



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office



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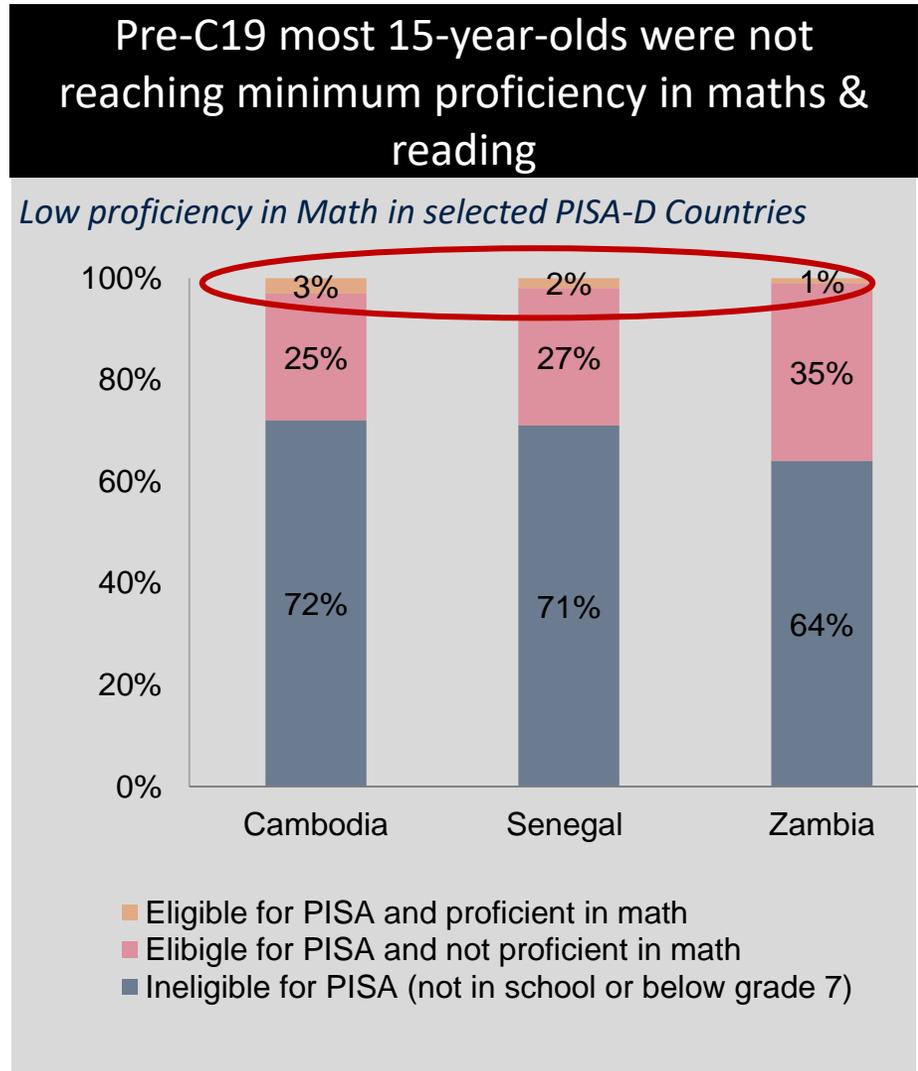
# What Works in Education

A Decade of Learning: Experience and Evidence in  
Education Informing Policy and Practice

