



**RESULTS FOR  
DEVELOPMENT**

# Beneficiary Assessment of the GPOBA- supported Vietnam Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project

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*Prepared jointly by Results for Development Institute and the Australian  
Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and Pacific for the  
Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid (GPOBA)*

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## Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AFAP	Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific
BA	Beneficiary Assessment
DOET	Department of Education and Training
DPC	District People’s Committee
ESDP	Education Strategic Development Plan
EMWF	East Meets West Foundation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPA	Grade Point Average
GPOBA	Global Partnership on Output – based Aid
IVA	Independent Verification Agent
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
OBA	Output-based Aid
PSS	Professional secondary school
RBF	Result-based financing
R4D	Results for Development
SPA	School Promotion Association
USS	Upper secondary school
US\$	United States Dollars
VN	Vietnam
WB	World Bank

## I. Introduction and Executive Summary

The Global Partnership on Output Based Aid (GPOBA) is a World Bank-administered program that formally launched in 2003. GPOBA's mandate is, *"to design and fund output-based service delivery programs for the poor. It aims to facilitate learning, support the identification and dissemination of knowledge on issues relating to the role and application of OBA, and contribute to the financing of output-based payments for services under OBA schemes"* (World Bank 2014). The Vietnam Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project was the first, and so far only, GPOBA-funded education project, and consisted of a 3-year pilot that was implemented from 2010 to 2013. The objective of the project was to improve the access of poor and disadvantaged students to upper-secondary school level education (grades 10-12) through non-public upper secondary schools (USS) and professional secondary schools (PSS) in Vietnam, using results-based subsidies. The project targeted students in twelve provinces throughout Vietnam.

Following the completion of the project, a World Bank Implementation Completion and Results Report (ICR) (2014) and an external evaluation (Batzella 2013) were conducted. To complement these, GPOBA commissioned a beneficiary assessment to gather and analyze information on the perspectives of project beneficiaries and stakeholders. Data were gathered through in-depth field research between October 2014 and February 2015. The beneficiary assessment draws primarily on qualitative data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, but also incorporates available secondary data.

The beneficiary assessment was guided by the following four evaluation questions:

1. What was the project's impact on beneficiaries (in terms of expected outcomes)?
2. How do beneficiaries and stakeholders perceive the program benefits and impacts outside of its stated objectives?
3. How could the program be improved in the future to achieve greater impact on beneficiaries?
4. Is there potential for the program to be sustained and/or scaled?

Results show that project beneficiaries were overall very positive in their assessment of the project and its impacts, while still providing insightful recommendations as to how the project could be improved should it continue or scale-up. Key findings that emerged from an analysis of beneficiaries' views and secondary data were as follows:

- 1) Qualitative data collected through the beneficiary assessment confirmed existing quantitative data indicating that the project had a positive impact on expected outcomes of improving the attendance, enrollment, and academic performance of poor and disadvantaged students in upper-secondary education, and of reducing their chances of dropping-out. When beneficiaries' perceptions are triangulated with secondary data, the project's impact appears to have been strongest on the outcomes of attendance, enrollment, and drop-out, and least pronounced on academic performance (as measured by GPA).

- 2) According to interviews with beneficiaries, the two most significant impacts of the project outside of its expected, explicitly stated outcomes were (i) increased student motivation and effort among project students, and (ii) improved affordability of upper secondary education for families. The project does not appear to have had an impact on beneficiaries' perspectives of the perceived benefits of upper secondary education; however, students felt the project prepared them well for future studies or employment, and the majority of interviewed students are currently pursuing higher education (64%) or working (28%). Beneficiaries were overwhelmingly satisfied with teacher quality, but saw room for improvement with regard to school infrastructure.
- 3) Interviewed beneficiaries were satisfied overall with the project's implementation and collaboration between project stakeholders, but made several suggestions for improvement related to: (i) school payment timing and pre-financing, (ii) student selection criteria, (iii) monitoring and verification, (iv) impact evaluation, (v) provision of project management costs for school boards and teacher compensation, and (vi) communication activities.
- 4) While the demand for the continuation and scale-up of the project is very much present among project beneficiaries, several also expressed doubts regarding the project's sustainability.

The evaluation team's analysis of beneficiaries' recommendations for the project's improvement, and comments regarding the sustainability of the project, led to two additional conclusions:

- 5) Taking into account the percentage and prioritization of beneficiaries' responses as well as the project's resources and objectives, the recommendations that emerge as most feasible and significant are: (i) providing schools with some degree of upfront financing, (ii) expediting school payments, (iii) implementing a baseline survey for future OBA education projects, (iv) providing a nominal amount of compensation for project management costs for schools and for teachers, and (v) improving communication about the project both to project stakeholders and to external education stakeholders.
- 6) Currently there are no clear pathways to sustainability for the project given the lack of government engagement and interest from other donors. Nonetheless, it provided valuable lessons regarding how best to plan for pathways to sustainability from the project's outset. These include: (1) designing the project with potential paths to sustainability in mind, (2) defining a role for central government (or the level of government at which resource allocation and policy decisions are made in the country of implementation) and actively involve them throughout the project, (3) clearly identifying the attitude of the government towards private education if the project is providing subsidies to private schools, and (4) identifying ways to keep costs down (particularly monitoring and verification and other high overhead costs), if not during the pilot phase then for beyond. These lessons are extremely valuable to a sector in which examples of output-based aid approaches, let alone scale-ups of output-based aid approaches, remain relatively few and far between.

The summary table below provides an in-depth overview of key findings. The [conclusion](#) at the end of the report provides recommendations for future OBA education projects developed by the evaluation team that emerge from an analysis of the lessons learned from this project.

## Summary Table of Key Findings

### Evaluation question 1: What was the project's impact on beneficiaries (in terms of expected outcomes)?

- Attendance**
- For all relevant categories of interviewed beneficiaries, a majority noted that students' school attendance improved as a result of the project (52% for students, 83% for parents, and 80% for teachers).
  - A majority of interviewed parents and teachers shared the opinion that project students receiving the scholarship had more regular attendance than non-project students (55% for parents, and 85% for teachers). 47% of students expressed the same view.
  - Closer parent-teacher communication and teacher follow up was a key benefit of the project according to 55% of parents and 85% of teachers, and led to improved student attendance.
  - The project led to closer tracking of attendance for project and non-project students.
- Enrollment of disadvantaged students**
- Project schools experienced increases in the proportion of enrolled disadvantaged students – 17.6% on average, 33.6% when two largest schools are excluded (Batzella 2013) – and in some cases an increase in total enrollment.
  - 7 out of 13 schools visited by the evaluation team experienced decreases in enrollment after the completion of the project.
  - Schools' ability to maintain student enrollment after the completion of the project was in part determined by the province's policies towards public schools (how large the quota for public schools is).
- Drop-out**
- 100% of interviewed school headmasters and teachers affirmed that project students exhibited significantly lower drop-out rates when compared to students overall.
  - 84% of interviewed students stated that as a result of the subsidy, they were less likely to drop out of school.
  - Cited reasons for drop-out included (a) students living far away from home with insufficient parental oversight (Bac Kan province); (b) shame associated with failing public school examination and attending private school; (c) academic capacity; (d) family's financial status; (e) relocation or marriage.
  - Ethnic minority students in Bac Kan province had above average drop-out rates in the first semester.
  - Parental engagement played a critical role in supporting project students to meet output requirements.
- Academic performance**
- 83% of interviewed parents felt that the project improved their son or daughter's academic performance. 92% of interviewed teachers stated that project students demonstrated better academic performance than non-project students. The positive impact of the project on academic performance was slightly less pronounced among

students; 47% of whom felt that project students had better GPAs than non-project students.

- Quantitative data from the Batzella (2013) external evaluation shows a marginal improvement in project students' GPA over non-project students (suggesting teachers' and parents' perceptions may be inflated).
- Improvements in academic performance were attributed to: (1) increased student motivation to meet output requirements, and (2) increased academic support and attention provided by teachers, in addition to increased emotional and mentoring support.
- Some concerns were expressed about the academic abilities of project students and the impact this had on increasing the chances of students dropping out.

### Evaluation question 2: How do beneficiaries and stakeholders perceive the program benefits and impacts outside of its stated objectives?

#### Student motivation and effort

- Improved student motivation to study was the most commonly cited response by students (63%), parents (59%), headmasters (33%), and SPA representatives (71%) as a significant additional impact of the project outside of its expected outcomes.
- Improvements in student motivation and effort were attributed to: (1) students' appreciation for the opportunity to access and complete upper secondary education, and (2) decreased student concern and worry regarding the implication of them attending upper secondary school on their families' financial situation.

#### Affordability of upper secondary education

- Increased affordability of upper secondary school was the other most commonly cited additional main impact of the project by students (57%) and parents (28%), (when asked through an open-ended question). When asked explicitly, 87% of interviewed students and 83% of interviewed parents agreed that the project reduced their families' financial burden.
- 79% of students, 61% of parents, and 62% of teachers found the tuition subsidy amount adequate to cover tuition fees. 71% of interviewed headmasters and 73% of interviewed SPA representatives felt that the tuition subsidy needed to be higher to sufficiently cover schooling expenses to allow students to attend school.
- While 65% of students found non-tuition expenses to be affordable, consensus emerged during student focus group discussions that additional school-related expenses incurred during their time at upper secondary school posed the greatest financial challenge.
- The fact that tuition subsidies did not increase each year to match rising tuition prices was found to be problematic. Families were required to contribute a greater amount each year as a result.

#### Perceived benefits of upper

- 69% of students interviewed stated that even if they had not participated in the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project, they still would have attempted to pursue and complete their upper secondary education given the value they and their families

## secondary education

attached to education; similarly 85% parents affirmed that they still would have sought other means to send their children to upper secondary school. The project itself therefore does not appear to have had a major impact on beneficiaries' intrinsic valuing of education, but rather enhanced its affordability and facilitated students' ability to pursue and succeed in upper secondary school.

## Teacher and school quality

- 96% of interviewed students were overwhelmingly satisfied with the quality of teaching, however 28% of students and 10% of teachers noted that school facilities and infrastructure was lacking (for example, libraries, laboratories, computer rooms, and textbooks – some of which were criteria for school selection). 43% SPA representatives stated that project schools met project requirements in terms of facilities, while the remaining 57% still saw room for further improvement.

## Post-graduation activities

- 64% of all students (USS and PSS) interviewed are now pursuing higher education. Other post-graduation activities include working in an industrial park, serving as an apprentice, working as farmers or for family businesses, and military service.
- The majority of PSS students interviewed are now working in jobs related to particular vocations.
- Interviewed students felt that their experiences in USS and PSS through the project prepared them well to continue on to higher education or to start working, though several interviewed students noted that increased support in the area of career and/or university guidance and in navigating the job and university application process would have improved their experience.

## Additional impacts

- Other notable impacts of the project cited by beneficiaries include: (i) 70% of SPA representatives noted that the project increased the attention that local authorities gave to the issue of enrolling and ensuring the education outcomes of poor and disadvantaged students, (ii) 77% of interviewed teachers noted that they saw improvements in their school's operation and management as a result of the project, (iii) increased teacher motivation, capacity, and support to disadvantaged students.

### Evaluation question 3: How could the program be improved in the future to achieve greater impact on beneficiaries?

## Overall project implementation and stakeholder collaboration

- Overall, project beneficiaries felt that the project was implemented smoothly and that relevant stakeholders worked well together.
- The fact that the project worked with SPAs which were already embedded within local communities was seen to have a positive impact on the project's implementation and success.
- In almost all cases, school leadership demonstrated strong support for the project. Support from the school headmaster and board was critical to smooth implementation and the ultimate value-add of the project to the school.

## School payment

- Some schools found pre-financing the first semester to be challenging; this resulted in



### timing and pre-financing

school fees being collected from students in some cases. 40% of interviewed headmasters suggested that upfront funding equivalent to one semester's tuition should be provided to participating schools.

- Schools did not take out loans as anticipated during the project design stage. The main reason for this was that while the project design had anticipated that Departments of Education and Training (DOET) could serve as guarantors for loans, in reality this was not the case, and schools did not receive contributions from DOETs. Additionally, interest rates in Vietnam during the project implementation period were high.
- Payment disbursements were found to be delayed by 2-3 months in certain cases (during the first semester of Year 1 of the project), which placed a financial burden on participating schools. 40% of headmasters suggested accelerating the disbursement process to ease the financial burden on participating schools. According to the implementing agency, East Meets West Foundation, this was done in subsequent semesters.

### Student selection criteria

- There was broad interest from beneficiaries in including a larger number of students in the program.
- 20% of DOET representatives suggested expanding the project to specific types of public schools.

### Monitoring and verification

- 40% of DOET representatives interviewed recommended an annual assessment of the quality of teaching be conducted and used to determine school performance (in addition to student performance).
- A few SPA representatives suggested that SPAs could conduct independent verification themselves to reduce project costs.

### Impact evaluation

- The lack of a baseline study for the project was perceived by the implementing agency, East Meets West Foundation, as a key area for improvement in future projects.

### Provision of project management costs and teacher compensation

- Several SPA representatives indicated that there should have been a stipend or some form of financial support for project schools, and 16% of teachers expressed a desire to be compensated for the extra work required of them as part of the program.

### Communication activities

- Some participating stakeholders were not fully aware of the project details, resulting in eligible students failing to apply for the program, some parents being unaware of the source of subsidies, and some DOET representatives not being aware of program risks related to pre-financing. 17% of interviewed parents stated that they wanted more project information to be provided to parents and students.

- The project lacked resources to conduct a communication campaign with external education stakeholders, which could have raised the visibility of the project, particularly among government stakeholders.

#### **Evaluation question 4: Is there potential for the program to be sustained and/or scaled?**

##### **Project stakeholders' interest in scaling-up and sustaining the project**

- Project stakeholders demonstrated substantial interest in seeing the project continued and in ongoing involvement.

##### **Feasibility of project scale-up and sustainability**

- Various stakeholders expressed doubts about the actual likelihood of the project's sustainability and scalability due to factors including insufficient government interest and de-prioritization of non-public schools as well as high costs.

