



The Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Project for the State Level Programmes (IMEP)

Mid Term Review of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN)

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Mid Term Review of the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSPIN)

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Table of Acronyms

AESPR	Annual Education Sector Performance Report
AESR	Annual Education Sector Review
ARIES	Activities Reporting & Information e-System
ASC	Annual School Census
BCIA	Big Common Impact Area
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CSACEFA	Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CUBE	Capacity for Universal Basic Education
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development
DFIDN	Department for International Development Nigeria
DO	Desk Officer (ESSPIN)
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESR	Education Sector Review
ESSPIN	Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria
FIS	Federal Inspectorate Service
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GEMS	Growth and Employment in States
GEP	Girls' Education Project
GMR	Global Monitoring Report (EFA)
HR	Human Resource
IDP	International Development Partner
IMEP	The Independent Monitoring and Evaluation Project for the State Level Programmes
IQTE	Islamiyya, Qur'anic, and Tsangaya Education
IT	Information Technology
JCCE	Joint Consultative Council on Education
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KADSEQUAS	Kaduna State Education Quality Assurance Service
KERD	Kano Education Resource Department
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGEA	Local Government Education Authority
LTTA	Long-Term Technical Assistance
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MLA	Monitoring Learning Achievement
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTSS	Medium-Term Sector Strategy
MTR	Mid-Term Review

NCE	National Council on Education
NCCE	National Commission for Colleges of Education
NEDS	National Education Data Survey
NEI	Northern Education Initiative
NIEPA	National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
NEMIS	National Education Management Education System
NTI	National Teachers' Institute
PATHS	Partnership for Transforming Health Systems
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPM&R	Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Research
PSA	Project Support Activity
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QA	Quality Assurance
SAVI	States Accountability and Voice Initiative
SBMC	School Based Management Committee
SDP	School Development Plan
SESP	State Education Sector Project
SHAWN	Sanitation, Hygiene and Water in Nigeria Project
SIEMU	State Educational Inspectorate and Monitoring Unit (Jigawa)
SLP	State Level Programme
SPARC	The State Partnership for Accountability Responsiveness and Capability
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSIT	State School Improvement Team
SSO	School Support Officer
STL	State Team Leader
STT	State Task Team
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
TA	Technical Assistance
TDNA	Teacher Development Needs Assessment
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRCN	Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Committee
UBEC-IF	Universal Basic Education – Intervention Fund
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VFM	Value for Money

Executive Summary

ESSPIN is a complex, ambitious, high risk, basic education programme. With a UK-DFID investment of £83.5 million between 2008 and 2014, its success will be judged on its ability to make significant inroads in to Nigeria's education access, equity and quality deficits in a highly dysfunctional and politicised basic education system.

Nearly three years into the programme, ESSPIN has spent £32 million. Most of this investment has been directed to work in the six States of Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos. Its intention has been to demonstrate an integrated approach to improving Nigeria's public, primary and junior secondary schools, including the introduction of new ways of planning, budgeting, monitoring and managing basic education services, at all levels, in State education systems.

The Mid-Term Review (MTR) finds that ESSPIN has been effective in establishing a platform for basic education reform in six Nigerian States but not to any great degree at the Federal level.

Its pilot work in approximately 1000 schools and communities, and their associated LGEAs, is conceptually sound. It is resulting in some early teaching and learning benefits. Its work with State Ministries and SUBEBs is leading to better practice in the use of data for policy and planning, in the development of Medium-Term Sector Strategies (in which ESSPIN has been a pioneer), and in engaging with non-State partners.

While technical platforms have been built, necessary political engagement strategies have been uneven. Roll out and replication strategy is still at an early stage of development. So too is investment in public service delivery activities. ESSPIN needs its own costed, Medium-Term Development Strategy for 2011-2014 without delay. This work requires redefinition of Programme logic and design to demonstrate that beyond its valuable work in 1000 pilot schools and its systems reform work in six States, ESSPIN can and will have impact on a scale commensurate with Nigeria's basic education needs within the next three years.

Context and Relevance

The MTR concludes that:

- In responding to its DFID mandate (2007) during 2008-2011, ESSPIN has focused on the application of long and short-term technical assistance (TA) to introduce an integrated approach to school improvement and to facilitate planning, financing and management reforms at different levels of State government's basic education delivery systems.
- The degree to which ESSPIN's design model has embraced lessons from earlier projects and injunctions is mixed. CUBE has been most influential.
- In amending the ESSPIN Logframe for 2011-2014, it will be important to apply a Logic Model that defines the conceptual strengths of school improvement and the main drivers of the ESSPIN programme in terms of a clear relationship with, and causal attribution/contribution to, higher order development results and educational outcomes.
- Placing a strong focus on an integrated approach to improving schools is consistent with recent international research and evaluation literature, for example, *Making Schools Work* (World Bank 2011). A design model that places the school and its community at the heart of basic education service delivery is deeply challenging in the Nigerian context. For ESSPIN to be truly influential

requires a major demonstration effect beyond pilot activity to show that schools really perform better if there is consistent and well packaged support for all schools, all of the time.

- It is not an unreasonable proposition, in the application of the ESSPIN demonstration design model to work intensively in one sixth of Nigeria's States. Theoretically, major advances on UBE/MDG indicators by 2014 affecting close to 35 million people directly and indirectly would be a significant return on DFID's investment of £83 million.
- In its management, ESSPIN has strong echoes of a traditional project style intervention, with heavy initial investment in external TA, managed and directed by largely stand-alone Programme Management Units (PMUs), centrally in Abuja, and in each of the six States.
- The perception in DFID, in mid-2011, is that ESSPIN is an expensive TA programme with insufficient results to show, two and half years into the Programme. Assessed in terms of definable access, equity and quality results this is correct. Assessed in terms of DFID's initial project design, the evidence is that TA has been effective within the 2007 appraisal framework.
- ESSPIN's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is developmentally sound but more attention is needed to results, to attribution and to measures of leverage, roll-out and replication.
- The SLP collective, of which ESSPIN is part, is founded on the premise that influence and leverage through political engagement is highly relevant if MDG level results are to be realised. This being so, a concerted and integrated approach to political engagement seems to have been slow in emerging from ESSPIN and the SLPs more widely.
- There is no shortage of documentation and reporting in ESSPIN, but there is considerable scope for this being more concise and much more focused on degrees of change and progress over time.
- There is also a need for communication materials which address different levels of Nigerian decision-makers on school improvement and wider basic education reforms. These must be transparent about costs and benefits in order to facilitate a meaningful dialogue on the replication of good school improvement practice and the development of realistic, costed, basic education plans.
- ESSPIN must define its medium-term strategy within the framework of DFIDN's Operational Plan. A strong DFID ESSPIN partnership is essential for ESSPIN's success. Creating or re-establishing this partnership and providing more focused, concise results reporting to DFID is urgent.
- Surprisingly little attention has been given to risk analysis and risk mitigation, either within ESSPIN or in tandem with the other SLPs. There is no risk rating in the ESSPIN Logframe and there is no rigorous analysis of the very substantive assumptions made at Purpose and Output levels. What is in the control of ESSPIN, what is in the control of the SLPs collectively, what more can DFID do and what really does lie outside of everyone's authority and power? These are questions currently left unanswered.
- As the Programme has evolved it has gradually become more responsive to circumstance and context in individual States. But there is both the need and the scope for a much more hands on role for major stakeholders from a variety of constituencies to guide the design and development of ESSPIN as it enters a critical phase in its evolution. It is unsatisfactory that the Technical Team should operate without such advice and guidance especially at the political level.

Is ESSPIN on Track?

Through analysis of progress under the Programme's four Outputs (and sub-outputs), the MTR concludes that:

- In the middle of 2011, ESSPIN's primary achievements are to be found under Outputs 2-4, within the six States directly supported by ESSPIN. Its headline results include:

- In the next academic year the total number of pilot schools in the six States is projected to be 1,155.
- 1,041 School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) are functional. The ESSPIN approach endorsed by UBEC, SUBEBs and other stakeholders including CSOs.
- Two rounds of State level, Medium-Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) development and Annual School Census (ASC) preparation completed in five States.
- Functional reviews at Ministry, State and LGEA levels with evidence of new ways of working (new organisational structures, job plans and work plans).
- Over 1000 schools exhibiting better teaching and learning practice. 1,010 School Development Plans (SDPs) completed. Regular and intensive support and advice from School Support Officers (SSOs) and State School Improvements Teams (SSIT)
- 99,000 students benefiting from access to water and to sanitation facilities (45,000 girls gaining from access to new and separate toilets).
- School Quality Assurance (QA) is being reconceived and legislative provision to sanction these changes is in the pipeline.
- The development of benchmarks for literacy and numeracy for the six grades of Primary schooling.
- Technically strong baseline surveys have demonstrated the scale and the nature of the access, quality and equity challenge which has to be addressed. These data and the ASC is beginning to galvanize support for evidenced-based policy and planning.

It is important to put these gains into perspective. In the six States in which ESSPIN is working, there are approximately 10, 800 public primary schools so ESSPIN pilot schools represent less than 10% of this total. The 99,000 students benefitting from new water and sanitation facilities represent of 3.5% of the total primary public student population in the six States.

By Output:

- **Output 1: Federal Governance for Basic Education Reform:** Uncertainties remain about how best to work at the Federal level. Attempts to effect major organisational change in the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) and its parastatals proved difficult. A more pragmatic approach has been adopted with a focus on those bodies best able to facilitate the roll out and replication of good school improvement practice. The level of investment that Output 1 requires should be reassessed relative to direct investment in service delivery at the State level.
- **Output 2: Governance and Management of Basic Education Services Strengthened:** In ESSPIN's six States, there has been productive work on MTSS, the development of functional reviews and the production of Annual School Censuses. The benefits of this work are not yet realised in terms of the uptake of UBE priorities in budgets and in budget release levels. Functional reviews at different levels of government have been well received but legislative approval is still required for some important structural and quality assurance changes to be affirmed. The development of the Annual School Census has been a very effective strand of ESSPIN's work which States are starting to fund on a regular basis.
- **Output 3: School Improvement:** ESSPIN now conceives this as the central driver for all of its outputs. With regard to its current Logframe indicators (insufficient in themselves to fully capture school improvement):
 - **School Development Plans:** ESSPIN's intensive investment in training, support and monitoring of its pilot schools is demonstrating that good practice with regard to school development planning can become an integral part of school improvement. There is little evidence yet that SDPs will become an essential block in basic education planning at LGEA, SUBEB and State MoE levels. Or that direct grants to schools will appear in State plans and budgets on a regular basis.

- **School grading:** Good work in the States (and federally), to introduce and re-orient ideas about the quality assurance (QA) of schools, of which regular school inspection is an important part. In terms of progress towards ESSPIN targets however, the work is only just beginning. The weight that is accorded to this work politically in States will only become clear in the next few months when QA related legislation is approved or not. This deserves to be a purpose level indicator.
- **Head teacher competence:** There has been a well-sequenced and qualitatively sound approach to the training and subsequent support of head teachers. An early challenge is to roll out training for all head teachers in each State.
- **Clean water and separate latrines for girls:** A modest pilot when compared to the challenge of water shortage and the lack of sanitation in schools. Data needs to be collected from the outset on the impact of the provision of clean water on enrolment and attendance. Unit cost data is needed including comparators of other projects within and beyond Nigeria.
- **Output 4: Community Engagement and Accountability:**
 - **Functioning School Based Management Committees:** The establishment of active SBMCs in 1,164 schools, 85% functional. Some evidence of an awareness of roles, responsibilities and rights; teacher presence, improved teacher-pupil contact time, and more child-centred learning; improved attendance and enrolment (including girls); harnessing of resources to address school development plans; and, instances of lobbying by SBMCs and of positive response from LGEAs, SUBEBS and construction contractors. But attention is needed to representation and participation on SBMCs and to the use of more concrete downward accountability mechanisms (such as LGEA and School Report Cards).
 - **Women and Children:** The SBMC template and questionnaire provide useful questions to assess the voice and participation of women and children. There is no synthesis of this information as yet. Based on MTR interviews and document review for the six States, it is felt that this is a high risk area needing greater attention by the ESSPIN team.
 - **CSO Advocacy:** Too early to assess as CSOs engagement with communities has mostly taken place in the last year.
 - **Information on School Resources:** Given the lack of data, no assessment could be made but it should be possible to have some information on this indicator from CSO monitoring and mentoring when these data are analysed.
 - **Community Demand:** As with the preceding indicator there is some evidence of this happening but it is not possible to indicate the scale.

Access and Equity

In analysing progress on sub-outputs and Outputs, the MTR concluded that insufficient attention is being paid to access and to equity. It is difficult to understand the access and equity targets that have been set and the assumptions on which they are based in the Logframe and the results table. Clearer articulation of demand and supply barriers is needed and an assessment of possible programming options. Clarity on access targets and strategies is required. A more comprehensive tracking of enrolment, attendance and retention within pilot schools is needed.

Value for Money (VFM)

Analysis of ESSPIN VFM has proved difficult. Financial management information is not linked easily to the activities defined in the Logframe. Expenditure by State and by Output is not readily available. ESSPIN has not collected or used this type of financial data systematically for strategic planning and decision making. National and international comparators for assessing the cost of an integrated package of interventions for school improvement could not be identified within the time frame of the MTR.

The MTR looked at the structures, processes, and practices influencing economy, efficiency and cost-effectiveness in relation to allocative efficiency, managerial efficiency, and technical efficiency (as this relates to the use of technical assistance). In summary:

- **Allocative Efficiency:**

- With 43% of the total budget, Output 3 (School Improvement) has the largest share. In absolute terms, Output 2 (Governance Reform) has the highest expenditure to date (almost £12 million). Halfway through the Programme, expenditure on Output 2 is relatively overspent; Output 3 relatively under spent. This is in line with an initial focus on governance reform. Spending on Output 1 is also relatively ahead of time on planned expenditure. Central management costs are distributed equally across the four Outputs.
- There is no specific strategy on allocations between States. ESSPIN has used a fairly uniform intervention package in all six States. Standardised training modules resulted in economies of scale although modifications were made to match local contexts. By May 2011, each State spent on average £4.2 million (37% of the total budget). There is room for more flexibility of expenditures across States. School improvement programmes and governance reform - initially driven by a uniform TA package – should be increasingly driven by States. ESSPIN should be responsive and reactive to political developments to maximize its leverage and replication strategy.
- Collecting expenditure data at the State level is needed to establish the overall cost of an integrated and intensive package of reform and school improvement. This is an important question if ESSPIN is going to leverage resources for roll out and replication.
- There is a need for clear and consistent tracking and reporting on leverage – where State and other resources have been provided as a result of, or as a complement to, ESSPIN's efforts. Some of this information is available at State level, but it ought to be tracked routinely.

- **Managerial Efficiency:**

- The total budget for ESSPIN programme management (referred to as LTTA Management) is £7.1 million (9% of the total budget) of which £2.5 million has been spent up to May 2011. This does not include travel and living allowances. Fee rates are considered to conform to market rates although for long-term international TA, slightly lower fees at central level might have been possible.
- TA (long and short term) represents £20.3 million or 24% of the total budget for the period 2008-2014. By May 2011, about half of this budget (£10.1 million) had been expended. Project Support Activities (PSA) represents £32 million of the budget of which approximately one quarter has been expended. The remaining category contains all costs that support the operation of ESSPIN. This includes management fees and support staff costs and all reimbursables. £13.8 million has been expended in this category. Total expenditure on travel and living costs are £5.1 million. If we assume that these costs are split equally between TA and management, the share of Project Management including reimbursables out of total expenditure to date would be 35 percent. ESSPIN contests this conclusion.
- Overall, programme management costs are considered comparatively high. A typical figure for programme overhead costs is around 20 percent but ESSPIN is not a typical programme in its scope and intensity. Due to its magnitude and heavy reliance on TA, there are few, if any, similar programmes in the world which offer useful comparisons.

- **Technical Efficiency**

- The total budget for long-term TA is £10.9 million or about 13% of the total budget. Up to May 2011 expenditure is £3.9 million (36% of the LTTA budget). These are the salaries of the technical advisors based in Abuja (6 FTE) and in the six States (34 FTE; 40 FTE in total) excluding their travel and living allowances. The total budget for STTA is £9.4 million or about 11% of the total budget. Up to May 2011 expenditure is £6.2 million (65% of the STTA budget). In total, 12,280 days of STTA have been used against an average daily fee rate of

£548. For the remaining period, ESSPIN currently foresees an additional 4,980 days against an average fee rate of £573. Feedback on the quality of training activities in general has been very positive. Less easy to assess in VFM terms is whether core and lasting technical capacity is being created that can sustain systemic reforms, especially at SUBEB level and below.

Impact

An early assessment of impact concludes there is little question that ESSPIN has impacted on the thinking and the work of education officials, albeit differentially across the six States. But these gains are relatively fragile in systems that are susceptible to sudden shifts in the priority that is accorded to education and where externally driven change may be accommodated rather than fully embraced. The political economy of education in Nigeria cannot be divorced from issues of patronage, corruption, and political expediency.

ESSPIN has to move from its impressive achievements in building a technical platform for change to a clear demonstration of its ability to influence, leverage and help to drive a radical improvement in the delivery of basic education services of good quality; in other words to meet ESSPIN's purpose level objectives. From a 2011 vantage point this requires attention to re-assessing the definition of ESSPIN's purpose; the definition of a small set of high level indicators to track progress, a well defined strategy of political engagement, fine tuned by State, and much more attention to detailed monitoring review and lesson learning.

DFID has made it quite clear that it requires sound and early evidence of impact. This cannot wait for survey and evaluation work late on in the Programme – important though that is. The urgent need now is to show early evidence of service delivery that has impact, wherever this occurs. And to describe very clearly the results chain that links programme planning 2011-2014 to purpose level outcomes.

Future Strategy

The MTR concurs with ESSPIN that *there are both internal and external reasons to reappraise and reconceptualise the programme strategy*. A re-appraisal process is necessary to:

- **Re-calibrate ESSPIN's theory of change:** This requires a clear calibration of the relationship between an integrated approach to school improvement and ESSPIN's ability to bring its work to scale and maximise its impact within a three to four year period. And to recognise that this requires a responsiveness and flexibility that has not always been evident in the first half of the Programme.
- **Assess the requirements of consolidation:** Some consolidation is required but ESSPIN is unclear as to what it means by needing to reach a *point of sustainable reform*?
- **Define leverage in a much more strategic and coordinated way:** Leveraging resources and political commitment go hand in hand. Both are critical to ESSPIN's success. The assumptions and their associated risks in the ESSPIN Logframe can only be confirmed and mitigated through two major processes. First, the demonstration effect of education sector public service reform and school improvement is so powerful and so popular politically that it leverages resources and support for change. Second, and central to the SLP model, is a well-defined process of political engagement. In ESSPIN's case this is particularly around the development of sector strategies, budget definition, the release of budgeted funds, the maximum use of UBEC-IF financing, quality assurance reforms and the instigation of strong monitoring, reporting and accountability practices.
- **Roll out and replication is the most urgent strategic priority for ESSPIN:** For ESSPIN's four Outputs to be achieved (although their current levels of ambition require scrutiny) and for access, equity and quality gains to be realised at the purpose and goal level of the Programme,

the replication and roll-out of reforms and school improvement good practice is key to success in the next three years. The MTR identifies six issues for particular attention.

- **Results need to be reviewed, redefined, tracked and communicated more effectively**
- **ESSPIN needs to reposition itself within Nigeria:** It requires a much stronger Nigerian input into its design and development strategy and greater decentralization to its State teams.
- **Resource allocations require revision:** the balance between TA and PSA budgets and expenditure is not immutable. It should be re-assessed in the context of what needs to be achieved at the Purposed level of the Programme in the next three to four years, with VFM criteria strongly in mind. Much more attention needs to be given to unit costs in defining realistic roll out and replication strategies.
- **The re-appraisal of ESSPIN is needed without delay:** a major external re-appraisal should be avoided. DFID and ESSPIN (with assistance from IMEP, if this is requested) should together agree the ground rules for the re-appraisal process. Contributions should be sought from each member of the management consortium, and from SLP partners – especially SPARC and SAVI. Wise Nigerian counsel should be identified and the knowledge and the experience of State team members should be brought to bear.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The MTR concludes that a number of considerations point to the need for a re-assessment and re-appraisal of ESSPIN. These are:

- The internal needs of the Programme in moving from a TA-led demonstration of good school improvement practice to wider roll out and replication
- The start of the new political cycle in Nigeria
- DFID's stated concerns over ESSPIN strategy and impact
- DFID's focus on demonstrable, attributable results, and VFM, allied to the initiation of its new operational plan which includes major new educational investments in girls' education.
- DFID's strong new interest in private schooling (where an early conversation is needed with ESSPIN to determine the place of the Programme in the Department's thinking on private provision within its new Operational Plan).
- The findings of this MTR (especially as these relate to Access and Equity).

