominance of Anglophone origin of first authors and of the English language used for references remains unbroken. In a sense this is natural, given that researcher often publish in English, even if their nationality or native language is another. However, if the report continues to aim for going beyond data and statistics, the credibility of incorporating national and region-specific experiences and perspectives would benefit from continued efforts to collect and use more local sources as well, to ensure that the descriptions of regional, national or local practices are both sufficiently contextualised and factually correct. This is important also because national sources are the sources that are most often used by policy makers, compared to international sources.[53]

Some of the interviews with development partners highlighted incidental cases where specific national examples in the report were not considered the best national illustration of the narrative, or contained some minor factual errors that pointed to a limited understanding of the local contexts. While these may not be avoided entirely in a report of the scope and complexity as the

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[52] The growth in number of sources identified outpaced the (also) substantial increase in report volume (from 270 pages or 122 thousand words in 2019 to 401 pages / 169 thousand words in 2021/2022 when excluding the statistical tables, which is a 48 % increase in pages, and 38 % increase in words).
[53] NORRAG (2022), Strategic review of global and regional evidence and knowledge initiatives, networks and platforms in education, p. 2.

GEM Report, such cases can be minimised through systematic procedures to cross-check local sources and contributions, particularly when it does not involve peer reviewed academic contributions. When including local sources, the content and source could be checked more systematically with development partners active in that context, for instance by reaching out to UNESCO field offices or other UN agencies on the ground (UN Country Teams, UNCTs). Doing so would also help avoid possible situations of bias, where contributions are fully shaped by either non-governmental actors or by national policymakers. The description of practices or policies that do not filter out such biases can negatively influence the reputation of UNESCO and surprise local UNESCO field offices, who are likely to be approached by government stakeholders or local media about the reference, even more so when these contain factual errors.

All in all, there is broad consensus among stakeholders that the GEM Report publications and key messages are credible. The GEM Report is underpinned by extensive consultations in the preparatory phase, which helps ensure a solid conceptual framework. Moreover, this evaluation's review of the sources used in the GEM report shows the solidity and high-quality of the evidence used. The additional efforts undertaken by the GEM Report team to strengthen and diversify the evidence-base since 2018 further adds to this positive assessment.

The GEM Report's contribution to global, regional and national education communities' monitoring of progress.

This section, we discuss whether the GEM Report and associated products have helped the global, regional and national education communities monitor progress on education in the SDGs. It allows an assessment of the GEM Report's contribution to global monitoring of progress on education in the SDGs.

Building on the previous section that established the availability and overall quality and credibility of the various GEM Report publications, this section reviews an important second pre-condition for the GEM Report's work to have any (possible) impacts, as defined in the reconstructed theory of change. It reviews the extent to which the GEM Report and associated products succeeded in helping education actors and communities across the globe to monitor progress on education in the SDGs.

The main GEM Reports that are published every 1.5 years are an important source for monitoring towards the key SDG 4 indicators. Following the more thematic section where the GEM Report reviews the contribution of a specific theme to progress towards SDG 4, the second part of these reports consists of an analytical review, building on global statistics mainly collected and compiled by UIS. These reports are the most visible contribution of the GEM Report to monitoring global progress on education goals for stakeholders; over three-quarters of respondents in our stakeholder survey confirm that it contains relevant information to this end.

In recent years the GEM Report has prioritised broadening access to information on progress on SDG 4 and offering a more dynamic interaction with (statistical) data, compared to just providing static tables in the GEM flagship Report. Moreover, the GEM report also actively works with UIS and other partners to identify and conceptualise global indicators based on existing empirical evidence. A variety of tools and data solutions are offered to accompany the main report for that purpose. First of all, the data and tables included in the report are further supported by the SCOPE (Scoping Progress in Education) website, which presents national progress to SDG 4 in a more dynamic way, highlighting and describing specific country progress and allowing users more direct interaction with the data as well, by selecting the countries of their interest. The review of progress on these indicators is further reported based on a joint analysis with UIS on the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), offering an additional quantitative understanding of the factors behind progress in SDG 4 indicators. To overcome the challenges of timeliness and consistency of much of the data measuring progress to SDG 4, a new website was launched with

UIS in December 2021, presenting consolidated estimates of out-of-school and completion rates in Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW).

In addition to the quantitative monitoring of progress, the GEM Report team has also worked to monitor the development of national education policies. For this purpose, policy profiles for all countries on each of the GEM Report themes have been developed since the 2020 GEM Report on inclusion in education. The contents of these thematic country profiles are published online in a stand-alone national repository for laws and policies on a website termed "Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews" (PEER), inspired by the European Eurydice website on national education systems[54]. Countries are subsequently invited to review and update these profiles through their delegation at UNESCO.

While this repository contains examples of rich descriptions of national policy contexts in the selected themes, some concerns regarding the quality and sustainability of the findings warrant further attention. First of all, only a limited number of country profiles are formally validated[55]. Unlike Eurydice – where information is fed by national authorities directly –, the information presented through PEER is primarily collected through desk research by the GEM Report team, complemented in a limited number of specific cases by commissioned research[56]. There is no question about the capacity and competence of GEM team or its experts to collect objective descriptions as input for these profiles, but it is an established fact that they are neither experts in the countries they cover, nor in the thematic fields that happen to be reviewed in that given year. For draft inputs for writing the GEM Reports this is not necessarily problematic; when using specific insights or national policies, additional quality assurance can be taken in the specific sections concerned. However, given the frequency (one per 1-2 years), number (all UNESCO Member States) and scope (changing themes) of developing such country profiles, similar quality assurance procedures as for the content of the main report cannot be expected for all individual PEER country profiles. While this does not necessarily disqualify the content of non-validated profiles, nor its possible utility for internal and external stakeholders, it creates a possible risk to the credibility and reputation of GEM Report, and ultimately of UNESCO, as publisher of the report whose logo is omnipresent on the PEER website. The country profiles clearly indicate the year when they are written, and allow for incidental updates in case additional information is provided by delegations of Member States. However, no mechanism is foreseen to systematically update the country information for the existing themes. As the work on PEER started in preparation for the report on inclusion published in 2020, most country information on PEER remains relatively up to date by 2023. However, this content will have a limited shelf-life for external users, after which its contents will be of more limited utility for visitors[57]. Presenting time-sensitive and mostly non-validated information on specific national policies risks undermining the high level of trust and credibility that the GEM Report presently has among its key stakeholders.

The presence of the GEM Report on social media has grown together with the considerable expansion of online presence of GEM Report publications. The GEM Report actively engages in social media activities on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. Overall, the team has been able to reach out to a growing number of individuals via these different channels. While lockdowns and changing ways of working in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic are likely to have contributed to increased online activities as well, the dissemination strategy of the GEM Report contributed to increased online audiences and an enhanced ability to inform readers

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[55] At the 2020 launch of PEER (together with the GEM report on inclusion in education), a total of 16% of country profiles had been formally validated by country representatives, as reported in the 2020 GEM Report Management Report. No information is available for subsequent years.

[56] The 2019 Management report indicates that a total of 24 country profiles were externally commissioned; ten large federal countries as well as 14 Arab countries. In subsequent years the proportion is slightly higher, for instance also outsourcing the work on countries from Central and Eastern Europe as well as Central Asia in 2021. No exact figures are available.

[57] One possible use of the cases could be for researchers to revisit some of the themes that the GEM has collected information on after a certain period of time and use the information as baseline for an analysis of progress. By our knowledge no such efforts are currently planned or foreseen by the GEM report or others.

about its work on monitoring progress to SDG 4. This is also reflected in the positive trend in visitor numbers to the GEM Report website, which moved up from roughly 600 thousand in 2018 to almost 800 thousand in 2022. A one-time increase is visible for 2020, possibly explained by the sudden increase in online activities due to the pandemic. Overall, the rising trend suggests first of all a growing interest in GEM Report publications but can also be seen as a first hint that the GEM Report website(s) offer relevant information to readers. A review of visitor figures of the GEM Report specific websites further reveals relevant trends. First of all, a consistent decline in visitors (relative to the overall website) of the website with blogposts is visible since 2018. Also, in absolute numbers (not presented), the number of visitors of the blog website in 2022 was less than half of that in 2020. This decline is remarkable, as the number of blogs per month has remained largely stable over time. While the lower trend in readership clearly precedes 2021, some of the decline may lie in the migration of the blogs to a new platform with a redesigned interface in 2021, which faced a number of temporary technical issues, such as broken links, and lower search engine rankings due to changes in website structure. These issues are reported to have been addressed, which calls for close monitoring of the trend in visitors in 2023.

In 2022 PEER was the most visited among the specific GEM websites, attracting around 44% of the number of visitors of the main website, compared to the 21% of the World Education Blog and 15% of WIDE. Particularly for PEER, this constitutes a considerable increase compared to 2021, when its share of visitors was roughly similar to that of WIDE. No information is available on whether these audiences overlap or on what factors could explain this increase. SCOPE has attracted considerably less visitors since its launch in 2020 (around 6% of the total number of visitors to GEM Report website). The trends highlights the established role that WIDE has, presenting relevant quantitative findings to help understand (limitations to) progress to SDG 4. The substantial rise in visitors to PEER can be understood as an overall interest of visitors in more qualitative insights to complement the formal quantitative statistics.

Figure 7: Online visits to GEM Report and associated products websites
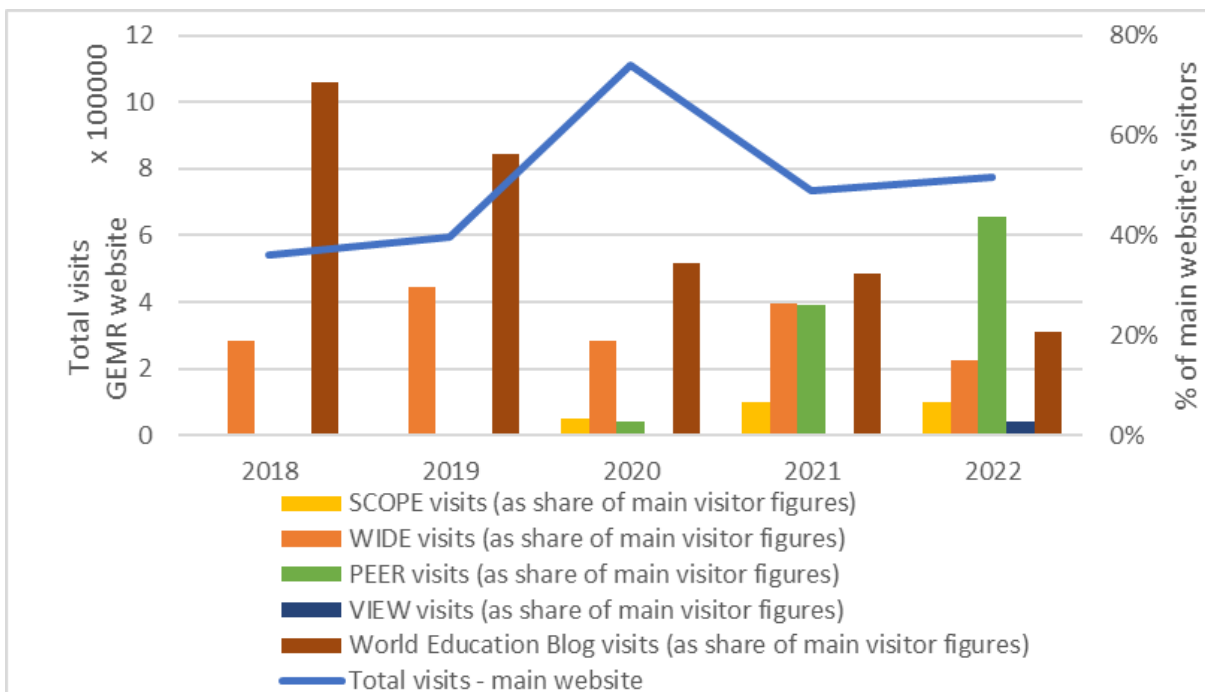
Source: GEM Management Reports

These statistics align somewhat with the findings of the stakeholder survey, but it remains important to keep in mind that the survey is likely to have reached individuals that work more closely with GEM Report than the average visitor to the GEM Report website. A total of 57% of

respondents to the stakeholder survey indicated to have visited the WIDE website, with 50 and 51% of respondents indicating to have visited SCOPE and PEER respectively. These findings do not replicate the difference between visitors to PEER and WIDE as suggested in the website visitor data for 2022; possibly PEER attracted more attention from stakeholders that are not as closely involved with the GEM Report as those responding to the survey. A total of 43% of respondents indicated to have recently visited VIEW, the newest addition to the tools. Compared to the roughly two-thirds of respondents that consulted the 2020 GEM Report on inclusion in the last three years, the figures are decent, but show potential for further improving visibility of the various GEM Report online publications. Interviewees for instance reported that it can be complex navigating the different dedicated websites. Each website has their own focus, while the link of each tool and publication with the core GEM Report is not immediately obvious to an outside visitor, who is easily confused about the purpose and type of data that is presented.

The section on relevance already determined the (perceived) utility of GEM Report publications, but the next step is to find evidence that stakeholders are able to use the findings on monitoring progress to SDG 4 in GEM Report publications in their own work. In-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders already highlighted how findings from GEM Report find their way in others' work. One stakeholder referred to GEM Report as a unique and comprehensive source of information that supports policy development, strategic planning, and the creation of indicators for various reports. Interviewed UNESCO officials in field offices for instance reported that the publication of a GEM Report is an important highlight of the year, which is followed by careful reflections on possible consequences on UNESCO's work in the local operating environment. The same was found for other UN organisations and development partners active on the ground; the significance of the report is widely seen beyond only information gathering. It is considered to play an important role in shaping further substantive work and reporting on progress. The breadth of GEM Report publications offers a comprehensive overview of global education trends, challenges, and opportunities, which are generally accompanied by evidence-based recommendations for action that are taken seriously by partners in the field. These findings are also reflected in the stakeholder survey. Figure 7 shows that respondents to our stakeholder survey are very positive about their ability to use the findings from GEM Report in their work, across all types of stakeholders. An overall 84% of surveyed respondents indicates that GEM Report introduced them to new ideas / approaches, and around 80% indicate that they either cited GEM Reports in their work or used the data published by GEM Report. As no substantial differences can be observed across different stakeholder groups, these are not presented.

Figure 8: Practical use of the GEM Report and associated products
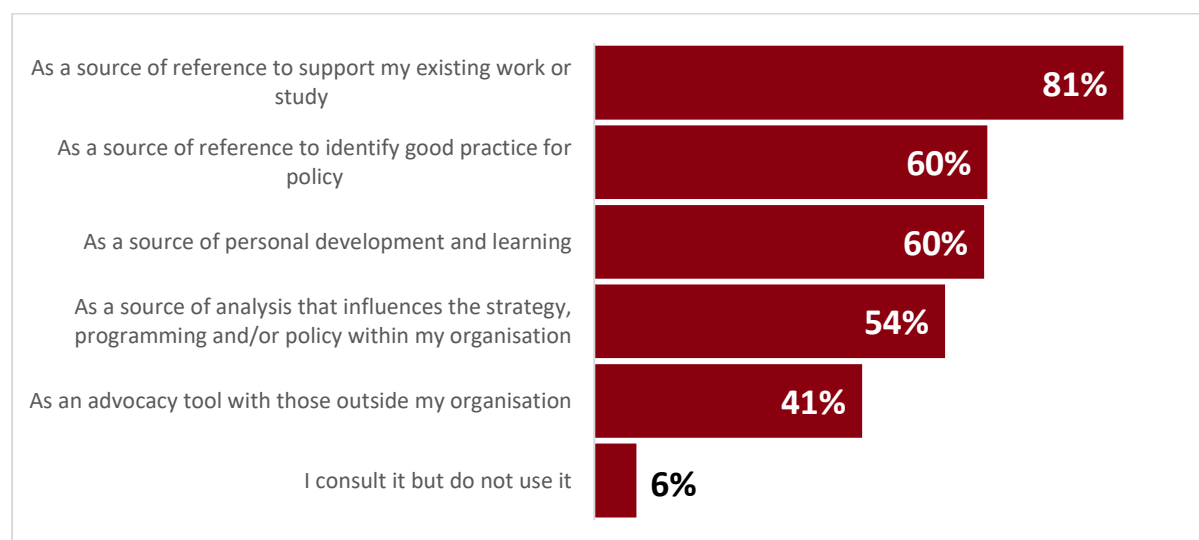
Source: GEM Report 2023 evaluation stakeholder survey

The utility of GEM Report publication for other stakeholders is confirmed in the citation analysis, which looked into citations of GEM publications from January 2019 until June 2023 (see annex 6 for more details). It found a total of 753 citations from across 480 different academic sources. This shows how the GEM Report and associated publications are discussed and used as a resource in advancing education and development research. The GEM flagship reports are among the most cited publications, followed by background papers. The type of sources that cite GEM publications varies considerably, both as regards the country of affiliation of authors, as well as the journals or book series.

All in all, the evaluation finds substantial evidence for GEM Report publications' ability to make a meaningful contribution to monitoring global progress on education goals. New and innovative tools have been launched since 2018 to further open up traditionally static data tables into online interactive websites, offering education communities across the world the means to compare and review national, regional or global progress to SDG 4. Stakeholders responded in large number to have used both qualitative and quantitative evidence provided by the variety of GEM Report publications. The potential remains to further disseminate and streamline these tools for specific target audiences in the coming years.

Box 5: Selected survey quotes on the usage of the GEM Report

- *"We can use the recommendations and best practices from the report to be our reference for policy development as well as initiate the projects or programmes that benefit country in reaching SDG goals"*
- *« Les publications et les rapports GEM nous ont apportés des idées pour améliorer notre assistance a l'éducation des migrants et des refugies. »*
- *"I am an educational thought leader. I regularly contribute to media on educational topics, policies etc. GEM reports help me substantiate my views and give credence."*
- *"Policymakers often rely on GEM reports to gain a better understanding of international education trends and best practices. the reports' recommendations can influence the development of education policies that aim to improve access, equity, and quality."*

The contribution of the GEM Report to enhanced policy uptake and change in education policies.

If the broad range of work done under the heading of the GEM Report is to ultimately lead to observable impacts, such as sustainable changes to education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4, a necessary next step is that these publications are not only high quality and credible, or are shared, available and used to inform global monitoring of progress towards the SDG. When following the reconstructed theory of change towards impacts, the ultimate test for impact lies in whether GEM publications is used as input for *policy change*, its recommendations are followed up on and its advocacy is taken on by other stakeholders. The evidence for such a contribution is reviewed in this section. This aligns with the third step in the redefined change process (providing insights that stimulate reflection). Publication of these results is not enough, some kind of follow up is necessary for the GEM Report to make a change. The final steps in the change process are beyond the area of control of the GEM Report, as these focus on actual improvements to policy (which Member States may work on in response to reflections, discussions or insights facilitated by the GEM Report), or ultimately (step 5) contributing to inclusive and equitable quality education.

The considerable increase in the number and type of GEM Report publications and tools available since 2018 underlines the commitment of the GEM Report team to inform stakeholders and influence policy debate. The GEM Report Strategy for 2019-2024 outlines its clear ambitions to

raise awareness of SDG 4 and strengthen accountability among education stakeholders.[58] The strategy identifies partnerships and peer learning mechanisms as a key basis for dialogue, which is to influence change in education policies.

The GEM Report team has a primary responsibility to distil key findings and formulates clear messages with an eye on developing global communication and outreach outputs that can be further developed into regional and national policy and programmatic responses. These key messages take centre-stage in the GEM Report team's work on policy advocacy, for which the publication of each GEM flagship report is planned as a major communications push. The global launch and subsequent months of regional and national launch events all around the world all revolve around launching the campaign of the key thematic publication for that year. These events are found to have contributed positively to building partnerships and encouraging the national and regional dialogues necessary for changing education policies.

In support of a report's launch, the GEM Report team designates a so-called "group of friends", a collection of key actors and partner organisations specifically selected around the theme of that year's report. It serves as a sounding board for the recommendations, allowing for instance for minor adjustments in language to improve impact and acceptance. The GEM Report team is sharing the recommendations to this group in advance to help build a sense of ownership among these stakeholders once the report is launched, and to give time to prepare a broader advocacy campaign by this broader coalition. Interviewees find overall that this approach works well and helps to amplify the advocacy effort, thereby increasing its potential to influence policies. One limiting factor in influencing policies mentioned by interviewees relates to the limited involvement of UNESCO field offices in planning such campaigns. Currently UNESCO field offices are informed roughly two months in advance to enable the preparation of campaigns, but have no early access to the content of the report, or its conclusions and recommendations. This means in practice that the preparation of their substantial response to the report (for instance in response to specific references to the country or region) and the work on national translations can only really start after the formal publication. A more systematic involvement in the embargoed final stages of the report preparation – and at the minimum a heads-up in case the reports includes references to their geographical area of work - could allow field offices to better prepare a response to clarify immediate questions from press, government or civil society. This in turn could be beneficial of the strategic positioning of any response in the preparation of national campaigns that can be initiated after the global launch. For this purpose, convening a similar internal group of (regional) UNESCO representatives could also be considered, respecting the report's editorial independence in the same way as the "group of friends".

In the framework of the 'Spotlight' series, established in 2022, the GEM Report has taken the partnership approach – as exemplified in other collaborations such with UIS, GPE, World Bank – further by working together with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the African Union and a selection of selected countries directly. The aim is to a have a more focused impact on specific challenges around foundational learning in education policies in a number of Sub-Saharan African countries. It is early to assess the actual impacts of this approach on policies, but so far the work resulted in the publication of more targeted policy measures, a briefing of relevant ministers and engagement among stakeholders in ADEA and the African Union to continue the work.

Stakeholders are mostly positive about the effectiveness of the various activities and available publications and tools to influence policymakers and help shape debates. This is shown by the survey results, which asked stakeholders how they used the key policy messages, either in terms

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[58] See Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024.

of the way that issues are presented or discussed, or that actual changes in policies or approaches are taken onboard.

Most changes in the way that thematic issues are presented can be observed in research reports and academic articles; no less than 80% of academics responding to our stakeholder survey report to have incorporated research findings, conclusions, and policy recommendations in their reports and articles. Majorities of respondents affiliated to UNESCO, consultants, and to a lesser extent representatives from NGO and national policymakers all report such a similar influence. A majority of academics and representatives of international organisations (such as UNESCO and sister agencies) that responded to our survey also report to have incorporated GEM Report findings in presentations and conferences.

Figure 9: Use of findings from GEM Report for presentations / discussions – by stakeholder group
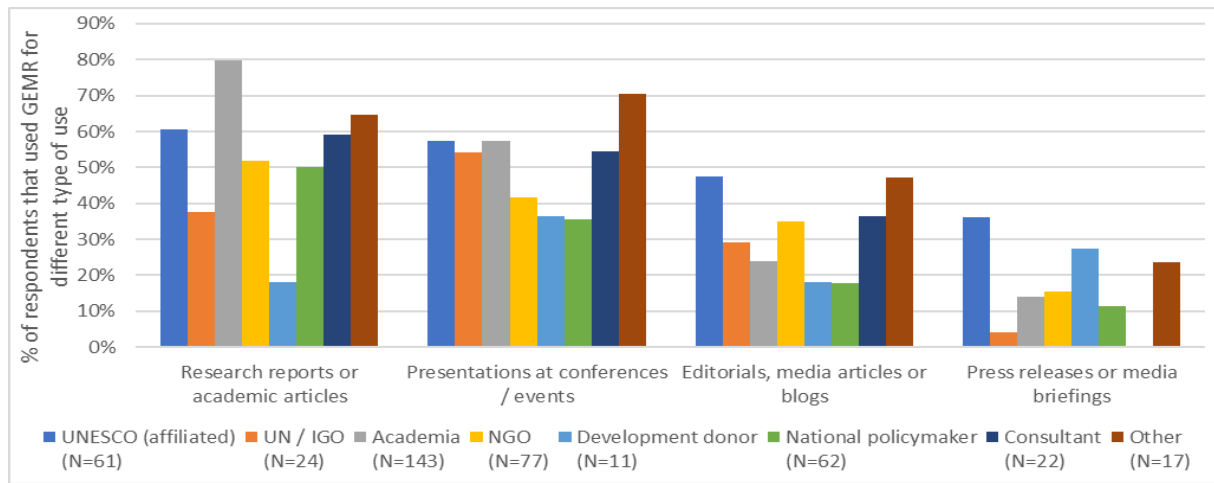
Source: GEM Report 2023 evaluation stakeholder survey

Respondents in the survey see most impacts of GEM conclusions in advocacy reports and material; particularly respondents from UNESCO reported this in high numbers (65%), as well their colleagues in other UN agencies and NGO. Beyond advocacy and regardless of their organizational affiliation, respondents also point to evidence of being taken up in concrete projects/ programmes or funding proposals. Ultimately, 50% of national policymakers also report that in the development of national policies, GEM conclusions and recommendations had been taken into account.

Figure 10: Use of findings from GEM Report for influencing policy – by stakeholder group
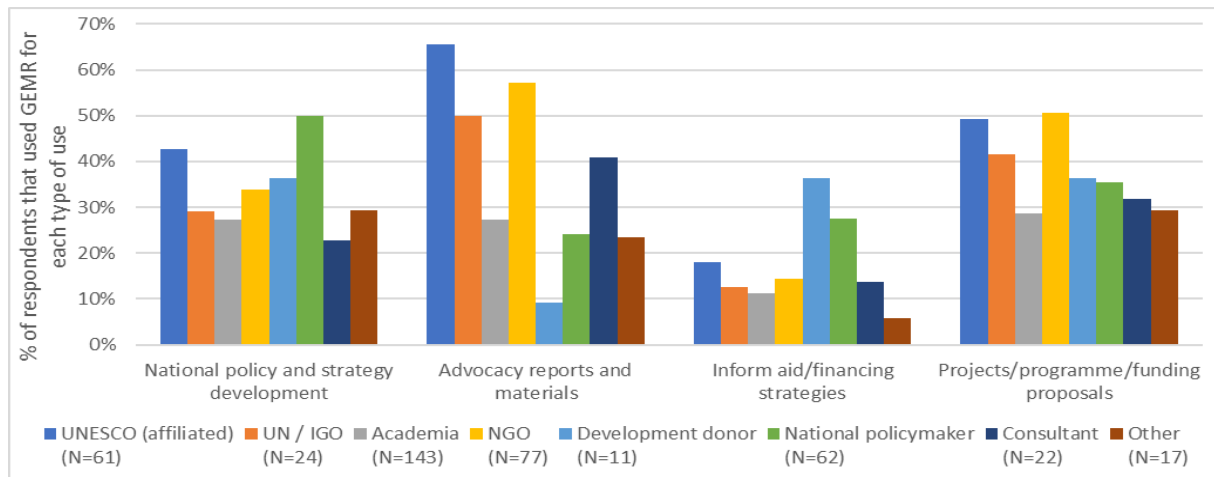
Source: GEM Report 2023 evaluation stakeholder survey

These are remarkable findings that highlight an important ability of the GEM Report and follow-up activities to engage its stakeholders in responding to the key findings in the report. However, such 'take-up of knowledge into policies' cannot always be considered synonymous to achieving the necessary policy change at the national level. Making such actual contributions to change requires extensive national work and depends on more than only a well-organised event in which the GEM Report is presented. It requires extensive follow-up, by national policymakers, civil society and development partners on the ground.

The GEM Report team itself collects impact stories and reports these in management reports. Most of such impact stories at the national level show how the GEM Report over the years has been used as expert source, for instance in legal proceedings to enforce a government response on education policy (India, Brazil), or for instance brought up as evidence in the discussion of specific themes in legislative deliberations (Spain, United States, Bahrain).[59] These are meaningful examples of how GEM Report findings are used as key evidence in improving education. These also show how by the GEM Report's own measure of success, the added value of the GEM Report lies primarily in its high quality and relevant research. The added value of its efforts to influence change in education policies around the world by building partnerships and engaging in discussions and peer learning is less obvious.[60] While undeniably also inherently more difficult to track and measure, this second type of work takes place in a crowded global education policy community, involving many organisations that also have the resources to engage with countries directly at the national level. In relation to its donors and implementation partners, this distinction in the scope of the work of the GEM Report needs to be well guarded.

Transforming the global conclusions and recommendations from the GEM Report publications into meaningful policy action would require contextualised responses to national needs, which is generally not the focus of GEM Report advocacy efforts. The central launch event and regional and national follow-ups help ensure considerable attention to the theme of that particular year but offer limited opportunities to focus on more specific findings or issues raised in individual background papers. An unbundling of the GEM Report's content, possibly by releasing background papers incrementally, could enrich country discussions and generate more in-depth conversations on specific topics within a larger theme.