## II. Overview of Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project

The Vietnam Upper Secondary Education Enhancement project was designed to address constraints facing students' upper secondary completion in selected project provinces in Vietnam. This OBA project was implemented as a pilot providing output-based assistance that reimbursed tuition fees to beneficiaries who satisfactorily met required thresholds across three basic conditions, namely (i) grade point average (GPA); (ii) class attendance records; and (iii) acceptable behavior criteria.<sup>1</sup> The project was implemented by the East Meet West Foundation (EMWF) through a grant agreement signed with the World Bank in 2010.<sup>2</sup>

The project's objective was to increase the access of poor and disadvantaged students, including eligible students of ethnic minority groups, to upper secondary education in non-public (private and semi-public) upper secondary schools (USS) and professional secondary schools (PSS) in project provinces, through a subsidy scheme for student enrollment. Non-public schools include both private schools (privately owned and operated schools) and "semi-public" schools (schools owned by the state but operated privately). The provision of output-based subsidies to schools was intended to support the enrollment of around 7,500 students during the three-year implementation period. The project was designed to offer a partial subsidy to eligible lower secondary school graduates who could not afford tuition and were not accepted by public upper secondary schools. As is typical of OBA projects, the service provider (in this case the participating schools) took on operational risk by pre-financing project students' tuition and receiving reimbursement from GPOBA upon verification of pre-defined outputs indicative of satisfactory service delivery to poor students. The project's target beneficiaries were USS students and PSS students in twelve provinces: Bac Kan, Bac Giang, Phu Tho, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Thua Thien-Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen initially, and Thai Binh was added after the first year. These included disadvantaged districts with a high percentage of poor households and ethnic minority groups. The reimbursement was a flat rate of US\$ 90 per student per year for USS and US\$ 160 per student per year for PSS respectively.

The project's progress and achievement of its main objective – to improve education outcomes for disadvantaged students – was measured against the following operational targets (East Meets West 2014):

- Enrollment of approximately 7,500 beneficiary students in non-public USS and PSS;
- Attendance of enrolled beneficiary students in a minimum of 80% of classes;
- Beneficiary students obtain passing grades, i.e., term or annual GPA of at least 5.0, and scores of at least 3.5 for each subject GPA.

Further detail on the education context in Vietnam can be found in [Annex 3](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Disbursement was formally linked to students' GPAs and attendance rates, but students who violated school rules were not eligible for re-sitting exams at the end of the year if they failed to meet the performance criteria.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank as the administrator of the Global Partnership on Output-Based Aid and East Meets West Foundation as the recipient and implementing agency of the grant

### III. Beneficiary Assessment Methodology

The purpose of the assessment was to collect information on beneficiaries' and stakeholders' perspectives on the project and its impacts. The beneficiary assessment is primarily qualitative while also incorporating available quantitative data.

This assessment intended to answer the following questions:

1. What was the project's impact on beneficiaries (in terms of expected outcomes)?
2. How do beneficiaries and stakeholders perceive the program benefits and impacts outside of its stated objectives?
3. How could the program be improved in the future to achieve greater impact on the beneficiaries?
4. Is there potential for the program to be sustained and/or scaled?

Three data sources were used:

1. In-depth key informant interviews with (from each province sampled):
  - Former students supported by the project
  - Parents of supported students
  - Teachers
  - School management (school headmasters)
  - Study Promotion Association (SPA) members
  - Local authorities (DOET representatives)
2. Focus group discussions with (from each province sampled):
  - Former students
  - Parents
  - Teachers
3. Secondary data collected from selected schools and existing secondary data and analysis of the project

To answer question 1, secondary data from school records (to the extent available)<sup>3</sup> was used in addition to secondary data previously collected through the existing ICR (World Bank 2014) and external evaluation (Batzella 2013) to estimate student GPAs, attendance, and drop-out rates. This was complemented with qualitative data from focus groups and interviews. Qualitative data collected from focus groups and interviews informed answers to questions 2, 3, and 4. Finally, a desk review of key project documents was also conducted.

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<sup>3</sup> Secondary data provided by schools is listed in [Annex 2](#).

### Province selection for the beneficiary assessment

Project provinces and districts for the beneficiary assessment were selected based on locations where the majority of schools were non-public USS and PSS that were populated by disadvantaged and poor students, as well as students from ethnic minority groups in both mountainous and delta regions (selected provinces are demonstrated by the shaded areas in Map 1).

Upon consultation with the EMWF team, and taking into account the survey conducted for their Completion Report in 2013 (East Meets West 2014), the evaluation team proposed to select additional provinces and schools as a sample for this beneficiary assessment. In addition, since EMWF had conducted its final evaluation in several provinces, this beneficiary assessment sought to avoid repetition in those sites by selecting different schools to allow the evaluation team to use the previous information gathered as secondary data to triangulate with this study's findings. These decisions were made to maximize the available data sources on the project.



Map 1: selected provinces for beneficiary assessment data collection

Taking all of the above factors into account, Bac Kan, where 90% of students were ethnic minorities, was selected for this assessment, as well as Thai Binh and Phu Tho provinces in the north. Four other coastal provinces were selected in the center of Vietnam, with an emphasis in Binh Dinh where 19 schools were covered by the project. The full list of provinces covered by the beneficiary assessment can be seen in Table 2 below.

A list of all schools in each of the seven provinces was created, and in each province, two schools that had not been surveyed by EMWF were randomly selected. In each province, the evaluation team sought to conduct 15 in-depth conversational interviews (with two teacher representatives, one school headmaster, one DOET representative, one representative from the local SPA, five students, and five parents or family member representatives) and three focus group discussions (with one group each of parents, students and teachers). There was no overlap in individual participants taking part in both interviews and focus groups in any location.

### Qualitative tools, data collection, and data analysis

R4D and AFAP jointly developed questionnaires ([Annex 4](#)) used in conducting interviews and focus group discussions. Initial versions of these questionnaires were tested and revised during field visits in November 2014. Interviews and focus groups were conducted in the seven provinces from November 2014 through January 2015, with additional phone interviews with selected students conducted in February 2015. The purpose of these phone interviews was to

gain the perspective of students who were no longer residing in their home provinces and therefore were unable to be interviewed during the field visits.

### Breakdown of participants

217 stakeholders participated in interviews and focus groups, with 144 interviews and 73 participating in focus group discussions. The breakdown of participants by category overall and by both location and category is shown below.

Table 1: Participants by category

Category	Key informant interviews	Participation in focus group discussions	Total participants
<b>Student</b>	75	20	95
<b>Parent</b>	28	29	57
<b>Teacher</b>	13	24	37
<b>School management (headmaster)</b>	15	-	15
<b>SPA and DOET representatives</b>	13	-	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>217</b>

Table 2: Participant type by province

Province	Student	Parent	Teacher	School rep	DOET/SPA	Total
Bac Kan	6	6	1	1	2	<b>16</b>
Thai Binh	10	10	12	2	2	<b>36</b>
Phu Tho	13	19	6	2	2	<b>42</b>
Da Nang	21	4	1	3	2	<b>31</b>
Quang Ngai	14	6	5	2	2	<b>29</b>
Binh Dinh	13	9	5	2	2	<b>31</b>
Quang Binh	7	0	6	3	1	<b>17</b>

In addition, representatives from the implementing agency and the project lead from the World Bank were interviewed as part of the data collection process.

For the purpose of this beneficiary assessment, the term *beneficiaries* is used to refer to participants and stakeholders involved in the project. This includes students who were eligible for tuition subsidies and their families; participating schools, teachers, and headmasters; DOET and SPA representatives; and the implementing agency East Meets West Foundation. The viewpoints of all of these groups are presented in Section IV regarding beneficiary assessment findings.

### **Control group**

While the initial beneficiary assessment methodology sought to incorporate a control group of eligible students from the same project schools who had not received the subsidy, the evaluation team encountered several challenges related to data availability which made this approach not feasible:

- *Lack of school records on non-project students:* Project schools had not systematically kept track of students who were in the same cohort as project students but who had not participated in the project. As a result, it proved difficult not only to construct a randomly selected sample of control group students, but also to identify and track them down for beneficiary interviews.
- *Lack of incentive for non-project students to participate:* Even where such students were identified, the incentive for them to return to the province to participate in interviews or focus group discussions was often low as they did not have the same tie or appreciation for the project as project students did, and many had moved to different locations for employment or other reasons.

As a result, the evaluation team concluded that the number of control group interviews would be too limited to deem them representative, and the sample size too small to generate findings from which meaningful comparisons or conclusions could be made. This conclusion was discussed with and agreed by GPOBA in December 2014.

## IV. Beneficiary Assessment Findings

This section provides a presentation of the findings from the beneficiary assessment. These findings analyze patterns in interviewees' responses and synthesize key themes that emerged from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. They are focused on the perceptions of project beneficiaries and stakeholders, which have been triangulated with prior secondary data analysis (Implementation Completion and Results Report, World Bank 2014; and external evaluation, Batzella 2013). The findings are organized into four sections, based on each of the four evaluation questions. Following this section, Section V provides an analysis of beneficiaries' suggestions for improvement and feedback regarding the project's sustainability.

### i) Perception of the project's impact on expected outcomes

The first evaluation question sought to identify beneficiaries' perception of the project's impact on the outcomes it explicitly set out to achieve. These included improving project students' attendance and academic performance, as well as improving the enrollment of disadvantaged students in upper secondary schools, and by extension, reducing their drop-out.

#### Attendance

One of the key outputs associated with the project was student attendance. Students were required to maintain an attendance rate of at least 80% in their classes in order to receive their scholarship stipend. Quantitative data from the ICR (World Bank 2014) revealed that for project students from 2010 to 2013, the average number of absent days/student/year remained low, ranging from 3.33 to 3.70. This is significantly below the accepted threshold of 45 days absent/student/year.<sup>4</sup> In the beneficiary assessment, students, parents, and teachers were asked whether (1) project students' attendance improved as a result of the project, and (2) how project students' attendance compared to non-project students' attendance. Qualitative data collected from interviews with project stakeholders confirmed the positive impact that the project had on student attendance. An overview of responses is provided below:

*Table 3: Beneficiaries' responses with regard to student attendance*

Question	Students	Parents	Teachers
Did receiving the scholarship affect your/your son or daughter's/project students' regular attendance at school? <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, I attended school more regularly: <b>52%</b></li> <li>➤ No, it did not affect my attendance: 44%</li> <li>➤ Yes, I attended school less regularly: 4%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, he or she attended school more regularly: <b>83%</b></li> <li>➤ No, it did not affect his or her school attendance: 17%</li> <li>➤ Yes, he or she attended school less regularly: 0%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, their attendance increased: <b>80%</b></li> <li>➤ No, their attendance stayed the same: 20%</li> <li>➤ Yes, their attendance decreased: 0%</li> </ul>
How do you compare yourself/your son or daughter/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly: <b>47%</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly: <b>55%</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly: <b>85%</b></li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> This threshold is set by the Ministry of Education and Training, according to Regulation 29 which states that students will only be accepted to lower and upper secondary classes if they are absent for less than 45 days / year.

<sup>5</sup> Response rates for questions included throughout this beneficiary assessment report ranged from 90 to 100%.



project students with non-project students with regard to attendance?	➤ No difference: 41%	➤ No difference: 28%	➤ No difference: 15%
	➤ Non-project students attended school more regularly: 0%	➤ Non-project students attended school more regularly: 3%	➤ Non-project students attended school more regularly: 0%

- For all relevant categories of interviewed beneficiaries, a majority noted that students' school attendance improved as a result of the project (52% for students, 83% for parents, and 80% for teachers).
- A majority of parents (55%) and teachers (85%) shared the view that project students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly than non-project students. 47% of interviewed students shared the same opinion.
- Students and parents interviewed for the beneficiary assessment affirmed that in general, students attended school regularly during the three years that they participated in the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project, with the exception of cases of illness or urgent family issues.
- 100% of parents interviewed confirmed that their children were well aware of the importance of regular school attendance as a pre-requisite to receiving the stipend, and that rigorous attendance tracking by teachers was required as part of the project's implementation. They noted that teachers maintained regular communications with students' families to monitor student attendance on a daily basis (i.e. if students missed class consistently, teachers were required to check in with students' families). If students consistently missed school, teachers would request meetings with their families to discuss the underlying causes of the issue (which interviewed parents noted were the same as mentioned by students, namely illness or family issues). This increased individual follow-up on the part of teachers and schools with project students was a noted benefit of the OBA approach by 55% of parents and 85% of teachers.
- During focus group discussions, all teachers and school headmasters agreed that, in accordance with school rules, both project and non-project students were equally required to attend class regularly. All schools applied strict attendance-tracking measures, for example, closing the school gate after 7.30am, and student attendance was carefully checked by teachers on a daily basis. The closer monitoring of attendance may have therefore had implications not only for project students, but similarly for non-project students.

### Enrollment of disadvantaged students

The external evaluation of the project (Batzella 2013) found a positive impact of the intervention on the enrollment of disadvantaged students. The proportion of disadvantaged to non-disadvantaged students was higher in the GPOBA project cohort than it was in subsequent cohorts that did not receive any subsidies. Participating schools experienced a 17.6% increase in the proportion of enrolled disadvantaged students (this number raises to a 33.6% increase when the two largest schools are excluded) (Batzella 2013). Thus the external evaluation found that smaller schools tended to be more successful at increasing disadvantaged student enrollment than larger schools. One reason put forward for this by the evaluation's author is that larger schools tended to be more popular and successful and faced fewer challenges in

attracting new students to enroll. Conversely, smaller and often poorer schools made a greater effort to promote the project in their communities as a means of increasing student enrollment. For these smaller schools, enrollment overall was increased during the project years (Batzella 2013). One other potential interpretation for this finding is that the marginal revenue generated from increased enrollment for larger schools was proportionally much lower than the smaller schools, so the incentive to enroll additional disadvantaged students even with the subsidy may have been lower.

