

DECEMBER 4-5, 2024 – MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EMIRATE OF DUBAI - BOD/2024/12 DOC 09 – FOR DECISION

GPE 2030 STRATEGY

Please note: In accordance with the GPE Transparency Policy, documents are public only after their appraisal by the relevant governance instance. Governance officials may circulate documents to their constituency for consultation purposes, except for documents of a confidential nature.

Key issues for consideration:

- In June 2024, the Board endorsed an approach and related timeline for developing the GPE 2030 Strategy. It requested the Secretariat to pursue further work on the following areas: what makes GPE unique; scope; leave no one behind; leveraging financing; leveraging partnerships and measuring results and impact. This document and associated decisions cover GPE 2030's scope and leave no one behind.
- At their October 2024 meetings, the Performance, Impact and Learning Committees (PILC) and Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) broadly agreed on maintaining GPE's current scope (12+1) and mainstreaming gender, climate change and inclusion. Members also agreed on further supporting the participation and capacity of teachers to transform education systems. Committees' members supported additional focus on skills-to-work programming but cautioned not to broaden the scope to include post-secondary technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
- Members from both Committees recommended the proposal to strengthen support to the most marginalized children, to gender-responsive and inclusive systems, and to the measurement and use of data on learning outcomes. They also concurred to continue prioritizing low- and lower-middle-income countries in GPE 2030. Members decided to remove upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) from the decision language and further reflect on the issue when more detail on the modalities of engagement with UMICs becomes available.

Objective

1. The Board of Directors is requested to consider, for its decision, proposals for two strategic choices for the GPE 2030 strategy namely **Scope** and **Leave No One Behind**. These decisions relate to the breadth and ambition of GPE 2030 and set the strategic direction for the funding and financing framework.

Recommended decision

BOD/2024/12-XX— GPE 2030's Scope: The Board of Directors determines that GPE 2030 should:

1. Maintain a scope of 12 years of primary and secondary education plus at least one year of pre-primary education. This includes evidence-based interventions to support integrated programming for younger children (3+), as

part of programs focused on pre-primary education, and skills to work programming for youth enrolled in secondary education or equivalent non-formal or catch-up education and skills programs.

2. Continue to strengthen mainstreaming inclusion and gender equality across all aspects of GPE work, including a focus on addressing gender-based violence and inclusion of children with disabilities and refugees.
3. Strengthen approaches to addressing climate change in education systems and mitigating the impact of climate change on education delivery, recognizing that this is especially critical in fragile and conflict-affected countries with the most severe impacts on the most vulnerable, including refugee children and children with disabilities.
4. Explore ways in which GPE engagement can strengthen the participation and capacity of teachers in shaping and delivering a country's priority reform, recognizing that any education system transformation is impossible without the active engagement of teachers, including teachers with disabilities and refugee teachers.

BOD/2024/12-XX – Leave No One Behind: The Board of Directors determines that:

1. Low- and lower-middle-income countries should continue to benefit from GPE's traditional grant mechanisms (system transformation grant, system capacity grant) and innovative financing opportunities.
2. GPE should continue to strengthen country capacity to identify, track, and support children at risk of dropping out and out-of-school children, including directing GPE financing to children and youth outside the formal education system in some contexts.
3. More gender responsive, equitable and inclusive education systems should be supported, including through a stronger intersectoral lens and incentivizing the equity, efficiency and volume of domestic financing.
4. The GPE Secretariat should explore how to support, incentivize, and strengthen accountability across the partnership for measuring and using disaggregated learning outcome data, by sex, disability, protection status and age, to improve results.

Background and overview

1. In June 2024, the Board endorsed an approach and related timeline for developing the GPE 2030 Strategy, and requested the Secretariat, under the guidance of the Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC), to pursue further technical work and consultations to inform strategy development in

areas where the development of the GPE 2030 Strategy would benefit either from taking a new direction or re-affirming current choices ([BOD/2024/06-06](#)). These areas were: (1) what makes GPE unique; (2) Scope; (3) Leave No One Behind; (4) Leveraging Financing; (5) Leveraging Partnerships and (6) Measuring Results and Impact.

2. In July 2024, a survey was launched to seek initial input to some of the key issues related to these areas. A summary analysis of the survey results is provided in Annex C. Information on ongoing and planned consultations can be found in Annex B.
3. A decision at this time on the two strategic choices of **Scope** and **Leave No One Behind** (see Annex A) is essential to guide the related decisions on the funding and financing framework.
4. Annex B details the ongoing consultations for GPE 2030 and updates on the remaining strategic choices. Annex C presents a summary of the survey results.

