Independent Summative Evaluation of the **Global Partnership for Education 2020**

Final Report

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List of Abbreviations

AE	Accredited Entity
ASA	Advocacy and Social Accountability
CA	Coordinating Agency
CCM	Country Coordinating Mechanism
CL	Country Lead (in CST)
CLE	Country Level Evaluation
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CST	Country Support Team
CY	Calendar year
DCP	Developing Country Partner
EA	Enabling Activity
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPR	Effective Partnership Review
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Plan Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
FCAC	Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries
FIF	Financial Intermediary Fund
FP	Focal Point
FSP	Full-sized Project
FY	Financial Year
GA	Grant Agent
GAVI	Gavi, the vaccine alliance
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	The Global Environment Facility
GEIA	Gender Equality Institutional Assessment
GF	the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GPC	the Grants and Performance Committee of GPE Board
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPR	Grant performance report
GPSP	Grant Process Streamlining project
HSCC	Health Sector Coordinating Committee
ICC	Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee
IEC	Independent Evaluation Committee
ISE	Independent Summative Evaluation
JSR	Joint Sector Review
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LAS	Learning Assessment System
LEG	Local Education Group
LIC	Low income countries
LMIC	Low and middle income countries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCA	Maximum Country Allocation
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
MSP	Medium-sized Project
NDA	National Designated Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
PDG	Program Development Grant
PEF	Partners' Engagement Framework
PIF	Project Identification Form
PR	Principal Recipient
QA	Quality Assurance
QAR	Quality Assurance Review
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation
RF	Results Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIC	the Strategy and Impact Committee of GPE Board
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
STAR	the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
TA	Technical Assistance
TEP	Transitional Education Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US$	United States Dollar
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VfM	Value for Money

Executive Summary

Evaluation Purpose And Approach

The Independent Summative Evaluation (ISE) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to help shape the latter's post-2020 strategy by drawing lessons from its performance since 2015. In addition, the ISE is a means through which GPE aims to be transparent and accountable for its actions and results. The ISE was conducted in two stages. Stage one (August – December 2019) primarily involved a desk study into the broader development and organizational effectiveness of GPE. During this initial desk study, various evidence gaps were identified and prioritized for further investigation in stage two (January – April 2020), based on their relevance for GPE's post-2020 strategy.

This final report presents the overall ISE findings, starting with the broader stage one findings, followed by more detailed findings related to eight selected areas of further investigation. Under development effectiveness, these areas are: (i) ESP implementation, (ii) LEG effectiveness, (iii) the efficiency and use of funds in GPE's grant allocation and disbursement processes, and (iv) GPE's role in domestic and international financing for education. Under organizational effectiveness, these areas are: (i) fit-for-purpose governance and management arrangements, (ii) the overall health of the partnership, (iii) the functionality of the conceptual framework, and (iv) GPE's M&E performance,

A detailed methodological approach has been developed for each area, relying on data from available reports and interviews with a selection of GPE's diverse stakeholders at the global and country levels. The ISE also includes a systematic qualitative examination of the significance of contributing factors in key GPE performance areas such as ESP implementation and LEG effectiveness. Furthermore, the ISE includes a benchmark study among four other global funds. To link the ISE conclusions more directly to the sections of GPE's ongoing post-2020 strategy development process, these are categorized and presented below as *development effectiveness, efficiency and trends in financing, and organizational effectiveness.*

Development Effectiveness

GPE has demonstrated progress towards all of its outcome- and output-level objectives as targeted in GPE's overall Results Framework (RF), although its effectiveness per objective varies. At the global level, targets for *building a stronger partnership* have been exceeded, while targets for *more financing* have been achieved although progress in *better financing* (harmonization and alignment) remains a challenge. At the country level, GPE's effectiveness has been most convincing in *creating more inclusive policy development processes resulting in ESPs/TEPs that increasingly meet GPE's quality standards.* GPE has successfully supported the financing of ESP/TEP implementation through ESPIGs that are largely on track and generally perceived to be relevant, despite covering a relatively small portion of funding for ESP/TEP implementation.

GPE's effectiveness towards ESP implementation and its subsequent contribution to more effective and efficient education systems remains a challenge. These goals reflect relatively broad sector-wide ambitions compared with other global funds. Progress towards these goals depends on the successful contribution of GPE's interventions in combination with a wide range of external factors.

A deeper investigation into internal and external factors explaining ESP implementation revealed that GPE's achievements in terms of creating better plans, more inclusive sector dialogue and monitoring processes, and financing are positively associated with ESP implementation. This illustrates the validity of GPE's ToC in the sense that this combination of GPE-supported outputs provides relevant building blocks for making progress in ESP implementation. The ISE also

observes that progress in improving plans has moved at a faster pace than improvements in dialogue and monitoring, which progressed in a more modest pace, similar to that of ESP implementation. This indicates that improving sector plans may be important but on its own is insufficient to ascertain satisfactory progress in plan implementation.

At the same time, the ISE observes that higher ratings of the GPE contributions to sector planning, dialogue and monitoring are associated with lower ratings of implementation performance. This is explained by the fact that GPE support towards inclusive planning processes is adapted to support needs, which typically are highest in countries with relatively weak plan implementation capacity. Consequently, the GPE contributions should be strongest in countries where it ESP implementation is most likely to be difficult, which points to the significance of other factors that are not directly part of GPE's interventions.

Some of these factors lie within GPE's sphere of influence, relating to implementation capacity, funding, and motivation of key factors involved in ESP implementation. These factors are recognized in GPE's Theory of Change and have been confirmed to hold relevance for ESP implementation, although in practice it appears that GPE has had relatively little influence on them. A key emerging area of attention in this has been the importance of inter-government relationships and cooperation, in particular between the ministries responsible for education, the Ministry of Finance and sub-national government entities.

In addition, the ISE examined factors outside GPE's sphere of influence related to the institutional and socio-economic context, which according to literature can be expected to hold relevance for ESP implementation. From this, it appeared that the absence of conflict and fragility and the presence of rule of law are important institutional factors that facilitate ESP implementation. At the same time, socio-economic features like higher population density, and lower ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity appear to be enabling factors for ESP implementation.

At the country level, GPE depends on the LEG for advising the education policy cycle from ESP/TEP development to ESPIG application and ESP implementation. Progress in LEG effectiveness has been uneven across countries. More LEGs have been effective in discussing ESP and ESPIG development and ESPIG monitoring, and fewer in influencing ESP implementation and strategic choices.

A deeper investigation into the internal and external factors that explain differences in LEG effectiveness revealed that particular combinations of organizational and collaboration principles proposed by the Secretariat explain LEG effectiveness, although LEGs do not need to meet all principles to be effective. Mutual accountability has the closest association with LEG effectiveness. Other than that, positive cases of effective LEGs meet at least two principles. The combination of principles and contextual factors that seem most closely associated with LEG strategic effectiveness are strong government leadership and strong LEG governance, or strong GPE initiative and influence in countries where the education sector actors have weaker capacity.

Technical capacity gaps within complex government systems for the delivery of education and data collection are an issue for all LEGs in discharging their functions, especially in closing the feedback loop between action and reflecting on what has been achieved, what has not, and why. The motivation and leverage of LEG members explain whether or not they contribute to effective LEGs.

Structural political and economic factors are associated with LEG effectiveness, including inequality (income, ethnic, and linguistic), the absence of other fora for dialogue in the education sector, limited space for civil society, and the impact of conflict and disasters. This relationship between LEGs and the structural factors that surround them can be summarized under the concept of a social contract, which influences whether inclusive dialogue on education based on accountability is possible.

LEGs struggle to find solutions that require system thinking because they imply changing the behavior of teachers and education actors, which requires exploring how their motivation, incentives, and leverage interact in principal-agent or collective action problems. Other global funds adopt a similar multi-stakeholder partnership model at the country level and show similar challenges. Compared with other funds, GPE's unique sector-wide focus requires the highest level of effort to ensure that the LEGs work as intended as country-specific multi-stakeholder platforms.

Efficiency, use of funds and trends in financing

GPE's grant allocation process from MCA to first disbursement takes more than 40 months on average, which strains the level of commitment to the process among in-country actors. The first 26 months of this period include an initial delay, as the timing of the education sector planning process is not linked to the MCA announcement. Subsequently, a significant amount of time is occupied by completing a complex sector-wide participatory analysis and plan development process. Altogether, this consumes about two-thirds of the 40 months, which differs from other global funds that have a more issue-based/thematic focus and are less demanding in term of inclusiveness and quality requirements.

Once this process is completed in line with GPE's quality standards, the application process for the implementation grant can start. This process includes a rigorous three-staged QAR process, involving external appraisals that can be lengthy and affect the sense of national ownership. GPE is taking commendable steps to address these issues through the GPSP, GPR, VfM and the EPR processes.

Grant implementation is judged to be efficient, as the majority of grants are on track, while delays in disbursements are primarily caused by operational challenges (e.g. complications in procurement), which often lie beyond GPE's scope of control. The Secretariat monitors progress in implementation and fund disbursement and undertakes regular efforts to analyze and propose options for improved efficiency. The Secretariat has grown in size during the current strategy period, mostly in response to Board decisions. Nevertheless, the costs of the Secretariat have remained within GPE's own targeted range and in line with other global funds.

Country allocations over the 2012 – 2020 period illustrate a continued focus on basic education in LICs and LMICs, with a slight emphasis on FCACs in line with GPE's MCA formula. Funds are allocated to a wide range of activities related to improving learning quality, equity and systems, reflecting a country-level partnership consensus rather than a specific prioritization. During the 2012 – 2018 period, a relatively small proportion (5.6 percent) of ODA to education in DCPs and as much as 11.8 percent to basic education has been channeled through GPE. Since 2016, GPE has seen unprecedented funding pledges and contributions from DCPs and donor countries, albeit significantly less than what is needed to close the enormous funding gaps.

Domestic expenditure remains by far the most important source of funding for education. GPE has continuously advocated the importance of increasing domestic education budgets, although its influence is limited as domestic funding decisions are subject to many other considerations. As a result, the number of DCPs that have structurally managed to increase or sustain domestic education budgets above 20 percent of their overall government budget remains below GPE's targets as set in 2016.

Donors make deliberate choices in terms of what, where, and how they provide assistance, and many donors value having a direct relationship with the recipient country, control over the spending of aid, and the quality of accountability and governance systems. Principal reasons why traditional donors provide funding to GPE include the fact that GPE may work in countries that are not direct partner countries of the donor, as well as the possibility to participate in shaping the global education development agenda.

The global landscape for education development is becoming increasingly complex, with developing countries graduating or demoting in income status or fragility, a changing web of traditional and newly-emerging donors (e.g. private foundations, China, India, etc.), and recently-established funding vehicles such as the Education Cannot Wait and the International Financing Facility for Education. The 2015 interim evaluation already called upon GPE to consider a more specific position in the overall aid architecture for education. Since then, GPE has remained positioned as a broad and inclusive funding channel for basic education, although there has been a growing call for GPE to position itself more sharply.

Organizational Effectiveness

GPE has overachieved on its targets in *building a stronger partnership*, among others by clarifying roles, responsibilities and key operational processes, the production of knowledge products and further

professionalizing GPE's risk management and fiduciary oversight. In addition, substantial progress has been made in establishing a strategic management framework as recommended by the 2015 interim evaluation. This includes a ToC and RF that has improved the clarity and transparency of GPE's ambitions and how it will hold itself accountable for results.

To date, GPE has primarily used these frameworks for communication and accountability purposes, and less as tools to steer and learn from its operations. The ToC and RF are aligned, and signs have been found of these frameworks being used to guide or validate operational plans, although this has not yet become common practice throughout GPE. Clear efforts have been made to translate the Gender Equality Policy into action plans, although because GPE's gender strategy followed later its specific objectives did not find their way into GPE's overall RF. This separation means that it remains difficult to observe the effects of GPE's gender strategy on GPE's core results.

M&E efforts have been successful in increasing GPE's accountability at the global level. There are convincing signs of M&E results influencing the quality of programmatic discussions by adding regular factual output-related data on key issues like progress in alignment, trends in funding, JSR application, etc. At the country level, GPE's M&E efforts primarily rely on the successful application of JSRs, which has remained a challenge in terms of meeting GPE standards despite positive feedback from DCP representatives. Despite the apparent use of available M&E information, the RF in its current shape does not sufficiently address key questions related to GPE performance, in particular related to the quality of cooperation, mutual accountability and ESP implementation at the country level.

In addition, Board members and Secretariat staff have persisting concerns about the quality of partnership dynamics and the adequacy of managerial arrangements that are not captured by the existing RF. A deeper investigation into the health of the partnership and the extent to which governance and management arrangement are fit for purpose revealed that GPE's principle of being an inclusive partnership has become an obvious part of GPE's DNA as it is reflected in GPE's structures and decision-making processes and practices. At the global level, this is visible in the composition of the Board and its five standing committees — all of which comprise the diverse constituencies of GPE — and the value placed on consensus in decision-making. It is also illustrated by the prominent role of these member bodies in decision-making related to grant appraisal and approval, financial oversight, internal practices and procedures. At the country level, it is visible in the (desired) composition of LEGs and the prominent role of this multi-stakeholder platform in the ESP development and grant application process, especially compared with other global funds.

The ISE appreciates the benefits of GPE's efforts to put its principle of inclusiveness in practice, as it keeps GPE together as a unique global platform on which the multiple stakeholders in the education sector work together towards a common goal. At the same time, the ISE is cognizant of the costs of GPE's inclusive practices and the gradual expansion of the partnership, in particular in terms of the pace and quality of decision-making in GPE's relatively heavy governance structures. This also makes it difficult to find time for joint reflection and learning on how to optimize the contribution of the existing members. Looking at how other global funds have organized themselves, the ISE believes that there is scope for increased efficiency without jeopardizing GPE's important asset of being a truly inclusive partnership.

At present, the Secretariat primarily plays a support role vis-à-vis the Board, its committees and – to a lesser extent – the LEGs. The pace of progress is often affected by the frequency of meetings of the Board (committees), whose mandates are not limited to strategic issues (the 'what' and 'why' of GPE) but also extend to more practical issues related to GPE's operations and organizational development (i.e. the how of GPE). A direct consequence of this is the recurring challenge of finding the necessary time in the agenda of Board (committee) meetings to address all of the issues on which a dialogue and decision is required. In light of this, the Secretariat spends significant time carefully preparing and framing these discussions. Indeed, this facilitates a quick yet limited reactive debate, although both Board members and Secretariat staff are critical about the current working arrangements, illustrating the need for further streamlining.

Looking at other global funds, we see diverse management arrangements, mostly reflecting less intense involvement of the Board, despite being mindful of keeping members connected on strategic issues. For instance, their Board decides on country allocations, funding key areas/priorities, and approval for larger investments, while the Secretariat follows up on priorities within country programs and approves individual grants, usually with the help of an independent thematic expert panel. In terms of strengthening national ownership/government leadership, GPE's mechanisms are largely similar, but they stand out by having a broader and inclusive sector-wide orientation, which increases the number of actors involved and complicates partnership dynamics. In supporting ESP/TEP implementation, GPE has less diverse mechanisms for providing TA, applies a Variable Tranche modality comparable to GCF's results-based financing and stimulates joint monitoring through JSRs similar to Gavi.

Finally, throughout the ISE process, the GPE Secretariat has demonstrated itself to be alert, active and capable of identifying and analyzing tactical and operational challenges. More than 40 internal and external reviews have been undertaken during the past five years of implementing the GPE 2020 strategy, leading to new insights for improved performance on which the Secretariat could act more rapidly, if empowered to do so.

In response to its findings and conclusions, the ISE has formulated the following recommendations:

1. Maintain a focus on sector-wide basic education, but concentrate on improving the ESPs/TEPs implementation by balancing the attention devoted to content and processes, as well as addressing funding, capacity and contextual constraints (to be initiated during the first year of GPE's post-2020 strategy).

Despite GPE's efforts to develop better and more inclusive sector-wide plans, ESP implementation remains limited. Substantial progress has been made in the quality of plans. Progress in the inclusiveness of sector dialogue and monitoring processes has also been made — albeit somewhat less quickly — while the two in combination are seen as essential stepping stones towards successful plan implementation. Besides, funding gaps, capacity constraints and contextual factors continue to affect ESP implementation. The ISE therefore recommends a 'package' of recommendations, which together are meant to strengthen the causal connection from ESP/TEP planning to implementation.

More specifically, without jeopardizing its achievements in plan development, the ISE recommends a strengthened emphasis on process-related requirements that can be expected to facilitate plan implementation like those being pursued in the EPR process. Besides, reducing the funding gap is recommended through (i) a more explicit issue-based identification of funding priorities within ESP/TEP documents, (ii) empowering LEGs to more strongly engage with the government's own policy and budgetary processes, and (iii) continuing efforts to demonstrate the effective and efficient use of funds.

