



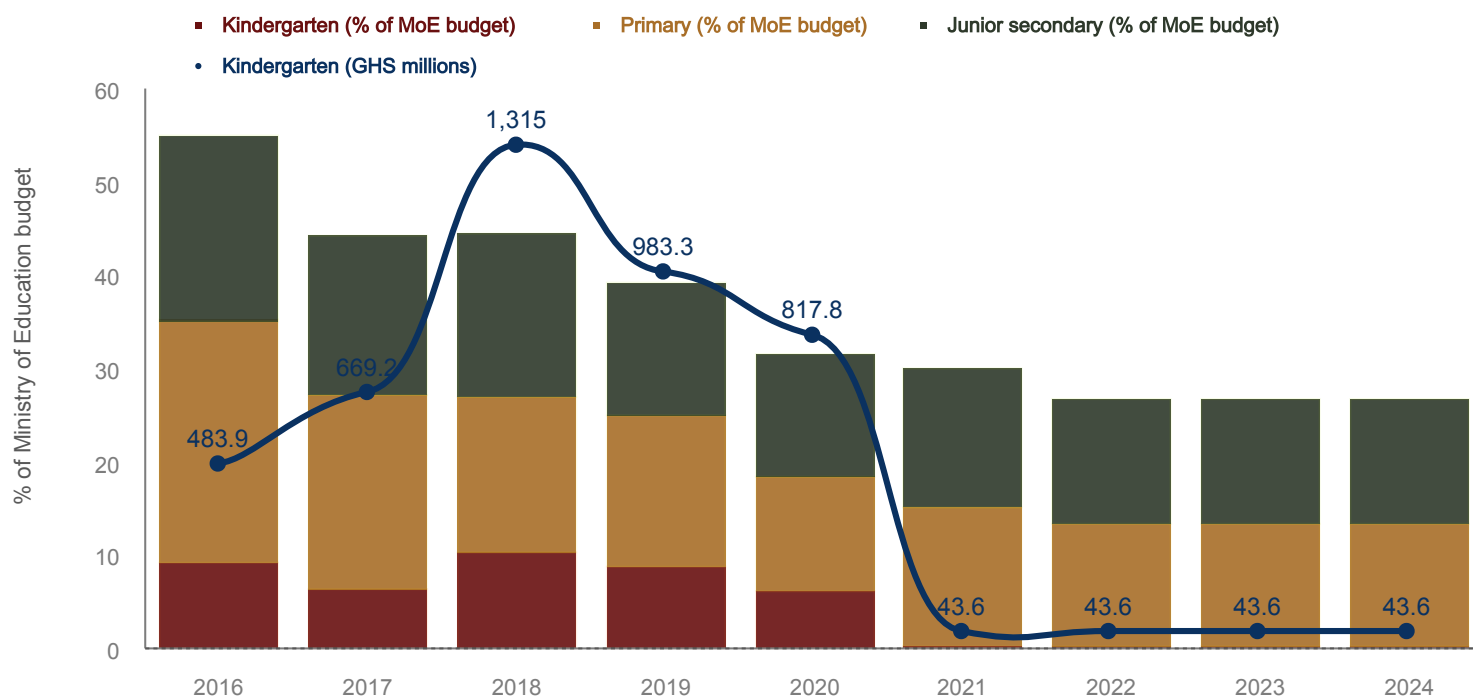
2021 EDUCATION BUDGET BRIEF



The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted children’s access to education in Ghana, exacerbating existing inequities. Prior to the pandemic, about 1 million children aged 6-17 years were out of school, with significant urban-rural disparities, with children faring far worse in rural areas. A 2018 study by UNESCO found that in Ghana, relative to children from the richest household decile, children from the poorest household decile benefit from less than 20% of education expenditure – among the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Boys were also more likely to be deprived in learning than girls, particularly at the lower secondary school level. Against this backdrop, it is worrying to see that the budget allocation to the Ministry of Education (MoE) has seen a significant reduction for basic education, not only in real but also in nominal terms.