March 7-8, 2023

Dr Rachel Hinton

# The education context

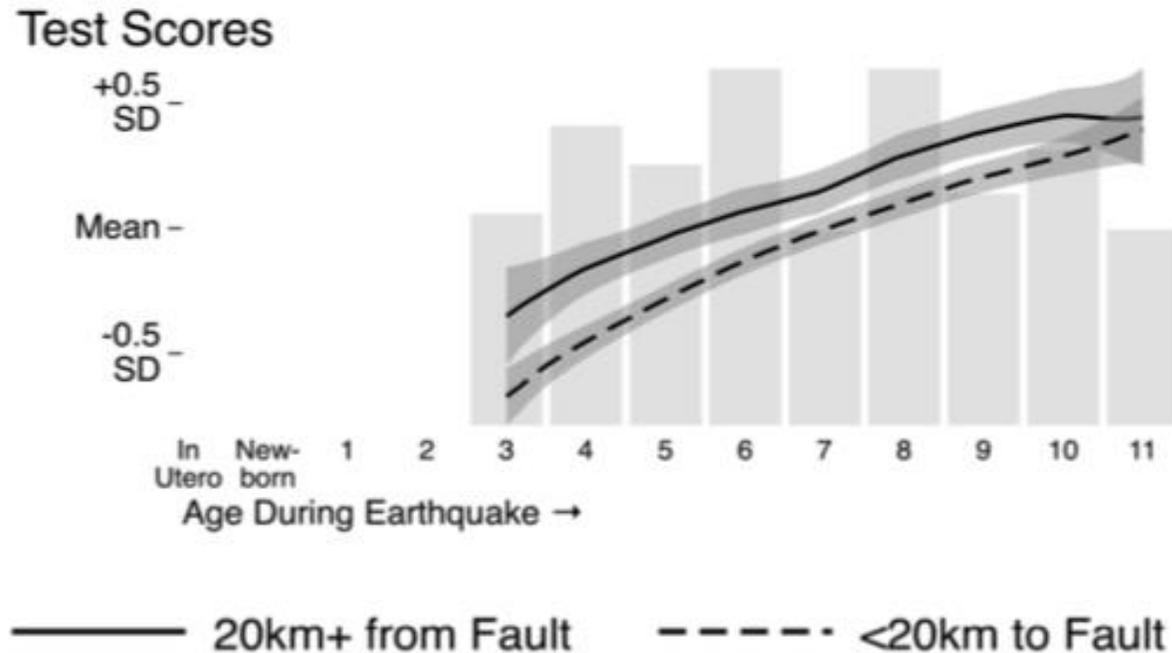


Source: Authors calculations based on PISA for Development 2018 data. For more see: [“PISA-D Reveals Exceptionally Low Learning”](#), RISE blog.

Source: Kaffenberger, M. (2019). *PISA-D Reveals Exceptionally Low Learning*. RISE Blog.

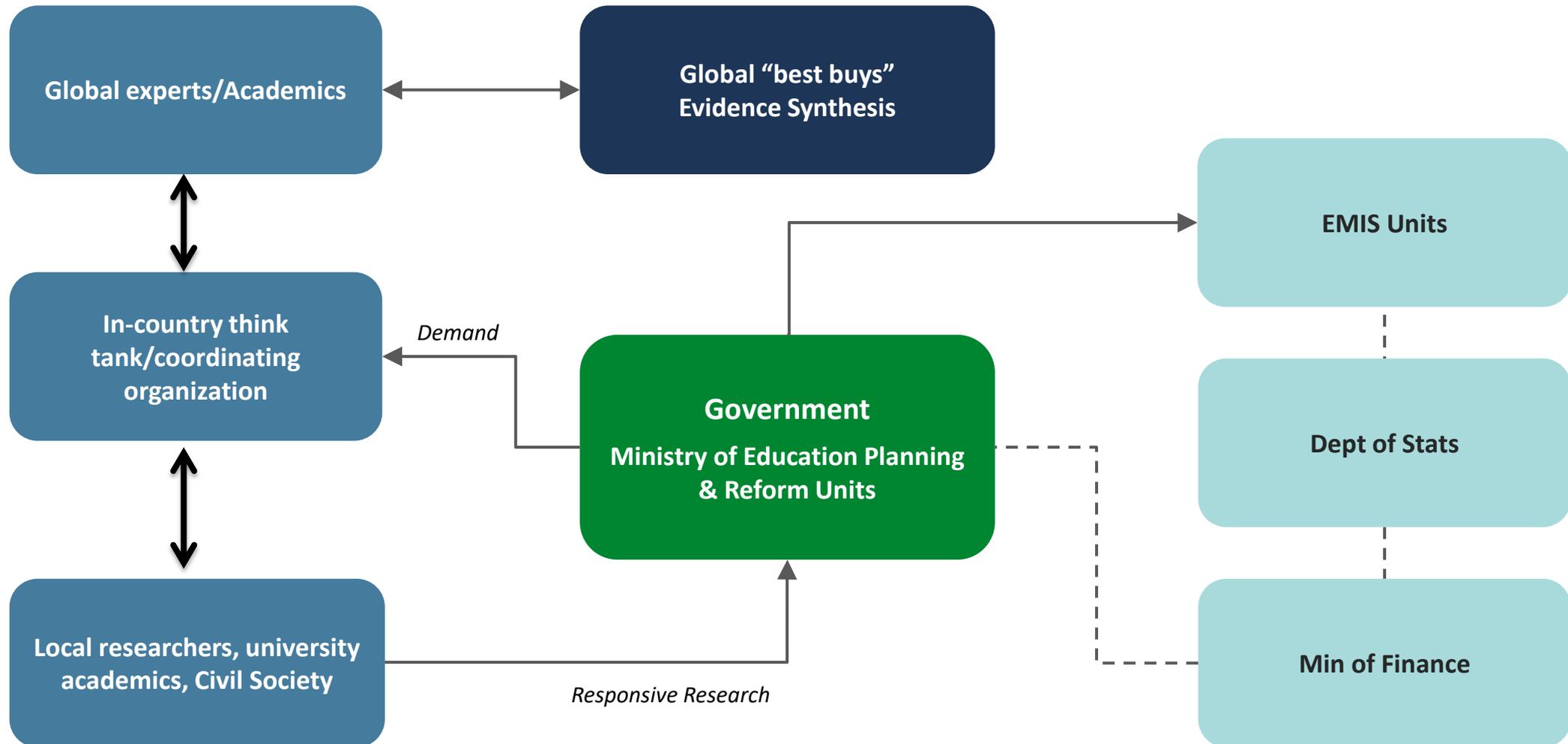
# COVID-19 adds to a pre-existing learning crisis

## Children affected by school closures struggle to recover – Pakistan data



Source: Tahir, A, Daniels, B, and Das. J. (2020). "[Human Capital Accumulation and Disasters: Evidence from the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005](#)" RISE Insight Note.