N.B. Even though the effects of the Covid 19 crises are beyond the scope of the ISE, we consider it appropriate to flag the importance of carefully monitoring the likely effects of this crisis on the funding situation of GPE. These effects may include economic crises affecting overall ODA resources, a shift of resources in support of health care systems, or changing funding needs in support of distant learning systems, etc.

Capacity constraints can be addressed by using (i) a more systematic partnership capacity assessment approach using well-established diagnostic models for partnership performance, and (ii) more flexible and varied mechanisms to provide TA support in response to emerging capacity constraints.
Finally, it is suggested to tackle contextual constraints by (i) paying more deliberate attention to external factors that are known to affect plan implementation by making programmatic adaptations and including risk mitigation plans, and (ii) conscientiously capturing and sharing experiences with mitigating adaptations in response to external risks.

2. Strengthen the effectiveness of LEGs as inclusive government-led mechanisms adding value throughout the education policy cycle (to be initiated in the first year of the post-2020 strategy).

Varieties in national contexts explain differences in the shaping, mandate and subsequent performance of LEGs. The ISE therefore recommends continuing the EPR process to strengthen LEG effectiveness. This process should start by reconfirming the country-specific mandates and ambitions of LEGs based on the prevailing political economy and 'social contract' in a country. Subsequently, the ISE recommends stimulating LEGs to assess and address their own capacity gaps in fulfilling this mandate, followed by a periodic self-assessment of progress, reviewing the LEG's *joint accountability for results* and the *mutual accountability of its member contributions*. To make this possible, the ISE suggests to combine existing resources (e.g. Education-out-loud, ESPDG, pilot to finance CA) into one dedicated funding window for in-country partnership capacity development.

> *3. Sharpen the positioning of GPE and its financing, emphasizing support for enabling factors for effective ESP implementation (as part of the ongoing strategy development process).*

The ISE recommends a sharper global positioning of GPE and its financing to more clearly articulate its added value to the sector and guide its financing priorities at country level. A more deliberate strategic focus concerning where and what to fund would help GPE to secure a more aligned and complementary position vis-à-vis other existing and emerging education funding channels, as well as helping to support partner countries in bridging the gap between different types of funding modalities and types of assistance.

Given the limited resources available to GPE compared with the overall funding needs, the ISE believes that GPE funding can add more value by being strategically selective rather than by co-financing a small part sector plan implementation (with the risk that GPE funding becomes a surrogate for funding line items in the education budget of the DCP). The ISE therefore recommends prioritizing GPE funding more sharply on improving the critical systemic conditions necessary for a government to effectively design, fund, manage, and implement education sector policies and plans.

In line with this, we recommend that ESAs already distinguish pre-conditions for effective ESP implementation (including sector accountability needs and EMIS development and operationalization) from education needs, as well as identifying quick wins. This enables introducing a sharper focus and allows accelerating funding by already addressing these pre-conditions in parallel with the broader sector planning process.

> *4. Improve and complement conceptual frameworks with utility-focused management tools and learning processes (as part of, and immediately following the finalization of GPE's post-2020 strategy).*

The ISE believes that under the post-2020 strategy GPE's progress in having a strategic management framework (including ToC and RF) should be taken further. This means consolidating GPE's success in having become clearer and more accountable for its ambitions and results, while increasing the use of this framework for management and learning purposes. This includes (i) adapting the corporate ToC in GPE's post-2020 strategy to do more justice to the reality of GPE's work, (ii) developing a RF that captures complex change (i.e. less predictable and non-linear) by adding qualitative behavior-oriented progress markers to a reduced set of key indicators aligned to a revised ToC, (iii) ensuring that (gender) equality ambitions are included at the outcome and output levels of the ToC and RF, and (iv) strengthening joint learning processes at the global and country level by shaping a prioritized learning agenda, incorporating learning results in the corporate results framework and specifying the learning purpose of future M&E work streams.

> *5. Implications for the Board and Secretariat to improve Organizational Effectiveness.*

The combined performance of the Board, its sub-committees, the LEGs and the Secretariat largely determines GPE's organizational effectiveness, which is a means towards achieving development effectiveness. The final ISE recommendations are therefore phrased as 'implications for the Board and Secretariat' to illustrate that these are means to enable the successful implementation of earlier-mentioned recommendations, rather than being ends in themselves.

An important implication for the Board is the need to concentrate more deliberately on the 'what' and 'why' of GPE, empowering the Secretariat to take charge of

and report on the 'how'. This implies among others that the Board formulates and approves GPE's strategy — including the ToC — sets GPE's ambition level in terms of inclusiveness, determines country allocations, and is only involved in the approval of large, higher-risk grants that hold strategic importance to GPE. Another implication is that the Board sets GPE's annual learning agenda, and concentrates its involvement in revising the RF to identify the key performance questions that the framework needs to answer, while leaving the Secretariat to accelerate the implementation of the EPR process and GPSP and similar interventions.

In addition, the ISE recommends that as part of the upcoming governance review, the Board should examine the costs and benefits of having five standing committees with different and fluctuating workloads that all require regular Secretariat support. Following this, the Board may conclude that a different combination of standing committees and alternative arrangements (e.g. temporary task forces or working groups) is preferable, whereby members continue to drive GPE's response to strategic issues, while making optimal use of the Secretariat for advice and support and for dealing with operational issues.

One implication for the Secretariat is that in its current thinking about organizational reform, it re-emphasizes the centrality of supporting in-country grant management and partnership facilitation processes as its primary process, with all other processes in support of or overseeing this. In addition, we recommend that the Secretariat recognizes and organizes the distinct system and competency requirements of its fund management and partnership facilitation functions. Besides, we suggest developing separate work streams for mobilizing new partners and optimizing the contribution of existing partners. Finally, we recommend that the Secretariat prioritizes *utility* over *specificity* in developing its guidelines and support, allowing more time and space for adaptations at the country level.

The ISE realizes that these proposed implications are more about adapting practices and behavior than procedures. Such adaptations start from deliberate decisions but require a carefully-designed and facilitated internal transition process to have a good chance of success.

1

Introduction

1.1 Background about setup and purpose of GPE

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the successor to the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. Established in 2002, GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that mobilizes global and national support for education in developing country partners (DCPs). The vision and mission of GPE are focused on achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

The partnership brings together DCPs' governments, donor partners, the private sector and philanthropic organizations, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) including teacher organizations[1]. At the global level, GPE is governed by its Board of Directors, comprising representatives across the partnership. GPE's Secretariat provides operational and administrative support. At the country level, partners come together through local education groups (LEGs, or whichever names apply in respective DCPs). LEGs are government-led and coordinated by a designated coordinating agency (CA). GPE funds are administered by a grant agent (GA). GPE's Theory of Change (ToC) and country-level planning model illustrate how the partnership's objectives and goals are achieved.

[1] From TOR for the Independent Summative Evaluation in annex Ten

1.2 Purpose of the ISE

The Terms of Reference (ToR, see Annex Ten) for the ISE of GPE 2016-2020 clearly states the purpose and scope of the ISE. The ISE will be instrumental in helping to shape GPE's post-2020 strategy and will run parallel to the latter's planning process, organized separately by GPE's Strategy and Impact Committee (SIC) on behalf of the Board. The ISE will also serve as an update to the findings of the last independent evaluation of GPE (2015) and review the extent to which its recommendations have been implemented.

The four aims of the ISE — as stated in its ToR — are as follows:

- **Learning**: To understand which aspects of the GPE 2020 strategy are working and which need improvement in the next GPE strategy period.
- **Accountability**: To determine progress towards results and whether GPE partners are fulfilling their expected roles and responsibilities effectively.
- **Transparency**: To communicate findings and achievements to all stakeholders.
- **Effectiveness**: To determine the extent to which the GPE operational model is fit for purpose.

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation in its entirety has been structured in two stages (see Figure 1.3.1).

Stage one of the ISE was based on evaluation questions stated in the ISE ToR that related to the areas of development and organizational effectiveness (see Figure 1.3.2).

The findings of stage one largely depended on desk review and initial interviews of Secretariat staff. During this stage, a number of issues were identified – partly from identified evidence gaps and partly from discussions with the SIC and the Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) — that required more in-depth investigation during stage two of the ISE. These issues for further investigation are again organized under development and organizational effectiveness (see Figure 1.3.3).

Nonetheless, the ISE acknowledges that organizational and development effectiveness are related, which means that in its final analysis of findings the ISE has regarded these issues in combination. In other words, it is acknowledged that the issues under organizational

Figure 1.3.1 Overview of ISE stages

Stage one August - December 2019

- *Document review of the existing evaluative and other GPE materials →*
- *Interim report of initial findings*
- *Analysis of evidence gaps in the existing materials to answer the evaluation questions →*
- *Proposed evaluation approach to address these gaps during the second stage*

Stage two January - June 2020

- *Implementation of agreed evaluation methodologies to address the evidence gaps identified in the first stage*
- *Data collection and synthesis*
- *Producing draft and final reports*

Figure 1.3.2 Scope of ISE stage one

Development effectiveness

- *Relevance*
- *Effectiveness and contributions to impact*
- *Efficiency, additionality and leverage*
- *Likely sustainability*

Organizational effectiveness

- *Governance and management*
- *Administrative efficiency*
- *Country level arrangements and processes*
- *Monitoring and evaluation*

Figure 1.3.3 Scope of ISE stage two

Development effectiveness

- *ESP implementation*
- *LEG effectiveness*
- *Efficiency in use of funds*
- *Trends in financing*

Organizational effectiveness

- *Fit for purpose Governance and Management arrangements*
- *Health of the Partnership*
- *Functionality of GPE's conceptual framework*
- *GPE's performance in M&E*

effectiveness are likely to affect those under development effectiveness (e.g. strong M&E frameworks and practices should help ESP/TEP implementation and resource mobilization, while a healthy partnership is likely to contribute to LEG effectiveness). This interrelation is carefully considered when drawing final conclusions about the main explanatory factors for GPE's performance in achieving progress towards its objectives.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report presents the results of both stages of the ISE process. A separate report with the elaborate stage one findings was finalized in November 2019. In this overall ISE report, the main findings of stage one are summarized in chapter 4.

As such, this final ISE report is structured as follows. In chapter 2, the methodological approach of both stages is summarized, while the core of the inception report outlining the detailed methodological approach for stage two is annexed (see Annex One and Annex Two). Chapter 3 provides a description of GPE's main conceptual frameworks (i.e. ToC and country-level planning cycle). Following chapter 4 with main findings of stage one, chapter 5 reflects the ISE findings related to the issues covered under development effectiveness. Chapter 6 has a similar setup on organizational effectiveness. Finally, chapters 7 and 8 present the ISE's overall conclusions and recommendations.

2

Methodology and Approach

2.1 Overall ISE approach

The ISE was conducted in two stages. Stage one consisted of an extensive desk study and initial interviews with Secretariat staff, aimed at gaining a broader overview of the overall documented performance of GPE. This revealed a number of evidence gaps and key issues for GPE's post-2020 strategy that were selected for further investigation in stage two. Below, we provide further details about the methodological approach of both stages.

2.2 Approach to stage one

Stage one of the ISE took place from August to November 2019. This first stage was meant to provide initial inputs into the ongoing post-2020 GPE strategy development process based on the rich documentation available related to GPE's performance since 2015. The process of stage one comprised 1) an introduction and 'on-boarding' of the ISE team, 2) intake meetings with the IEC and the Secretariat, 3) desk study, 4) a draft interim report and presentation to the SIC and 5) the finalization of the interim report that was presented to the Board in December 2019.

Table 2.2.1 Key issues organized in eight research components

Development Effectiveness	Organizational Effectiveness
Effectiveness	***Governance and Management***
1. *Achievement against GPE's Results Framework (up to outcome level)*	1. *Board performance*
2. *Contribution and additionality of GPE*	2. *Performance in convening, aligning and sustaining political will among stakeholders*
3. *Analysis of what works well and less well*	3. *Communication of GPE's vision and achievements*
	Relevance
Efficiency	***Administrative Efficiency***
4. *Efficient use of funds*	4. *Performance of the GPE Secretariat*
5. *Facilitators and barriers to the use of funds*	5. *Adaptations to Countries Affected by Fragility and Conflict (FCAC) context*
	6. *Fiduciary oversight*
Likely Sustainability	***Country-level arrangements and processes***
6. *Sustaining country-level outcomes*	7. *Performance of LEGs*
7. *Sustainability in the design of ESPs and GPE-funded interventions*	8. *Performance of CAs*
	9. *Effects on donor confidence and coordination*
	10. *Perceived added value of GPE among country-level stakeholders*
Relevance	***Monitoring & Evaluation***
8. *Alignment and coherence*	11. *Quality and usefulness of the M&E strategy and Results Framework*
9. *Responsiveness to country needs*	12. *Consistency and usefulness of the Country-Level Evaluations (CLEs)*
10. *Validity of the ToC*	

The introduction and 'on-boarding' took place in mid-August 2019, whereby the Secretariat provided the ISE with an initial introduction to the goals and setup of GPE. From this moment onwards, the ISE started working out the evaluation matrix in response to the 44 questions mentioned in the ToR (see Annex Ten). At the same time, the Secretariat started sharing documentation with the ISE as inputs to the desk study.

Following an intake visit to the GPE Secretariat in Washington DC in September 2019, the ISE started an intensive desk study, reviewing the wide variety of documents made available by the GPE Secretariat (see Annex Eight). The results of this desk study have been summarized in an interim report, which — following feedback from the IEC and SIC — has been structured according to 22 key issues under the eight evaluation components (see Table 2.2.1).

2.3 Approach to stage two

In consultation with the SIC and IEC, it was agreed that stage two of the ISE would concentrate on eight more specific areas of investigation, in search for answers to the following main evaluation questions

Under development effectiveness:

1. *What explains the apparent limited ESP implementation?*
2. *What explains the differences in LEG effectiveness, in particular during ESP implementation?*

For these two questions, the ISE mapped out progress in the 28 countries/provinces covered by CLEs. Subsequently, the interrelations between this progress and a range of (assumed) internal (i.e. related to GPE interventions) and external (i.e. beyond the scope of GPE) contributing factors was examined. Factors that appeared to have a significant connection with ESP implementation or LEG effectiveness were then subjected to a further qualitative contribution analysis, using existing documentation and literature, to better understand why these connections exist (i.e. what explains the factors that appears to help or hinder).

3. *To what extent has GPE made the best use of funding at its disposal (in terms of efficient grant allocation and disbursement processes)?*
4. *What explains the main trends in international and domestic financing for education and how does this affect the role of GPE in the international aid architecture for education?*

For these questions, relevant trends in international financing for education and GPE's allocation of funds at its disposal were mapped out for the 2012-2019 period. Subsequently, the explanations behind these trends were explored through interviews and desk study. In addition, the ISE has reviewed GPE's ongoing efforts to analyze and improve the efficiency of its grant processes.

Under organizational effectiveness:

5. *How fit for purpose are GPE's current governance and management arrangements in light of GPE's likely directions under its post-2020 strategy?*

The approach in response to this question primarily relied on a benchmark study of four other global funds: Gavi, the vaccine alliance (GAVI); the Green Climate Fund (GCF); the Global Environment Facility (GEF); and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF). This benchmark study has included a review of available evaluation reports related to those funds and interviews with selected staff members, including those dealing with evaluations.

6. *To what extent has GPE made progress towards being a strong and healthy global partnership?*

To answer this question, a variety of GPE stakeholders have been interviewed to gain insights into the existing dynamics/patterns of interaction in GPE. These findings have been analyzed using the Circle of Coherence model[2], which distinguishes four dimensions of interaction that need to balance for a partnership to function optimally.

[2] Brouwer, H. and Woodhill, J., 2016. MSP (Multi-Stakeholder Partnership) Guide. Wageningen: Wageningen University & Research.

7. *To what extent have GPE's overall conceptual frameworks (ToC, RF, Gender Strategy) served their respective purposes?*
8. *To what extent has GPE's M&E performance been successful in serving the purposes of the M&E strategy at the global and country levels?*

Answers to these two questions have been explored by reviewing documented rationale and purposes behind GPE's conceptual frameworks and M&E strategy, while the technical quality of these frameworks has been assessed based on a limited literature study. Subsequently, the ISE has used interviews with diverse GPE stakeholders primarily at global level (see Annex Nine) to gain insights into the use and perceived usefulness of these frameworks and strategies.

Separate evaluation matrices reflecting the link between the stage one findings and stage two areas for further investigation followed by further details about the intended methodological approach were developed for each question (see Annex One and Annex Two). These matrices are documented — along with further details related to the planning and organization of stage two — in the ISE's inception report.