Next Steps

5. Following the December 2024 Board deliberations, a strategy framework will be drafted, capturing all the critical strategy decisions for Committee and Board discussion in April and June 2025, respectively.

Annex A – Background on Strategic Choices of Scope and Leave No One Behind

Annex B – Background on Consultations and Way Forward

The following annexes are available on the [Governance Portal](#):

Annex C – Survey Results

Annex A – Background on Strategic Choices of Scope and Leave No One Behind

1. **Scope:** GPE’s scope describes the areas within an education system that are eligible for GPE grants. Recognizing that GPE funding is a small fraction of overall funding to the education sector, the expectation is that country partners will choose one issue (a priority reform) that is within scope, behind which government, partners and GPE will align their efforts to accelerate delivery.
2. GPE 2025 emphasized “the poorest and most marginalized, prioritizing at least one year of pre-primary education and 12 years of education and training”. Staying the course on “12+1” has received support from stakeholders in all constituencies in the GPE 2030 survey.
3. Youth unemployment, especially among disadvantaged groups, remains a challenge in many GPE partner countries. While formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs have historically yielded poor returns due to high costs and low job placement rates, there is evidence that general secondary education students can benefit from market-relevant vocational training. This has garnered strong support from partner countries, southern CSOs, teacher unions, youth and student organizations and academic institutions, which agree that depending on the context, GPE should focus on employability skills. Expanding GPE’s efforts in this area will require Secretariat capacity to ensure quality skills-for-work programs are evidence based and good value for money. Aligning GPE support in this area with secondary education or non-formal equivalent would exclude post-secondary TVET, adult education and adult literacy programs.
4. Strong evidence shows that investing in quality early childhood education is a cost-effective way to improve future educational outcomes and reduce learning gaps. It is proposed that GPE continue to support pre-primary education. There is growing interest in expansion of early childhood education for children in the 0-3 age range. This sub-sector is still evolving – with great variation across service providers and policy and governance arrangements. It is proposed that the GPE take a pragmatic approach to these cases and allow support for integrated programming for younger children only when it is part of a program primarily focused on pre-primary education.
5. Addressing cross cutting priorities including climate change, gender equality, safe learning, school nutrition and education technology can accelerate

progress and strengthen quality education systems. These issues remain within scope, as relevant to the country context. Of these, the GPE 2030 survey highlights that linking education to climate change and gender equality are viewed as critical by all stakeholders.

6. GPE has made significant progress in hardwiring gender equality, with nearly 80 percent of active grants addressing gender-related barriers in partner countries. There is also growing recognition of climate change's disproportionate impact, with 1.29 billion school-aged children globally facing extreme climate events annually, 90 percent of them in low- and middle-income countries. It is proposed that under GPE 2030, further work is undertaken to mainstream climate in GPE's engagement, building on the work of GPE's climate smart education systems initiative, and learning from progress in hardwiring gender equality.
7. Recognizing that teachers are at the heart of improving education delivery, it is proposed that the GPE Secretariat further explore how GPE 2030 might strengthen the participation and capacity of teachers in shaping and delivering a country's priority reform.
8. **Leave No One Behind:** GPE 2025 prioritized financial and non-financial support to low- and lower-middle-income countries with poor learning outcomes, high numbers of out-of-school children, significant gender disparities, and those affected by crisis and fragility. GPE 2030 presents an opportunity to sharpen this focus.
9. Understanding today's landscape is crucial, as individual factors (e.g., socio-economic status, gender, disability, ethnicity) and place-based factors (e.g., rural/urban, climate vulnerability, crisis/displacement) significantly influence opportunities for quality education. These inequities within countries are irrespective of country income status – for example, in middle-income countries the poorest children in rural areas are seven times more likely to be out of school compared to the richest children.
10. High and rising inequality in middle-income countries has adverse economic, social, and political consequences, both within those countries and globally. Gender disparities are worsening in many contexts, and the impacts of climate change falls more heavily on the poor. Education can act as an equalizer in

societies and a force for social stability, if quality education opportunities are available for all, especially those most affected by worsening inequality.