Between 2016 and 2020, the budget allocation to the ministry grew at an average annual rate of 20%. This growth is set to fall to 8% between 2021-24. The outlook for basic education is troubling, with average annual expenditure growth set at only 3%, well below the expected rate of inflation. Of particular concern is the outlook for kindergarten expenditure, for which expenditure is set to fall by 95% in 2021, to just 0.25% of the Ministry of Education’s budget by 2022. This is just a fraction of the 15% target set by the Ministry in its Early Childhood Education policy document. If these budget cuts are not reversed, it will significantly reduce early school readiness, and exacerbate existing inequities within the education system. Furthermore, the budget for basic education continues to be almost entirely allocated to compensation, with limited allocation for goods and services. Expenditure on goods and services is vital to improve the quality and equity of education.

Ministry of Education budget allocations to primary education



Source: MoE Sector Performance Reports and MTEFs, 2016-2021

At the 2021 Global Education Summit in the United Kingdom, the President on behalf of the Government of Ghana made a pledge to spend at least 23% of the national budget on education over the medium-term (2021-2025). As a part of this commitment, the Government has indicated its intention to embrace technology and innovation to help to bridge the equity gap in education. However, according to the 2020 Ministry of Finance Budget statement, the total budget for education constituted just 13.8% of total expenditure. It is imperative that the Government meets this commitment starting with the 2022 budget to make education more equitable, and to reach all Ghanaian children in and out of school.



EDUCATION SECTOR BUDGET BRIEF



1

The Government must prioritize and safeguard the budget for Kindergarten (KG) activities. The 2021 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for the Ministry of Education includes a 95% reduction in the funding provided to KG, from GHS 818 million to just GHS 44 million. This risks a huge exacerbation in the shortage of places, which is already significant, with 400,000 children of KG age currently out of school.



The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) indicates that, nationally, 3 out of 10 children aged 3-4 years are still not developmentally on track as per the Early Childhood Development Index. This is due, in part, to the low provision of Kindergarten (KG) education: at present, there are 400,000 KG-aged children who are not currently in school. The provision of KG education is an essential part of reducing the inequity of education spending. It is shown to improve early education outcomes and to increase school readiness. KG provision helps young learners to develop foundational skills and provides an equitable start in children's social life through their education.

However, according to the Ministry's budget allocations set out in its Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for 2021-2025, the budget for the KG activity has been reduced by 95% between 2020 and 2021, to just GHS 43.6 million, down from GHS 817.8 million in 2020. This is an enormous decline in the available funding to a vital part of the education system. Furthermore, the proportion of funding allocated to basic education, which includes KG, primary and junior secondary schooling, is set to fall to just 26.8% of the Ministry's budget. This represents a 32% reduction from 2019 levels.

	Average Annual Growth Rate	
	2016-2020	2021-2014
Ministry of Education	20%	8%
Of which is spent on goods and services	0%	3%
Of which is spent of basic education	20%	3%
Kindergarten	30%	-24%
Primary	19%	11%
Junior secondary	20%	8%

The impact of such a decline in KG funding, and wider basic education funding, cannot be understated. It poses significant risks to the human capital development of Ghana's children, with lifetime impacts for their educational and economic potential. In the Ministry of Education's Early Childhood Education (ECE) document, published in 2020, it is stated that "development and sustainability rests on the strong foundation and quality of the ECE delivery we make available to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children". The document contains a 2025 policy target of 15% of the Ministry's budget to be spent on KG activities. Instead, the current outlook indicates that just 0.25% of the budget will be allocated toward KG activities over the 2021-2024 MTEF period. This is a very important issue that must be immediately addressed by the Ministry and the Government, starting with the 2022 budget.

2

Government must accelerate the expansion of WASH facilities in schools. Access to improved water and sanitation facilities at schools and home is critical to retain children, especially girls, in school. More funding and greater budget transparency is required to accelerate equitable progress in this area, and to ensure accountability in the delivery of sustainable WASH infrastructure.