It is recommended that a re-appraisal be conducted and completed within three months from acceptance of this Report. Its central purpose should be to:

- Re-assess and re-define ESSPIN's theory of change and the higher order results of the Programme.
- Re-assess the distribution of its remaining resources (by Output, by State, by expenditure item) to ensure VFM and maximum impact by 2014
- Prepare a costed roll out and replication strategy, drawing on a joined up SLP assessment of the political economy of education in each of the ESSPIN States and Federally
- Define ESSPIN's position, role and value added within DFID' overall education strategy for Nigeria
- Define clear reporting and oversight relationships with DFID.

The ground rules for this re-appraisal should be determined by DFID and ESSPIN. It should not be conceived as a major external re-reappraisal. It should be a process of enabling key stakeholders (DFID, all of the ESSPIN management consortium, the Abuja and State teams, and key Nigerian partners) to define a clear road map of achievable goals, targets and results between now and 2014. External input should be tightly defined where it is deemed necessary.

The outcomes of the re-appraisal and its products should be signed off by the Head of Office DFIDN. Consideration should be given to a "light touch" IMEP review early in 2012.

Introduction

This report sets out the findings of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the United Kingdom's (UK), Department for International Development (DFID), Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), which was conducted from 16 May to the 3 June 2011. It responds to the terms of reference (TORs) which are appended at **Annex A**.

The report assesses the performance of ESSPIN since its inception in August 2008 and the lessons that have and are being learned. It analyses ESSPIN strategies for achieving the Programme's four Outputs, and its purpose and higher order goals. It pays attention to the suite of five DFID State Level Programmes (SLPs) of which ESSPIN is one part and to important changes in DFID aid policy over the past year. It recognises the central importance of the political economy of education in Nigeria. Value for Money (VFM) receives attention. These issues are interrogated in the six Chapters of the MTR report:

1. Context and Relevance
2. Is ESSPIN on track? Output Analysis 2008-2011
3. Value for Money
4. Early Assessment of ESSPIN's Impact
5. ESSPIN Future Strategy: 2011-2014
6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The OECD-DAC evaluation rubric of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact is followed to the extent that data and evidence permit.¹

Given the level of ambition for the Programme, and its planned 2014 goals and objectives, space is given to future strategies – their readiness, relevance and rigour.

A five person team with expertise in areas requested by DFID made initial inroads into ESSPIN's considerable documentation (**Annex D**) in the week beginning 9 May. Following three days of briefing and initial meetings at the Federal level (16-18 May), visits were made to each of ESSPIN's six States (Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos) by two sub-teams (18 – 29 May). In the final week (30 May -3 June) further discussions were held at the Federal level, cross sub-team analysis was undertaken, and preliminary findings were presented to ESSPIN, and to DFID Nigeria (DFIDN), on the 2 and 3 June respectively. A summary note on MTR methodology is at **Annex B**. The MTR schedule of visits and meetings appears at **Annex C**. The MTR was managed and guided by the International Monitoring and Evaluation Project (IMEP)

As required, DFID's ARIES reporting format is attached as a separate document.

Challenges and Value of Findings

ESSPIN is a complex programme. It operates vertically, from school, community and Local Government through to State level bodies, and horizontally, with other SLPs, the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) and its parastatals, international development partners (IDPs) and across a spectrum of Nigeria's civil-society and non-governmental organisations (CSOs/NGOs). The political dimensions of its work are fundamental to its success. Given this level of complexity, the time

¹ IMEP – with responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of all of the five State Level Programmes (SLPS) – requires the use of DAC criteria to ensure a degree of comparability across SLP reviews.

allotted to the MTR was very limited with no more than three working days per State visit. The need to split into two sub-teams to cover six ESSPIN supported States, impacted on the skill set of each team and constrained in-depth analysis. VFM work was hampered by the lack of financial data with a dynamic input-output outcome relationship. Overall, the MTR design was more consistent with that for a single strand project and not a highly ambitious, multi-level £83 million investment in a Federal State.

The MTR team wishes to acknowledge the very considerable help and support provided by the ESSPIN teams in Abuja and in the six ESSPIN supported States; by Barbara Payne, Senior Education Adviser DFID Nigeria, by the IMEP office in Abuja and ECORYS in The Netherlands, and the invaluable assistance of numerous ESSPIN stakeholders.

1 Context and Relevance

This Chapter provides a short overview of the genesis and the development of ESSPIN including lesson learning from earlier basic education projects. It describes its main programme characteristics and assesses the internal logic and the continuing relevance of its Logframe. Three years into the Programme, it summarises the strength of ESSPIN's own monitoring and evaluation systems. Based on findings from the six ESSPIN States it assesses the Programme's ability to be responsive to need and to political and social context. It critiques its risk analysis.

The Genesis and Development of ESSPIN

ESSPIN is an £83 million UK investment in basic education (2008 to 2014). It was appraised in 2007 and started work in August 2008.

The Programme was conceived as a major DFID intervention to help Nigeria to achieve its education MDGs against the backdrop of highly politicised and dysfunctional basic education delivery systems. The 2007 appraisal document noted that *... over 7 million children of primary school age [are] out of school...an estimated 75% of primary school teachers are unqualified ...shortages of infrastructure and educational materials persist ... learning outcomes [are] amongst the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

In 2006 DFID had issued its White Paper on *Governance Work for the Poor*. In Nigeria, this policy was translated into a suite of four (later five) State Level Programmes to *support the reform and development of central government systems at State level with a particular focus on the management of financial and human resources*. ESSPIN was, and is, a part of this collective, with a mandate to demonstrate that Nigerian primary and junior schools can improve significantly through systemic reforms in public service delivery.

The ESSPIN Project Memorandum made clear that:²

- UBE cannot be achieved through the expansion of external aid to basic education.
- There is a *unique opportunity* [through the SLPs and by working with other IDPs] to leverage systemic change
- Working in a small number of States *can help to demonstrate that well planned sector reform is possible ...ESSPIN ... will encourage replication of best practice: within States using government resources; by Federal Government take up of State Level initiatives; and above all by State to State learning.*
- ESSPIN's approach to improved governance in the education sector is underpinned by the concepts of capability, responsiveness and accountability.³

Together, these principles and statements of intent defined ESSPIN's central theory of change, namely, that the scale of the challenge of UBE in Nigeria and the deep-seated failures of its public service delivery systems could not be addressed by single strand, quick fix interventions. Long-term, sustainable improvements would require systemic change in the governance, organisation and management of education, and of the basic education sub-sector in particular.

² Italicised quotations from the October 2007 Project Memorandum

³ MTR underlining

In responding to this mandate, from 2008 to 2011, ESSPIN has focused primarily on the application of long and short-term TA, a) to introduce an integrated approach to school improvement through intensive training programmes, and advisory and research support, and, b) to initiate reforms at a number of levels in six State governments with responsibility for basic education. In essence, the first three years have been to reform systems and demonstrate good practice.

Lesson Learning

The ESSPIN appraisal identified three important strands of past or ongoing work in support of basic education in Nigeria that were relevant for ESSPIN. The Girl's Education Project (GEP – managed by UNICEF and funded by DFID) had shown that *special measures to increase girls' participation in education do work, but that sustaining the impact requires systemic reform*. DFID's Capacity for Universal Basic Education project (CUBE) had demonstrated the critical importance of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and of building capacity to undertake long-term sector planning (in Kano, Kaduna and Kwara and at the Federal level). On the World Bank's State Education Sector Project (SESP: 2006-2011), the ESSPIN appraisal noted that *to maximise effectiveness and reduce our partners' transaction costs, ESSPIN and SESP programmes will, to the extent possible, use the same supervision structures and monitoring and evaluation arrangements*.

The degree to which ESSPIN's design model has embraced these lessons and injunctions is mixed. The Programme has undoubtedly built on CUBE's experience in working with State MoEs and State Universal Education Board's (SUBEBs) to link data, policy and planning, through to the development of Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS) and activity based budgeting.⁴

The ESSPIN paper on *Girls Education and Gender Strategy* (May 2011) states that in *the first half of the programme ESSPIN has approached gender mainstreaming as a cross cutting objective achieved through a variety of activities under different outputs*. While the paper highlights a range of these activities, many with a strong focus on data disaggregation and specific initiatives in support of girls' and women education, it is far less persuasive in elaborating how gender has been conceptualised and worked through, in delivering Outputs 1-4. And there are no specific reflections in the paper on the lessons that have been learned from GEP.⁵

On ESSPIN's partnership with SESP – an important dimension of ESSPIN's strategy in the Project Memorandum – there are examples of good practical cooperation on CCTs in Kano and in the sharing of resources for some activities, as distinct from clearly joined-up, mainstreamed working arrangements in the States where both programmes operate.

Programme Design

Logframe

ESSPIN's Logframe has been subject to a number of revisions during the lifetime of the Programme, two in six months prior to the MTR, with further revision planned.

The Logframe (February 2011) has an overall Goal, a single Purpose, 4 Outputs and 26 Activities (see **Annex E**). Each output has a set of indicators with a baseline, milestones (2011 or 2012 or

⁴ In Kano, Kaduna and Kwara it has been possible to work with State officials who worked with CUBE. Some harder lessons have been learned with regard to how to develop user friendly EMIS systems in the light of the experience of developing NEMIS during the CUBE period.

⁵ The ESSPIN paper on *ESSPIN Partnerships* (May 2011) does however recognise that *lessons can be learned from UNICEF's work on girls' education and from its work at community level*. It indicates that the girls' education pilots are largely based on UNICEF experience. The *Girl and Gender Strategy* is also a good deal more purposeful in working with GEP3 in its forward looking proposals.

both) and targets for 2014. A Logframe Indicator Handbook (Feb 2011) goes some way to explain the rationale for the targets and the milestones that have been set.

As ESSPIN recognises, the Logframe needs further revision if it is to have a stronger internal logic, to provide a robust basis against which ESSPIN performance can be tracked and assessed with confidence. It has a number of difficulties:

- ESSPIN's **goal** statement is set at the high level of MDG achievement. Its milestones and targets suffer from a 2006 baseline of limited quality, a 2010 milestone dependent on NEDS (which uses attendance rates), and targets, the logic for which is insufficiently clear.
- The **Purpose** level statement includes three related intentions: the improvement of the planning, financing and delivery of basic education services; attention to the sustainability and replicability of these improvements; and both of these objectives being driven by the need to improve access, equity and quality. The single indicator for access and equity relates net enrolment to consumption markers. This is complicated (e.g. lack of authoritative population data), and suggests an ESSPIN poverty-driven strategy which is not obvious at the Output level. The quality related indicator on reading is sound although the logic for the targets is unclear. The same observation relates to the indicator on teachers. In both instances these statements are more appropriate at the Output level. The utilisation of the education budget is a sensible indicator although – significantly – no reference is made to basic education. So, theoretically, there could be very high utilisation levels but with little priority accorded to basic education. The gap between purpose level outcomes and goal level achievements is large with some major assumptions and risks between the two.
- ESSPIN has four **Outputs**: on Federal level governance (1), State and local level governance (2), School Improvement (3) and Community Engagement and Accountability (4). The IMEP Inception Report examined some of the problems associated with the elaboration of these Outputs. In essence, work under the Output 1 statement is, in 2011, not what ESSPIN is now trying to achieve through its emphasis on replication rather than organisational reform. Two of the indicators under Output 2 (on school inspection and pupil teacher ratios) might be better conceived as outputs of school improvement. Defining good indicators for school improvement under Output 3 is difficult and complex (and there is some overlap with Output 2 on inspection) but as the section on Output 3 in **Chapter 2** shows there are a number of problems with current indicators, their milestones and their targets. All of the Outputs fail to capture adequately, access and equity dimensions. Further comments on these indicators are made in **Chapter 2**.
- Many of ESSPIN's 26 activities might be better conceived (or grouped) as sub-outputs.

This critique needs to recognise that ESSPIN has recently undertaken work on results, in response to DFID's requirements on results, performance tracking and value for money, With external advice, ESSPIN has developed a Results Chain (see Figure 1 in *Value for Money Strategy*, May 2011) and a Table of 33 Results Indicators (see **Annex F**).

The Results Chain is based on the theory of change underpinning the ESSPIN school improvement model; it is a useful schematic in this regard. It does not, however, cater for the wider dimensions of replication, increasing access and equity, and a heightened focus on service delivery, all of which need to be factored into 2011-2014 strategies. Nor does it clarify attribution and contribution issues and analysis, in moving from a pilot project to a process of leverage and replication.

The Table of 33 Results Indicators is intended to offer more immediate, quantitative results to support performance tracking and VFM measurement. The results are grouped into six categories, the conceptual basis for which is unclear. For example, the separation of Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure from School Improvement has no obvious logic. In addition, some results are

immediate deliverables (e.g. numbers trained); others are higher order results (e.g. numbers of additional learners in schools).

While some rationale is provided for each of the 33 results in Annex 1 of ESSPIN's *Programme Forward Planning* paper (May 2011), the underlying assumptions remain unclear and uneven; for example, the extent to which, replication is factored into targets. The justification for the level of the ambition of targets is also not evident, when, for instance, the allocation of more resources to a particular input could lead to additional beneficial outcomes (e.g. number of learners accessing water supply). It is also not indicated which results will be disaggregated by gender.⁶

While not being prescriptive, the MTR team believes that amending the Logframe will not be sufficient in itself to plan and manage for 2014 results (and longer term outcomes). Some form of Logic Model (building on the current ESSPIN Results Chain Schematic) is needed to capture holistically ESSPIN's theory of change that includes its integrated school improvement strategy. This requires a paradigm that demonstrates how each strand of the Programme relates to higher order educational outcomes and the measures that can be used with authority to demonstrate results and their attribution. Each significant intervention strand should be unpacked in a reworked Results Framework, which sets measurable (quantitative and qualitative) realistic and justified outcome, output and sub-output targets relative to baseline; makes assumptions and critical success factors explicit and will enable the demonstration of attribution or robust contribution of ESSPIN to development results and educational outcomes. This work should be a facilitated process involving specialists from State teams alongside the management team in Abuja and to the extent possible the members of the management consortium and prominent stakeholders (see **Chapter 6**).

School Improvement

At the heart of ESSPIN's design model and its theory of change is school improvement. As the ESSPIN project memorandum makes clear, and NEDS 2010 has recently confirmed, virtually every dimension of public schooling in Nigeria is deficient whether the indicators refer to inputs, processes or educational outcomes.

While School Improvement is defined as one of four ESSPIN Outputs, increasingly it provides the central focus and driver for change for ESSPIN's approach to achieving its higher order outcomes. In the paper *Programme Forward Planning (Outputs 2-4)*, school improvement is defined as *the central objective of the second half of the programme – the driving influence of the programme in the six ESSPIN-supported States*. All three outputs are now conceived collectively as a contribution to better Nigerian schools, and Output 1 as enabling and replicating this approach through Federal level interventions.

Placing a strong focus on improving schools is consistent with much of the recent international research and evaluation literature.⁷ For example, *Making Schools Work* (World Bank 2011) provides a systematic stock check on school accountability reforms in developing countries. It concludes that *service delivery failures stemming from weak public sector accountability are, at*

⁶ **Annex G** provides a brief analysis of each result against the February 2011 Logframe.

⁷ See also the work of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in the development of its Indicative Framework. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in India - another Federal country – operates in every Indian District. It takes an integrated approach to the delivery of primary education. Some of DFID's sector in Africa have pursued similar approaches to school development and improvement (Malawi Community Schools in the mid 1990s and in the Eastern Cape in South Africa). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report on *The Quality Imperative* (2005) places the school at the heart of any basic education sector reform process.

root, a political economy challenge as much as a technical one and that ...sequencing, bundling and packaging are bound to be important in any reform effort.

A design model that places the school and its community at the heart of a reform process presents a very major challenge in systems that are traditionally very top down. Conceptually sound, this is a model that is deeply challenging in the Nigerian context. For ESSPIN to be truly influential requires a major demonstration effect beyond pilot activity to show that schools really perform better if there is consistent and well packaged support for all schools, all of the time.

Modus Operandi

ESSPIN works primarily in six States, using a Programme Management Unit (PMU) approach to management, and, in the first three years, has concentrated on a TA-led delivery of activities and sub-outputs. It has developed an internal Monitoring and Evaluation strategy.

Six States

Most of ESSPIN's work and budget is directed to six States: Enugu (which joined ESSPIN early in 2010), Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos. The rationale for this choice of States is a mix of educational need and disadvantage (especially in the Northern States), building on the work of SESP and CUBE, and DFID's interest in ESSPIN working in Lagos with the other SLPs.⁸

It is not an unreasonable proposition, in the application of the ESSPIN demonstration design model, to work intensively in one sixth of Nigeria's States. Theoretically, major advances on UBE/MDG indicators by 2014 affecting close to 35 million people directly and indirectly would be a significant return on DFID's investment of £83 million.⁹ The rationale for the selection of pilot LGEAs and schools is less clear. This was a Nigerian, State level decision. It appears to be primarily geographic, to cover different districts within a State. Lagos covers all LGEAs, while Kano opted to work in three – a rural, peri-urban and urban LGEA. According to ESSPIN there is some evidence of poverty targeting in Kaduna and Enugu but precisely what was entailed is not known to the MTR.

Programme Management and the use of TA

ESSPIN has strong echoes of a project style intervention, in its heavy initial investment in external TA, managed and directed by largely stand alone Programme Management Units (PMUs), centrally in Abuja, and in each of the six States. In recent years, (and in the context of the Paris Declaration), this is a relatively unusual way for DFID to work in the education sector. There is now a perception in DFID in mid-2011 (in London and Abuja) that this is an expensive TA programme with insufficient results to show, two and half years into the projected lifetime of the ESSPIN programme.

The DFID Project Memorandum states that *approximately 65% of the programme budget will provide technical assistance to transform Government delivery capacity and to promote voice and accountability*. Of the £32 million pounds that has been expended to date (38% of the budget), TA fees account for just under one third of total expenditures (see **Chapter 3** on VFM). This approach can be assessed in different ways:

- TA-led services have been delivered in a timely and efficient way across the six States.¹⁰
- In less than two and a half years, influential baseline studies of good quality have been prepared and publicised.^{11 12}

⁸ Similar pragmatic and political justifications appear to explain the choice of demonstration LGEAs and of pilot schools within them. The MTR team visited one school in urban Kano which did not appear to be a school particularly deserving of pilot status if need was a major criteria.

⁹ Based on total population figures for each State (2006 Census).

¹⁰ Based on the evidence of work plans and quarterly reviews

- The preparation by States of two rounds of the Annual School Census, MTSS (reflected in some or large measure in budget allocations), and Annual Education Sector Performance Reports (AESP) have been notable achievements.
- Functional Reviews of MoEs, SUBEBs and LGEAs have resulted – though not uniformly across the six States - in new ways of defining organisational structures, work plans and job descriptions.
- The quality of training, advice and support has been of a high standard, delivered in ways that have been relevant, practical and appropriate to level.
- There is some evidence of good linkage and synergy between what is being done at different levels in the education system from school to State organisations.

Far less easy to assess is whether lasting technical capacity is being created that can sustain systemic reforms, especially at SUBEB level and below; an important test of ESSPIN's design model.

Monitoring and Evaluation ¹³

ESSPIN has in-house TA to lead its M&E work. In the paper *Monitoring and Evaluation Results and Forward Planning* paper (May 2011) the two-fold function of its work to date is made clear.