11. Shifts in country income status—33 countries have transitioned from low- to middle-income in the last 20 years—also affect GPE’s global reach, which now includes 25 low-income countries (LICs), 51 lower-middle-income countries (LMICS), and 16 upper-middle-income countries (UMICS)¹. On average 68 percent of children in GPE partner countries are unable to read and comprehend a simple sentence by the age of 10 (54 percent in UMICS; 64 percent in LMICS; 91 percent in LICs or fragile and conflict affected countries). By 2040, it is projected that 161 million children of primary and secondary age will be out of school, including 73 million in middle-income countries, and 60 million in fragile contexts.
12. The GPE 2030 survey suggests that the majority of GPE funds should continue to support low-income countries but also that GPE should consider a mix of grant and technical/convening support for middle-income countries, with a focus on the poorest communities.
13. Within countries the paucity of accessible and actionable data continues to hamper efforts to identify and track those children most at risk from being left behind. Most stakeholders agreeing that GPE has a role in improving the measurement of learning outcomes. It is proposed that GPE explores how to support, incentivize, and strengthen accountability for measuring learning outcomes through GPE mechanisms. A proposal to link top ups to progress in measuring learning outcomes is included in the GPE 2030 strategic parameters document (BOD/2024/12 DOC 11).

¹ Countries that are eligible for new grants under GPE2025 and their economic classification as of July 1, 2024.

Annex B – Background on Consultations and Way Forward

1. The GPE 2030 survey link was shared with all partners by mid-July and closed 11 September 2024. Simultaneously, the Secretariat provided a toolkit for partners to conduct self-led virtual (or in-person) consultations.
2. At least five self-led consultations have been held by partners, including representatives from donors, civil society, multilaterals and foundations. Additionally, the Secretariat held in-person consultations with teachers from around 15 countries during the Education International World Congress in Buenos Aires in late July, virtual consultations with around 50 active coordinating agencies in early September, and in person at partner country focal point constituency meetings in May and mid-October for the Asia-Pacific and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Central Asia constituencies. Initial consultation with the Latin America and the Caribbean constituency was held in early 2024, with follow up planned for 2025.
3. The Secretariat organized two partnership-wide consultations to explore the initial findings from the survey results and react to the recommendations. The Africa regional constituency meeting on 21 November is the final consultation moment for the GPE 2030 strategy before the Board meeting.
4. There will be additional moments for consultation around the remaining decisions related to GPE 2030 in early 2025.

What makes GPE unique and leveraging partnerships

5. Given the close interconnection between the feedback received for these two strategic choices, they are presented together.
6. Feedback from the GPE 2030 survey shows that GPE's unique value lies in its partnership model and its focus on inclusion in education. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of GPE taking a more proactive role in further strengthening its partnership model. Suggestions included enhancing the capacity of local actors to engage more effectively in education sector reforms.
7. Areas for further exploration include:
 - **Establish measurable objectives** Measure partnership effectiveness and strengthen accountability for aligned support behind priority reforms.
 - **Expand the partnership** to include local and regional stakeholders who contribute value beyond the role of grant agents or coordinating agencies.

- **Strengthen country level partnership** to uphold the principles of country ownership and mutual accountability and continue to support strengthening and institutionalizing collaboration and sector coordination at the country level. This is particularly crucial in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- **Strengthening links across different levels of partnership** Develop and strengthen mechanisms that link global, regional and country level partnership to ensure greater transparency, voice, and accountability within the partnership.
- **Establish and/or strengthen partnerships within and beyond the education sector** In line with strengthening country level partnerships, proactively engage with new and untapped partners who are aligned with GPE principles to support the education transformation agenda. This includes stakeholders from within the education sector - such as teachers, youth, parents, ministries of finance, and gender advocates - and those from cross-sectoral fields such as climate change, gender equality, safe learning, school nutrition, and education technology.

Background

8. Early findings from the GPE 2030 survey show that partners are aware of the value they bring into the partnership. They are also aware of the tensions that arise in a diverse and multi-stakeholder partnership and expect the Secretariat to be proactive in strengthening partnerships at country level. Survey respondents see a clear role for the Secretariat in ensuring sector processes and dialogue remain inclusive, participatory, and informed by evidence as countries pick up the pace in implementing the priority reforms outlined in their partnership compacts. Tracking and reporting on partnership compact delivery, continuous learning and adapting, co-designing solutions came out as priority elements for partners to align their efforts in delivering compact objectives.
9. Survey results also highlight the importance of engaging with and through new or under-leveraged partners from within the education sector and beyond. This engagement is crucial for greater inclusion, mutual learning, coordination, and collaboration at local and global levels. By incorporating these diverse voices, especially those unlikely to be GPE grant agents, GPE can enormously enhance legitimacy and credibility of the partnership in countries.
10. A strength noted in the survey results lies in GPE's partnership model, uniting diverse partners under a shared framework to drive education reform. At the

regional and global level, through its constituency-based governance, GPE amplifies the voices of partner countries in global dialogues, providing a platform that individual organizations alone cannot offer. Through its operating model, GPE aims to facilitate the alignment of partner actions with national education priorities, ensuring that efforts are collaborative, mutually reinforcing, evidence-based, and inclusive. Recent evaluations show strong evidence on GPE2025's ability to support a government led, participatory dialog on reform prioritization, with potential to further strengthen this as countries move towards implementation of education reforms.