Access to improved water and sanitation facilities at schools is critical to retain children, and especially girls, in school. However, significant regional disparities exist in the distribution of school toilet facilities. In the Upper West region, for example, 61% of schools do not have access to these facilities, compared to 9% without access in Greater Accra. At KG level, 32% of schools and over 1 million children have no access to hand washing facilities. The provision of adequate WASH facilities will reduce preventable diseases and improve learning in schools. This issue is even more acute in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is difficult to evaluate infrastructure plans that tackle this issue, in large part because budgets from other MDAs are not presented in a consolidated manner, and because the Ministry of Education's capital expenditure data is limited in detail. However, it is clear from the progress to date that more investment is required to prioritize and accelerate and universal access to clean water, safe sanitation and handwashing through expansion of WASH facilities in schools, in an equitable manner that eliminates existing regional disparities.

Additional WASH facilities in schools are being delivered by the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Education. It is UNICEF's view that the establishment of collaborative mechanisms with the Ghana Education Service, at both national and district levels, would facilitate more efficient maintenance and construction of functional facilities for all basic schools. Furthermore, the Government should prioritise WASH infrastructure through the Annual Budget Financing Allocation (ABFA) as part of the Government's flagship programmes.



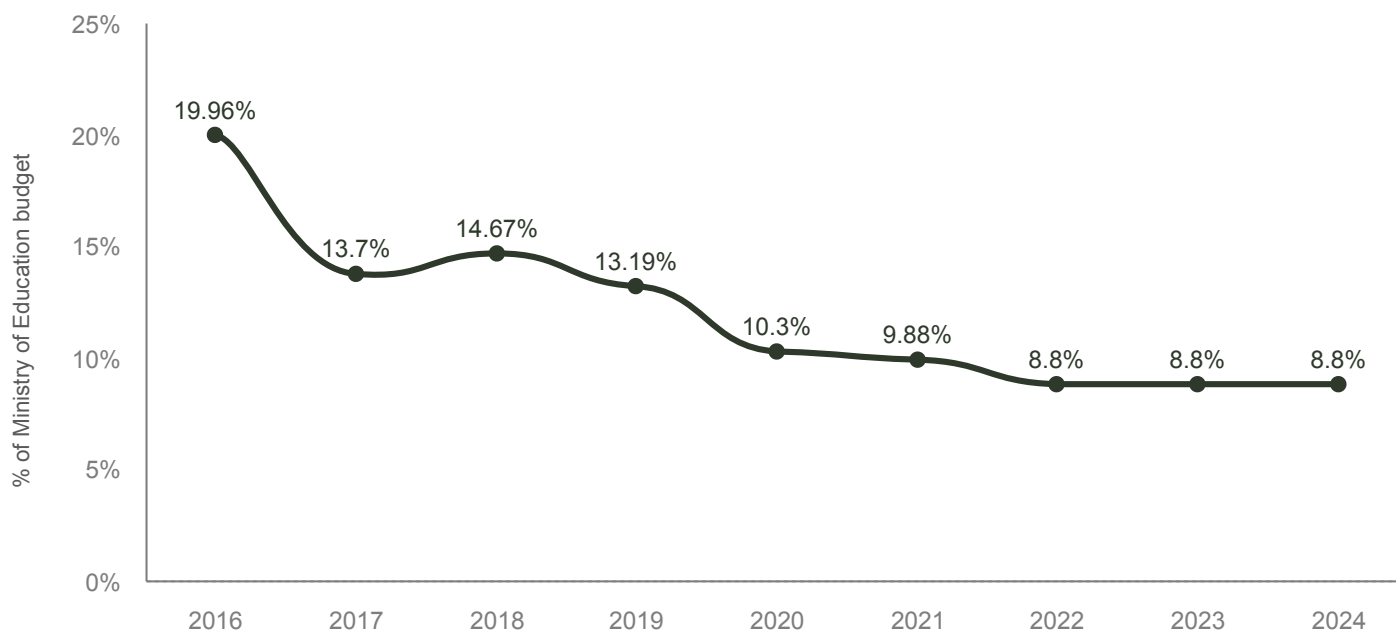
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The Government must increase its budgetary allocations towards goods and services. By 2022, the proportion of the Ministry of Education's budget allocated to goods and services has declined by 56% since 2016. There continues to be no provision of goods and services expenditure for basic education in the PBB over the medium-term. It is essential that this trend is reversed to improve the quality of education in Ghana.