First, at the ESSPIN programme level the emphasis has been the development of the Logframe and the collection of information that would allow its indicators to be monitored (through EMIS, household, student, and school surveys). Second, at the State level, focusing on stimulating demand for information ...to *minimise ESSPIN specific M&E activities (project mode) and to help develop instead state education sector monitoring frameworks (in programme mode) ... building capacity to undertake monitoring and evaluation of their own policies and programmes and to use outputs from those improved State systems in order to meet ESSPIN reporting needs.*

Developmentally this is a sound approach. For the remainder of the Programme up to 2014 ESSPIN proposes to sustain this way of thinking and working, while also needing to take into account the work of IMEP and its overarching M&E role.

There are aspects of monitoring and evaluation which will require much more attention in the second half of the programme. DFID's interest in results and attribution will require close scrutiny. Measures of leverage, roll-out and replication need revisiting to ensure that they can be defined and tracked on a regular basis. State based unit cost data for school improvement is a necessary component of this work.

There is no shortage of documentation and reporting in ESSPIN, but there is scope for this being more concise and more focused on what change is happening and why/not. At a somewhat lower level, it became apparent during the course of the MTR mission, that ESSPIN has, or could have, data at its disposal which, if analysed on a regular basis would inform Programme reporting and planning. Examples include: disaggregated enrolment data from ESSPIN pilot schools before the issue of the ASC; the analysis of CSO mentoring and monitoring reports; better budget analysis of MTTs priorities and fund release.

¹¹ For example the Minimum Learning Achievement (MLA) and teacher and head teacher surveys and ESSPIN support for NEDS: *National Education Data Survey (2010)*

¹² Release of the TDNA (only 10% to standard) and MLA appears to have provided a strong impetus for restructuring and refocus in Kaduna.

¹³ See too the IMEP Inception Report on Monitoring and Evaluation of ESSPIN (First Draft April 2011).

Exerting Influence and Leverage

The SLP collective, of which ESSPIN is part, is founded on the premise that influence and leverage through political engagement is highly relevant if MDG level results are to be realised. This being so, a concerted and integrated approach to political engagement seems to have been slow in emerging from ESSPIN and the SLPs more widely. The ESSPIN paper *Political Engagement Strategy* (May 2011) appears to acknowledge this when stating that *as SLPs approach their mid-way points and mid-term reviews, a common need has been identified for the SLPs to articulate a joined-up risk mitigation strategy to address the political commitment assumptions in programme log-frames*. Indeed, the paper has very little to say about political engagement (with State and non-State actors) in the period 2008-2011. It is essentially a forward looking strategy paper based on a newly developed four step action plan.

This is not to deny evidence of joined-up activity, for example, through SPARC in developing ways of working with Ministries of Economic Planning and in facilitating dialogue with State Governors. The introduction of Big Common Impact Areas (BCIA's) has helped to define more explicitly how ESSPIN can benefit from, and exploit, joint SLP work on identifying political entry points and on better budget execution strategies.¹⁴ But given that this is a critical component of the ESSPIN design model, evidence of good practice in the first half of the Programme is relatively weak.

There is also a need for communication materials which address different levels of Nigerian decision-makers quite specifically on how school improvement and wider reforms can be achieved. This needs data on costs and benefits, in order to facilitate a dialogue on replication and the development of realistic, costed plans.

Meeting DFID's Expectations

DFID Nigeria is one of the UK's major aid programmes. And education is an important component of DFIDN's new Operational Plan, responding to Nigeria's very weak performance on the education MDGs. GEP 3 is being appraised to help to enable girls in the Northern States to attend and complete a full cycle of basic schooling. Initiatives in the area of private education and teacher education are being assessed. Weight is being placed on achieving significant results attributable to DFID assistance.

ESSPIN management states that it is conscious of these imperatives.¹⁵ It has instigated work at State level on private education (not originally part of a programme focused on public sector schooling) and – with the World Bank – on Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) in Kano State. But these initiatives have rather different frames of reference and timescales (focussing strongly on access) when compared with systemic reform and change in basic education delivery systems and an integrated approach to school improvement.

It was made very clear to the MTR team, however, that DFIDN sees ESSPIN as having been insufficiently responsive to accelerating expenditure on direct public service delivery; capping levels of external TA; in reporting and demonstrating that it is on track to achieve its higher order results; and demonstrating VFM for a large, high profile DFID education project. It states that these messages have been conveyed very clearly over the past two years.

ESSPIN managers argue that the Programme has endeavoured to be responsive and that in 2011 the arrival of a Senior Education Adviser in Abuja has resulted in a more regular and productive

¹⁴ Recent discussion seminars (e.g. in Kaduna in December 2010) have developed State level work plans on BCIA's, and better coordination and risk assessment.

¹⁵ They are elaborated in some detail in the papers prepared for the MTR.

dialogue. What is clear is that ESSPIN must define its medium-term strategy within the framework of DFIDN's Operational Plan and that a strong DFID ESSPIN relationship is essential for ESSPIN's success. Creating or re-establishing this partnership, including more focused, concise results reporting from ESSPIN is urgent.

Attention to Risk

Surprisingly little attention has been given to risk analysis and risk mitigation, either within ESSPIN or in tandem with the other SLPs. ESSPIN is an ambitious high risk programme in *an extremely difficult working environment* (Project Memorandum 2007). The Memorandum identified generic risks and sector specific risks and set out some mitigation strategies.

A recent VFM study commissioned by ESSPIN (March 2011) offered a largely theoretical approach to risk management but noted ... *other donors in the education sector in Nigeria (e.g. World Bank, UNICEF) and other state-level programmes (e.g. SPARC), appeared to be either more explicit or more robust in assessing and responding to the risks which they regard as greatest, suggesting that ESSPIN could do more in this respect. The study recommended that a simple step would be to present existing risk management efforts ...highlighting, for VFM purposes, the risks with the greatest cost impacts.*

The MTR team sees the need for something more fundamental than this in concert with other SLPs. Such work seems to be partly encompassed within the new political engagement strategy. But at present there is no risk rating in the ESSPIN Logframe and there is no rigorous analysis of the very substantive assumptions made at Purpose and Output levels. What is in the control of ESSPIN, what is in the control of the SLPs collectively, what more can DFID do and what really does lie outside of everyone's authority and power? These are questions currently left unanswered.

Responsiveness to Context

ESSPIN is primarily concerned with demonstrating and rolling out ways of improving schools through systems reform. It offers a basic package in this regard. As the Programme has evolved it has become responsive to particular circumstance. Kwara was already working on an education reform programme; IQTE is a critical component of education in Islamic States; the circumstances of girls in Northern Nigeria lies at the heart of Nigeria's MDG/UBE challenge, and Colleges of Education in Kwara and Kaduna have sought ESSPIN's assistance. As noted earlier, ESSPIN, with some encouragement from DFID, has initiated State specific activities including through mechanisms such as Challenge Funds, to respond to local needs and demands. But it has done this essentially within its school improvement and systems reform paradigm.

A different aspect of context relates to the guidance on ESSPIN's development. There is no ESSPIN Board, Steering Committee or advisory group to draw on Nigerian expertise and experience to guide ESSPIN development. At the State level, efforts to institute MoE led Steering Committees have met with limited success. But there is both the need and the scope for a much more hands on role for major stakeholders from a variety of constituencies to guide the design and development of ESSPIN as it enters a critical phase in its development. It is unsatisfactory that the Technical Team should operate without such advice and guidance especially at the political level. The function and the identification of such a mechanism need to be thought through carefully within the SLP framework, and with DFID.

2 Is ESSPIN on Track? Output Analysis 2008-2011

2.1 Is ESSPIN on track?

This chapter assesses progress towards the achievement of ESSPIN's four Outputs.¹⁶ It looks at the framing of each output and comments on the strengths, weaknesses and legitimacy of individual indicators. It questions the grounds on which baseline, milestones and targets have been set. It offers an overall assessment of the effectiveness and likely sustainability of the sub-outputs that have been delivered in the period 2008-2011.

In the middle of 2011, ESSPIN's primary achievements are to be found in the work that has been undertaken under Outputs 2-4, within the six ESSPIN States supported by the Programme.¹⁷ There has been good progress in developing and introducing systematically, new ways of working at State and sub-State levels especially in the areas of planning, budgeting, data collection and analysis, and quality assurance (Output 2). ESSPIN's multi-layered and multi-faceted approach to school improvement is beginning to show some initial teaching and learning benefits in over 1000 Nigerian schools (Output 3). It has developed a strong approach to establishing and making SBMCs work (Output 4).

ESSPIN's demonstration activities have been well received by those practitioners who have benefited from the Programme's training and through its exposure to new ways of teaching and learning and school management. Its headline results include:¹⁸

- In the next academic year the total number of pilot schools in the six States is projected to be 1,155.
- 1,041 School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) are functional. The ESSPIN approach has been endorsed by UBEC, SUBEBs and other stakeholders including CSOs.
- Two rounds of State Medium Term Sector Strategy (MTSS) development and Annual School Census (ASC) preparation has been completed in five States.
- Functional reviews at Ministry, State and LGEA levels with evidence of new ways of working (new organisational structures, job plans and work plans).
- Over 1000 schools exhibiting better teaching and learning practice. 1,010 School Development Plans (SDPs) completed. Regular and intensive support and advice from School Support Officers (SSOs) and State School Improvements Teams (SSIT).
- 99,000 students benefiting from access to water and to sanitation facilities (45,000 girls gaining from access to new and separate toilets).
- School Quality Assurance (QA) is being reconceived and legislative provision to sanction these changes is in the pipeline.
- Technically strong baseline surveys have demonstrated the scale and the nature of the access, quality and equity challenge which has to be addressed. These data, along with ASCs, are beginning to support evidenced-based policy and planning

¹⁶ February 2011.

¹⁷ ESSPIN's support with USAID in the finalisation and publication of the National Education Data Survey 2010 is valuable product of Federal level work.

¹⁸ The MTR did not find easy to reconcile figures from different ESSPIN sources and data.

It is important to put some of these gains into perspective. In the six States in which ESSPIN is working, there are approximately 10, 800 public primary schools, so ESSPIN pilot schools represent less than 10% of this total. The 99,000 students benefitting from new water and sanitation facilities represent of 3.5% of the total public primary student population in the six States. These are important demonstrations, nevertheless, of what can be achieved; of a strategic and integrated approach which puts schools at the centre of public service delivery. A strong platform has been built in just over two years which, in the context of Nigeria, is a worthy achievement. But though six platforms have been built, they have not yet become launch pads for the wider roll out of good practice. They need to become quickly if access, quality and equity MDG targets are to be reached by 2014.

ESSPIN's technical work has been judged to be of a high quality by the recipients interviewed by the MTR team; but, well conceived and sustained political engagement is less well advanced. Embedding school improvement programmes in budgets and ensuring that funds are released remains work in hand. Leveraging increased levels of funding for basic education is at an early stage. Roll out and replication of good practice – the real measure of ESSPIN's success – is beginning but is not yet ESSPIN's driving force. These broad judgements flow from the sections on each Output that follow. In addition, a section has been added on **Access and Equity** on the grounds that ESSPIN needs to give much more strategic attention to these core components of its Programme.

2.2 Output 1 Federal Governance for Basic Education Reform

Uncertainties remain about how best to work at the Federal level. Attempts to effect major organisational change in the Federal Ministry of Education (FMoE) and its parastatals proved difficult. A more pragmatic approach has been adopted with a focus on those bodies best able to facilitate the roll out and replication of good school improvement practice. The level of investment that Output 1 requires should be reassessed relative to direct investment in service delivery at the State level.

Output 1 *Federal Government governance framework for enabling basic education reform*. There are two main Logframe Output indicators one of which is subdivided into seven sub-indicators.

Early Development

The DFID Project Memorandum (2007) defined Output 1 as to *strengthen the Federal Government's capacity to play an appropriate role in the stewardship of the education sector*; this, in a system where under the Federal Constitution, primary responsibility for primary and secondary education rests with each State. At the outset of the Programme, ESSPIN's intention was to support the Federal Government to perform its Constitutional role: the overall stewardship of the education sector, policy development and long-term planning, and the effective and efficient allocation and disbursement of Federal resources to the States. It was a reform agenda.

By the time of the Inception Review (mid 2009), ESSPIN was able to report some modest progress, largely in terms of process rather than product with the assistance of TA inputs:

- The conceptualization, development and implementation of the *Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector* which had benefited from ESSPIN TA.
- The provision of three specialists (in education quality, information technology, and state partnerships) working in the FMoE as advisers to the Hon. Minister of Education.
- Work in UBEC to define ways of improving Federal fund flows to States.

- Negotiations with the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE), the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and the National Teachers Institute (NTI) on support for the improvement of teaching standards and the development of career paths for teachers.¹⁹
- Support for institutional development of the FMoE Policy, Planning, Management and Research (PPM&R) Department aimed at better management of the Joint Consultative Council on Education (JCCE) / National Council on Education (NCE) policy formulation process.
- Building capacity of PPM&R to promote strategic and operational planning/budgeting practices amongst States and support for the decentralisation of the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS).²⁰ Agreement was reached with partner States that the ASC would take place from November 2009 and annual ESRs planned to start in January-March 2010.

Current Strategy

Promising though these initial developments appeared at the time, the ESSPIN MTR paper *Output 1 Progress and Forward Planning* (May 2011) makes it clear that working to strengthen the policy, management, funding and quality assurance functions of the FMoE and its key parastatals proved to be a difficult and only partly successful strategy. Accordingly, the focus has shifted towards working with those organisations which have shown that they have the most potential for replicating successful initiatives from DFID-ESSPIN supported States, in other Nigeria States. ESSPIN claims that this direction is now reflected in the current Logframe indicators (see **Output 1 Annex E**). It posits too that while the original Logframe indicators were measures of functionality and capacity, the new indicators represent much stronger measures of effectiveness. And that this was in line with discussions with DFID about impact rather than process.

The Logframe (see **Annex E Output 1**) itemises State level replication milestones and targets which it is intended should be achieved in 2011, 2012 and 2014 for: MTSS and an Annual Education Sector Report (AESR); direct funding to primary and/or junior secondary schools; school census reports issued by August of each year; application of national SBMC policy; and, periodic surveys of teacher assessment and learning outcomes. In their present iteration, these indicators raise a number of interesting issues and questions, which include:

- Whether replication targets under Output 1 should include – as they appear to do – the six ESSPIN States? As the analysis under Outputs 2-4 shows, most of the reforms that have been advanced at State level have been achieved as a result of policies and programmes designed and implemented by the States themselves with limited inputs from the Federal level.
- If the achievement at Output 1 lies primarily with non-ESSPIN States, how have the milestones and the targets been determined? What are the ways in which Federal level work will be rolled out in specific States? Do the numbers of States for each indicator provide a realistic or sufficient level of ambition? There is no clear answer to these questions. And DFIDN does not recognise these State targets as having been discussed and approved.

Effectiveness

ESSPIN has been active since the inception review in 2009, at the activity, level with five institutions:

FME

- Contribution to the development of the Minister's One Year Strategy Plan for the Development of the Education Sector (May 2010-April 2011).

¹⁹ This followed on from the USAID financed ENHANCE project which supported the NCCE, TRCN, NTI and UBEC in developing a national policy on teacher quality.

²⁰ This has been a contentious area of work. There are still unresolved differences around the desirability of using the software by ESSPIN (which is reportedly simpler) or the common – very security conscious package- introduced in 2005 and still supported by UNICEF.

UBEC

- A Letter of Agreement and work plan have been developed between ESSPIN and UBEC to take forward and roll out the work on SBMCs across Nigerian States.²¹
- Dialogue on the targeted use of Intervention Funds (IF) for school improvement at State level.
- A review of UBEC – SUBEB relationships in the six ESSPIN States to highlight key challenges and opportunities for the relationship in the future.
- Discussions with UBEC on a more integrated approach to school improvement which would involve new ways of working within UBEC and between UBEC and SUBEBs.²²
- A functional review of UBEC (2010) and technical reviews to help improve financial management, M&E systems, and human resource management (HRM).

Federal Inspectorate Services (FIS)

- Support for reform and dissemination of the QA instrument and the development of the QA handbook for use nationally. Training and accreditation of 25 FIS officers at Federal level, with NIEPA to take up this training role.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)

- Teacher Standards were developed as part of a general revision of the teacher education curriculum due to be introduced in 2011 (October). The development of a Curriculum Implementation Framework and a Guide for College Restructuring, based on experiences at Oro College was also supported. NCCE staff was helped to develop a QA toolkit, which is an institutional self-assessment format for Colleges of Education, piloted at Oro and Gidan Waya Colleges.

National Institute for Education Planning (NIEPA)

- ESSPIN has commenced discussions with NIEPA, seeing this institute as key in its replication phase. NIEPA's training materials have been reviewed in respect of Teacher Training, SBMCs, Planning and QA.

Each of these activities is worthwhile in its own right with the work with UBEC appearing to have the greatest traction for roll out and replication, notably on SBMCs. It may well be sensible to play this more pragmatic, opportunistic and less obviously reforming role given the uncertainties of leadership in Federal institutions.

ESSPIN has also identified other groups which it believes are critical to the next phase of replication: the MDG Office, the Commissioners Forum, the bi-monthly meeting of SUBEB Chairs, the Governors Forum, as well as donor agencies and programme agencies. A strategy of engagement is required for each of these bodies and groups if ESSPIN is to be very clear-headed as to what can be achieved by way of roll-out and replication. Each has a relatively high investment cost in both political and technical terms.

For a two and half year programme of activity the gains at the level of Output 1 have been modest, although work in support of NEDS 2010 has been productive. In defining a strategy for work at the Federal level through to 2014, some wider judgements will need to be made. Are the biggest gains

²¹ A stakeholder workshop was taking place at the time of the MTR to design templates for state adaption of national SBMC guidelines. ESSPIN also recently supported a national level workshop to bring together SESP, UNICEF, Action Aid and other players who support SBMCs to develop a common approach. The stated intention of UBEC is to have SBMCs established in all public schools in all states by 2012 [a higher level of ambition than the ESSPIN Logframe indicators.

²² A MoU is being prepared to guide the roll out of such an approach in selected states through UBEC-SUBEB collaboration. Concurrently ESSPIN is engaging with SUBEB management in the six supported States to explain the process and broker dialogue.

for ESSPIN going to come from much more intensive attention and investment in the six States (or some of them) ensuring complete roll out and replication and a consequent lessening of its engagement at the Federal level? How central is building capacity and enabling Federal action on specific streams of activity relative to the gains from State level work? Do the returns from two and a half years of work centrally suggest the potential for much bigger returns between now and 2014? The product of this largely activity level work to date is not overly persuasive relative to resources used (see **Chapter 3**), and for the allocation of resources to 2014. A much sounder business case is required to demonstrate that ESSPIN programming at this level will deliver purpose level outcomes.

2.3 Output 2 Governance and Management of Basic Education Services Strengthened

In ESSPIN's six States, there has been productive work on MTSS, the development of functional reviews and the production of Annual School Census. Making real and lasting budget provision for these exercises is mixed. Likely sustainability of reforms is variable across the six States.

Output 2 *State and Local Level Government Level Governance and Management of Basic Education Strengthened*. There are five Logframe Output indicators one of which is subdivided into six sub-indicators.

Given the constraints of the time available to the MTR in each State, it was decided that for Output 2 attention would be focused on three important sub-Outputs, namely:

- The development of State education Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS)
- The functional review of State level education organisations
- The development of the Annual School Census (ASC)

The MTSS

This section summarises the effectiveness and the likely sustainability of ESSPIN's intervention in support of the development of State MTSS. **Annex H** provides a more detailed overview for Jigawa and Kano.

Effectiveness

Strengthening of strategic planning has taken place in all six States: a major achievement in a relatively short time. With ESSPIN technical assistance, staff in MoE PPRS departments has developed two rounds of MTSS (with the exception of Enugu). In most States, the first MTSS (2010-2012), was a valuable learning process that ESSPIN conducted without any SPARC guidelines. Lessons learned were applied in the second round, at the same time as SPARC became more active in budget planning and development in all Ministries.

In assessing effectiveness, it is important to measure the degree to which MTSS priorities and targets have driven the annual approved budget estimates. This objective is captured in Indicator 2.1 of the Logframe: the *percentage of Annual State Budget derived from the MTSS*.²³ At present, this indicator is not systematically calculated and monitored.