Stakeholders also highlight the substantial momentum created by national and regional launch events around a given theme, but also the fact that no structure or approach is provided to be able to have a meaningful follow-up after that event. This cannot be given or expected from the GEM Report team, who have their resources dedicated to new events elsewhere or preparations for the next theme, while national stakeholders may not sufficiently own the policy messages or key conclusions to meaningfully engage with policymakers in their own policy context. However, there is scope for better leveraging the communication and dissemination infrastructure within UNESCO as a potential avenue for continued outreach. While UNESCO is a natural first partner for such national follow-up, its ability to engage in long-term follow-up depends fully on the organization's local capacities. In 2018-2023 there are a number of examples where UNESCO field offices have been active in supporting GEM Report outreach beyond the national launch events, through supporting translations into the national language, as well as with additional activities. However, this is not realistic everywhere, and calls for additional consideration when selecting or prioritizing support for specific launch events. These considerations can also include reflections on whether the involvement of other development partners with a more substantial presence and capacity in countries would not be able to create a more sustainable policy dialogue.

Overall, this section showed how the growth in GEM Report tools, publication and outreach activities underlines its commitment to engage stakeholders to take up GEM Report conclusions and recommendations and as such contribute to changing education policies that enable

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[59] See for instance management report 2022
[60] Long term outcome, as defined in the GEM Strategy 2019-2024

accelerated progress to SDG 4. Stakeholders confirmed that the use of GEM Report findings has influenced and shaped the work of partners. Expectations that the GEM Report contributes more directly to policy change need be managed carefully. The unique value added of the GEM Report in the busy field of international education policy community is not its ability to influence national policies, but its ability to provide independent, high quality and relevant research.

Reflection on the contribution of the GEM Report products to the mandate and change process

Based on the discussions in the previous sections (on the contribution to the monitoring and policy uptake), the evaluation team conducted a summative assessment of the extent to which the different GEM Report products contribute to the GEM Report mandate and the change process. The following table provides an assessment of the extent to which the different GEM Report products serve the mandate: firstly, to support building the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4, and secondly, to report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments. The table also reflects on the (likely) contribution of the different products to the envisaged change process of the GEM Report. This allows to position the different products and their role in developing a conducive environment for partners to contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4). The communication and outreach activities are not separately discussed, but their contribution is taken on board in the assessment per GEM Report product.

Table 8: Assessment of GEM Report products and how they serve the mandate

GEM Report Products	**Mandate**		**Change process**				
	To support building the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 (from not at all in place to fully in place)	**To report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments (from not at all in place to fully in place)**	**Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs**	**Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences**	**Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy**	**Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4[61]**	**Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4)**
	● (red, full)	◔ (red, quarter)	● (red, full)	● (red, full)	● (red, full)	◔ (grey, quarter)	
Global reports	This product provides all available data on SDG 4 and serves as the main mechanism for monitoring and reporting. This product assesses policies from a thematic perspective. It does not extensively assess commitments made by partners but assesses progress related to the SDG 4 targets. The integration of the SDG 4 benchmarks strengthens the assessment of (national) commitments.		This product is the basis for the GEM Report change process. It provides the data and explains progress and differences. Through the launch events and other actions, the report stimulates reflection and dialogue.				
	◔ (red, quarter)	◑ (red, half)	◑ (red, half)	◑ (red, half)	● (red, full)	● (grey, full)	
Regional reports	This product is less oriented to providing data on progress towards SDG 4. This product, while presenting a regional approach, allows to discuss more deeply national situations and policy developments and link this to national commitments.		This product builds further on the global report data presentation. It zooms in a specific region and contextualises the data. Through this is allows more specific reflections and dialogues to take place that can be taken on board in the improvement of policy making processes.				
	◔ (red, quarter)	◔ (red, quarter)	◑ (red, half)	◑ (red, half)	◕ (red, three-quarter)	◔ (grey, quarter)	
Youth and Gender reports	This product is less oriented to providing data on progress towards SDG 4. This product provides a specific angle on the thematic focus of the global report. It is less focused on reporting on commitments.		This product builds further on the global report data presentation. It provides a specific angle (youth, gender) and follows this angle over time, stimulating more specific angle-related reflections.				
	◑ (red, half)	◑ (red, half)	◑ (red, half)	◔ (red, quarter)	● (red, full)	◔ (grey, quarter)	

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[61] NB: For step 4 and 5 of the change process the assessment of the contribution focusses on providing an indication of a likely contribution of how the products can be used by partners to reform policies and pursue the SDG 4 objective. For this reason the colour of the symbol is grey instead of red.

GEM Report Products	Mandate		Change process				
	To support building the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 (from not at all in place to fully in place)	**To report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments (from not at all in place to fully in place)**	**Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs**	**Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences**	**Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy**	**Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4[61]**	**Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4)**
Brief policy papers	This product allows a specific topic-related insight, not (always) directly linked to the SDG 4 monitoring. It can differ per paper. This product, while focusing on a specific topic, puts attention on aspects on which policy action is needed to meet commitments. It can differ per paper.		This product builds further on other GEM Report data gathering and analyses. It is less focused on reporting progress on SDG 4 (depending on the paper), but allows specific, targeted reflections and dialogues to take place that can steer (national) policy discussions.				
World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)	● (full)	◕ (three-quarter)	● (full)	◔ (quarter)	◑ (half)	◔ (quarter, grey)	
	This product allows tailored insights into the data related to SDG 4 indicators. It allows to see how countries score on the indicators. The product does not report on commitments, or relates the data to national policy commitments		The database does not report on progress in relation to SDG 4 targets directly, but it allows users to compare their country to other countries and through this, it could stimulate reflections and dialogues.				
Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER)	◔ (quarter)	◑ (half)	◔ (quarter)	◔ (quarter)	◔ (quarter)	○ (quarter, grey)	
	This product provides information on national policies relates to themes covered in the Global GEM Reports. It does not provide information on progress to SDG 4, nor does it reflect on (national) commitments.		The profiles can serve as a source for different stakeholders to understand the policies in a country. Through this it can serve the change process, but the link to the envisaged change process is weaker compared to other products.				
Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE)	● (full)	◕ (three-quarter)	● (full)	◔ (quarter)	◑ (half)	◑ (half, grey)	
	This product provides direct insights in the SDG 4 indicator data and makes the link to the set targets on SDG 4. Through this it is a tool to hold partners to account but it does not focus on policy reforms.		The product allows tailored access to seeing countries' progress towards the SDG 4. It can be used by partners to see the country progress in comparison to other countries and through this can stimulate reflections and dialogues.				
Visualizing Indicators of Education for the	◔ (quarter)	◑ (half)	● (full)	◔ (quarter)	◑ (half)	○ (quarter, grey)	
	This product focuses on two flagship indicators (out-of-school and completion rates) for which countries have expressed		The product allows to see longer term developments related to specific indicators and this can be used to stimulate reflections at country level.				

GEM Report Products	Mandate		Change process			
	To support building the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 (from not at all in place to fully in place)	**To report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments (from not at all in place to fully in place)**	**Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs**	**Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences**	**Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy**	**Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4[61] Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4)**
World (VIEW)	commitments. It does not link the data to targets or policy reforms.					
Education Finance Watch	[25%]	[50%]	[25%]	[25%]	[50%]	[grey 50%]
	This product is less focused on the SDG 4 and the progress. It does highlight a specific conducive condition for progress, namely the finances put in education. It therefore does reflect on countries commitments and holds partners to account on this dimension.		This product can serve as a tool to make the point that more finances are needed to progress on the SDG 4. As such it is less directly linked to the first steps of the change process, but it can spark reflections and dialogue between partners.			
Spotlight	[25%]	[75%]	[25%]	[50%]	[75%]	[grey 25%]
	This product focuses on a specific part of the SDG 4 indicators, but places this in a wider national policy context in a few countries. It hence focuses more on the policy implementation.		This product allows a more in-depth assessment in a smaller set of countries. Through this it allows more reflection and dialogue with partners in those countries.			
SDG 4 Scorecard / High-level Political Forum Reports	[full]	[full]	[full]	[full]	[full]	[grey full]
	This product allows national partners to develop own targets linked to their own commitments and monitors progress towards these commitments. It links fully to both parts of the mandate.		This product uses the SDG 4 related data, and uses this to report on progress towards nationally agreed targets. This allows reflections and dialogue that can inform national level policy development to progress towards reaching the SDG 4 objectives.			

External Evaluation Services:
2023 GEM Report external evaluation

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All in all, based on the assessment it can be concluded that the Global Report, the databases (WIDE, VIEW, SCOPE) and the SDG 4 scorecard are most contributing to the first part of the mandate. The second part of the mandate is best supported by the Global Report, SCOPE, Spotlight and the SDG 4 scorecard. Concerning the envisaged change process, The Global Report and the SDG 4 scorecard are likely to contribute most to the change process leading to reflections and dialogue among target groups through providing insights on data and policy. For this, also the Regional Reports and the Policy Papers can play a role. Overall, the assessment reveals that the Youth and Gender reports, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), and Education Finance Watch products, while serving their specific purpose, are less strongly linked to the mandate and contributing to the envisaged change process.

3.4. Efficiency (How well are resources being used?)

The section on efficiency looks at how the resources are used and how the management and governance procedure support efficient implementation of activities. Table 9 provides a concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings.

Table 9: Efficiency: concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings

Evaluation issue	Assessment (from not at all in place to fully in place)
The planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities is conducted efficiently and well supported by the management arrangements	
Governance structure supports ownership of main stakeholders and effective decision making in an efficient way.	

Efficiency of planning and implementing of activities, and the support from the management arrangements

This section focuses on the concrete activities that are conducted and the allocation of resources to those activities. It also reflects on the work developed in collaboration with external partners (including UNESCO). Finally, we focus more on the management arrangements that are in place to support the functioning of the GEM Report and what could be improved on this. In the end, the section assesses whether the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities is conducted efficiently and whether the management arrangements support the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities in an efficient way.

GEM Report consists of a Director and the GEM Report team, which is split into five main divisions, namely communications & advocacy; thematic research; monitoring; spotlight project; operations & partnerships. Staff members from one division can also conduct tasks under other divisions. The distribution of spending shows that in 2022 54% of expenditure was allocated to conducting research; 22% to communication and outreach; 12% respectively to production and distribution and to management and administration.[62] Staff costs make up more than half of the total expenditure of GEM Report.[63] The activities differ per division and are briefly explained below.[64]

1. The Communications and Advocacy divisions (5 staff and 2 consultants) is responsible for the preparation and planning of the publications, events and (social) media coverage.

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[62] GEM Report internal data (2023)
[63] See GEM Report Management Reports 2022.
[64] According to GEM Report organizational structure 2023.

2. Thematic Research divisions (4 staff and 7 consultants) is responsible for planning, contracting, quality assuring the thematic reports and the underlying research publications (such as background papers). The thematic department also takes responsibility for preparing the PEER country profiles and the regional reports. The outsourcing of drafting background papers and country profiles to external experts is a rigorous process involving a call for proposals, an assessment, various quality checks and internal control mechanisms.
3. The Monitoring divisions (4 staff, supported by up to 2 consultants) is responsible for conducting the research related to monitoring the SDGs, but also for the WIDE, SCOPE, VIEW and educational finance research as well as the GPE Results Report.
4. The Spotlight divisions (2 staff and 2 consultants) is responsible for the specific Spotlight initiative producing a continental and country reports on foundational learning in Africa.
5. Operations & Partnerships divisions (5 staff, of which 2 administrative support, and 1 consultant) is responsible for the financial management, fundraising and the overall management of the team.

In terms of the management arrangements, GEM Report is led by the director and assisted by four managers and a project manager (for Spotlight). Over the years, the GEM Report has seen a considerable staff turnover each year. Just over half of the GEM Report staff in 2018 still works for the GEM report in 2022 (11 out of 18), despite the fact that the team increased from 18 to 22 (of which a majority is female). As a comparison, the turnover for UNESCO staff in 2020 was 5.3%.[65] In the period 2018-2022 GEM Report saw 33 staff members, eleven worked the whole period at GEM Report, four at least four years,, three at least three years, six at least two years, and nine at least one year.[66] As indicated by interviewees, there are a number of explanatory factors that influence this considerable turnover, having to do with, amongst others, duration of temporary contracts (two years for the two fixed-term staff and one or two years for project appointments,, which make up the majority of GEM Report staff including the Director[67]), available career opportunities with prospects for fixed term contracts, the nature of work (becoming repetitive after a few iterations). This staff turnover concentrates among the teams of researchers, possibly indicating that for this type of collaborator the nature of the work was more important than the duration of the contracts. Furthermore, staff contracts were in some cases not continued as a decision by GEM Report management based on evaluations of staff members and also taking into account the evolving needs of the GEM Report. The staff turnover of the communication and advocacy team, as well as that of operations is considerably lower. All staff in these teams that worked for the GEM Report in 2018 continued to do so by 2022.

GEM Report staff members, being interviewed raised issues around the workload of the staff, the staff turnover (especially among researchers) and an over-reliance on (junior) consultants to do part of the work. Furthermore, staff members indicate that they feel involved in too many GEM Report initiatives and products, and that they are too focused on deadlines, deliverables and KPIs and that there remains limited time for reflection and internal consultation. Also, external stakeholders during interviews voiced their impression that the workload of GEM Report staff is high and that the different topics the GEM Report staff members have to cover is demanding for them. The perceived increase of the workload is a result of the increase of GEM Report income in the period 2018-2022 compared to the previous period, but is also a reflection of better management of staff time. The staff impressions seem to suggest a tension between on the one

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[65] See Key Data on UNESCO STAFF, https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/staff_key_data_june_2021en.pdf
[66] Review of GEM Report Management reports 2018 until 2022.
[67] According to UNESCO regulations, all GEM Report staff contracts are UNESCO contracts. "Fixed-term (FT)" contracts are staff contracts funded through UNESCO Regular Resources, usually issued for the duration of 2 years. This contract category is not applicable to GEM Report because GEM Report is an extra-budgetary programme. "Project Appointments (PA)" contracts are staff contracts funded through extrabudgetary resources. These can be issued for 1 or 2 years, subject to funds availability and programmatic needs. This contract category is what most GEM Report staff have. "Temporary Appointment (TA)" are staff contracts that are less than 12 months in duration.

hand the increased diversification of GEM Report related products and on the other hand the increased budget and staff resources. The latter cannot fully compensate for the increase of products and related tasks, resulting in the impressions of increased workload.

Another issue raised by GEM Report staff is that the GEM Report team needs to continuously invest (together) considerable resources to raise funds. This is not only related to the reaching out to potential donors, the negotiations with potential donors, and the communication and reporting to donors, but also living up to the specific requests of donors, for instance in terms of offering presentations during events or conducting activities in partnership.

Reflecting on the activities related to the production of the reports and on the communication and dissemination, from the external perspective, the workflow of arriving at the thematic report is considered thorough and transparent by those respondents being involved in the commissioning of concept notes, background papers and drafting the thematic chapters (see also the assessment of credibility under effectiveness). It is considered a long and extensive process, but very well done. It is a very consultative process in which the GEM Report team, which consists of generalists (i.e., not experts on the particular theme) develop some expertise as a result of the exposure to the experts that draft the concept note and background papers. The process of the production of the regional reports, in partnership with regional expert institutions, is valued by those regional partners. Generally, they indicate that the communication runs smoothly and that the balance between offering structure and editorial freedom is well maintained.

Some respondents raise concerns on the production process and about whether this thorough and consultative research approach is really needed to fulfil the GEM Report mandate. Those reflections point to the idea that the role of the GEM Report is not primarily to conduct (conceptual) research (as presented in part of the background papers) but to review the implementation of the education-related SDG and to report on the implementation of national and international strategies only. In this context, respondents, instead of contracting individual experts to draft background chapters, would opt for more long-term and sustainable partnerships with stakeholders and academic communities in order to increase their ownership, so that also the final report will be better used.[68] While these respondents raise a valid issue concerning increasing the engagement and ownership, it makes it more challenging to mobilise key expertise on specific specialised topics and to maintain editorially independent. Other respondents also raise the issue that international partners might simply delegate research to the GEM Report, de facto using it to outsource their own research capacity. While there is in principle nothing wrong with being contracted to conduct research, one could question whether this supports the mandate of GEM Report and helps positioning the GEM Report as global public good.

The communication and dissemination of the various products is generally regarded by respondents as positive: GEM Report is able to reach a wide range of stakeholders and readers. As evidenced by the GEM Report survey,[69] asked about the source through which they became aware of the GEM Report products, over 50% of respondents (51%) mentioned the GEM Report website, while 46% mentioned the newsletter. Social media (41%) and launch events (21%) were also the next most common sources. These findings persist when considered by professional category. The interviews however also pointed to challenges in the dissemination and communication activities. These challenges mainly referred to the tensions between GEM Report and UNESCO concerning communication and publishing reports and products. Respondents also see room for improvement in the cooperation between GEM Report and UNESCO in terms of better aligning publication schedules of reports dealing with similar topics and involving each other's experts in publications (for instance as contributor or to cross-check findings at country level).

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[68] The global Report is drafted entirely by the GEM Report team.
[69] GEM Report survey Q15 Through which source or sources do you usually become aware about new publications of the Global Monitoring Report Team? - Selected Choice (N=525).

Respondents also reflected on the timing and sequence of the GEM Global report (being published everyone and a half year). Some see this as too fast, not leaving sufficient time to publish the related regional reports, organise the launch events and also follow-up on the recommendations of the report. Other respondents suggest increasing the impact by aligning the timing and sequence to the UN Summits (2024 Summit of the Future) or other high-level events. These respondent suggestions can be challenged by indicating that aligning the GEM Report to larger events reduces the visibility of, and attention to the GEM Report messages. On the other hand, as long as the GEM Report assures that countries are sensitised about the level of progress towards SDG 4 and reflect on whether their policy commitments are sufficiently contributing to progress, this could take place in the context of wider events building momentum at global, regional, or national level.

All in all, the evidence suggests that the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities is conducted efficiently (i.e., that GEM Report delivers results in an economic and timely way), but that there are concerns about the team experiencing high workload, fund-raising puts additional pressure on the capacities of GEM Report staff, and challenges in the cooperation with UNESCO.

Efficiency of the governance structures and reflections on the role of the Advisory Board

This section focuses on the governance structure. In particular, the evaluation team reflected on the role and procedures related to the Advisory Board and the hosting of GEM Report by UNESCO, looking at whether the governance mechanisms and the arrangements of the Advisory Board lead to desired outcomes and buy-in of main stakeholders and what could be improved. This leads to conclusions assessing whether the governance structure supports ownership of main stakeholders and effective decision making in an efficient way.

As already mentioned, the GEM Report is hosted by UNESCO, as determined in the Incheon declaration. This means that institutionally, GEM Report falls under the Office of the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO. In terms of its constituency, some of the Advisory Board members have clear institutional links with the SDG 4 architecture and Education 2030 Agenda. The Director-General of UNESCO is responsible for inviting members and selecting the Chairperson to join the Advisory Board (in consultation with the Assistant-Director General for Education and the Director of the GEM Report). As described in the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Board, the Advisory Board for the GEM Report assumes a consultative role, offering oversight, guidance, and recommendations in the domains[70] of ensuring alignment of the vision, purpose, and objectives of Global Education Monitoring Reports with SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Framework for Action; staying abreast of the evolving national, regional, and international landscape regarding the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action; shaping future GEM Report themes, priorities, and methodologies; nurturing the long-term development of the GEM Report; identifying emerging issues, priorities, and global concerns relevant to the SDG 4 agenda; ensuring the quality and timeliness of SDG 4 statistics and data; identifying sources of expertise, knowledge, information, and funding mobilization; and finally, collaborating on communication and outreach strategies for the Report, encompassing advocacy, publications, and partnerships. Furthermore, Advisory Board members are encouraged to actively engage in advocacy, outreach, and distribution efforts to disseminate the GEM Report within their respective constituencies.

The Advisory Board consists of 35 members and is composed of representatives from its several constituencies: the chair, Ex-officio (UNESCO ADG/ED, DIR/ UIS), multilateral organisations,

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[70] See GEM Report (2017), Terms of reference for an advisory board Updated March 2017

UNESCO, donors, regional experts, regional organisations, civil society organisations, and independent experts from developing countries.[71]

Considering the overall governance structure, respondents are overall slightly critical, as they do not always see how the GEM Report gets the best out of the governance structure. A critical issue remains on how the governance arrangements and the Advisory Board support the GEM Report to interact and align with the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism. Some respondents indicate that this could be improved. Also here, the relationship between GEM Report and UNESCO emerges in the reflections. Some respondents mention that they do not see that GEM Report and UNESCO cooperate to the best of their abilities for reaching the best results in terms of providing, through publishing data and analysis, incentives for stakeholders to act on progressing towards SDG 4. In addition, some respondents indicate that the governance structure and the Advisory Board insufficiently support the GEM Report being recognised as a global public good, available to all. Partners, also those present in the Advisory Board, fund and develop their own data-driven approaches and monitoring reports which relate to (part of) the SDG 4. Moreover, the governance structure lacks a formal decision-making power outside the Director. The Advisory Board is formally only intended to offer oversight and advice[72], informally however, an approach is adopted by the Advisory Board on how decisions are taken and to avoid undue influence of any one member. This being said, respondents, both internal GEM Report staff, as well as those involved as donor, development partner, or Advisory Board member voice perceptions that it remains unclear how decisions are taken. Similarly, also questions and concerns are raised by different respondents about the role of donors in suggesting new products or approaches.

When zooming in on the functioning of the Advisory Board, many respondents are generally satisfied with its structure and quality. They indicate that the meetings are well organised, that the discussions that take place are informative and that the GEM Report team is well-prepared. Furthermore, respondents highlight that the composition of the Advisory Board has been sufficiently geographically diverse. Reflecting on the dynamics in the Advisory Board, respondents indicate that the meetings could be more engaging and interactive and consist less of long presentations. In addition, only a few members engage in the discussions. The GEM Report could get more out of the Advisory Board if for instance the meetings would be organised a little differently, to have documents that present more dynamic and suggested decisions, rather than just dilemmas that can be discussed but on which no conclusions will have to be drawn. The Advisory Board could be more engaged in more strategic and organisational discussions (being discussed in the GEM Report funders' meeting) instead of the focus on themes and content. Related to this latter point, respondents indicated that the board consists of experts having a generic expertise in education, while the discussions on the selection of themes, but also on the themes themselves requires people with specific expertise.

All in all, the evaluation concludes that the governance structure only to some extend supports ownership of main stakeholders and effective decision making in an efficient way. The respondents are critical towards how the governance structure supports alignment to the Global Cooperation Mechanism and, while being overall positive about the Advisory Board, steps could be taken to engage the members in more strategic and organisational discussions such as the GEM Report funders' meeting.

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[71] GEM Report (2018), Global Education Monitoring Report: a multi-year strategy 2019-2024.
[72] See GEM Report (2017), Terms of reference for an advisory board Updated March 2017, p. 2: "The Advisory Board for the GEM Report will play a consultative role. It will provide oversight, guidance and suggestions in the following areas: ..."

3.5.   Sustainability (Will the benefits last?)

The sustainability of the GEM Report is examined through two lenses: financial and environmental. Financial sustainability concerns the budget and organisation of resources for the operations of the GEM Report activities, with a particular view on the expansion of partnerships since 2018. With regards to the environmental footprint of the GEM Report, this evaluation sought to identify ways in which the report has become more cognisant over time about the impact of its development, production and dissemination strategies. Table 10 provides a concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings.

Table 10: Sustainability: concise summative assessment of the evaluation findings

Evaluation issue	Assessment (from not at all in place to fully in place)
Steps taken to increase financial sustainability	
Environmental footprint and improvements taken since 2018	

GEM Reports' financing measures taken to strengthen its sustainability

In this section, we discuss measures that have been taken to strengthen the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of financial and human resources (partnerships and resource mobilisation). The final section assesses progress on strengthening the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of its environmental footprint.

The GEM Report has been operating under a special pooled account mechanism at UNESCO since 2002. The special account is debited with the expenditures relating to the purpose of the account, including management costs currently set at 7% and retained by UNESCO. It is one of the oldest and largest special accounts operating at UNESCO, with a strong track record of operational and financial performance. The account is expected to remain active until at least 2030, aligning with the current end date of the GEM Report mandate. Funds in the pooled multi-donor account are managed in accordance with UNESCO's financial rules and regulations, as well as the account's specific financial regulations. This mechanism is valued as "the best platform […] to support getting further funds" as noted by one interviewee.

During this evaluation period, the highest total donor contribution was reported in 2023 at 7.1 million USD, up from 4.6 million USD in 2022. The lower value from 2022 probably reflects changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as multi-year contributions attributed to a single year. The average contribution between 2018 and 2023 was 6.07 million USD, which is an increase from the average contribution for 2011-2017 being 4.37 million USD. All in all, the GEM Report team hence managed to substantially improve the funding position compared to the past. Nonetheless, during this period, the GEM Report's revenue has been sensitive to multiple factors, including the impact of COVID-19 on education financing, changes in government funding policies, foreign exchange rate variations, and the challenging socio-economic landscape.

The financing structure of the GEM Report has diversified over time. The evaluation conducted in 2014 refers to a dominance of government bilateral donors, with two new private donors appearing in 2011 and 2013, respectively. By 2017, the share of private donors had increased to 15%.[73] Since 2018, the share of private foundations has been relatively constant, at about 21% of total contributions, compared to about 76% from public bilateral and multilateral sources. In

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[73] Education for Change (2014), External Evaluation of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report. IPSOS MORI (2018), Evaluation of the Global Education Monitoring Report.

2022 and 2023, multilateral donors (and in particular the European Union) emerged as important donors (accounting for 20% and 25% of secured funds respectively). This is a remarkable departure from the period 2011-2017, when bilateral organisations contributed on average to about 89% of the total funding. Interviews with GEM Report staff highlight that this is the result of a deliberate strategy since 2018 to expand the donor base, in an effort to increase the share of longer-term donor commitments.

Currently, the donor landscape of the GEM Report is quite broad, with various bilateral aid organisations and private foundations providing the majority of the funding. Over the years, the group of donors usually consists of about 10 bilateral government aid agencies and a handful of other donors, mostly private foundations. A core set of bilateral funders have contributed every year to the GEM Report, accounting for an average of 65% of the total budget during the 2018-2023 period.[74] As of 2023, Australia and the United Kingdom have renewed commitments. Most private foundations usually commit for short periods (one or two years), with the exception of the Foundation to Promote Open Society which has committed yearly since 2016. The dynamics of how donors contribute depend on each donor's particular circumstance and there can be many reasons outside the influence of the GEM Report why a donor stops it funding. **Error! Reference s ource not found.** details the distribution of funding during the evaluation period, with significant annual variations.

Figure 11: Secured funding by type of donor, 2018-2023
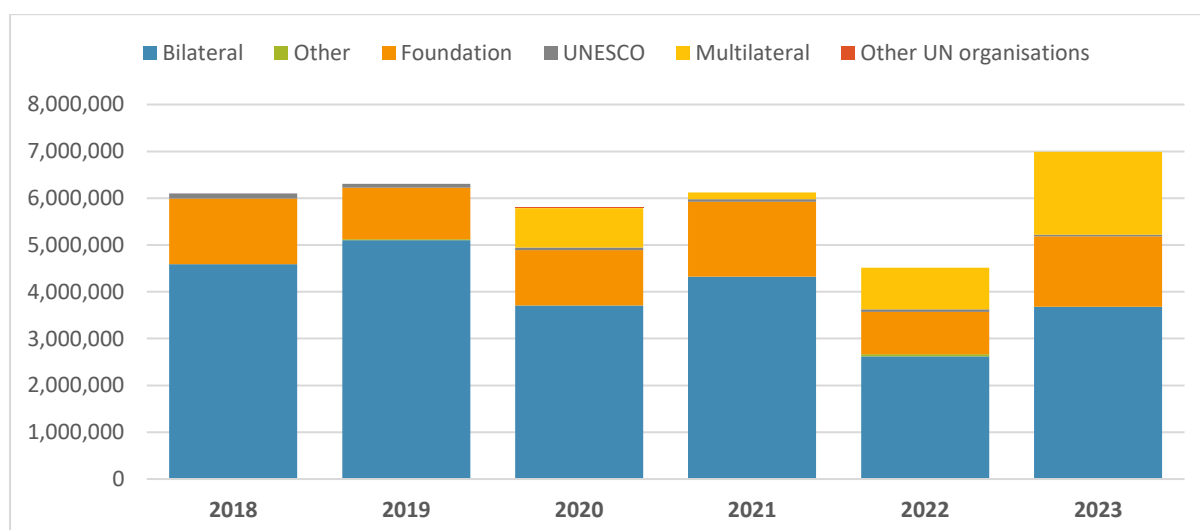
Sources: GEM Report Internal Data, 2023.