# What does evidence uptake success look like at country level?





# What Works Hub Global Education Vision

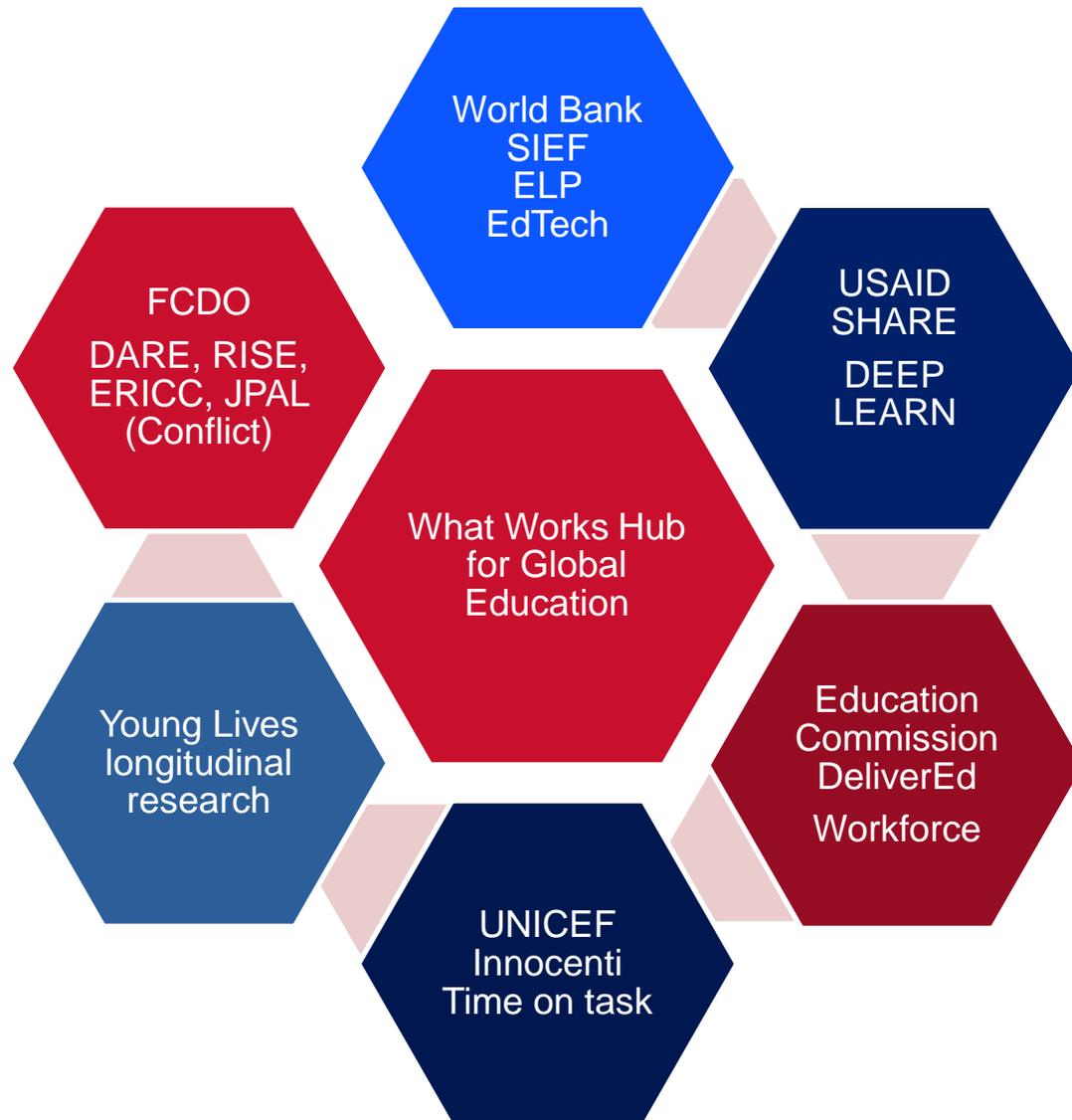
A global platform to support governments who want to transform their education systems in a sustainable way, maximising the impact of education evidence to inform cost effective reforms to benefit all children.

**Synthesise** and **curate** the best evidence in ways that governments and practitioners need for bold reform.

Strengthen education and finance ministries' **capability** to use and contextualise data and evidence, for example through establishing policy labs within Ministries of Education.

Create a new field in **implementation science** that produces evidence and supports our partner governments to use a 'diagnose, test, learn and adapt' cycle to take education reform to scale.

# Pooling our collective expertise



Our approach to research:

- **We are guided by critical evidence gaps** and potential to improve our understanding of how to support the most marginalised. We consider where our research is likely to generate greatest returns for girls.
- **Work collaboratively** with development partners across the education sector to raise the rigour of education research globally.
- **Take a platform approach** using our joint EGIR/EdGE new 'What Works Hub for Global Education' to ensure that our research has impact both internationally and nationally.
- **Gender and equity is a priority** across all of the programmes.





## The triple challenge

### 1. STRUCTURAL CHALLENGE

'selling' of interventions

commercial interests may drive decisions  
conflicting advice - often with low quality  
evidence

absence of a high-level panel e.g. IPCC in  
climate science

### 2. EVIDENCE CHALLENGE

low levels of investment in education research  
despite the growing evidence base e.g. RISE,  
JPAL, EdTech, ESRC, MRC there has been no  
synthesis of *what works* with a focus on cost

### 3. MEASUREMENT CHALLENGE

No comparative measure of learning that  
captures costs

Lack of investments by key donors including  
Gates

# Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel



**Kwame Akyeampong**  
Co-chair of the panel  
Professor of International  
Education and Development,  
The Open University  
Expert in education systems in  
Africa, including on political economy  
of reform, teacher training and  
complementary basic education



**Susan Dynarski**  
Professor of Education,  
Harvard Graduate  
School of Education  
Researcher at the forefront of  
understanding and reducing  
inequalities in education, including  
for college access, financial aid  
design, labor market outcomes,  
and high school reform.