The approach in response to the questions under development effectiveness has largely relied on a further desk study, with particular emphasis on various internal reviews and external country-level and programmatic evaluations. Limited interviews were held, including with the evaluators involved, selected donor partners and Secretariat staff to develop a deeper understanding of why things are the way they are.

As the issues covered under organizational effectiveness have been less extensively covered by earlier reviews, the approach here has relied more on interviews with a diversity of GPE stakeholders at the global and country levels. A complete overview of the interviewees is presented in Annex Nine.

In essence, the stage two evaluation questions are meant to provide insight in more specific elements of GPE's effectiveness and relate to GPE's objectives as presented in its Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 (Table 2.3.1).

Table 2.3.1 Matching GPE objectives with ISE evaluation questions stage two

Objectives from GPE's ToC	*ISE evaluation questions stage two*
GPE objective 1 (country level) — Strengthen educations sector planning and implementation	*ESP implementation — question 1*
GPE objective 2 (country level) — Support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring	*LEG effectiveness — question 2*
GPE objective 3 (country level) — Ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support	*Efficiency and allocation/use of Funds — question 3*
GPE objective 4 (global level) — Mobilize more and better financing	*Trends in financing — question 4*
GPE objective 5 (global level) — Build a stronger partnership	*Fit-for-purpose management and health of partnership — questions 5 and 6*
GPE's overall conceptual frameworks	*Questions 7 and 8*

To enrich and stimulate the evaluation findings, the preliminary evaluation results were reviewed in a participatory sense-making exercise. During this event, the SIC together with additional representatives of GPE's constituencies and selected Secretariat staff members validated and assessed the main ISE findings. In addition, they engaged in a joint brainstorm session in search for creative solutions in addressing some of GPE's key challenges. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, since early March 2020, the ISE had to undertake all its activities virtually. This includes the sense-making that was organized in the shape of an interactive video-conference on April 30th, 2020.

2.4 Challenges and limitations

The ISE faced a number of conventional challenges that can be expected in a large-scale evaluative desk study as outlined below:

1. Finding our way among the large and ever-increasing number of documents within a relatively short time frame;
2. Having to rely on existing information, without being able to assess the accuracy or validity of many of those documents, which makes it difficult to assign significance when documents offer contradictory or multi-interpretable findings; and
3. Giving a clear, accurate and agreed interpretation to complex concepts like alignment, donor confidence, government leadership or country ownership.

N.B. New and updated versions of documents continued to emerge, therefore the ISE has worked with documents that were available on April 1, 2020. Efforts have been made to the extent possible to enrich the report with findings from documents that have become available later, but these have not been reviewed in full.

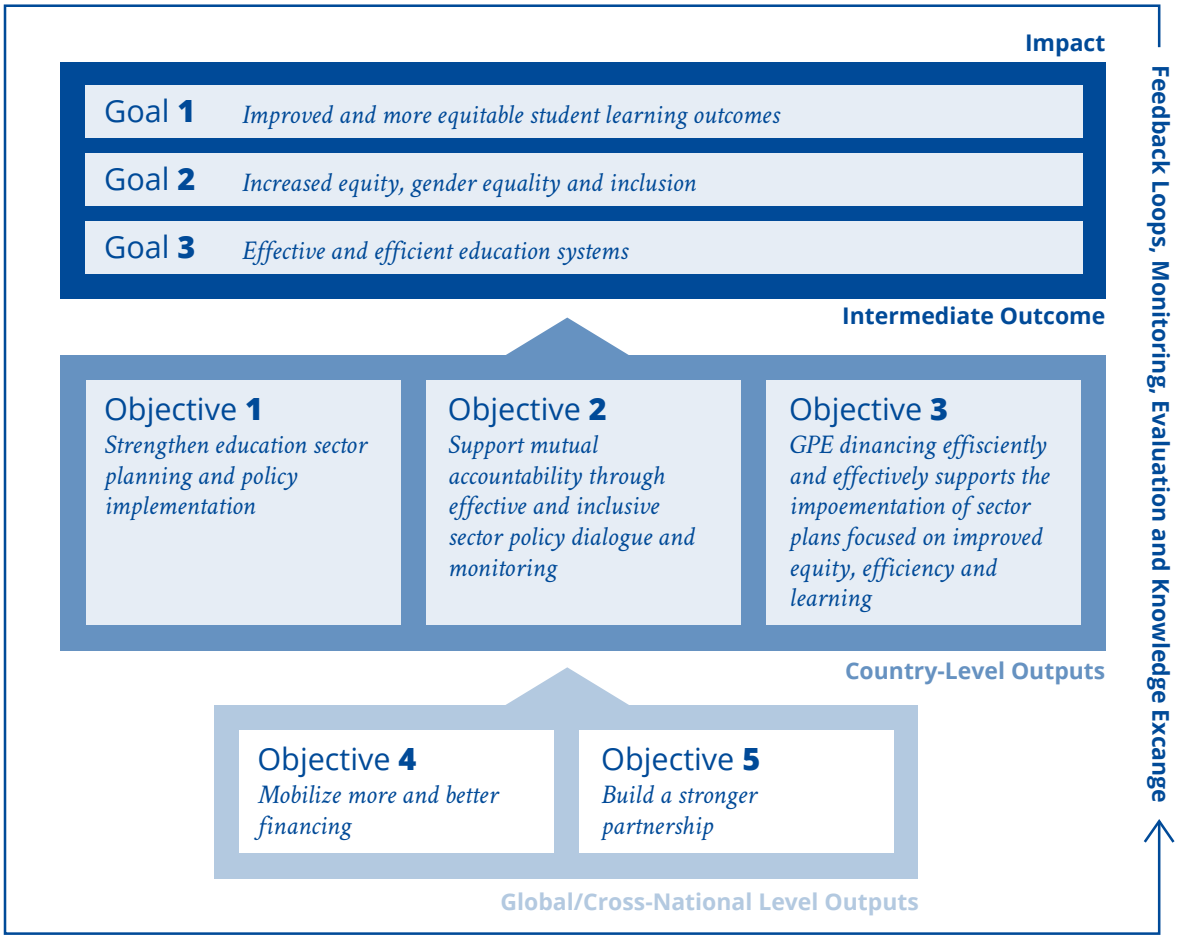
Since early March 2020 however, the ISE started facing the much greater challenge of undertaking the ISE while the global COVID-19 crisis was unfolding. In particular, government officials from DCPs and donor countries suddenly had to design, implement and/or deal with a range of far-reaching measures that affected both the organization of the education sector in their countries as well as their own personal working arrangements. Understandably, this meant that their availability for interviews and other involvement in the ISE (e.g. sense-making as part of the Board retreat) were interrupted, slowing down and limiting the data collection process. This means that in particular the stage two results related to international financing and organizational effectiveness are based on a smaller and less representative sample of interviewees than anticipated, and hence they carry the risk of being somewhat biased. The ISE has obviously kept this limitation in mind when drawing and formulating its conclusions, whereby we still consider this report to be a fair and accurate reflection of GPE's overall performance.

3

GPE's conceptual framework

GPE has constructed the following ToC as part of its 2020 strategy (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 GPE's Theory of Change (GPE Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020)



This ToC connects GPE's global outputs (objectives 4 and 5) to its country-level outputs (objectives 1-3). The ToC places the three country-level objectives of 1) strengthened sector planning and implementation, 2) mutual accountability and inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring, and 3) GPE financing in support of ESP/TEP implementation as complementary processes at its core. Together, these three processes serve as the main pathways towards effective and efficient education systems (goal 3 = outcome), which in turn is expected to contribute to GPE's vision of equitable and quality education (goals 1 and 2 = impact).

This ToC was approved by the Board in December 2015 and included eleven assumptions from global outputs to the impact level[3]. By referring to objectives 1 to 5 as outputs, goal 3 as an intermediate outcome, and goals 1 and 2 as impact, the ToC reflects GPE's distinction between its sphere of control (outputs) from its spheres of influence (outcome) and concern (impact). At the same time, it is understood that clearly delineating the sphere of control of a partnership is complicated, as the behavior of individual members is not controlled by the partnership but is decisive for its performance.

[3] As part of the inception process of the country-level evaluations, a more detailed generic country-level ToC has been worked out.

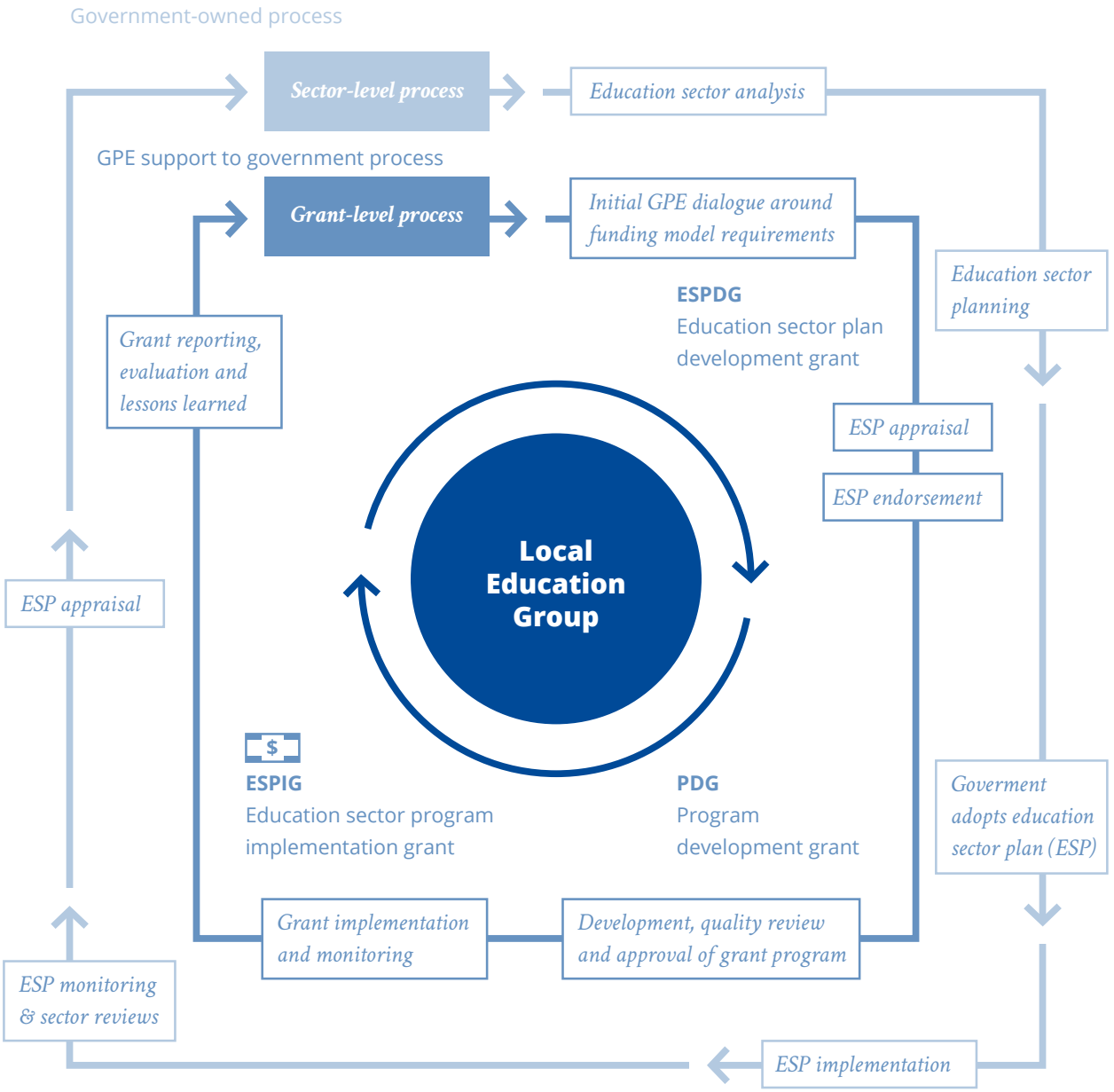
It is furthermore acknowledged that a more detailed generic country-level ToC was developed as part of the inception of the CLEs. This ToC distinguishes planning from implementation and incorporates 24 assumptions (17 related to country-level outputs, five to outcomes and two to impact).

The global ToC forms the basis of GPE's Results Framework, which includes 37 indicators to measure and report upon GPE's performance. Given that the ISE evaluates the partnership as a whole, its global ToC and the related Results Framework have been used as the main frame of reference in assessing GPE's development effectiveness. In line with the ToR, the ISE has undertaken an assessment up to the outcome level (goal 3), placing GPE's contribution to impact-level results (goals 1 and 2) beyond the scope of the ISE.

Another important element of GPE's conceptual framework illustrating GPE operations at the country level is GPE's planning cycle (see Figure 3.2). This picture places the LEGs at the core of GPE's activities at the country level, whereby GPE's support processes are embedded within broader government-owned sector-level planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Figure 3.2 also illustrates where the various GPE grants (Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG), Program Development Grant (PDG), and Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG)) fit within the broader government-owned process. The ISE has used this planning cycle in assessing development effectiveness and governance arrangements at the country level.

Figure 3.2 GPE's country planning cycle (GPE website)



4

Main Findings Stage One

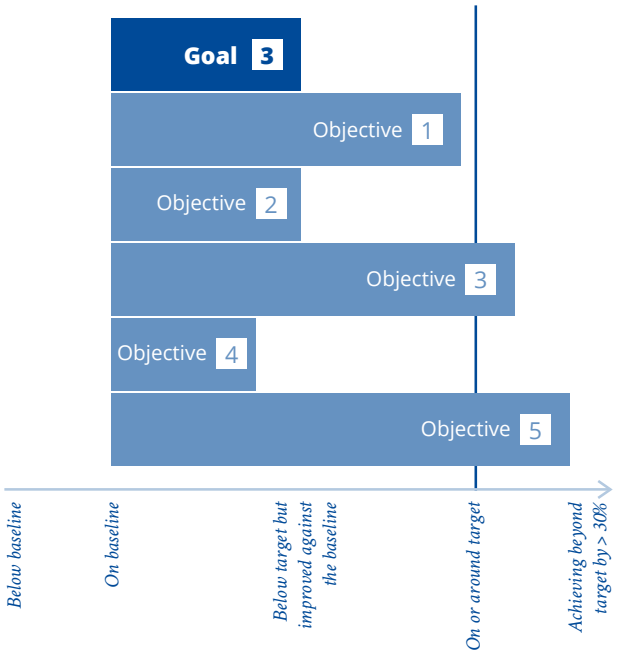
The ISE was conducted in two stages. Stage one primarily involved a desk-study into the broader development and organizational effectiveness of GPE. This initial desk-study revealed various evidence-gaps, which were prioritized for further investigation in stage two, based on their relevance for GPE's post-2020 strategy. This chapter therefore reflects the broader findings from stage one of the ISE[4], followed by an explanation of how evidence gaps from stage one led to the selection of the more specific areas of investigation in stage two.

4.1 Development effectiveness, stage one

4.1.1 Effectiveness

Under the effectiveness criterion, the ISE presents GPE performance in terms of progress towards its targets at outcome-, country- and global output level as reflected in GPE's RF, and presents likely factors contributing to observed progress as identified by the CLEs. Figure 4.1.1 presents an overview of GPE progress against the various results levels in GPE's strategic plan. This visual is based on aggregated data per results level from GPE's annual results reports[5] with the vertical axis referring to the different results levels and the horizontal axis indicating levels of progress in comparison with the 2016 baseline and targets.

Figure 4.1.1 overview of GPE progress against results



A more qualitative assessment of GPE's progress towards its goal and objectives is provided below.

As can be seen from this overview, GPE countries have shown signs of progress in strengthening their education systems (goal 3). However, this progress has been slower than planned, while in some countries progress has been insufficient to meet the most pressing needs in basic education. The main drivers of progress reported in the CLEs are connected to DCPs in terms of political will to achieve progress on education, country capacity, and resources. GPE has provided a small but meaningful contribution to kick-start progress on the sub-sectors of the ESP that the ESPIG was funding.

The quality of ESPs and connected strategies (objective 1) produced by GPE countries has significantly improved according to GPE's own quality standards. GPE quality assurance processes and criteria for ESPs and GPE

[4] The elaborate ISE findings from stage one have been reflected in a separate interim ISE report.