While changes in enrollment are best measured through quantitative analysis, qualitative interviews nonetheless shed interesting light on beneficiaries' perspectives of why the project did or did not improve enrollment:

- Students and parents reported that the program had a clear positive impact on students' financial ability to enroll in and attend upper secondary school (see "Affordability" section for further discussion). Without the tuition subsidies, parents noted that there was no guarantee that they would have been able to send their children to upper secondary school.
- Interviewed school headmasters indicated that the project not only supported an increase in the enrollment of disadvantaged students due to its explicit targeting criteria, but that it also led to an increase in overall enrollment compared to their prior situation by improving the perception of the private and semi-public schools themselves. Several of the schools visited by the evaluation team had previously suffered from low rates of enrollment due to inadequate demand for private education in the area (as a result of high fees, perception of lower-quality relative to public schools). The tuition subsidies helped to boost student demand for such schools and led to an increase in total enrollment.
- In 7 out of 13 project schools visited by the evaluation team (in Bac Kan, Quang Ngai, and Da Nang), school headmasters noted that since the end of the project, overall student enrollment had decreased again once the tuition subsidies were no longer available, to the point where some schools were even forced to close due to insufficient student enrollment caused by the unaffordability of tuition fees.<sup>6</sup> This was, however, also due in part to education policies within these provinces. In certain provinces such as Da Nang, interviews with the SPA and local officials revealed that the political commitment to universal access to public education was stronger than in other provinces, and as a result, larger quotas have been afforded to public schools to accept students despite their limited capacity. Subsequently, over 90% of students are able to attend public upper secondary school in this province, which when coupled with the common perception of low quality associated with private schools, resulted in significant challenges for private schools to enroll students after the end of the project. In other provinces however, budget constraints on education spending have led to much

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<sup>6</sup> This was the case for example for Dien Hong, Khai Tri USS and Duc Minh USS in Da Nang. Hung Vuong USS in Bac Kan currently only has one class with fewer than 30 students in the following two years since the project ended. Truong Dinh and Hoang Van Thu USS in Quang Ngai had only 2 classes of students in each grade compared to 5 classes during the previous project years. Other schools visited had not suffered the same situation, but often even teachers were involved in marketing the school in an effort to increase student enrollment.

lower quotas for public school acceptances. In Binh Dinh province, according to the interviewed DOET representative, public schools are able to accommodate approximately only 43% of eligible upper secondary students, which leaves remaining students with the options of either attending private school or pursuing continuing education. As a result, project schools in Binh Dinh did not face challenges in enrolling sufficient students even after the project’s completion.

### Drop-out

Given that project schools had only retained contact with students who had completed the program, the evaluation team was unable to interview project students who had dropped out from the program. That being said, several comments and observations were still made by interviewed beneficiaries regarding the impact of the project on student drop-out (Table 4).

*Table 4: Students’ responses with regard to drop-out*

Question	Students
Have you ever considered quitting school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes: 39%</li> <li>➤ No: 61%</li> </ul>
Did receiving the scholarship affect your consideration of whether to quit school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, I was less determined to quit school: 84%</li> <li>➤ No, it did not affect my consideration of whether to quit school: 16%</li> <li>➤ Yes, I was more determined to quit school: 0%</li> </ul>

- 100% of interviewed school headmasters and teachers affirmed that project students exhibited significantly lower drop-out rates when compared to students overall. This supports the finding from East Meets West’s Completion Report, which found that project students’ average drop-out rate was 4.6% while non-project students’ was 7.4% (East Meets West 2014).
- 39% of students interviewed noted that they had previously considered dropping out of school due to financial reasons. A majority (84%), regardless of their answer to the question of whether they had previously considered dropping out, stated that as a result of the tuition subsidy they were less likely to drop out of school.

### Cited reasons for cases of drop-out

- In one specific province (Bac Kan), the number of project students who dropped out in the first semester was higher than average. 20 students dropped out in Hung Vuong USS alone in the first semester, and another 40 students who dropped out in the three following semesters were partly replaced with other students. Bac Kan is a northern mountainous region, and the only province visited by the evaluation team to have enrolled ethnic minority students. Many of the students’ families lived in rural and more isolated areas far away from the town where the school was located. As a result, students were required to live in the town away from their families in order to attend school. Interviews with project beneficiaries revealed that the majority of project students who dropped out from the project in Bac Kan were those living in the town away from their families, and who, according to teachers and school headmasters, were

not receiving adequate parental oversight and support to ensure that they were attending class and studying sufficiently to maintain an adequate academic performance and behavior record. One interviewed student from Hung Vuong USS in Bac Kan noted that, “Some students left home in remote areas to pursue their education in the town. Because their parents could not keep close track of them, their performance kept worsening.” This suggests that, despite the incentives offered through the subsidy to students, parental engagement still plays a critical role in supporting students to meet the project requirements. It also suggests that perhaps more research is needed to understand how incentives may need to be strengthened or adapted for the specific case of students living away from home, and ethnic minority students more broadly, who may face additional non-financial demand-side barriers to education that non-ethnic-minority Vietnamese students do not face.

- 20% of interviewed students (in Phu Tho, Bac Kan, Quang Ngai, Da Nang), when asked what the reasons were for their classmates dropping out, noted that in some cases they had felt a sense of shame and inferiority from having failed the public school exam and having to attend private school. This led to insufficient concentration on their classes, which resulted in poor academic performance and lack of engagement in school.
- In a very small number of cases (4%), interviewed students noted that fellow project students were unable to meet the output requirements for the following main reasons: (i) their individual academic capacity was too low to keep up with the project’s requirements, (ii) their family’s financial condition was such that even with the subsidy, they were unable to meet school costs, and (iii) relocation or marriage. These findings support those summarized in the ICR Report (World Bank 2014) which states that the two main reasons for student drop-out in year 3 was the poor performance/attitude of the student at school, and economic hardship and/or needing to find work (World Bank 2014).

### Academic performance

Interviewed students, parents, and teachers shared positive perceptions of the project’s impact on the academic performance of project students, though this view was most pronounced among teachers and parents (Table 5 and 6).

*Table 5: Students’ and teachers’ responses with regard to the relative academic performance of project vs. non-project students.*

Question	Students	Teachers
How would you describe the academic performance of project students versus non-project students (GPA)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project students had better performance: <b>47%</b></li> <li>➤ Project students had the same performance: 45%</li> <li>➤ Project students had worse performance: 8%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Project students had better performance: <b>92%</b></li> <li>➤ Project students had the same performance: 8%</li> <li>➤ Project students had worse performance: 0%</li> </ul>

Table 6: Parents' responses with regard to improvement in their son or daughter's academic performance (as a result of the project)

Question	Parents
Did receiving the scholarship affect your son or daughter's academic performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, he or she performed better than before: <b>83%</b></li> <li>➤ No, he or she performed the same as before: 10%</li> <li>➤ Yes, he or she performed worse than before: 0%</li> </ul>

- Just under half of interviewed students (47%) shared the opinion that project students had better GPAs than non-project students. The main reasons cited were linked to the increased socio-emotional mentoring and academic support that teachers provided to project students as a result of the OBA approach. One interviewed student in Binh Dinh stated, *"In terms of personal relationships, teachers cared about project students more. They motivated them and supported them."* These students noted that they benefited from increased confidence in their academic capabilities.
- 83% of interviewed parents felt that the program helped to improve their son or daughter's academic performance.
- 92% of interviewed teachers judged that project students demonstrated better academic performance than non-project students. The most commonly cited reason was project students' higher levels of motivation and effort towards completing upper secondary education. Focus group discussions with teachers confirmed views shared by students regarding increased teacher support for project students. Teachers noted that even the academically struggling project students were in some cases able to improve their academic performance and other school outcomes as a result of increased individual support from teachers.
- Spillover effects on the academic performance of non-project students were not mentioned in the same way that they were in the case of student attendance. This is unsurprising given that the two most commonly cited reasons for improved academic performance were increased motivation from project students and increased teacher support for project students, neither of which inherently translates to non-project students.
- Despite the positive views expressed by teachers, parents, and students, just over 25% of interviewed school headmasters expressed concern about the academic abilities of project students and the financial risk this posed to the school in the event that students were unable to complete their upper secondary education. This aligns with one of the key findings from the ICR, which notes that the low level of preparation of project students from their previous lower secondary education was seen by project stakeholders as a key challenge affecting students' ability to perform well at the upper secondary level (particularly for PSS students) (World Bank 2014).

The external evaluation (Batzella 2013) noted only a modest improvement in terms of project students' GPA when compared with eligible and ineligible non-project students, which suggests that teachers and parents may have an inflated sense of students' improved academic performance. However, the project's ICR notes that given that the project focused on disadvantaged students who may have been unlikely to complete upper secondary school in

the absence of the project, the fact that project students may not have demonstrated significantly higher GPAs should not necessarily be seen as a shortcoming of the project. East Meets West's Completion Report (2014) indicates that for project students, average GPAs was higher each subsequent year of the project over the course of the three years (5.95 from 2010-2011; 6.06 from 2011-2012; 6.33 from 2012-2013).

**Evaluation question 1 takeaway:** The project successfully demonstrated a positive impact on all of its expected outcomes (attendance, enrollment of disadvantaged students, drop-out, and academic performance), though when beneficiaries' perceptions are triangulated with secondary data, the project's impact appears to have been strongest on the first three outcomes (attendance, enrollment, and drop-out), and least pronounced on academic performance (as measured by GPA).

## ii) Perception of additional project impacts outside of its stated objectives

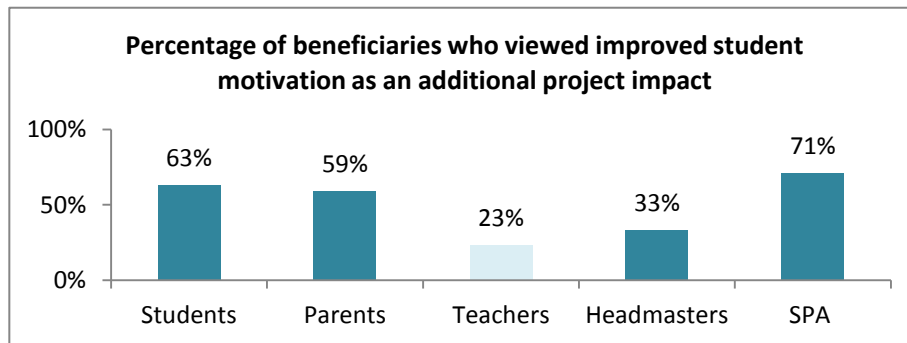
The second evaluation question sought to identify beneficiaries' perceptions of the project's most significant impacts outside of its stated objectives of improving student attendance, enrollment, academic performance, and reducing drop-out. This following section discusses beneficiary perceptions of the project's additional benefits, the two most significant of which were found to be (i) improved student motivation and effort and (ii) increased affordability of upper secondary education.

### Student motivation and effort

While student motivation and effort were not outputs to which subsidy disbursements were tied, an implicit assumption in the project's theory of change is that by tying subsidies to GPA, students would exert greater effort in school and be more motivated to reach the pre-defined targets. Interviewed beneficiaries repeatedly highlighted this as a key positive impact of the project on students receiving the subsidies.

- Interviewed beneficiaries were asked what they thought the main impacts of the project were in addition to its expected outcomes. Improved student motivation to study was the most commonly cited response by four categories of beneficiaries (students, parents, headmasters, and SPA representatives, as shaded in dark blue in Graph 1). For example, 63% of students and 59% of parents felt that one of the most significant benefits of the project was that it increased students' motivation to study and succeed academically.

Graph 1: Beneficiaries' responses with regard to additional project impacts – student motivation



- Interviewed teachers and headmasters noted that due to the fact that project students came from disadvantaged backgrounds, their appreciation for the tuition subsidy granted by the project was very high, and motivated them to work hard to stay in the program, in order to successfully complete their upper secondary education cognizant of the opportunity that this would provide them and their family.
- Interviewed teachers and students universally noted that another key factor that led to increased student motivation and effort was the decrease in financial worries that project students faced as a result of receiving the subsidies. A significant number of interviewed students noted that their awareness of the financial stress their studies had on their family often prevented them from focusing on their education without worrying, and that one of the positive impacts of the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project was the removal of these concerns as a result of the tuition subsidies. One interviewed USS student in Binh Dinh noted, *“After receiving the stipend, my attitude towards studying improved a lot; before receiving the stipend I used to worry a lot about financial issues.”* Without the concerns of the financial implications of their education on their families, students were able to increase their focus and dedication to their studies.

#### Affordability of upper secondary education

Qualitative interviews with beneficiaries sought to assess to what extent the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project increased the affordability of upper secondary education to socio-economically disadvantaged students in Vietnam.

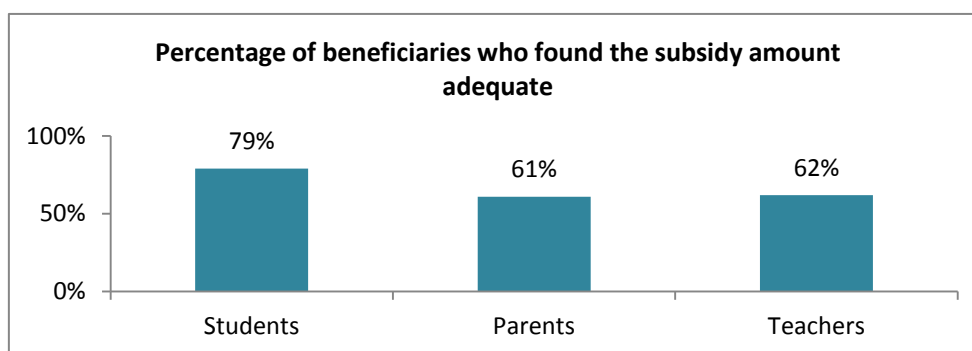
#### Overall impact of tuition subsidies on affordability of upper secondary school

- Increased affordability of upper secondary school was the other most commonly cited additional impact of the project by students and parents (57% for students and 28% parents).
- 87% of interviewed students and 83% of interviewed parents agreed that the project reduced their families' financial burden and created accessible opportunities for pursuing upper secondary education. As noted previously, the increased affordability of upper secondary school as a result of the tuition subsidies reduced students' risk of dropping out for financial reasons.

### Tuition subsidy amount

- 79% of students, 61% of parents, and 62% of teachers interviewed shared the opinion that the tuition subsidy amount was adequate to cover tuition fees (Graph 2). Interestingly in contrast, 71% of interviewed headmasters and 73% of interviewed SPA representatives felt that the tuition subsidy needed to be higher to sufficiently cover schooling expenses to allow students to attend school.

*Graph 2: Beneficiaries' responses with regard to tuition subsidy amount*



- Several students and parents participating in focus groups suggested increasing the amount of the tuition subsidy (e.g. to US \$120 per USS student).
- School tuition prices increased on a yearly basis, while subsidies provided to participating students at schools stayed constant, meaning that students had to pay a greater share of school fees each year. 40% of headmasters and 17% of SPA representatives interviewed suggested that subsidies should be increased yearly to match school tuition increases. SPA representatives suggested conducting a survey of school-related and associated costs to determine this amount (they were not all aware that this had in fact been conducted by EMWF during the feasibility period). Several parents interviewed through focus group discussions noted that the increase in tuition fees over the course of the three years of the project without a subsequent increase in the tuition subsidy posed a financial challenge for them.
- One school headmaster suggested increasing the amount received by students who passed exams with high grades (e.g. to US \$120 per USS student), while maintaining the amount provided to students meeting minimum requirements at the current level (\$90/\$160 per student). According to this interviewee, this could help to incentivize student performance through providing greater subsidies to higher performing students.