Better monitoring is required from ESSPIN to determine and guide ministries on the actual uptake of the identified priorities. Indicator 2.1 is not measuring the extent to which prioritised activities in the MTSS are realised in the budget. For instance, in Kano State, the approved budget for 2001

²³ This indicator is more or less the same as results indicator 22: *the Number of States with MTSS linked to realistic budgets*.

includes the exact amount for school rehabilitation set out in the MTSS but the number of schools was doubled in the budget, reducing funding per school by half. Monitoring of this type was found to be most effective in Lagos and Kwara.

The alignment of the MTSS to the annual budget estimate is in itself of little value if the actual releases show large variations to the approved budget. This information is not captured in the Logframe but it is introduced in the ESSPIN list of 33 results. Indicator 19 refers to the *number of States whose budget utilisation rate exceeds 90 percent*. This indicator should be in the Logframe.

Fertile ground exists for MTSS development in most Nigerian states given that education's share of the total budget has increased. In Enugu, for example, there has been a significant increase in the share of the budget allocated to education (2007-11.64%; 2008-19.08%, 2009-19.11% 2010-21.88%).

Budget utilisation rates do, however, show a more mixed picture and are alarmingly low in some States. In Kano, for instance, in 2010, only 60% of the total approved budget to education was released, of which only 16% was for approved capital expenditure. Systemically, overestimated sector resource envelopes are a large contributor to low performance rates. In addition, UBEC funds have not been released in the absence of counterpart funding, leaving capital investments for primary education at an absolute minimum.²⁴ In other education sub-sectors, investments are also minimal. In this environment, planning can improve, but its effectiveness does not go beyond being a paper exercise.

Sustainability

The capacity to undertake strategic planning has been strengthened in all six States. Even though results in terms of prioritized spending are inadequately demonstrated, staff from PPRS departments seem dedicated to new ways of working which their ESSPIN training and support has facilitated. Although new Governments are in place, there is no immediate reason to believe that the MTSS process will be affected. In Jigawa, however, there have been changes in the MoE that have lessened the momentum for reform at a time when the MTSS process has not been fully institutionalised.²⁵ More ownership from the Ministry and additional technical support is needed before results can be sustained. This is unlikely to be realised quickly.

Functional Reviews

The basic education sub-sector at the State level in Nigeria is characterised structurally by the existence of functional overlaps and the duplication of roles and responsibilities within and between organisations. But the delivery of a quality basic education requires strong and effective administrative structures and systems that can provide leadership and management for the effective functioning of schools. ESSPIN has supported the development of Functional Reviews in each pilot LGEA, SUBEB and MoE to contribute to the better alignment of functions with strategic objectives.

Effectiveness

Work on functional reviews commenced by defining clear Mission and Vision statements incorporating core values from LGA to State levels. The functions of LGEAs, SUBEB and MoE were reviewed to remove overlaps and role duplication.

²⁴ Kano has failed to realise four years of UNBE-IF Funding.

²⁵ More ownership from the Ministry and additional technical support is needed before results can be sustained. This is unlikely to come quickly.

The MTR received positive feedback at various levels on the clarity of the new job descriptions that have been introduced for a variety of posts. Alignment of functions at SUBEBs and LGEAs has been improved and Ministries are concerning themselves more centrally, with policy formulation and standard setting. In most States, the actual restructuring of departments is an ongoing process characterized by delays in getting formal approval for the changes. There remains the risk that actual restructuring might not fully take place. Part of the functional review focus has been on VFM and accountability for results. Several states have done, or are in the process of doing a HR audit. Significant savings are expected from this exercise ranging from an estimated NN 20 million per month in Jigawa to NN 40 million in Kano.²⁶

At SUBEB level in Kaduna, ESSPIN facilitated a functional review that led to the restructuring of the Department of Social Mobilisation, from a small unit with five staff, to a full department with 15 staff and, also, in the establishment of a Quality Assurance function. This development has been mirrored in the seven pilot LGEAs where there are new Social Mobilisation and Social Inclusion Desk Officers. The development of vision, mission, core values, and results areas (by all stakeholders) has had real traction with highly visible posters in all offices, and officers at different levels capable of speaking knowledgeably about their newly defined roles and responsibilities.

Progress has been made in ESSPIN States to establish and/or strengthen QA. Instead of disparate inspections by SUBEB, MoE, Science and Technology, Private Schools etc., there is now increasing evidence of a unified approach to school inspection and support.

Results in the field of organisational development are measured by two indicators; the first measures the *percentage of departments in the MoE and SUBEB using Departmental Work Plans developed from the MTSS and annual budget*. This represents a major step forward in aligning departmental work with budgeted programmes, a link that is very new in the management of basic education in Nigeria. ESSPIN claims that all Departments now have work plans. Sample checks support this assertion; work plans were available and largely being used with positive experience.

The second indicator, rates the functionality of six State Basic Education functions in a qualitative way. In the results framework, these two indicators are combined in a rather broadly defined statement (29): *Number of States with reorganised education management structures and systems*.

Sustainability

Organisational reforms are still ongoing, and therefore, making judgements on sustainability (and impact) are premature. But during MTR interviews, many officials indicated that it would be very difficult to return to old practices as they have seen the positive results of new ways of working. LGEAs are now allocating small budgets by activity. One LGEA chair commented that ESSPIN had been instrumental in bringing different players together. It was *the first time that superior officers have consulted or listened to them*. It *motivated us to see that we can play a role*. Similar sentiments were expressed at different levels in the system, with evidence of both knowledge and buy-in to reforms. But the effect at this stage is still mainly concerned with the elimination of organisational and functional overlaps. In time this may lead to school improvements as the LGEAs have an enhanced role to supervise activities at LGA level.

Annual School Census (ASC)

The third stream of work examined under Output 2 concerns the development of the Annual School Census to enable States to plan on the basis of evidence.

²⁶ In Kaduna, the HR audit has been brought together with the payroll but that Health Sector had made N30m per month savings and education is expected to make similar savings.

Effectiveness

This has clearly been a very effective ESSPIN work stream. All states have produced two ASCs. ESSPIN TA support and training activities have been used to design a complete annual cycle for data collection, input, analysis and publication which has built important capacity at different levels of the system. The ASCs are beginning to make an important contribution to thinking about planning and to building a solid data base over time. This work has helped to quantify sector performance on a range of basic education indices, thereby guiding future policy directions according to needs.

There is no clear Logframe indicator linked to the annual school census. The results of the ASC and the other activities under Output 2 may be presumed to influence the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) in public primary schools which is measured in Output indicator 2.4. This is a far from ideal indicator as the link between the production of the ASC (activity 2.9) and the PTR is indirect and also dependent on a number of other external factors. Measurement of the production of the ASC, as such, has been newly introduced under Results indicator 24: *Number of States that produce ASC by August*. This new indicator is considered, however to be too quantitative. It should be reformulated to capture the degree to which data is considered reliable, and is being analysed and used for strategic planning.

Sustainability

Technically, most ESSPIN supported States are confident that they have the skills to operate the ASC without substantial support from ESSPIN. Financially, the sustainability of the ASC might be at greater risk. Kano has explicitly included a budget for the next ASC in the MTSS and this has been approved in the Budget Estimates. Such leverage of funds in other states is less evident. In Kaduna N5 million of the N7 million required for the second ASC was provided by the State, the balance being provided by ESSPIN.

2.4 Output 3 School Improvement

Output 3 is *the capacity of primary and junior secondary schools to provide an improved learning environment developed and sustained*. It has four Logframe indicators. These are reviewed in sequence.

School Development Plans (SDP)

Logframe Indicator (3.1) is the percentage of public primary schools with a school development plan.

ESSPIN's intensive investment in training, support and monitoring of its pilot schools is demonstrating that good practice with regard to school development planning can become an integral part of school improvement. There is little evidence yet that SDPs will become an essential block in basic education planning at LGEA, SUBEB and State MoE levels. Or that direct grants to schools will appear in State plans and budgets on a regular basis.

This indicator is measured in different ways in different ESSPIN documents. The Logframe handbook (February 2011) cites the percentage of public primary (not JSS) schools whose head teacher showed a copy of the SDP (implicitly, at the time of the annual school census). In the ESSPIN table of 33 results (item 6), the number of schools supported to use SDPs is quoted - with

a target of 7,680 schools by 2014²⁷ It is not clear whether the results table target includes SDPs that have been developed without ESSPIN's assistance.

The indicators and their targets raise a set of issues:

- The Logframe refers to schools *with* an SDP. It says nothing about process (e.g. a collective school and community activity) nor does it try to capture the impact of school-based planning in the utilisation of school grants or through other forms of action.²⁸
- There is no immediately available evidence as to how the milestones and the targets have been established, The figures do not appear to have any obvious basis in future planning in State or SUBEB level documents (e.g. in State MTSSs).
- There are no ESSPIN facilitated SDPs (and associated grants) for Junior Secondary Schools.

Table 2.1 lists the SDP baseline for 2010 in the six States and 2012 and 2014 milestones. Second, it gives the % of primary schools in the six States that have SDPs as a result of ESSPIN's work. On this initial evidence, to achieve the 2012 milestone and the 2014 target suggests a) a significant expansion of ESSPIN engagement with schools, allied to, b) an acceptance and expansion of SDP Planning more generally throughout each State, including through non-ESSPIN interventions.

Effectiveness

All ESSPIN supported school head teachers and SSOs have benefited or are benefiting from training which encompasses School Development Planning as this is set out in Section 4 of the *School Based Management Committee Handbook*. This offers a step-by-step guide from inception to the review of SDP outcomes. From discussion with head teachers, School Support Officers and SBMC members, the process and the intended product of SDPs is well understood.

Sample plans reviewed by the MTR, though variable in their presentation, demonstrate a good awareness of school needs, reflect a clear prioritisation of tasks, with planned activities costed with some care.²⁹ Different sources of voluntary support and funds are identified. Plans were not developed in the knowledge that school grants would follow. There was sample evidence of budgets being determined after best cost pricing for construction work. In Fagge Special Primary School, in urban Kano, drawing on local benefactors is already a well established practice. Nearly all lists had items that could be said to contribute to better teacher and learning – directly or indirectly. Most tasks (monitored by SSOs) have a timeline for achievement.

Table 2.1 SDPS – Baseline, Milestones and Targets

INDICATORS	Enugu	Jigawa	Kaduna	Kano	Kwara	Lagos
2010 Baseline (%)	0	6	12	16	10	23
2012 Milestone (%)	10	20	25	20	50	35
2014 Target (%)	20	40	65	25	75	50
% of public primary schools with SDPS generated by ESSPIN programme work	8.41	12.37³⁰	5.36^{31,32}	9.93³³	29.59	10.14

²⁷ The ESSPIN *Programme Forward Planning* paper for Outputs 2-4 (May 2011) sets the ESSPIN programme target of 7,680 SDPS by 2014 (as in the results table). There is no data on the number of public primary schools in Nigeria but the ESSPIN target figure is equivalent approximately to the total number of pre-primary and primary schools in Kaduna and Kano combined (2009-2010 censuses).

²⁸ It can be argued the production of an SDP of necessity requires a process

²⁹ Care will be needed to avoid the Plan becoming an annual shopping list but current evidence does not suggest this.

³⁰ Based on primary school data 2009/10

³¹ Based on primary school data for 2009/10

³² Based on school grant data sheet

In general, it seems to be recognised in SDPs seen by the MTR that some priorities and needs (e.g. more teachers) are probably beyond the range of plan deliverables. But if this is a widespread assumption it needs to be challenged as there is a potential danger that plans may become restricted to small infrastructure proposals and fail to include wider ways of engaging in school improvement including through requiring action by LGEAs and SUBEBs. There is some anecdotal evidence that this is happening in some places.

An area of needed investigation is the process by which those without basic literacy contribute and comprehend the school development plan.

ESSPIN is supporting school grants through SUBEBs for all schools with SDPs – although direct funding to schools is not part of the O.3.1 indicator. The level of the grant depends on school enrolment. Different States set different enrolment band formulas. Every school within a band receives the same amount, although inevitably under this system very large schools receive less on a per pupil basis.

There is a question as to whether, in the future, greater judgement should be exercised on the quality and the thrust of the school plan as a pre-requisite for receiving school grants. But for the moment, this appears to be a fair way to introduce and test the grants scheme prior to enabling and leveraging State governments to follow suit.

Sustainability

SDPs should be conceived as, a) an essential part of school improvement, including through the management of grants and other sources of funds, b) a necessary instrument of whole school development engaging the community, and c) as a contributory means of holding LGEA's and higher level institutions to account. ESSPIN's intensive investment in training, support and monitoring of its pilot schools is demonstrating that good practice with regard to school development planning can become an integral part of school improvement. The initiation of school grants is evidently an incentive to sustaining school development planning.

There is little evidence yet that SDPs will become an essential block in the way in which LGEAs, SUBEBs and State MoE's conceive their planning cycles or that direct grants to schools will appear in plans and budgets at the State level on a regular basis. Plans that depend entirely on self help are likely to have a limited shelf life except where there is exceptional local leadership. But it is good to see, for example, in the Kaduna State MTSS 2011-2013 a budget line for SBMCs and SDPs.

A major consideration for ESSPIN going forward and leveraging political support and resources for basic education will be to demonstrate and advocate for school developing planning as an essential building block of school improvement.

School Grading

Logframe Indicator (3.2) is *primary and junior secondary school being graded satisfactory or better (%)*.

Good work in the States (and federally), to introduce and re-orient ideas about the quality assurance (QA) of schools, of which regular school inspection is an important part. In terms of progress towards ESSPIN targets however, the work is only just beginning. The weight

³³ Adding this figure from number of SBMC's established

that is accorded to this work politically in States will only become clear in the next few months when QA related legislation is approved or not. This deserves to be a purpose level indicator.

The ESSPIN results table has a target figure of 5,250 schools as being graded satisfactory or better by 2014. This figure cannot immediately be related to the percentage figures in the Logframe. It represents approximately half of the public primary schools in the six States. This would be a limited reward after a six year programme.

There is no baseline against which to measure progress. This makes the presence of milestones and targets puzzling in terms of their genesis and criteria. Some fit with the head teacher indicator (0.3.3) might have been expected. **Table 2.2** sets out the milestones and targets for this indicator, from the Logframe.

Table 2.2 Grading of primary and junior secondary schools

INDICATORS	Enugu	Jigawa	Kaduna	Kano	Kwara	Lagos
2010 Baseline (%)	-	-	-	-	-	
2012 Milestone (%)	3	25	5	10	25	25
2013 Milestone (%)	5	35	12	15	35	35
2014 Target (%)	10	45	25	25	45	45

Effectiveness

The Logframe handbook states that the primary instrument for inspecting and assessing school performance will be the *Education Quality Assurance Handbook for Nigeria* the application of which is at a very early stage.³⁴

It is an achievement that ESSPIN has made progress over a relatively short period of time in helping to reconfigure and to unify inspection and quality assurance work in the States in what has been a highly fractured and dysfunctional system. This does not mean that there is necessarily a unified model for each State. In Jigawa, for example, the primary responsibility for leading and managing this work lies with the Educational Inspectorate and Monitoring Unit (SIEMU) which is the creation of the State Governor who has demanded a direct line of reporting on school quality. In Kaduna it is the School Inspectorate and in Kano the Education Resource Department. In Kwara 75 officers were recruited, trained in new inspection methodologies and deployed to four Zones.

It is also the case that new quality assurance and inspection authorities have not been fully sanctioned by individual States. In Kaduna, for example, the Kaduna State Education Quality Assurance Service (KADSEQUAS) was approved in May 2010 along with new operational guidelines for the inspectorate, initiating a unified service for managing assessments for all schools. But the KADSEQUAS Bill awaits approval. As in the other States elections have delayed this process. In its paper on Forward Planning for Outputs 2-4, ESSPIN plans to further institutionalise Advisory Services and QA agencies to quality assure schools.

ESSPIN cites as one preliminary measure of progress that all pilot schools have undertaken a School Self Evaluation process. Based on a small sample of the products of this work there is unsurprisingly (first time round) a considerable and understandable variation in quality.

³⁴ The handbook is a worthwhile product of Federal level work by ESSPIN

Sustainability

There are two important measures of sustainability on which it is too early to make a judgement. Firstly, that new quality assurance structures have legislative authority. Secondly that provision is made on an annual basis in plans, budgets and releases for regular school inspection and quality assurance support. To take one example, in the Kaduna MTSS 2011-2013, reference is made to establishing and sustaining an effective QA and M and E system, and that 700 schools should be inspected using the new Quality Assurance approach. A separate sub-output budget line is included for this purpose.

Head Teacher Competence

Logframe Indicator (3.3) is *the percentage of head teachers in public primary schools with at least near sufficient professional competence.*

There has been a well sequenced approach to the training and subsequent support of head teachers.

The baseline for each State is adjudged to be 0 (Table 2.3). It is puzzling as to how milestones and targets have been set (including a milestone for 2011 and a survey planned for 2012).³⁵ The 33 results table refers to head teacher training days and numbers of head teachers trained (5,250 by 2014).

Table 2.3 Head Teacher Competence (Baseline, Milestones and Targets): Numbers of Schools Surveys and Head Teachers Trained (by May 2011)

INDICATORS	Enugu/Other	Jigawa/Other	Kaduna/Other	Kano/Other	Kwara/Other	Lagos/Other
2010 Baseline (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
2011 Milestone (%)	5/1	30/5	10/4	15/1	30/5	20/5
2012 Milestone (%)	15/2	50/10	40/7	20/3	50/10	40/10
2014 Target (%)	30/5	80/20	70/15	25/5	80/20	70/20
Number of schools in head teacher sample study	.	30	24	30		
Head teachers trained (Mod 1-3)	91	198	165	281	1,472*	200

* The MTR found it difficult to reconcile this figure provided by ESSPIN Abuja with data provided on the ground in Kwara.

Effectiveness

The five state survey on evaluating head teacher performance (September 2010) was an important baseline study although limited in scale. It concluded that nearly two thirds of a head teacher's time is spent on activities that are not connected to school leadership or management.

Modular training has been conducted some public primary school head teachers in each State (Table 2.3); in total 2,407. Based purely on a small number of interviews in the Northern States it is possible to conclude cautiously that:³⁶

- Teachers see a change in the behaviour of their head teachers – they are more supportive

³⁵ The fourfold grading system for judging head teacher competence is based on a small head teacher sample survey conducted by SSIT teams. This survey will be repeated each year and for non-ESSPIN supported schools. The scale and scope of this survey is not specified.

³⁶ The MTR team did not see evidence of the use of the new school head teachers' guidebook.

- Head teachers can articulate their new roles and how they are starting to play them Head teachers can discuss the process by which school evaluation was undertaken and SDPs developed
- Head teachers can rehearse the main tenets of their modular training including child-centred learning – training which they rated highly
- Head teachers welcome the new types of advisory support that they receive from SSOs and the SSIT team members
- Head teachers can point to better teacher attendance as a result of the work of SBMCs
- Anecdotally, there is evidence that SSOs and SSIT teams are supporting head teachers in non-ESSPIN schools to adopt new ways of working.

Sustainability

A sample examination of two Northern MTSS's gave rise to two contrasting results:

- In Jigawa – in the first outline draft of the 2011-2013 MTTs – there is no specific mention of further head teacher development nor is there mention of the SSIT
- In Kaduna – 2011-2013 MTTs there is specific reference to training for head teachers in school records keeping and on school self evaluation (for all school heads)

For sustainable good practice by head teachers, ongoing support embedded in LGEA and SUBEB activities will be important. In turn, this will depend on regular budget provision. More widely there appears to be an urgent need to define ways in which ESSPIN can help State authorities reach a very much larger head teacher constituency than hitherto.

Water and Sanitation

Logframe Indicator (3.4)³⁷ is *the percentage of public primary and junior and secondary schools (%) with water supply and separate latrines for girls*. [The Log frame handbook elaborates on the meaning of water supply and the use of latrines by pupils and teachers]

A modest pilot when compared to the challenge of water shortage and the lack of sanitation in Nigerian States. Data needs to be collected from the outset on the impact of the provision of clean water on enrolment and attendance. Unit cost data³⁸ is needed including comparators of other projects within and beyond Nigeria.