[5] In the figure, the bars show the same ordinal scale with values: achieving beyond target by more than 30 percent (+3), on or around the target (+2), below target but improved against the baseline (+1), on baseline (0), below baseline (-1). Each indicator in the Result Framework for which there is an aggregated value from post-2016 data is assigned one value according to the scale. Value to dimensions of progress coming from the CLEs was also assigned. In the graphic, the simple averages of all values are reported.

financial and technical support – also provided by CAs and GAs – are closely associated with better quality planning. Nevertheless, country capacity at baseline still plays an important role in determining this quality. With the RF focusing primarily on progress in ESP development, progress in ESP implementation has been receiving less management attention while the on-going discussions related to the post-2020 strategy reflect a clear shift in paying heed to ESP implementation. Nevertheless, the CLEs report modest and diverse progress in ESP implementation with a range of explanations, including funding and capacity constraints.

GPE countries have progressed towards inclusive sector dialogue (objective 2), especially at the stage of plan development and in terms of ensuring the wider participation of civil society, albeit less than expected and hoped for in the following phase of dialogue on plan implementation and monitoring. The Joint Sector Review (JSR) led by the DCP government and conducted through the LEG is the model proposed by GPE for monitoring and improving sector plan implementation, though its use remains limited. Despite GPE guidance for JSRs, challenges remain related to a lack of clarity in responsibilities and the level of effort required for undertaking a JSR. A variety of issues limit the path to effective dialogue and monitoring, which ideally would lead to full and transparent mutual accountability. CLEs indicate that a weak tradition of consultations between the government and civil society, illustrated by limited history of well-established and inclusive dialogue mechanisms, hampers progress towards this objective.

Textbox 4.1.1 GPE's contribution and additionality at the country level

The 12 CLEs reviewed in stage one include claims on GPE contribution[6] that take place in a complex context with many other contributing factors at play. GPE's contribution appear small in the bigger picture, even if contributions appear to hold strong significance to stakeholders.

- *The most common contribution claim reflected in the CLEs is that GPE contributed to improving sector-wide planning.[7] However, almost half of CLEs qualified the contribution as small given that the DCP governments had a strong capacity for planning even in the absence of GPE.*
- *The second most common contribution claim is that GPE contributed to meeting sub-sector targets of sector-wide plans, mainly through ESPIGs.[8] Again, more than half of the CLEs qualified the contribution as moderate, reflecting the fact that ESPIGs cover only a small percentage – with exceptions – of sector plan funding.*
- *Half of the CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving sector dialogue and monitoring, although most of them qualified the GPE contribution as moderate.[9]*
- *Three CLEs report that GPE contributed to strengthening education systems (Kenya, Mozambique, and Senegal) but they qualified the GPE contribution as small. Additionally, one CLE reported that GPE contributed to strengthening the country Public Financial Management system.*
- *Two CLEs reported that GPE contributed to improving the quality of international funding (Kenya and Senegal). The CLE for Senegal qualified the contribution as limited. The other two CLEs reported that GPE's use of an established mechanism for pooled funding contributed to strengthen it (Malawi and Mozambique).*

The CLEs synthesis evaluation confirms that contribution to positive change is most evident for strengthening ESPs and least evident for more and better education sector financing beyond ESPIGs.

GPE's additionality compared with other types of funding is not clear because the CLEs review only GPE funding and do not compare it with other sources of funding. The CLEs are able to identify that the GPE support has been part of a set of causes that has been sufficient to achieve change, but they do not make claims about what would have happened in a situation without GPE support.

[6] Contribution claims come from a review of twelve CLEs. This analysis defines a contribution claim as a claim that something (a factor, actor, event, or event type) was causally relevant for something else. The CLEs formulated their claims based on triangulated evidence and using a contribution analysis approach, which identifies contribution factors by using a pre-defined theory to identify expected causal connection for research and then explore whether they held in practice based on data collection. Only contribution claims noted in at least three different CLEs were taken into account.

[7] Ten CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving planning (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, and South Sudan). Four CLEs qualify the contribution as small (Guyana, Nepal, Pakistan, and Rwanda).

[8] Eight CLEs report that GPE contributed to implementing some ESP sub-sectors (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). Five CLEs qualify the contribution as small (Guyana, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe).

[9] Nine CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving dialogue (Cambodia, Guyana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). Five CLEs qualified the contribution as small (Guyana, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Senegal).

ESPIGs have constituted the lion's share of GPE grant funding at the country level (objective 3) and they aim to support the implementation of parts of the sector-wide plans. They are relevant for GPE's goals, mostly on track to achieve their main outputs and objectives, and considered relevant and significant by stakeholders. As such, ESPIGs represent an effective delivery mechanism for GPE support, although they are subject to a demanding grant application process and on average only represent less than 10 percent of funding for ESP implementation.

Besides mapping documented progress at the country level, the ISE made an inventory of likely factors contributing to observed progress as identified by the CLE. An overview of these findings is reflected in the Textbox 4.1.1.

GPE has experienced mixed progress in raising international funding for education and aligning international funding with government systems (objective 4). GPE has demonstrated success in mobilizing unprecedented domestic and international funding pledges in recent years. In terms of better (i.e. more aligned and harmonized) funding, domestic factors such as the strength of country public finance management and the presence of established pooled funding mechanisms have contributed to donors' and GPE's alignment with national systems. The effectiveness of GPE's advocacy efforts targeting donors to further align their funding and provide pooled funds remains limited.

GPE has overachieved on its targets related to building a stronger partnership (objective 5). This is i.a. reflected by improved clarity of roles, the number of knowledge products, and progress in professionalizing risk management and fiduciary oversight. At the same time, concerns remain about the quality of partnership dynamics at both the global and country level that are not captured by GPE's RF. This relates to issues such as country ownership, the complexity of effective constituency consultations, the level of delegation between the Board, its committees and the Secretariat, creating a spirit of mutual accountability, and balancing inclusiveness with practical functionality. The ongoing Effective Partnership Review (EPR) process aims to address these challenges, in particular at the country level, although its roll-out and effects takes a considerable time.

4.1.2 Efficiency

The efficient use of funds is a key aspect of country-level objective 3 in GPE's ToC, which includes efficient GPE financing. The implementation of GPE's grants in country is generally on-track according to GPE's internal monitoring reports, though subject to operational challenges and capacity constraints, especially in FCACs. The efficient use of funds is a constant point of attention for the Secretariat but is contingent upon an efficient operational environment that extends beyond fund management and includes other components of an efficient education system.

Besides, careful monitoring of progress in implementation and fund disbursements, delays in grants' approval and disbursements are currently being addressed by GPE through the Secretariat's Grant Process Streamlining project (GPSP).

4.1.3 Sustainability

Sustainability of outcomes related to improved education systems requires longer-term perspectives that exceed the lifespan of the traditional project cycle. The absence of specific sustainability criteria[10] (i.e. explicit conditions that are expected to be in place to ascertain that a particular system improvement remains may undermine ESP's sustainability of outcomes. Enhancement of DCPs' EMIS and other data-collection and reporting systems is recognized by GPE as a priority for results-tracking and sustainability. Capacity constraints of ministries of education at national and sub-national levels are a challenge in creating sustainable outcomes. Sustainability, as defined by the DAC, is not an explicit feature of GPE's ToC, though GPE's emphasis on pursuing education system-wide improvements implies a recognition of the multi-faceted change process that is needed to achieve sustainable outcomes. Having said that, operational support at present does not systematically incorporate sustainability considerations, including funding and capacity constraints.

[10] i.e. the explicit conditions that need to be in place to ascertain the continued prevalence / functioning of a particular system improvement, for instance by having budgetary provisions to cover recurrent costs, or having institutionalized competencies or procedures in place).

4.1.4 Relevance

GPE is well aligned with SDG 4's vision, targets, and indicators for basic education. GPE grants are well aligned with its higher-level goals of improved and more equitable learning outcomes and increased equity, gender equality, and inclusion in education. GPE grants are also well aligned with ESPs. Regarding needs-based funding, the GPE allocation formula prioritizes funding to FCACs, more populous countries, lower-income countries, and countries that are more vulnerable in terms of education needs. At the same time, GPE's operational model incentivizes country performance, such as the requirements of having the quality the ESP endorsed as a condition for receiving ESPIG funding, and the variable funding tranche.

The ToC in design contained in the 2020 strategy is clear in its logic, as it identifies and connects GPE's objectives and goals. It justifies the need for improved equity and quality education referring to external research and explains that these goals require an improved education system. It contains the logic that GPE's three country-level outputs will lead to this, with inclusive policy dialogue increasing the quality of policies and plans. This in turn should lead to better funding and implementation of programs for strengthening education systems. The current ToC is GPE's first and was constructed with limited available evidence, whereby it was necessary to assume many of the causal linkages. The ToC furthermore includes assumptions that partially refer to external factors for success, and partially provide an elaboration of GPE's intervention logic, illustrating significant steps from one results level to the next.

In practice, the ToC connections between GPE support and quality sector planning and ESPIG implementation appear valid under the assumption that a country is not affected by open conflict and support is tailored to country implementation capacity for sector plans. The causal connection with strengthened education systems requires effective ESP/TEP implementation, which is a different process from ESP/TEP plan development, and which has seen weaker progress than planning and ESPIG implementation. The reported evidence demonstrating the connection between GPE support and inclusive dialogue and monitoring and between GPE support and more and better financing remains limited at present.

4.2 Organizational effectiveness, stage one

4.2.1 Governance and management

The Board and its sub-committees have made deliberate intensified efforts to provide strategic direction and management oversight since 2015. These efforts contributed to a new overall strategy, expansion of GPE's policy framework, clarified roles, elaborated procedures, guidelines, and reports. In terms of resource mobilization and partner engagement, the GPE has been successful in the sense that the last few years saw unprecedented funding pledges of DCPs and Donor Partners, while signs of increased engagement of various particular constituency groups (DCPs, Private Sector, and Foundations) are reported as well. These achievements cannot be attributed to the Board alone, but have been clear Board priorities in guiding and steering the partnership and in particular the work of the Secretariat.

To make adequate follow up on Board's intensified efforts in giving strategic direction and management oversight possible, the Secretariat has been provided with additional resources to cope with increasing demands and expectations. The Secretariat has grown significantly in terms of budget, size, and responsibilities[11], although still within its own targets and reasonable when compared with other global partnerships. This growth also led to the delivery of an increasing number of outputs, many in response to Board decisions.

The Board and management have paid substantial attention to convening and aligning stakeholders. The results in convening stakeholders are primarily demonstrated in an increasing number of advocacy events and progress in the engagement of specific constituency groups. The results in aligning donors with DCP priorities, systems and procedures, however, remains an issue on which limited progress is made. The GPE Board and Secretariat have been successful in sustaining political will in financial terms, as it has

[11] In 2015; 74 staff and an operating budget of US$ 20.1 million; in 2018: 108 staff and an operating budget of almost US$ 35 million.

secured increasing pledges from DCPs and donors. Political will as demonstrated by in-country ownership with DCP government's clearly taking the lead in ESP implementation remains a concern, that is being addressed in the EPR process.

The GPE has communicated its vision and made information about its results publicly accessible. At the same time, the GPE management has been rather self-critical about the quality of its communication and demonstrates a drive towards improvement. After having commissioned an external review, the Secretariat is now developing a new advocacy and communication strategy with the aim to further professionalize and enhance the effectiveness of its external communication.

4.2.2 Administrative efficiency

The Secretariat has managed partnerships and external relations by (a) providing extensive support to different constituent groups (in particular DCPs); (b) preparing background material and convening pre-board meetings among DCPs decisions; and (c) intensified global advocacy and leveraging its members to raise the visibility of education in the global development debate. The Secretariat has also enhanced its efforts to serve country-level processes and has shown flexibility and responsiveness in guidance for FCACs as these countries receive more, faster, and enhanced flexible funding. However, despite efforts to tailor its approach in grant application processes, it remains a challenge to make these sufficiently context-specific given the wide variety among FCACs.

The Secretariat has provided adequate attention to administrative efficiency, including GPE's results-based financing approach and budget management, with a focus on minimizing transaction costs (streamlining QA processes, developing SOPs, strengthening grant management-related information systems and operationalizing a VfM approach). The Secretariat has also given increasing attention to fiduciary oversight in the past few years and has performed satisfactorily since the baseline measurement in 2016 given that the Secretariat adequately deals with 100 percent of reported significant audit issues. The intensified fiduciary oversight required an obvious and significant increase in resources, whilst the need for this increase is less obvious given that since 2016 GPE has always met its performance targets for fiduciary oversight. At the same time, the Secretariat is developing more sophisticated financial oversight and risk management systems, but their practical applicability and subsequent added value remain to be proven.

The overall increase in volume and diversity of tasks made the work of the Secretariat more complex, leading to questions about prioritization and coordination that are often not addressed in Board decisions. This potentially affects the clarity of purpose of the Secretariat's work with the risk of creating inefficiencies both at the global and country levels. The EPR process illustrates recognition of those risks at the country level and is therefore interpreted as an important and relevant undertaking in helping the GPE to refocus its efforts and address key challenges at the country level.

4.2.3 Country-level arrangements and processes

The ISE has seen ample evidence of LEGs promoting dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, especially in enhancing the quality of ESPs/TEPs, be it that their centrality to this process is varied. At the same time, LEGs are still primarily regarded as essential consultation mechanism for the ESPIG applications with varying levels of government leadership.

Both country-level arrangements and the Secretariat support have aimed to strike the right balance between inclusion and participation in the LEG and the need for its effectiveness. At the same time, CLEs and the examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model stress that work still needs to be done on improving the inclusiveness of LEG consultations in the area of expanding representation and deepening participation of teachers' unions and CSOs as well as on keeping the sector-wide forum active post-ESP completion, and on increasing the utility of JSRs for learning and decision-making.

There is less evidence of LEG effectiveness during the implementation of sector-wide plans. JSRs are seen as a step forward towards inclusive monitoring, but their use in compliance with GPE quality standards is still limited. The reported progress in promoting dialogue, an inclusive ESP/TEP development and the relatively positive ESPIG implementation rate have resulted in interventions that are better embedded in country plans. At the same time, the effect on donor confidence as demonstrated in their alignment to DCP's financial

management and accountability systems has remained limited. It is however acknowledged that political factors in donor countries strongly influence their decisions related to funding modality, making GPE's influence on donors' alignment and harmonization relatively small.

In-country stakeholders' perceptions of in-country arrangements are generally positive while some constraints have been experienced concerning complex and time-consuming processes such as QA, and the lack of clarity regarding the role of different actors. Nevertheless, there are many and varying appreciated aspects related to in-country arrangements. Among these are: financial support from GPE to implement parts of the ESPs/TEPs, guidance in and support of collaborative sector-wide processes, the technical assistance by the CA and the GA, the inputs and insights from Secretariat in the preparation of ESP/TEP, and the constructive interaction between the CA, the GA and the Secretariat during the preparation of ESPIGs.

4.2.4 M&E performance

The Secretariat has seriously implemented the various work streams that make up GPE's M&E strategy using the global ToC and the RF as the main framework to organize M&E findings. The effective implementation of the M&E Strategy at impact level has been complicated by having to rely on data from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), which collects country data that is often limited and out of date. This has meant that issues like the level of violence experienced by children; and enrolment/drop out of disabled children or ethnic minorities are not (yet) part of the current RF.

Nevertheless, the RF with 37 indicators and the Results Report have resulted in a regular comprehensive and transparent overview of GPE's progress in relation to its existing ToC, including comparisons over time. At the same time, practical considerations have constrained the relevance of the RF as complex issues like progress in ESPIG implementation, advocacy, or fiduciary oversight are each captured in a single but limited indicator, which leads to the risk that decision-making is informed by relatively narrow data.

In addition, twenty summative and eight prospective have been commissioned, providing a systematic review of GPE's progress and contributions to its country-level objectives. The results of these have been synthesized, which enabled the formulation of generic lessons and recommendations that are meant to facilitate the strategic steering of the GPE.

The results of the impressive amount of M&E work[12] are publicly available, which has made GPE increasingly transparent in terms of its use of available resources, the nature and spread of its operations and its progress towards results. Generating and communicating this information to its diverse constituents according to its agreed RF, reflects GPE's progress in becoming more accountable for results, which has been one of the main purposes of GPE's M&E strategy.

[12] Including Annual Portfolio Reviews and Results Reports, reviews of completion reports, 28 CLEs, three programmatic evaluations and six thematic reviews / studies till between 2016 and early 2020.

Besides, the Secretariat has made clear efforts to extract lessons from the M&E work, which are then conveyed to the Board, the constituencies represented, and its sub-committees with the aim to inform global decision-making. However, whether the extent to which M&E results indeed influence decision-making and are proportionate to the level of effort and resources spent on M&E remains a question. In addition, the learning effect from M&E results beyond the Board and the Secretariat, and in particular across the partnership at the country level remains limited (partly by design).

4.3 Follow-up on recommendations from interim evaluation (2015)

In stage one, the ISE has also reviewed the extent to which the four overall recommendations from the 2015 interim evaluation have been implemented and what effect these have had on GPE's performance.