During the interviews conducted for this evaluation, numerous respondents commented on the increased number and diversified set of donors since 2018. The general perception raised was that the resource mobilisation approach taken by the GEM Report has had an influence on the product selection. Going further, the perception is that the GEM Report faces a dichotomy between newer donors, usually foundations, which are more likely to focus on specific products that provide evidence-based legitimation in their area of interest – and government aid agencies, that tend to prioritise the GEM Report's more general contribution to the global discourse on education, as well as its ability to fulfil the mandate of monitoring SDG 4.[75] This difference in focus has fed the perception from various interviewees that the expanded set of GEM Report products was at least partially by suggestion from private donors. As indicated by several stakeholders at the global level (including Advisory Board members), this perception – if not resolved over time – could possibly weaken the time-held, valued reputation of the Report's independence.

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[74] During the 2018-2023 period, these are Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
[75] GEM retreat synthesis notes.

A noticeable omission in the donor landscape of the GEM Report are those organisations which play a key role at global and regional levels to support countries reaching the education SDG, namely the UN organisations and other multilateral organisations sitting on the SDG 4-Education 2030 High-Level Steering Committee.[76] These organisations could be reasonably expected to support the GEM Report as a global public good and contribute to the sustainability of the GEM Report mandate. Instead, the GEM report receives few, small and one-off contributions from such organisations.[77] The only exception is the European Union, which has funded the GEM Report since 2021, has recently increased its funding and will contribute to 2026.[78] UNESCO contributes USD 50,000 per year to the GEM Report. Since 2020, a multilateral contribution from the GPE has been linked to a specific output not part of the GEM Report, which is considered a notable achievement by some members of the GEM Report team.[79] All in all, those organisations (i.e. UN organisations) that agreed on the established GEM Report mandate in 2015 are currently largely absent in terms of providing financial resources to fulfil the mandate.

The lack of long-term financial commitment from global SDG 4 mechanisms creates a risk factor for the Report's core financial sustainability, and most notably increases vulnerability to changes in donor trends. While the success of efforts to diversify the donor base compared to before 2018 is visible, fundraising for the GEM Report occurs in a constrained landscape for international aid to education.[80] The period of this evaluation has been a challenging funding environment for education in low-income developing countries. Bilateral and multilateral aid to education has fallen since 2020 both in total amounts and as a share of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).[81] Furthermore, donor financing commitments have shifted away from the education sector as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, the war in Ukraine and the prioritisation of other sectors.

Fundraising for the GEM Report is time-consuming and requires regular, substantial investment for short-term commitments. The GEM Report team and its products are financed through resource mobilisation and fund-raising activities conducted by the director and several other team members, including the partnerships and the finance and fundraising officers. The 2019-2024 Strategy identifies the challenges – administrative costs and financial instability – caused by the changing nature of funding arrangements, shifting towards short-term, yearly agreements compared to multi-year agreements. As an example, Norway's development aid agency NORAD has been a regular donor to the GEM Report since 2003. Yet, in recent years, NORAD has shifted from direct appropriations to the GEM Report team to yearly "softly earmarked funding to the Education Sector" which leaves UNESCO to determine allocations within the organisation, including to the GEM Report.[82]

All in all, the GEM Report funding landscape has improved considerably compared to before 2018, both in terms of the size of support, as well as in ensuring the commitment of a more diverse base of donors, particularly also including private foundations. Nonetheless, the commitment from the international education community remains visibly absent, despite the benefits it reaps from the presence of the GEM Report and its products, as outlined across this evaluation. Another challenge that remains is its continued reliance on mostly short-term funding of donors. While some improvements can be seen in its in terms of its efforts to secure more long-term financial support, the short-term funding of donors poses some challenges for longer-term planning of GEM Report activities.

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[76] https://www.unesco.org/SDG 4education2030/en/members?hub=7
[77] UNICEF contributed USD 90,000 in 2018/19 and the World Food Programme USD 20,000 in 2020.
[78] The European Union has contributed in 2020, 2022 and 2023.
[79] The GEM team is contracted to write a monitoring chapter of the GPE Results Report (see Chapter 1 in 2022 Report)
[80] The GEM Report's donors usually categorise funding as development assistance and aid.
[81] GEM, World Bank and UIS (2023). Education Finance Watch, ED/GEM/MRT/2023/EFW/1. Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387042.locale=en.
[82] See, for example, https://resultater.norad.no/agreement/QZA-20/0095.

Environmental considerations related to the GEM Report development and production process

This section present findings related to environmental considerations related to the GEM Report development and production process. It allows to assess whether these considerations have become more prominent in recent years.

The GEM Report production varies every year in terms of the number of products and the availability of printed material. The table below highlights the major printed matter over the last three reports for which data are available.

Table 11: Printed matter, 2019- 2022

(All languages)	2019 Report on Migration and Displacement	2020 Report on Inclusion	2021/2 Report on Non-state Actors
Full report	13,000	7,450	2,200
Summary	23,900	7,000	4,960

Sources: GEM Report Management Report July-December 2022.

Notes: Information on regional and gender reports was not available. Due to COVID-19 pandemic and the switch from physical to online events, the printing of the 2020 GEM Report materials is significantly lower than for previous reports. The revised policy of distributing smaller numbers of physical reports also reduced numbers in 2021/2.

The environmental footprint of the Report is difficult to establish as there is no specific mechanism for monitoring or reporting on the possible emissions of the team's activities, nor any expected benchmarks meeting stakeholder expectations.[83] On one side, the changing nature of launch events and ecological considerations have put greater emphasis on digital distribution of the Reports and summaries. Between the 2019 and 2021/22 Reports, the number of printed full reports was reduced six-fold. About 3% of reports were physically distributed, while 97% were digitally distributed for the 2021/22 Report. On the other side, however, the total number of physical and online launches for the Global Report and other products has increased. Notwithstanding COVID-19-related travel restrictions, physical launches can require the presence of specific persons travelling by airplane. The 2017/2018 Report had one global launch (Maputo), one regional launch (Brasilia) and 135 other events (including national launches and high-level events). The 2021/22 Report had 39 global launches (19 online, 20 physical), 15 regional launches (10 online, 5 physical) and another 124 events.[84] GEM Report management reports estimated the cost per event at an average USD 3,850 for launches related to the 2016, 2017/18 and 2019 Reports, but do not reflect the relative cost impact of the physical and online events.[85] The value-for money indicator on physical distribution (as share of physical and digital distribution) shows a decrease in physical distribution over the years, going from 9% in 2016 to 3% in 2021/2022.[86]

The evaluation found that the overall balance between reduced printing and the increase in online events since the COVID_19 pandemic has lowered the GEM Reports environmental footprint. While environmental considerations are taken on board in the production and dissemination of the GEM Reports, they are to some extent challenged by the attendance of staff travelling to some physical launch-related events, the total number of which increased since the Post-Covid period. The presence of the GEM Report team in these meetings, however, needs to be assessed in the context of the benefits to the envisaged change process: highlighting creative tensions as incentives for policymakers to act. Presence in countries and regions is key for this.

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[83] In June 2021, UNESCO developed an Environmental Sustainability and Management Policy with practical framework to integrate into the organisation's activities, but this was not applied to the GEM team.

[84] Global Education Monitoring Report Management Report to Funding Agencies, Report on activities. 1 July to 31 December 2022; and 1 July to 31 December 2021.

[85] Costs primarily include travel for speakers and GEM Report team members, interpretation, hiring venues and hospitality.

[86] UNESCO GEM Report (2022), Global Education Monitoring Report management report to funding agencies
Report on activities 1 July to 31 December 2022 with yearly financial statements

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The previous chapter presented the evaluation findings per evaluation criterion. The starting point for assessing the GEM Report against the evaluation criteria was the reconstruction of the Theory of Change. This reconstruction clarified the character of the GEM Report (in terms of its problem statement, goal, envisaged change process) and also situated the GEM Report in a wider context that influences the change process. This scene-setting provided the framework to reflect on what relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability actually implies for the GEM Report. The current, and final chapter, synthesises these evaluation findings into broader conclusions and formulate actionable recommendations for GEM Report team, and for the wider monitoring architecture. Before presenting the conclusions, we first provide a wider reflection in which the GEM Report evaluation conclusions need to be positioned.

Reflection on the wider GEM Report context - fostering a conducive environment for progress towards SDG 4

For monitoring data and for policy implementation data to support policy development at global, regional and national level, the right conditions need to be in place. These concern high level political involvement, firm statement of common concern, availability of specific objectives, benchmarks and indicators, a high level of institutionalisation, and finally a creative tension to stimulate reflections and policy development. In this, the GEM Report during the period under evaluation made a contribution to improving these conditions, especially related to working on specific objectives, benchmarks and indicators. For instance, through working on the benchmarking methodology. Nonetheless, when reflecting on the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism and the position of the GEM Report in the monitoring architecture, it seems that some of these conditions are not fully in place, which hampers the potential of the GEM Report to play its role as envisaged by its mandate. Specific conditions that seem to fall short concern the political buy-in of national level stakeholders on the specific education SDG and the firm statement of a common concern. Both are principally put in place by the 2015 Incheon declaration, but seem to be somewhat faded in recent years, being reflected in the low level of progress towards SDG 4[87]. Not having these conditions in place constrains the GEM Report and associated products to tap into the policy discussions at national and regional level and – through providing data and analysis – to motivate countries to take the necessary steps to make progress towards SDG 4.

4.1. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The GEM Report and associated products are highly valued, relevant and influence the work of partners.

The evaluation found broad consensus that the quality of the GEM Report and associated products are highly valued and that the reports contribute to a sense of momentum to prioritise educational issues. The assessment reveals strong evidence that GEM Report publications allow tracking global educational advancements. Since 2018, the introduction of novel and interactive tools has breathed life into previously static data tables, transforming them into online platforms, offering education communities across the world the means to compare and review national, regional or global progress to SDG 4. Potential remains to further disseminate and streamline these tools for specific target audiences in the coming years. Stakeholders confirmed that the use of GEM Report findings has influenced and shaped the work of partners. Interviewed stakeholders hold differing opinions on the importance of the thematic versus the monitoring

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aspects of the GEM Report. For a number of stakeholders, moving closer towards 2030 calls for increased focus on the monitoring aspects to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments towards 2030.

Conclusion 2: Stakeholders' and donors' expectations of the role and ambitions of the GEM Report have been moving towards expecting the GEM Report to support policy implementation and influence policy change, which lies beyond the GEM Report mandate and beyond what can reasonably be expected from its theory of change.

The GEM Report dual mandate refers to serving as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and to reporting on national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments. As such, the mandate does not call explicitly upon the GEM Report to improve policymaking or countries progressing towards the SDGs. In practice, the GEM Report encourages policy development as part of its overall change process. It provides an institutional framework for discussions and reflections and provides the data to feed such discussions. However, achieving such outcomes is fully dependent on the countries themselves and to some extent on organisations that support the implementation of policies together with countries. This being said, there are expectations, especially among some donors, that the GEM Report contributes more directly to policy change. Hence, the expectations need be managed carefully. The unique value added of the GEM Report in the busy field of international education policy community is not its ability to influence national policies which could divert it away from its mandate if it starts engaging with individual policies in individual countries, but primarily its ability to provide independent, high quality and 'policy relevant research and analysis.

Conclusion 3: GEM Report's position as a global public good is challenged in the global education environment marked by proliferating initiatives and competition.

The monitoring of SDG 4 suffers from significant fragmentation, with inconsistently applied and lived-by organisational mandates. This situation has created an environment where various organisations perceive opportunities to launch additional initiatives, often focusing on specific aspects of the SDG 4 framework. In turn, this further exacerbates the fragmentation of the monitoring landscape and undermines the established role of the GEM Report in providing the mechanism to monitor and report on SDG 4, requiring heightened efforts for the report to assert its significance and authority as a global public good.

Conclusion 4: The expanded variety of GEM Report products since 2018 has been comprehensive and structured, but the overall contribution of a number of the additional products to the GEM Report core mandate ('monitoring' and 'holding stakeholders to account') remains less clear, while they do contribute to a perceived overstretching of GEM Report staff.

Since 2018, the GEM Report has seen a considerable shift in focus, most visibly observed in the increasing range of publications and tools developed. The role of the GEM Report has evolved from primarily serving as a monitoring mechanism towards new areas and approaches, such as offering country profiles, benchmark reports, and specific targeted country assessments. While this expansion has been comprehensive and structured, its overall contribution to its core mandate remains less clear. Overall, the Global Report, the databases (WIDE, VIEW, SCOPE) and the SDG 4 Scorecard are most contributing to the first part of the mandate (monitoring). The second part of the mandate is best supported by the Global Report, SCOPE, Spotlight and the SDG 4 Scorecard (holding to account). The Youth and Gender reports, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), and Education Finance Watch products, while serving their specific purpose, are less strongly linked to the mandate and contributing to the envisaged change process. Furthermore, these additional products, while also attracting additional donors, also put

pressure on the GEM Report staff, who have seen the amount and variety of work across these publications increase substantially.

Conclusion 5: Lack of longer-term funding compromises GEM Reports effectiveness, sustainability and the ability to fully fulfils the GEM Reports mandate.

By 2023, the concerns about the GEM Report's long-term sustainability have remained unresolved. The financial stability of the GEM Report continues to heavily depend on short-term funding from multiple donors and lacks sufficient long-term commitments. Global public goods require long-term perspectives in terms of financing.[88] The persistence of this situation stands in the way of more effective planning, as highlighted in earlier evaluations. Additionally, while operating in line with the GEM Report strategy, some donors, be it implicitly, attach specific expectations and demands to their funding, slightly deviating from the GEM Report's established mandate.

4.2. Recommendations

Overall, the evaluation appreciates the work of the GEM Report and the evaluation team is impressed with the accomplishments of the GEM Report team with the limited (long-term) resources in a challenging wider context. The following set of recommendations is provided as considerations to strengthen the GEM Report in the future, but acknowledges that some of the considerations may be more focused on the wider community than for the GEM Report team per se. We clearly indicate what the evaluation team considers to be within the realm of the GEM Report team to consider and what is not. These recommendations are developed on the basis of suggestions from respondents and the overall analysis by the evaluation team. They are discussed with the evaluation reference group.

Recommendation A (for GEM Report and Advisory Board): Consider rebalancing the monitoring and thematic part of the GEM Report.

To summarise the mandate, the GEM Report is aimed to provide oversight in how countries progress towards the SDG 4 and to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments. The GEM Report operationalised this well before 2015 by offering a thematic analysis of policies and progress and a monitoring part that provides an overview of the global state of play. While this made sense at the time (given the difficulty in driving media interest to education statistics that change little from year to year, but also as the SDG 4 indicators were not finalised), and while the evaluation team recognises that the thematic parts of the global report are highly valued, with only seven years from 2030, the monitoring part could receive more prominence in the global report and other products so as to increase an overall sense of urgency in relation to progress towards SDG 4.

The GEM Report could more actively take up its mandate to help hold countries and stakeholders to account for their commitments. This could mean to move beyond passively publishing the data available on the indicators, but building on the mechanism that allows countries to set their own priorities and agree on which indicators they are monitored (in line with steps already taken together with UIS on the benchmarking). This would also better link the monitoring and the policy part of the mandate. This furthermore allows international organisations and donors to link up with those policy priorities and indicators to support the countries in progressing. It finally allows to see concrete progress at country level on (some of the) selected indicators of SDG 4 for which countries set concrete targets and in relation to which they initiated policy changes.

Furthermore, more attention could be given to why despite having information, countries do not progress on SDG 4. Given that there is an abundance of data, evidence and research and also a

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[88] See GEM Report (2018), Policy Paper 34: Fulfilling our collective responsibility: Financing global public goods in education: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261530

relatively good sense of where progress to SDG 4 is more limited, the key challenge to be resolved does not seem to be the lack of data, but rather the limited use of that data evidence and research. This begs the crucial question from the perspective of the GEM Report's role to keep national and international stakeholders to account, of what is holding countries back in following the evidence? In this context, the GEM Report could look at the underlying dynamics that hamper educational policy reform and implementation more generally instead of focusing on a particular theme. It could also look for information that is disruptive enough to make governments react. The mandate of the GEM Report allows for its publications and team to be bolder and more critical about the lack of progress when presenting country data, in an effort to encourage debates and reflections on the way forward.

The following actions could be considered:

1) Prioritise a selection of the SDG 4 indicators and targets that are disruptive enough for governments to act as proxy for progress.
2) Focus the thematic part of the GEM Report more on the underlying dynamics of why countries do not progress towards the SDG 4.

Recommendation B (for GEM Report and Advisory Board): Consider streamlining and better integrating the number of GEM Report products to better fulfil the mandate of monitoring progress and help holding partners to account on their commitments.

The evaluation found that during the period under review, many new GEM Report products and initiatives emerged and that while also additional funding and staff is made available, the GEM Report staff experience a high workload. Furthermore, the evaluation found that while the different GEM Report products are appreciated, they differ in their connection and relevance in relation to the GEM Report mandate concerning monitoring progress and help holding partners to account on their commitments. In relation to this, it is recommended to streamline and better integrate the GEM Report products and activities in line with the GEM Report mandate and to streamline and integrate the work processes leading to the GEM Report products better to reduce the experienced workload of the GEM Report staff.

The following action could be considered:

1) Further improve the links between GEM Report products and bring them in line so they together in the best way contribute to fulfilling the GEM Report mandate (in line with the available funding).

Recommendation C (for GEM Report and Advisory Board, and donors): Better mobilise partners working directly in countries to use GEM Report products for impact and policy change.

The evaluation showed the limits of what can be expected from the GEM Report in terms of reaching actual policy change. Within the broader context in which a large number of education-focused international organisations operate, the GEM Report plays an important facilitating role in better clarifying actual progress towards SDG 4. At the same time, it should be up to other organisations – those that work directly with stakeholders in countries – to use the GEM Report's findings and analysis to support countries in developing and implementing policies by which they progress towards the SDGs. This requires the GEM Report to clarify its envisaged change process and identify which other organisations can play a role in bringing the GEM Report messages to impact at the policy level.

This 'limitation' requires the GEM Report team to more fundamentally consider *how* monitoring data and analysis can stimulate policy development and also *what* data has the potential to move policies. This implies better knowing how the GEM Report and related products are used and by

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whom. It also requires building more operational partnerships with organisations active in the countries. A starting point could be through the establishment of stronger partnerships with the UN Country Teams in the field of education, in which all the entities of the UN system that carry out operational activities are included. In this light, particularly also the UNESCO country level infrastructure is a resource that can be better used. Furthermore, working with regional (multilateral) organisations, and regional research networks should continue and should be strengthened in the future. Further establishing relationships with regional bodies is crucial to make sure that policy messages reach the right desks in the countries. This work is not limited to building partnerships, it should also strengthen the communication, active outreach, and follow-up activities to keep partners working in countries engaged.

Through enhanced cooperation with such organisations, the GEM Report will be able to complete its envisaged change process, and as such make its contribution to moving countries in the direction of SDG 4 (noting that such movement remains outside the GEM Reports' accountability).

The following action could be considered:

1) Further strengthen operational partnerships with organisations active in the countries (i.e., UN Country teams, UNESCO and regional organisations) and involve them already in the preparation of reports and in planning activities after the reports are published and mobilise them to engage in discussions at country/regional level.
2) Further strengthen the communication and outreach activities to keep all partners, at global, regional and national levels engaged in the GEM Report related discussions so that they bring the messages to the ministerial and programmatic levels.

Recommendation D (for GEM Report and Advisory Board): Adopt a strategic vision that reflects on the envisaged change process and that demands from the community sustainable funding to function as global public good.

The evaluation found that the mandate of the GEM Report is still highly relevant and coherent to what can be expected from the GEM Report. However, it seems to lack the power to position GEM Report well in the changing landscape. A reflection on the mandate in this changing landscape and reaffirmation of the position of the GEM Report in the wider infrastructure related to SDG 4, could help to strengthen the recognition by international organisations and countries of the GEM Report as a global public good. This reflection could inform the development of a new strategy prioritising the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of requiring long-term financial commitments from those organisations that acknowledge that the GEM Report is a global public good and worthwhile funding (without earmarking).

The new strategy could also reflect on the GEM Report's role in initiatives emerging to stimulate progress on the SDG 4, such as the Transforming Education Summit and the monitoring of the commitments of countries, as this closely links to the mandate of the GEM Report.

The following actions could be considered:

1) Develop a new strategy taking into account the above recommendations and considerations.
2) Further seek long-term financial support to better secure the GEM Report as global public good by approaching the global community (including explicitly organisations in the UN family).
3) Refine the value-for-money indicators in line with the new production and dissemination strategies.
4) Further monitor the carbon footprint of the report production cycle, including travel, printing and other activities following the 2021 UNESCO Environmental Sustainability and Management Policy.

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Global Education Monitoring Report

Terms of reference - External evaluation services

1. Background

Mandate and role in the global SDG 4 architecture

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report is an editorially independent report hosted and published by UNESCO since 2002. In 2015, it received the official mandate at the World Education Forum in Incheon and through the Education 2030 Framework for Action to be "*the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs" as well as "on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review.*"

The GEM Report delivers on the mandate by synthesizing, analyzing and communicating the best available data, evidence and research from a wide array of sources to explain progress and differences in education, and to make recommendations that stimulate reflection and dialogue and thereby improve policymaking. The Report engages policy makers, academics, teachers and youth to actively promote research-based policy dialogue to drive policy change at global, regional and national level. Through strategic partnerships, extensive communications and advocacy engagement, policy dialogue and peer learning mechanisms, the Report aims to tackle difficult and newly emerging topics in education and provide evidence to inform debate and decision-making.

Since 2015, the GEM Report has published five global editions focused on the following themes: education and the other development goals in 2016, accountability in 2017/8, migration and displacement in 2019, inclusion in 2020 and the role of non-state actors in 2021/2. The topics of the next two reports are: technology in 2023 and leadership in 2024/5.

The Report is accompanied by a range of associated products designed to contribute to the fulfilment of its mandate: publications, such as the summary, youth, gender and regional editions of the global report, policy papers, the Education Finance Watch series, the Spotlight report series on Africa and other reports relevant to monitor SDG 4; four online resources, the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE), the Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER), the Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE), and the Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW); and a range of communication and advocacy efforts tailored to serve the needs of national, regional and global actors for comprehensive, independent and comparative evidence on education to inform policy dialogue and decision-making. The GEM Report also co-leads the national SDG 4 benchmarking process with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Governance

The GEM Report's Advisory Board provides guidance on the implementation of the strategy, which it has endorsed. It is composed of seven constituencies: representatives of member states in different regions; regional organizations; multilateral agencies; donors; civil society; directors

of UNESCO education and Category 1 institutes; and independent education experts. It meets once a year to decide on future report themes and provide guidance and feedback to the Report team. The GEM Report's operations are compliant with UNESCO's financial regulations and rules, complete and are subject to annual financial reporting, audits, and evaluations in line with the UNESCO Evaluation Policy.

2. History of the GEM Report external evaluations

The GEM Report periodically commissions independent external evaluations of its programme and knowledge products, to determine how effectively it fulfils its mandate, and to inform decisions for the design of the next GEM Report strategy. External evaluations were conducted in 2006, 2009, 2013/4, and 2018.

In addition, in 2016, UNESCO's Division of Internal Oversight Services (IOS) conducted an Evaluation of the Education for All (EFA) Global and Regional Coordination Mechanisms. This comprehensive evaluation also examined the role of the report and found that it had played a positive role in supporting UNESCO's overall EFA coordination.

GEM Report strategy and results framework

Following the 2018 external evaluation, the GEM Report 2019-2024 strategy articulated a series of actions, underpinned by a set of key performance indicators, to strengthen the delivery of GEM Report's knowledge products that mark global progress towards SDG 4 targets, supported by strategic partnerships, an active communications programme and peer learning mechanisms designed to increase these products' influence on policy dialogue at regional and national level. The actions are defined in the logical framework that forms part of the strategy.

3. Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the upcoming 2023 evaluation of the GEM report is twofold and will cover the period from 2018 to mid-2023:
  (a) to determine how effectively the GEM Report fulfils its mandate, and
  (b) to inform the updating of the GEM Report's strategy.

Taking into account the findings and recommendations of the previous external evaluations, it will assess the relevance, effectiveness and pathways towards impact of the GEM Report as well as its efficiency and potential for sustainability. It will analyse its achievements and challenges within the current context, identify lessons learned and make recommendations on how to improve future activities in particular considering the comparative strengths of the GEM Report and the multi-stakeholder environment in the evolving global context within which it operates.

The GEM Report has a broad audience, including national, regional and international policymakers in education and finance, planners, policy analysts, aid agencies, foundations, UN organizations, NGOs, teachers, students, experts, researchers and the media.

The evaluation should be summative, for accountability purposes, but also formative, to help the GEM Report improve. The target users of this evaluation's findings will therefore be the following:
  • the GEM Report team, to gain deeper insights and to develop its new strategy;

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- its Advisory Board members, to inform their guidance to the GEM Report team;
- its existing and potential funders, to assess their past and inform their future financing decisions;
- UNESCO, to assess how to improve the hosting arrangement; and
- Member States, to whom the GEM Report is ultimately accountable.

The following evaluation questions, which are primarily based on five of the six OECD DAC criteria, are indicative and will be further refined and validated during the inception phase of the evaluation:

1 **Relevance:** *Is the intervention doing the right things?*
- Does the format and delivery mechanisms of the GEM Report and its associated products remain relevant for measuring progress towards SDG 4 globally?
- Have the themes addressed in the GEM Report and its outputs been relevant for the global, regional and national education communities to monitor progress on education in the SDGs?

- **Coherence:** *How well does the intervention fit?* Given its mandate as a global public good, to what extent are the GEM Report and its associated products coherent with other global, regional and national initiatives in the area of monitoring progress in education?
- What are the GEM Report's comparative strengths?

2 **Effectiveness:** *Is the intervention achieving its objectives?[1]*
- To what extent have the GEM Report and associated products helped the global, regional and national education communities monitor progress on education in the SDGs?
- To what extent are the GEM Report and its research outputs credible? What measures have been undertaken to ensure a high level of quality? What aspects can be improved?
- How successful have the GEM Report's outreach and dissemination efforts been in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences?

3 **Efficiency:** *How well are resources being used?*
- How efficiently are planning and implementation activities carried out?
- Are management arrangements efficient for the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities?
- How efficient are the governance structures? Are there any grounds to revise the governance mechanisms and the role of the Advisory Board?

4 **Sustainability**
- What measures have been taken to strengthen the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of financial and human resources (partnerships and resource mobilisation)?
- How efficient is the GEM Report development and production process in terms of environmental considerations?

The evaluation team will also need to carefully frame the analysis by considering the following two issues. In terms of impact, the evaluation should explore the tension between (i) the mandate of the report, which is defined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, as being 'an independent team

… monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and … on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments' and (ii) the expectation by several of its funders for its outputs to influence policy discussion and lead to policy change. The evaluation team will be expected to develop a methodology, based on a theory of change, which outlines pathways to GEM Report impact and defines the levels of direct accountability for the achievement of GEM Report results as well as higher level impact that is outside the direct accountability of the GEM Report.

In terms of **sustainability**, it is to be considered that the GEM Report is a global public good with an independent reporting mandate that can only be sustained through external support. However, its sustainability is also related to the conditions that led to the establishment of the GEM Report. The evaluation team will therefore need to particularly explore and review underlying risks and opportunities for the sustainability of the GEM Report and its achievements.

4. **Methodology**

The institution selected for this assignment is expected to propose a comprehensive design and plan to undertake the evaluation, with a detailed methodology adopting both quantitative and qualitative approaches including, but not being limited to, the following steps:

- Desk study of all relevant documentation, including websites, documents and guidelines published or issued in the course of implementation, progress reports to donors, and previous evaluations.
- Review and refining of the GEM Report theory of change based on its strategy and results framework.
- Data collection and analysis via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from UNESCO and other UN agencies, governments, donors, foundations, researchers, civil society organizations, and the media. The sampling approach should ensure that representatives of each relevant constituency are consulted for the purposes of this evaluation.
- On-line surveys amongst those stakeholders targeted by the GEM Report knowledge and advocacy products.
- Bibliometric, media and internet search analysis, including tools for monitoring media and other forms of outreach and use of the GEM Report products' use by organizations and researchers.
- At least two trips to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to conduct interviews and participate in workshops for presenting and discussing findings and recommendations.