The Logframe uses a 2009 baseline which draws on the 2009/10 census returns for both primary and junior secondary schools. The data (which is not reproduced here from the Logframe) shows the scale of the problem – the more so on latrines than water points although the provision both is extremely poor. Against this backdrop the ESSPIN milestones and targets are both modest in their level of aspiration.

The ESSPIN results table uses numbers of learners and numbers of girls and not – as in the Logframe – the number of schools. Thus, it is targeted that just over 300,000 learners (approximately 10% of primary students in the six States) will benefit from new water and sanitation units by 2014 and 138,000 girls will benefit from new separate toilets. It is assumed that the Logframe figures refer to total State provision generally and not to direct ESSPIN support alone.

³⁷ This indicator received relatively little attention by the MTR team in the North]

³⁸ These data are there within the Programme but they are not collected and analysed for wider lesson learning and planning.

The ESSPIN *Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy* paper (May 2011) posits three quality indicators; a) share of schools with potable water supply b) share of schools with functional toilets c) the ratio of students per functional toilet.

Table 2.4 summarises progress to date in each State

Table 2.4 Water and Latrines 2008-2011

INDICATORS	Enugu	Jigawa	Kaduna	Kano	Kwara	Lagos
Results to date	10 schools identified to be provided with water and toilets	20 boreholes and hand pumps complete 100 toilets and 80 boreholes and hand pumps in progress	61 boreholes and 61 toilet blocks being developed in two phase	Water for 22,500 children Toilets for 12,000 children Prototype water/solar pump project for a school of 12,000 in Kano	19 water sites completed; 41 in progress. 19 sanitation sites in progress	Water for 13 schools in first phase 26 schools for second phase identified but reduced to 17 schools. Toilet construction in 13 Phase 1 schools.

Effectiveness

It is difficult to judge how effective the provision of water and sanitation by ESSPIN has been in the absence of data on trends in the enrolment and attendance of girls in particular. Anecdotally – including from CSO contractors – the provision of clean water is resulting in more children coming to school and staying for a full day in the classroom. The importance of clean water is also cited by head teachers.

ESSPIN states that an important factor in the selection of schools, for water points and for latrines, is their role as school cluster training centres with adequate facilities. Though a sensible idea in itself this would not appear to a primary reason for selection based on need.

A report on cost effectiveness was prepared in 2010 and workshops have been held for infrastructure teams at State, SUBEB and LGEA levels.

Sustainability

This area of work has modest aspirations. It will only have mainstream and sustainable effects if the pilot work can show that there are cost effective ways of deriving major school improvement benefits through the provision of water and latrines. As with all ESSPIN work, an ongoing, phased infrastructure programme must be built into MTSS and annual budgets on a considerably expanded scale primarily through SUBEB. There is evidence for this in the recent and draft MTTs in the Northern States but not on a scale that will make inroads into the major deficits made clear in the ASC reports.

It will be important for ESSPIN to track, comparatively, what is happening in the water sector in GEP 2 and the DFID Sanitation, Hygiene and Water project (SHAWN).

2.5 Output 4 Community Engagement and Accountability

Output 4: Mechanisms for accountability strengthened through increased capacity of communities and civil society to support schools and articulate demand for inclusive, quality basic education services. There are five Output indicators. .

School Based Management Committees

Logframe Indicator (4.1) is the percentage of public primary schools with functioning SBMCs. Result 14 in the results list refers to the number of community members trained to participate in SBMCs.³⁹

The establishment of active SBMCs has been a notable ESSPIN achievement: SBMCs have been activated in 1,164 schools, of which 85% are functional, leading (based on MTR observation) to:

- Awareness of roles, responsibilities and rights
- Increased teacher presence, improved teacher pupil contact time, and more child-centred learning
- Increase in pupil attendance and enrolment (including girls)
- Harnessing of resources to address school development plans
- Instances of lobbying by SBMCs and of positive response from LGEAs, SUBEB's and construction contractors

More attention is needed to the issue of representation and participation on SBMCs and to the use of more concrete downward accountability mechanisms (such as LGEA and School Report Cards).

Table 2.5 provides data on ESSPIN pilot schools only. Data on SBMCs are not available from States or from ESSPIN, for other schools with SBMCs. The 2012 survey will update this.

Table 2.5 Output 4.1 SBMC Indicators

	Enugu	Jigawa	Kaduna	Kano	Kwara	Lagos*
No. of public PS & JSS	1,367	2,300	4,700	6,000	1,841	1,286
Pilot % of total	7.3%	8.6%	3.5%	5.3%	12.4%	7.7%
Indicator: Percentage and No. of primary schools with functioning SBMCs	[91 pilot schools * 10 mission school SBMCs identified for training]	198 schools (100% pilot)	165 (100% pilot)	250/320 (78% pilot schools)	229 schools (100% pilot schools) with a further 27 schools currently receiving training	100 schools (100% pilot schools)
Baseline (2010)	-	28%	16%	25%	53%	NA
Milestone (2012)	20%	40%	40%	50%	70%	NA
Target (2014)	50%	70%	80%	80%	90%	NA

N.B In total these figures do not completely tally with the Output 4 paper for the MTR (May 2011)

* Lagos applies a cluster approach to SBMCs – reportedly five schools in a cluster. The Handbook for SBMC training refers to 8-10 schools per SBMC cluster.

These figures call into question the likelihood of meeting the 2012 milestone for all public schools, without a significant thrust by other players (e.g. IDPs and NGOs) and state funding.

³⁹ The Logframe baseline derives from an ESSPIN community survey (2010) which will be repeated in 2012 and 2014. There are no routine data available on other schools with functioning SBMCs.

Effectiveness

SBMCs are functioning in 85% of ESSPIN pilot schools. Seventy SBMCs need to be fully established in Kano. Direct evidence for functionality is based on interviews with a sample of SBMCs in the six States, with CSOs and other officials, and from a review of a sample of CSO mentoring and monitoring reports in each State.

Training has been provided to 19,788 SBMC members (7,000 female⁴⁰) across all ESSPIN pilot schools.⁴¹ High levels of satisfaction with the approach were expressed at all levels and also with the effectiveness of the ESSPIN model. SBMC members spoke with conviction about learning of their right to be involved in their school and the education of their children, and of the steps they had taken towards this end. They cited examples of the upkeep of the physical environment and of better school security. There were reports also of SBMC monitoring leading to increased teacher presence and contact time in classrooms; of action leading to a reduction in pupil absenteeism ; increased enrolment (including of girls); and drop-outs returning to school. Instances of the enrolment of children with disability were also reported.

Apart from small school grants (ESSPIN funds through SUBEB) there is some evidence of schools harnessing local resources, which are used according to priorities in School Development Plans. However, the manner in which information on such changes is currently being collected and reported in CSO monitoring and mentoring reports does not allow for quantification of the scale or of the identification of trends.

Efficiency

The establishment of functional SBMCs follows a similar approach in all states. With ESSPIN support, there is a State specific SBMC policy and guidebook, which has been disseminated to all public schools in the six States. Good quality materials have been produced, and utilisation of locally based CSOs and School Support Officers (SSOs) for the training of SBMCs makes good use of local resources. The ESSPIN (cross-state) cost of activating, training and mentoring of 1 SBMC is N215, 000.

ESSPIN State team Output 4 staff members are familiar with the Logframe and indicator 4.1 on SBMCs but were not relating these to the baseline, milestones or targeting in their planning and reporting. (This observation also applies to School Improvement indicators).

Sustainability

States spoke highly of the effectiveness of SBMCs in pilot schools and of the new capacity of CSOs and SUBEB and LGEA officials to support and expand good practice. A well designed Training of Trainers manual has been developed. All States express the intent to expand the ESSPIN SBMC model to other public schools. In Kaduna, in particular, and to some extent in Jigawa, Kano and Kwara, the functional review of SUBEBs has led to stronger Social Mobilisation Departments with a clear focus on SBMCs. But, as yet, there are limited budgets for the expansion of the pilot.

The Kaduna State Government has translated, printed and disseminated the State SBMC policy and guidebook to all public schools and in 2011 has allocated N10 million for expansion to other selected LGEAs. Kaduna's SUBEB appears determined that ESSPIN's model (with small grants overseen by SBMCs and involving CSOs and government officials in their training) will be utilised. But, at present, there is no costed plan for this process.

⁴⁰ This is an unlikely figure which endorses the lack of consistent sex disaggregation and/or reporting. This equates to 35% females trained

⁴¹ By comparison, the GEP2 2010 Annual Review indicates that 17,215 SBMC members (4,376 female, 25%) had been trained

In Kwara, the SBMC Policy was developed as part of the State's *Every Child Counts* reform. SBMC development is included in the MTSS and state resources have been used to train Social Mobilisation Officers from 12 LGEAs with the intention to replicate the model further.

In Jigawa, while the policy and the guidebook (in English) have been distributed to all schools there is no budgetary provision for translation. SUBEB officials indicate that they wish to support direct school funding but had failed so far to have budgetary provision made. They have experience of UBEC Self Help Projects which have reached approximately 500 schools over the last three years. The SMD felt that future Self Help grants could be aligned with the ESSPIN approach to SDPs, including support and monitoring. Progress appears to hinge on backing from the new administration.

In Kano, the SBM policy and guidebook in Hausa has been translated but is awaiting printing and dissemination to all schools. The latest MTSS (Target 4.4.3) refers to the establishment of SBMCs state-wide but with no budget. The issue has been highlighted in Government handover notes and in an early speech by the incoming Governor. Some concerns were expressed by SSIT and CSOs about the delay in small grants reaching pilot schools and of the de-motivating effect which this had on SBMCs. Some concerns were also expressed by SUBEB and SSIT about the lack of clarity on their roles and what they felt was overreliance by ESSPIN on designated ESSPIN Desk Officers (DO) at LGEA level in liaising and coordinating SBMC training and activities.

The ESSPIN paper on *Community Engagement – Early Impact* (May 2011) estimates that approximately 25-30% of SBMCs are using their investment in school improvements to leverage further support from government. It is not possible to endorse this figure, but from the sample of CSO reports screened and interviews conducted by the MTR, it is felt that it may be close to accurate. Further planned monitoring will enable this to be validated.

Women and Children

Logframe Indicator (4.2) refers to the *percentage of communities where women and children perceived SBMC decisions to be reflecting their concerns*. Result number 15 has a very similar statement but is expressed in terms of the total number of communities.⁴²

The SBMC template and questionnaire provide useful questions to assess the voice and participation of women and children but there is no synthesis of this information as yet. Information on women's and children's participation are not readily available or reported on-such as numbers on SBMCs, numbers by office holder or attendance at meetings. Based on MTR interviews and document review for the six States, it is felt that this is a high risk area needing greater attention by the ESSPIN team.

Effectiveness

There are problems in the Northern States, unsurprisingly, given the many barriers faced by women and children. Some SBMCs have only one woman member although the norm reportedly is three to four.⁴³ Some CSOs cited cases where there are no women, or where a nominated woman has failed to show up. There is an inherent bias against the number of women participating in the Northern States. SBMC membership is drawn from Traditional Leaders, Religious Leaders, Head Teachers and Teachers, along with Old Pupil's Associations and professional body representatives.

⁴² The results checklist states that no data will be available until the 2012 community survey. *The Logframe* Baseline derives from CSO reports. Milestones have been set by State for 2011 and 2012.

⁴³ The absence of such data is surprising.

These currently yield only male members, as women are not present or organised in these groupings. This listing does not acknowledge and address the existing imbalance. This is not reflected in membership in the southern States. There are instances in Lagos and Kwara of women participating as officials on SBMCs – as Treasurer and Secretary. Women SMBM sub-committees are active in Kwara – primarily in encouraging attendance through engagement with mothers and guardians.⁴⁴

It is clear from a review of the training materials and mentoring reports that communities have been sensitised on the participation of women and children. The approach has included targeting and getting the support of traditional and religious leaders; with some exceptions, this was not sufficient. There are problems with timing of meetings; with attitudes to women's involvement at meetings, with women's capacity to dialogue and engage (mainly but not only in the North). Where women are active in SBMCs, it appears to be along very traditional division of labour lines, where women (working as a sub-Committee in the South) go into homes to persuade other women to let their children go to school, while men make the decisions.

There is clearly a need for strategies which go further than reminding communities of their responsibilities. Save the Children and Social Development Direct (both members of the ESSPIN Consortium) should be engaged to help to address this issue. Currently, ESSPIN's approach to addressing this is not clear. Suggestions advanced in dialogue with its teams are limited to awareness-raising and/or are just in their infancy e.g. proposed women's forums as an adjunct to SBMCs in Kano. While the pragmatism of engaging women in order to reach them and their families is understandable and justified, it is necessary to go further, and to work towards a longer-term transformative effect. Otherwise, there is the risk of achieving immediate gains but at the expense of reinforcing existing unequal structures and relationships. This risk extends also to other groups e.g. those who are illiterate, poor, of different ethnic origin or are non-indigene to the community.

Reporting on children's involvement on SBMCs is mainly qualitative with some useful illustrations of where children did take action with their peers or felt supported to report e.g. teacher non-attendance. But it was not possible for the MTR to assess the scale or sustainability of this.⁴⁵

Efficiency

Current reporting by CSOs on this issue is inadequate and does not include basic data. Many claims are unsubstantiated, such as 'women's participation appears to be increasing'. It is critical for ESSPIN to get an early sense of the extent of the issues and to address them without delay.

Sustainability

Good work has been done, for example, through the module on Inclusive Education and gender sensitisation of CSOs, STT, SITT and various officials who are a resource for future SBMC establishment and support. It is not possible to assess the extent to which these stakeholders are now gender sensitive but it is clear that some, at least, are. The work of sensitising communities and leaders on women's right to involvement in decisions related to schooling is unlikely to support real change unless additional and reinforcing strategies are used. Engaging some of the more gender sensitive CSOs in a dialogue on ways forward would be a useful starting point.

⁴⁴ A document on Gender Champions is about to issue.

⁴⁵ Children are engaged in cooperation with PATHS in Health Clubs. The one Club visited by the MTR was working well with good evidence of children taking a lead.

CSO Advocacy

The **Logframe Indicator (4.3)** refers to the *quality and scale of civil society partner's basic education advocacy work on behalf of communities.*⁴⁶ Result number 16 has a 2014 target based on a total number of CSOs working with government on SBMCs.

Too early to assess as CSOs engagement with communities has mostly taken place in the last year.

Effectiveness

The number of CSOs working with government in the five States (Enugu being at an early stage) is 36. In all States, the CSOs were selected through a process involving SAVI drawing up a short list of possible organisations from its data base; further screening, interviews and an organisational assessment leading to final selection and training alongside Social Mobilisation Officers, the State Task Team members and School Support Officers from LGEAs. This team then constituted the training and support team for SBMCs. The process appears to have been effective in building good working relationships, understanding and appreciation between CSOs and government. There is considerable appreciation for the joint work of CSOs and SSOs in mentoring and monitoring communities, and in helping to resolve local level issues. But, as yet there are no examples of CSOs (or ESSPIN) identifying advocacy issues for higher level policy and strategy attention.

Efficiency

It is possible that a lower cost way model of engaging CSOs might have been adopted but SAVI's view is that capacity strengthening of CSOs, particularly in Northern Nigeria is necessary to develop their ability to play their role effectively. The creation of joint CSO and government training team means that a resource now exists for replication, assuming that there is the political will to allocate appropriate resources.

Sustainability

Progress has been made on relationship building and capacity building – but will this be enough when funding for activities is not provided? MTR discussion with CSOs provided no steer on this, beyond a general commitment to continued engagement.

Information on School Resources

The **Logframe Indicator (4.4)** refers to *the percentage of parents/guardians of public primary school students who were informed by the school in the previous three months of school resources and their use.* Result number 16 has the number of schools providing relevant information to parents and guardians.⁴⁷

Given the lack of data, no assessment could be made by the MTR but it should be possible to have some information on this indicator from CSO monitoring and mentoring when these data are later analysed.

Community Demand

The **Logframe Indicator (4.5)** is the *percentage of schools where community demand was responded to with the provision of resources.* Result number 18 has similar wording but refers to the total number of schools.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Baseline is derived from an ESSPIN community survey. No milestones have been set.

⁴⁷ The Logframe indicator is clearer as 'relevant information' is open-ended.

⁴⁸ Milestones for 2011 will be assessed by CSO monitoring reports.

As with 4.4 there is some evidence of this happening but it is not possible to indicate the scale.

Access and Equity

It is difficult to understand the access and equity targets that have been set in the ESSPIN Logframe and the assumptions on which they are based. This is also true for the results table (of 33 indicators). Clearer articulation of demand and supply barriers in primary schooling is needed, as well as an assessment of further programming options. Clarity on access targets and strategies is also required. A more comprehensive tracking of enrolment, attendance and retention within pilot schools is essential.

The extent to which ESSPIN is collecting, analysing and using sex disaggregated data is inadequate and raises concerns about the degree to which interventions recognise and address gender differences. Given DFID's thrust on MDG targets, including girls' enrolment, especially in the North, ESSPIN will need to revisit the scale of need and the scope for a more substantive response during the proposed re-appraisal and up-scaling response during the proposed re-appraisal of the Programme (Chapter 6). This will also need to situate access and equity more centrally in proposed work on ESSPIN's theory of change, results and performance measurement.

Outputs on access and equity are not explicit in the ESSPIN Logframe Output indicators although they do feature at Goal level (net enrolment, completion rates and the gender parity index); and at the Purpose level (*primary education net enrolment rate of the bottom two consumption quintiles – sex disaggregated*). The ESSPIN Results Reporting Table (Quarterly Report March 2011) has identified two results for Access and Equity:

- Number of additional learners accessing basic education owing to ESSPIN activities with a programme target of 223,000, though whether *additional learners* will be attributed to ESSPIN is unclear.
- Number of 'at risk' female learners who are recipients of Conditional Cash Transfers (cumulative to date is given as 3,000 and the 2014 target for the Programme is 12,000)

Access

The poor quality of the Nigerian education system is a barrier to access. A key strategy of ESSPIN is to address access through a focus on improved quality, such as enhancing the educational environment (e.g. teaching methods, school development plans, improved water and sanitation facilities); and changing community and parental attitudes (e.g. training and mentoring, including establishment of active SBMCs, school grants and dialogue on entitlements to education). It is posited that this will lead to increased enrolment of boys and girls.

It is difficult to comment on the extent to which ESSPIN has contributed to increased access, even within pilot schools, as data are not available on this until the 2010-11 ASC has been cleaned and analysed. There is a significant body of qualitative and anecdotal evidence from interviews to suggest that overall enrolment and retention for boys and girls has improved in pilot schools, but the MTR was unable to measure the scale of this increase and attribution to ESSPIN's efforts. Based on analysis of enrolment figures for 2009-10 and 2010-11 (uncleaned) in pilot schools in two states (Kaduna and Jigawa), there was a 20% enrolment increase from one year to the next.⁴⁹ How this compares with the general picture within and across each State will not be known until the 2010-2011 ASC is available.

⁴⁹ These data were produced at the request of the MTR by ESSPIN state teams with caveats as the 2010-11 data are not cleaned.

With encouragement from DFID, since 2010, ESSPIN has focused more specifically on issues of access, particularly in the Northern States. The main response has been the launching of two pilots on IQTE education in Kano, now being replicated in Kaduna and Jigawa. The ESSPIN pilots have increased state knowledge and awareness of the scale of IQTE schools and factors influencing parental demand and choice, especially for girls. The scale is significant. According to the ESSPIN paper *Islamiyya, Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education* (May 2011) citing other sources, there were 23,000 Islamic schools in Kano State catering for three million children compared with fewer than 5,000 State primary schools; although these figures are contested. Recent, 2009 papers suggest that there are nearly three times more Islamic schools than State school in Kaduna and twice the number in Jigawa.

There is state interest in the ESSPIN approach to Islamic education but so far proposals for the establishment of an IQTE Board to handle the potential increases in school and student numbers have languished – with some expectation that new administrations will activate these.