Measuring Results and Impact

11. GPE plays a crucial role in helping partner countries' efforts accelerate learning outcomes, promote gender equality, and enhance inclusion through systemic reforms. At the heart of GPE's value proposition is its commitment to supporting countries in achieving long-term results that extend beyond grants and funding cycles. Considering the feedback received from the survey and other consultations, the Secretariat proposes exploring the following areas:
 - **Focus on key outcomes and results areas:** GPE 2030 should more sharply demonstrate its value through three tiers of outcomes: (i) **Sector-level education outcomes:** such as improved learning outcomes, to which GPE directly contributes; (ii) **Education system reform**, which GPE facilitates, e.g. policy and institutional improvements through priority reforms articulated in country compacts; (iii) **GPE grants:** Track and leverage the results of GPE grants, which often include co-financing, to enhance the impact of GPE's work.
 - Across the three tiers, GPE will prioritize the following key results areas: student learning, gender equality and inclusion, teachers and teaching, domestic finance for education, and addressing climate change.
 - **Adopt a partnership-wide target for SDG 4.1.1a reporting:** While the GPE results framework already tracks partner countries progress on SDG 4.1.1², GPE proposes setting a partnership-wide target for all partner countries to report data on SDG 4.1.1a³ (covering both reading and mathematics) to the

² Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

³ Proportion of kids in grades 2 and 3 "achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.

UNESCO Institute for Statistics between 2025 and 2030. The proposal aligns with upcoming funding allocation decisions, to be considered by the Board in December 2024, and has received support from survey respondents.

- **Annual progress monitoring of the priority reform:** As part of the mid-term reviews of partnership compacts country partners will identify a short list of intermediate actions that the local education group will monitor (including roles and responsibilities where relevant). It is proposed that these will be tracked annually and updated as needed.
- **Strengthen results measurement and monitoring:** GPE proposes to standardize measurement and reporting on the results of similar interventions across GPE grants (e.g., bringing out-of-school children into school, gender equality, etc.) to improve the aggregation of results. In addition, a light but standardized measurement approach for co-financed programs, leveraged through GPE’s innovative finance mechanisms, would also allow GPE to aggregate and report results more comprehensively to all stakeholders.

Background

12. Between 2019 and 2023, only 30 out of 88 GPE’s partner countries reported data on reading, and 29 countries on mathematics, either at early grades or at the end of primary education to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics⁴. This lack of regular and high-quality data has significantly constrained both the sector’s and GPE’s ability to assess progress in student learning outcome. Despite the limited data, there is a broad consensus that learning levels remain critically low across many partner countries. This calls for a greater focus on sector level learning outcomes.
13. In addition to the challenges with learning outcome data, there is also a scarcity of evidence regarding the implementation of systemic reforms that are essential for improving education outcomes. Survey respondents support measuring the implementation and results of system reform. In addition, GPE could continue strengthening data systems and analytic capacity in partner countries.
14. To address some of these data and evidence gaps, GPE has made significant strides in grant monitoring since 2021. The introduction of standard reporting on grant progress and results, along with the classification of grant interventions to clearly define areas supported by GPE financing, has improved the ability to

⁴ As of August 2024.

track and report outcomes. Additionally, periodic reviews of completed grants now offer summarized results, including the number of children benefitting from these interventions, providing valuable insights into the impact of GPE's efforts and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of education progress.

Leveraging financing

15. Strategic considerations for scaling up the use of GPE grant resources to leverage and mobilize additional finance for education were discussed in the June 2024 Board ([BOD/2024/06-07](#)), informed by consultations and extensive research with the Boston Consulting Group. The Board approved next steps for the Secretariat to further analyze and develop options for the range of instruments that may be introduced for the 2026-2030 financing period. This work is currently in progress, with the technical analysis scheduled for presentation to the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) and Performance, Impact and Learning Committee (PILC) in April 2025 and to the Board in June 2025. The analysis will not only encompass a thorough review of all available options but also incorporate feedback from Board constituencies gathered through consultations conducted between December 2024 and June 2025.