The proposed methodology should form the basis of proposals, but the selected institution will be expected to further refine the approach and methodology in the inception phase.

The GEM Report team will provide to the evaluation team access to its documentation and contact lists to facilitate the work. It will also take all necessary steps to disseminate the evaluation findings in an effective and transparent manner and will post the final report on its website. The GEM Report team will develop a management response to the recommendations which will be included in the final report and ensure necessary steps for the implementation of the recommendations.

In line with the UNESCO Evaluation Policy (2022-2029), the evaluation team is expected to comply with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation,

[Guidelines for Integrating](#) [Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations](#) and [Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#). The evaluation organization will also have to ensure that ethical, human rights and gender equality principles as well as environmental considerations are duly integrated in all consultations and at all stages of the evaluation process. The final evaluation report shall be in line with the UNEG [Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports](#).

5. Roles and responsibilities

The selected institution shall ensure adequate operational capabilities to undertake the tasks with organisational autonomy including internal quality assurance, contingency planning and risk mitigation. Services shall be delivered by a gender-balanced, culturally and geographically diverse team with relevant experience, credibility, and of the required and complementary skills sets as well as experience in designing and applying methodologies, including the use of innovative methods, tools and processes. The team is further expected to demonstrate specific knowledge and understanding of the global education policy and development landscape. The institution will be responsible for administering all methodological tools including surveys. The institution will be responsible for the team's logistics including office space, administrative and secretarial support, telecommunication equipment and services, storage and sharing of documentation.

The GEM Report team will be responsible for the overall managerial oversight of the evaluation process and provision of quality assurance of the evaluation outputs. The GEM Report will convene an evaluation Reference Group comprised of select stakeholders who will provide the overall guidance and quality assurance of the deliverables, including feedback on draft deliverables. The Reference Group shall be consulted periodically during the evaluation and meet virtually, as necessary.

The GEM Report team will furnish access to relevant contact and distribution lists of stakeholders. It will also facilitate access to UNESCO staff from headquarters, institutes and field offices, and to the GEM Report Advisory Board members. The GEM Report team will provide access to its human resources and financial data, planning, reporting and media monitoring tool(s).

6. Deliverables

The evaluation team will be required to deliver the following in English, which will be submitted for feedback to the GEM Report team and Reference Group. The evaluation team will begin by preparing a comprehensive design for the evaluation during the inception phase, which will inform the future stages of the work:

1. **Inception report** containing the theory of change or logic model of the GEM Report drawn from the desk study and an evaluation design including detailed methodology, list of reviewed documents, evaluation matrix outlining the refined evaluation questions, assessment framework, detailed methodology work- plans and logistics. The evaluation design should also include the proposed data collection methods and tools as well as timeline and key deadlines and include a workshop with the GEM Report team to explore and refine the theory of change and pathways towards impact of the GEM Report.

2. **Half-day workshop** at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris to present preliminary findings and recommendations of the draft evaluation report to the GEM Report team and Reference Group.

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3. **Draft evaluation report** of no more than 50 pages, excluding annexes.

4. **Half-day workshop** at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris to present and refine the preliminary findings and recommendations of the draft evaluation report to the Advisory Board at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

5. **Final evaluation report**, of no more than 50 pages (excluding annexes) which should indicatively be structured as follows:
- Executive summary
- Description of the GEM Report and its intervention logic/theory of change
- Evaluation purpose
- Evaluation methodology (including respective challenges and limitations)
- Findings (in terms of achievements and challenges)
- Lessons learned
- Recommendations emerging from the findings in relation to the evaluation criteria and in consideration of the contextual factors concerning impact and sustainability)
- Annexes (including ToR, list of stakeholders consulted, data collection instruments, list of key documents consulted, summary of survey results providing an adequate level of evidence to sustain the findings and recommendations, justification of team composition and short bio data of the consultant team)

6. **Communication outputs** targeted to different audiences, such as PowerPoint presentations, visuals, an evaluation brief and infographics shall be agreed in the inception phase.

7. <u>Schedule</u>

The evaluation is expected to start in early June 2023 with an initial planning and inception phase followed by desk review, data collection through consultations, interviews and assessments. Consolidated feedback from the GEM Report team and the Reference Group will be provided at each step, either in meetings or via email. The final report is expected to be delivered by mid-December 2023. An indicative set of deadlines for deliverables are as follows:

- Inception report   Mid-July 2023
- Presentation of first findings   Mid-September 2023
- Draft evaluation report   Mid-October 2023
- Presentation to Advisory Board   End-October 2023
- Final Evaluation Report   Mid-December 2023

8. <u>Composition of the evaluation team</u>

The composition of the evaluation team shall meet all *mandatory criteria* as per the established long-term agreement:
- All members of a team must have as a minimum an advanced university degree (Master's or Doctorate) in education, social, behavioral or economic sciences, international development, public policy, management, or fields related to research and evaluation methodologies.
- The team leader should have at least 15 years of professional experience in programme or project evaluation of relevance to policy making, and demonstrated

knowledge of results-based management, planning, monitoring and evaluation. The team leader should demonstrate experience in leading multidisciplinary and multinational teams (at least 10 projects/assignments).

- At least one team member (senior evaluation expert) must have a minimum of 10 years of experience in conducting programme and project evaluations using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including expertise in comprehensive evaluations of relevance to international policy (a minimum of 10 projects/assignments).
- At least one team member should demonstrate knowledge, understanding and experience on how to access, critically appraise and apply global research and evidence in education related to policy, advocacy and programming (a minimum of 7 projects/assignments)
- At least one team member must have knowledge, understanding and experience with global developments in education and international engagement strategies (a minimum of 7 projects/assignments).
- At least one team member must have knowledge, understanding and experience with bibliometric, media and internet search analysis.
- The team should have the ability to communicate, present and write in English to the highest standard.

In addition, the following *desirable criteria* will be taken into account in determining the selection of the institution:

- Team members are fluent in at least one other UN language.
- The team collectively has at least five examples of work demonstrating understanding and application of UN mandates in human rights and gender equality and/or in gender- and culturally- sensitive approaches in evaluation.
- At least one team member has in-depth understanding and knowledge of issues pertaining to global trends of the education sector in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (relevant assignments/work experiences).
- Evaluation teams demonstrate an appropriate gender balance, and an inclusive and culturally and geographically diverse representation will be considered an advantage.
- At least one team member has in-country experience within the education sector in developing countries.
- At least one team member has knowledge, understanding and experience with data analytics and data visualization tools.

Annex 2: Reconstruction of the Theory of Change

Introduction

Our team developed and tested a comprehensive approach to (re)construct a Theory of Change on the basis of work done by academics of London School of Economics. This goes beyond the usual linking of objectives to activities, outcomes and results, but aims at understanding what are the underlying lines of reasoning, working mechanisms and assumptions of the change process.

The development of a Theory of Change helps to understand strategic and operational planning of initiatives with ambitious and complex goals. It starts from a baseline analysis of the context and issues. It then maps out the logical sequence of changes that are stakeholders expect to be necessary in the contextual conditions to support the desired long-term change. In this evaluation, the purpose of reconstructing the theory of change (ToC) is twofold:

- First of all, it is instrumental in documenting the development of the GEM report (and its predecessor) since its creation in 2002. Reconstructing the theory of change will analyse the logic behind its overall approach and the context in which it is implemented. It allows relating the sequence of changes of the envisaged outcomes and exposing the assumptions underlying the chosen approach.

- Secondly, it will be used in a prospective way in order to identify lessons learned and develop recommendations for the future, taking into account the 2030 Agenda.

The table below lists the essential elements for a comprehensive ToC approach. It follows the logic that to fully understand the change process it is necessary for each element in the broader strategy to identify the 'why, what, who, when, and how'.[89]

Table 12: Required elements for a comprehensive ToC approach

Cluster	Elements of ToC	Questions for mapping ToC
Line of reasoning towards achieving results (mechanism and expected outcomes)	Problem Statement	• What is the problem/ challenge the GEM report is about to solve?
	Overall Goal	• What is the overall goal of the GEM report ? • How do such objectives relate to the challenge(s)?
	Change Process	• What actions / activities are planned in order to achieve the objectives? • What is the mechanism of change linking the inputs to short-term output/outcomes and long-term goal (How are the project activities envisaged to lead to the expected results)?
	Change Markers	• What are the milestones, indicators or other tools to assess/measure extent of change?
	Meta-Theory	• What is the underpinning theory that justifies the chosen change process?
Implementation (planned interventions)	Inputs	• What resources are made available (financial, institutional, partnerships, commitments etc.)? • What is the timeline associated with reaching the objectives?
	Institutional / organisational	• What coordination mechanisms are put in place? • What institutional rules and requirements have a likely effect on implementation?
	Actors	• Who are involved and what are their responsibilities and cooperation arrangements?

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[89] Van Stolk, C., Ling, T. and Reding, A. (2011). Monitoring and evaluation in stabilisation interventions: Reviewing the state of the art and suggesting ways forward. RAND Europe, prepared for DFID Stabilisation Unit. Taken from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, . 7. Cited from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, p. 13.

Cluster	Elements of ToC	Questions for mapping ToC
Practical implementation (Outcomes and context)	Assumptions	• What are the beliefs, values, and unquestioned elements for each step of the change process?
	Internal Risks	• What are the potential modalities of the activities that may undermine its success?
	External Risks	• What are external risks to the activities with the potential to undermine its success and outline plans to overcome these?
	Obstacles to Success	• What are obstacles likely to threaten the change process? • What plans are outlined to overcome them?
	Knock-On Effects	• What are the potential unintended consequences, both positive and negative?

Source: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge (LSE), adjusted and elaborated by authors.

Based on the theory of change as described above, indicators can be identified for each relevant element of the ToC, following the SMART-criteria. For the purpose of this proposal, our team developed a tentative evaluation matrix, providing directions on the evaluation questions, the related indicators/judgement criteria, sub questions and indications on how the questions will be answered.

Problem Statement

In this section we explore the GEM Report mandate and statements related to overall envisaged impact. From this we try to distil a suitable description of the problem statement underlying the existence of the GEM Report between the years 2018-2023. In doing so, it is not our intention to theorise on problems of GEM Report that are out of the GEM Report's mandate to work on, but instead to have a realistic and more operational idea of the raison d'être that underpins the work of the GEM Report .

The 2015 Incheon Declaration adopted at the World Education Forum (WEF) formalised the informal arrangement of the then EFA Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR) into a mandate for the GEM Report *as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs, within the mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the proposed SDGs."*[90] It will be the "mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs, with due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Education 2030 Framework for Action Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also *report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review*"[91] The mandate expanded on the existing EFA GMR monitoring mandate: the SDGs now included education as a

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[90] Full paragraph 18: "We resolve to develop comprehensive national monitoring and evaluation systems in order to generate sound evidence for policy formulation and the management of education systems as well as to ensure accountability. We further request the WEF 2015 co-convenors and partners to support capacity development in data collection, analysis and reporting at the country level. Countries should seek to improve the quality, levels of disaggregation and timeliness of reporting to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. We also request that the Education for All Global Monitoring Report be continued as an independent Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM Report), hosted and published by UNESCO, as the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on the proposed SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs, within the mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the proposed SDGs" World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library
[91] Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library

stand-alone goal as well across a set of other SDGs. Turning this mandate in a problem statement could mean that:

1) The development of the new SDGs with a broader set of education objectives (some of which intersect with other development objectives such as gender, youth and climate) left a gap for an effective mechanism to monitor and report on developments towards SDG 4 and on education in the other proposed SDGs, as well as on the implementation of national and international strategies towards these objectives.

To position the GEM Report mandate, it is important to recall the full section on Monitoring, follow-up and review for evidence-based policies in the Incheon Declaration.

Box 6: Extract from the Incheon Declaration

97. Follow-up and review based on robust monitoring, reporting and evaluation policies, systems and tools are essential for the achievement of Education 2030. Monitoring quality in education requires a multidimensional approach covering system design, inputs, content, processes and outcomes. As the primary responsibility for monitoring lies at the country level, countries should build up effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms, adapted to national priorities, in consultation with civil society. They should also work to build greater consensus at the global level as to what specific quality standards and learning outcomes should be achieved across the life course – from early childhood development to adult skills acquisition – and how they should be measured. In addition, countries should seek to improve the quality and timeliness of reporting. Information and data need to be freely accessible to all. National-level data, information and outcomes based on existing reporting mechanisms, together with new data sources as necessary, will inform reviews at the regional and global levels.

98. In order to better measure and monitor quality, equity and inclusion, efforts should be made to increase the capacity of governments to disaggregate data appropriately and use them effectively for planning and policy-making. Partners, in close cooperation with the UIS and other institutions as appropriate, will provide direct and targeted support to Member States to strengthen relevant measurement and monitoring capacities. The UIS will facilitate sharing of best practices with a view to strengthening country data systems, particularly for African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing states and middle income countries. Efforts should be made to include quality frameworks in national education plans and to build the capacity of countries to monitor equity, inclusion and learning outcomes.

99. Global monitoring is integral to international and regional efforts to strengthen analysis and knowledge management. In line with the UN Secretary-General's recommendation, more efforts will be made to harmonize reporting on the SDGs with reporting to the various human rights treaty bodies that relate to education. These official national reports, often reflecting contributions by civil society, offer important insights into the status of the right to education.

100. In recognition of the importance of harmonization of monitoring and reporting, the UIS will remain the official source of cross-nationally comparable data on education. It will continue to produce international monitoring indicators based on its annual education survey and on other data sources that guarantee international comparability for more than 200 countries and territories. In addition to collecting data, the UIS will work with partners to develop new indicators, statistical approaches and monitoring tools to better assess progress across the targets related to UNESCO's mandate, working in coordination with the Education 2030 SC.

101. The EFA Global Monitoring Report will be continued in the form of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report. It will be prepared by an independent team and hosted and published by UNESCO. The Director of the team is appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO. Attention will be paid to geographical balance in its Advisory Board. **The GEM Report will be the mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs, with due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review.**

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102. The collection, analysis and use of data will be further strengthened by encouraging a 'data revolution' based on recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development.[92] To address current data gaps, agencies need to improve coordination, including strengthening existing inter-agency groups and establishing new ones, to develop harmonized methodologies for deriving common estimates based on available data, while developing new comparative data sources as necessary. Countries and agencies should strengthen and standardize data on domestic resource mobilization and other streams of finance for education, including household contributions. Countries and agencies will also benefit from participating in proposed mechanisms to further develop standards, build capacity, collect necessary information and share data.

103. <u>Moreover, a research and evaluation culture is necessary at the national and international levels to learn lessons from the implementation of strategies and policies and feed them back into actions. At the national level, countries should evaluate the effect of their education policies on achieving the Education 2030 targets. They must build on monitoring results and research findings to ensure effective evidence-based decisions and results-oriented programmes.</u> An evaluation process would look at all components of an education system with the aim of sharing lessons, opening debate on what works and providing constructive feedback. Key principles for the evaluation approach include the centrality of teaching and learning quality; the importance of school leadership; equity and inclusion as key dimensions; transparency; and partner participation at all levels. Overall, evaluation activities should contribute to the accomplishment of both accountability and development objectives. Furthermore, at the global level, the convening agencies commit to evaluating the effectiveness of their coordination mechanisms and the extent to which their programmes support countries in implementing Education 2030

The **2019-2024 strategy** provides other hints to a potential problem statement. The Long-term outcome is "GEM Report evidence and recommendations are used to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4"[93] Based on this, in relation to developing inclusive and equitable quality education, a potential problem statement for the GEM Report could be as follows:

2) ***Decision makers at national, regional and global levels lack data, evidence, research and recommendations that can stimulate reflection and dialogue, needed to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4.***

Bringing all this together, the underlying problem statement for the GEM Report could be that **while countries and stakeholders committed themselves to achieving the SDG 4 and work on education in the other proposed SDGs, the decision makers at national, regional and global levels lack data, evidence, research and recommendations that can stimulate a level of reflection and dialogue that allows holding relevant partners to account for their commitments to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4.**

Overall Goal

The overall goal relates closely to the reconstructed problem statement.

The Financial regulations of the Special Account Global Education Monitoring Report annexed a GEM Report Performance Management Framework. This framework presents as overall goal 'Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning

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[92] The advisory group's key recommendations are: (1) Develop a global consensus on principles and standards, (2) Share technology and innovations for the common good, (3) New resources for capacity development, (4) Leadership for coordination and mobilisation and (5) Exploit some quick wins on SDG data.
[93] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 6.

opportunities for all (SDG 4)'.[94] This framework also defined an intermediate outcome: "Education systems, plans and policies are strengthened to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4 (contributing to UNESCO's 39 C/5 ER10)"[95]. These goal-related statements go beyond the expressed mandate from 2015 (and earlier).

The 2019-2024 strategy indicates that "the theory of change underlying the GEM Report's approach is based on the idea that, by making rigorous evidence, data and recommendations on education available and accessible, the GEM Report will improve policy dialogue and peer learning and will strengthen education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4." [96] The expressed vision of GEM Report is "to serve as the main resource for decision makers who seek comparative research and knowledge to inform their actions on inclusive and equitable quality education at national, regional and global levels." [97] The GEM Report's mission is "to synthesise, analyse and clearly present the best available data, evidence and research to explain progress and differences in education, and to make recommendations that stimulate reflection and dialogue and thereby improve policymaking."[98]

The overall goal reflected in the GEM Report documents suggest that it is closely related to the mandate of establishing "mechanism for monitoring and reporting on SDG 4 and on education in the other SDGs, with due regard to the global mechanism to be established to monitor and review the implementation of the 2030 Education 2030 Framework for Action Agenda for Sustainable Development. It will also report on the implementation of national and international strategies to help hold all relevant partners to account for their commitments as part of the overall SDG follow-up and review"[99] Both the Performance Management Framework and the 2019-2024 strategy suggest more emphasis on impacting national education systems through the GEM Report actions.[100]

When sticking to the mandate and the suggested problem statement, the reconstructed goal could be that the **GEM Report is providing the monitoring mechanism, the accountability measures, data, evidence, research and recommendations to stimulate reflection and dialogue at national, regional and global level allowing education systems, plans, policies and budgets to move towards achieving SDG 4.**

Change process, change markers and meta-theory

The change process associated with the GEM Report consists – in line with the above problem statement and overall goal – of several aspects. Some that can be directly controlled by the GEM Report , others that are out of direct influence of GEM Report . The following steps could be identified:

1) Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs;

2) Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences;

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94 Financial regulations of the Special Account Global Education Monitoring Report, p. 4.
95 Financial regulations of the Special Account Global Education Monitoring Report, p. 2.
96 GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 2.
97 GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 2.
98 GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 2.
99 Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: [Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library](#)
100 GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 6: "GEM Report evidence and recommendations are used to move education systems, plans, policies and budgets towards achieving SDG 4"

3) Stimulate reflection and dialogue among its target groups by providing insights on data and policy;

4) Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4;

5) Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

The first three steps are in direct control of GEM Report , step 4 and 5 not so much. These two steps are also not included in the mandate. The performance framework and the 2019-2024 strategy however express the ambition to inform policy dialogue and contribute to achieving the SDG 4. The 2019-2024 strategy also provides a further exploration what is the role of the GEM Report in this. It states that the strategy "maintains the GEM Report's core products while aiming **to focus more closely on informing policy dialogue and strengthening partnerships to increase the GEM Report's relevance to decision makers at regional and national levels.**"[101]

This could be interpreted in terms of that the GEM Report plays a specific role in a wider environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4. This environment consists of global, regional and national commitments, peer learning, advocacy, awareness-raising, partnerships, comparison (data), provision of technical support, providing financial support etc.

A way to situate the role of the GEM Report in its wider SDG context is to build further on theories around soft-law, which seek to explain how countries can be effectively stimulated to progress towards commonly agreed objectives without the option of more directive pressure. For this we draw on a literature review of success factors of intergovernmental policy processes[102].

Box 7: Conditions for creating an agenda for work towards common objectives[103]

- **External factor: Preparatory political involvement**: The first condition is previous preparatory political involvement. Some steps are often taken in the past that have led to an increased awareness of, or involvement in a topic. A certain foundation needs to exist in order to continue developing a policy field. Not only does the topic need to be embedded in the national culture, but the culture itself also determines the way people cooperate with each other. When developing a certain policy field that is not strongly embedded in national culture, more time will be needed to gain political support.
- **External factor: Common concern**: Secondly, there should be a common concern among countries that it is important to develop a certain policy field. There should be a discourse on the topic in order to gain similar understanding of the definitions, the instruments available and an agreement to reach a certain

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[101] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 2.

[102] Broek , Simon, Buiskool, Bert-Jan, Hake, Barry, Impact of ongoing reforms in education and training on the adult learning sector (2nd phase), 2011. Reapplied in Broek S. et al (2012), State of play of the European Qualifications Framework implementation. The overviews were based on previous research on OMC in other policy fields: See: Gornitzka, Ase, Coordinating Policies for a "Europe of Knowledge" Emerging practices of the "Open Method of Coordination" in education and research. Oslo: Centre for European Studies. Working paper No.16. March 2005, 2005; Humburg, Martin, The Open Method of Coordination and European Integration. The Example of European Educational Policy. Berlin: Jean Monnet Chair for European Integration and the Freie Universität Berlin. Working paper No.8, 2008; Newgov, Classifying and mapping OMC in different policy areas. Reference number: 02/D09. Dublin: University College Dublin, 2005; Ruiter, de, Rik, 'Variations on a Theme. Governing the Knowledge-Based Society in the EU through Methods of Open Coordination in Education and R&D'. European Integration. Vol.32. No.2: 157-173, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010; Tholoniat, Luc, 'The Career of the Open Method of Coordination: Lessons from a ' Soft' EU Instrument'. West European Politics. Vol.33. No.1: 93-117. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2010; Regent, Sabrina, 'The Open method of Coordination: A New Supranational Form of Governance?'. European Law Journal. Vol.9. No.2: 190-214. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2003.

[103] This review is based on an analysis of the open method coordination in the European Union. This line of thinking is used here as example to better understand what role regular monitoring processes can play in stimulating developments in countries towards commonly agreed objectives.

quality level. As a result, a feeling of shared responsibility should be created which is the main drive behind the policy developments made and which also serves as a motivation for improvement of national policies. At the national level, however, civil society should also be aware of the importance of the policy developments and be willing to contribute to achieving the common objectives. Instead of a political concern it should be considered a personal or public concern.

- **External factor: Availability of specific objectives, benchmarks and indicators**: Another condition is the availability of objectives, benchmarks and indicators. Specific SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) formulated objectives are not always present. Consequently, it is often difficult to stimulate concrete actions and to measure results. Also, on the national level specific objectives are not always formulated. The question is if there are any measurable objectives, benchmarks or indicators available which give a clear direction to what a specific policy is supposed to achieve.

- **Needs to be actively maintained: High level of institutionalisation**: The fourth condition of ensuring success in working towards common objectives is a high level of institutionalisation. This means that an organisational structure exists where people continuously work on the coordination and improvement of a specific area. At the international level, a coordinator is necessary who can coordinate a complex and large scale cooperation process on a common agenda. Also at the national level there needs to be a clear organisational structure coordinated by a particular party. Someone has to take the lead in order to get the subject on everyone's agenda and to create a platform for discussion.

- **Needs to be actively maintained: Involvement and cooperation of stakeholders**: A fifth criteria for success is related to the involvement and cooperation of stakeholders, given the importance of bottom-up developments. Guidance and coordination at the community level will only be effective and sustainable, if the common agenda is supported by the countries, their civil societies and actively implemented at the local level. Therefore, not only should stakeholders be willing to participate in events and meetings on certain topics, but also stakeholders should be involved in national policy making, development and implementation.

- **Needs to be actively maintained: Presence of creative tension between countries with incentive to act**: A final criteria of success is a certain level of tension (on policy directions / ideology) between countries with an incentive to act or reluctance to act. Because of a conflict of opinions, the countries with an incentive to act will try to persuade the reluctant countries to join them in developing a particular policy field. If there is no conflict, no debate will follow and few actions will be initiated. The same applies to the national level, where the more reluctant parties will have to be convinced of the importance of a potential national priority. In order to get a topic on the national agenda someone needs to be absolutely convinced of its importance and lobby for more support.

Source: Cited from (Broek et al., 2012).

Reflecting from these criteria for success on supporting progress on a common agenda, we focus on the areas that the GEM Report in its role can influence; the first three criteria are important, but are set and defined by other actors. The last three factors however are conditions that need to be actively pursued to ensure sufficient movement towards the anticipated objectives. These are selected to conceptualise the role of the GEM Report; which is to **support the institutionalisation** of processes for progressing towards the SDGs, to **work on the monitoring of progress**; and finally **helping highlight creative tension to stimulate reflections and policy development**. This soft-law environment is further supported by many other organisations, most notably, the UN, UNESCO, UIS, donor organisations and civil society organisations. Hence, **the GEM Report is directly accountable for reaching the first three steps of the change process and contributes by supporting institutionalisation and working on monitoring and stimulating discussions and reflections, indirectly to the two higher levels change processes by supporting establishing a conducive environment for countries to work towards the SDG 4.**

The GEM Report strategy describes three outputs that support the change process. These concern:

1) **Evidence, research and data**: The GEM Report identifies, compiles, synthesises and analyses the latest and most compelling research in international education, with an emphasis on cross-country and over-time comparisons informed by national contexts.

2) **Communication and outreach**: Based on its research and data, the GEM Report distils key findings, formulates clear messages and develops global communication and outreach outputs that can be further developed into regional and national policy and programmatic responses.

3) **Policy advocacy and knowledge sharing**: The launch of the GEM Report in various international, regional and national fora is the key strategic tool used to inform and influence policy. A critical lever to further improve the GEM Report's visibility will be the development of strategic partnerships, especially at regional level (such as ADEA, SEAMEO, CoL), and the engagement of the GEM Report in regional policy dialogue mechanisms and peer learning exchanges. By bringing together expertise, assets and resources from across the United Nations system and the education architecture, and by collaborating closely with regional bodies in support of national governments, the GEM Report will be better positioned to inform policy dialogue and change at national and regional levels.

To deliver on these outputs, the GEM Report implemented a large range of different, but connected activities. The box below provides a concise overview of the activities implemented and products delivered. They function as an integrated set of products focused on specific education themes to support the evidence, research and data mandate.

Box 8: Overview of GEM Report key outputs and activities

The core products of the GEM Report are its **global reports**, which are published every 1.5 year. The Reports are organised into two main sections: a specific theme of global importance and monitoring of the education goals. The themes covered accountability in 2017/8, migration and displacement in 2019, inclusion in 2020 and the role of non-state actors in 2021/2. The upcoming two reports are foreseen to be on technology in 2023 and leadership in 2024/5. These core flagship products are accompanied by a range of associated products, including dedicated **regional, youth** and **gender** reports, which are published as companions to the flagship report. The regional reports in particular were introduced during the evaluation period, contributing to its significance and visibility among regional partners.

To these resources, the production of the GEM Report includes the following printed publications:

- **the Education Finance Watch**, an annual series developed in collaboration with the World Bank, first published in 2021 and bringing on board the UIS as a third partner in 2022;
- **the Spotlight series** reviewing progress on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa developed in cooperation with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the African Union (AU) since 2022 and
- **the SDG 4 Scorecard**, which measures, in the context of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which countries called for benchmarks to be set, how countries are progressing towards their national benchmarks and developed in cooperation with UIS.

And the following online resources:

- the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) offering comparative insights on education enrolment and outcomes, revised and relaunched in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2019;
- Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER) describing countries' laws and policies on the theme of the global report and on selected key themes in education, launched in 2020;
- Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE), combining statistical insights on key SDG indicators to offer an interactive alternative to the monitoring part, launched in 2020;
- the Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW) tool, offering global timeseries estimates on out-of-school and completion rates per country based on new methods developed with the UIS that enable the use of multiple data sources, launched in 2021;

In addition to these, the GEM Report team also publishes the background papers that provide the empirical basis of the GEM Report. Finally, between 3-5 brief policy papers are published online annually, providing practical policy perspectives on themes related to the main thematic reports and beyond.

It is important to note how these products are intended to function as in an integrated way rather than be isolated outputs. A distinction can be made between those products the GEM Report team released already prior to 2018 (GEM Global report, Gender and Youth Reports, policy papers on various themes, and technical background papers, WIDE) and those that were developed and published more recently (PEER, SCOPE, Regional reports, Education Finance Watch and Spotlight). In particular the regional reports, the spotlight series and the SDG 4 scorecard deserve more detail.