So far, the following has been achieved through the IQTE pilots:

- 800 children in Kano benefiting from basic education in 28 Tsangaya school clusters, drawn from 140 Tsangaya schools, with 30 community teachers trained and supported;
- 900 girls accessing basic education in Integrated Islamiyya Schools in Kano, including training of 30 female community teachers
- In Kaduna, enrolment of 450 Almajiri and 76 girls and training of 38 integrated teachers (and 9 support officials);
- IQTE Jigawa pilot launched covering 30 school clusters targeting 900 pupils

In total these pilots have affected 3,012 students.

There are some early positive quality indications from the IQTE pilot in Kano state:

- Encouraging Year 1 average scores for students from Kano Tsangaya schools i.e. pupils scored 70%; 63% and 70% in Hausa, English and Maths, compared with 45%; 54% and 44% average scores from pupils in comparator State public schools.
- Inclusion of N50 million for IQTE development in Kano State Approved Estimates 2011

The Role of Private Schools

One potential means of reaching more children more rapidly is through support to private schools, a particular feature in the Southern States of Nigeria. This is an approach which is attracting the attention of DFID which intends to undertake scoping work to see whether it can be supportive of low cost private schooling, as a significant contribution to the achievement of the MDGs.

ESSPIN was conceived by DFID in 2007 as a programme focused on the delivery of basic education by State authorities. However, the Programme has developed a strategy paper on *Non-State Providers* (May 2011) arguing that the Programme cannot ignore the expansion of private schools. In Lagos, in particular, its mainstream public school programme caters for approximately 30% of the primary school population. The paper suggests that there are teaching quality issues in private schools which ESSPIN can help to address; and that private school models can demonstrate greater efficiencies with greater accountability to communities than public schools.

The Paper makes the case for ESSPIN involvement in private school provision around issues of advocacy, support to a coalition of private schools, access to credit, school improvement, and quality assurance.

From the exploratory work that has been undertaken so far, especially in Lagos, it has been shown that private schools approved by the State fare better than unapproved schools in terms of PTR, number of female teachers and teacher qualifications, salaries, and teacher presence in schools. Infrastructure, water supply and sanitation are problems for many private schools – approved and unapproved.⁵⁰ Other challenges include difficulties with interaction with government and gaining approved status; securing funds and credit finance for investment in infrastructure; and seasonal flooding. Faced with these problems, private schools have formed associations to lobby and protect their interests. These associations have broadened support to include in-service teacher seminars, advice on school management, and collective representation to government. The State government, in turn, has made significant progress in improving its relations with private schools over the past two years, though instances of Local Council Development Area staff requesting a tax from schools based on their illegal status was reported.

Some private schools, including those run by religious institutions provide free or concessionary places for children. One such school in Lagos which charges no fee has an enrolment of 225 and a waiting list of several hundred, indicating clearly that the demand exists.

Early discussions are needed between ESSPIN and DFID to determine the place of ESSPIN in the Department's thinking on private schooling within the new Operational Plan. A key question is whether ESSPIN is the appropriate and most efficient vehicle through which to work having regard to the fact that it has an administrative structure in place in States.

In view of the urgency of this matter to the overall context in which ESSPIN operates, there would be value in conducting a feasibility study in the next few months on ways of advancing DFID's work for private schooling, to take place concurrently with, but separately from, the reappraisal of ESSPIN.

Equity

The primary ESSPIN approach to issues of equity in education has been to raise awareness on inclusive education and the right of all children to education. This has permeated the teaching and training modules developed for various levels and is evident in, for example:

- School improvements to address supply side dimensions of quality (such as improved teaching methods, better water and sanitation); safety and sensitivity to needs of different categories of pupil (by sex, children living with disability, nomadic children, those out of school) – no specific targets or estimates are available for these interventions.
- Awareness raising and training on inclusive education (including children living with disability) for officials and SBMCs. There are examples of school-level initiatives and responses, particularly in getting children into school, community support to enable poor children remain in school and (reportedly) construction of simple ramps and rails to aid children living with disability. But inclusive education needs sustained effort at State policy, strategy and budget levels, since it is costly to make provision for special needs. It is also unclear what targets ESSPIN has set for this and how far it wants to progress beyond awareness-raising.
- SBMC training and action to increase enrolment and retention of both boys and girls.
- Child protection and participation training has been provided to Government partners, CSOs and SBMCs, which is helping to raise awareness on the critical issues which have such an impact on enrolment and retention of vulnerable children. The need now is to focus attention at the next level in terms of strategies: codes of conduct, reporting mechanisms and referral

⁵⁰ In in one MTR meeting with Private School owners, it was reported that many private schools were not registered because of the high cost of registration starting from minimum N500, 000. If the cost of registration is reduced, more private schools might register and then agree to use uniform and State curricula.

pathways which recognise the extreme difficulty for children to report and to get redress for abuse, both in and out of school. Discussions have commenced within ESSPIN on building this approach into work with head teachers, teachers, SSITs etc. with recent training on child protection for SSITs in Kano and Kwara. Incorporation into teacher training and other training modules is also now being addressed.

- Joint SLP Big Common Impact Areas (BCIAs) have specific targets related to girl's education and the retention of girls in schools

Feedback from different stakeholders during the MTR suggests that awareness has been raised; that efforts have increased at school and community level to address different needs and that there has been progress – though it is not possible to quantify this for categories of student. In Kaduna, a State Committee on Inclusive Education, established in 2008, has been reinvigorated and enlarged to represent a broad coalition of stakeholders. A survey of out of school children has been planned and personnel have been trained. It was ready to start but was delayed by the 2011 elections. It is expected that this survey will provide information for policy and planning on inclusive education.

ESSPIN's main strategy for addressing equity, including gender equity, has been to mainstream attention across the programme. Heretofore, this approach was not supported by any specific strategy (though various papers were produced on this at different times) until the *ESSPIN Strategy on Girl Education and Gender* (ESSPIN 046) in May 2011. Reviewing other current strategy documents and Forward Planning Papers suggests that work remains to be done to ensure that the new strategy and a focus on gender equality results are central, integrated and supported by clear indicators, targets and resources, including a budget.

ESSPIN has had no resident Lead Specialist for Access and Equity for some time and it unclear how such issues are addressed in management decision-making, including allocation of resources. Specialist inputs on access and equity appear to be for discrete pieces of work but without an overarching framework. Even the basics of collecting, analysing and reporting on sex disaggregated information in ESSPIN documents (including briefing materials for the MTR) are inadequate. Channels for input of Access and Equity expertise (e.g. from Social Development Direct, the specialist consortium partner) are needed at senior management level in terms of guiding strategic decision-making. There is need also for attention to ongoing development of the competencies, skills and strategies of Access and Equity Officers at state level.

More recently some innovative pilots to address equity (and access) have been developed. ESSPIN, in partnership with the State Government and the World Bank (SESP) has recently embarked on a **Conditional Cash Transfer (CTT)** pilot in Kano state. The first tranche of funds has been disbursed (with two different levels of funding and two different modalities). In total 11,880 girls were identified, with ESSPIN providing the funds for 25% of these, and the balance from the State Government. With the World Bank, an Impact Assessment has been designed with 'treatment' and 'control' groups identified and progress is already being assessed. This is commendable and should yield useful information for improved replication. However, it should not be necessary to wait for completion of the assessment to generate learning and consider possible scaling up of the pilot in other LGEAs and states. Another concern is the three year duration of this pilot, when there is need to aim for more girls to complete a full cycle of secondary schooling.

One issue already highlighted by the CTT pilot is the bottle-neck of JSS places for eligible girls. The CTT Programme Implementation Unit identified approximately 1,000 eligible girls who subsequently failed to get places. In response to this, ESSPIN Kano has proposed use of the **Kano Challenge**

Fund Scheme to complement CTT⁵¹ in the three pilot LGEAs, by addressing supply-side barriers to girls' education at public JSS, including schools not previously directly supported by ESSPIN. If funds were available, there is scope to expand these pilots beyond the three selected LGEAs and including JSS in the private and voluntary sector also.

Other planned pilots to address access and equity include:

- **Girls' education** (Jigawa)⁵² which is expected to target 6,000 girls by 2014 (initially 2,905) through provision of e.g. school uniform and learning, sanitary and health materials, intended to make parents and girls more comfortable about attending school and making it less costly;
- **Community Education Initiative Pilot for Nomadic Children** which will target 40 schools with 3,000 students (Jigawa) and a small programme in Kano which will be demand-led;
- **Support to Remote Schools** Kaduna expected to reach 1,500 pupils

In total, through ESSPIN's efforts a total of 17,880 girls are targeted for support, as are 4,500 students in nomadic and remote schools.

It will be important to assess the actual impact of these pilots and to continue to consider other measures to address barriers to girl's, nomadic children and other potentially excluded groups to basic education. While worthy these pilots are a relative 'drop in the ocean' compared with the needs of children in Nigeria⁵³. It will be important to revisit the issue of scale and the role of ESSPIN in helping deliver the targets in DFID's Operational Plan. DFID's 2015 Education target is 800,000 children (75% girls) receiving education in Northern Nigeria – directly attributable to DFID. ESSPIN's target of 223,000 children (40% girls) by 2014 is based on a rationale of impacting on all schools in Kwara, Lagos and Jigawa; on 25% in Enugu but only 10% of schools in Kano and Kaduna. This does not resonate with DFID's Northern States and girls' education prioritisation. In terms of DFID's intention to create more opportunities for women and girls, there is scope, for example, for attention to increasing the numbers of women teachers and to deployment and career development of women in the education sector.

⁵¹ ESSPIN (April 2011) Kano State Challenge Fund Programme 1 Supply Capacity Assessment indicates that just one third of the 750 JSS in the state are for girls and that there are approximately half as many girls as boys studying at JSS.

⁵² ESSPIN Jigawa (undated) Girls Education Pilot: Concept and Implementation Strategy

⁵³ DFID's Operational Plan indicates that 60% of 6-17 year old girls in Northern Nigeria are not in school.

3 Value for Money (VFM)

3.1 VFM Analysis⁵⁴

Assessing ESSPIN's Value for Money proved difficult. Financial management information is not linked to the activities defined in the Logframe. Expenditure by State and by Output is not readily available. ESSPIN has not collected or used this type of financial data systematically for strategic planning and decision making.⁵⁵

ESSPIN financial planning is done on an annual basis. It follows DFID's financial year (FY) from 1 April to 31 March. ESSPIN management prepares a Forecast Analysis using a standard format for long and short-term TA expenditures, reimbursables, management costs and project support activities (PSA). This Analysis is sent to DFID for approval, after which it provides the basis for financial monitoring during the year. A monthly invoice is sent to DFID using the same cost structure. Annually, the invoices are subject to an external audit; only one of which has taken place so far (July 2008 – August 2009) which concentrated on procurement and internal control issues and not on reporting structures.

ESSPIN's current financial reporting system is not geared to inform strategic management decisions; financial management information is not linked to the activities defined in the Logframe. Accordingly, it does not provide data as a matter of course on how expenditure relates to progress by Output, and by State. Quarterly reports do assess progress by State but without a financial chapter to interpret progress against financial inputs. There is no annual financial report.

This is not to say that financial information is not available. ESSPIN State Teams prepare a quarterly work plan including an activity-based budget by Output. The ESSPIN team in Abuja uses these work plans to release funds to the States and to monitor progress at State level. But the State work plans are not consolidated in a form which enables monitoring of overall progress. At the MTR team's request, ESSPIN prepared an overview of the expenditure by State to date although this information is not part of the current reporting structure.⁵⁶

While the ESSPIN management team recognised that analysing aggregated information might be useful for purposes of the MTR it did not see its added-value in terms of managing ESSPIN. It argued that monthly internal reporting on TA, PSA and reimbursables expenditures provided an adequate basis for management decision making. It also cited the recent introduction of efficiency indicators that enabled ESSPIN to monitor spend against results.

⁵⁴ VFM analyses have two purposes, a) to account for performance and make informed judgements about "whether the results obtained are worth the inputs spent," and b) to provide essential managerial information to improve decision making and indicate future performance prospects. The focus is on:

- Economy: "the process of acquiring human and material resources of appropriate quality and quantity at the lowest possible cost";
- Efficiency: "the production of maximum output for any given set of resource inputs (or the use of minimum inputs to achieve the required outputs)";
- Effectiveness: "the achievement of desired outcomes or benefits, in both quantitative and qualitative terms

VFM analysis requires close examination of the linkages between expenditure, Logframe activities, (sub-) outputs, and outcomes. This in turn requires the availability of accurate and comprehensive financial and operational data.

⁵⁵ Efforts to examine VFM at sub-output level (teacher training and Annual School Censuses) proved unproductive.

⁵⁶ Some crude assumptions were made to prepare the requested breakdown, for instance, simply dividing by six and retrospectively attributing expenditures equally by State.

This is a somewhat surprising position to take, not least when ESSPIN urges and assists State Governments to develop activity and programme-based budgets. For informed management decisions, activity-based expenditure data is a primary requirement. Cost breakdowns by (sub-) output will enable the ESSPIN team to reflect on the cost-effectiveness of its interventions and provide evidence to inform management decisions on whether or not to continue with certain activities. The MTR team strongly advises that basic expenditure data be incorporated into quarterly reports, to provide the consolidated information set out in **Table 3.1**, with a narrative explanation on deviations. Tracking and reporting on leverage is necessary too.

Table 3.1 State and Output Reporting

	(Sub)Output 1		(Sub)Output 2		(Sub)Output ...		Total
	Budget	Realised expenditure	Budget	Realised expenditure	Budget	Realised expenditure	
State 1							
State 2							
State							
Total							

3.2 ESSPIN's Value for Money Strategy

DFID Nigeria explains its newly introduced *Value for Money Strategy* as a commitment to delivering value for money (VFM) in its programme expenditure.⁵⁷ This means that all programme staff need to know what is being achieved, at what cost, with each intervention, across all sectors and delivery partners.⁵⁸ Completing **Table 3.1** is a relatively easy measure which will assist in calculating costs and in realising DFID's Strategy. The next step will be to translate this information into results achieved. In this regard, the VFM Strategy notes that the ESSPIN Logframe requires revision to place greater emphasis on service delivery and to take account of DFID's results and VFM agenda.

Further Logframe revisions have been put on hold to await the findings of the MTR. But in order to make some progress on VFM, a set of 33 result indicators have been developed. At present, the VFM efficiency indicators that ensue from the list of results do not link clearly with the outputs defined in the Logframe, although ESSPIN has expressed its intention to integrate the two in due course. The MTR believes that the next round of work will require greater clarity and consensus on ESSPIN's intervention logic (see **Chapter 1**).

Given that the limitations of the operational and financial data that was available, the MTR focused on the structures, processes, and practices influencing economy, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. These are grouped under allocative efficiency, managerial efficiency, and technical efficiency (as this relates to the use of technical assistance).

⁵⁷ Although the DFID Strategy on VFM is recent, it has many similarities with well established practice on assessing the cost effectiveness of aid interventions.

⁵⁸ Final *DFID Nigeria VFM Strategy*, January 2011.

3.3 Allocative efficiency

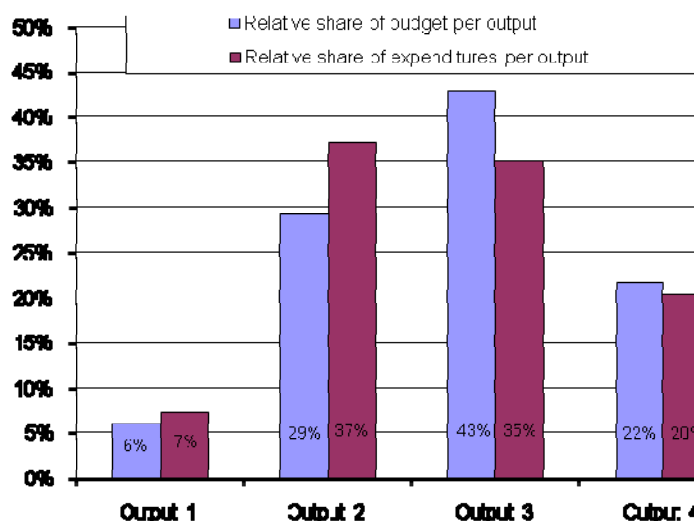
Allocation between Outputs

The total approved DFID budget for ESSPIN (2008-2014) is £83.5 million, of which £32.1 million (38%) had been spent by May 2011. With 43% of the total budget, Output 3, on school improvement, has the largest share. In absolute terms, Output 2 on State Governance Reform has the highest expenditure to date with almost £12 million.

Figure 3.1 shows that expenditure on Output 2 is relatively overspent and that on Output 3 relatively under spent halfway through the Programme. This is, however, broadly in line with expectations, as the initial focus of the Programme has been on governance reform at the State level. Investment in project support activities is anticipated to rise significantly between 2011 and 2014.

Half way through the Programme, Output 1 is slightly overspent, which is surprising given the difficulties and delays in the implementation of this Output. Central management costs are distributed equally across all four Outputs. They are therefore partly attributed to Output 1 as well.⁵⁹

Figure 3.1 Expenditure by Output to May 2011



Output	Budget	Expenditure	% used
Output 1	4,939,912	2,343,301	47%
Output 2	24,108,041	11,934,001	50%
Output 3	35,286,949	11,229,852	32%
Output 4	17,899,739	6,562,245	37%
Total	82,234,640	32,069,399	39%

Allocation between States

There is no specific strategy on allocations between States. Until now, ESSPIN has used a fairly uniform intervention package in all six States. Standardised training modules resulted in economies of scale although modifications were made as necessary to match local contexts. By May 2011, each State spent on average £4.2 million (37% of the total State budget). Because of its late start,

⁵⁹ Management costs at State level are attributed to outputs 2-4 using the ratio of approximately 30:50:20. Central Management Costs are equally distributed to outputs 1-4.

expenditure in Enugu has been less than other States. Expenditure in Kano is above the State average, explained by higher expenditure on Project Support Activities (PSA) due to a higher number of pilot schools than other states. Kano also has a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Pilot which does not exist elsewhere, and an IQTE pilot, which it started before Jigawa and Kaduna.

Expenditure at the Federal level (Output 1 and some central project management costs) is £7 million or 22% of the total expenditure to date.

Table 3.2 Total Expenditure by State and at the Federal Level

State	Total Budget	Expenditure (up to May 2011)	Utilisation Rate
Enugu	5,646,173	1,576,588	28%
Lagos	10,660,766	4,245,654	40%
Kwara	11,562,798	4,700,278	41%
Jigawa	11,787,076	4,369,222	37%
Kaduna	12,681,653	4,950,852	39%
Kano	14,388,555	5,242,419	36%
Abuja	15,507,619	6,984,386	45%
Total	82,234,640	32,069,399	39%

In terms of VFM, there is room for more flexibility of expenditures across States. School improvement programmes and governance reform - initially driven by a uniform TA package – should increasingly be driven by ownership at the State level. ESSPIN should be responsive and reactive to political developments to maximize its leverage and replication strategy. Different levels of investment in different States should become much more evident as the post election positions in the six States and levels of support for ESSPIN programmes become clearer in the second half of 2011.

In terms of reporting structures, collecting expenditure data at State level will be needed to establish the overall cost of an integrated and intensive package of reform and school improvement. This is an important question if ESSPIN is going to leverage resources for the roll out and replication of good practice. None of the planning documents provide estimated costs of ESSPIN's consolidation strategies. Neither is there an overview of the cost implications for State Ministries and SUBEB's in turning demonstrable good practice into sustainable State wide reforms. These estimates are needed (including through comparisons with other major education programmes in Nigeria).⁶⁰

In addition, there is a need for clear and consistent tracking and reporting on leverage – where State and other resources have been provided as a result of, or as a complement to, ESSPIN's efforts. Some of this information is available at State level, but it ought to be tracked routinely.

3.4 Managerial efficiency

Programme Management Team⁶¹

The management team consists of 10.7 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. There are four full-time senior managers at Central level and one in each State. In addition, the Programme Director and

⁶⁰ At MTR's request, the Kaduna State team provided a breakdown of the ESSPIN unit cost interventions for a sample school (visited by the MTR). Kano's State team provided similar data.

⁶¹ The ESSPIN Abuja team makes the case that the management team should also include Lead Specialists pushing the main management team up to 15 people (11 male and four female; seven Nigeria and eight British).