Overall, stakeholders suggested three different approaches to modifying the subsidy amount provided on a yearly basis: (1) to match rising tuition prices, (2) to correspond to student performance, or (3) by increasing the amount provided to all students.

### Additional incurred school-related costs

- 65% of students interviewed noted that additional non-tuition expenses were affordable, and 35% of students found additional expenses unaffordable. Students



interviewed during focus group discussions identified additional school-related costs that they incurred during their time at upper secondary school (such as living costs for students living away from home, fees for extra classes, insurance, textbooks, commuting, etc.) as the greatest financial challenge faced over the three years. At least three interviewed students mentioned that in order to meet these costs, they were required to take on part-time jobs, which as a result lessened the time they were able to spend studying.

- Interviewed parents acknowledged they worked to find the means to meet non-tuition additional costs. The majority of respondents noted that they had to rely on short-term incomes such as selling farming products (38%); wages from temporary hired labor (34%); petty trade (28%); and borrowings from relatives or banks (21%) to pay for such non-tuition fees (Table 7). Only 3% of interviewed parents had a regular and permanent salary that they could put towards schooling expenses. Many noted that their incomes fluctuated and were subject to daily earnings, and were supporting households of 1-4 members on unstable salaries.

*Table 7: Parents' main sources of income*

Parents' main sources of incomes according to beneficiary interviews	
Selling farming products	38%
Wages from working as temporary hired labor	34%
Petty trade	28%
Borrowings from relatives or a bank	21%
Social welfare allowance	10%
Permanent salary	3%

Table 8 below provides data on tuition and other school-related expenses at Vu The Lang USS in Phu Tho province from the 2014-2015 school year, which have not varied significantly from the years of the project's implementation. Tuition subsidies provided to project students amounted to USD 90 per year. The costs broken down below were seen to be similar to other project schools visited, and therefore likely a representative indication of costs faced by USS project students (see [Annex 1](#) for costs for four additional schools visited – two PSS and two USS). While specific tuition fees differed, overall schooling costs remained comparable (in some instances schools had lower school fees but higher fees for supplemental classes, in other instances schools had higher overall tuition fees, but these already took into account the fees for supplemental classes). While not officially obligatory, interviewed teachers noted that in only rare instances could students afford to forego these classes (either if they were outstanding students, or if their families really could not afford to pay them). The majority of interviewed students noted they paid for supplemental classes.

Table 8: Overview of tuition fees and additional schooling costs at Vu The Lang USS, Phu Tho

Description of costs	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
<b>I. Tuition per semester</b>			
Regular educational curricular (MOET)	1,000,000 (200,000/month)	1,250,000 (250,000/month)	1,500,000 (300,000/month)
Supplemental classes, covering additional knowledge by subject, assistance to weak and slow learners, and extracurricular activities	600,000 (150,000/month)	720,000 (180,000/month)	800,000 (200,000/month)
<b>II. Additional schooling costs</b>			
Electricity, drinking water, exam paper, test paper, photocopy, cleaning, security, etc.	500,000/semester	500,000/semester	500,000/semester
Contribution to “Emulation & Reward” fund	200,000/school year	200,000/school year	200,000/school year
Contribution to the school “Student Parents” Fund	200,000/school year	200,000/school year	200,000/school year
School uniform	250,000/2 sets for summer and winter	0	0
Contribution to school facilities	300,000/3 years	0	0
Notebooks and Textbooks	0	120,000	120,000
Technical and vocational skill training & test	0	0	400,000
Check-up	50,000/student	50,000/student	0
Use and operating school tools and equipment	0	300,000/3 years	0
<b>Total tuition</b>	<b>1,600,000 (approx. USD 75)</b>	<b>1,970,000 (approx. USD 92)</b>	<b>2,300,000 (approx. USD 108)</b>
<b>Total additional schooling costs</b>	<b>1,500,000 (approx. USD 70)</b>	<b>1,370,000 (approx. USD 64)</b>	<b>1,420,000 (approx. USD 66)</b>
<b>Total costs (tuition + additional schooling costs)</b>	<b>3,100,000 (approx. USD 145)</b>	<b>3,340,000 (approx. USD 156)</b>	<b>3,720,000 (approx. 174 USD)</b>

Taken together, these findings paint a nuanced picture of the project’s impact on the affordability of upper secondary education for target beneficiaries. While the project undoubtedly has a positive impact on the overall affordability of upper secondary education (and was commonly cited by interviewed beneficiaries as a significant impact of the project), it did not address *all* of the school-related financial concerns of parents and students, largely due

to additional non-tuition costs and the rising tuition costs over the course of the three year project implementation period. From the numbers above, the USD 90 tuition subsidy over the course of one year covered approximately 60% of families' total school costs, requiring families to provide around 40% of total costs (remaining tuition and non-tuition costs).<sup>7</sup>

### Perceived benefits of education

Overall, the beneficiary assessment found that the project did not impact beneficiaries' perceived benefits of upper secondary education, as it was already highly valued by both parents and students.

- 85% of interviewed parents stated that even in the absence of the tuition subsidies from the project, they still would have tried their best to send their children to upper secondary school through other means (e.g. borrowing from relatives, private lenders, etc.). Similarly, a majority of students interviewed (69%) stated that even if they had not participated in the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project, they still would have attempted to pursue and complete their upper secondary education given the value they and their families attached to education (Table 9 and 10). The qualitative answers of parents and students indicated that they placed a strong value on completing upper secondary education, and recognized that an upper secondary school certificate was necessary to finding employment in any service-sector and manufacturing job, in addition to being a pre-requisite to pursuing higher education. As one interviewed father in Da Nang shared: *“Once we have children, we have to raise them, feed them, and send them to school. This is the responsibility of parents; that is why we have to work during the day and even at night. We still have to try our best to support them in finishing high school. It is the only way for my children to escape from poverty.”*

*Tables 9 and 10: Students' and parents' responses with regard to continuing education in the absence of a tuition subsidy*

Question	Students
If you had not received financial support from the project, would you have continued your education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes: 69%</li> <li>➤ No (would have had to quit school to find a job): 31%</li> </ul>

Question	Parents
If your son or daughter was not chosen for the project, would you have allowed him/her to continue with his/her education? Could you have afforded to do so?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Yes, I would have allowed him/her to continue: 85%</li> <li>➤ No, I would not have allowed him/her to continue: 15%</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> This was for Year 1, but of note is that the percentage of costs that the subsidy covered decreased in Years 2 and 3.

- However there was similarly universal acknowledgment that, without the tuition subsidies, there is no guarantee that families would have been able to meet the costs of tuition and related schooling expenses, given their unstable, seasonal, and low incomes. While the project appears to have had a clear impact on the affordability of upper secondary education for families, the data gathered through the beneficiary assessment suggests that families acknowledged the value of upper secondary education and would have attempted to send their children regardless of their participation in the program. This confirms the finding from the Project's feasibility study that the primary barrier to upper secondary education among target beneficiaries is financial (World Bank 2014).

### Teacher and school quality

Interviewed beneficiaries shared their perspectives on the quality of schools and education provided. While these observations do not necessarily reflect on the quality of the project intervention itself, which was focused on implementing output-based aid subsidies and not on directly implementing or improving the quality of education provision, they provide useful information to understand the context in which the project operated. Similarly, an implicit assumption in the theory of change for an output-based aid approach is that an increased focus on outputs should lead to quality improvements in service provision as a means of reaching those outputs.

- Students were overwhelmingly satisfied with their teachers' performance. 96% of students interviewed reported that their teachers were knowledgeable, experienced, enthusiastic, and supportive of students over the course of their education (similar consensus emerged among students participating in focus groups). Only 4% of students interviewed felt that the teachers lacked experience and taught in a non-interactive style.
- Students, as well as teachers, were slightly less satisfied with the quality of school infrastructure. 72% of students and 40% of teachers interviewed found the quality of facilities and materials (e.g. libraries, laboratories, computer rooms, and textbooks) sufficient, while 28% of students and 10% of teachers underscored their dissatisfaction due to low quality and inadequate supply of school facilities (e.g. lack of teaching and learning equipment, poor conditions for use, facilities that were difficult to access or physically damaged, etc.). In some cases, students were not allowed to access to libraries or computer rooms. All students participating in focus groups recommended that in the future the project should support schools in improving physical facilities.
- 43% SPA representatives stated that project schools met project requirements in terms of facilities, while the remaining 57% still saw room for further improvement. Nonetheless, 85% of teachers implied that schools had good facilities compared to other (public) schools in their province and district. Interviews with school headmasters and teachers revealed that some schools underwent significant improvements during three years of project. For example, Diem Dien school in Thai Binh province took out a bank loan in 2010 to build a three-story building; Tran Cao Van school in Binh Dinh did not meet the project requirements regarding facilities at the beginning of the project, but nonetheless made noticeable improvements.

It is difficult to attribute causality between perceptions of teacher and school quality and the project intervention itself, given that interviewed students were not always aware of what the teaching quality or school facilities were like prior to the project. However, the fact that students expressed greater satisfaction with the quality of teaching than with the quality of the school infrastructure is not surprising, given that the former is likely to have a greater impact on improving the educational outcomes to which payments were disbursed (notably GPA and attendance) than the latter, and thus schools may have been more likely to focus on improvements in that area. Similarly, improvements to infrastructure are more costly and were likely out of budget for participating schools.

### Post-graduation activities

A key area that this beneficiary assessment was able to probe further than the previously completed World Bank ICR report (2014) and Batzella (2013) external evaluation, given that those were conducted immediately upon the project’s completion, was the paths that project students had taken since graduation.

- 64% of interviewed students reported that they are currently continuing their studies at universities or colleges, and 17% of interviewed students stated that they are now working in industrial parks (mainly in provinces with industrial zones, namely Phu Tho, Thai Binh, and Quang Ngai) after graduating. A majority of PSS students from focus group discussions are now working in jobs related to particular vocations (though several noted difficulties in finding employment after graduation, discussed further below). Four interviewed students had begun higher education but were required to drop out and find a job due to financial difficulties. Interviews with teachers revealed this to be the case for at least five other students.

*Table 11: Current work status of interviewed project students according to students and parents*

	What are you doing now? (students)	What is your child doing now? (parents)
Higher education (studying in college or university)	64%	71%
Working in an industrial park	17%	7%
Apprenticeship	7%	-
Jobless	7%	-
Working as famers/ in the family business	4%	14%
Military service	1%	7%

- Interviewed students felt that their experiences in USS and PSS through the project prepared them well to continue on to higher education or to start working. In addition, some participating schools provided students with career orientation and career guidance sessions, through which students were able to initially identify career goals and prepare for their future plans. However, all students participating in focus groups suggested that students should be better supported in gaining career-oriented knowledge and skills, and in being guided on job-seeking strategies. One student

participating in a focus group discussion who had attended a PSS in Da Nang noted, *“After finishing our studies, the project could have provided some career orientation activities. Even with the certificate, some of my friends were not able to find jobs.”* Other students in the focus group noted that English speaking and interview skills were particular areas of weakness.

- Teachers interviewed through focus group discussions noted that, from their experience, close to three quarters of project students passed entrance exams to universities and colleges and continued on with their higher education after the project (though they were unable to say whether students have remained in higher education). Schools unfortunately did not always have up to date records of students’ post-graduation activities, thus while these interview findings provide an indication, the evaluation team was unable to systematically triangulate these with secondary data.

### **Additional impacts**

Beneficiary interviews highlighted a number of impacts of the project in addition to those outlined above. These are grouped below by impact on the different stakeholder groups involved: local government, schools, teachers, and households (families and students).

#### **Local government**

- *More attention given to poor students.* 70% of SPA representatives noted that the project increased the attention that local authorities gave to the issue of enrolling and ensuring the education outcomes of poor and disadvantaged students.

#### **Schools**

- *Supporting improvements in participating schools and in USS and PSS more broadly.* About 75% of headmasters interviewed indicated that the project helped to develop the local education sector, enabling participating schools to further enhance their education models and increase demand for their services. 77% of interviewed teachers noted that they saw improvements in their school’s operation and management as a result of the project.
- *Opportunities to improve school services through partnerships.* About 75% of headmasters and teachers interviewed mentioned that the project brought about opportunities to partner with corporate actors to improve access to services, for instance through having a company paint murals or install water taps in schools as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives.

#### **Teachers**

- *Increasing teacher motivation.* About 75% of headmasters and teachers interviewed mentioned that, because of the program, teachers were more enthusiastic about and involved in teaching students, both in terms of supporting student learning and behavior improvements. A teacher during a focus group discussion in Quang Ngai noted, *“The project motivates me to work harder, and as a result I pay more attention to the students receiving the stipend and support them in their future plans.”*

- *More attention and support given to poor students.* Parents and students noted teachers' increased focus on supporting poor and disadvantaged students to be a major benefit of the project. Almost all interviewed teachers similarly expressed the view that as a result of the project and having to conduct household visits to verify students' and families' socio-economic status, they felt much more aware of and connected to their students' home conditions, and as a result, more motivated to provide them with the additional support needed. 82% parents shared that they had received support from teachers and schools during the application stage (filling in the form, instructions for paperwork, etc.).
- *Improved capacity.* All teachers consulted through interviews and focus group discussions emphasized that they were very impressed and learned a lot from the dedicated and serious attitude and professional working style of the EMWF staff, and that as a result of interacting with EMWF's staff they were able to improve their communication, computer, and monitoring and reporting skills.

**Evaluation question 2 takeaway:** The two most significant impacts of the project in addition to its expected outcomes according to beneficiaries were (i) increased student motivation and effort among project students, and (ii) improved affordability of upper secondary education for beneficiary families. The project does not appear to have had an impact on beneficiaries' perspectives of the perceived benefits of upper secondary education, however, students felt the project prepared them well for future studies or employment, and the majority of interviewed students are currently pursuing higher education or working. Beneficiaries were overwhelmingly satisfied with teacher quality, but saw room for improvement with regard to school infrastructure.