Since 2019, the GEM Report included **Regional Reports** in its publications. The reports contextualise the global findings of the core flagship publication within specific regional contexts, providing localised insights into education systems, policies and practices. Four regional reports were published during the evaluation period (2019 Arab States, 2020 Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021 Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, 2022 South Asia), with a fifth (2023 Southeast Asia) being launched on 30 November.

In 2022, the first results of a new strand of work around progress on universal basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa were published. The **Spotlight** series bundles such insights, developed in cooperation with Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). For each cycle, one focus country per region is selected for which in-depth review of the education sector is conducted, on the basis of a specifically developed analytical framework. This is complemented by thematic background papers and case studies from other countries, which are combined together in a continental report. The work is conducted with the purpose to stimulate peer learning and offer more in-depth insights in (the quality of) education policies in Africa. For this purpose, work is ongoing to embed its process in existing structures of the African Union.

In 2023, the first **SDG 4 Scorecard** was published in cooperation with UIS. The report compiles, in the context of the Education 2030 Framework for Action in which countries called for benchmarks to be set, national benchmark values from national education and policy documents and measures how countries are progressing towards their national benchmarks. This first report also analyses progress made on early childhood participation rate with reference to national policies and private provision.

The knowledge products and tools developed by the GEM Report as described above form part of its overall toolkit of activities, within which specific **communication and outreach** activities as well as **partnership and advocacy** work form an integrated part. The publication of the various knowledge products of the GEM Report series are accompanied by series of

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specific **launch events** that seek to garner attention to the topics and bring together both high-level decision makers and civil society. It also publishes regular **blogs** in multiple languages to engage with online audience around its knowledge products. It seeks to brand its work through regular and targeted presence in print, electronic and social media.

Its partnerships and advocacy work is specifically visible through its involvement in relevant global **policy fora and committees**, through which the GEM Report team highlights its knowledge products, in an effort to serve the needs of national, regional and global actors for comprehensive, independent and comparative evidence on education to inform policy dialogue and decision-making. This includes regular participation in events such as the G7 and G20 policy fora, as well as those more specifically in relation to SDG 4, such as High-level Political Forum[104], Transforming Education Summit, the SDG 4 High-level Steering Committee, Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 Indicators, and its shared leadership with UIS on data and monitoring in the Global Education Cooperation Mechanism.

In terms of **Change markers**, the five steps of the change process can be taken as starting point (Obtain trustworthy data and analyses thereof on SDG 4 and education in other SDGs; Report on progress on SDG 4 and explain progress and differences in education; Provide recommendations that stimulate reflection and dialogue; Improve policymaking, plans and policies to provide quality education to all and advance progress towards SDG 4; Contribute to inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4)). Interestingly, the first three steps can be clearly linked to the key tasks and the accountability of the GEM Report, and are related to the outputs presented. The final two exceed the output level and relate to the intermediate and long-term outcomes as presented in the 2019-2024 strategy. While not being directly in the sphere of influence, the GEM Report can be held accountable for its contribution to (jointly) developing the conducive environment for countries to progress to the SDGs. The change markers will have to reflect this perspective. They therefore, should not only describe outputs, but as well outcomes. An initial suggestion is to look at:

- Whether the GEM Report supports the institutionalization of discussions around global and country-specific progress towards the SDG and ways to get there. With institutionalization we refer to having a trusted, reliable infrastructure that provide knowledge and information on progress. This institutionalization complements other types of institutionalization such as the UN structure, UNESCO, Specific Committees etc..
- Whether the momentum from 2015 is maintained to work towards the SDGs;
- Whether the monitoring and reporting on progress is stimulating reflections and discussions;
- Whether the GEM Report provides creative tensions to act for countries and stakeholders;
- Whether countries are progressing towards the SDGs.

The underlying meta-theory of GEM Report envisaged change process is not straightforward. A simple knowledge uptake and utilisation framework does not do justice to the GEM Report's unique character as these models look at how a knowledge product is in the end used and applied in practice. The GEM Report is a wider initiative that seeks to help bring about a conducive environment for countries to progress on their commitments. It is therefore not only the 'knowledge' that is published that plays a role, but the whole function of regularly monitoring

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[104] GEM Report special publications: UIS, GEM Report (2019), Meeting commitments: are countries on track to achieve SDG 4? GEM Report (2019), Beyond commitments 2019: how countries implement SDG 4; UIS, GEM Report (2022), Setting commitments: National SDG 4 benchmarks to transform education.

countries and reporting on their progress that adds to the institutional framework that establishes that conducive environment for countries and development partners to work towards the SDGs. For this reason, we broaden our understanding with known criteria for success in working towards common objectives in an intergovernmental context. According to this framework, and applied to the GEM Report context, the GEM Report plays a role in the institutionalisation of discussions around progress towards SDG 4 and education-related interlinkages with other SDGs of learning from each other, as well as developing a creative, or critical tension for countries to maintain momentum, reflect on policy development and improve policy making.

Inputs, actors and partnerships

As specified in paragraph 101 of the Incheon Declaration, the GEM report will be prepared by an independent team and hosted and published by UNESCO. The Director of the team is appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO. Attention will be paid to geographical balance in its Advisory Board.[105]

The GEM Report is supported by a wide range of donors and the total annual budget fluctuates around 6 Million USD. The distribution of spending shows that 45% of the budget goes to conducting research; 22% to production and distribution; 18% to management and administration; and 16% to communication and outreach.[106]

The GEM Report is working closely with different partners, such as UIS, experts, UNESCO, UNESCO Field Offices, national statistical agencies and other international and regional organisations (such as SEAMEO, AU, ADEA, CoL etc.).[107]

Assumptions and obstacles to success

The 2019-2024 strategy lists the key assumptions underpinning the work of the GEM Report team being[108] a continued international and national focus on and commitment to meeting the education SDG and its targets; and the existence of sufficient capacity by policy makers to use and interpret the data and analysis for policy impact. In terms of risks, the strategy includes inadequate or unpredictable finance; a multiplicity of education reports; misunderstanding of the GEM Report's mandate; and operational capacity constraints. Of these assumptions, the one concerning the "continued international and national focus on and commitment to meeting the education SDG and its targets" seems to be more under the control (albeit indirect) of GEM rather than an assumption, and would rather better feature as a result. In other words, reporting on the SDG and engaging in discussions is a means to the end of fostering continued commitment.

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[105] Paragraph 101: World Education Forum (2015), Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all: Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: towards inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all - UNESCO Digital Library
[106] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 4.
[107] See annex stakeholder mapping
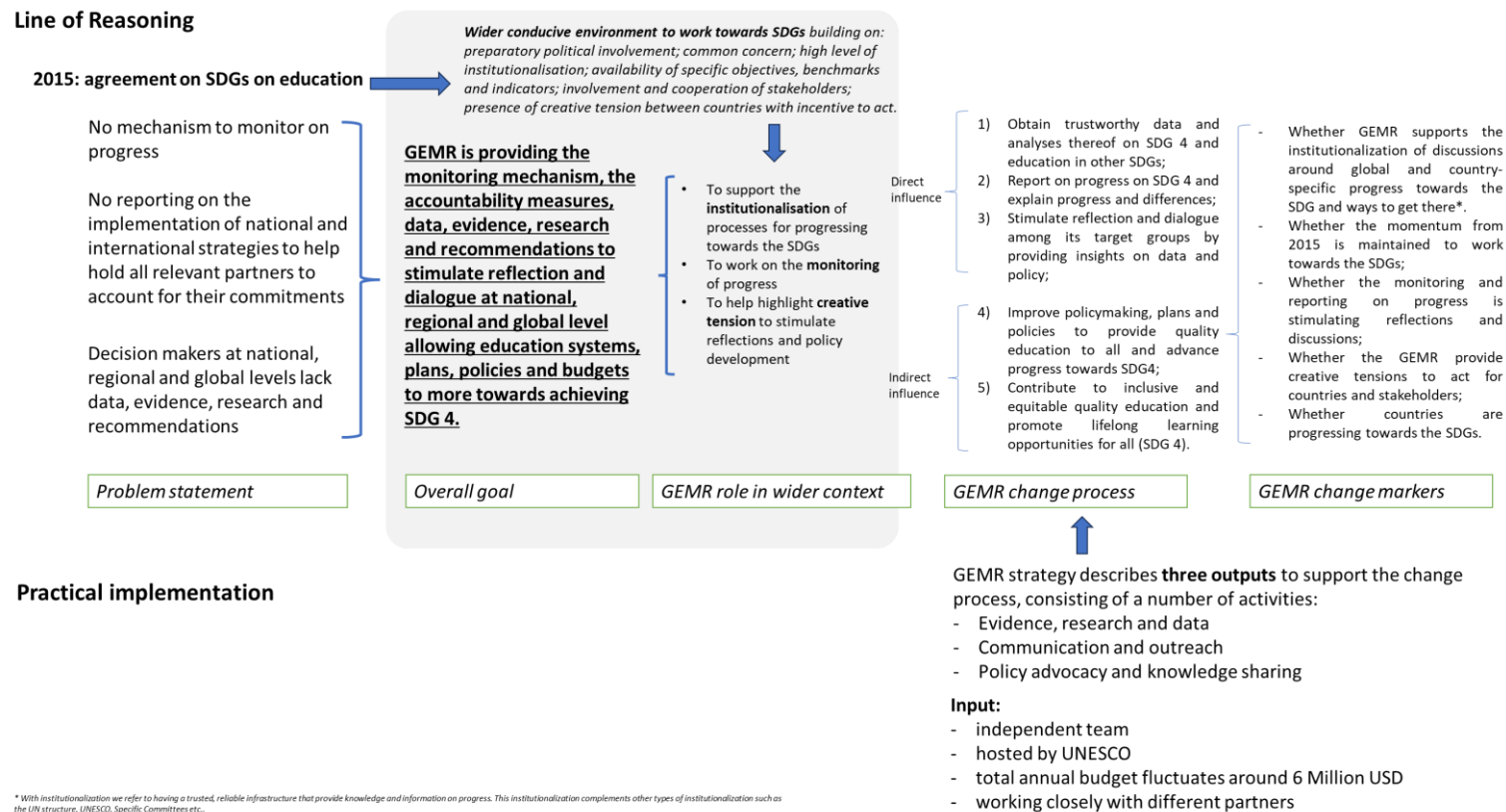[108] GEM Report (2019), Global Education Monitoring Report Strategy 2019–2024, p. 3.

Overview of ToC

The reconstruction of the ToC led to a number of reflections and observations on how the change process envisaged by the GEM Report could work. This is captured in the following overview figure.

Figure 12: Schematic overview of the reconstructed Theory of Change

Source: Authors

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Annex 3: Methodological approach

This annex describes in more detail the methodological approach adopted by the evaluation. It is divided in three subsections:

1. Process of Theory of change reconstruction
2. Data collection tools
3. Triangulation, analysis and reporting

Process of reconstruction for the Theory of Change.

Our teams developed and tested a comprehensive approach to (re)construct a Theory of Change on the basis of work done by academics of the London School of Economics. This goes beyond the usual linking of objectives to activities, outcomes and results, but aims at understanding what are the underlying lines of reasoning, working mechanisms and assumptions of the change process.

The development of a Theory of Change helps to understand strategic and operational planning of initiatives with ambitious and complex goals. It starts from a baseline analysis of the context and issues. It then maps out the logical sequence of changes that stakeholders expect to be necessary in the contextual conditions to support the desired long-term change. In this evaluation, the purpose of reconstructing the theory of change (ToC) was twofold:

- First of all, it was instrumental in documenting the development of the GEM report (and its predecessor) since its creation in 2002. Reconstructing the theory of change helped analyse the logic behind its overall approach and the context in which it was implemented. It allowed relating the sequence of changes of the envisaged outcomes and exposing the assumptions underlying the chosen approach.
- Secondly, it was used in a prospective way in order to identify lessons learned and develop recommendations for the future, taking into account the 2030 Agenda.

The table below lists the essential elements of a comprehensive ToC approach. It follows the logic that to fully understand the change process it is necessary for each element in the broader strategy to identify the 'why, what, who, when, and how'.[109]

Table 13: Required elements for a comprehensive ToC approach

Cluster	Elements of ToC	Questions for mapping ToC
Line of reasoning towards achieving results (mechanism and expected outcomes)	Problem Statement	• What is the problem/ challenge the GEM report is about to solve?
	Overall Goal	• What is the overall goal of the GEM report ? • How do such objectives relate to the challenge(s)?
	Change Process	• What actions / activities are planned in order to achieve the objectives? • What is the mechanism of change linking the inputs to short-term output/outcomes and long-term goal (How are the project activities envisaged to lead to the expected results)?
	Change Markers	• What are the milestones, indicators or other tools to assess/measure extent of change?
	Meta-Theory	• What is the underpinning theory that justifies the chosen change process?
Implementation (planned interventions)	Inputs	• What resources are made available (financial, institutional, partnerships, commitments etc.)? • What is the timeline associated with reaching the objectives?

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[109] Van Stolk, C., Ling, T. and Reding, A. (2011). Monitoring and evaluation in stabilisation interventions: Reviewing the state of the art and suggesting ways forward. RAND Europe, prepared for DFID Stabilisation Unit. Taken from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, . 7. Cited from: Stein, D., Valters, C., (2012), Understanding 'Theory of Change' in international development: a review of existing knowledge, p. 13.

Cluster	Elements of ToC	Questions for mapping ToC
	Institutional / organisational	• What coordination mechanisms are put in place? • What institutional rules and requirements have a likely effect on implementation?
	Actors	• Who are involved and what are their responsibilities and cooperation arrangements?
Practical implementation (Outcomes and context)	Assumptions	• What are the beliefs, values, and unquestioned elements for each step of the change process?
	Internal Risks	• What are the potential modalities of the activities that may undermine its success?
	External Risks	• What are external risks to the activities with the potential to undermine its success and outline plans to overcome these?
	Obstacles to Success	• What are obstacles likely to threaten the change process? • What plans are outlined to overcome them?
	Knock-On Effects	• What are the potential unintended consequences, both positive and negative?

Data collection tools.

Desk review

As an essential component of the evaluation process, the evaluation team analysed the available GEM reports and related documents to extract information relevant to each question in the evaluation matrix. Documental information served as the initial basis to address lines of inquiry. A mapping of documentation included in the review was produced during the inception phase and updated during data collection (see Annex 6). More in detail, the desk research included the following:

- Key GEM Report strategic documents (including management plans/reports, results and KPI frameworks, progress reports);
- GEM Report research outputs and products (including publications, concept notes, stakeholder engagement notes, and process documents);
- GEM Report communication products and process documentation (including published communication products, strategies, communication monitoring data, schedules, distribution lists);
- Administrative documentation, including organigram, budgets and financial overviews;

While a significant amount of GEM documentation was publicly accessible, the team also relied on documentation from other actors, notably UIS, IAEG-SDGs, and donors. The team also looked at documentation from the users of GEM Report products, including how international programs and networks in the field of education utilize and reference them.

To gain further insights into the utilization and impact of GEM reports within the academic discourse, the research team also analysed outcomes of major education conferences held over the past three years. This analysis encompassed research papers, presentations, and conclusions, serving to investigate the influence of GEM reports and their role in shaping academic debates. In addition to this, the team looked at the references to the GEM Report and related products in international education conferences and networks (CIES, UKFIET, BAICE, RISE, among others) as well as in academic blogs and opinion pieces. This documentation analysis supported and integrated both, interviews and the bibliometric analysis.

Semi-structured interview

A significant share of evidence came from interviews with a substantial variety of stakeholders at UNESCO, starting with the GEM report team, but also other key stakeholders at UNESCO HQ and beyond. In the inception phase, four scoping interviews were conducted with the GEM Report

Staff and UNESCO HQ to fine-tune the issues to be assessed and to identify the relevant evaluation methodology.

With the support of the GEM Report staff and through the help of a stakeholder mapping exercise (for more details, see Annex 5), the evaluation contacted and updated a list of informants along the data collection phase. Given the large number of GEM Report stakeholders, the sampling choices underlying the development of the interview list reflect two considerations:

- **Inclusivity.** It is important that the evaluation covers all voices, including all types of actors that contributed to the development of the GEM Report products, but also users and target audiences; The evaluation team also sought to ensure a gender and geographical balance among stakeholders across the various stakeholder groups.
- **Significance.** It is important that the interviews capture the points of view of those that are most informed about the processes, themes and issues affecting the work of the GEM Report.

For each interview, the evaluators followed interview checklists tailored to specific groups of stakeholders to guide the discussion.

The table below summarises the purposive sampling strategy for the interviews and the number of interviews conducted for each type of stakeholder. While gender was not a priority in the definition of sampling criteria, the evaluation engaged 24 out 37 women (51%) in its interviews.

Table 14: Conducted interviews by type of stakeholder and sex

Broad type of stakeholder	Type of stakeholder	Planned interviews	Conducted interviews	Of which with female interviewees
Academia		6	4	3
Advisory Board		5	4	2
National governments		2	0	0
Development partners	Civil Society/INGOs	5	2	1
	International Dev. Organizations	4	1	0
	Organisations related to the SDGs	3	2	0
	Regional cooperation partners	12	10	5
Donors	Bilateral public donors	3	2	2
	Multilateral donors	2	2	1
	Private donors	3	3	1
GEM Report Team		7	7	4
UNESCO	UNESCO HQ	4	4	2
	UNESCO Institutes	3	1	1
	UNESCO ROs and Fos	7	5	2
Total		66	47	24

Table 15: Conducted interviews by region and sex

	Female	Male	Total	% Female
Africa	0	1	1	0%
Asia and Pacific	4	5	9	44%
Europe and North America	5	2	7	71%
Global	14	14	28	50%
Latin America and Caribbean	1	1	2	50%
Total	24	23	47	51%

The interviews have also been analysed using Atlas TI. They were coded using the evaluation matrix to code all the quotes that relate to a specific evaluation criterion or evaluation question. In total, from the interviews, 471 quotes are coded in relation to the evaluation questions. The table below provides an overview of the number of quotes per question and respondent group.

Table 16: Analysis of interview input

	GEM team Gr=8	Donors Gr=7	Int partners Gr=10	UNESCO Gr=8	AB members Gr=7	Users Gr=4	Academics / institutions Gr=9	Total quotes
Relevance 1. Does the format and delivery mechanisms of the GEM Report and its associated products remain relevant for measuring progress towards SDG 4 globally?	5	5	6	6	5	1	3	50
Relevance 2. Have the themes addressed in the Report been relevant for the global, regional and national education communities to monitor progress?	5	4	9	6	6	2	4	40
Coherence 1a. Given its mandate as a global public good, to what extent are the GEM Report and its associated products coherent with other global, regional and national initiatives in the area of monitoring progress in education?	5	5	10	5	6	3	6	56
Coherence1b. What are the GEM Report's comparative strengths?	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	11
Effectiveness 1. To what extent have the GEM Report and associated products helped the global, regional and national education communities monitor progress on education in the SDGs?	1	5	10	5	5	4	5	36
Effectiveness 2. To what extent are the GEM Report and its research outputs credible? What measures have been undertaken to ensure a high level of quality? What aspects can be improved?	2	2	4	4	3	1	5	20
Effectiveness 3. How successful have the GEM Report's outreach and dissemination efforts been in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences?	6	5	8	6	5	4	7	48
Efficiency 1a. How efficiently are planning and implementation activities carried out?	3	2	1	2	1	1	3	14
Efficiency 1b. Are management arrangements efficient for the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities?	4	3	4	1	2	1	4	27
Efficiency 2. How efficient are the governance structures? Are there any grounds to revise the governance mechanisms and the role of the Advisory Board?	3	3	4	2	4	0	1	20
Sustainability 1a. What measures have been taken to strengthen the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of financial and human resources (partnerships and resource mobilisation)?	4	5	5	1	5	1	1	30
Sustainability 1b. How efficient is the GEM Report development and production process in terms of environmental considerations?	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
Assessment - overall reflections	4	3	5	3	5	0	2	29
Recommendations	5	6	7	6	4	3	4	36

Online survey

The evaluation also relied on data gathered through a global online survey. The survey was designed to incorporate the views of a broader selection of UNESCO partners, including the final users of the GEM Report. Because of both limited available data on the GEM Report target audiences and convenience reason, the survey sampling strategy was not probability-based. Instead, the survey was shared with all contacts in the GEM Report internal CRM system, with the aim to reach the broadest range of potential respondents; at the same time, to avoid possible bias, a number of background questions were included to disaggregate responses by characteristic of respondents and check for overrepresentation of certain types of stakeholders or geographical regions.

The majority of questions were closed questions with categories, which allowed a quantitative analysis through descriptive statistics, presented in the report through graphs, tables and figures. In addition to this, respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for improvements through a small number of open answers. These were separately categorised, analysed and used to integrate findings across the report.

The survey was developed in English and translated in French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arab. It was then deployed through a hyper-link and disseminated via e-mail to a selection of target audiences with the support of the GEM Report staff.

A detailed report on the survey results is available in Annex 5.

Bibliometric, citation and social media analysis

The evaluation included a bibliometric analysis with two objectives:

- To assess on what sources the GEM Reports are based, and how this changed over time;

- To contribute to measuring the effectiveness of the outreach and communication activities around the GEM reports and associated publications (Citation and social media analysis).

Three types of analysis were conducted:

- Analysis of sources used by GEM reports
- Citation analysis
- Analysis of social media impact

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A more detailed description of each analysis is provided in the table below.

Table 17: Description of types of bibliometric analysis performed

Type of analysis	Objectives and rationale	Inputs used	Indicators
Analysis of sources used by GEM reports	This analysis helped to reflect upon the evidence basis used to write the GEM reports, looking for possible bias and assessing the quality of the sources.	• GEM Report 2019 (Migration, displacement and education) • GEM Report 2021/2022 (Non-state actors in education) Both based on reference lists (BibTex), distinguishing between thematic and monitoring section	• Comparison of the relative share of publication types used in the two reports (e.g. journal articles, monographies, international reports, national reports and strategies, newspaper, social media and internet, datasets…) • Comparison of the year of publication of the sources used • Comparison of the language of the sources used • Comparison of the country/region of origin of the sources used (if possible) • Comparison of the country/region mentioned in the titles • Comparison of the impact factor of the publications used
Citation analysis	This analysis provided data on the extent to which GEM reports and associated products (e.g. background papers) are used in other (scientific) publications and accessible to the academic world.	GEM Reports 2019, 2020 and 2021/2 in the five official languages of UNESCO, Gender report 2019, Spotlight reports	• Comparison of the relative share of publication types citing the GEM report • Comparison of the languages of publications citing the GEM Report • Comparison of the country/region of origin of publications citing the GEM Report • Comparison of the impact factor of publications citing the GEM Report
Analysis of social media impact	This analysis measures the effectiveness of the outreach activities. Assuming that the GEM Report team already uses most of the available indicators for monitoring purposes (e.g. through SproutSocial), the focus of this analysis is on accountancy rather than on the identification of improvement potentials.	Web indicators provided by GEM report team	• Downloads over time of Full reports (different languages), summary reports, regional reports, policy papers (most and least popular) in total and by region (global South vs. global North) • Twitter: number of followers, impressions, engagements, clicks over time • Facebook: Likes, impressions, engagements over time • Media coverage: number of articles

Triangulation, analysis and reporting.

For any evaluation, it is unrealistic to rule out any bias in the collection of data. For this reason, the methodological approach ensured that answers to each evaluation question were always collected via multiple data collection methods or by approaching more than one type of data source and /or stakeholder. Opinions and perceptions from stakeholders collected in interviews were cross-checked (triangulated) with data obtained from other sources (desk research, and online questionnaires, bibliometric analysis) to ensure corroboration. Where discrepancies arose, these were investigated further by means of multiple sources.

In line with UNESCO's Evaluation Policy (2022-2029), the evaluation complied with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, and UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The evaluation team ensured that ethical, environmental, human rights, and gender equality principles were duly integrated in all consultations and at all stages of the evaluation process. In particular, the evaluation adopted the following measures:

- **Engagement of evaluators experienced** in applying culturally-sensitive approaches in evaluation and well aware of importance of ethical principles;
- **Explicitly diverse representation** and inclusivity in data collection, actively involving stakeholders from different backgrounds, genders, and perspectives;
- Adoption of **interview approaches** and data collection methods that provided engaged actors with an open, inclusive space to freely voice opinions and concerns;
- **Informed consent and confidentiality** in all data collection methods, ensuring voluntary and well-understood participation in the evaluation process;

Following the Evaluation TOR, the evaluation methodology does not include specific questions on gender within the evaluation matrix. Still following TORs, the evaluation did however include specific environmental considerations.

All data collected were continuously analyzed based on the agreed approach laid out in the evaluation matrix (see Annex 4). By continuously checking information obtained through desk research, surveys, and interviews with different stakeholders against the structure of the evaluation report, the evaluation team ensured that no key insights were lost. After the data collection phase, the experts investigated the whole body of evidence gathered as a whole and made an overall assessment in line with the evaluation questions. Because different sources of data collection were used, the assessment phase consisted of critical triangulation of evidence found. Throughout the evaluation, and in the final delivery, a clear distinction was made between perceptions, (expert) analysis, or objectively verifiable evidence. Overall, the evaluation team's reasoning was made fully transparent and extensively discussed within the evaluation team and with the Evaluation Reference Group to ensure a broad consensus on the methodology and on the interpretation of findings and resulting conclusions.

During the inception meeting and through continuous contacts with the GEM Report Team, the evaluation team explicitly illustrated the limitations of the research method, as well as intrinsic views and perceptions originating in the institutional background and experience of the contractors, with the aim to make them comprehensible for the awarding authority and externals. Internal quality control mechanisms included internal peer review, which was based on a constant communication process between the evaluation consortium partners.

Once evidence was triangulated and associated with evaluation questions, the evaluators applied judgment criteria based on the evaluation matrix to interpret them and formulate answers for each evaluation question. Towards the end of data collection, preliminary findings were presented to the GEM Report team to assess the need for expanding data collection. Findings were summarised through a concise summative assessment, presented in the report by the following pictograms:

- ○ Not at all in place
- ◔ To a limited extent in place
- ◑ To a modest extent in place
- ◕ To a large extent in place
- ● Fully in place

The formulated conclusions were based on the evidence gathered, and in cases of contradictory evidence, these discrepancies were clearly articulated in the report. Based on the conclusions, the evaluation team developed recommendations and detailed lessons learned on how the GEM Report's processes, products, and impact could be improved to better achieve the stated expected results in the future. These recommendations were tailored, specifying specific suggestions for the GEM Report team. All findings, conclusions, and recommendations were condensed into a Draft Evaluation Report, which adhered to the UNESCO and UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports.

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

The reconstruction of the ToC allows to position the evaluation questions and to embed them in the overarching line of reasoning. This is presented in the following figure and table.