4.3.1 follow-up to Clarify added value and what constitutes success

For the first time in its existence, the GPE has developed and agreed on an overall ToC and RF that are both part of the GPE Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. These frameworks are perceived as a significant step forward in clarifying GPE's ambitions, its conceptual thinking in how to pursue these ambitions and the results it wants to be held accountable for. In the past years, GPE has furthermore positioned itself as an inclusive global

player contributing to SDG-4, with a clear emphasis on supporting basic education systems in a broad and expanding group of developing countries meeting GPE's eligibility criteria. This positioning has obviously impacted its funding patterns, with relatively small contributions towards a variety of activities in a large number of LICs and LMICs. This pattern illustrates the consensus of an inclusive partnership, but makes the added value of GPE in comparison to emerging funds in the education sector less clear.

4.3.2 Follow-up in developing a strategic management plan

GPE has developed an overall RF to enable systematic results-based management of its Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020. This RF reflects a partnership consensus in terms of which results will be measured and how to monitor GPE's progress and success. In line with its ToC and RF, GPE developed and implemented a deliberate M&E strategy with four work streams. The roll-out of GPE's M&E strategy included extensive internal monitoring and external evaluation efforts, which have enabled GPE to make significant progress in becoming more accountable for its overall results towards its diverse constituent groups. The effects of these M&E results on decision-making at global level is more difficult to determine, as Board decisions are often based on a variety of considerations and inputs, of which the M&E is one. Nevertheless, in comparison to the situation in 2015, the M&E efforts in the past years have ensured that decision-makers now have access to regular factual information about progress towards results.

In addition, a new Financing and Funding Framework was introduced that would allow for a broader mix of funding mechanisms, introduce more results-based financing, and facilitate additional resource mobilization from a wider range of sources[13]. The effects of this FFF have become visible in the introduction of instruments like KIX, and the Variable Tranche though it is too early to assess how these have respectively influenced knowledge sharing and ESPIG performance. Besides, the FFF has been successful in terms of generating increasing funding pledges and diversification of funding sources, although the contribution of the FFF to this will have to be regarded in combination of many other GPE efforts (e.g. advocacy, private sector engagement strategy, and so on).

4.3.3 Follow-up to clarify roles and responsibilities

Since 2015, the GPE charter articulating the role of the Board, the various constituency groups and the Secretariat has been updated. In addition, elaborate ToRs have been developed and refined outlining in detail the roles and responsibilities of each of the Board committees. Similarly, a ToR for the Secretariat's country-level role has been adopted in May 2019, along with ToRs for CAs and GAs. This means that significant progress has been made to clarify the respective roles of the diverse key entities that together determine GPE's performance.

[13] BOD/2017/03 DOC 02, March 1, 2017.

At the same time, workloads and capacities continue to evolve, increasingly burdening a.o. the GPC having to deal with a growing number of grants to be appraised and monitored, and the Secretariat facing an increasing number of tasks to be performed. Besides, concerns have been voiced about the level of delegation to the Secretariat, and whether the best use is made of the Secretariat. This illustrates that the journey towards clarified roles and responsibilities has made promising progress on paper, but in practice this continues to require regular fine-tuning and adjustment.

4.3.4 Follow-up to make GA and CA arrangements more adaptable to context

Optimizing country-level arrangements has been at the core of the on-going EPR roll-out process that following the completion of an externa review of GPE's in-country partnership arrangements in June-2018. In light of this, various efforts have been made to improve arrangements and make them more adaptable to context. This is illustrated by the earlier-mentioned ToRs for GAs and CAs, the expansion of accredited GAs (17 at present), the development of mutual accountability framework, pilots in financing CAs, other. Many of these efforts, however, remain in relative early stages, making it premature to pass judgement on their success.

The majority of these efforts do not (yet) go as far as the recommendations of the interim evaluation, in which the option of a carefully explored (gradual) transfer of responsibilities for grant supervising and coordination

to DCPs is suggested. At present, GAs and CAs are still international agencies, working together with national entities to the extent capacities and resources allow. It appears that institutional constraints that follow from being a World Bank hosted trust fund complicate transferring these responsibilities to DCPs. At the same time, the lack of progress in alignment of donor funds to financial management and accountability systems of the DCPs, illustrates a hesitation to transfer fund management responsibilities as suggested in the 2015 interim evaluation.

4.4 Linkage to stage two

The stage one findings related to GPE's effectiveness has revealed modest progress in ESP/TEP implementation and significant variety in LEG performance in realizing effective inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring processes. GPE's ToC assumes ESP implementation and effective LEGs to be key contributing factors towards improved education systems. The 28 CLEs and respective synthesis reports reflect an analysis of underlying factors. However, given the assumed critical importance, the ISE has conducted a more comprehensive in-depth (correlation) analysis of the contributing factors that explain ESP implementation and LEG effectiveness or lack thereof. Besides the 28 CLEs, this investigation has also considered relevant literature and GPE's programmatic evaluations (see sections 5.2 and 5.3).

Stage one has included a generic review of efficiency in the use of funds during implementation, but not a more comprehensive portfolio review that would be needed to assess the efficiency of GPE's grant allocation and disbursement processes. During stage two, this portfolio review has taken place and has also been used to assess the extent to which GPE is making the best use of the funds at its disposal (see section 5.4).

In addition, stage one findings illustrated a mixed progress towards more and better financing, with significant differences among donors and countries. Even though, it is acknowledged that GPE has limited influence over education funding decisions of donor partners and DCPs, it is important to better understand trends and determining factors in international and domestic financing. The ISE has, therefore, investigated this further in the expectation that this would lead to insights to help GPE in (a) better targeting its advocacy and fund-raising efforts and (b) informing future decisions relate to GPE's positioning in the international aid architecture for education (see section 5.5).

Besides, stage one findings related to effectiveness towards objective 5 (building a stronger partnership) demonstrated overachievement on related targets in GPE's RF, in particular in clarifying roles, responsibilities and key operational processes like shaping ESPIG applications and undertaking JSRs. At the same time, concerns were voiced about the quality of partnership dynamics that are not captured by the existing RF. This includes typical global partnership issues such as insufficient country ownership, weak mutual accountability, translating global agreements into local action, and difficulties in transitioning from plan development to implementation. Given that various other global partnerships have been facing similar challenges, the ISE has undertaken a benchmark-study among four other global funds, to generate ideas for improvement of GPE's governance and management arrangements (see section 6.2).

Other concerns, identified during the initial interviews in stage one, relate to the quality of cooperation among the various entities that make up the GPE (Board, its diverse constituency base, the various Board committees, the Secretariat and the key actors at country level: LEGs, CAs, GAs and relevant ministries). Many of these concerns have also been addressed by the EPR process, which illustrates that beyond much-needed clarity, additional measures are required to improve partnership dynamics. Contemporary theories and models[14] on building strong multi-stakeholder partnerships confirm this as they emphasize the need to also pay attention to the less-tangible elements of partnership dynamics such as vibrancy, recognition, cooperation, joint accountability, and collective learning. In stage two, the ISE has, therefore, investigated the overall health of the partnership in further depth, paying particular attention to the quality of interaction among partners throughout the GPE (see section 6.3).

[14] See a.o. GIZ's Capacity Works model (2015), the Free Actor Network Approach by E. Wielinga (2012), and the MSP Guide by Wageningen University (2016).

Stage one findings confirmed the logic of GPE's conceptual frameworks, but also revealed concerns about their use and perceived usefulness, which was labeled for further investigation in stage two (see section 6.4). Finally, the desk study in stage one showed that GPE's M&E strategy has largely been implemented according to plan, resulting in the wealth of M&E information that the GPE Secretariat has collected and publicly reported upon. The stage one findings illustrated that GPE has made significant progress in meeting the accountability purpose of its M&E strategy. What has not become clear yet is the extent to which the provision of M&E information adequately responds to the other purposes of the M&E strategy: stimulating learning and improved performance as well as facilitating organizational decision-making. Therefore, in stage two, the ISE has been exploring GPE's performance in M&E to determine the extent to which GPE's M&E information has been used and has been perceived useful for purposes beyond accountability (see section 6.5)

5

Development effectiveness

Under Development Effectiveness, the ISE presents the results of an analysis of factors contributing to ESP implementation and LEG effectiveness. Subsequently, findings related to efficiency in grant-making processes, trends in fund allocation (use of funds), and trends in financing for education are presented in this chapter.

5.1 ESP implementation

Core question: *What explains the apparent limited ESP/TEP implementation?*

Main Findings: *a review of the connection of factors within GPE's sphere of control and ESP implementation shows that GPE's ToC appears to hold in the sense that a combination of good plans, inclusive dialogue and monitoring, and adequate financing is needed for successful ESP implementation. GPE's high success levels in achieving better plans alone is a good start, but not enough for ESP implementation. Besides, implementation capacity at national and sub-national level, sufficient funding and motivation are essential factors for ESP implementation but despite those factors being acknowledged in its ToC, GPE's ability to influence those factors has remained limited.*

5.1.1 Introduction

The GPE ToC considers ESP implementation[15], which ESPIGs finance only in a small part, as crucial for making progress towards more efficient and effective education systems. It assumes that the combined effect of GPE contributions to sector planning, dialog and monitoring, and financing will result in connected improvements in quality and together support ESP implementation.

This section explores whether the country-level outputs as foreseen in GPE's ToC are effective in driving ESP implementation and in combination with which factors. In doing so, we first explain the analytical framework used, followed by a generic overview of progress in ESP implementation according to the CLEs. Subsequently, we will review the positive or negative effects of the various internal and external factors on ESP implementation.

[15] For the sake of brevity, we refer to ESP implementation meaning both ESP and TEP implementation.

[16] BOD/2015/12/DOC08-annex 1, Rev. 1

5.1.2 Analytical Framework

ESP implementation is central to GPE's conceptual framework[16], as it forms a key causal link from GPE supported interventions to improved education systems (goal 3). GPE aims to support ESP implementation in a number of direct and indirect ways. Direct ways include (i) the development of better (i.e. more evidence-based and nationally owned) sector-plans, (ii) improved mutuality accountability and inclusive monitoring of plan implementation and (iii) financing. The ISE considers these three as the assumed key internal contributing factors.

GPE also supports ESP Implementation in less direct ways. Most importantly, through its advocacy and financial support, GPE aims to influence domestic and international financing, while also implementation capacities at national and sub-national level are supported as part of the ESPIGs. In its ToC, GPE recognizes the importance of these factors (funding and capacity) but also acknowledges that these cannot be controlled but merely influenced by GPE. The ISE considers these as a first category of external contributing factors to be reviewed as part of its analysis of ESP Implementation. This implies looking at implementation capacity, motivation and funding (opportunities), which are also

factors on which systematic information is available through the CLEs.

In addition and in accordance with its ToC, GPE pays particular attention to Fragile and Conflict Affected countries as they are likely to have the largest and most pressing education needs. At the same time, this particular context is likely to complicate progress in sector-plan implementation. Besides, GPE's ToC recognizes the important of cross-sectoral collaboration, which illustrates that the institutional setting in which sector-plans are to be implemented are likely to make a difference. Finally, even though not explicitly recognized in GPE's ToC, broader literature research suggests that also a range of socio-economic factors are likely to influence the implementation (see Annex Three). The ISE recognizes that these factors are outside GPE's realm of control or influence, but do reflect factors that are likely to affect GPE's effectiveness and therefore deserve attention in the design and monitoring of plans. In this light, the ISE reviews a 2nd category of external factors consisting of (i) issues related to fragility and conflict (i.e. rule of law, FCAC status, political stability), (ii) issues related to the institutional setting (i.e. relations with other ministries, number of ministries involved, level of decentralization), and (iii) selected socio-economic factors (i.e. ethnic diversity and (in-school) population density).

In summary, the ISE uses GPE's ToC as the point of departure for its analytical framework, building its analysis around the distinction between GPE's sphere of control, GPE sphere of influence, and mechanisms

Methodological explanation

The analysis in this chapter relies on a combination of tabulations, correlation analysis, thematic analysis of contribution analysis conducted at CLE level, and qualitative comparative analysis.

Tabulations and correlation analysis identified if and how the mentioned hypothetical internal and external factors appear prima facie associated with ESP implementation, screening the myriad of potential factors into a more limited manageable list. Thematic analysis of contribution analysis and qualitative comparative analysis have explored more deeply the causal relations, identifying potential pathways and potential configurations of factors.

The CLE judgement of overall implementation of the ESP is the major outcome measure, which is mentioned as 'Implementation Performance'. The analysis has relied on the CLEs' assessment, which is a consistent measure across CLEs. The 28 CLEs report consistent and complete information on the internal factors. The ISE has converted the CLE's rating of achievements on planning, dialogue and monitoring, and financing, and GPE contributions to these into 1-2-3 numerical ranking. These numerical ranking tracks the three scale color coding used in the CLE. Averages rankings have been used where there is more than one ranking[17]. These ratings of achievements and of contribution claims are included in Annex 5.1.4.

The only exception to using the CLE ratings is for achievements in respect of Domestic and International Financing. Here, the CLE have based their rating solely on aspects relevant to GPE such as whether or not the country met specific GPE targets or whether or not the amounts were increasing or decreasing. The ISE has preferred to use the average annual percentages of domestic expenditure on education relative to overall public expenditure. Adding to this, it also considered donor and GPE funding as percentages of the total cost of the ESP, over the review period or as closely as it could match the review period.

The second and third categories, ratings/values for external factors are interval numerical and so did not need any conversion; qualitative comments on other potential factors such as decentralization have, however, been converted similarly to a 1-2-3 ranking. The tables showing the values for all these other factors are in Annex 5.1.4. There are several sources: the 28 CLEs themselves, the 2019 CLE Synthesis Report and the 2020 CLE Synthesis Report; UIS and the World Bank global indexes. For the finance data extracted from the CLEs, it seemed more logical to prefer an estimate from the CLEs spanning the longest period within the review period rather than any point (one year) value. Given that nearly all the data is interval, correlational rather than tabular analysis is required.

[17] Note that these rankings, whilst not intended to be comparative between reports but a rating for each Contribution in each country, do effectively rank countries as poor, medium, and good in respect of each rating.

that are outside GPE's influence but still important in explaining ESP implementation[18].

This analytical framework therefore contains three categories of factors.

1. Internal factors, within GPE sphere of control, which relates to better plans, more inclusive dialog and plan monitoring, and better (ESPIG) financing.
2. Factors within GPE's sphere of influence but outside its sphere of control, which relates to domestic / international funding, implementation capacity at national and sub-national level, relationships between and motivation of stakeholders at the country-level
3. Factors outside GPE's sphere of influence, which relates to conflict and fragility, the broader institutional setting, and socio economic conditions (e.g. ethnic diversity and in-school population density[19]).

[18] GPE's ToC does not explicitly distinguish its spheres of control, influence and interest. For this analysis, the ISE has assumed that the GPE comprises the Board, its Sub-committees, the Secretariat and the LEGs. It is furthermore assumed that the LEGs are led, hence include, the key governmental institution(s) responsible for basic education, but not the government as a whole.

[19] The factors in this category have been chosen through a two steps approach. First, the ISE has conducted a comprehensive literature review of the factors influencing government programmes implementation in developing countries. Second, and in the absence of a unified framework, the ISE has created a long-list of factors and conducted correlation analysis to prioritize a short-list of factors with a higher potential explanatory value for the analysis.

5.1.3 Progress on ESP implementation

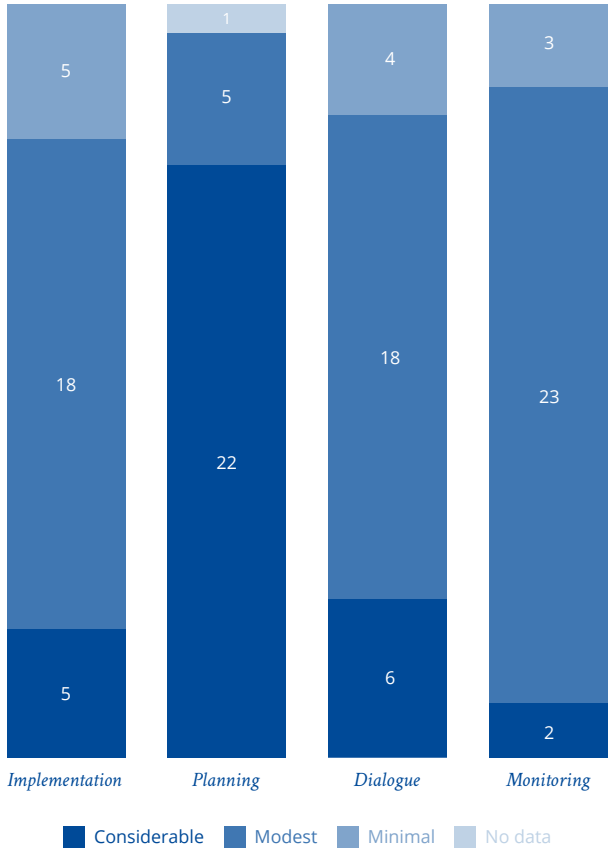
A review of the information on ESP implementation, as well as progress on other areas of the GPE model, suggests that the most frequent rating for progress in implementation performance is "modest" (see Figure 5.1.3 below).[20] When looking at the overall success in terms of progress in ESP implementation, DRC, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan are rated lowest whilst Bangladesh, Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique and Rwanda are rated highest.