Sufficient expenditure on goods and services is crucial to ensure that schools are equipped with the tools necessary to provide a quality education. This category of the budget is used to procure items like textbooks, paper, pencils and other education materials to support learning. It is also used to provide teachers with training. Despite significant shortages of learning materials across schools in Ghana, the Ministry of Education is set to spend just 8.8% of its budget on goods and services from 2022 onwards. This is a decline of 56% from 2016, at which point the Ministry allocated 20% of its budget to goods and services.

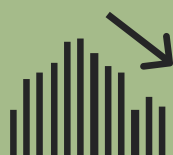
Proportion of Ministry of Education's budget allocated to goods and services



Source: MoE MTEFs, 2016-2021

Greater investment in goods and services is necessary to facilitate quality learning opportunities, and to ensure the provision of adequate textbooks for every child. Increases in this budget should be used to build the capacity of teachers and to introduce technology to bridge equity gaps and address the needs of all learners including girls, those that are hard-to-reach, and those with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Furthermore, the 2021 Ministry of Education MTEF budget for basic education does not contain any provision for goods and services. The basic education budget is allocated entirely for compensation. According to EMIS, in 2018, none of the KGs that they contacted had literacy textbooks, and only 18% had numeracy textbooks. Without greater investment in goods and services, particularly for basic education, it is likely that early education outcomes will decline. In order to improve learning outcomes at the basic level, it is critical for Government to reverse this de-prioritization of the budget for goods and service for basic education and commit to achieving the minimum target for the Ministry's allocation towards goods and services.



The proportion of the Ministry of Education's budget spent on goods and services has declined by 56% since 2016, with no allocation at all within the basic education budget