Figure 13: Embedding evaluation questions in Reconstructed ToC

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Evaluation question	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Method of data collection
Relevance (*Is the intervention doing the right things?*)			
Does the format and delivery mechanisms of the GEM Report and its associated products remain relevant for measuring progress towards SDG 4 globally?	• To what extent are the GEM Report activities supporting the envisaged change process and supporting the delivery of the mandate? • To what extent has the format and delivery mechanism of the GEM report changed over time since 2018? • To what extent have the data sources of the report changed over the years? • What are the user needs regarding the measurement of progress towards SDG 4, among key stakeholders, such as educational communities, policymakers and civil society? • What could the GEMR change in its practice to respond to possible future changes in the measuring of progress towards SDG 4 globally in the coming years? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The GEM Report activities and associated products, their format and delivery mechanisms are relevant in the light of the envisaged change process.	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Bibliometric analysis on evolution of sources used by the GEM Report • Interview with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users • Survey education stakeholders
Have the themes addressed in the Report been relevant for the global, regional and national education communities to monitor progress?	• What role does the thematic approach play in the overall change process of the GEM Report? • How has the choice for thematic topics been decided? Is this process sufficiently balancing the needs of global, regional and national education communities? • How are the themes supporting monitoring and progressing towards the SDG 4? • How do key stakeholders, such as educational communities, policymakers and civil society assess the relevance of the key themes? • What further suggestions for improvements can be collected from stakeholders on the thematic focus?	The themes covered are relevant in the context of monitoring and progressing towards the SDGs	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Bibliometric analysis on increased attention to specific themes • Interview with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users • Survey education stakeholders
Coherence (*How well does the intervention fit?*)			
Given its mandate as a global public good, to what extent are the GEM Report and its associated products coherent with other global, regional and national initiatives in the area of monitoring progress in education?	• How does the GEM report relate and compare to other reporting tools to SDG? • What is the position of the GEM Report in the UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators • What other global, regional and national initiatives are identified that monitor progress in education? • To what extent does the GEM report complement these initiatives? What areas of possible overlaps exist? • What role does the GEM Report play in the overall wider environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4 (support the institutionalisation of processes for progressing towards the SDGs, to work on the monitoring of progress; and helping highlight creative tension to stimulate reflections and policy development)? • What synergies exist/ can be explored? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	GEM Report is aligned to other initiatives and contributes to a conducive environment by which countries are stimulated to progress towards the SDG 4.	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users • Survey education stakeholders
What are the GEM Report's comparative strengths?	• What does the GEM report provide that cannot be found elsewhere? • How is the authority of the GEM report viewed? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The GEM report has specific comparative strengths	• Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users

Evaluation question	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Method of data collection
			• Survey education stakeholders
Effectiveness (*Is the intervention achieving its objectives?*)			
To what extent have the GEM Report and associated products helped the global, regional and national education communities monitor progress on education in the SDGs?	• Are global, regional, national education communities using the GEM report for their reporting? • How do various users assess the utility of the GEM report for monitoring progress on education in the SDG • What is the reputation of the report among main user groups of the reports? • What agenda-setting power can be attributed to the report? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The GEM report contributes to global monitoring of progress on education in the SDG	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users • Survey education stakeholders
To what extent are the GEM Report and its research outputs credible? What measures have been undertaken to ensure a high level of quality? What aspects can be improved?	• What actions are taken to ensure quality and credibility of its evidence, research and data? • How is quality and credibility of the GEM report assessed by its main stakeholders • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The GEM report evidence, research and data, as well as its policy messages are credible as judged by stakeholders and supported by evidence	• Document review • Bibliometric analysis on academic use of GEM Report • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners). • Interviews with different types of users • Interviews with contributors (academics / institutions) • Survey education stakeholders
How successful have the GEM Report's outreach and dissemination efforts been in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences?	• What outreach and dissemination strategy has been followed? To what extent has it been implemented as planned? • What trends can be observed in broader use and readership of the report (downloads, distribution hard-copies, citations, social media presence) • How do stakeholders in various user groups assess access and dissemination of the report? • To what extent do the targeted audiences take up the policy messages and use the reports?[110] • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The GEM Report and the outreach and dissemination strategy supported the uptake and use of policy messages	• Document review • Assessment of user data, including bibliometric data • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners, NGOs/civil society). • Interviews with different types of users • Survey education stakeholders
Efficiency (*How well are resources being used?*)			
How efficiently are planning and implementation activities carried out?	• What concrete activities / workflows can be defined? • What are the allocations of staff / tasks within the GEM report team? • What is the extent of work developed in collaboration with external partners (including UNESCO)? • What suggestions for further improvements can be collected from stakeholders (concrete suggestions, or based on benchmarks)?	The planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities is conducted efficiently	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners).

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[110] NB: See earlier footnote on the Knowledge uptake and Utilisation Tool: Reach, Uptake and Impact.

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Evaluation question	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Method of data collection
Are management arrangements efficient for the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities?	• What management arrangements are in place to support the functioning of the GEM report? • How are planning, implementation and monitoring of activities affected by existing management arrangements? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	The management arrangements support the planning, implementation and monitoring of GEM Report activities in an efficient way	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners).
How efficient are the governance structures? Are there any grounds to revise the governance mechanisms and the role of the Advisory Board?	• What governance structures are in place to support the functioning of the GEM report? • Do the governance mechanisms and the arrangements of the Advisory Board lead to desired outcomes and buy-in of main stakeholders? • What suggestions for further improvement can be collected from stakeholders?	Governance structure supports ownership of main stakeholders and effective decision making in an efficient way.	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners), especially AB members
Sustainability (*Will the benefits last?*)			
What measures have been taken to strengthen the sustainability of the GEM Report in terms of financial and human resources (partnerships and resource mobilisation)?	• What is the existing financial support structure (donors)? • What are donor expectations of the GEM Report (in the coming years)? • What (financial) guarantees have been provided to the GEM Report? • What measures have been taken to mobilise additional financial and human resources in 2018-2023? • What improvements can be identified regarding the partnerships and resource mobilisations since 2018? What can be further improved in coming years?	Steps taken to increase financial sustainability	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners).
How efficient is the GEM Report development and production process in terms of environmental considerations?	• What environment considerations have been integrated in the development and production process? • How do such considerations compare to those of other partners active (benchmarks)? • What development can be identified in terms of the environmental footprint of the GEM report since 2018	Environmental footprint and improvements taken since 2018	• Document review • Interviews with GEM team • Interviews with stakeholders (donors, UNESCO, partners).

Annex 5: Stakeholder mapping

By its nature, the processes that embody the activities of the GEM Report involve a broad range of partners and stakeholders, be it in its conception, production, or usage. A stakeholder map is a valuable tool utilized in evaluations to identify and analyse the various stakeholders involved in a project or program. Its purpose is to map out the key stakeholders, understand their interests, influence, and level of involvement, and determine the appropriate strategies for engaging with them throughout the evaluation process.

This annex is an attempt to order and synthesize the diversity of partners contributing at various level to the effectiveness and impact of the Report. By identifying and categorizing stakeholders, the exercise was used in the inception phase to facilitate the development of targeted methodological approaches and data collection tools, bringing the evaluation closer to its purposes. This annex was also used in the inception phase to better identify actors to engage through interviews.

Stakeholders can be categorized in six main categories: UNESCO actors, Donors, Academia, International Development Community, Governmental partners, Direct support to the Report production.

A graphical representation of the stakeholder map is included in the figure below.
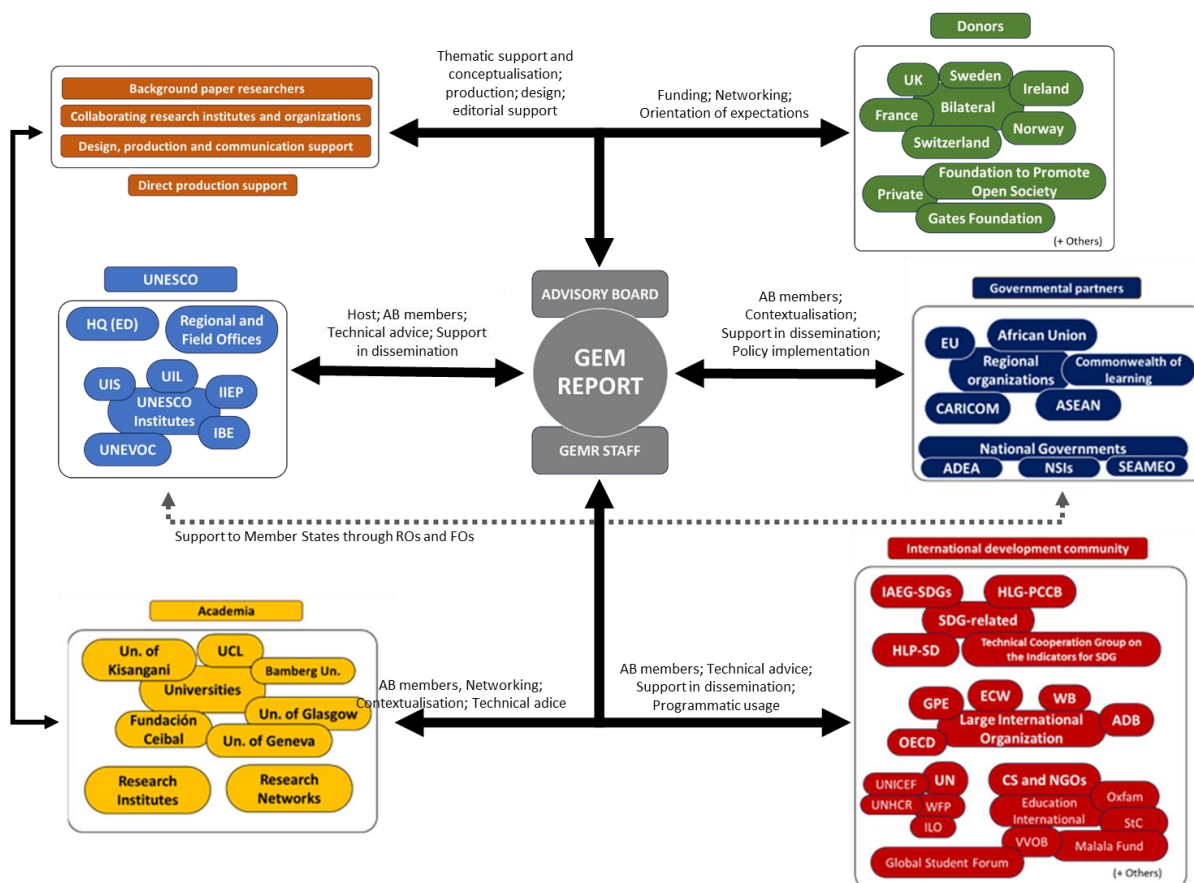
More in detail, the stakeholders have the following roles and responsibilities:

Main stakeholders	Main roles
UNESCO	Host of the GEM Report
HQ ED	Consultation, Networking, users
HQ Bureau for the Management of Support Services	Supporting role

Main stakeholders	Main roles
Regional and Field Offices	Consultation, Networking, users
UNESCO Institutes	
UIS	Provision of data and analysis
UIL, IIEP, IBE, UNEVOC	Consultation, Technical inputs, Networking
Donors[111]	
Bilateral donors (United Kingdom, Switzerland, Sweden, Ireland, Norway, France + others)	Funding, Networking
Private donors (Foundation to Promote Open Society, Bill and Melinda Gates foundation + others)	
Academia	
University of Geneva	Consultation, technical inputs, contributors, users
Fundación CEIBAL	
Université de Kisangani	
University College London	
Researchers who produced background papers	
SUMMA Education Research and Innovation Laboratory for Latin America and the Caribbean	
UNICEF Innocenti	
International development community	
SDG-related fora	
IAEG-SDGs - Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal	Conception and consultation, technical inputs, users
HLG-PCCB - High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	
High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development	
Technical Cooperation Group on the Indicators for SDG	
Global International Development Organizations	
GPE - Global Partnership for Education	Consultation, technical inputs, users
ECW - Education cannot wait	
OECD	
WB - World Bank	
ADB - Asian Development Bank	
UN System	
UNICEF	Consultation, technical inputs, users
UNHCR	
WFP	
ILO	
Civil Society and NGOs	
Education International	Consultation, technical inputs, users
Oxfam	
Save the Children	
VVOB Education for Development	
Malala fund	
Global Student Forum	
Governmental partners	
Regional organizations (EU, African Union, ASEAN, CARICOM, Commonwealth of Learning)	Conception and consultation, users
National governments or networks of Ministries (e.g. SEAMEO)	

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[111] The 8 mentioned donors provided 80% of funding between 2018 and 2022

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Annex 6: Findings of the bibliometric analysis

One of the objectives of the bibliometric analysis is to review the references used in the GEM Reports and explore how these developed over time. This can be considered the 'internal' component of the bibliometric analysis, for which some first findings were reported in the progress report. The results of the external component, such as the review of citations of the GEM report and of the social media analysis are reported for the first time in the draft evaluation report.

Methodological approach

Purpose: The analysis is intended to help reflect upon the evidence basis used to write the GEM reports, looking for possible bias and assessing the quality of the sources. It feeds into the answer to the evaluation questions related to effectiveness: "To what extent are the GEM Report and its research outputs credible? What measures have been undertaken to ensure a <u>high level of quality</u>? What aspects can be <u>improved</u>?"

Documents: In order to measure developments across the evaluation period, a comparison was drawn between the two last reports available in June 2023, i.e. the GEM Report 2019 (Migration, displacement and education) and 2021/2022 (Non-state actors in education)

Data basis: The reference lists were extracted from the final manuscript via EndNote. In the case of the reference list of the GEM Report 2021/2022 it was possible to distinguish between references used in the monitoring and in the thematic part of the report.

Overview of data basis

N°	Name of the file	Description
1	GEM report 2019 complete_all references.xlsx	All references used in the GEM Report 2019 (Author, title, document type, year of publication) (n=1143)
2	GEM report 2021 Monitoring_all references.xlsx	All references used in the GEM Report 2021 **Monitoring part** (Author, title, document type, year of publication) (n=674)
3	GEM report 2021 Thematic_all references.xlsx	All references used in the GEM Report 2021 **Thematic part** (Author, title, document type, year of publication) (n=1280)
4	GEM report 2021 complete_all references.xlsx	All references used in the GEM Report 2021 (Author, title, document type, year of publication) (n=1918)
5	GEMR 2019 complete_journals and books.xlsx	All academic sources used in the GEMR 2019 which could be found in Scopus via doi or book title (Author, title, journal/book, language of document, open access, country of first author) (n=177)
6	GEMR 2021 Monitoring_journals and books.xlsx	All academic sources used in the GEMR 2021 **Monitoring part** which could be found in Scopus via doi or book title (Author, title, journal/book, language of document, open access, country of first author) (n=175)
7	GEMR 2021 thematic_journals and books.xlsx	All academic sources used in the GEMR 2021 **Thematic part** which could be found in Scopus via doi or book title (Author, title, journal/book, language of document, open access, country of first author) (n=220)
8	GEMR 2021 complete_journals and books.xlsx	All academic sources used in the GEMR 2021 which could be found in Scopus via doi or book title (Author, title, journal/book, language of document, open access, country of first author) (n=395)

Main results

The total number of sources cited in the GEM Report thematic flagship publication was much higher in 2021 (1919) than in 2019 (1143).

Publication type

The GEM Reports are to a large extent based on grey literature (53% of sources cited in the GEM Report 2019 and 39% in the GEM Report 2021). This includes mainly reports from international organisations, but also from national ministries or agencies as well as from NGOs, think tanks etc. Articles from peer reviewed journals form a significant share of the sources, respectively 23 and 29% in 2019 and 2021.

The category "unclear document type", which represents 15-22% of all sources, includes among others many blog articles from international organisations and civil society organisations. While this is not academic literature, the information and data used is often retrieved from international statistics.

Figure 14: Publication type of sources cited in the GEM Report 2021 (n=1918)
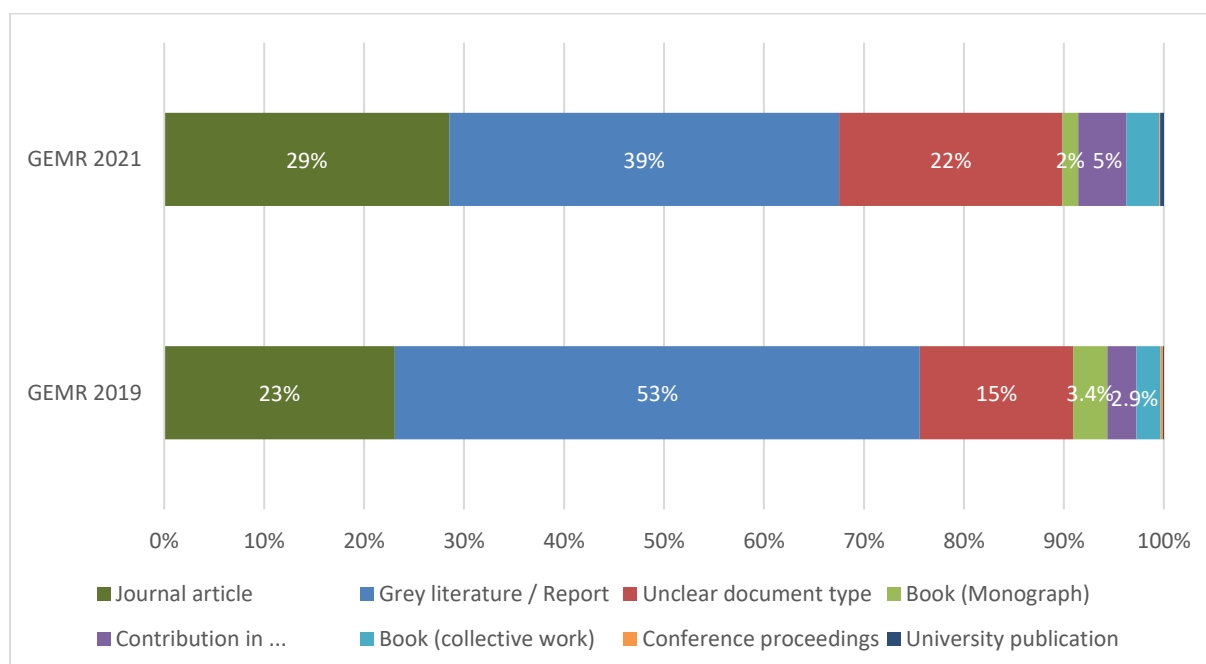
Language

The overwhelming majority of sources cited in the GEM Report are written in English. French, German, Portuguese and Spanish follow, while other languages are represented only once or twice in the bibliography. Sources in languages other than English, French and Spanish are usually focusing on a particular topic in a particular country – they don't have the comparative and cross-sectoral scope of international reports, which are almost always available (and therefore cited) in English.

Language	Sources in GEM Report 2021	Sources in GEM Report 2019
Arabic	1	0
Dutch	2	1
English	**1793**	**1092**
Finnish	0	1
French	**44**	**10**

Language	Sources in GEM Report 2021	Sources in GEM Report 2019
German	6	**10**
Greek	2	2
Italian	2	5
Portuguese	**37**	2
Russian	1	0
Spanish	**27**	7
Swedish	1	2
Turkish	1	0
Ukrainian	1	0

Affiliation of first author in journal articles

Looking at the institutional affiliation of the first author of papers cited by the GEM Report in 2019 and 2021, the dominance of the Anglophone world already indicated by the language analysis is confirmed. A majority of articles cited are written by scholars belonging to US American universities, followed by the United Kingdom and Canada. Taken as a whole, Europe is well-represented as well, even if non-Anglophone countries mostly reach less than 10 articles per country with the exception of Germany (in 2021). In Asia, China and Hong Kong dominate with together 7 articles cited in 2019 and 20 in 2021. African research institutions are not well-represented in the sample, with some exceptions for South Africa (4 articles in 2019 and 3 in 2021), Kenya and Uganda (one article each in 2021).

Figure 15: Affiliation of first author of articles from peer reviewed journals cited in the GEM Report 2019, retrieved in scopus (n=174)
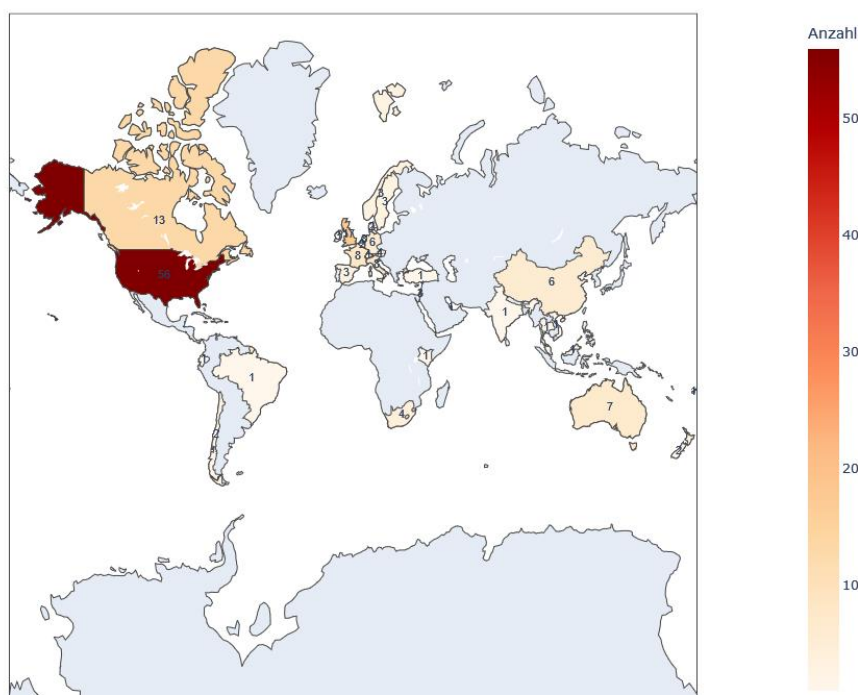
Conclusion

A comparison between the bibliographies of the GEM Report thematic flagship publication in 2019 and 2021 indicates that some efforts have been made to increase the evidence base of the report. The number of sources cited has increased by 68% and the share of peer-reviewed journal articles has increased as well, which can be seen as a positive trend with respect to the quality of sources used. Moreover, the diversity in terms of language and geographic origin of the sources

has also increased, even though the structural dominance of Anglophone countries and of the English language remains unbroken.

Analysis of citations

Methodological approach

Purpose: The citation analysis provides data on the extent to which GEM reports and associated products (e.g. background papers) are used in other (scientific) publications and accessible to the academic world. This will contribute to answering the evaluation question on effectiveness "How successful have the GEM Report's outreach and dissemination efforts been in contributing to an enhanced uptake of policy messages by their target audiences?"

- Which are the GEM Reports and associated products that can be found on Eric (as the main database on education featuring also non-journal sources) and Scopus (as a world-leading database for academic literature)?
- How often are the GEM Reports and associated publications cited?

Documents:

- Search terms : REF("Global Education Monitoring Report") or REF("全球教育监测报告") or REF("Informe de seguimiento de la educación en el mundo ") or REF("Rapport mondial de suivi sur l'éducation") or REF("التقرير العالمي لرصد التعليم") or REF("Spotlight on basic education completion and foundational learning")
- The research focused on the GEM Report in all official languages, starting from the assumption that the GEM Report would be cited either in the title (in the case of background papers, gender reports, regional reports, youth reports and summaries) or as author or editor in the case of policy papers.
- Scopus was chosen because of its large coverage of academic journals and books in the social sciences and humanities. In addition, a research was conducted in ERIC. ERIC does not allow for a search in the reference list of indexed publications, so a full-text research was conducted but did not bring about useful results.

Database:

- Scopus (search for references): n=753
- Eric (full-text search): n=8

Limitations:

The overall number of articles and books citing the GEM Report and associated publications is most probably higher than what could be retrieved from Scopus in the framework of this evaluation. One reason is that there is no agreed way of citing the publications, especially for the background papers, which don't have a doi. If the authors did not mention the GEM Report in the title (e.g. Hersh M., *Technology for inclusion* (Background paper prepared for the 2020 global education monitoring report: Inclusion and education), (2020)), it will not feature in the list. In addition the Scopus database itself has its limitations, as it doesn't include non-academic publications and has a bias towards journals and books written in English.

Main results

Citation numbers

The GEM Report and associated publications are cited in a large number of scientific papers, showing that the GEM Report products are discussed and used as a resource in

advancing education and development research. A search on Scopus covering the timeframe January 2019-June 2023 produced 753 publications referring to one or more GEM Report sources published since 2019 (including the GEM Report 2019). The most cited source within the timeframe is the GEM Report 2020 on inclusion (cited by 302), ahead of the GEM Report 2019 on migration and displacement (cited by 192). These are followed by the background papers (cited together by 135) (see Figure below). With a few exceptions for French and Spanish versions of the GEM Report, all sources cited English versions of the reports and summaries. This is not surprising, since 95% of the papers citing the GEM Report are themselves in English. It also reflects the bias of Scopus towards English-speaking books and journals.

Slightly over half of the sources citing the GEM Report and associated publications are Open Access, being thus accessible to researchers independent of the resources of their institution.

The publications citing the GEM Report are from 480 different sources (i.e. journals, books, conference proceedings). Among the journals or books most represented in the sample are those five titles, featuring each more than ten different articles or chapters with references to the GEM Report :

- International Encyclopaedia of Education (4th edition): 29
- Sustainability (Switzerland): 22
- International Journal of Educational Development: 18
- International Journal of Inclusive Education: 18
-
- Education Sciences: 13

Figure 16: Number of publications referring to a Global Education Monitoring Report or other associated publications featuring "Global Education Monitoring Report" in their title and published since 2019, retrieved from Scopus in June 2023 (n=753)
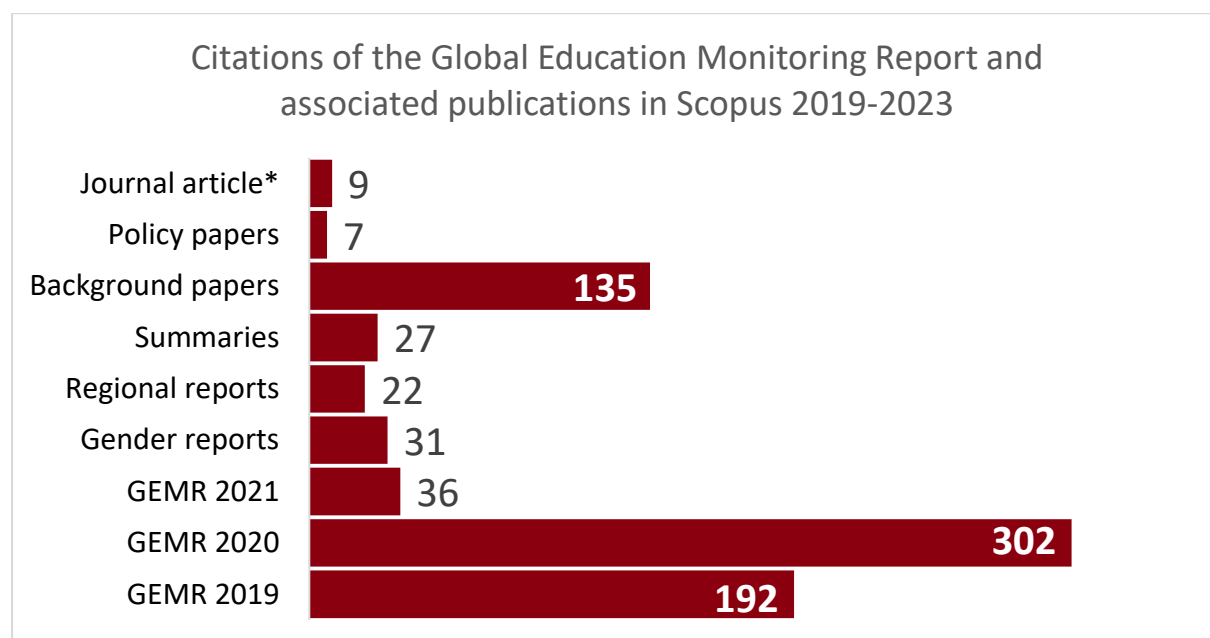
*The journal article is Antoninis M.,et al., All means all: An introduction to the '2020 Global Education Monitoring Report' on inclusion, Prospects: Quarterly Review of Comparative Education, 49, 3–4, pp. 103-109, (2020). Other journal articles published by individual analysts of the GEM Report team are not included, since the words "Global Education Monitoring Report" do not appear in their titles.

Language of publication and affiliation of first author

Around 95% of publications in Scopus citing GEM Report publications are in English, followed by 2% in Spanish. Most publications citing the GEM Report are from authors affiliated to a research institution in an Anglophone country, especially the USA but including also South Africa and Australia. These results must be interpreted with care, because Scopus as a database is biased with an overrepresentation of journals and books in English language. It is worth noting, however, that 30 authors from India and 21 from China cited the GEM Report , showing that it is perceived as relevant also beyond Europe and North America.

Figure 17: Affiliation of first author citing GEM Reports from 2019 onwards and associated publications (e.g. background papers, gender reports etc.) based on Scopus (n=753)
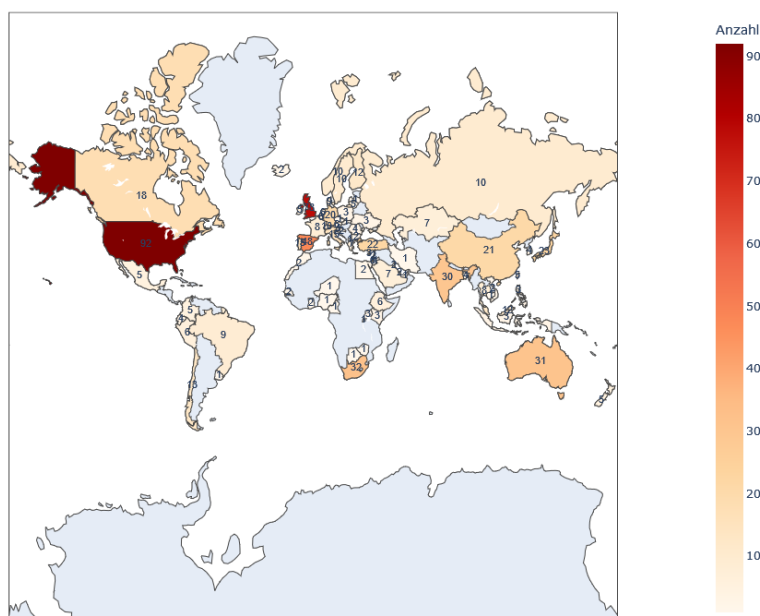
Conclusion

The GEM Report and associated publications are cited in numerous scientific papers, showing that the GEM Report products are discussed and used as a resource in advancing education and development research. Most cited publications are the reports themselves. Overall, there is a high variety in the publications referring to the GEM Report , both as regards the country of affiliation of authors, as well as the journals or book series. Data from Scopus indicate that English publications have a higher impact, but this should not mean that translations are not well-received, since Scopus is itself biased towards English journals. Publications in other languages referring to translated versions of the GEM Report might not have been included here. The visibility of the GEM Report and associated publications in Academia, however, is still hampered by the fact that they are not referenced in Scopus or other relevant databases such as ERIC, except for a few journal articles published by team members.