When looking at the achievements at the lower results levels of GPE's ToC, it becomes clear that progress has been more considerable for ESP planning than for ESP dialogue and monitoring, which appear to be more at par with the rating for ESP implementation.

5.1.4 Explanation of causal connection between internal and external factors and ESP implementation

As indicated above, the ISE has reviewed the effect of three categories of factors on ESP implementation. The specific factors under each category that were reviewed and appeared to have a significant association are summarized in table 1 below. The full range of factors originally identified as possibly affecting ESP implementation are briefly discussed in Annex 5.1.

Figure: 5.1.3: Ratings for achievements in respect of Planning, Sector Dialogue, Monitoring and Implementation



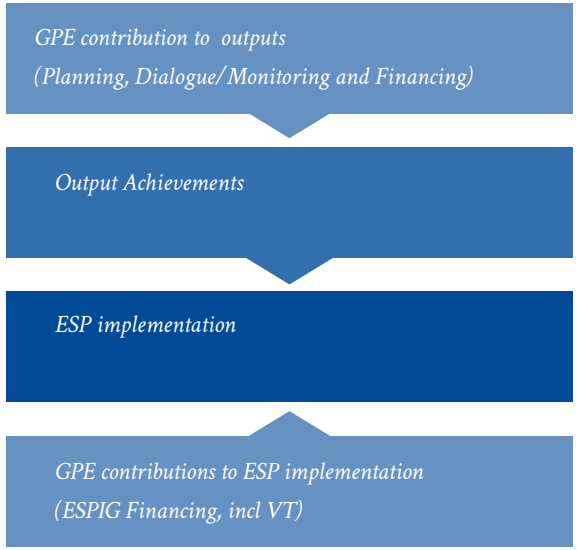
[20] The CLEs report that coming to a judgement on progress in implementing ESP has been difficult, because of lack of clear data on this dimension. Often, reporting against plans was incomplete, lacking either data on higher-level results or on activities implemented. Their judgement has had to rely more than would have been ideal on the information available for the implementation of the ESPIG.

Table 5.1.4 Factors associated with CLE rating of performance in ESP implementation

Category	*actors (nature of association)*
1. Internal factors within GPE's sphere of control	• *GPE contribution to ESP Implementation, i.e. ESPIG funding, including VT (positive)* • *Achievements in terms of improved planning, dialogue and monitoring (positive)* • *GPE contribution to improved planning, dialogue and monitoring (negative)*
2. External factors within GPE's sphere of influence	• *Motivation of governmental and non-governmental actors (positive_* • *Implementation capacity at national and sub-national level, including inter-governmental cooperation* • *Availability of domestic financing (positive)* • *% of donor funding (negative)*
3. External factors within GPE's sphere of interest	• *Conflict and political stability (negative), and absence of violence (positive)* • *Institutional setting (rule of law = positive, others context specific)* • *Socio-economic conditions, including population density (positive), ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity (negative)*

Notes: The table includes only the factors that have been found statistically significant in the correlation and that also had other supporting evidence in their favor, detailing the implementation pathways. A positive association indicates a factor that helps, while a negative association indicates a factor that hinders ESP implementation.

Figure 5.1.4a Inter-related aspects of GPE performance



Internal factors within GPE's sphere of control

The CLEs provide assessments of different inter-related aspects of in-country GPE performance. The ISE has understood these inter-relations as follows;

In light of this, the ISE has first conducted a correlation between ESP implementation and the preceding results / GPE contributions, as a first step to understand if and how the various ratings are linked to each other. This would provide us a set of issues for further consideration

in a more qualitative analysis of CLE findings. Below are the results that emerge from these associations:

1. GPE contribution to ESP implementation is positively associated with implementation rating, which is consistent *prima facie* with the validity of GPE ToC
2. Achievements in planning, dialog and monitoring are positively associated with ESP implementation, which, again is consistent with GPE ToC. However, the analysis suggests that achievements in quality of planning is much higher than quality of dialogue and monitoring and financing. This indicates that the logic in GPE ToC has not entirely applied (below more information on this analysis).
3. The contribution of GPE to planning and Sector Dialogue and Monitoring is negatively associated with ESP implementation, which at first sight appears not consistent with GPE ToC.

GPE contribution to ESP implementation

A thematic analysis of CLEs and the Synthesis report suggests that ESPIG-funding constituted GPE's main and most visible contribution to sector plan implementation[21]. ESPIG effects appear disproportionally higher than their limited size because they constituted most of the resources available for capital investments in contexts where the vast majority of domestic sector financing covers recurrent costs. In Senegal, for example, the ESPIG constitutes a limited amount of total funding, but was unique in providing funding for strengthening sector governance (e.g. introduction of performance contracts, training of school-based management committees), and strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems[22].

The CLEs and their synthesis reports suggest that the only other GPE mechanism with a viable contribution to ESP implementation is the variable tranche.[23] Putting in place incentives for in-country stakeholders to make efforts for reaching agreed upon targets and monitor related progress on an ongoing basis is the pathway at play.

In summary, the CLEs and the CLE synthesis confirm the importance of GPE's contribution to ESP implementation through ESPIG funding. It leaves open the possibility that providing the ESPIG without a strong support for ESP planning would have been as effective. Exploring this possibility is the next step in the ISE analysis.

From achievements in planning, dialogue and monitoring to ESP implementation

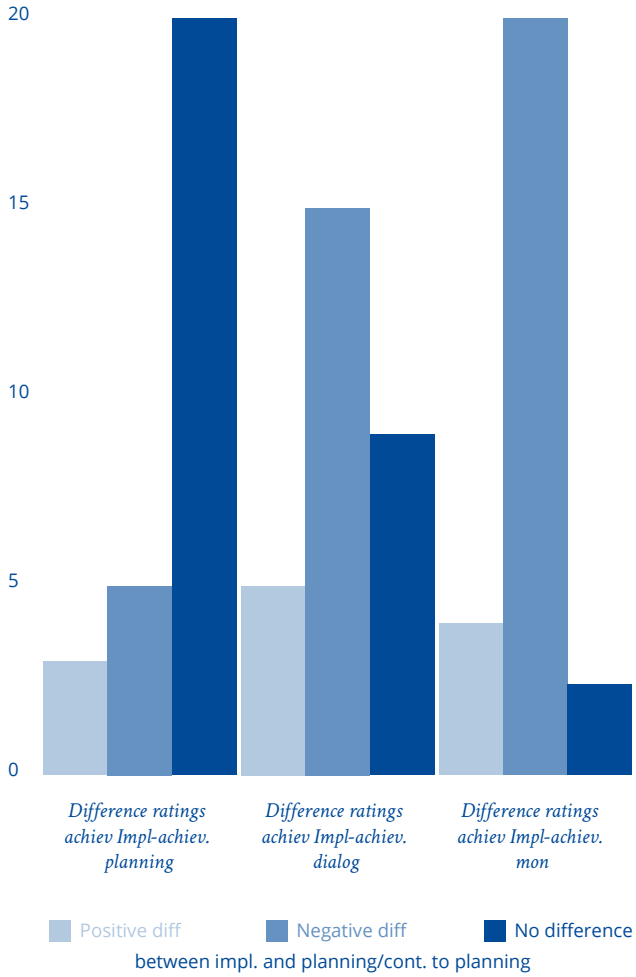
As expected in the GPE ToC, the correlation analysis suggests that progress in sector planning and sector dialogue and monitoring is positively associated with

[21] CLE synthesis Report 2020

[22] The association between ESP implementation and GPE contribution to ESP implementation suffer from a methodological limitation, as the CLE synthesis reports that due to limited data available for ESP implementation, the data available for ESPIG implementation has sometime been the back-bone of their analysis of ESP implementation, likely strengthening the relationship between these two levels of GPE ToC.

[23] CLE synthesis Report 2020

Figure 5.1.4b Difference in the rating of ESP implementation and ratings of quality of planning, quality of dialogue, and quality of monitoring



ESP implementation. However, progress in quality plans has been much more common than quality dialogue and monitoring. Figure 5.4.1b shows the difference between the rating of ESP implementation and the rating of quality planning (left), quality dialogue (center), and quality monitoring (right). The pink columns shows the number of CLEs that report that rating for quality planning, dialogue, or monitoring is higher than the rating for implementation, pointing to a situation where change at the lower level of GPE ToC has not (yet) translated into change at the higher level of the ToC. It illustrates that this situation has come about much more often for planning than for dialogue or monitoring.

It appears that more headway is made in improving the quality of plans, while progress to improve the quality of dialogue and monitoring has been more modest and in line with progress in ESP implementation. In other words, GPE has been more successful in improving sector plans than in improving dialog and monitoring. According to the logic of GPE's ToC all three are needed to realize significant improvements in ESP implementation, hence this finding is consistent with GPE's ToC as it illustrates that improvement in sector plans alone is not enough for successful ESP implementation.[24]

Looking at how GPE contributions to planning, dialogue and monitoring correlate with ESP implementation an, initially surprising, negative connection emerges, indicating that higher scores of GPE contributions go together with lower ESP implementation ratings. Given the limited number of countries and associated methodological limitations[25], the ISE wants to be cautious with drawing strong conclusions from this. Nevertheless, a more qualitative analysis based on the CLE findings and interviews with GPE stakeholders, provides plausible explanations for this negative association.

One explanation is that the GPE allocation formula provides more funding and contribution in country contexts such as Nigeria, Pakistan, and South Sudan where achievements are very likely to be weak because the environment is less conducive to ESP implementation. Connecting to this, where the ratings of achievement are already 'good' or 'strong', then there is little space for further progress. Additionally, GPE is that much better in influencing quality planning that it achieves a good plan even in places, while influencing dialogue and monitoring and financing proves to be more complicated.

Other explanations are that the effect of GPE contributions is mediated by contextual factors, which determine what other un-intended effects GPE might have on the system apart from raising the quality of planning. The CLEs, for example, suggest that GPE planning emphasizes the importance of Ministerial direction of the MoE rather than the capacities for Regions and Districts to implement the plan and coordination with other Ministries, inter-ministerial coordination, and high-level dialogue with the MoF[26]. Additionally, it may be that efforts to increase inclusiveness and participation in developing the sector plan via the LEG detract from the capacities available to implement the plan.[27]

From this analysis of factors / mechanisms within GPE's sphere of control, the ISE concludes that the GPE ToC overall appears to be valid, but that challenges in strengthening dialog and monitoring remain important barriers in ESP implementation. The implication is not that planning in itself is bad for ESP implementation, but rather that being so much better at planning than in influencing other elements in GPE's ToC does not (yet) lead to effective ESP implementation.

External factors in GPE sphere of influence: government motivation, government capacity and funding gaps

The analysis turns to the role of contextual factors, starting from those that are closer to GPE and exploring how GPE has adapted its support to filling gaps and removing barriers when possible, and adapting when not possible. This step of the analysis relies more on the qualitative information provided by CLEs and CLE synthesis and uses the correlation analysis only for triangulation.

[24] The ISE has conducted a QCA on the five best and worst countries on the implementation rating, which supports this conclusion, whilst it also nuances it. None of the five best countries had the highest score for progress in all three dimensions of planning, dialog and monitoring, and financing, but they had in general made at least a modest progress in all three area, with the exception of Mozambique's progress in financing.

[25] The distribution of ratings of contribution to quality planning is very skewed: contribution to planning is rated Poor twice, medium 6 times and good 20 times. With such a skewed distribution, the chances of getting a skewed result increases.

[26] More information on this below

[27] However, there is little evidence supporting this possibility.

The CLEs have identified three assumption areas underlying the step between progress in planning, dialogue and monitoring and financing, and ESP implementation. These are: sufficient motivation in DCPs and country-level stakeholders, sufficient implementation capacity in DCP governments and stakeholders, and opportunities for ESP implementation, especially in the forms of available finance. Their analysis has confirmed the importance of these three factors.

For motivation, the CLEs and CLE Synthesis Report suggest that the degree to which all relevant government and non-government actors perceive the sector plan as being relevant to their mandate and mission is an important driver of their motivation to contribute to implementation.[28] Not ensuring motivation by all Ministries, Government agencies, and decentralized actors who share the responsibility for the education sector was an important barrier.[29] The present correlation analysis confirms the association between the presence of complex relations across Ministries and lack of empowerment of decentralized government and limited ESP implementation. One additional facet of the inter-Ministerial relationship is the relationship with the Ministry of Finance.

The CLEs and CLE synthesis provides qualitative evidence that lack of capacity in DCP government and stakeholders has been an important barrier to ESP implementation, suggesting which capacity gaps have constituted the largest barriers across countries.[30] Notwithstanding the list below, the configurations of capacity gaps have been unique in each country.

1. MoE coordination capacity at central level, together with lack of clear definition of responsibilities within the MoE for ESP implementation and monitoring[31]
2. Turn-over in senior MoE staff responsible for leading certain elements of sector plan implementation[32]
3. Gaps in specific technical capabilities of MoE staff. For example, specialization in statistical analysis or procurement[33]
4. Lack of technical capabilities at the sub-national level[34]
5. Absence or low quality of operational planning such as through actionable implementation plans at national and sub-national levels.[35]
6. The absence of realistic and user-friendly results frameworks to facilitate action and allow monitoring of progress in plan implementation[36]
7. Capacity to use JSR data to inform sector plan implementation[37]
8. In some cases, capacity gaps interact: EMIS is associated positively with Implementation Performance. However, the quality of an EMIS is influence both by capacity gaps in statistical and monitoring skills in particular DCP governments' agencies and also by gaps in coordination as it is often the shared responsibility of different entities: agencies collecting data in the education sector, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, etc.

To further reinforce the importance of capacity gaps in DCP government, the correlation analysis has found that government effectiveness has the strongest association with ESP implementation rating, which the QCA has also confirmed.

It appears therefore that capacity gaps have been an important barrier, but the evidence does not suggest that GPE's influence in filling capacity gaps has been strong. The CLEs report positive examples, such in Senegal, Togo, and Uganda where ESPIG funds covered, amongst

[28] CLE synthesis Report 2020

[29] Bangladesh, DRC, Mali are examples where the responsibility for the education sector is shared by several ministries. DRC, Nepal, and Nigeria are examples where the responsibility is shared between decentralized level of government.

[30] CLE synthesis Report 2020

[31] CLEs for DRC, Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zimbabwe

[32] E.g. in the CLE for Zambia

[33] E.G Lack of skills in procurement skills have been noted in Malawi, and Mauritania. Lack in sufficient numbers of staff with adequate technical expertise and experience were noted in in several CLEs (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) as hindering country capacity to collect and, especially, conduct meaningful analyses of available data to inform decision making.

[34] E.g. in Ethiopia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zimbabwe

[35] E.G in DRC and Zimbabwe

[36] e.g. in Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

[37] CLEs in Cambodia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, and Togo noted that the absence of effective monitoring paired, in some cases, with overly ambitious plans negatively influenced sector plan implementation

others, training and equipment to key government (and, in Togo, also non-government) units responsible for plan implementation at both central and decentralized levels and were credited for improving project management and financial management capacity within government, with a focus on achieving results. Besides these few examples, however, CLEs found little evidence of ESPIG-funded project or programs regularly including efforts to assess, monitor or help strengthen in-country capacity for sector plan implementation.

The CLE Synthesis also suggests that Secretariat CLs, grant agents, and coordinating agents have had limited influence on ESP implementation and that neither ESA not ESPs have conducted comprehensive capacity gaps analysis that have resulted in relevant and strong strategies for filling those gaps, pointing to a limited effect for planning in filling this key gaps.

Regarding the capacity of civil society, CSEF funding was broadly credited with having allowed recipients to strengthen their internal capacity to become more active LEG participants but without specific examples of related actions in ESP implementation.