### **iii) Beneficiaries' suggested improvements to the project**

The third evaluation question sought to identify beneficiaries' suggested improvements to the project. Key findings regarding beneficiaries' satisfaction with project implementation are presented below, followed by a discussion of their suggested improvements.

#### Perceptions of project implementation

- All headmasters interviewed felt that the project was implemented smoothly. They reported that the project was well organized and that schools and teachers complied with the project operations guidelines provided by EMWF. During in-depth interviews, headmasters were able to articulate the key project implementation component and how their schools went about executing them, including:
  - ✓ Conducting all required project preparation activities, including selecting eligible students and verifying their eligibility, as well as assisting in the preparation of applications for tuition subsidies to eligible students.
  - ✓ Assigning teachers and staff to dedicate time to project-related work, including providing additional support to students who were slower learners.

- ✓ Assessing student performance and results through term and final exams.
  - ✓ Allowing the auditing of results by the independent verification agency (IVA) on a semester and annual basis.
  - ✓ Working closely with the SPA, IVA, and EMWF through participating in project meetings and workshops.
- Similarly, all SPA representatives interviewed affirmed that the project was properly implemented with commitment from participating schools and the general support of DOETs. They noted that SPAs consulted DOETs and coordinated with participating schools to select students for the projects and prepare supporting documentation to guide project implementation. All interviewed SPA representatives were very knowledgeable about the project and committed to its successful implementation. Having worked with the implementing agency before on previous projects, a strong working relationship was already established which facilitated the smooth implementation of the project. SPAs were also well embedded in the communities in which they worked, and had previously established relationships with provincial DOETs from another education project. According to the implementing agency, this also had a positive effect on overall implementation of the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement project. Nonetheless, 47% school headmasters noted that they would expect more involvement of the local DOET during the project implementation process.
  - In almost all cases, school leadership demonstrated strong support for the project. 93% of interviewed school headmasters found the OBA approach as applied by the project to be innovative, practical, and effective, and expressed strong appreciation for the project's model. In only one observed case did a school representative (from Khai Tri USS) note that a lack of interest from the school headmaster and board of directors in the project resulted in sub-optimal project outcomes – in this instance only 5 students received the tuition subsidy, and of those only 3 successfully graduated.

Despite the overall general positive perceptions regarding project implementation, many interviewed stakeholders nonetheless had constructive suggestions for its improvement, which are presented below.

#### **School payment timing and pre-financing**

Due to issues some schools faced with pre-financing and receiving payments, school headmasters suggested providing some funding up front and disbursing school payments more quickly, as noted below.

- *Provide schools with an advance equivalent to one semester's tuition.* Many schools were not able to provide the funds to pre-finance student tuitions during the first semester of the project. As a result, in all schools visited by the evaluation team outside of Bac Kan province (where one school was supported by a wealthy individual), instances were noted where tuition for the first semester was collected from project students. In certain provinces (Thai Binh, Binh Dinh), the implementing agency identified that this was occurring and the SPA was able to put a stop to the practice; in other provinces (Quang Ngai, Quang Binh) in schools such as Truong Dinh, Hoang Van Thu



US\$, the students had to pay the first semester's tuition in advance, which was to be returned to them after they graduated. 40% of headmasters suggested that upfront funding equivalent to one semester's tuition should be provided to participating schools, particularly those facing financial challenges. Several interviewed SPA representatives interviewed supported this viewpoint, expressing concern regarding the weak financial capacity of certain participating schools in the project and thus their inability to pre-finance tuition subsidies.

- In the initial project commitment document, the project was designed with the assumption that DOETs could serve as guarantors for project schools to take out loans to cover their operational costs until receiving reimbursement by EMWF. The idea was that EMWF would work closely with local authorities at the provincial level (through Provincial People's Committee and the local DOET) to mobilize a source of money from the local government's budget, equivalent to 10% of project management costs, as the local government's contribution to the project. However, all interviewed DOET and SPA representatives in seven provinces stated that, in reality, no contribution funding from the DOET was mobilized and project schools did not take out bank loans. According to interviewed school headmasters and SPA representatives, this was due to (i) the limited budget of local governments in the project provinces and lack of engagement of DOET with the project; and (ii) the state of the credit market in Vietnam during the project implementation period. According to interviewed DOET representatives, DOETs provide administrative management for the government at the provincial level for education and training, and do not have the legal function or status necessary for a bank's guarantee. Furthermore, school headmasters noted that even if there had been a local DOET that was willing to guarantee their school to borrow money from banks, they would have been reluctant to take out a loan as a result of the high average interest rates for bank loans in Vietnam from 2010 to 2013, which ranged from 18% to 22%, and were therefore largely unaffordable to them.
- *Expedite school payments.* According to interviewed stakeholders, participating schools in some instances (during the first semester of the first year of project implementation) received funds 2-3 months after IVA reports were approved, which resulted in a significant lag time between the verification of results and reimbursement. 40% of headmasters suggested accelerating the disbursement process to ease the financial burden on participating schools. The implementing agency also noted that this was a particular challenge during the first year of the project's implementation. In the subsequent years of the project, the implementing agency EMWF received bridge financing and did not have to wait for funding from the World Bank to be able to disburse to schools, thus school payments were made one month after the IVA visits (2 weeks after IVA reports were received by EMWF).

### Student selection criteria

Stakeholders provided a number of suggestions to alter the criteria used to select eligible students, with a general consensus around loosening the requirements so as to enroll a greater number of students.

- *Adapt the eligibility criteria to make it less strict.* All teachers and most SPA and school headmasters cited difficulties in adhering to the eligibility guidelines for selecting students for the program. Specifically, it was difficult to find enough students in poor and near-poor households (with the appropriate poverty certificates) due to concurrent efforts by local governments to make poverty standards more stringent (i.e., fewer families were qualifying for official poverty status certificates). These respondents suggested easing the eligibility criteria used to be able to accept a larger number of students into the program. Parents were also in consensus on this issue during focus group discussions. A small number of SPA representatives specifically suggested extending the scope of eligibility to non-poor students.
- *Expand the program to additional grade/education levels.* One interviewed headmaster suggested expanding the program to cover poor and disadvantaged students in grades 10, 11 and 12 at schools (i.e. multiple cohorts each year, as opposed to one cohort over the course of three years). The same headmaster suggested that the program could also be expanded to cover students applying to vocational colleges, and all parents participating in focus groups suggested the program continue to subsidize students in continuing to college or university.
- *Expand the program to different types of schools.* 20% of DOET representatives interviewed suggested that the program could also cover students in non-traditional public schools not currently included in the program. This includes public schools with financial autonomy, as in Binh Dinh, as well as category B students attending public schools.<sup>8</sup>
- *Enroll more students in the program.* All students participating in focus groups suggested increasing the number of students participating in the program. 13% of headmasters suggested that each school should be able to enroll the maximum number of students possible in the program (as specified by the quota), rather than restricting this number based on eligibility.

### Monitoring and verification

Several SPA and DOET representatives suggested modifying the monitoring and verification processes used by the project, as detailed below.

- *Use quality of teaching as an additional indicator, rather than just outputs.* 40% of interviewed DOET representatives recommended that an annual assessment of the

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<sup>8</sup> Some public schools (which are fully financed by the State budget) hold a number of classes with higher tuition fees (comparable to those charged at private schools). Public schools as a result generate more income from these classes, and students (who failed to pass the entrance examination to public schools) still benefit from the perceived prestige of attending a public school. Students who attend these classes are known as “Category B students.”

quality of teaching be conducted and used to determine school performance, rather than depending solely on student performance outputs.

- *Reduce rigor of inspections.* A few interviewed SPA representatives suggested that inspections and verification of outputs at effectively performing schools could be relaxed or delegated, with greater attention given to verifying outputs at underperforming or poorly compliant schools. These SPA representatives similarly suggested training SPAs to conduct independent verification to reduce the high costs associated with monitoring and verification, since many SPA representatives were previously DOET officials or headmasters (and therefore familiar with education).

### Impact evaluation

- *Implement a baseline survey prior to project implementation.* While the implementing agency expressed satisfaction with the process for monitoring and verifying outputs, one shortcoming of the project design that was identified was the lack of a baseline survey. This has made it challenging to rigorously assess the impact of the project on project students over time. The implementing agency recommended that future OBA education projects be designed with baseline surveys built in from the outset.

### Provision of management costs for schools' board of directors and teacher compensation

- *Provide financial support to board of school directors for project management.* Several SPA representatives indicated that there should have been some form of stipend or financial support for project schools, as the project imposed a relatively onerous administrative burden. This included significant paperwork to which many project schools were required to assign one staff-member to take care of, usually either a vice headmaster or school accountant. One SPA representative from Thai Binh province noted that, *"After witnessing the huge number of project-related tasks that project schools and their teachers had to take on during the first semester, we all came to a consensus between SPA leaders and staff members that we should spend half of our allocated SPA project management budget provided by EMWF and equally distribute it to project schools in our province."*
- *Pay teachers for time spent on project tasks.* Several teachers noted during focus group discussions that while they appreciated the project model, it often required a significant amount of extra work for them, for which they were not compensated. One headmaster interviewed suggested providing payments to teachers to cover the extra work required of them in participating in the project, such as household visits to assess families' economic status. 16% of teachers and 7% of SPA representatives also proposed to provide an allowance for teachers.

### Communication activities

- *Improve communication of information about the project to project stakeholders.* While most school representatives were satisfied with communication to students and parents regarding the program, three students in one province, Binh Dinh, as well as two other students in Thang Long PSS in Da Nang, did not apply to the program. This was despite the fact that they were eligible, and occurred due to a lack of information and full understanding regarding the project. 17% of interviewed parents stated that they

wanted more project information to be provided to parents and students, as many of them did not know about the project. One headmaster suggested improving communication about eligibility for and benefits of the project. Similarly, some interviewed stakeholders, even among those who had participated in the project, were not sufficiently familiar with the details of the project model and implementation. They were therefore not fully aware of some of the project risks, such as those of pre-financing student tuition. The implementing agency noted that in their experience, some parents and families were not fully aware of the details of the project. They knew that their children were receiving subsidies, but assumed that these were from the government and were not aware that they were from the World Bank.

- *Improve communication about the project to external education stakeholders.* The implementing agency noted that one improvement to the project could have been the increased involvement of education stakeholders through a communication campaign. Similarly, the implementing agency noted that if the project had the budget, one recommendation would be to develop case studies of students' success stories from the project to use for communication and advocacy with DOETs and potentially the MOET.

Further discussion and analysis of these suggestions can be found in the Section V below.

**Evaluation question 3 takeaway:** Interviewed beneficiaries were satisfied overall with the project's implementation and collaboration between project stakeholders, but made several suggestions for improvement related to: (i) school payment timing and pre-financing, (ii) student selection criteria, (iii) monitoring and verification, (iv) impact evaluation, (v) provision of project management costs for school boards and teacher compensation, and (vi) communication activities.

#### **iv) Potential for sustainability**

The fourth and final evaluation question sought to assess the sustainability and scalability of the project from the perspective of project stakeholders and beneficiaries. The issue of project sustainability was probed from two angles – demand-side, i.e. whether stakeholders wished to see the project continue and scale-up; and supply-side, i.e. the extent to which stakeholders thought that the conditions and resources required for the sustainability of the project existed.

Overall, there was substantial interest from nearly all stakeholders in continued involvement with the project.

- All SPA representatives interviewed and parents participating in focus groups suggested that the project should continue. 87% of headmasters interviewed noted their interest in continuing to take part in the project.
- All teachers interviewed suggested that the project should continue and scale up, and one interviewed school headmaster suggested that the World Bank collaborate closely with the MOET to scale up the project.

- All DOET representatives interviewed were interested in participating in the project on a long-term basis, and offered to contribute human resources and policy support to further develop the project (however they were not explicit in terms of what this might mean or consist of).

Nonetheless, some beneficiaries voiced doubts about the ability to obtain necessary funds and the likelihood that the project would be sustained in the long term.

- One of the 15 interviewed headmasters noted that participating schools rely largely on external donor financing to function given constraints faced by state budgets and the resulting tendency for the provincial government to focus on public schools.<sup>9</sup>
- One headmaster interviewed was concerned that local authorities would not support the project given their preference to invest in new schools rather than upgrade existing school infrastructure, while another expressed doubts that the program could be sustained given the high costs associated with the program. This concern was similarly raised in the ICR report which notes the high overhead cost of the project of \$81 per student (World Bank 2014).
- One DOET representative noted that while he supported the project model in principle, he did not have the authority to scale it up in the province without resources from the state budget, which are allocated from the central level.
- The implementing agency noted that one key challenge to the sustainability and scale-up of the project was the insufficient involvement of the national MOET in the project, and stated that if the project were to be done again, a key lesson learned would be to increase MOET involvement. One of the key challenges noted by the implementing agency to doing so was the lack of resources budgeted to compensate MOET representatives for their involvement. The same stakeholder noted the importance of defining the MOET's role in the project from the beginning. Similarly, the implementing agency noted that DOET engagement with the project at the local level could be improved, for instance through involving them more in monitoring and evaluation activities.

**Evaluation question 4 takeaway:** While the demand for the continuation and scale-up of the project is very much present among project beneficiaries, several also expressed doubts regarding the project's sustainability.

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<sup>9</sup>This was seen to be the case in Da Nang and Quang Binh province, where the provincial government was more focused on providing opportunities for all students to pursue education in public schools. In other provinces such as Binh Dinh, as a result of insufficient funding from the state budget, the government had transformed private schools to public schools with financial autonomy mechanisms.

## V. Discussion and Analysis

This section presents an analysis and discussion of beneficiaries' suggestions for improvement and feedback regarding sustainability. It places the suggestions made by beneficiaries within the broader context of the project's resources and objectives to highlight those that the evaluation team feels are feasible and most significant, and draws out lessons learned from the project regarding sustainability.

