

## Informing the Strategic Plan of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

July 2019

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has officially launched its strategy development process with the aim of a final Strategic Plan and Funding Framework approved by the GPE Board in June 2020. Views were invited from GPE's stakeholders globally, including from ASPBAE, through a survey on GPE's role and approach during the next strategic period. The survey, developed in consultation with GPE's Strategy and Impact Committee, enabled the stakeholders to respond to key questions to be addressed in the next Strategy. Responses will be analysed and shared with the GPE Board and with the Board committees for discussion during their October meetings.



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ASPBAE Civil Society Developing Country (or CSO2) representatives in the GPE Board launched a set of email and phone-based consultations with the CSO2 constituency to mobilise the strong participation and input of civil society in this process. The CSO 2 constituents identified the following key inputs and messages to the process:

- Ensure that the new Strategic Plan is more fully aligned to the SDG 4 and Education 2030 agenda - embracing it as a whole. This includes a more explicit reference to 12 years of free education, dealing upfront with adult literacy and education and an intergenerational perspective, more emphasis in dimensions on equality (beyond equity) and quality with a broader perspective (as envisioned in target 4.7, for example) as well as civil society participation in policy debate and decision-making.



The CSO 2 constituency called for more attention to partnerships, domestic financing and tax justice, civil society participation in education processes.

- GPE must prioritise its essential characteristic of PARTNERSHIP. More than an emphasis on leadership, GPE should value partnership, in coherence with its core constitutive characteristic. In its new plan, GPE should highlight, acknowledge and envisage the strengthening of all partners and their mandates. Overlaps or possible areas of conflicting mandates should be avoided.

- More attention must be given to domestic financing and tax justice. The latter should be a core element of the new plan. Furthermore, GPE should revisit how it calculates the 20% of GDP, which currently excludes debt servicing. This alters significantly the results of the indicator. The manner that UIS and other research

institutes calculate should be used, which in fact is the manner used in the text agreed by SDG4/E2030. The effects of the Multiplier Fund in fostering indebtedness and loans with the banks should also be analysed.

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- The Strategic Plan should give more attention to how civil society and education actors are being treated by the governments, including having a clearer indicator related to civil society participation at all levels as well as the overcoming the rising trends of criminalization of education actors.

- On teachers, more attention needs to be given to fostering their autonomy and academic freedom, currently under attack in many countries.

The last Asia Pacific Regional Consultation of Education Advocates offered an opportunity for a more in-depth discussion with 18 national education coalitions on ASPBAE's and the coalitions submissions on the GPE strategic plan process. Reinforcing the common messages so far defined within the wider CSO2 constituency, ASPBAE and member coalitions reiterated the following:

- GPE's ability to convene a broad set of education partners and stakeholders that have the potential to provide significant support (through political will and financing) in delivering the full SDG 4 agenda and strengthening public education systems should expand its scope to cover education support for children as well as youth and adults, in order to fully realise its vision and mission. The latter has so far been neglected in GPE priority.

The 3 strategic areas ASPBAE recommend GPE to focus on additionally were (1) Youth and Adult Learning and Education including adult literacy, (2) Gender and disability inclusion, and (3) Skills development as targeted in SDG 4.7 such as life skill and foundational skills, further stressing that GPE should commit to the full ambition of SDG4/Education 2030 agenda, that is, 'leaving no one behind' and which affirms a lifelong learning framework of education. Hence, in its strategic objectives and financing support to developing country partners, GPE should support education access and learning for not only children, but youth and adults as well. Further, marginalised and vulnerable groups should be given voice and space in sector planning processes and decision-making.