Regarding domestic and international financing (= change in opportunities) for ESP implementation, the ISE mainly reviews the funding gaps and % of donor financing. The thematic analysis of CLEs and CLE synthesis 2020 suggests that sufficient domestic financing is a key factor for ESP implementation, which is confirmed by the correlation analysis. The thematic review furthermore shows that funding gaps have been a widespread barrier for ESP implementation with actual funding gaps ranging from 0 percent (Cambodia and Senegal), to 32 percent (Zambia) to over 70 percent (South Sudan). Significant funding shortfalls, which negatively affected countries' ability to implement planned interventions and contributed to fragmented plan implementation, were also noted in Mozambique, the Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

The level of donor funding as a percentage of ESP total is *negatively* associated with implementation performance. This is quite surprising, but out of the twenty CLEs where annual averages could be calculated over half were between 11 percent and 18 percent, which is a small range. The three highest percentages were for Liberia, Sierra Leone (both having experienced EBOLA), and South Sudan (a civil war). This illustrates that higher amounts of donor funding were available for humanitarian reasons in a rather challenging context for ESP implementation. Furthermore, donor funding and, in particular, GPE funding appears to have often been used in cases where there is an unanticipated shortfall so that the funding is more akin to trouble-shooting than a planned investment.

When looking at the GPE contribution to domestic financing, it appears that in only one out of 28 countries (Malawi), the GPE contribution is rated "considerable", while in 14 out 28 this contribution is rated minimal. This confirms the limited influence of GPE on domestic financing. GPE's contribution to international financing scores better with 9 out of 28 reflecting a considerable contribution, which is largely explained by the fact that ESPIG funds are part of and have helped leveraging international financing.

From its analysis of this second category of factors within GPE's sphere of influence, the ISE concludes that coordination across DCP government is a key issue for strengthening ESP implementation, both in terms of creating motivation and capacity for working together and in ensuring capacity in all the parts of the system involved in implementing ESPs. This was noted both for inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination at the central level and coordination between decentralized levels of governments. The importance of this cross-sectoral cooperation within government was already foreseen in GPE's ToC, while the analysis shows that also cooperation of relevant government entities at national and sub-national level is a key factor for successful GPE implementation. At the same time, it appears that the extent to which this can be influenced by GPE has proved to be difficult.

In addition, the ISE observes a limited focus on filling capacity gaps for ESP implementation. This starts with a relatively weak capacity gap analysis during ESA and ESP planning, which appears to be an important missing link, partly explaining the combination of GPE's strong success in planning and its more limited success in ESP implementation.

External factors in GPE sphere of interest: Conflict and fragility, institutional setting, and socio-economic features.

Pathways related to conflict, fragility and emergencies

The country's FCAC status and indexes of conflict, political stability, and absence of violence are all associated significantly with Implementation performance in the expected directions (the first two negatively and the last two positively).[38] The ISE points out, however, issues of reliability in GPE FCAC classification, because, for example, Mozambique and Rwanda are classified by GPE as FCAC but have good scores under all other indexes of political stability and absence of violence.

In addition to fragility connected to man-made crisis, three other countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) suffered from the EBOLA outbreak, and Nepal had earthquakes.

Considering conflict and emergencies together, this means that most (16) of the countries had very problematic national circumstances to contend with; and this augmented index is strongly negatively associated with Implementation performance.

Institutional Setting

Some of the factors mentioned above (e.g. cross-sectoral collaboration) can be considered to be part of institutional setting as well, but are within the realm of GPE's influence and ambitions. In this section, the ISE considers additional factors that relate to the institutional framework but are not in GPE's sphere of influence.

The most remarkable factor appears to be *the rule of law*, which tracks the ability to enforce contracts in the national tribunals. This factor is associated with ESP implementation, with the pathway likely being a better ability to involve and manage service providers in ESP implementation, including from the private sector. Service providers can rely on contracts being enforced, also when the government is a contractor. For rule of law, South Sudan and Zimbabwe are rated the lowest, and Rwanda and Senegal the highest.

Besides, several CLEs further noted changes in institutional context as likely factors that — in all cases negatively — affected sector plan implementation. Examples include changes in government in Mozambique and Zimbabwe; recurrent teacher strikes in Senegal; cash shortages and reduced spending power due to a deteriorating economic situation, resulting in a lack of funding and a threat of education employee strikes in Zimbabwe; armed conflict such as in South Sudan, or political instability paired with health crises in the DRC. The regular occurrence of context-specific factors affecting ESP implementation underlines the importance of a systematic monitoring of this context, so that implementation problems can be better anticipated.

Pathways connected to the socio-economic context

The ISE reviewed the connection between various socio-economic conditions and ESP implementation (see Annex Three). Concentrating on those with the strongest link, it appeared that population density is positively associated with ESP implementation because it is, *in general*, easier to deliver services to more concentrated centers than to widely dispersed remote, rural areas. The pathway connecting the two is likely that it is more difficult to deliver good quality educational services in widely dispersed, remote rural areas. The countries with the highest population density is Bangladesh at 1,170 persons per km^2, which was more than four times the next country. The least dense were Mauritania at 4 persons per km^2 and Mali at 15 persons per km^2.

Ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity are strongly negatively associated with ESP implementation, as it is more difficult to deliver educational services to a widely diverse population (different languages, norms and habits). South Sudan and Nigeria are the most diverse and are two of the five poorest performers, Bangladesh, Rwanda and Zambia are the least diverse and the first two are among the four best performers.

Combination of factors

The ISE has conducted a QCA, looking at the five best and worst countries and searching for combination of internal and external factors associated with ESP implementation. From this, it appeared that no combination is stable across countries, suggesting that countries' experiences are largely unique, with only partial common points. The QCA does suggest cases of possible combinations, but the reader should be careful in taking these out of context.

[38] For additional results e.g. cross-tabulations and the correlation table see Annex 5.2

The case of Rwanda suggests that success can be driven by strong government effectiveness and a drive to fight corruption and strengthen the rule of law. This also allows GPE to create value through ESPIGs and support for monitoring systems. The cases of Bangladesh and Kyrgyz Republic suggests that progress in ESP implementation can be driven by rising financing for education (expenditure per student in primary school). The case of Liberia, however, which has a similar combination of positive factors as Bangladesh and Kyrgyz Republic, suggests that large gaps in DCP government effectiveness shuts this pathway down. Bangladesh and Kyrgyz Republic have an average rating for government effectiveness, suggesting that it is neither a driving force nor a barrier. The case of Gambia suggests that GPE can be a strong driving force for ESP implementation in smaller countries, where its ESPIGs is a larger minority of ESP implementation funding than in other countries.

In cases of weaker ESP implementation, external factors appears to be hindering both ESP implementation and strong progress in planning, dialog and monitoring, and financing. In cases such as Nigeria, South Sudan, and Sierra Leone, GPE is still able to influence a stronger planning, but not move forward with a similar pace on the other areas of its ToC.

The implication seems to be that the areas where GPE could make large improvements in ESP implementation are in targeting additional funding and support countries that experience large capacity gaps and weak government effectiveness but no barriers in terms of open conflict and emergencies. In countries where conflict is an issue, GPE should be modest in its expectations of the country being able to implement an ESP/TEP, and support might be better delivered through other mechanisms.

5.1.5 Overall conclusions

GPE contribution to ESP implementation is positively associated with the rating of implementation performance. Achievements related to the quality of planning, dialogue and monitoring, and financing are positively associated with the CLE's rating of implementation as well. This pattern of findings illustrates that the intervention logic in the ToC remains valid as it points out that the GPE supported building blocks (better plans, dialogue & monitoring, and financing) are all needed to make progress in ESP implementation. At the same time, the ISE observes that progress in improving plans has moved at a faster pace than progress in dialogue and monitoring, which has been more at par with the modest progress in ESP implementation. This indicates that improving plans alone has not been enough to ascertain satisfactory plan implementation.

Besides, the ISE observes that higher ratings of the GPE contributions to sector planning, sector dialogue and monitoring are associated with lower ratings of implementation performance. This negative association between GPE's contribution and ESP implementation is explained by the fact that GPE support towards inclusive planning processes is adapted to support needs, which typically are highest in countries with relatively weak plan implementation capacity. Consequently, the GPE contributions should be highest in countries where it ESP implementation is most likely to be difficult. Finally, stimulating inclusiveness implies getting more actors involved. This leads to sector plans that are more comprehensive but also more complicated as they would have to address the needs and interest of a larger group of stakeholders. Overall, this points to the significance of other factors that are not directly part of GPE's interventions.

Such other factors are partly within and partly beyond GPE's sphere of influence. Within GPE's sphere of influence, implementation capacity, funding, and motivation are all key factors for ESP implementation and GPE has been able to influence these mainly through the ESPIGs. However, in reality it appears that large capacity and funding constraints exist, and that GPE's influence to reduce those constraints has been limited. A key emerging area of attention has been inter-government relationships and cooperation, in particular between the Ministries responsible for education, the Ministry of Finance and sub-national government entities.

The most important factors outside GPE's sphere of influence are related to the institutional and socio-economic context. Concerning the institutional context, it appears that the absence of conflict and fragility and the presence of rule of Law are positively associated with ESP implementation. In terms of socio-economic conditions, it seems that a higher population density (i.e. making it easier to reach higher numbers of students), and lower ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity (i.e. less variety in languages, cultural norms and habits to be integrated) are enabling factors for ESP implementation.

5.2 LEG effectiveness

Core question: *What explains the differences in LEG strategic effectiveness, in particular during ESP implementation?*

Main findings: *Progress in LEG effectiveness has been uneven across countries, but there is never only one explanation for why LEGs are successful or less successful in their core policy-dialog functions. LEG effectiveness principles are important, but LEGs do not need to meet all principles to be effective. Mutual accountability appears to have the strongest association with LEG effectiveness, but no single principle is of decisive importance, hence combinations of principles are required. Technical capability gaps among members are an issue for all LEGs, while their motivation and leverage also plays a role. Contextual factors hinders the LEGs from meeting the effectiveness principles. Weak sector governance in large, populous, diverse, and stratified societies or conflict pre-empt most LEG principles from being present. Benchmarking suggests that GPE has taken on a bigger challenge than comparator partnerships in strengthening the sector as a whole as the focus for its country-level multi-stakeholder partnerships.*

5.2.1 Introduction

Efforts particularly concerning the Effective Partnership Review (EPR) have been devoted to studying the effectiveness of country-level arrangements. This has led the Secretariat to formulate a definition of LEG strategic effectiveness in terms of the LEGs discharging core policy functions where LEGs can add most value to the sector: supporting sector plan development, implementation and monitoring, addressing education financing and resource use, and promoting harmonization and alignment.[39] The Secretariat has also devoted analytical work to exploring the determinants of LEG strategic effectiveness, which led to the definition of seven enabling factors for effective LEGs, the LEG effectiveness principles (see Textbox 5.2.1).[40] This useful analytical work by the Secretariat is now continuing with the on-going LEG self-assessment project, implemented in pilot countries.[41] Under this project, LEG members from volunteer countries will rate the strategic performance of the LEG and explore its determinants in view of identifying and agreeing on priority improvement areas to enhance effectiveness.[42]

LEGs are central in achieving GPE's country-level objectives. Therefore, the ISE has explored in greater depth what contributes to LEG's strategic effectiveness, as well as why some approaches to working with and in LEGs have worked in some contexts but not others. The results of the analysis should be considered initial and partial, pending the more granular data from the LEG self-assessment project.

Textbox 5.2.1 LEG effectiveness principles

- *The mandate, functions and objectives are clear and agreed*
- *The partnership framework generates inclusion and engagement*
- *There is a clear governance structure for coordination*
- *Working arrangements are flexible, 'fit-for-purpose and well-communicated*
- *Regular monitoring contributes to learning and improved performance*
- *Leadership and ownership are demonstrated in practice*
- *Key actors contribute to healthy partnership dynamics*

[39] Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Principles towards effective local education groups. Working paper; Global Partnership for Education (2019) What can local education groups learn from effective coordination and partnership mechanisms? Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Local education group self-assessment

[40] Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Principles towards effective local education groups. Working paper. Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Local education group self-assessment. ppt.

[41] The latest update by May 2020 reports that Cameroon, Chad, and Papua New Guinea, out of 20 pilot countries, have already used the tool and shared preliminary results.

[42] Countries have chosen multiple ways (for multiple contexts and purposes) of using LEG tools – not necessarily through rating;

Firstly, this chapter explores LEGs' progress in discharging their core policy-dialog functions. Secondly, it explores how well the LEG principles proposed by the Secretariat — which are dimensions of organizational and collaboration quality in the LEG[43] — explain LEGs' strategic effectiveness, and considers the role and contribution of GPE to dialog and monitoring. Thirdly, it widens the perspective to include the technical capability, motivation, and leverage of LEG members, as well as other structural and education-specific factors. Finally, it brings all insights together using a system coherence model based on work by Lant Pritchett.[44]

The findings in this section rely on a combination of correlation analysis, thematic analysis of CLEs, qualitative comparative analysis, and benchmarking with other funds (see Annex 6.1). They are derived first from correlation analysis to identify areas of interest, and then supplemented with other methods for generating the actual explanations of pathways leading to LEG strategic effectiveness.

[43] Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Principles towards effective local education groups. Working paper. Global Partnership for Education (n.d.). Local education group self-assessment. ppt.

[44] Pritchett, Lant. Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes: Making the Transition from Schooling to Learning. Dec. 2015.

5.2.2 Progress on LEG strategic effectiveness

Textbox 5.2.2a Methodological explanation for LEG strategic effectiveness

In the Secretariat's framework of the LEG effectiveness principles, LEGs are seen to be strategically effective when country-led policy dialog contributes to accelerating progress in the planning, implementation and monitoring of a nationally owned ESP. Members are able to advance toward agreed policy dialog objectives when sufficient organizational and collaborative capacities are in place or are being nurtured. Annex 5.2.8 includes a 2 pager prepared by the Secretariat describing the basic elements of its framework.[45]

The evaluators' analysis has adapted and used some notions of the Secretariat's framework for an analysis that has a different purpose: understanding the extent to which LEGs fulfil their core policy-dialog functions based on the information available in the CLEs, and understanding what is helping some LEGs in being more effective.

The evaluator has operationalized LEG strategic effectiveness in two measures, neither measure being perfect, but their strengths and weaknesses complementing each other.

The first measure combines country progress in dialogue and monitoring with information on how central the LEG's functioning has been to this progress (as opposed to other policy fora). The CLEs report rich qualitative information on the other dialogue bodies active in the country: their membership, functions, position in the system, as well as judgement by evaluators on duplication of dialogue and the relative importance of these bodies. The evaluator has translated the rich qualitative information in a simple three-points scale. The LEG is central if no other stronger body conducts most of its functions. The LEG is partly central if there is a partial overlap or duplication with the functions of other bodies. The LEG is not central if another stronger body conducts most of the key functions of the LEG.

This measure's strength is the consistency of data across CLEs, but its weakness is being a measure of progress, meaning that baseline conditions influence the progress that is possible.

The second measure operationalizes the definition of LEG strategic effectiveness through the concept of continuum of partnership strength, grounded in preliminary analytical work conducted by the World Bank and the German Development Institute.[46] The concept places outcome areas of aid partnership effectiveness in levels increasingly difficult to achieve, on a continuum from weaker to a stronger partnerships. The present analysis has adapted the framework by placing the functions that the GPE model assigns to LEGs on this continuum. The ratings along the continuum are:

0 = The CLE reports that the LEG was only active in ESP and ESPIG development

1 = The CLE reports that LEG members have shared information on their individual activities, but not discussed coordination

2 = The CLE reports that LEG members have discussed coordination and alignment with ESP and among their programs

3 = The CLE reports that the LEG has proposed recommendations for improving ESP implementation that have been followed up on and implemented

4 = The CLE reports that the LEG has discussed strategic issues for the education sector (such as the direction of the sector) or the use of harmonized approaches with country systems.

A country is on the place corresponding to the function that its CLE reports the LEG discharging that is further along on the continuum. The evaluator has conducted a robustness check to ensure that the inconsistency in CLE reporting did not skew the analysis: in no cases, countries have been located further along in the continuum than reasonable given what their CLEs report on the other functions as well.

The measure's strength is its analytical power and ability to tease out absolute levels of performance across countries, but its weakness comes from the fact that the CLEs do not report information completely consistently.[47] For more information on the concept of continuum of partnership, see Annex Four.