### Analysis of beneficiaries' suggestions for project improvement

The recommendations related to **pre-financing and school payment timing** are sound, and the first coincides with a conclusion similarly drawn in the project ICR (World Bank 2014). A review of the literature on results-based financing in education (R4D 2014) noted that the issue of pre-financing can pose a particular challenge for education results-based financing projects which, in contrast to infrastructure projects or other programs with hard assets, often do not have a tangible result or product to secure a loan against. Experience has similarly shown that private school providers in developing country contexts can also face difficulties in securing loans (ILM Ideas 2014). At the same time, schools often require regular cash flows to maintain school operations, and may not have significant amounts of cash reserves. Interviews with project stakeholders highlighted that a significant risk to the lack of pre-financing is that schools may collect tuition from students anyway, which undermines the OBA model. Providing schools with an advance would mitigate these challenges, and similarly expediting school payments would improve the cash flow available to participating schools. The experience of the implementing agency also demonstrates that, when funding through a third-party NGO, it is important to consider not only the cash flow and liquidity of the schools, but also of the implementing agency itself.

While the suggestions regarding **student selection criteria** are interesting perspectives, they must be placed within the context of the project's activities, resources, and priorities. For example, the project was adjusted in light of the challenges noted in the first suggestion to allow for more flexibility in terms of student eligibility.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the suggestion to include non-poor students falls outside of the objectives of the project, and the suggestion to enroll multiple cohorts within one school, while ideal, was not feasible within the given project budget. However, they could be considered should the project continue. The suggestion to allow schools to enroll more students in the program, while understandable from the perspective of headmasters who may wish to boost enrollment in their schools, runs counter to one of the lessons learned noted during an in-depth interview with the implementing agency, which was that the number of beneficiary students per school should be limited to reduce the financial risk to the school (should students drop out, the school would face limited options to

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<sup>10</sup> The adjusted eligibility criteria meant that in years 2 and 3, eligible students include not only students from families with official poverty statuses of "poor" or "nearly poor" (as in year 1), but also students classified as "economic hardship" status. The criteria also allowed for the inclusion of students whose families did not have poverty certificates, but who were considered by the school to be "poor" or "nearly poor", provided households were able to prove this status (written letter, completion of the Household Survey Form followed by a household visit by the SPA to verify its accuracy, etc.). (East Meets West 2014).

replace them with other eligible students if all eligible students were already enrolled in the project). However, the suggestion offered by a number of DOET representatives to consider expanding the project to particular types of public schools, should the project continue, could be a way of increasing government buy-in to the project and potentially the chances of the project's sustainability.

While the quality and rigor of the **monitoring and verification** processes of the project cannot be assessed by the perception of project stakeholders alone, the suggestions made by interviewed stakeholders raise two interesting points. With regard to the first suggestion to use teaching quality indicators as a measure of performance, it is unlikely that payments would be tied to such an indicator, given that it is qualitative and arguably subjective. However, measuring and documenting teacher performance through classroom observations, for example, would still be a valuable addition to the broader evidence base built by the project. Given the important role that teacher support appears to have played in the achievement of student outcomes, such qualitative evaluations would help to shed light on what specific practices and approaches are most effective. This information could then be used to inform the design of future projects.

The second suggestion that SPAs conduct independent verification is unlikely to be feasible. Given the close implication of the SPAs in project implementation, it could entail a conflict of interest were they to also conduct independent verification. Similarly, applying a differentiated level of rigor of verification to schools depending on their performance would be inconsistent and potentially introduce distortions. However, underlying this suggestion is the notion that alternative means for conducting independent verification at lower costs could have benefited the project. The evaluation team notes that in the long-term, it could benefit the project to identify whether there are similar community organizations with the capacity to conduct independent verification at lower cost.

The recommendation regarding the **implementation of a baseline survey** is key and can serve to inform the design and budgeting of future OBA education projects. Having a baseline survey to be able to compare outcomes before and after the project's implementation would significantly improve the quality of analysis and evaluation of the project. Moreover, it would provide an additional tool for advocacy and engagement with the government and other donors in any effort to identify additional sources of funding.

Similarly, while not explicitly raised by interviewed beneficiaries, assessing the impact of the project would have been made easier had data related to project students and non-project students been systematically tracked throughout the project, and records maintained post-project completion. Tracer studies of graduates would be useful as a reference or control group.

A nominal amount of **compensation both for project management costs for schools and for teachers** participating in the project would likely further increase their buy-in and support for the project, as well as their motivation to perform. Given the critical role that the schools'

board of directors and teacher support appears to have played in this project, this recommendation would be a simple and non-onerous way of motivating school managers and teachers to continue their support.

The suggestions related to the project's **communications activities** suggest that a more clearly-defined communication strategy would have strengthened the project's implementation and impact. This includes communication about the project both to project stakeholders, as well as to external education stakeholders. While this may not have been realistic with the allocated project resources and budget, it is an important activity that could be budgeted in to future education OBA projects.

Taking into account the percentage and prioritization of beneficiaries' responses as well as the project's resources and objectives, the recommendations that emerge as most feasible and significant are: (i) providing schools with some degree of upfront financing, (ii) expediting school payments, (iii) implementing a baseline survey for future OBA education projects, (iv) providing a nominal amount of compensation for project management costs for schools and for teachers, and (v) improving communication about the project both to project stakeholders and to external education stakeholders.

#### Analysis of project sustainability

Drawing on the perspectives offered by project stakeholders and placing them within the broader context of the project, the following analysis provides a discussion of the project's sustainability.

To date, the project has not been sustained after the completion of the pilot. While it has proved to be a successful demonstration project, shedding light on important lessons learned regarding the implementation of output-based aid in education, the project has not been taken up by the local or central government, nor have additional donors stepped in to support its continuation.

One key challenge that was identified at the stage of the ICR was the **insufficient involvement of the national MOET in the project**. This challenge was similarly echoed during an interview with the project lead from the World Bank. Achieving the MOET's buy-in from the outset may have increased the likelihood of sustainability in the form of government scale-up of the project. While DOETs were engaged throughout, ultimately education policy-making remains largely centralized in Vietnam, although this is now beginning to change with new decentralization education policies being implemented. The project could have conducted increased engagement activities such as workshops and meetings with central government officials, both at the outset of the project and during its implementation. In the future, involving both the central MOET and the local DOETs at the design stage could be another approach to increasing their ownership over the project.

The project lead from the World Bank similarly expressed the view that while the OBA model was seen as innovative and successful by many project stakeholders, **it remains a relatively**



**new concept for government policymakers in Vietnam.** To increase the likelihood of their buy-in and support for scaling the model, increased funds could have been allocated to conduct awareness-raising and advocacy activities regarding OBA with key government stakeholders.

Findings from interviews with DOET representatives also suggested that the **government's policy and overall interest in supporting non-public education was not clear or consistent.** Given that output-based aid approaches often work closely with private-sector providers, and given that the scale-up of education projects more often than not requires government ownership,<sup>11</sup> in the context of education it is especially important to understand from the project's outset the government's attitude towards private education, and whether they might be willing to support the scale-up of a project focused on private providers.

For the purposes of the pilot, the expertise of the implementing agency was a significant value-add given their previous track record of implementing output-based aid projects in other sectors. However, as noted above, this also resulted in **relatively high overhead costs** given the need to design entirely new monitoring and reporting systems specific to this particular project. The project lead from the World Bank noted that in other World Bank results-based financing education projects currently being implemented in Vietnam, such as the Early Childhood Development project, attempts are being made to rely on existing government systems and data, which as a result reduces such overhead costs. One potential lesson learned from this pilot regarding the sustainability of OBA education projects is therefore the importance of attempting to identify ways to keep such monitoring and verification costs low, if not during the pilot itself, then for beyond the pilot stage.

An additional interim path that the project could have considered would have been **to more actively engage with other potentially interested donors in the region**, for example the Asian Development Bank, to gauge interest in supporting the scale-up of the project until such time that the government was able to take over full funding of the project. Such an approach should and could only be pursued if the government expressed long-term interest in scaling the project but lacked the financial resources to do so independently immediately after the completion of the pilot.

**While the pilot does not appear to be immediately sustainable, it nonetheless provided valuable lessons regarding how best to plan for pathways to sustainability from the project's outset.** These include: (1) designing the project with potential paths to sustainability in mind, (2) defining a role for central government (or the level of government at which resource allocation and policy decisions are made in the country of implementation) and actively involve them throughout the project, (3) clearly identifying the attitude of the government towards private education if the project is providing subsidies to private schools, and (4) identifying ways to keep costs down (particularly monitoring and verification and other high overhead costs), if not during the pilot phase then for beyond. These lessons are extremely valuable to a

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<sup>11</sup> See R4D literature review (2014) on RBF in education for an in-depth discussion of the role of government in the sustainability of education projects.

sector in which examples of output-based aid approaches, let alone scale-ups of output-based aid approaches remain relatively few and far between.

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendations for future education OBA projects

This beneficiary assessment has documented and analyzed a wide range of perspectives regarding perceived impacts of and suggested improvements to the Enhancing Upper Secondary Education Project in Vietnam according to project beneficiaries. Key takeaways for each of the four evaluation questions are provided in the [Executive Summary](#).

While the beneficiary assessment has shed light on a number of lessons learned from the project for project stakeholders themselves (the donor, implementing agency, etc.), many of these lessons are more broadly applicable to potential future OBA projects in education. Recommendations for future OBA education projects are presented below.

### Tuition subsidies, school financing, and payments

- Conduct ongoing surveys with beneficiaries and schools throughout the lifetime of the project to track whether tuition fees are increasing. If they are, adjust tuition subsidies accordingly.
- At the design stage, projects should identify not only tuition costs, but also the extra non-tuition costs students are required to pay. The determination of the tuition subsidy amount should take into account whether students will be able to afford additional non-tuition expenses.
- Future OBA education projects could experiment with differentiated tuition subsidy amounts by student performance (e.g. higher subsidies for those exceeding output criteria) to see if this has any effect on overall student performance. However, such an approach would likely entail a higher monitoring and verification burden.
- Ensure schools are capable and willing to provide funds to pre-finance funds for first semester tuition, or provide initial funds to schools to be able to cover this cost.
- Account for contextual factors that may prevent schools from taking out loans.
- Expedite school payments (and payments to the implementing agency) to the extent possible.

### Potential project success factors

- Active parent engagement played an important role in supporting students to meet project outputs in this pilot. Consider incorporating active parent engagement strategies into future OBA education project designs.
- The role of increased teacher support (academic and emotional) to students was perceived to be a key contributing factor to their performance. This element should be considered when designing future OBA education projects.
- The strong positive feedback regarding teacher quality is to be particularly commended as the project did not include any explicit teacher training. Given that this beneficiary assessment and previous studies of this project have underlined the critical importance of teacher support to project students' success (and ability to meet output criteria), future OBA education projects could consider integrating a more explicit capacity building component for teachers.
- For OBA projects focused on upper secondary education, consider training and requiring schools to provide increased university guidance and career counselling to students, and encourage schools to facilitate links between graduates to employers where possible.
- Ensure the engagement of school leadership when choosing participating schools in future OBA education projects. This was one of the selection criteria for school selection in the Upper Secondary Education Enhancement Project, and should be strongly considered in the design of future OBA education projects.
- Given the successful role of SPAs in this project, consider identifying similar local partners familiar with the education context and embedded within local communities to participate in local project implementation.

### Monitoring and verification, and project evaluation

- Consider incorporating qualitative assessments of teacher quality, not as outputs tied to disbursements, but rather as broader evidence generated by the project on what types of approaches and practices used by teachers are most effective at improving student performance.
- Look to identify whether local community organizations with the capacity to conduct independent verification at lower cost are an option.
- Incorporate baseline surveys into future OBA education projects to be able to compare outcomes before and after the project's implementation.
- Systematically track data related to project and non-project students throughout the project, and maintain records for both post-project completion.

### Additional project design considerations

- While the perceived value associated with upper secondary education was significant among interviewed beneficiaries, this may not be true in all contexts. In contexts where socio-cultural demand-side barriers to education are higher, additional incentives or support mechanisms may be needed in addition to an OBA subsidy approach. The feasibility study conducted for this project which identified the principal reason for drop-out at the upper secondary level as “unable to pay tuition fee” proved critical to the successful design of the project. This step should be integrated into all future OBA education projects.
- Future OBA education projects could consider providing a nominal amount of compensation for teachers participating in the project, as well as to schools to cover project management costs.
- Future education OBA projects should budget for, develop, and execute communication activities both for internal project stakeholders and for external education stakeholders.
- Consider further research into whether the incentives required for ensuring the enrollment and attendance of ethnic minority students are the same as for non-ethnic minority students, or whether the approach needs to be adapted.
- Ensure that the academic abilities of project students are at a minimum level whereby the project’s academic performance requirements are not unrealistic (and thereby place service providers at an unreasonable level of financial risk).

### Sustainability

- As mentioned above, potential lessons learned regarding sustainability for future education OBA projects include that they should: (1) be designed with potential paths to sustainability in mind, (2) define a role for central government (or the level of government at which resource allocation and policy decisions are made in the country of implementation) and actively involve them throughout the project, (3) clearly identify the attitude of the government towards private education if the project is providing subsidies to private schools, and (4) identify ways to keep costs down (particularly monitoring and verification and other high overhead costs), if not during the pilot phase then for beyond.

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## Annex 1: Costs at four schools visited

In addition to the disaggregated data on school costs provided by Vu The Lang USS in Phu Tho, the evaluation team was provided costs data by four other schools. This information is presented below. PSS students received a higher subsidy (\$160/year) than USS students who received \$90/year). Without comprehensive cost data for all schools it is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the extent to which the tuition subsidies covered a reasonable proportion of total costs. From the breakdown shown below, costs appear to diverge widely in the case of PSS.