- GPE needs to optimise its convening power even more to challenge mechanisms and actions that undermine public education systems and lead to further inequality in education, such as the current drive towards making education financing more beneficial for private investors and commercial banks, and driving low and lower-middle income countries to expand their debt exposure as a means to access education grants and investments. GPE should ensure that it will only support costed and credible education sector plans that will strengthen the public education systems. It should require full



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transparency when governments are engaging with partners in financing the sector plans, including in the terms and negotiations regarding loans, which tend to be shrouded in secrecy, with education stakeholders kept in the dark. GPE needs to ensure that the private sector is indeed contributing to the Partnership at the global level and should demonstrate concretely how it is supporting the strengthening of the public education systems at the national level.

- GPE can do/support more affirmative action and advocacy in countries/contexts where civic participation and civil society inclusion in policy processes are threatened or restricted. SDG4 cannot fully progress without democratic guarantees that allow the public and civil society to

hold their governments to account on their SDG4 commitments. The European Union, for example, has already laid out [specific modalities to address the growing restrictions in democratic spaces](#) in many countries and contexts.

- On the issue of what GPE could do to better support effective education policy and programme implementation, ASPBAE suggested that GPE should require from its grant applications stronger and more accountable monitoring systems that set regular sector review processes and includes participation of education stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs), from the local to national levels. GPE should also set-up a robust mechanism to capture lessons from the ground in various contexts on why sector plans are not fully implemented. Further, governments need to be held accountable and build a strong sense of ownership of their education sector plans to ensure that they can muster the political and financial will to drive well the sector plan implementation.
- To ensure that education policies and programs are systematically based on good evidence, ASPBAE highlighted that GPE can optimise the use of its resources to drive evidence-based education results/outcomes by working with and supporting the efforts already being made by its member, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This way, GPE is fully strengthening its role as a Partnership that leverages and builds on the strengths of its members to support the full education agenda. GPE can also utilise the evidence, data, and studies undertaken/collected by its civil society and teachers' union constituencies to cross-analyse education information, especially in areas of education equity and quality which are narrowly measured or missed by official government reports.
- On new efforts GPE should make to support capacity development of national education systems, ASPBAE underscored that there should be stronger sharing and learning from the rich experiences within the Partnership, especially from the developing country partners, CSOs, Teachers Unions, UNESCO, UNICEF, and donors who have experiences in education at national levels.



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UNESCO, UNICEF, and donors which have experiences in education at the national levels. GPE should also complement the efforts of UNESCO and other existing intergovernmental sub-regional bodies (for example, the South East Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, SEAMEO) in building the capacities of governments in strengthening public education systems through the development of credible education management information systems that inform policy reforms and implementation strategies from the local to the national levels.



**ASPBAE highlighted that there should be minimum requirements agreed within GPE that will apply to all country grants. These should reinforce and be aligned with the SDG 4 commitments and agenda.**

- On the question of whether GPE should differentiate how it operates according to the capabilities and needs of partner country systems, ASPBAE responded that there should be minimum requirements agreed within the partnership that will apply to all country grants. These should reinforce and be aligned with the SDG 4 commitments and agenda. Any departure from these minimum requirements should still be consistent with the internationally agreed benchmarks and commitments made to education especially on human rights, the SDGs and SDG 4.
- GPE should continue the efforts to seek ways to prevent fragmentation of the education aid architecture to minimise transaction costs and the burden on country-level partners. It should continue to pursue hosting of Education Cannot Wait, especially noting that 32 GPE partner developing countries are fragile or affected by conflict, representing 47% of all country partners; and a large share of GPE implementation grants were allocated to partner countries affected by fragility and conflict i.e. 60% in 2016. It should remain an active participant in the current global discussions on the emerging education aid architecture convened by UNESCO.

Other points raised by ASPBAE included supporting consultative mechanisms at that local and national levels that are inclusive and with participation of diverse education stakeholders, including CSOs and teachers' organisations, which facilitate broad support for the delivery and monitoring of education sector plans aligned with SDG4. GPE should strengthen its facilitative role as a Partnership that leverages and builds on and acknowledges the strengths of its members. It should complement and build on the strengths of its members prevent duplication of work, and overlap of mandates with its members, and drive well-coordinated delivery of SDG 4.

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