Analysis of dissemination activities and social media impact

Methodological approach

Purpose: The analysis of social media data measures the effectiveness of the outreach activities of the GEM Report team. Assuming that the GEM Report team already uses most of the available indicators for monitoring purposes (e.g. through SproutSocial), the focus of this analysis is on accountancy rather

than on the identification of improvement potentials. Indeed, as external observers the evaluation team does not have access to other data than the GEM Report team itself. Based on this data, visualisations will be developed to answer the following evaluation sub-question: "What trends can be observed in broader use and readership of the report (downloads, distribution hard-copies, citations, social media presence)?"

Database: web indicators 2022 provided by GEM Report team: 05_UNESCO Data\Web Indicators 2022.xlsx

Main results

Dissemination of the GEM Report

The online version of the GEM Report is available on the UNESCO-GEM Report website for download in five languages (English, French, Chinese, Spanish and Arabic). The number of downloads is typically highest in the few months following the launch and declines subsequently, taking into account that not all language versions are launched simultaneously (see Figure 17)

Figure 18: Cumulated number of full reports downloaded from UNESCO websites (all languages) between 2016 and 2022 (Source: GEM Report web indicators)
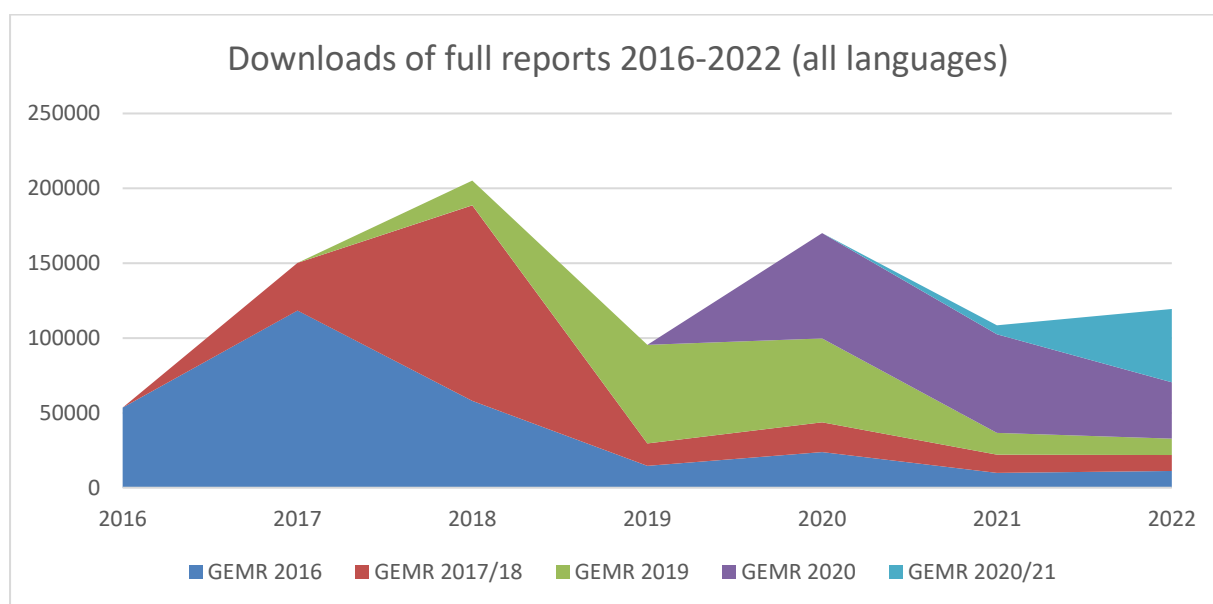
Overall, the total number of downloads for the GEM Report 2016 to 2020/21 has been decreasing after reaching a peak in 2018. However, the download numbers over time differ for each report. The **GEM Report 2020 had more stable download numbers** than the previous reports so that in the end, it could reach a similar number of downloads. The Covid-19 pandemic, by preventing the organisation of in-person launch events, might have had an impact on the dissemination of the report. Alternative dissemination strategies (e.g. via social media) could have more continuous effects while not leading to the same peaks as in-person events.

The GEM Report is in most cases available in the five official languages of UNESCO. A comparison of full report downloads by language shows that the **English version is by far the most downloaded one**, followed by the Spanish and French versions.

Figure 19: Full report downloads by language and by year (source: GEM Report web indicators)

Total number of downloads 2019-2022 per language (%)			
Language	GEMR 2019	GEMR 2020	GEMR 2021 /22
English	70%	79%	95%
French	5%	4%	1%
Spanish	21%	14%	3%
Arabic	3%	2%	1%
Chinese	2%	not translated	not translated
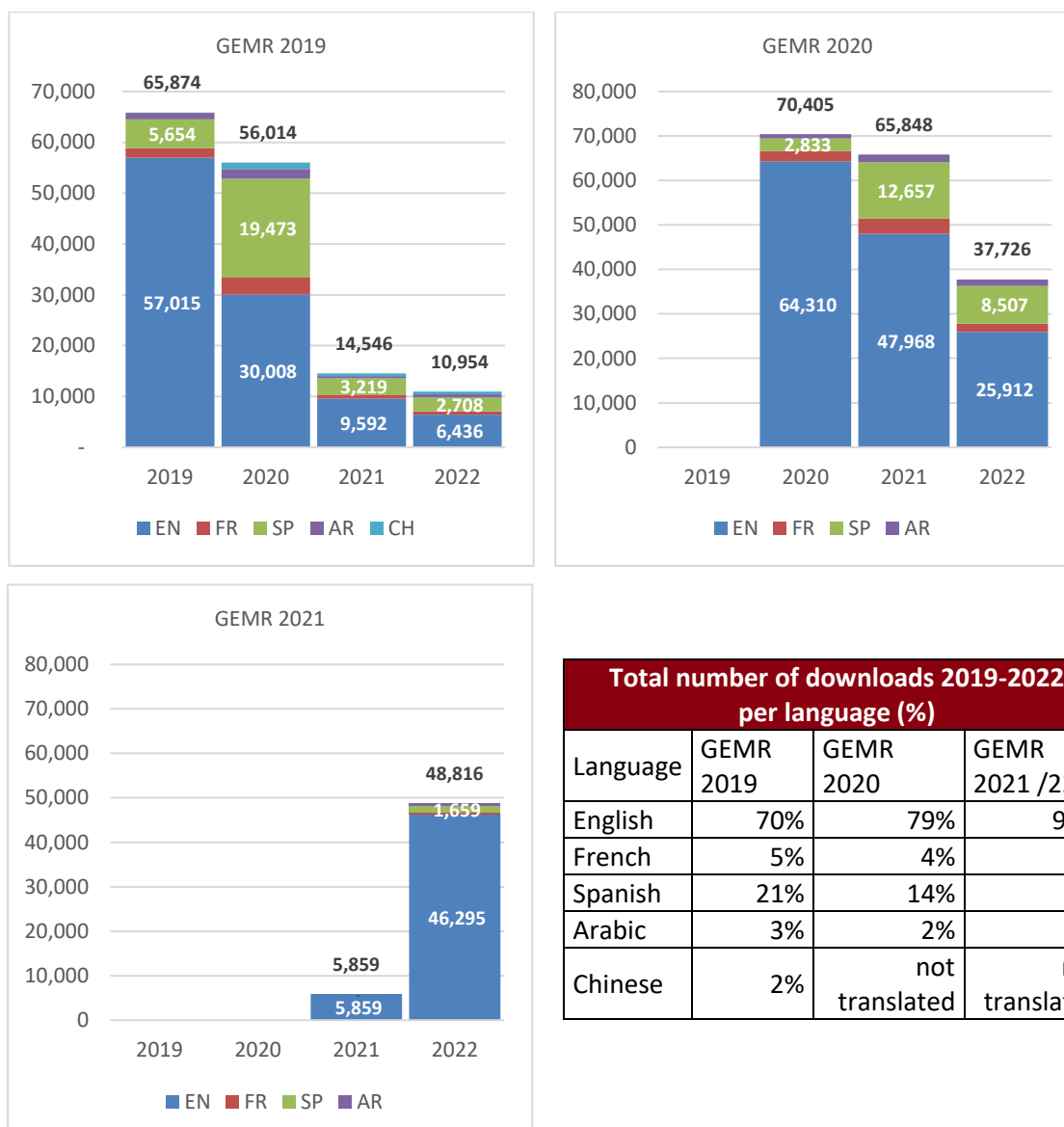
Looking at regional reports, however, the picture is different. Not surprisingly, for the regional reports, the number of downloads in the most spoken language of the focus region is comparatively higher – this being said, in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, Russia is less of a "lingua franca" than Arab in the Arab states (see fig. 7). As for policy papers, it is striking that some language versions were not downloaded very often, an extreme example being the Arab version of the policy paper "Education Finance Watch 2021", which was downloaded only 7 times in 2022, compared with 59 times in Spanish and 54 in Chinese (all of them were launched in the second half of 2022). This raises questions as to the costs of translation compared to the impact. Simple answers are difficult to provide, however, since there are examples of policy papers which were much more successful, like the one on "Act now: Reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the cost of achieving SDG 4", which was downloaded in Arabic 154 in the first six months following the publication. The relevance of a report or paper for a specific region or country might be difficult to predict.

Figure 20: Download of regional reports by language (source: GEM Report web indicators)
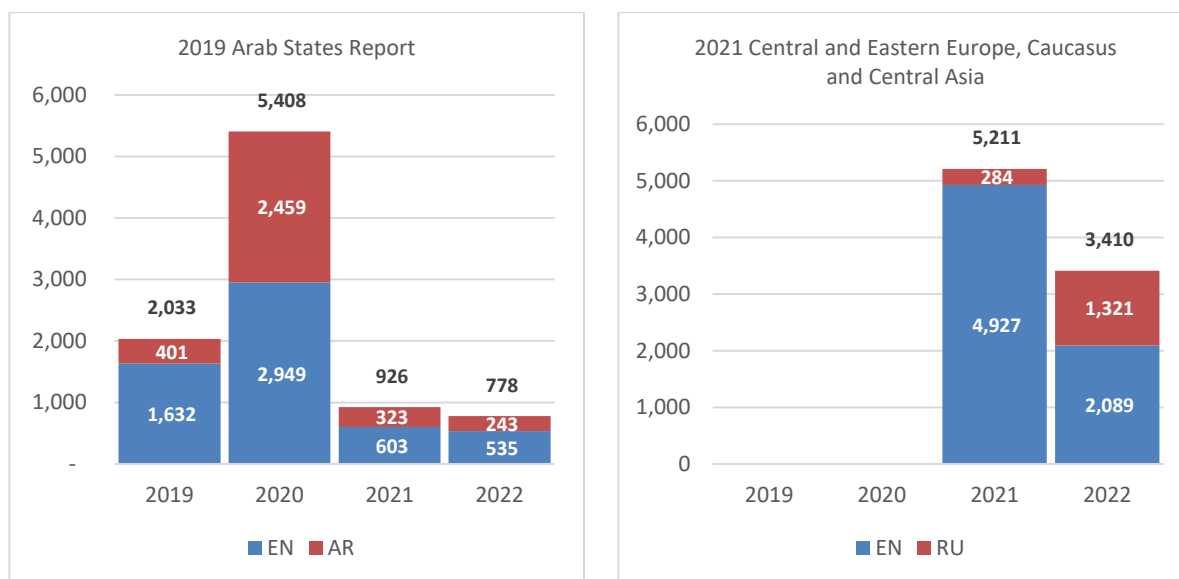
Social media activities and website

The GEM Report actively engages in social media activities on Facebook, twitter, linked-in and Instagram. Overall, the team has been able to reach out to a growing number of individuals via these different channels. For Twitter / X, a downward trend affected the number of organic impressions and engagements in 2020, although the number of tweets sent by the GEMR went up from 2,233 in 2019 to 2,827 in 2022. While the number of likes increased on Facebook, the organic and paid impressions as well as engagements also dropped after reaching a peak in 2020. This trend could be linked to the number of posts, which reached a peak at 571 in 2020 compared to 283 in 2022 on Facebook. Interestingly, the top country of origin of users engaging on Facebook are India, the USA, and Pakistan. This differs from the list of countries with the most views for different websites and blogs managed by the GEM Report, with China and France featuring prominently besides the USA and United Kingdom.

Figure 21: Social media indicators

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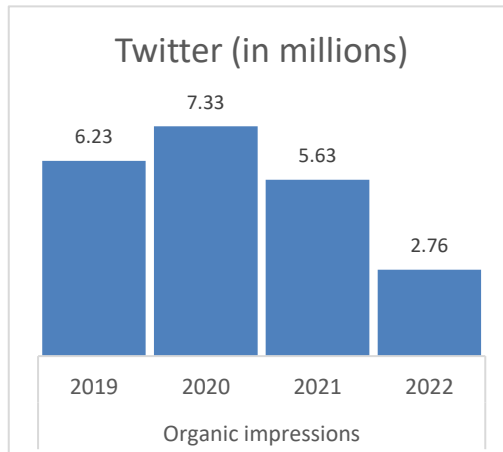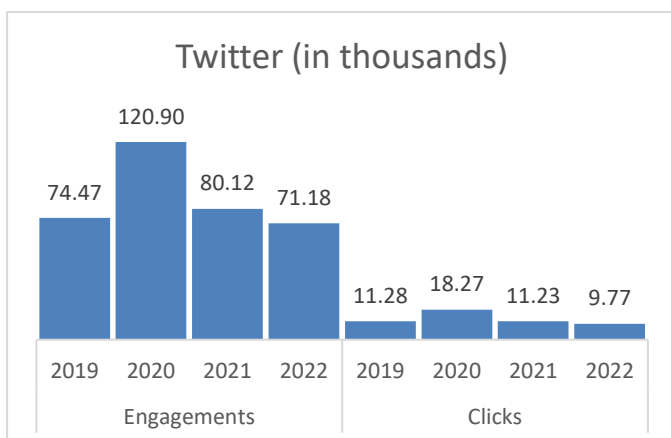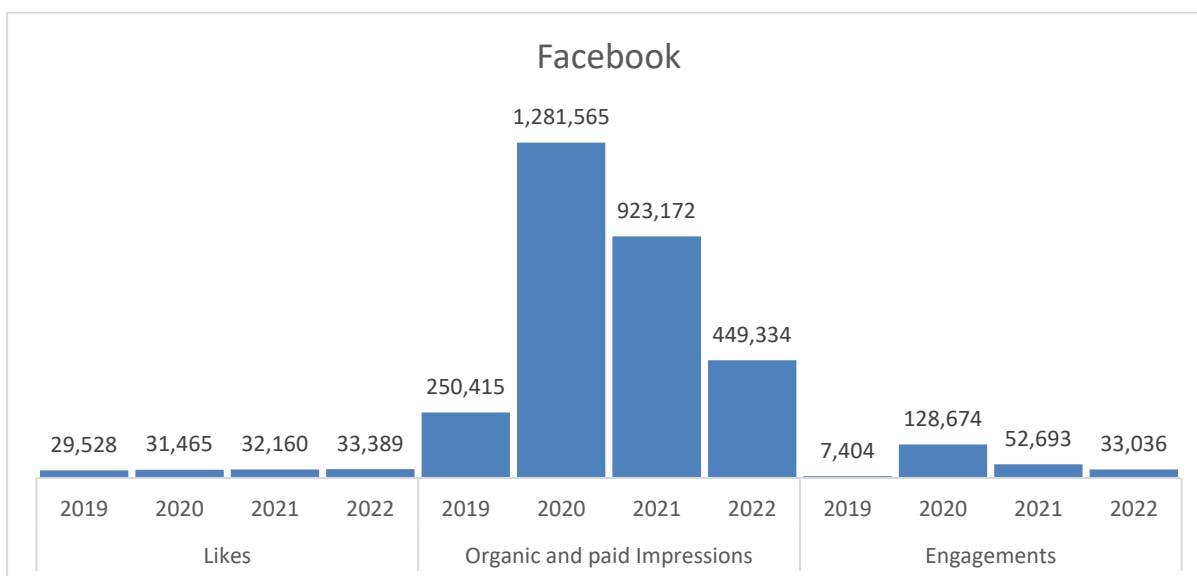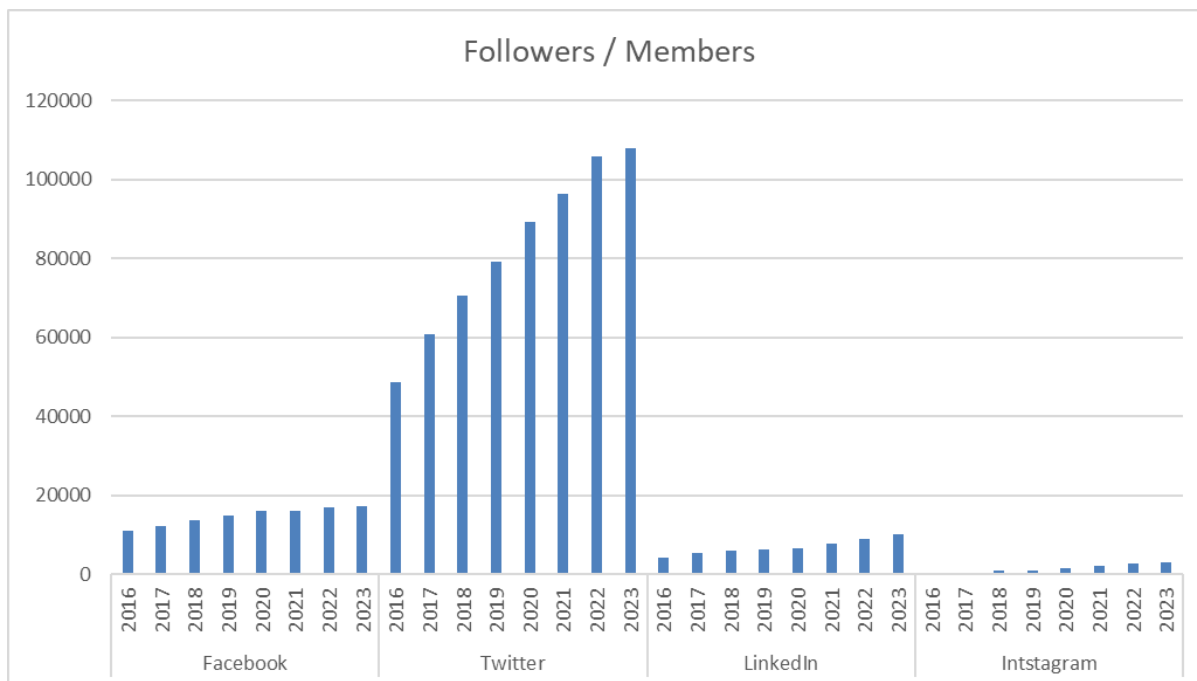
The traffic on the GEM Report website also registered a peak in 2020, dropping afterwards but at a higher level than it was before (see fig. 18). A similar pattern exists with regard to the number of unique users, which reached at peak in 2020 at 584,830. The proportion of page views from countries of the Global South varies depending on the period examined between 40 and 75%.

Figure 22: Number of page views for the GEM Report main website (source: GEM web indicators)
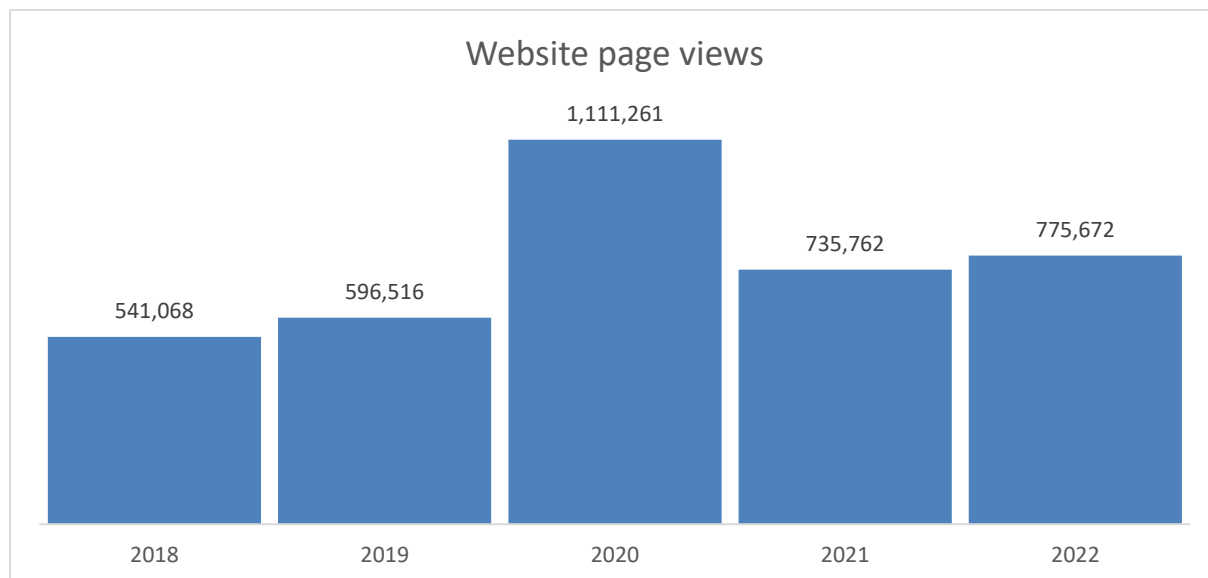
Conclusion

The broad dissemination strategy of the GEM Report appears successful. The number of people reached has increased overall and the diversity of channels used by the GEM Team makes sense given different communication patterns around the world. Social media activity reached a peak in 2020, declining to some extent as shown by some of the indicators. There could be an effect of lockdowns in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, since people might have been more inclined to spend time on the Internet and social media. In order to draw substantial conclusions as regards the effectiveness of the outreach and dissemination strategies, however, the quantitative monitoring results should be related to the qualitative analysis of the GEM Report team's strategies.

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Annex 7: Sources

People interviewed

Institution	Role
Academia	
Oxford, Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre	Director
University of Melbourne	Researcher and contributor
EDC	Researcher and contributor
University of Western Ontario	Researcher and contributor
Advisory Board	
UNICEF	Education Senior Advisor
UNDP	Director, Human Development Report Office
World Bank	Senior Education Specialist
Development partners	
Technical Coordination Group on SDG 4	Working Group Chair
OECD	Director of the Directorate of Education and Skills
SEAMEO	Policy and Planning Specialist
International Parliamentary Network for Education	Executive Director
UN	TES special advisor
Global Campaign for Education	Head of Policy, Advocacy & Campaigns
European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education	Assistant Director and Project Officer
NEPC	Executive Director
CPR	Senior Visiting Fellow
Central Square Foundation	Associate Project Director
IPS Sri Lanka	Research Fellow
IIDS	Lead Education Specialist
SEAMEO	Director
GPE	Education Policy and Learning Team Lead
Donors	
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Director, Global Learning Strategy
NORAD	Head of Education Section, Department for Global Health, Education and Research
EU DEVCO	Head of Sector - Education, European Commission
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund	ICE Program Director
Porticus	Portfolio Manager
FCDO	Senior Education Adviser, Team leader Education Policy and Global Funds, Girls' Education Department
GEMR Team	
GEM Report team	Communications & Advocacy Lead
GEM Report team	Finance and Programme Development Officer
GEM Report team	Director
GEM Report team	Partnerships & Operations Lead
GEM Report team	Senior Project Officer based in NY, working on SDGs
GEM Report team	Technical Lead - Spotlight
GEM Report team	Thematic Research Lead
UNESCO	

Institution	Role
UNESCO RO Dakar	Programme specialist
UNESCO Jakarta (multi-country office)	Programme Officer
UNESCO Brazil	Education Unit Coordinator
UNESCO Germany National Commission	Programme specialist
UNESCO RO Bangkok	Programme Officer
UNESCO ED	Chief of Section, ED/COM/KMS
UNESCO ED	Chief of Section, ED/E30/SDG
UNESCO ED	Director, ED/PLS
UNESCO ED	Director, ED/PSD
UIS	Director

Literature used

Strategic Documents:
- GEM Report Strategy 2019-2024
- GEM Report Strategy 2019-2024, brochure
- GEMR Brochure

GEM Report research and products:
- GEMR concept notes (5 + 6
- GEM Report publications
- Stakeholder engagement (consultations, experts reviews, peer reviews, etc.)
- Youth report concept note
- Regional reports concept note and example
- Spotlight analytical framework
- PEER guidance document

Documentation about communication and production sub-teams:
- GEM Report communications long-term strategy
- Examples of press releases and other communications materials
- Monitoring: web indicators
- Web indicators
- Monitoring of policy impact
- Examples of advocacy strategies
- Submission document for Publications Board & gender checklist
- Publication board- information material management tool
- Production schedule
- Co-publishing agreement with ESPH
- GEMR Launch Events listing and planning
- Examples of launch materials from different countries
- Group of friends TOR
- CRM concept note and policy influencer strategy
- Distribution list and strategy
- GEM Report Management Reports 2018
- GEM Report Management Reports 2019
- GEM Report Management Reports 2020
- GEM Report Management Reports 2021
- GEM Report Management Reports 2022

Advisory Board Documentation:
- TORs for the Advisory Board
- Advisory Board members list
- Advisory board meeting minutes
- Reference group TOR

Administrative and institutional documentation:
- Management reports 2018-2023
- Organigram
- Financial regulations of the Special Account Global Education Monitoring Report
- 2022 team retreat conclusions

Previous external evaluations:
- Reports from the previous Independent Evaluations of the GEMR
- Evaluations by donors
- IOS templates and policies

Other reference documentation:
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- Global review of progress towards SDG 4 Education 2030 targets and commitments, Presentation by Silvia Montoya, UIS Director at the PISA for Development International Seminar, London, 25 September 2019
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Annex 8: Findings of the survey

The evaluation team developed an online survey in collaboration with GEMR team of UNESCO. The survey was launched in 5 languages (English, French, Russian, Chinese and Arabic). For privacy reasons, an open link was shared by UNESCO with a very extensive email database (about 25,000 email addresses). As the evaluation team did not have access to the email files, targeted reminders were sent out by the GEM Report team. This approach also meant that representativeness could not be checked. It was therefore important to triangulate the survey results with other data sources such as the semi-structured interviews.

The survey was launched on 18 August and closed on 3 October 2023. A total of 541 respondents took part in the survey. Item response varied from question to question so that for some questions the actual response rate was somewhat lower.

Selected closed questions

Q6 - What region is your organization operating in? Please select all that apply

The most common operating region for the survey respondents' organisations is Africa (41%), followed by Western Europe and North America, and by Asia and the Pacific (both scoring about 31%). 24% of respondents organisations operated in Latina America and the Caribbean, 15% in Eastern European States and about 18% in the Arab States.