Programme Officer (based in the UK) represent together 0.7 FTE. The total budget for the programme management referred to as LTTA Management is £7.1 million (9% of the total budget) of which £2.5 million had been expended up to May 2011. This does not include travel and living allowances (see also section on project management costs).

Fee rates are considered to conform to international market rates although for long-term international TA slightly lower fees at central level might have been possible. More Nigerian nationals would have improved the input mixture.

Total Programme Costs by Category

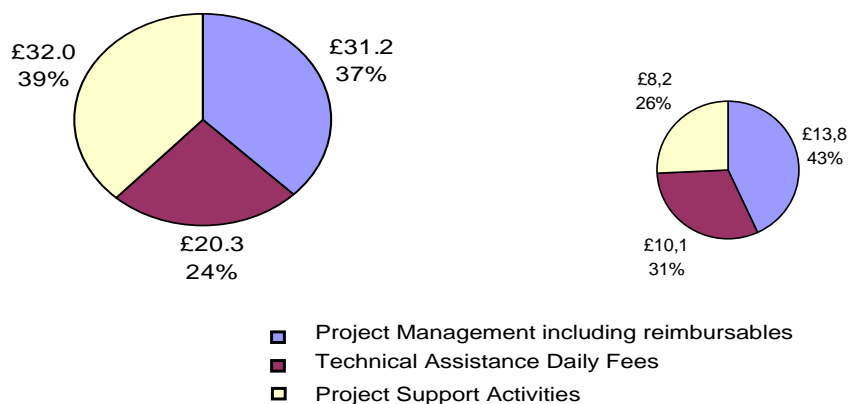
Figure 3.2 gives a distribution of ESSPIN's budget and expenditure in three main cost categories. TA (long and short term) represents £20.3 million or 24% of the total budget for the period 2008-2014. By May 2011, about half of this budget (£10.1 million) had been expended. Project Support Activities (PSA) represents £32 million of the budget of which approximately one quarter has been expended. The remaining category contains all costs that support the operation of ESSPIN. This includes management fees and support staff costs and all reimbursables (travel and living costs, office costs, meetings and other events, vehicle running costs, IT and communication equipment). Until now £13.8 million has been expended in this category, although this figure should be read with care. It can be argued that travel and living costs related to TA should be in the TA category, but there is no breakdown available between TA and management travel and living costs to make this distinction possible. Total expenditure on travel and living costs is £5.1 million. If we assume that these costs are split equally between TA and management, the share of Project Management expenditures, including reimbursables, out of total expenditures to date would be 35 percent.⁶²

Overall, programme management costs are considered comparatively high. A typical figure for programme overhead costs is around 20 percent. On the other hand, no one can qualify ESSPIN as a typical programme. Due to its magnitude and heavy reliance on TA, there are few programmes internationally with which to compare it. In this respect it will be interesting to compare the overhead costs of the other SLPs.

Figure 3.2 Total ESSPIN Programme Costs to May 2011

Total budget: £ 83.5 mln

Total expenditures: £ 32.1 mln
(38% of budget)



⁶² The ESSPIN team questions the 35% calculation, primarily on the grounds that allocating all reimbursables except travel and living expenses to management costs, fails to recognise that some of these costs relate to the delivery of TA. ESSPIN also argues that the MTR calculation assumes that State Team Leaders and Technical Team Coordinators are classified as managerial (which they are in ESSPIN's conception of it management team) when an important part of their time (75% TTC and 50% STL is defined as technical). Configured in this way the ESSPIN team calculates its management costs as 26% and not 35%. The MTR acknowledges these points but as the main text makes clear it is difficult on available data to attribute costs clearly between management and technical assistance. This further highlights the need for the much clearer definition of cost categories and the allocation of different types of ESSPIN support expenditures.

3.5 Technical efficiency⁶³

ESSPIN has a heavy reliance on TA. Excluding long-term management costs, there is a total budget of £20.2 million of which half has been spent by May 2011.

Table 3.3 TA Expenditures to May 2011

Type of TA	Budget	Actual Expenditure	%
- LTTA technical	10.874.629	3.905.405	36%
- STTA	9.372.207	6.154.544	66%
Total	20.246.836	10.059.949	50%
Total Programme costs	83.489.643	32.069.398	38%
%	24%	31%	

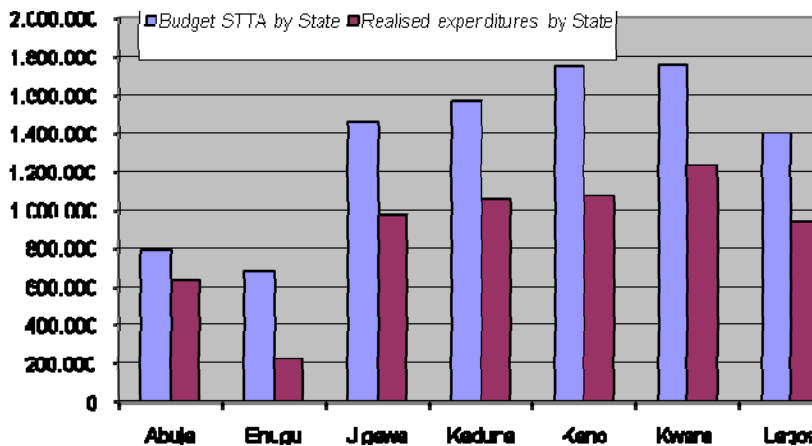
Long-Term Technical Assistance (LTTA)

The total budget for long-term technical TA is £10.9 million or about 13% of the total budget. Up to May 2011 expenditure is £3.9 million (36% of the LTTA budget). These are the salaries of the technical advisors based in Abuja (6 FTE) and in the six States (34 FTE; 40 FTE in total) excluding their travel and living allowances.

Short-Term Technical Assistance (STTA)

The total budget for STTA is £9.4 million or about 11% of the total budget. Up to May 2011 expenditure is £6.2 million (65% of the STTA budget). In total, 12,280 days of STTA have been used against an average daily fee rate of £548. For the remaining period, ESSPIN currently foresees an additional 4,980 days against an average fee rate of £573.

Figure 3.3 Short term expenditure by State up to May 2011



The STTA days are divided over 24 different categories, including Head Teacher Training, EMIS, Quality Assurance, M&E, Communication and Knowledge Management etc. There are, however, no predefined linkages to the different outputs, making it difficult to comment on the ratio between inputs and outputs.

⁶³ Following the MTR report back to ESSPIN on 2 June, ESSPIN queried the basis on which TA expenditure had been calculated. ESSPIN argued that the real indicator should be the average cost of STTA and LTTA taken together. ESSPIN's calculation being that the average across both STTA and LTTA is £392.

The feedback on the quality of training activities in general has been positive. Some interviewees reported that they had received similar training from other donors of much lower quality. This is positive news, although it is possible that this might indicate that the rationale for training or the selection of participants left room for repetition. Nonetheless, impressive progress has been made as the evidence listed in **Chapter 2** has shown. Less easy to assess at this stage is whether core and longer term technical capacity is being created that can sustain systemic reforms, especially at SUBEB level and below. This will be an important test of ESSPIN's design model.

Conclusion

Initial conclusions on Value for Money based on an assessment by output level on evidence available:

- Under both Output 3 and 4, there are examples of low cost – high impact interventions such as School Grants and CCTs. While still small in scale, these interventions have a substantial VFM potential when replicated and leveraged with and through State funds.
- All TA inputs used under Output 2 have resulted in reliable data for strategic planning and laid a good foundation for improved planning and budgeting. This is an important achievement but to maximize VFM, ESSPIN should concentrate on budget utilisation and the uptake of prioritised spending in the approved State Budget.
- Output 1 results are below expectations. The inputs provided by ESSPIN through working at the Central level have only partly resulted in the intended Outputs. The presence of four Technical Advisors at Federal level outside of the mainstream of the ESSPIN programme does not provide VFM.
- Improved attention to coordination and cooperation through the practical implementation of the BCIA, especially in the field of political engagement, may result to efficiency gains between the SLPs.

A VFM analysis requires a close examination of the linkages between expenditures, Logframe activities, (sub-) outputs, and outcomes. ESSPIN should systematically monitor expenditure in relation to activities and the (sub) outputs to which they refer, to improve reporting on VFM.

4 Early Assessment of ESSPIN's Impact

The two preceding Chapters of this report have reviewed progress against ESSPIN's four Outputs and assessed its Value for Money.

The Output Analysis concluded that *in the middle of 2011, ESSPIN's primary achievements are to be found in the work that has been undertaken under Outputs 2-4, within the six ESSPIN States supported by the Programme. There has been good progress in developing and introducing systematically, new ways of working at State and sub-State levels especially in the areas of planning, budgeting, data collection and analysis, and quality assurance (Output 2). ESSPIN's multi-layered and multi-faceted approach to school improvement is beginning to show some benefits in approximately 1,000 Nigerian schools (Output 3). It has developed a strong approach to establishing and making SBMCs work (Output 4). For Output 1 Uncertainties remain about how best to work at the Federal level. A major organisational reform agenda has been ... replaced by a more pragmatic approach to work with and through those Federal agencies that are deemed able to lead on, and facilitate, the roll out and replication of reforms in non- ESSPIN States. Based on achievements to date, the level of investment that Output 1 both deserves and requires should be re-assessed. Available evidence suggests greater value for money through working at the State level.*

The analysis confirms that the activities undertaken by ESSPIN in the first half of the Programme have been concerned primarily with demonstrating that it is possible to institute reforms at the State level - from school to ministry – that result in discernible improvements in basic schooling

From observation and interviews conducted in the field by the MTR team there is little doubt that ESSPIN has made an initial impact on the work practices of education officials, albeit differentially across the six States.⁶⁴ These gains must be regarded as relatively fragile in systems that are susceptible to sudden shifts in the priority accorded to education and where externally driven change may be accommodated rather than fully embraced. A common feature of all donor interventions is that the political economy of education in Nigeria cannot be divorced from issues of patronage, corruption, and political expediency.

Consideration of impact is dependent on results being achieved. Since this is an MTR, it is not possible to assess impact at the purpose level of the Programme. It is only possible to gauge the potential impact of systemic improvements, in building a technical platform for change and reform. The challenge for ESSPIN is to demonstrate its ability to influence, leverage and help to drive a radical improvement in the delivery of basic education services of good quality; in other words to move towards meeting its purpose level objectives. From a 2011 vantage point what is the potential for these objectives to be achieved?

In an effort to answer this question five issues require attention:

- Predicted Impact
- Logframe Indicators
- Political Engagement
- Monitoring, Review and Lesson Learning

⁶⁴ In Kwara it can be argued that a reform process was already in train and under current political leadership is firmly embedded

Predicted Impact

The MTR considers that organisational reforms resulting from the functional reviews; the elimination of role duplication; and streamlining the development of the MTSS, together, have a potentially significant impact in the six States in which the Programme is working if – over the next three years – political engagement and leverage is effective. Although too early to assess, the school improvement programme, including the development of SBMCs, SDPs and the accompanying measures in teacher professional development and physical infrastructure, have the potential for considerable impact if good practice can be rolled out and replicated.

However, a key factor to the realisation of impact in terms of access, equity and quality will be the ongoing commitment of the host institutions and the capacity of the State level institutions to continue to absorb and institutionalise the results of ESSPIN initiatives and to use sustain them in the longer-term. These are risks that are insufficiently factored into ESSPIN programming.

Logframe Indicators

As has been made clear in **Chapter 2**, ESSPIN is not well served by its Logframe. The purpose level statement and its indicators exemplify this fact. This is illustrated in the February 2011 Logframe by the need to *interpret* the purpose level statement in a footnote, although the amendment has its own internal inconsistencies.

The purpose statement tries to capture a number of related intentions: the improvement of the planning, financing and delivery of basic education services; attention to the sustainability and replicability of these improvements; and both of these related objectives being driven by the need to improve access, equity and quality. This leaves some measure of uncertainty as to the core purpose of ESSPIN. A more concise formulation might be along the lines that improvements in basic education services result in greater access and equity, and better quality in primary and junior secondary schools.

DFID has made it quite clear that it requires sound and early evidence of impact. This cannot wait for survey and evaluation work late on in the Programme – important though that is. The urgent need now is to provide early evidence of impact wherever it occurs in a concise and results oriented framework and to describe very clearly the results chain that links programme planning 2011-2014 to purpose level outcomes.

Political Engagement

The centrality of political engagement to help to secure progress in basic education has been made clear in different sections of this report. And DFID/SLP strategies are coming on stream to give this some greater reality than hitherto.

This suggests that some better markers are needed at the purpose level of the ESSPIN Logframe. Budget utilisation is important but other indicators might be invoked too. For example, the inclusion of evidence of accountability measures and a legislative programme that underpins better service delivery. Dialogue with SPARC and SAVI is needed to guide the selection of indicators to demonstrate political engagement and action on basic education.

Monitoring, Review and Lesson Learning

In May 2011 it is almost impossible to make any assessment of progress against Purpose level indicators. In large part this is because a) ESSPIN is still in a development phase and b) the survey work which is the main means of tracking progress doesn't start until 2012. And in the case of budget utilisation, the Annual Report from the Accountant General has not yet issued for 2009.

However, there is a need for some greater reassurance than is currently available that purpose level targets – as they are or as they may be reconceived – are attainable. This requires work at a number of levels. First the targets that have been (or will be) set require greater validation. Second, in each of the six States there is the need for an analysis of the likely attainment of higher order results. This in turn needs a much stronger analysis of the political economy of education in each State and a detailed, State specific risk analysis. This should lead to a more realistic assessment as to where there can be real and substantive impact by 2014, and – in turn – where ESSPIN resources should be concentrated.

At a technical level too, there is a need to look at ways of monitoring instances of progress towards Purpose level targets that is not entirely dependent on regular surveys. Some of this detail is captured in quarterly reports. States need to collect and collate and analyse data more effectively. And the initial thinking that has taken place about developing a set of high level indicators should be developed further.

5 ESSPIN Strategy: 2011- 2014

In the *Background Paper* (May 2011) prepared for the Mid-Term Review it is stated ... as *ESSPIN approaches its mid-term ... there are both internal and external reasons to reappraise and reconceptualise the programme strategy*. The MTR agrees with this contention. This Chapter explains why. It focuses briefly on eight issues:

- ESSPIN's Theory of Change
- Consolidation
- Leverage
- Replication and Roll Out
- Results
- Re-positioning
- Resource allocation
- Re-appraisal

5.1 ESSPIN's Theory of Change

Well conceived but a demanding paradigm for big UBE gains by 2014

There is merit in ESSPIN's assertion that an integrated approach to school improvement is an important driver for change in the reform of basic education systems. School improvement has strong conceptual foundations and draws on respected international findings. It recognises that schools improve if there is a concerted effort on both the supply and the demand side of the basic education equation. It sees that access, equity and quality are inseparable components of education for all.

The challenge for ESSPIN is the degree to which, within a six year period (2008-2014), the demonstration of its school improvement and reform model (driven initially by intensive and extensive TA) can result in teaching and learning benefits in a very large number of Nigerian schools. DFID is making it clear that its investment of £83 million must demonstrably show results at the Goal level of the ESSPIN Logframe. And within Nigeria there is evidence of the demand for urgent and even radical change (The Presidential Task Team on Education, increasing demand for private schools, calls for greater accountability, media attention etc).

Does this mean that ESSPIN's approach should change? There is little question that ESSPIN should move more quickly to supporting public service delivery activities directly and to make politically sound choices within 2011 as to which States are most likely to be proactive on basic education reforms over the next four years. And, as it has started to do, the Programme will need to move beyond its original mandate of being tied to publically provided education alone. It should develop its theory of change (see **Chapter 1**) in ways that sustain the school improvement paradigm while placing it firmly within a wider theory of change that embraces basic education reform, replication, leverage, results and VFM. It must show that access, equity and quality gains can be made through the application of good school improvement practice in ways that are financially sustainable and politically risk sensitive.

At the same time, it is undoubtedly the case that Nigeria is a country where openings and opportunities need to be grasped as the occasion arises (the new political cycle, an active Governor, a pro-active College of Education provost, an effective CSO or private schools

association). Relatively quick wins can be made and ESSPIN has shown some signs that it has the capacity (especially within its State teams) to be responsive and reactive in productive ways.

Does this way of working endanger a systemic theory of change? It should not. ESSPIN has the capacity to move flexibly in ways that can analyse the implications of new initiatives within a broader logic model. For example, DFID plans to support the new GEP3 project to enable hundreds of thousands of girls in Northern Nigeria to participate in basic education. Inevitably, this programme has many wider implications for the quality of schooling in resource poor systems. ESSPIN is well placed to contribute to working through these wider considerations in what appears to be a strongly access oriented programme.

The core issue is defining a robust theory of change which ties conceptual clarity to the Programme's ability to bring its work to scale and maximise its impact within a three to four year period. And to recognise that this will require a responsiveness and flexibility that has not always been evident in some of its initial ways of working.

5.2 Consolidation

Necessary to some degree but what is a point of sustainable reform?

Much is made in ESSPIN forward planning papers of the need for consolidation to *reach a point of sustainable reform* (*Programme Forward Planning Paper: Outputs 2-4*, May 2011). Each of the Output papers 1, 2 and 3 outline consolidation strategies. Under Output 2, consolidation has *five dimensions* which in the view of the MTR is a substantive reform agenda in its own right.⁶⁵ Under Output 3, the case is made for the introduction of lesson plans in pilot schools, further support for School Support Officers, LGEAs and SUBEBs and training programmes for head teachers and teachers in non-ESSPIN schools in ESSPIN LGEAs.

The *Output 4 Results and Future Strategy* paper itemises strengthening and institutionalising SBMCs in government structures; strengthening mechanisms for voice, accountability and response through partnerships with civil society; and, using information to strengthen community demand. This too is a substantive body of work.

Two questions arise from these plans for consolidation. First, what do they tell us about the overall cost of an integrated and intensive package of reform and school improvement in Nigeria? This is an important question if ESSPIN is going to leverage resources for the roll out and replication of good practice. Is this an affordable model for Nigerian States to sustain? None of the planning documents provide estimated costs of ESSPIN's consolidation strategies. Neither is there an overview of the cost implications for State ministries and SUBEB's in turning demonstrable good practice into sustainable State wide reforms⁶⁶. These estimates are needed.

Second, in the sequencing of ESSPIN's programme for 2011-2014, the relationship between consolidation and replication and roll-out is not made. Are there benchmarks in the reform process which need to be achieved before replication and roll become the mainstream of ESSPIN's work? Implicitly the two run together; explicitly the relationship has not been made clear. What does the *point of sustainable reform* mean in practice?

⁶⁵ In summary: integration of planning at all levels; improved budget release and direct funding to schools, financial and HR management reforms, capacity building at local government level, and work on relationships with non-State providers and better teacher deployment practices.

⁶⁶ Although it can be argued that the costs are beginning to be identified in the work that is being undertaken in the development of the MTSS.

5.3 Leverage

Essential but insufficiently strategic and coordinated so far

Leveraging resources and political commitment go hand in hand. Both are critical to ESSPIN's success. The assumptions and their associated risks in the ESSPIN log-frame can only be confirmed and mitigated through two major processes. First, the demonstration effect of education sector public service reform and school improvement is so powerful and so popular politically that it leverages resources and support for change. There is some initial evidence of this effect in some States. But significant, evidenced-based gains in access, equity and quality are yet to be seen.

Second, and central to the SLP model, and now to DFID's new approach to State level representation, is a well-defined process of political engagement. In ESSPIN's case this relates particularly to the development of sector strategies, budget definition, the release of budgeted allocations, the maximum use of UBEC-IF financing, quality assurance reforms and the instigation of strong monitoring, reporting and accountability practices.

Relatedly, the SLPs collectively, are defining a more strategic approach to political engagement. One updated product of this work is a survey of the political economy of ESSPIN States (prior to the 2011 elections). If this analysis is extended post election to a more detailed look at the political economy of education in the six States, more informed judgements can be made regarding where a significant investment in political engagement would have the biggest pay-off. In turn, this must influence the disposition of ESSPIN resources for 2011-2014.