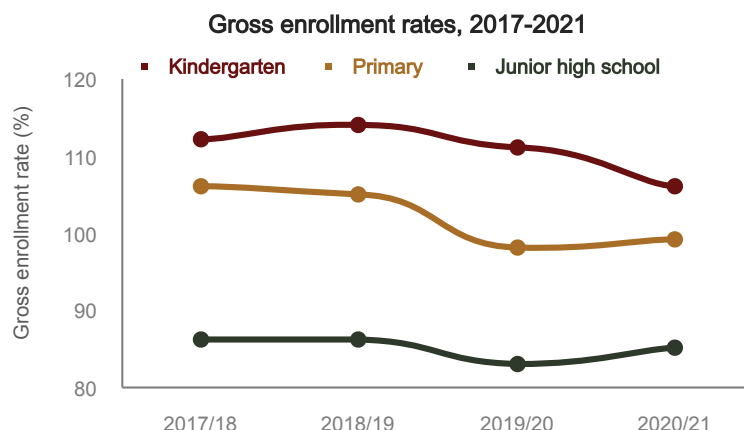


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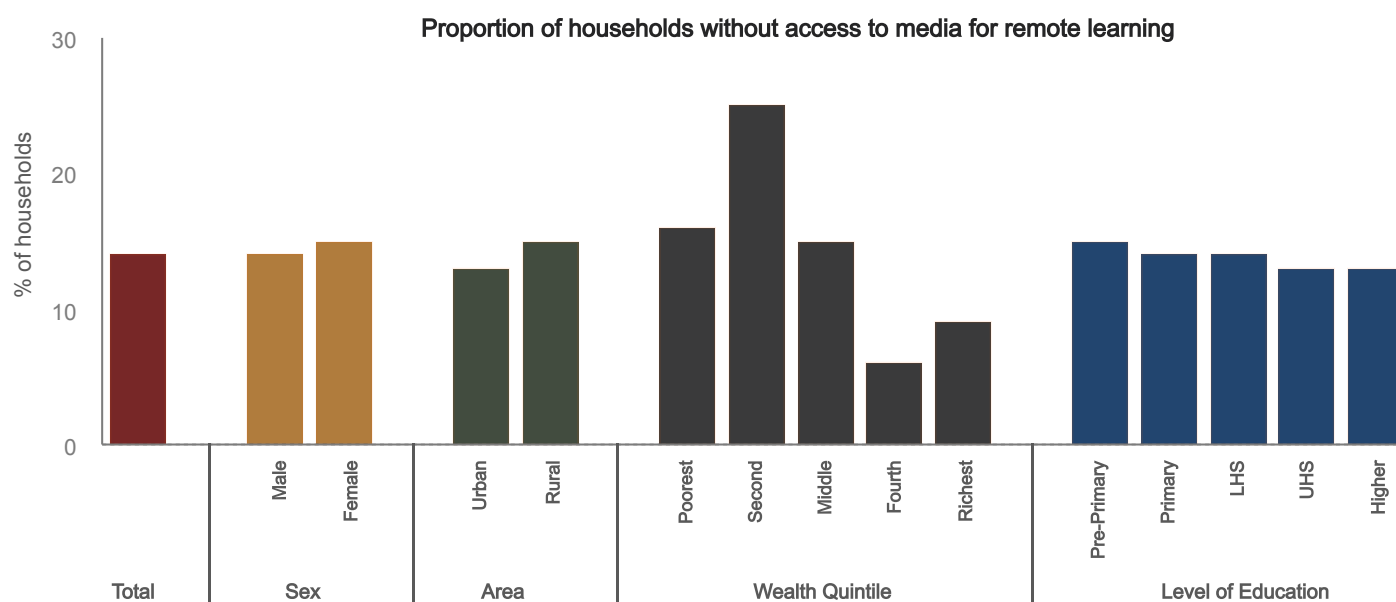
Government must ensure that children return to school and increase the education sector's capacity to respond to future crises through investing in distance learning. Many young children's access to education has been disrupted by the pandemic. The Government must ensure that they return to school. It should also increase the sector's resilience to future emergencies and shocks through investing in remote/distance learning solutions, especially for those in remote areas of the country.



A well-educated and empowered workforce is essential to Ghana's ability to effectively transition to an upper-middle-income status, drive innovation, and compete in the global marketplace. Indeed, higher educational attainment is associated with better employment and income-earning opportunities. During the pandemic, many young children's access to education has been severely limited, with disruption on a scale never seen before. This has been reflected by a reduction in gross enrolment rates (GER), particularly at the primary and Kindergarten levels, which have dropped by 6 and 8 percentage points respectively between 2018/19 and 2020/21. Without urgent action taken to repair this access to education, this situation risks leading to irreversible lifetime outcomes for these children, limiting their educational and economic potential.



The Government of Ghana provided nationwide distance learning programmes throughout the pandemic, which were a vital part of the response to mitigate against the secondary effects of the pandemic. Despite the Government's efforts, 66% of learners had difficulties accessing the programme as they do not have access to radio, TV, mobile devices and networks, and other facilities due to poor/no network connectivity, inadequate technical know-how and a lack of provision for learners with special educational needs. As shown in the graph below, the households without access to these devices were disproportionately poor. Government investment to increase the capacity for distance learning is important both as a remedial measure to make up for learning loss among children from poorer households, as well as to mitigate against future emergencies that risk further widening of the educational attainment gap that exists along socioeconomic and gender lines. Prior to the pandemic, the share of children from the richest quintile with foundational reading skills was 10 times higher than the share of children from the poorest quintile (50% compared with 5%). Inequitable access to technology is likely to exacerbate these gaps: 25% of the second poorest quintile do not have access to TV, radio or mobile devices, compared to just 6% of the second wealthiest quintile. Access to electricity is a critical issue for the two poorest wealth quintiles, as remote technologies rely on access to electricity for efficient functioning.



Source: MICS, 2017

The Government requires substantial investments to strengthen Education in Emergency (EiE) coordination mechanisms to provide safety nets for children, to improve their learning through digital literacy, and to make learning more fun to facilitate inclusion for continuous learning. Further funding is also needed to establish better infrastructure, for the provision of a viable innovative learning alternative to regular schools, and to ensure that there is the requisite technology needed to respond to the needs of children. This is particularly important for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and for children in remote areas, especially in the event of future school lockdowns under emergency crises.

At present, the limited information on the education budget allocation regarding the EiE makes it difficult to determine the budget allocated to responding to crises. This is vital information to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness for any potential emergency crises that affect education in Ghana. The Government should provide clear lines of expenditure for EiE. It should also increase its expenditure to strengthen the EiE response team and its coordination mechanisms to better prepare it for potential crises in future.