Answer	%	Count
Western European and North American Stats	31.71%	169
Latin-American and Caribbean States	24.77%	132
Eastern European States	14.63%	78
Asian and the Pacific States	31.33%	167
Arab States	17.82%	95
African States	41.46%	221
Total	100%	533
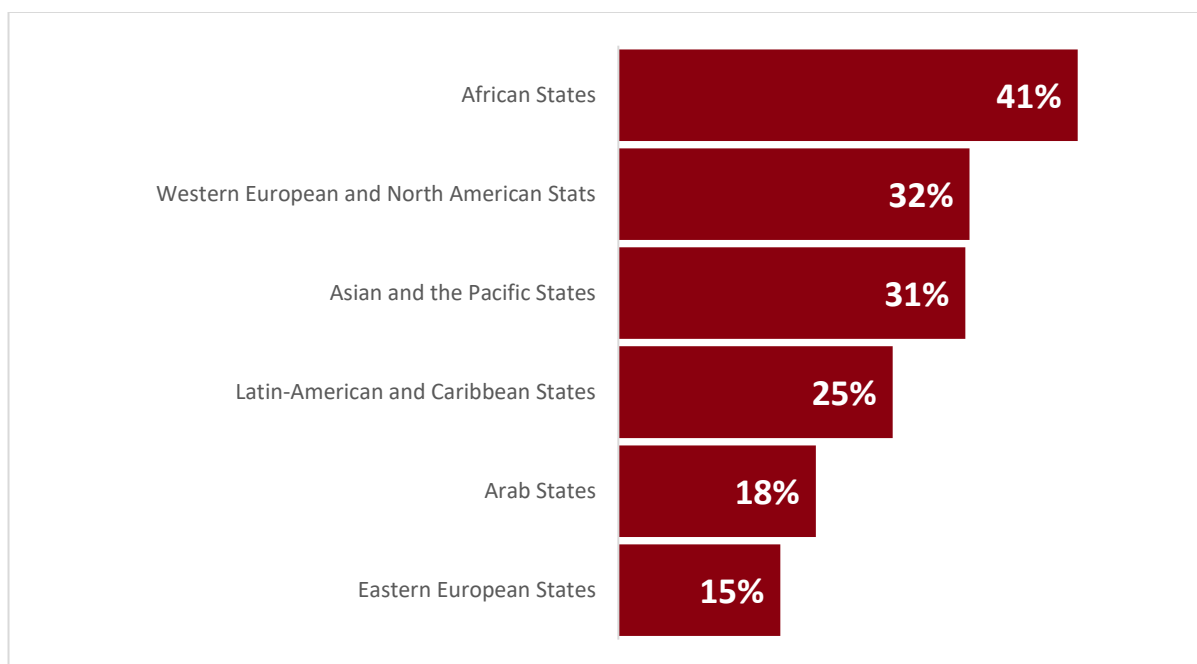
Q3 - Which of the following best describes your organization?

Almost a third of respondents (32%) worked for an academic institution, a think tank, or a research organization. The next most common organisations were NGOs and civil society organization (19%), UNESCO or UNESCO-affiliated organisation (16%) and National/local government agency or department (13%).

Answer	%	Count
UNESCO or UNESCO-affiliated organisation	15.53%	84
Another UN Agency or international organization	6.28%	34
Academic institution, think tank, research organization	32.16%	174
Non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society organization	18.85%	102
Donor Agency or Foundation	2.77%	15
National/local government agency or department	13.49%	73
Consultancy company or individual consultant	6.28%	34
Other, please specify	4.62%	25
Total	100%	541

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Academic institution, think tank, research organization	**32%**
Non-governmental organization (NGO), civil society organization	**19%**
UNESCO or UNESCO-affiliated organisation	**16%**
National/local government agency or department	**13%**
Consultancy company or individual consultant	**6%**
Another UN Agency or international organization	**6%**
Other, please specify	**5%**
Donor Agency or Foundation	**3%**

Q15 - Through which source or sources do you usually become aware about new publications of the Global Monitoring Report Team?

Asked about the source through which they became aware of the GEM Report products, over 50% of respondents (51%) mentioned the GEM Report Website, while 46% mentioned the newsletter. Social media (41%) and launch events (21%) were also the next most common sources. These findings persist when considered by professional category.

Through which source or sources do you usually become aware about new publications of the Global Monitoring Report Team? - Selected Choice	Percentage
Newsletter (mailchimp)	46.29%
GEM Report Website	50.86%
Launch events	21.14%
Social media	40.76%
In the news	10.48%
References in other documents	18.10%
Word of mouth	14.67%
Other, please specify	3.62%

Total	525
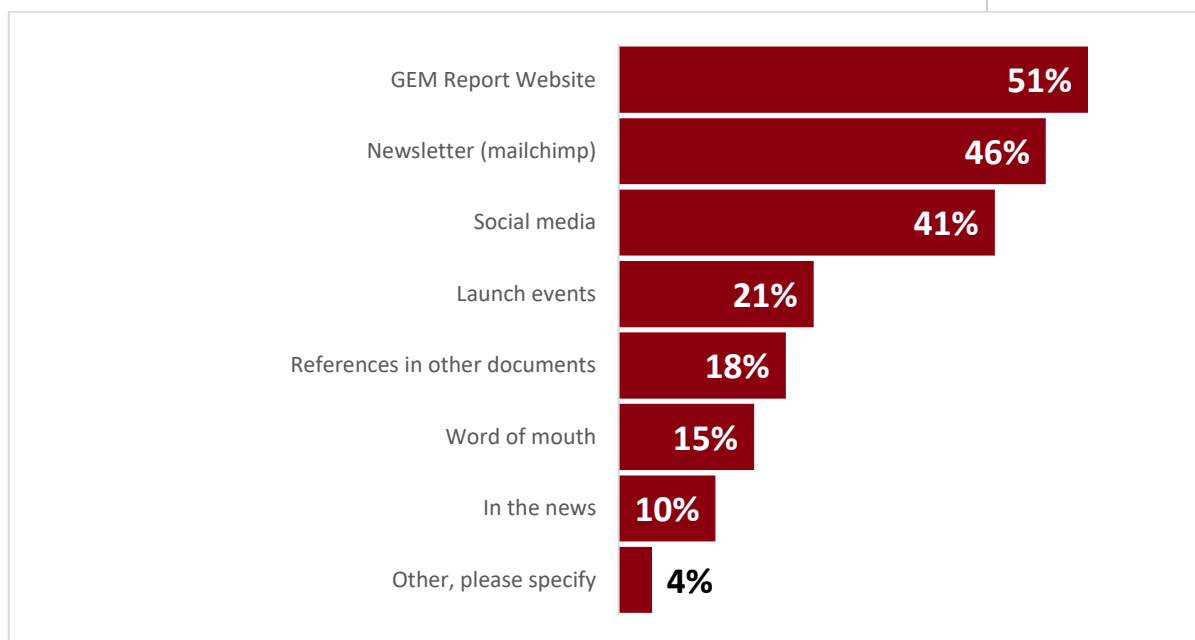
Q11 - What do you use the Global Education Monitoring Report for? Please, select all that apply

Respondents were also asked to indicate how they used the GEM Report. The most frequent included using it as a reference to support their work or study (81% of respondents), as a source of reference to identify good practice for policy (60%), as a source of personal development and learning (60%), and as a source to inform strategy, programming and policy (54%). These figures also largely follow the same trend when broken down by occupational category. As a source of reference for work/study, something is important for researchers and NGOs while it is less important for donor agencies and national and local government agencies. For donors, in turn, GEMR seems to be more important as a reference to identify good practices for policy and as source that influences the strategy, programming and policy within organizations than for other professional categories. Finally, it is abundantly clear that the GEMR is a more important source of personal development and learning for researchers than the other professional categories.

What do you use the Global Education Monitoring Report for? Please, select all that apply - Selected Choice	Percentage
I consult it but do not use it	6.46%
As a source of reference to support my existing work or study	80.86%
As a source of reference to identify good practice for policy	60.05%
As a source of personal development and learning	59.57%
As a source of analysis that influences the strategy, programming and/or policy within my organisation	53.59%
As an advocacy tool with those outside my organisation	40.91%
Total	418

Category	Percentage
As a source of reference to support my existing work or study	81%
As a source of reference to identify good practice for policy	60%
As a source of personal development and learning	60%
As a source of analysis that influences the strategy, programming and/or policy within my organisation	54%
As an advocacy tool with those outside my organisation	41%
I consult it but do not use it	6%

Q12 - Have you or your organization used the Global Education Monitoring Report as a reference for any of the following documents that you have produced, or contributed to? Please, select all that apply

The survey also enquired about using the GEM Report as a reference to support the development typologies of documents produced by respondents. Less than 10% mentioned "None". The most frequent answers included research reports or academic articles (61%), presentations at conferences or education events (51%), national policies and strategy development process (34%), advocacy reports and materials (39%), programmatic documentation (38%).

On this question, large differences can be found between the professional categories. Of course, it is not surprising that GEMR is mainly used by researchers as a reference in their research papers and publications. This is also the case but to a lesser extent for UNESCO and UNESCO affiliated organisations, NGO and consultants. The use of GEMR for advocacy also varies widely, with UNESCO, Other UN agencies and NGOs being mainly the biggest users. The GEMR is also mainly used by UNESCO, NGOs, donors and national/local government agencies in developing strategies. Finally, and not surprisingly, the GEMR are mainly used by donors to inform themselves about aid and financing strategies.

Have you or your organization used the Global Education Monitoring Report as a reference for any of the following documents that you have produced, or contributed to? Please, select all that apply - Selected Choice	Percentage
Advocacy reports and materials	39.23%
Research reports or academic articles	61.72%
Editorials, media articles or blogs	30.14%
National policy and strategy development processes	34.21%
Press releases or media briefings	16.51%
Projects/programme/funding proposals or reports	38.04%
Presentations at conferences or education events	50.96%
Other – please detail	2.15%
None	9.81%
Using the report to inform aid/financing strategies	16.03%
Total	418

Research reports or academic articles — **62%**
Presentations at conferences or education events — **51%**
Advocacy reports and materials — **39%**
Projects/programme/funding proposals or reports — **38%**
National policy and strategy development processes — **34%**
Editorials, media articles or blogs — **30%**
Press releases or media briefings — **17%**
Using the report to inform aid/financing strategies — **16%**
None — **10%**
Other – please detail — **2%**

Q14 - Can you answer the following questions with a yes or no?

The survey also posed a series of deeper questions regarding the engagement and usage of the GEM Report. While the number of answers to these questions were smaller, the results are still interesting:

- 85% of respondents informed their colleague(s) of one or more publications by the GEM report, and 80% discussed them with their colleagues;
- Almost 80% cited GEM report publications in their own reports or documents, and used data from one or more publications by the GEM report for their own work;
- 85% declared to have been introduced to new ideas or approaches by GEM Report publications;
- "Only" 66% of respondents adopted one or more recommendations published in one or more GEM Report publications, and "only" 57% of them implemented them

These global analyses largely also apply when broken down by professional category. The only exception appears to be the category of "other UN Agencies or international organisations". Almost half of the respondents within this category say they have not gained any new ideas or approaches thanks to the GEMR, while this percentage for the other categories is between 10 and 15 per cent. This professional category also says more than other categories that 'no' to the question whether they 'adopted one or more recommendations published by GEMR?

Q19 - How do you assess the utility of each of the following GEM Report products?

The utility of the Annual GEM report is considered by almost all respondents as useful or very useful (89%). The utility of all other reports is lower. Spotlight reports & Education Finance Watch are scored useful and very useful by 58% of all respondents and High Level Political Forum Reports (54%, lowest scores of all reports & websites, table on Q19 below)

Question	Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	Not useful at all	Don't know | NA	Total
Annual GEM Report	61.58%	27.68%	5.25%	0.95%	0.72%	3.82%	419
Regional Reports accompanying the thematic GEM report	39.55%	35.52%	8.06%	1.26%	1.76%	13.85%	397
Gender Reports	37.08%	33.16%	8.09%	3.13%	1.57%	16.97%	383
Youth Reports	32.97%	27.57%	10.27%	2.97%	2.16%	24.05%	370
Policy Papers	43.13%	30.19%	12.13%	0.81%	1.08%	12.67%	371
High-level Political Forum Reports	26.65%	27.47%	12.91%	3.02%	3.02%	26.92%	364
Education Finance Watch (2021/2022)	34.25%	24.66%	12.05%	2.19%	0.55%	26.30%	365
Spotlight Reports	26.76%	31.83%	12.39%	1.97%	2.54%	24.51%	355
World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)	41.55%	29.92%	8.03%	1.66%	0.55%	18.28%	361
Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER)	35.60%	28.80%	10.33%	2.17%	1.09%	22.01%	368
Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE)	34.53%	30.11%	8.01%	2.21%	0.83%	24.31%	362
Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW)	38.12%	24.86%	8.01%	2.49%	1.10%	25.41%	362
SDG 4 scorecard report on progress towards national SDG 4 benchmarks	48.25%	23.72%	10.78%	2.16%	1.35%	13.75%	371

Utility of Reports (percentage usesful & very useful

Report	Percentage
Annual GEM Report	89
Regional Reports accompanying the thematic GEM report	75
Policy Papers	73
SDG 4 scorecard report on progress towards national SDG 4…	72
World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)	71
Gender Reports	70
Scoping Progress in Education (SCOPE)	65
Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER)	64
Visualizing Indicators of Education for the World (VIEW)	63
Youth Reports	61
Education Finance Watch (2021/2022)	59
Spotlight Reports	59
High-level Political Forum Reports	54

Q10 - To what extent do you AGREE or DISAGREE with the following statements about resources published by the Global Education Monitoring Report Team?

89% of all respondents consider the GEMR report as an independent source of information and 79% says that the GEM report offers relevant information to monitor SDG 4. However, it is noteworthy that more than 20 per cent of respondents (and more than 35 per cent if we include the middle category of 'neither agree nor disagree') stated that the GEM Report (and additional products) does not reach the right partners and audiences. Among respondents, there is no agreement among the different professional category regarding the statement that ' The GEMR sufficiently highlights differences across national education policies to encourage critical reflections.' Almost 40% of the respondents of the other UN agencies & international organisations disagree with this statement, meaning that the GEM report is not highlighting enough the national differences. For all other professional categories, this percentage hovers around 20% (see tables question 10).

Question	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Don't know | NA	Total
The GEM Report is an independent source of information	12.47%	6.47%	6.71%	23.26%	45.56%	5.52%	417
The GEM Report offers relevant information	9.61%	4.68%	1.97%	21.92%	56.65%	5.17%	406

to monitor SDG 4							
The GEMR involves the right partners and stakeholders in development of its resources	8.96%	7.46%	10.20%	32.09%	31.59%	9.70%	402
The GEMR sufficiently highlights differences across national education policies to encourage critical reflections	10.08%	6.55%	7.05%	32.75%	38.29%	5.29%	397
The GEMR and related products provide value that cannot be found elsewhere	9.23%	5.74%	10.97%	31.92%	34.16%	7.98%	401
The evidence provided by the GEM Report and additional products reaches all the right partners and audiences	9.34%	11.36%	16.41%	28.79%	21.21%	12.88%	396
The work on additional products beyond the main GEM report fits coherently within its mandate	8.54%	4.77%	13.82%	26.63%	32.41%	13.82%	398

% somewhat & strongly agree

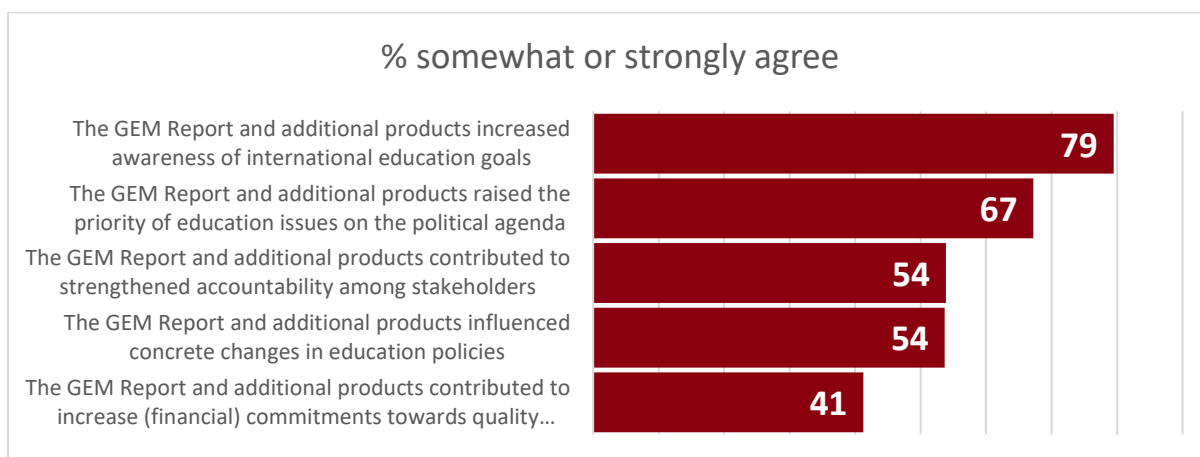| Statement	%
The GEM Report offers relevant information to monitor SDG4	79
The GEMR sufficiently highlights differences across national education policies to encourage critical reflections	71
The GEM Report is an independent source of information	69
The GEMR and related products provide value that cannot be found elsewhere	66
The GEMR involves the right partners and stakeholders in development of its resources	64
The work on additional products beyond the main GEM report fits coherently within its mandate	59
The evidence provided by the GEM Report and additional products reaches all the right partners and audiences	50

Q13 - What is your opinion about the GEMR contribution to each of the following possible impacts?

Looking at the potential impact of the GEMR, almost 90 per cent of respondents agreed that the GEM reports have raised the awareness for the international education goals. 66% of the respondents agrees that the GEM Report and additional products raised the priority of education issues on the political agenda. Only 41% agrees with the statement that The GEM Report and additional products contributed to increase (financial) commitments towards quality education. Finally, 54 % supported the statement that The GEM Report and additional products contributed to strengthened accountability among stakeholders (see tables questions 13)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Do not know | N/A	Total
The GEM Report and additional products increased awareness of international education goals	11.22%	0.95%	4.53%	25.30%	54.18%	3.82%	419
The GEM Report and additional products raised the priority of education issues on the political agenda	8.56%	6.36%	11.00%	25.67%	41.56%	6.85%	409
The GEM Report and additional products influenced concrete changes in education policies	8.82%	8.09%	16.18%	31.62%	22.06%	13.24%	408
The GEM Report and additional products contributed to increase (financial) commitments	8.35%	9.34%	23.34%	26.04%	15.23%	17.69%	407

towards quality education							
The GEM Report and additional products contributed to strengthened accountability among stakeholders	9.68%	5.71%	17.62%	31.02%	22.83%	13.15%	403

% somewhat or strongly agree

The GEM Report and additional products increased awareness of international education goals	79
The GEM Report and additional products raised the priority of education issues on the political agenda	67
The GEM Report and additional products contributed to strengthened accountability among stakeholders	54
The GEM Report and additional products influenced concrete changes in education policies	54
The GEM Report and additional products contributed to increase (financial) commitments towards quality…	41

Open questions

Q21 - Based on your knowledge and expertise, what do you think are the most critical aspects of the GEM Report and related products that require strengthening or improvement?

When analyzing this open-ended question, where a particularly large number of responses were recorded there is one theme that clearly stands out that is the disseminating of the GEMR. Many respondents believe that much progress can still be made in this area. It is then not just about disseminating the reports, but about making the key messages and recommendations known to a wide audience, such as policy makers, practitioners, and other key global and national stakeholders. Several respondents suggested the need to establish more direct connection with national policymakers and involve them more strongly in the dissemination process and in the follow-up of the recommendations. Other suggested that to encourage the adoption of the GEM Report's recommendations, support mechanisms like training programs, workshops, and knowledge-sharing platforms can be established to help education stakeholders better understand and implement the suggested changes. Others believe that the GEMR that the accessibility and dissemination of the report can be enhanced through various channels, such as digital platforms, interactive data visualization tools, and targeted advocacy campaigns, can amplify its impact and promote greater engagement with its findings. Some respondents also suggested translating the reports into local (non-European) languages to make them more accessible to a wider audience.

What the analysis also showed was that due to the large number of publications, some respondents lost sight of the big picture. For some, it was difficult to continue to see the connection between all these publications and the global report, although others recognized that there are very clear and logical links.

Finally, a large number of respondents had suggestions for themes that could be included in the GEMR, such as: Data on Teacher quality, where countries are at with legislation, policy, financing. Information on Youth, Gender, Technology in education, more attention for inclusivity (marginalized groups, people with disabilities, indigenous voices,..)

Q22 - Is there any theme or issue that GEMR is covering, but that should be covered by other actors? Is there anything that the GEMR does not cover but should?

Themes and issues covered by the GEM Report:
- Research on pedagogical issues
- Continuation of Annual Focus: Some respondents appreciate GEMR's annual focus on a theme but suggest continuing the conversations with support from other organizations or parts of UNESCO.
- Comprehensive geographic and thematic coverage
- Other actors should focus on technology, conflict prevention, environmental sustainability
- Inequality in education
- Educational Management and Governance
- Financial Aid from International Financial Institutions
- Transitions from School to Work

Suggestions of themes and issues that the GEM Report is not covering, but should cover, include:

- **Mission Focus:** Some suggest that GEMR should avoid mission creep and stay close to its mandate.
- **Digital Literacy and Technology:** Inclusion of Assistive Technologies, Curricular Approach to Teaching Computer Technology
- **Qualitative Context:** There's a call for GEMR to provide a stronger qualitative context alongside quantitative statistics in educational and learning access themes, balancing technical data work with more policy analysis related to SDG 4. A number of respondents mention the need to focus on implementation of education policies.
- **Focus on certain categories of stakeholders:** Disability and Prisoners, Indigenous Voices (including cultural and indigenous education), Teachers (quality, training, worldwide shortage), Inclusion of African Youth, Parent and Community Engagement
- **Inclusion of thematic focuses:**
    o Health in School Environment (including mental health, physical health, and emotional development);
    o Impact of Education on Childbirth Rates;
    o Environmental Education and Sustainability (including Impact of Climate Change on Education)
    o Mother-Tongue Education and Language Diversity;
    o Decentralization in Education
    o Quality of education
- **Local Contextualization**: Local and national education authorities could play a role in tailoring GEM Report recommendations to their specific contexts.
- **Education in emergencies or unstable:** Bridging Banditry and Education in Northern Nigeria, Education for refugees, girls, and early childhood, Violence in Schools,

Q16 - Can you briefly describe in what way publications by the GEM report have contributed to your professional work? If the publications did not make a substantial contribution, please briefly mention this as well.

- **Monitoring Progress Towards SDGs**. The reports offer benchmarks and indicators for tracking progress towards education-related Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Data and Statistics Reference.** GEM reports serve as a valuable source of data and statistics related to education, aiding in research and analysis.
- **Connecting global and local perspectives.** GEM reports enrich knowledge on various educational topics and provide insights into localized education contexts, while offering a global perspective on education trends and provide benchmarking information for various contexts. In this sense, the reports also facilitate international collaboration and discussions among education stakeholders from different countries.
- **Informing Policy and Advocacy.** Publications by the GEM report have been used to inform and shape education policies and advocacy efforts on a global scale. NGOs and advocacy groups use GEM reports to raise awareness about education challenges and advocate for reform, and governmental respondents indicate that GEM Report have contributed to curriculum development and innovative teaching methods by highlighting global education priorities.
- **Supporting Academic Research.** Researchers utilize GEM reports as reputable sources of information and foundations for their academic research.
- **Inspiration and Awareness.** GEM reports inspire new ideas, enhance awareness of education issues, and stimulate deeper thinking about education challenges.

Other Findings from Survey: Summary

- Report "2020 Inclusion and Education" (66%) & Report "2023 Technology in Education" (62%) are the most read reports among respondents. The "report 2017/8 Accountability in education: meeting our commitments" was the least read and consulted by respondents. This pattern also holds true when we break down by the different professional categories. (See Question 7 in the annex. (Comment by Patrick: This probably has to do with the fact that this is how familiarity with the reports has grown over the years).

- When respondents were asked which publications they had consulted in recent years, policy papers were the most consulted publications (by 42% of all respondents), followed by gender reports (37%) and regional reports accompanying the thematic GEM report (35%).This trend is confirmed when the results are broken down by professional groups, with the exception of policy papers, which are consulted slightly less by national/local government agencies or departments (see table Question 8 in Annex).

- The World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE) is the most popular website among the respondents (57% of the respondents visited the website in the past year). VIEW is the least popular although still 43% of the respondents visited the website in the past year. Again, this pattern is confirmed when we break down the data by professional category. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions. For donor agencies and foundations, SCOPE and WIDE are very popular sources, consulted by 82% and 73% of them respectively in the past year. PEER, in turn, is the most popular resource with UNESCO and UNESCO affiliated organisations, at 72% (see tables Question 18 in annex)

Annex 9: Consultants' biodata

This evaluation was realised by a core team of 3 Senior Education and Evaluation Experts, supported by a Survey Expert, a Bibliometric Analysis Expert, and backstopping. With a relatively balanced gender composition (4 men and 2 women), the team can collectively count on over 90 years of experience in evaluation, including education-related projects in complex institutional environments, as well as research experience on education policy, advocacy, and programming.

Simon Broek, Team Leader. Mr Simon Broek has 16 years of professional experience in conducting programme and project evaluation. He conducted more than 120 studies and evaluations for UNESCO, European Commission, European Agencies (ETF, CEDEFOP, Eurofound), ILO and bilateral organisations. He acted as a team leader of multinational/multidisciplinary teams in over 20 assignments. For UNESCO he conducted multiple evaluations in the last 8 years (CFIT2x, BEAR3x, TVET2x, LEG, UNEVOC, Inclusion, Teachers). Simon's expertise lies mainly in VET/WBL, adult leaning, teacher education, innovation (digitalisation). He has a background in philosophy and statistics and was editorial board member of the European Training Foundation (ETF); former member of the European level editors board for the E-Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE); and finally, task coordinator for monitoring and evaluation in the Apprenticeship Support Service (DG EMPL). He is a PhD candidate at the Open Universiteit (NL) working on activating vulnerable adults to learn and regional learning environments. A native Dutch speaker, he works in English and German.

Gert-Jan Lindeboom, Senior Evaluation Expert. Mr Gert-Jan Lindeboom has experience in international policy studies since 2010 and conducted various international studies, evaluations, and impact assessments for a variety of clients (such as UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO and various DG in the European Commission). He specialises in the evaluation of global projects in the field of education, often in the field of teacher policies using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. He has in-depth experience in the evaluation of publications and evaluated for instance UNESCO's Courier in 2022, as well as the European Training Foundation's approach to the publication of knowledge in 2021. For UNESCO he contributed to a broad range of evaluations, such as a UNESCO-Korean Funds in Trust project (KFIT: Better Education for Africa's Rise II), a UNESCO-Chinese Funds in Trust (CFIT) project Enhancing Teacher Education for Bridging the Education Quality Gap, an evaluation of the UNESCO-Korean Funds in Trust (KFIT) project building teacher educator capacities to use ICT, and an 2017 evaluation of the International Teachers Task Force. Gert-Jan is native Dutch and fluent in English and Portuguese.

Anaïs Loizillon, Senior Education Expert. Ms Anaïs Loizillon is an Education and Early Childhood Development (ECD) specialist. She has contributed to the analysis, development and evaluation of education policies and programmes for children through a broad range of experiences since 2006. Anaïs has provided policy and technical support to high-level government officials in Africa, Asia and Latin America, including providing strategic guidance and technical support to national governments and development partners aiming to create, reform or expand education programs, policies and systems. She has a Master's Degree in Public Affairs and Urban and Regional Planning, Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Ms Loizillon is fluent in French, English and Spanish.

Patrick Vander Weyden, Survey Expert. With a PhD in social sciences and over 20 years of experience in international development, Dr. Vander Weyden has an extensive and diverse experience in both evaluation and the education sector. He completed more than 25 evaluations as team leader/senior expert in Asia, Latin America and Africa, including for UNESCO and the

European Commission. His main sectors of interest include Higher Education, Primary & Secondary Education, social and political dialogue, advocacy, good governance & democratization. Academically, his main research topics are comparative politics (democratization & elections) and methodology (qualitative and quantitative evaluation methodology and survey methodology in unusual settings). He is fluent in English, French and Dutch.

Léna Krichewsky-Wegener, Bibliometric Analysis Expert. Ms Krichewsky-Wegener holds two Master's Degrees in European and East European Studies from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (France) and the Free University Berlin (Germany) and completed a PhD in Education Sciences on international learner mobility in TVET at the University of Osnabrück (Germany). She has been involved since 2007 in numerous international and European research and evaluation projects on TVET issues on behalf of CEDEFOP, the German Development Agency GIZ, the ILO and UNESCO. Her work has a strong focus on the analysis and evaluation of TVET reforms in the context of international (development) cooperation, including field research in European countries, Sub-Sahara Africa and Kazakhstan. Léna worked at the UNESCO GEM team 10 years ago. She has strong experience carrying out bibliometric, media and internet search analysis. Ms Krichewsky-Wegener is native German and French speaker and is proficient in English.

Marco Gozio, backstopping. Mr Gozio holds a Master's degree in International Cooperation, Development and Human Rights, as well as Master's degree in Data, Economics, and Development Policy. He can count on 10 years of experience in the international development cooperation, of which four years in developing countries and over two years with UN Women. With a diversified experience in NGOs, IOs, and private sector, his expertise sits at the intersection of M&E, Knowledge Management and Gender Equality. He has been conducting evaluations and studies with ICON-Institut since 2019. He is experienced in data analysis and data visualisation tools, including production of the communication products as visuals in presentations and infographics. A native Italian speaker, Mr. Gozio works in English, Portuguese and French.