There are also issues regarding ESSPIN's leverage at the Federal level. In part this relates to where ESSPIN sits in the education firmament in Abuja (see the section on re-positioning later in this Chapter). As noted in **Chapter 2**, the influence of ESSPIN at the Federal level has been mixed. As the *Output 1 Progress and Forward Planning* paper (May 2011) makes clear, ESSPIN has shifted from a Federal reform agenda to a more opportunistic assessment of where there is the greatest traction for furthering replication through individual institutions. But the fact that this has taken two and a half years suggests, in itself, relatively weak leverage at the Federal level.

5.4 Replication and Roll Out

The most urgent strategic priority for ESSPIN

If ESSPIN's four Outputs are to be achieved (although their current levels of ambition require scrutiny) and access, equity and quality gains are to be realised at the purpose and goal level of the Programme, the replication and roll-out of reforms and school improvement good practice is key to success in the next three years. This is acknowledged in the replication strategies that appear in different planning papers prepared for the MTR. Current proposals are summarised in **Table 5.1**.

The ESSPIN management team made explicit its view (especially in relation to scenarios painted under Output 1) that replication strategies would be firmed up in the light of MTR findings. This position, though understandable at the level of benefiting from external judgements, was in the view of the MTR team unwise. It might have been expected (certainly by DFD) that by the middle of

2011, a programme, the success of which depends on replication and roll out, would have a costed replication strategy which is more than the sum of its parts in **Table 5.1**.⁶⁷

Table 5.1 ESSPIN Replication Strategies 2011-2014

Strategy Papers	Replication Proposals
Output 1 (Federal Level)	<p><i>The focus has ... shifted more exclusively to replication. DFID-ESSPIN will, in future, concentrate efforts on those organisations which have shown the most potential for replicating successful initiatives from DFID-ESSPIN supported States into other States. Milestones and targets for replication are already included in the Logframe...</i></p> <p>The paper recognises the need (with other SLPs) to influence a range of political actors, forums and stakeholders at a high level along with civil society organisations and accountability related initiatives.</p> <p>Three replication scenarios are outlined: The first involves continuing to work towards the achievement of reforms beyond the ESSPIN states ... <i>a set of single stream activities and attempts to build linkages between partner organisations</i>. The second is what is described as an Integrated Approach to School Development ... <i>this means attempting to replicate in other States a very similar approach to that which is showing success in DFID-ESSPIN States</i>. Third, which could be combined with either scenario entails a deeper involvement with civil society ... <i>with a concerted effort to develop an independent monitoring capacity to track the performance of Federal and State education sectors</i>.</p>
Outputs 2-4 Forward Planning	<p><i>Alongside consolidation, ESSPIN will be concerned with the extension of reforms and the replication of school improvement processes with the existing States. Crucial to this is the leveraging of resources. Leveraging is both a means of spreading ESSPIN-inspired improvements beyond the pilot sites and a way of achieving greater efficiency from DID-ESSPIN inputs.</i></p>
Output 2	<p>It is Lagos, Jigawa and Kwara that <i>the solid foundations set by reforms in planning and organisational development, combined with political will to improve services, provide the basis for developing positive school improvements. In Kaduna, Kano and Enugu it will be more difficult to translate improvements in governance structures and systems into benefits on the ground.</i></p>
Output 3	<p><i>Replication beyond the current pilots and schools in the immediate vicinity of pilot schools will require leveraged funds from States. Jigawa, Lagos and Kaduna has expressed strong interest in rolling out the Programme to all schools ... Where this happens ESSPIN's role will be to plan and cost a programme of phased expansion and to provide training and capacity building to support such work. Reference is also made to replication models for IQTE and private schools.</i></p>
Output 4	<p>Six strands of work in support of replication are identified: <i>replicating ESSPIN community engagement in school improvement package within ESSPIN supported states and nationally; establishing linkages to ensure that government education planning and resourcing respond to community demands; extending the CCT pilot; disseminating the lesson learned with educational exclusion; rolling out supplementary programme components specifically concerned with girls' participation in educational and, raising issues of educational exclusion, the retention of girls, and child protection as matter of national concern and political debate</i></p>
Communications and Knowledge Management	<p><i>We will support the formulation and dissemination of education policy and improved practice ... communications will be targeted at technocrats and politicians ... with a view to replication of ESSPIN's approach to education reform</i></p>

⁶⁷ ESSPIN argues that this was impossible in advance of the 2011 elections and without greater agreement with DFID on the directions which it wishes ESSPIN to take, The MTR takes the view that it is possible to do a good deal of technical work on the unit costs of replication and roll out for full and partial packages of school improvement and wider basic education reforms. And to relate these costs to current levels of investment by State governments in their basic education plans and budgets.

At least six issues arise from the ESSPIN replication and roll strategy as defined to date.

First there is insufficient clarity regarding roll out and replication strategies at different levels, i.e.:

- In non ESSPIN schools in ESSPIN supported LGEAs in ESSPIN States
- In non ESSPIN schools and LGEAs in ESSPIN supported states
- In firming up judgements as to which ESSPIN States are most likely to embrace a reform and school improvement agenda across their State
- In assessing whether non-ESSPIN States can be supported directly by ESSPIN and/or assisted by ESSPIN States; if so, which States and based on what criteria and with what level of ESSPIN resources
- In assessing the scale and the level of the replication of some, or of the entire ESSPIN package in non ESSPIN States through Federal action.

Second, the accuracy, legitimacy and level of ambition of the 2014 targets at the Output and Purpose levels of the Logframe and – rather differently – in the list of 33 results needs to be re-assessed and justified (see **Chapter 2.5**). As yet, there is no clear story line that a set of rather disparate replication and roll out proposals will result in the achievement of intended Output and Purpose level targets; accepting that this is not easy and will necessarily be subject to regular revision.

Third, it will be important to re-affirm or establish DFID's level of expectation with regard to acceptable levels of success by 2014, as this relates to the widest possible number of beneficiaries. In so doing, the value of DFID's emerging education results framework, including the notion of the numbers of children supported in basic education as a result of DFID's assistance deserves attention.

Fourth, it will be necessary to revisit State and Federal level work plans for years 3 and 4 to assess the degree to which attention is being given to replication as against consolidation of a demonstration effect. A costed rolling plan for replication through to 2014 is required.

Fifth, assess the degree to which the greater autonomy of State level teams in planning and managing their budgets will assist more nuanced approaches to replication in their States.

Sixth, identify clearly in concert with other SLPs, both the technical and the political engagement implications for replication and roll out and the ways of working that will be required.

5.5 Results

To be reviewed, redefined, tracked and communicated more effectively

As earlier sections of this report have made clear (**Chapter 1**), ESSPIN has been relatively ineffective in communicating its higher order results (and tracking progress towards established targets) to DFID, and DFID has been insufficiently active in demanding them. This will have to change. To a degree it has with the introduction of new quarterly reports and the creation of a list of 33 results and the increased level of scrutiny by the new Senior Education Adviser in Abuja. It is sufficient here to say that the definition and the tracking of results require significant further review within a wider process of re-appraisal.

5.6 Re-positioning

Better guidance from within Nigeria and greater State level autonomy

Chapter 3 outlined ESSPIN's management model. As ESSPIN moves much more firmly from demonstrating good practice to leveraging wide spread change, its current ways of working need some re-assessment over and above the benefits that should be derived from more joined up ways of working across the SLP collective.

ESSPIN needs a much stronger Nigerian input into its design and development strategy. This is not to downplay the commitment, integrity and insight of a very committed group of Nigerian ESSPIN staff. Rather, it needs strategic input from a range of influential stakeholders in the Nigeria system to help to define workable approaches to leverage and replication. While there is already some informal contact and advice, a strategy is needed to put this on to a more formal footing. Clearly there are different models that can be invoked; an advisory group, a steering committee, regular workshop activity or a forum.

In defining an appropriate approach all members of the ESPIN management consortium should be consulted and a broad range of stakeholders considered.

The second issue with regard to re-positioning has also been alluded to in this report. It refers to the balance between a relatively large central management unit in Abuja and the staffing of State Offices. Both in VFM terms and in relation to the implementation of the programme between now and 2014 this situation needs to be re-assessed. Less TA should mean less central administration. More direct service delivery activities suggest the need for greater State team autonomy.

This is not to deny strong evidence of the close engagement of State teams in ESSPIN planning nor the availability of time for productive technical cross State dialogue. But ESSPIN does display a culture of relatively strong central control which is clearly necessary for oversight and reporting purposes but may become less relevant as contextual issues become more to the fore in exerting leverage and replicating good practice.

5.7 Resource Allocation

Rework the balance between TA and PSA budgets

DFID spelt out in the Project Memorandum that approximately 65% of the budget allocation should be for TA and 35% for public service delivery activities. **Chapter 3** has examined the patterns of these expenditures to date.

This balance between these two different types of expenditure is not immutable. DFID has been pressing for a cap on TA expenditure which appears sensible in moving forward on public service delivery investments and with VFM criteria clearly in mind. In so-doing the costs of replication related activities need to be clearly defined and – as the previous sub-section has suggested – the way in which resources should be budgeted for between States needs to be determined using politically aware criteria.

5.8 Re-appraisal

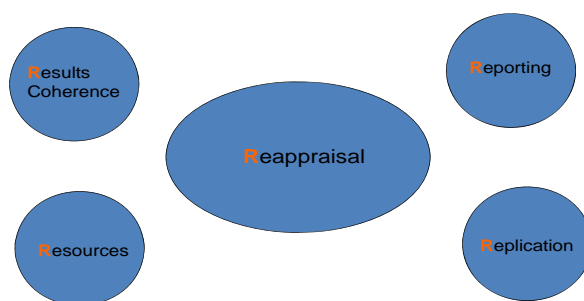
An immediate priority

This section started by quoting the ESSPIN management team as saying ... *there are both internal and external reasons to reappraise and reconceptualise the programme strategy.*

In accepting this thesis, the MTR team believes that this is an important moment in the lifetime of ESSPIN to re-examine Programme direction and its pace of change. This does require re-appraisal. And there is some urgency for this, given the considerable pressure for results emanating from DFID and the range of design and strategy issues that are highlighted in this report. The following way forward is recommended.

The diagram below – the 5 Rs – encapsulates what is needed. A well-defined re-appraisal process should be completed within three months of the acceptance of this report (see **Chapter 6**). Particular attention needs to be paid to a robust re-definition of results and their reporting and the development of a costed strategy for leverage and replication for 2011-2014.

Figure 5.1 In summary – the five R's



However, a major external re-appraisal should be avoided. DFID and ESSPIN (with assistance from IMEP, if this is requested) should together agree the ground rules for the re-appraisal process. Contributions should be sought from each member of the ESSPIN management consortium, and SLP partners – especially SPARC and SAVI. Wise Nigerian counsel should be identified and the knowledge and experience of State team members should be brought to bear.

Important and necessary products from this process should be:

- A revised Logframe that encompasses a clear internal logic and theory of change for 2011-2014. A set of higher order results indicators to capture impact and lower level indicators to facilitate the monitoring of progress and comparisons across States
- Budget allocations that are linked clearly to States, to Outputs and to replication strategies with a careful review of TA expenditure relative to the needs of direct, public service delivery activities
- A costed replication strategy
- Clearly defined reporting and review procedures and relationships between ESSPIN and DFID
- Well conceived positioning of ESSPIN within DFID's emerging education portfolio
- A model of ESSPIN management which places more weight on State level autonomy

This proposal has not been put forward lightly. The ESSPIN teams are very hard working and very committed. Re-appraisal as it has been defined here is an extra call on their time. But such are the legitimate expectations of ESSPIN given a very significant level of investment from the UK that this time is needed if there is to be total clarity as to how to maximise impact over the next three to four years.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The Mid-Term Review draws five main conclusions from its assessment of ESSPIN in May 2011 following the DAC rubric of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Relevance

Investing in UBE is essential for Nigeria's future. To make a significant difference within a six year time frame, aid has to be highly strategic. ESSPIN represents just 0.4% of Nigerian expenditure on education, so it is essential that the Programme's modus operandi is highly attuned to the diverse educational and political realities and opportunities of Nigeria. Its challenge is to demonstrate that reform is possible in dysfunctional and moribund systems and that large and relatively quick inroads can be made into Nigeria's access, equity and quality deficits.

Half way through its projected lifetime, it is evident in the six States in which ESSPIN is working that its activities are relevant to a cross spectrum of people from the beneficiaries of basic education through to those with responsibility for shaping and guiding the delivery of basic education services. The Programme's ability to demonstrate that it is possible to effect changes in teaching and learning, school management, community engagement with schooling, advisory services, quality assurance, and in the planning and financing of basic education, clearly resonates with people who find that it can be within their own authority to influence and bring about change.

The ESSPIN model is also seen as relevant by major stakeholders in its ability to conceive of reform in a holistic way, focusing on school improvement and lessening overlap and competition across agencies.

These gains are important. But there are caveats. First, ESSPIN has been working primarily in demonstration mode especially at school and LGEA levels. Second, the MTR witnessed ESSPIN in what might be described as the first flush of enthusiasm for its initial outputs. Third, at the political level, ESSPIN's relevance is viewed – perhaps unsurprisingly – with varying degrees of enthusiasm by State Governors and Education Commissioners. And post the 2011 elections, ESSPIN will have to rehearse and restate its relevance.

For DFID, the relevance of ESSPIN's governance and reform model is being examined closely in relation to its new Operational Plan in Nigeria. It is challenging ESSPIN to demonstrate its relevance, notably in meeting the needs of out of school children, especially girls, and to think beyond publicly provided schooling, especially in relation to the role of private schooling in delivering basic education of good quality.

Effectiveness

Passing judgement on ESSPIN's effectiveness depends on the frames of reference that are being used.

If the Programme is assessed in terms of its success in introducing a carefully sequenced approach to reforming the planning, financing and management of basic education in six Nigerian States it can demonstrate measures of success. Its baseline studies are technically sound and are

beginning to influence policy. Its work on MTSS, ASC, AESPR, functional reviews, quality assurance and school support is starting to alter ways of working. Its integrated approach to school improvement is conceptually robust and is showing quite quick teaching and learning benefits in close to 1,000 pilot schools. If, approximately, £4- 4.5 million had been spent on a single State reform programme over two years then the outputs that ESSPIN has achieved can be judged to be largely successful in highly politicised and fragile educational environments.

However, the effectiveness question can be framed differently. What has £32 million of UK aid bought in terms of better access, equity and quality in basic education between 2008 and 2011? In spite of local and largely unconsolidated evidence, that better (pilot) schools are attracting and retaining students, that new ways of classroom learning are energising pupils and teachers, and that attention to school- based management, water and sanitation is making a difference, the question posed in this way cannot yet be answered at the purpose level of ESSPIN's objectives.

In part, the issue is whether ESSPIN is moving too slowly. Its modus operandi of intensive TA, working with strong and committed ESSPIN State teams, in tandem with other SLPs is beginning to demonstrate that reforms in basic education are technically possible and politically realistic. And that unless this groundwork is undertaken the real access, equity and quality dividends will not flow. The counter argument is that two or more years demonstrating good practice needs to be backed up with much more direct investment in public service delivery, early attention to roll out and replication, and a more opportunistic and responsive approach to needs that are context specific and urgent.

As ESSPIN enters the second half of its programme of work, it is essential that its results, levels of ambition and realistic expectations be reassessed and confirmed.

Efficiency

This report has noted that there are a number of difficulties in assessing efficiency and VFM in ESSPIN. First, financial information is not gathered and used for strategic planning and investment decision purposes. Second, ESSPIN is a complex programme with few comparators against which to make efficiency related judgements.⁶⁸

It is clear, however, that there are a number of issues which deserve attention. The intensive application of TA – especially external TA – is one. In the design framework of ESSPIN, DFID determined that approximately 65% of the ESSPIN budget would be for this purpose. Now, DFID sees this as a top heavy approach with insufficiently early returns.

The quality of the TA (training or advisory) is judged by its recipients as being uniformly high (from teachers to Permanent Secretaries). It is seen to be practical, supportive and a good judge of need and level. Could the same ends have been achieved more economically; perhaps in some instances, for example, in the greater use of Nigerian CSOs on some aspects of the Programme?

A second issue relates to what has up until now been a fairly even-handed approach to investment in each of the six States. Now is the time – as investment in public service delivery, roll and replication become the core issue – as to whether this strategy should be sustained. A political judgement is needed in each of the six States – as it is with investment at the Federal level – as to where purpose level UBE gains are most likely to be realised. If political engagement and leverage

⁶⁸ MTR efforts to get comparators from other DFID and IDP programmes in Nigeria were unsuccessful.

is seen to have limited traction then State specific decisions need to be taken about future levels of assistance.

Thirdly, the size of the Abuja team (with the anticipated decline in TA management services) and the positioning of ESSPIN teams in separate relatively high cost office accommodation outside of ministries offer scope for efficiency gains.

Finally, there is scope for drawing down on a more sustained basis the skills which different members of the ESSPIN management consortium can bring to Programme development.

Impact

Much remains to be done in defining or re-defining baselines, milestones and indicators. Most of the next round of programme survey work is planned for 2012. More can be done in advance of this in collating and analysing local level data and evidence more regularly to show progress towards key targets and results.

At present, measures of impact can only be seen at the sub-Output level of the Programme. And these results are primarily an assessment of progress as the result of a demonstration effect (SBMCs, water points, head teacher training etc). This finds expression in ESSPIN's list of 33 results indicators.

There is some State specific evidence of ESSPIN's impact on the development of sector strategies, budgets and monitoring and evaluation, although budget provision to sustain these and other ESSPIN activities is not secure.

As **Chapter 4** has proposed much more attention is needed to assess political impact with measures that lie outside of the usual measures of education success.

Sustainability

ESSPIN's initial design model is that sustainable gains in UBE will only come about through investment in public service systems reform and an integrated approach to school improvement. This internally sound logic has to be set against the time frame for the Programme and a broader theory of change model. It can and has been argued that ESSPIN's governance approach will take at least a generation to bear fruit. But this is clearly not an acceptable contention for a time bound aid intervention.

Three points are made here. First, DFID and ESSPIN will have to make some early judgements as to where roll out, replication and sustainable gains can be achieved within the context of the new four year cycle of government after the May 2011 elections.

Second, ESSPIN needs to be very clear as to its strategies for building and sustaining capacity in the second half of the Programme.

Third, in relation to each intervention, however small, the issue of sustainability needs to be addressed. Suggestions have been made throughout this report as to where such gains might be made.

6.2 Recommendations

This section focuses on a small number of core recommendations. It does not gather together topic specific suggestions and recommendations made through the body of the report.

In mid 2011, a number of considerations point to the need for a re-assessment and re-appraisal of ESSPIN. These are:

- The internal needs of the Programme in moving from a TA-led demonstration of good practice to wider roll out and replication
- The start of the new political cycle in Nigeria
- DFID's stated concerns over ESSPIN strategy and impact
- DFID's focus on demonstrable, attributable results, and VFM, allied to the initiation of its new operational plan which includes major new educational investments in girls' education.
- DFID's interest in private schooling (where an early conversation is needed with ESSPIN to determine the place of the Programme in the Department's thinking on private provision within its new Operational Plan).
- The findings of this MTR (especially as these relate to Access and Equity).

It is recommended that a re-appraisal be conducted and completed within three months from acceptance of this Report.

Its central purpose should be to:

- Re-assess and re-define ESSPIN's theory of change and the higher order results of the Programme.
- Re-assess the distribution of its remaining resources (by Output, by State, by expenditure item) to ensure VFM and maximum impact by 2014
- Prepare a costed roll out and replication strategy, drawing on a joined up SLP assessment of the political economy of education in each of the ESSPIN States and Federally
- Define ESSPIN's position, role and value added within DFID's overall education strategy for Nigeria
- Define clear reporting and oversight relationships with DFID.

The ground rules for this re-appraisal should be determined by DFID and ESSPIN. It should not be conceived as a major external re-appraisal. It should be a process of enabling key stakeholders (DFID, all of the ESSPIN management consortium, the Abuja and State teams, and key Nigerian partners) to define a clear road map of achievable goals, targets and results between now and 2014. External input should be tightly defined where it is deemed necessary.

The outcomes of the re-appraisal and its products should be signed off by the Head of Office DFIDN.

Consideration should be given to a "light touch" IMEP review early in 2012



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