**Benjamin Piper**  
Director, Global Education, Bill  
and Melinda Gates Foundation  
Education expert who has done  
transformative work on the  
national scale Basic program in  
Kenya and the PRIME Initiative,  
which tested low-cost and scalable  
approaches to improving reading and  
mathematics outcomes in Kenya.



**Sylvia Schmelkes**  
Provost of Universidad  
Iberoamericana, Mexico City  
Sociologist and education researcher  
who headed Mexico's National Institute  
for the Evaluation of Education; also  
has expertise in internationalizing  
education, values, and adult learning.



**Tahir Andrabi**  
Inaugural Dean, LUMS School  
of Education, and Professor of  
Economics, Pomona College  
Researcher on education and advisor  
to Government in Pakistan. Co-  
founder of the Center for Economic  
Research in Pakistan (CEPR).



**Rachel Glennerster**  
Associate Professor, Division  
of the Social Sciences and  
the College, University  
of Chicago; former Chief  
Economist at FCDO  
Expert on assessing cost effectiveness  
of alternative interventions to reduce  
poverty, including in education.  
Researcher and policy adviser.



**Sara Ruto**  
Chief Administrative Secretary  
for Education, Kenya  
Experienced researcher, served as  
director/CEO of the PEAL Network  
since its inception in 2015; former  
Regional Manager of Unicef East  
Africa using evidence to draw public  
attention to children's learning.



**Hirokazu Yoshikawa**  
Professor of Globalization and  
Education, NYU Steinhardt  
Community and developmental  
psychologist; has done extensive  
research across the US, UK and  
NICs, with a particular focus on  
early childhood and equity.



**Abhijit Banerjee**  
Co-chair of the panel  
Professor of Economics, MIT  
Nobel prize-winning economist  
celebrated for experimental approach  
to alleviating global poverty.



**Sally Grantham-McGregor**  
Emeritus Professor of Child  
Health and Nutrition, UCL GOS  
Institute of Global Health  
Pioneer in the rigorous study of  
Early Childhood Development in  
developing countries with a focus  
on parental engagement. An  
Officer of the Most Excellent Order  
of the British Empire (OBE).



**Jaime Saavedra**  
Former Minister of Education  
of Peru, currently head  
of the Education global  
practice at the World Bank  
Researcher and policymaker with  
extensive expertise on education,  
inequality and poverty reduction.



**Rukmini Banerji**  
CEO, Pratham Education  
Foundation; Awardee  
winner of the Yashwantrao Chavan  
Award for Educational Development  
researcher in new pedagogical  
approaches and assessment; leader  
of large movement to transform  
education in India and beyond.



**Karthik Muralidharan**  
Professor of Economics,  
University of California  
San Diego  
Global co-director of education at  
J-PAL. Lead PI in India for the  
Research on Improving Systems  
of Education (RISE) program.

# To address learning gaps, we need both local context knowledge and global evidence

Panel hopes to provide clear recommendations based on rigorous research. These are generalized lessons on what are the Smart Buys in education for LICs and MICs.



LOCAL  
CONDITIONS

Governments and donor organisations develop deep understanding of context, and system and diagnose needs and priorities



GENERALIZED  
LESSONS

Locally decide which of these Smart Buys address local need and can be implemented well locally alongside wider system reform.



LOCAL  
IMPLEMENTATION



IMPROVEMENT  
IN OUTCOMES



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

## Why Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS)?

- Typical education measure used is schooling
- Schooling  $\neq$  learning
- LAYS adjust schooling for learning

In Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda **three-quarters of grade 3** students **cannot read** a basic sentence such as “the name of the dog is Puppy.”

World Development Report (2018)

POLICY RESEARCH WORKING PAPER

9450

### How to Improve Education Outcomes Most Efficiently?

A Comparison of 150 Interventions Using the New  
Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling Metric

*Noam Angrist  
David K. Evans  
Deon Filmer  
Rachel Glennerster  
F. Halsey Rogers  
Shwetlena Sabarwal*