Table A: Overview of tuition fees and additional schooling costs in four schools visited

Province	School	Description of costs	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	
Da Nang	Thang Long PSS	<b>I. Tuition</b>				
		Cooking		4,600,000 VND/semester		
		Hospitality		3,600,000 VND/semester 3.6 million VND/semester		
		<b>II. Additional costs</b>				
		Internship		2,000,000 VND/course		
		Medical insurance		289,800 VND/year		
		School cleaning		100,000 VND/year		
		Class fund		50,000 VND/year		
		<b>Total costs</b>		(varies by course, see below)		
		<b>Cooking</b>		<b>11,639,800 VND/year (approx. USD 538)</b>		
		<b>Hospitality</b>		<b>9,639,800 VND/year (approx. USD 445)</b>		
		Quang Binh	Industrial-Agricultural Technical PSS	<b>I. Tuition</b>		200,000 - 300,000 VND/month
<b>II. Additional costs</b>						
Internship				Free for some classes, 200,000 VND/course for others		
Medical insurance				300,000 VND/year		
Graduation exam				500,000 VND/exam		
<b>Total costs</b>				<b>3,000,000 - 4,000,000 VND/year (approx. USD 140 – 185)</b>		

Quang Ngai	Hoang Van Thu USS	<b>I. Tuition</b>			
		Include supplementary class fees	370,000 VND/month	420,000 VND/month	470,000 VND/month
		<b>II. Additional costs</b>			
		Test paper	20,000 VND/year		
		Medical insurance	289,800 VND/year		
		Drinking water	50,000 VND/year		
		<b>Total costs</b>	<b>4,059,800 VND/year (approx. USD 188)</b>	<b>4,559,800 VND/year (approx. USD 211)</b>	<b>5,059,800 VND/year (approx. USD 234)</b>
Binh Dinh	Nguyen Truong To USS	<b>I. Tuition</b>			
		180,000 VND/month			
		<b>II. Additional costs</b>			
		Supplementary classes	60,000 VND/month		
		Medical insurance	289,800 VND/year		
		<b>Total costs</b>	<b>2,689,800 VND/year (approx. USD 125)</b>		



## Annex 2: Secondary data obtained during fieldwork

Province	Title of secondary data source	Source
Bac Kan	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS – Term 1 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS – Term 2 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS – Term 3 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS – Term 4 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS - Term 5 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hung Vuong USS – Term 6 report	Hung Vuong USS
	Address list of project students	Hung Vuong USS
Binh Dinh	Approval letter of program reception from Binh Dinh Provincial People’s Committee (PPC)	Binh Dinh Provincial People’s Committee submitted to Binh Dinh SPA
	Project MOU between EMWF and Binh Dinh Province SPA	Binh Dinh SPA
	List of project students in Binh Dinh province	Binh Dinh SPA
	Summary Report, Binh Dinh province	Binh Dinh SPA submitted to EMWF
	MOU between EMWF and Tran Cao Van USS	Tran Cao Van USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Ngo May USS - Term 1 report	Ngo May USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Tran Cao Van USS – Term 1 report	Tran Cao Van USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Binh Duong USS – Term 1 report	Binh Duong USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Tran Quang Dieu USS – Term 1 report	Tran Quang Dieu USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Nguyen Hue USS – Term 1 report	Nguyen Hue USS
	Summary Report on Output-based Aid at Schools in Binh Dinh	IVA
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Tam Quan USS – Term 1 report	Tam Quan USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Nguyen Truong To USS – Term 1 report	Nguyen Truong To USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Nguyen Thai Hoc USS – Term 1 report	Nguyen Thai Hoc USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Hoa Binh USS – Term 1 report	Hoa Binh USS
Academic result and school attendance of students - An	An Luong USS	

	Luong USS – Term 1 report	
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Tay Son USS – Term 1 report	Tay Son USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Nguyen Dieu USS – Term 1 report	Nguyen Dieu USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - So 2 Tuy Phuoc USS – Term 1 report	So 2 Tuy Phuoc USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - So 2 Phu Cat USS – Term 1 report	So 2 Phu Cat
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Nguyen Binh Khiem USS – Term 1 report	Nguyen Binh Khiem USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students - Phan Boi Chau USS – Term 1 report	Phan Boi Chau USS
Da Nang	Student examination results tables of Khai Tri USS, Da Nang	Khai Tri USS
	Student enrollment statistics tables of Khai Tri USS, Da Nang	Khai Tri USS
	Summary Report Khai Tri USS , Da Nang	Khai Tri USS
	Report on the results of helping and preventing student drop-outs	DOET, Da Nang
	The status of student drop-out rates in Da Nang, Year 2009-2013	DOET, Da Nang
	Annual report Year 1, Da Nang	Da Nang SPA
	Annual report Year 2 , Da Nang	Da Nang SPA
Phu Tho	Academic result and school attendance of students record – Lam Thao USS – Term 1 school Year 2011	Lam Thao USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Lam Thao USS – Term 2 school Year 2011	Lam Thao USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Lam Thao USS – Term 3 school Year 2012	Lam Thao USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Lam Thao USS – Term 4 school Year 2012	Lam Thao USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Lam Thao USS – Term 5 school Year 2013	Lam Thao USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Lam Thao USS – Term 6 school Year 2013	Lam Thao USS
	Data report, Lam Thao USS Year 2010-2013	Lam Thao USS
	Information collection form	Lam Thao USS
	Annual Report Term 1, 2010	Lam Thao USS
	Summary Project Report, Vu The Lang USS	Vu The Lang USS
	Progress report year 2009-2013, Phu Tho	SPA Phu Tho submitted to EMWF
	Disbursement Report, Phu Tho	SPA Phu Tho
	The status of student drop-out rates in Da Nang, Year 2009-2013	DOET, Da Nang
	Annual report Year 1, Da Nang	Da Nang SPA
Annual report Year 2 , Da Nang	Da Nang SPA	
Thai Binh	Annual report 2011 – 2012	Thai Binh SPA

		submitted to EMWF
	Term I report school year 2012 - 2013	Thai Binh SPA submitted to EMWF
	Effectiveness of GPOBA program in non – public schools in Thai Binh	Thai Binh SPA Report 2013
	Term 3 Report, Diem Dien USS, Thai Binh	Diem Dien USS
	Term 6 report, Nguyen Hue USS, Thai Binh	Nguyen Hue USS
	List of project students in Thai Binh, Year 2	Thai Binh SPA
	Supplementary students list, Thai Binh	Thai Binh SPA
Quang Binh	Report on the status of project implementation at Industrial Agricultural PSS	Industrial Agricultural PSS
	Report on the status of project implementation at Economics PSS	Economics PSS
Quang Ngai	Summary Project Report	SPA Quang Ngai to AFAP
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Truong Dinh USS – Term 1 school year 2010	Truong Dinh USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Truong Dinh USS – Term 2 school year 2011	Truong Dinh USS
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Truong Dinh USS – Term 6 school year 2013	Truong Dinh USS
	School attendance of students records, Class 10A1, Truong Dinh USS	Truong Dinh USS
	School attendance of students records, Class 10A2, Truong Dinh USS	Truong Dinh USS
	School attendance of students records, Class 10A3, Truong Dinh USS	Truong Dinh USS
	School attendance of students records, Class 10A4, Truong Dinh USS	Truong Dinh USS
	Annual report 2010-2011, Truong Dinh USS, Quang Ngai	Truong Dinh USS submitted to Quang Ngai SPA and EMWF
	Annual report 2011 – 2012 , Truong Dinh USS, Quang Ngai	Truong Dinh USS submitted to Quang Ngai SPA and EMWF
	Academic result and school attendance of students – Nguyen Dieu USS – Term 1 school year 2011	Nguyen Dieu USS
	Summary report, Hoang Van Thu USS, Quang Ngai	Hoang Van Thu USS submitted to Quang Ngai SPA and EMWF
	Term 3 and 4 report, SPA Quang Ngai	Quang Ngai SPA submitted to EMWF
	Summary Report, Quang Ngai SPA	Quang Ngai SPA
	IVA Report, Quang Ngai	Quang Ngai SPA

### Annex 3: Overview of the education context in Vietnam

The commitment of the Vietnamese government and development partners over the past 25 years to improving access to and quality of education has led to remarkable improvements over a relatively short period of time. Over the course of a 14 year period (1992 to 2008), the percentage of the population aged 25-55 who had not completed any education level decreased from 23% to less than 1%. At the time of the project's inception, primary enrollment rates in Vietnam were nearly universal, and the gross enrollment rate at the lower and overall secondary levels were approximately 80 and 70% respectively. The two main challenges that faced the Vietnamese education system at the time of the project's inception consisted of (i) ongoing and increasing inequalities in educational attainment (persistent dropout rates and low learning outcomes for disadvantaged groups), and (ii) poor school quality (students were not receiving the skills they needed to pursue post-secondary education and participate in the labor market).<sup>12</sup> It was in this context that GPOBA pursued a pilot project to test an output-based aid approach as a means of addressing some of these challenges (ongoing inequalities in education attainment, attendance, and completion; particularly among low income-groups and ethnic minorities at the upper secondary level) (World Bank 2014).

The national education system in Vietnam consists of basic formal education and continuing education. The main education and training sub-sectors are categorized as follows: (i) preschool education, (ii) primary education, (iii) lower secondary education, (iv) upper secondary education, (v) vocational education (divided into two separate tracks, one being professional secondary education which falls under the Ministry of Education and training (MOET), and the other being vocational training which falls under the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA)), and finally (vi) higher education.

The GPOBA project focused exclusively on the upper secondary and vocational (PSS) levels. Two types of upper secondary schools exist in Vietnam, traditional upper secondary schools (USS) and professional upper secondary schools (PSS). The former provides education focused exclusively on academic skills and the latter provides both an academic background and an emphasis on professional skills for a particular industry (World Bank 2014). Both traditional and professional upper secondary education is delivered through three types of schools: public, semi-public, and private.

- **Public schools:** funded entirely by national government with low fees required by students' families. Admission is contingent based upon academic performance at the lower secondary level and/or entrance exam scores.
- **Semi-public schools:** schools whose infrastructure is owned by the state but whose classes and school management are operated privately. Tuition fees are charged to students that are typically significantly higher than at public schools.
- **Private schools:** privately owned and operated schools that are established and financed by an individual or group of individuals upon the receipt of a school

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<sup>12</sup> Data drawn primarily from: The World Bank, 2011, "Vietnam High Quality Education for All by 2020. Analytical Report."

establishment license. Tuition fees are charged to students that are typically significantly higher than at public schools.

Students typically apply first to public schools, which require passing a competitive entrance examination; if students do not score highly enough on this exam, yet wish to continue with their education, they then apply to semi-public or private schools. Unfortunately, poor students tend to perform less well on this exam than their wealthier counterparts, and thus must pay significantly higher fees to attend semi-public or private schools. In addition, students are expected to cover other school-related expenses, such as uniforms, transportation, boarding, and meals, and, by attending school, they also face the opportunity cost of forgoing work that would bring in extra income for their family. Because of these factors, poor students are much less likely to complete secondary school, with many dropping out after ninth grade.

Due to the context described in this section, the GPOBA Upper Secondary Education Enhancement project focused on private and semi-public schools as a means of targeting and supporting disadvantaged students to continue and complete their upper secondary education.

## Annex 4: Questionnaires

### Questions for USS and PSS students

Questions	
1.	Were you aware of the other students in your class/school who were receiving the GPOBA stipend?
2.	In your opinion, how did the GPOBA education project impact your school life during your time in upper secondary/professional secondary education? (E.g. level of motivation, affordability, etc.).
3.	In your opinion, how did the GPOBA education project impact other beneficiary students' school lives during their time in upper secondary/professional secondary education (E.g. level of motivation, affordability, etc.).
4.	How many students were there in your class and how many received the scholarship? How would you describe the performance of GBOPA students versus non-GBOPA students ? (GPA, ethics, etc.)?
5.	<p>Did receiving the scholarship affect your regular attendance at school? Which of the following statements most closely represents your experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, I attended school more regularly</li> <li>- No, it did not affect my school attendance</li> <li>- Yes, I attended school less regularly</li> </ul> <p>Comments:</p> <p>How do you compare yourself with other students in your class who did not receive the scholarship with regard to school attendance? Which of the following statements most closely represents your experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was not any difference between us</li> <li>- Students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly</li> <li>- Students who did not receive the scholarship attended school more regularly</li> </ul> <p>Why? Can you name the reasons for regular and non-regular attendance at school?</p> <p>Thinking back on an average school week of 5 days of classes, how many days in one week would you say you were able to attend class?</p>

	<p>Thinking back on an average school week of 5 days of class, how many days in one week would you say other GPOBA scholarship students in your class were able to attend class?</p> <p>Thinking back on an average school week of 5 days of class, how many days in one week would you say non-scholarship students were able to attend class?</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p>Have you ever considered quitting school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p>Please provide reasons:....</p> <p>Did receiving the scholarship affect your consideration of whether to quit school?*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, I was less determined to quit school</li> <li>- No, it did not affect my consideration of whether to quit school</li> <li>- Yes, I was more determined to quit school</li> </ul> <p>Please provide reasons:....</p> <p>Do you know any student who dropped out of school despite receiving support from the GPOBA program? Can you name the reasons for his or her decision?</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p>Do you know any student who could not continue his or her education because he or she did not receive the scholarship? Do you know why?</p>
<b>8.</b>	<p>What should be improved about the Project so as to achieve better results?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On student enrollment/attendance</li> <li>- On student academic performance</li> <li>- On student outcomes after the end of the Project.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<p>In addition to the Project's expected and planned outcomes, which is to help poor and disadvantaged students continue their education, did the Project have any additional impacts/effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your family</li> <li>- Your teacher</li> <li>- Your school</li> </ul> <p>If so, please describe those impacts/effects</p>

<b>10.</b>	<p>If you had not received financial support from the project, would you have continued your education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul> <p>If yes, how? If no, how would you have prepared for your future?</p>
<b>11.</b>	<i>(For female or ethnic minority students):</i> As a female/ ethnic minority student, what are your thoughts on the opportunities provided to you through the Project?
<b>12.</b>	What do you think about the opportunities given to the female students who took part in the project?
<b>13.</b>	What do you think about the opportunities given to the ethnic minority students who took part in the project?
<b>14.</b>	What do you think about the project in general; for example, did the project fulfill its promise to you?
<b>15.</b>	From your perspective, what did you think about the benefits provided through the program (i.e. the scholarship)? Was it enough? How would you improve the package of benefits you received through the program?
<b>16.</b>	<p>Given the tuition subsidy from GPOBA, what do you think about other school fees and expenses? Did you incur additional fees? Were they affordable?</p> <p>What additional constraints and challenges did you experience during your participation in upper secondary school even with the support of the GPOBA education project (if any)? How could these be lifted or addressed?</p>
<b>17.</b>	Do you think the Project had an impact on: (i) the ways students were supported to develop their knowledge and skills, (ii) students' future plans, i.e higher education or employment? If so, how?
<b>18.</b>	How would you describe the quality of your school's physical services, including the library, textbooks, reference materials, and physical facilities?
<b>19.</b>	How would you describe the quality of the teachers / instructors, their teaching methods, and the interaction between teachers and students in and out of classes, e.g. in what ways did they motivate their students to attend classes and encourage their learning process?
<b>20.</b>	What non-financial support if any did you receive to facilitate your studies in school as a result of the Project (e.g. academic support, increased support from teachers, etc.)?
<b>21.</b>	Did you take part in any extracurricular activities while at school? If so, which ones and which were the most significant in terms of contributing to your success at school and/or preparing you for future opportunities?
<b>22.</b>	What are your family's main sources of income and how did your parents afford your schooling during the three academic years of the program?