WORLD BANK GROUP

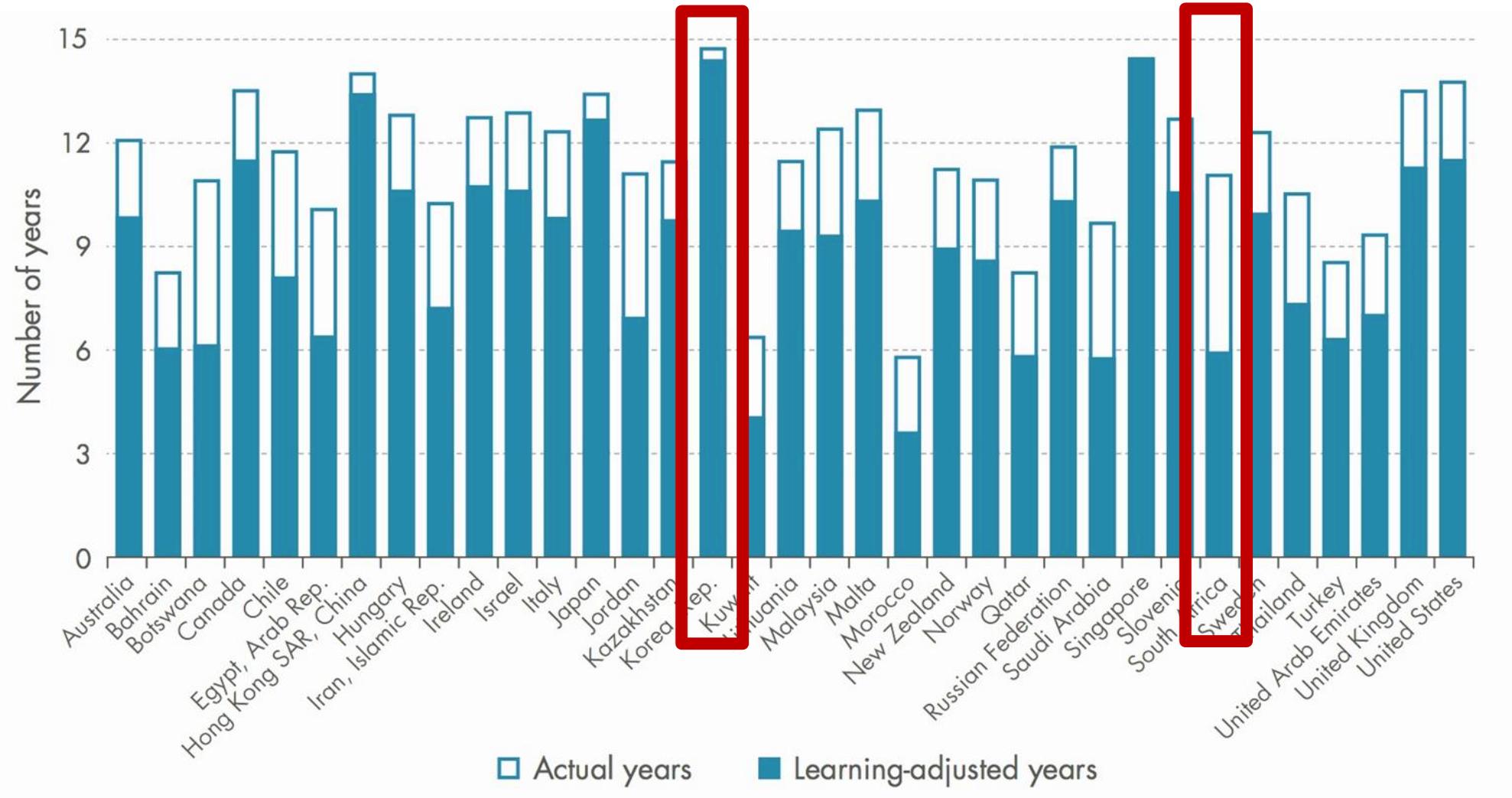
Education Global Practice

&

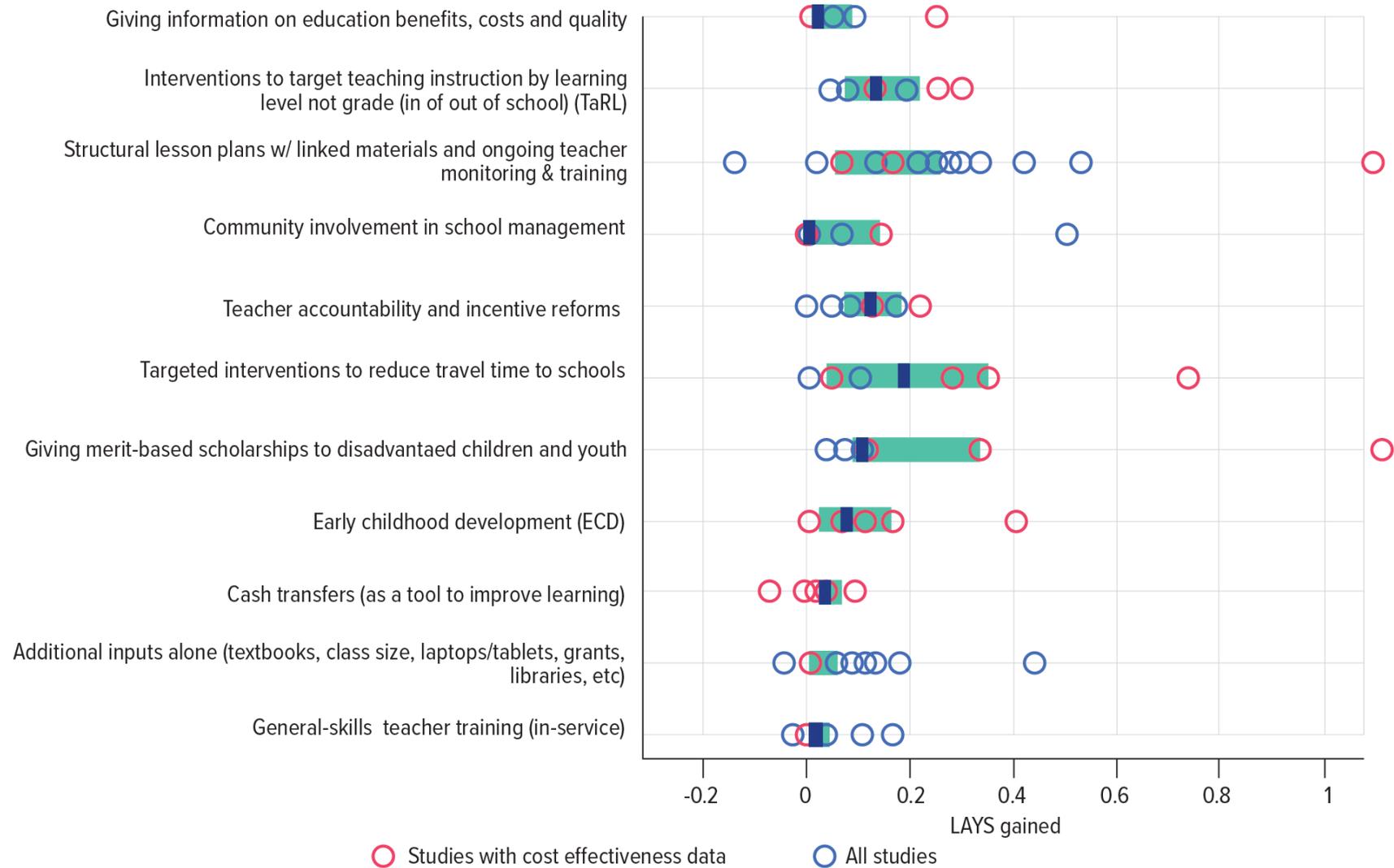
Development Research Group

October 2020

# Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS)

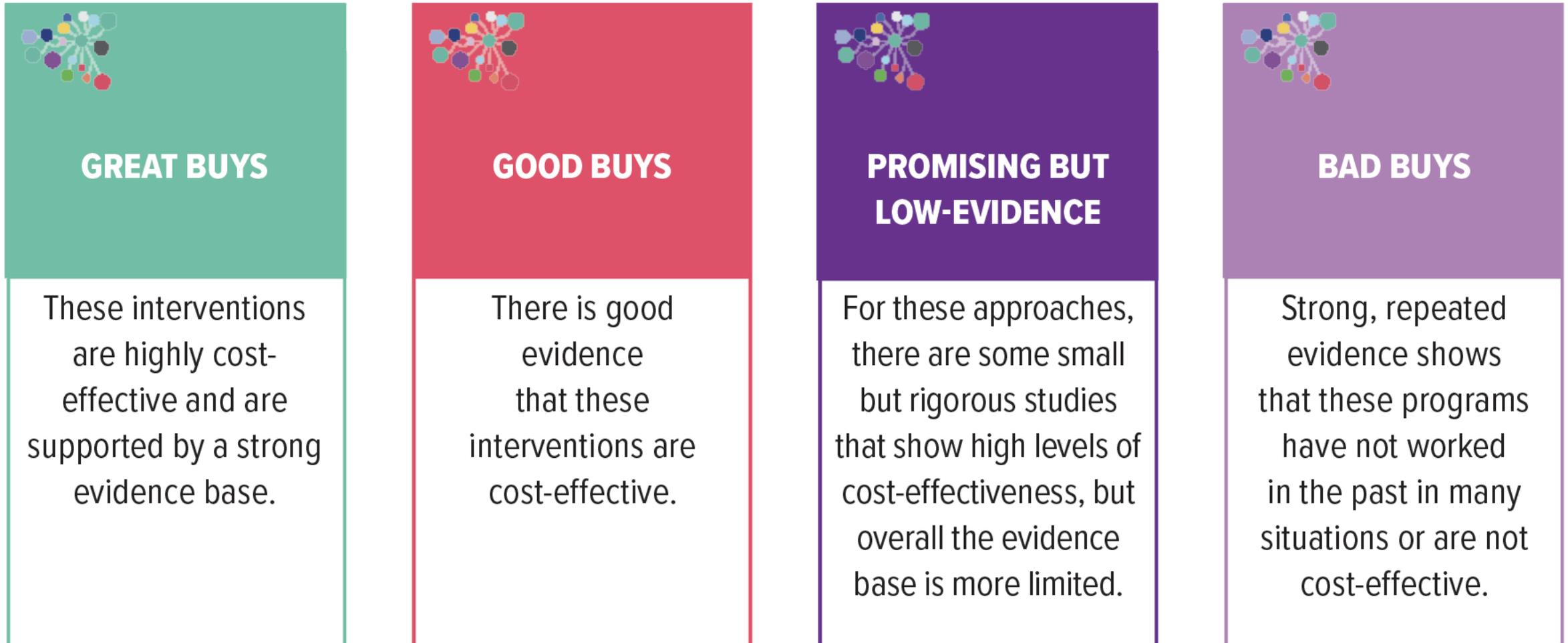


# Effectiveness: Learning-adjusted years of schooling (LAYS) gained, showing studies both with and without cost-effectiveness data



# Tiers of Smart Buys

We group educational interventions and categories of interventions into the following tiers, reflecting their **cost-effectiveness at improving learning** and the **strength of the evidence**



# GEEAP Recommendations Expanded to Policy Recommendations During and Post Covid

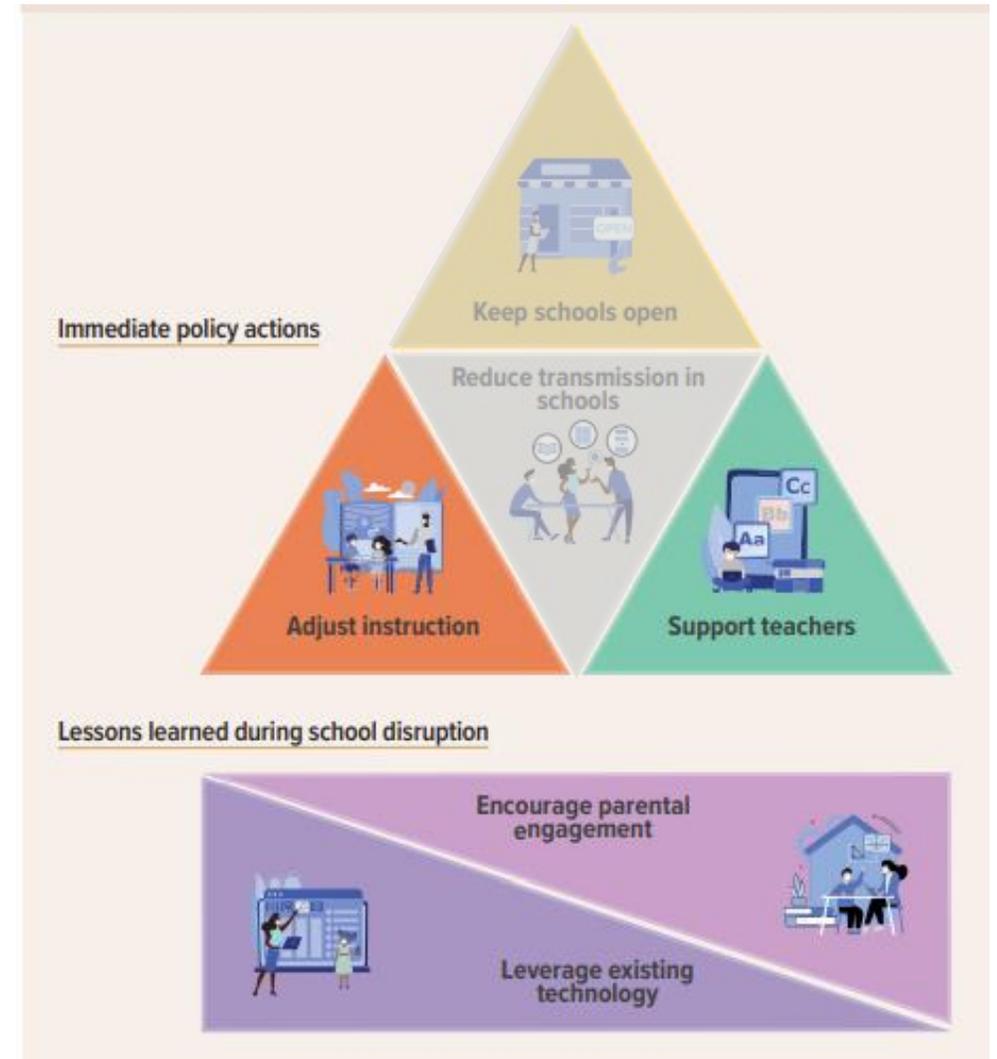
Covid Report

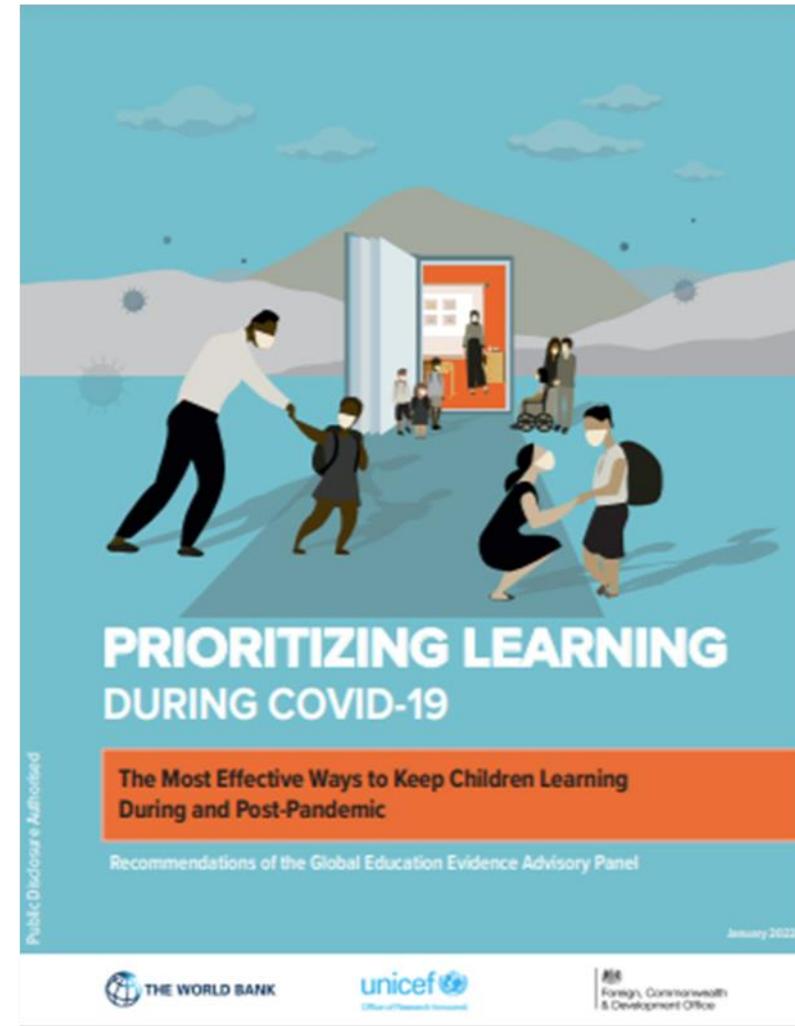
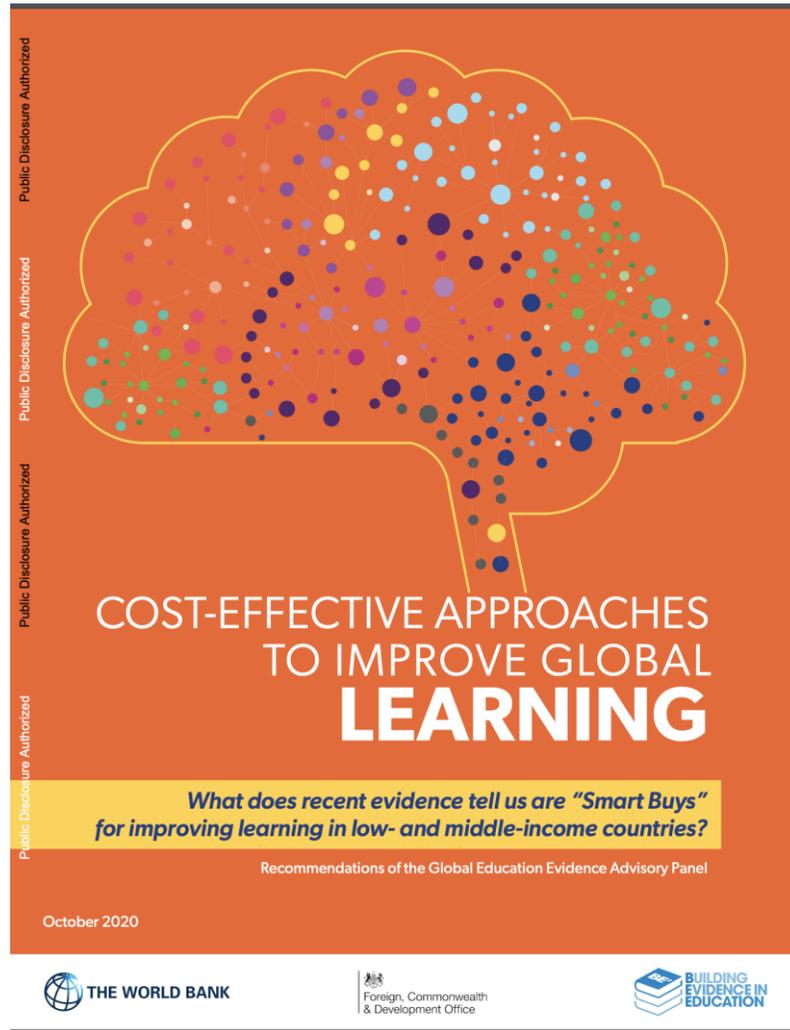
## “Smart Buys” Report



Lessons learned during Covid and earlier evidence are key to strengthening education systems and enhance learning

Immediate concerns about Covid are low in many countries, but effects from school closures need to be addressed.





Thank you

# Smart Buys need to be part of systemic reform



Individual interventions are not all that matters – **systemic reform** is crucial for sustainable systemwide improvements in learning

Requires an education system that is **coherent and aligned toward learning**, and alignment should encompass the key system actors, policies, incentives, pedagogy, and capacity

This in turn requires **political commitment** from the top to help systems escape low-learning traps (e.g., Brazilian state of Ceará, which has made remarkable gains over a decade)

## Criteria for the selection of research for the 2020 Smart Buys report

The Panel's classification decisions consider the following:

Key outcome is **foundational learning in basic education**

Focus on **cost-effectiveness**

Greater weight given to evaluations conducted **at scale** and to **longer-term impacts**

**Equity focus** - interventions shown to promote learning for all, and especially for more marginalized children, rather than for the elite

Panelists have brought their diverse expertise to **interpret** the evidence; this is not just a counting exercise

## Selection criteria for evidence in the Covid report

- **research that is published and peer-reviewed, also draw on working papers and presentations.**
  - Studies were sourced by reviewing the academic literature, the grey literature, and policy reports and by seeking expert guidance across disciplines (including education, economics, psychology and public health), building on the panel's broad expertise.
  - Structured search of largest research databases. Descriptive evidence and the different contextual responses to the pandemic.
  - When judging the effectiveness of different interventions, we gave greater weight to quasi-experimental and randomized research studies.
  - The paper emphasizes evidence with an equity focus to promote learning for all. Where relevant, the Panel has also included insights from studies outside education, to illuminate the appropriate education responses to the crisis.