<b>23.</b>	Given the support of GPOBA education project, how did you plan for your future before and upon your graduation, e.g. continuing on to higher education or entering the labor market?
<b>24.</b>	What are you currently doing? (E.g. employed, further study, unemployed). How did your secondary education contribute to what you are doing now?
<b>25.</b>	Do you have any other comments you would like to share?

### Questions for parents and households

Questions	
<b>1.</b>	<p>If your son or daughter was not chosen for the project, would you have allowed him or her to continue with his or her education? Why? Could you have afforded to do so?</p> <p>If you did not allow your son or daughter to continue with his or her education, how would you have planned for his or her future?</p> <p>How do you evaluate the potential income that your son or daughter would have earned by quitting school and pursuing employment right away, against the educational value and attainment (and long-term earnings potential) gained from attending USS/PSS with the support of the GPOBA education project?</p>
<b>2.</b>	In your opinion, what are the main benefits of the Project?
<b>3.</b>	In your opinion, what should be improved about the Project in order to achieve better results? (E.g. greater enrollment, attendance, academic performance of students receiving the subsidies)?
<b>4.</b>	ONLY FOR USS pupils- Has your son or daughter continued his or her education after graduation? Why? If they have not yet, would they consider it?
<b>5.</b>	<p>ONLY FOR USS pupils- Did receiving the scholarship affect your son or daughter's regular school attendance? Which of the following statements most closely represents you/your child's experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, he or she attended school more regularly</li> <li>- No, it did not affect his or her school attendance</li> <li>- Yes, he or she attended school less regularly</li> </ul> <p>Please provide reasons: ...</p>

	<p>As far as you are aware, how did the attendance of students who received the scholarship (like your son/daughter) compare to those who did not? Which of the following statements do you agree with most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was no difference between students who received and did not receive the scholarship in terms of school attendance</li> <li>- Students who received the scholarship attended school more regularly</li> <li>- Students who did not receive the scholarship attended school more regularly</li> </ul> <p>Please provide reasons:....</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p>Did receiving the scholarship affect your son or daughter's academic performance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, he or she performed better than before (GPA, test scores)</li> <li>- No, he or she performed the same as before (GPA, test scores)</li> <li>- Yes, he or she performed worse than before (GPA, test scores)</li> </ul> <p>Please provide examples:</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p>Did receiving the scholarship affect your son or daughter's level of motivation at school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, he or she was more motivated and worked harder at school than before</li> <li>- No, he or she was equally as motivated and worked the same amount at school as before</li> <li>- Yes, he or she was less motivated and worked less at school than before.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<p>ONLY FOR USS pupils- Do you know any student who could not continue his or her education because he or she was not supported by the Project? Do you know why?</p>
<b>9.</b>	<p>Were you satisfied by the quality of education offered at your son/daughter's school (e.g. teachers, teaching methods, facilities, etc.?). What could be improved?</p>
<b>10.</b>	<p>In your opinion, was the project well-developed and implemented? For example, was it able to fulfill its promise to the students and was communication between parents and the school well-maintained?</p>
<b>11.</b>	<p>Did your family or child face any additional constraints in completing USS/PSS that were not addressed by the Project? How could the Project help to address these?</p>
<b>12.</b>	<p>In addition to the Project's expected and planned outcomes, which is to help poor and disadvantaged students continue their education, did the Project have any additional impacts/effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Your child</li> <li>- Your family</li> <li>- Your child's teacher(s)</li> <li>- Your child's school</li> </ul>
<b>13.</b>	<p>Aside from the tuition fees paid by the Project, did you have to cover any other schooling costs (textbooks, schooling</p>

	device, extra class fees, etc.)  How did you cover such costs?
<b>14.</b>	What is your primary occupation, that is, what kind of work do you mainly do?  What are your household's main sources of income?
<b>15.</b>	How do you feel about your son / daughter's personal growth in terms of their overall knowledge and skills, opportunities to pursue higher education, and ability to find a job upon completion of USS / PSS as a result of the support of the GPOBA education project?
<b>16.</b>	Do you think the GPOBA education project has had any other impact or effect on your son/daughter's life? If so, in what way?
<b>17.</b>	What is your son/daughter currently doing?  To what extent do you think the GPOBA education project contributed to their current activities (studies, employment, etc.)?*
<b>18.</b>	Do you have any other comments you would like to share?

### Questions for teachers

Questions	
<b>1.</b>	How do you assess the performance of GBOPA students versus other non-GPOBA students? (GPA, ethics, behavior, motivation, etc.)?  Did you see GPOBA students at your school undergo significant changes (e.g. academic performance, attendance, behavior, attitude, etc.)? If so, how? From your perspective, what are the main changes experienced by GPOBA students during and after the GPOBA education project?
<b>2.</b>	Did the GPOBA students attend class regularly, compared to the time before the Project? Which of the following statements most closely represents your experience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their attendance increased</li> <li>- Their attendance stayed the same</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their attendance decreased</li> </ul> <p>Reason:</p> <p>Compared to non – GPOBA students, did GPOBA – students attend class regularly? Which of the following statements most closely represents your experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As regularly as non – GPOBA students</li> <li>- GPOBA students went to class more regularly</li> <li>- Non - GPOBA students went to class more regularly</li> </ul> <p>Why?</p>
<b>3.</b>	From your perspective, did the program provide any particular opportunities to girls who were able to access the tuition subsidies? Was the program effective at promoting access to education for girls?
<b>4.</b>	From your perspective, did the program provide any particular opportunities to ethnic minority students who were able to access the tuition subsidies? Was the program effective at promoting access to education for ethnic minority students?
<b>5.</b>	What could the Project do differently to ensure better inclusion and outcomes for girls/minorities?
<b>6.</b>	What improvements could be made to the Project to ensure that students can attend and stay in school?
<b>7.</b>	What improvements could be made to the Project to ensure that students maintain or improve their academic performance?
<b>8.</b>	<p>In addition to the Project’s expected and planned outcomes, which is to help poor and disadvantaged students continue their education, did the Project have any additional impacts/effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the students</li> <li>- the families</li> <li>- the teachers</li> <li>- the school</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	What impact did the project have on your school? Did you notice any changes in your school from the period before the GPOBA project started, vs. during the GPOBA project? If so, what were they?
<b>10.</b>	Did the project have an impact on your school’s overall efficiency? If so, in what way?
<b>11.</b>	Do you have any comments about the requirements laid out by the program for teachers to be involved in the project?
<b>12.</b>	What are your thoughts on the current educational curriculum used to teach USS/PSS students at your school?
<b>13.</b>	Did you change your teaching methods at all as a result of the GPOBA project? If so, in what way?

<b>14.</b>	Did you formulate innovative teaching methods that encouraged students' creativity and helped students, especially Project students, to consolidate their knowledge and skills development to encourage their continuation of education through building their willingness, motivation, and efforts? If so, in what way?
<b>15.</b>	In what ways did your USS / PSS support teachers who were involved in the GPOBA education project with required tasks and responsibilities?  Did you receive any additional support or training?
<b>16.</b>	What additional support, if any, do you think you could have benefited from through the Project?
<b>17.</b>	How would you describe the quality of education services and physical facilities at your USS / PSS?
<b>18.</b>	Do you think the project met its goal?
<b>19.</b>	In your opinion, what factors contributed to the program's success?
<b>20.</b>	In your opinion, what factors limited the program's success?
<b>21.</b>	Would you want your USS/PSS to continue with the GPOBA education project in the future? If yes, why; if no, why not?

### Questions for school management (school headmasters)

Questions	
<b>1.</b>	During the three years (2010-2013) that your school participated in the GPOBA education project, what were the main results demonstrated by your school in terms of average GPA, graduation rates, drop – out rates? (ask to verify with school records).
<b>2.</b>	How do you assess the performance of GBOPA students versus other non-GPOBA students? (GPA, ethics, behavior, motivation, etc.)?  Did you see GPOBA students at your school undergo significant changes (e.g. academic performance, attendance, behavior, attitude, etc.)? If so, how? From your perspective, what are the main changes experienced by GPOBA students during and after the GPOBA education project?
<b>3.</b>	Did GPOBA-students attend school regularly? Why/Why not?  Was there any difference in the attendance rates of GPOBA-students compared to non-GPOBA students?

4.	<p>From your perspective, did the program provide any particular opportunities to girls who were able to access the tuition subsidies? Was the program effective at promoting access to education for girls?</p> <p>Do you think girls had equal or unequal access to the GPOBA program as male students?</p>
5.	<p>From your perspective, did the program provide any particular opportunities to ethnic minority students who were able to access the tuition subsidies? Was the program effective at promoting access to education for ethnic minority students?</p>
6.	<p>Are there any cases in which GPOBA students were unable to attend school? Why? Do you have the total number? (Ask to verify school records).</p>
7.	<p>What did your school do to prepare for and implement the Project in order to achieve the desired outcomes?</p> <p>What ongoing monitoring mechanisms did the school have in place if any?</p> <p>From the school management side, what were the roles and responsibilities?</p> <p>To what extent did your school engage with other agencies and what did that engagement look like (SPA, IVA, DOET, EMWF)?</p>
8.	<p>What challenges did your school face during the 3 years of implementing the Project?</p>
9.	<p>If the program was to start again from the beginning, what would you recommend to do differently in order to improve the Project's results?</p>
10.	<p>In addition to the Project's expected and planned outcomes, which is to help poor and disadvantaged students continue their education, did the Project have any additional impacts/effects on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the students</li> <li>- the families</li> <li>- the teachers</li> <li>- the school</li> </ul>
11.	<p>What were some typical actions outside of the tuition subsidy that your school undertook to support the Project students to pass the minimum criteria and maintain satisfactory academic results to allow them to continue their education?</p>
12.	<p>From your perspective, what are the main changes/impacts on USS/PSS students' lives upon their completion of USS/PSS supported by the GPOBA education project?</p>
13.	<p>What are your overall impressions and comments on this form of OBA approach in education in general and as it applies</p>

	to upper secondary school?
<b>14.</b>	Assume that the OBA scheme is adopted by the Government or scaled by other means. What elements of the Project do you think should be modified to better adapt to the context of Viet Nam and increase the coverage of participating schools and students; particularly the poor, disadvantaged, and ethnic students; as part of the universalization of upper education program; and as a way that improves economic opportunities for the poor youth?
<b>15.</b>	Would your school be interested in participating in an OBA project again? Why or why not?
<b>16.</b>	In the context of this province, from your perspective, do you think OBA is replicable in a sustainable way beyond the pilot phase of this program? If so, how?  Is there interest in continuing this program in your region? How do you know?  What are the challenges or barriers to scaling up this program?

### Questions for local authorities and Study Promotion Association (SPA) representatives

Questions	
<b>1.</b>	How would you describe/ evaluate the achievements of the participating USS/PSS in the Project, including students, during the three academic years that the program covered from 2010 – 2013? Overall, do you think the Project was effective? Why or why not?
<b>2.</b>	From your perspective, do you think that students supported by the Project attended school more often as a result of the Project or not? Can you provide reasons for any changes in their attendance patterns?
<b>3.</b>	From your perspective, was the Project effective at enrolling disadvantaged students and preventing their drop-out? Why or why not? If students still dropped out even after being supported by the Project, can you describe the reasons behind this?
<b>4.</b>	Please provide the overall dropout rate in the locality? (ask for relevant records)
<b>5.</b>	From your perspective, was the Project effective at increasing access the academic performance of GPOBA students and students in the Project school(s) more broadly? Why or why not?
<b>6.</b>	From your perspective, do you think the Project successfully allowed students to continue their education who otherwise

	could not have without the support of the Project? (Please specify between USS and PSS students). Why or why not?
<b>7.</b>	From your perspective, do you think that GPOBA students could have / would have continued with their education without the GPOBA project? (Please specify between USS and PSS students). Why or why not?
<b>8.</b>	In addition to the Project's expected and planned outcomes, which is to help poor and disadvantaged students continue their education, did the Project have any additional impacts/effects on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the students</li> <li>- the families</li> <li>- the teachers</li> <li>- the school</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	In your opinion, was the Project well-organized, managed, and implemented? What are your thoughts on the mechanisms used to manage the Project?
<b>10.</b>	In your opinion, what should be improved or changed to increase the impact of the Project on beneficiaries (for example changes to the support package, etc.)?
<b>11.</b>	Were there any significant issues or constraints that students or schools faced that the Project did not address but that should have been addressed? If so, what were they?
<b>12.</b>	How could the Project be improved to achieve better results?
<b>13.</b>	In what ways did the local authorities support the Project school(s) and students in order achieve the objectives of the Project and meet the disbursement criteria?
<b>14.</b>	In your opinion, what were the main challenges and difficulties faced by the USS/PSS schools that participated in the project?
<b>15.</b>	How committed do you think the USS/PSS Project schools and students were to the GPOBA Project's objectives? Please describe.
<b>16.</b>	How would you describe the quality of the education services, teachers, students, and facilities of the Project USS / PSS?
<b>17.</b>	Do you think equal opportunities were provided to female and ethnic minority students to take part in the GPOBA education project?
<b>18.</b>	What impact do you think the GPOBA education project had on participating schools? Did it improve their overall quality of service and operational efficiency?
<b>19.</b>	Without the support of the GPOBA education project, what difference do you think this would have made on the achievements/performance of the USS/PSS in your province?
<b>20.</b>	What are your overall thoughts on the output-based model implemented by GPOBA and its application to the education



	sector in Vietnam?
<b>21.</b>	Assume that the OBA scheme is adopted by the Government or scaled by other means. What elements of the Project do you think should be modified to better adapt to the context of Viet Nam and increase the coverage of participating schools and students; particularly the poor, disadvantaged, and ethnic students; as part of the universalization of upper education program; and as a way that improves economic opportunities for the poor youth?
<b>22.</b>	In the context of this province, from your perspective, do you think OBA in education is replicable in a sustainable way beyond the pilot phase of this program? If so, how?  Is there interest in continuing this program in your region? How do you know?  What are the challenges or barriers to scaling up this program?
<b>23.</b>	Is there interest on the part of local/regional government to continue this Project? If yes, why? If no, why not?