[45] The key elements considered for each principle are listed here: 1) The mandate, functions and objectives are clear and agreed: a) Stakeholders have the same understanding of what the LEG should be discussing and achieving; b) captured in a TOR; c) which is realistic and in line with the ESP; d) the relationship between LEG and other dialogue fora is clear. 2) The partnership framework generates inclusion and engagement: a) Stakeholders relevant for ESP planning and implementation participate and engage; b) including those with critical perspectives and representing the constellation of Non-State actors; c) with clear membership criteria; d) and information on topics under discussion shared in advance; e) possibility for all members to insert topics on the agenda; f) and support for stakeholders who could not otherwise participate. 3) There is a clear governance structure for coordination: a) governance arrangements are capable of bringing together a variety of actors; b) make clear who has the authority over preparing LEG meetings; c) and make clear who has the authority over following up on LEG meetings; d) At least, the MoE establishes a LEG chair; 4) Working arrangements are flexible, 'fit-for-purpose and well-communicated: a) LEGs have robust working practices in organizing the dialogue; b) with is a road map guiding the dialog; c) and a stakeholder engagement plan, with procedures sharing information and participating at the right moment. 5) Regular monitoring contributes to learning and improved performance: a) participants are transparent with each other's; b) the LEG have set milestone and targets for its performance c) the LEG is self-assessing the partnership. 6) Leadership and ownership are demonstrated in practice: a) Government leads and owns the dialog ; b) leadership goes beyond high level political commitments and becomes the glue that creates cohesion among the LEG members. 7) Key actors contribute to healthy partnership dynamics: a) no undue influences, power dynamics, and pressures on the way the partners come together; b) constructive atmosphere; d) the coordinating agency galvanize enthusiasm of members without taking away the government's responsibilities.

[46] Eriksson, J. (2001). The drive to partnership: Aid coordination and the World Bank. The World Bank. And Mahn, T. (2013). Country-Level Aid Coordination at the United Nations: Taking the Resident Coordinator System Forward. Study 77. The German Development Institute.

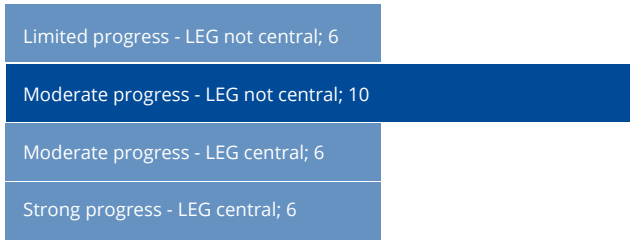
[47] To mitigate this concern, the variable has been used in combination with the first measure of LEG strategic effectiveness (presented above), and the information contained in the CLE has been double-checked with the evaluators who wrote them.

First measure of LEG strategic effectiveness

A thematic review of the 28 CLEs under the first measure of LEG strategic effectiveness confirms that progress has been uneven across countries.[48] As mentioned above, the evaluator would like to flag the case of Bangladesh, where the CLE rated progress in dialog and monitoring as limited because performance was already strong at baseline.

No CLE country experienced strong progress against baseline conditions on dialog and monitoring in cases where the LEGs were not central to policy dialogue (see Figure 5.2.2a). This suggests that LEGs might be necessary for strong progress in dialogue and monitoring, but not sufficient for it, because, the LEGs are present also in situations of moderate and limited progress.

Figure 5.2.2a First measure of LEG strategic effectiveness: country progress in dialogue and monitoring and how central the LEG's has been to this progress, by number of CLEs



[48] As mentioned above, the evaluator has used the core functions of LEGs. However, it is important to recognize that the actual functions are agreed among stakeholders and are not fixed 'by GPE model' but various across countries and contexts

The CLEs mention the following bodies as limiting the centrality of the LEG:

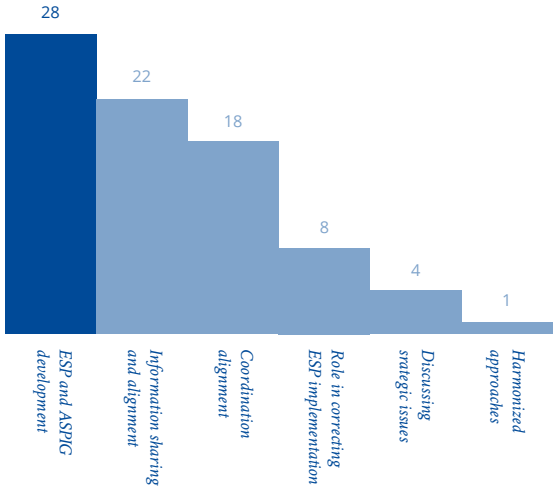
1. Dialogue bodies at the basic education level
2. Program steering committees for the ESPs
3. Humanitarian education-cluster coordination fora
4. Parliamentary oversight bodies
5. Separate governmental channels for engaging CSOs in the education sector and teacher unions
6. Inter-Ministerial Task Forces on education policy
7. Education Donors Group
8. Roadmaps for consultations for higher-levels of education policy development
9. Informal Troika groupings of main donors
10. High-level Conferences of the education sector
11. Decentralized dialogue at the district level.

Second measure of LEG strategic effectiveness

The thematic review of CLEs against the second measure of LEG strategic effectiveness suggests that LEGs have been effective for discussing ESP and ESPIG development and ESPIG monitoring, but less for influencing ESP implementation and discussing strategic choices and harmonization (see Figure 5.2.2b).

This is consistent with the findings of the Result Report 2020. The report suggests that all of the 13 ESPs reviewed in 2018 and 2019 met minimum required quality standards, consistent with a strong contribution of LEGs in that area. It also suggests that the proportion of quality joint sector reviews (JSRs) increased substantially, with 71 percent meeting quality standards in 2019 versus 27 percent in 2018. About half

Figure 5.2.2b Strategic effectiveness as measured on a continuum from left to right on the X axis between weaker and stronger partnerships (data source: CLEs, unit of measurement: based on which core functions on the continuum each CLE reports that the LEG is discharging)



of DCPs held a JSR in 2019.[49] This is an important sign of progress in the right direction. The present analysis adds that CLEs suggests gaps in JSRs leading to actual follow-up actions that helped in implementation the ESP. Annex Four contains additional details, information, and sources that ground and nuance the main findings on LEG strategic effectiveness presented above, including which CLEs report the LEGs discharging which functions and in which way.

[49] GPE. 2020. Results Report 2020. Washington DC, USA: GPE; GPE. 2020

Progress against the LEG effectiveness principles

Textbox 5.2.2b Methodological explanation on using the LEG effectiveness principles

The present analysis relies on the description of the LEG effectiveness principles contained on page 14 and following of Global Partnership for Education (2019), Principles towards effective local education groups, Global Partnership for Education (2019). Each principle is described in its basic elements, which have been transformed into themes for the thematic analysis of CLEs.

The thematic analysis has yielded signs that suggested that a LEG had met or not the principle. The evaluator has coded the rich thematic information collected from the CLEs on a simple three scale judgement: "1" if the signs in the CLE suggest that the LEG fully met the principle. "0" if the signs are mixed and point to progress in some areas with remaining gaps. "-1" if the signs suggest that the LEG does not meet the principle and did not experience progress on this dimension. "Blank" if a CLE did not report information for that principle.

Therefore, Figure 5.2.2c presents average values across all CLEs for a variable that ranges from +1 to -1. The reader should interpret the value of 0 as some progress that however does not meet the benchmark for that principle. In a later section, the evaluator has used these values as independent variables for correlation with LEG strategic effectiveness, and also for the QCA.

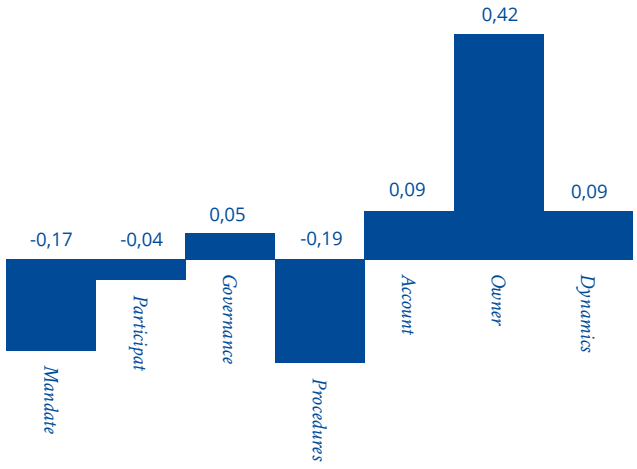
The ISE has explored the lower level of strengths and weaknesses of LEGs on the organizational and collaboration dimensions included in the LEG effectiveness principles. The present section shows average and overall progress across CLEs. A later will return to the LEG effectiveness principles as determinants of LEG strategic effectiveness.

The present review suggests that LEGs have been performing better on clear governance, DCP leadership ownership, and partnership dynamics.[50] It also suggests that working arrangements and clear mandate are areas for improvement.

Participation is an area where LEGs have improved, but still face challenges. The low score on participation is an apparent contradiction with the findings from the 2020 CLE synthesis and the GPE results report 2019, which found that LEGs have become more open to participation.[51]

The findings are however consistent when considering the fact that the CLE synthesis and results report track improvements, but the present analysis looks at performance against the more demanding benchmark of the LEG effectiveness principles.[52] Most CLEs report improvements in participation, but only in few cases,

Figure 5.2.2c Average performance against the LEG effectiveness principles, values ranging from -1 to 1. Data source: CLEs. Assessed against the LEG effectiveness principles as defined above



[50] Principle 5, mutual accountability, is about regular review of LEG effectiveness as a body for sector dialogue and coordination – whether it does what it sets out to do; monitors its own effectiveness, and learns from it to adapt. Regular monitoring contributes to learning and improved performance

[51] GPE. 2020. Results Report 2020. Washington DC, USA: GPE; GPE. 2020. The 2020 draft result report suggests that Local education groups (LEGs) are more inclusive, with increased participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and teacher organizations (TOs): 64% of LEGs included both, up from 59% in 2018. Teacher organizations are more likely to be left out: 66% of LEGs included TOs in 2019, while 89% included CSOs. Synthesis Study of External Evaluations of GPE conducted during the GPE 2020 timeframe. Washington DC, USA: GPE.

[52] The LEG effectiveness principle relevant for participation requires that all relevant stakeholders participate and engage in key moments of the policy cycle (including after planning), including those with critical perspectives and representing the constellation of Non-State actors (civil society, teacher unions, faith-based actors, decentralized actors when relevant to the country context). This requires inclusive membership criteria, access to information and evidence in time for preparing meetings, the ability of all actors to put topics on the official agenda, and presence of effective support for stakeholders who could not otherwise participate.

key junctures in the policy cycle. The more demanding benchmark for participation includes the ability of civil society, teachers' unions, faith-based service providers, private sector, and decentralized actors (when relevant for country conditions) to participate with a voice in setting the agenda for discussions and reviewing ESP implementation.

Four out of the 24 CLEs which report information on clear mandate suggests that a clear mandate is unequivocally in place for the LEG. Seven out of 28 CLEs do so for participation, seven out of 20 for clear governance, and six out of 26 for working arrangements. Additionally, five out of the 11 CLEs that report information on this dimension suggest that regular monitoring of the LEG functioning happens, 13 out of 24 do so for DCP leadership and ownership, and eight out of 20 do so healthy partnership dynamics.

Quality of policy dialog across education themes

The thematic studies prepared by the Secretariat allow a glimpse in the ability of the LEGs to connect the problems revealed by ESA and ESP planning with adequate strategies that are relevant for solving the main problems identified. A review of these thematic studies suggest that not using system-wide approaches in designing ESP and ESPIG solutions is an issue for LEGs.

Turning to the effectiveness in discussing education topics, LEGs struggle to deal effectively with certain education topics.[53] LEGs struggle to connect identified needs and relevant strategies on issues involving teachers' behavior change, expansion of the number of teachers, and teachers' allocations: the thematic studies suggest that these issues are identified as problems, but without leading to relevant strategies. LEGs more easily propose plans for providing more inputs. Similarly, connecting the barriers identified and relevant strategies and funding appears difficult for LEGs when challenges relate to socioeconomic status, ethnic groups, rural/urban areas, or language groups.[54]

Strenghts and weakeness in comparator partnerships

After having explored key dimensions of the strategic effectiveness and strengths and weaknesses in the organization of the LEGs, the ISE turns to exploring whether similar patterns of strengths and weaknesses are also present in the country-level platforms of comparator partnerships: GAVI, GF, GCF, and the GEF. In the present section, the benchmarking focuses only on strengths and weaknesses of comparator country-level structures in discharging their core policy functions and on two dimensions that are also included in the LEG effectiveness principles: participation and country ownership. Unfortunately, the benchmarking information is not granular enough for an analysis that tracks all the dimensions of the LEG effectiveness principles.

The benchmarking with four other global partnerships suggests that the problems of country-level structures in discharging their core policy-dialog functions are common in country-level coordination structures of the partnerships, whether these are multi-stakeholder platforms or focal points.[55] Similar to GPE, the country coordination structures established by GAVI and the Global Fund are reportedly stronger at coordinating efforts in the planning stages and weaker in ensuring monitoring of grants and the sub-sectors, and in harmonizing with country systems.[56] The GCF and GEF have a different model from GPE's, relying on Focal Points inside Governments for discharging policy dialog functions: there are no LEG equivalents in these two partnerships. Their country level structures have performed well in identifying proposals for funding aligned with country priorities, and, in the case of the

[53] Bullard, Katy, et al. Thematic Review: Teachers and Teaching. Feb. 2020; Cameron, Stuart. Thematic Review: Equity and Inclusion. Feb. 2020; GPE Secretariat. EPL Thematic Study Gender Equality. Feb. 2020.

[54] Conversely, many ESPs propose strategies on disability, vulnerable children (such as orphans), emergency or crisis-affected areas, and remote or difficult-to-reach areas, without having identified barriers relating to these groups or areas.

[55] The analysis relies on identifying whether LEGs strengths and weaknesses in strategic effectiveness are unique or are also present in other comparator partnerships, some of which have adopted a model of country partnerships similar to the LEGs (Global Fund and GAVI) and some of which have chosen a different model of having focal points (GCF and GEF). Annex 6.1 contain the background table that grounds the analysis presented here.

[56] Theglobalfund.org. 2020. [online] Available at: https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8792/terg_partnershipmodelreview_paper_en.pdf?u=637166002040000000

GCF also in harmonizing with country systems since DCPs have direct access to this Fund when accredited.[57]

Similarly, the benchmarking suggests that multi-stakeholder platforms have a different mix of strengths and weaknesses compared with alternative models (National Designated Authorities and Focal Points) in ensuring effective participation and country ownership. The available evaluation for the Global Fund suggests that their Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) have been effective in achieving CSO participation during grant planning stages by means of dedicated support for CSO participation, a story that is broadly comparable to the progress made by GPE in the same area.[58] GCF and GEF follow a different model. They facilitate participation of CSOs primarily through periodic workshops for planning and monitoring the portfolio. The MOPAN evaluation of GEF found that at least 12 out of 20 cases in its sample displayed effective participatory activities or mechanisms that had achieved the buy-in of stakeholders.[59] While in GPE, in the CLEs sample, 20 out of 28 countries experienced improvements in effective participation against a much more demanding standard of permanent participation.

5.2.3 Explanatory factors for LEG effectiveness

This section discusses partial explanations for LEG strategic effectiveness.[60] For ease of exposition, it presents factors by category; i.e. LEG effectiveness principles, GPE contributions, Capacity — Motivation — Leverage of LEG members, Structural factors, and the Partnership model (through benchmarking with other Funds).[61] These categories are ordered from categories that are more closely connected to GPE (and LEGs) sphere of control, then influence, and then interest.

Before discussing each partial explanation in turn, Table 5.2.3 presents a summary of the factors according to four categories. Factors internal to GPE ToC that have worked well for LEG strategic effectiveness are in the top-left box and factors internal to GPE ToC that have not worked well for LEG effectiveness, so called bottlenecks, are in the top-right box. Below, the table presents the external factors that have enabled (left) or hindered (right) LEG strategic effectiveness.

The factors included in the table are to be understood as neither sufficient nor necessary, unless otherwise specified. In common language, they describe what worked well in enabling strategic LEG strategic effectiveness as well as the bottlenecks.

The role of the LEG effectiveness principles

QCA reveals that countries do not need to meet all LEG effectiveness principles for an effective LEG. Correlation analysis first revealed that only three out of seven LEG effectiveness principles were positively associated with LEG strategic effectiveness, namely effective participation, clear working arrangements, and monitoring and learning.[62]

Qualitative contribution analysis (QCA) has explored in depth this puzzle. It has revealed that the LEG reviewing its own performance as a multi-stakeholder platform has the closest association with LEG strategic effectiveness, meaning that the LEGs that meet this principle tends to be closer to the upper end of the continuum of policy dialog and be central to strong progress in dialog and monitoring. It is the only principle that is always present

[57] Gefieo.org. 2020. Annual Performance Report (APR) 2019 | GEF Independent Evaluation Office. [online] Available at: <https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/annual-performance-report-apr-2019 Ieu. greenclimate.fund. 2020. [online] Available at: <https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/documents/977793/1474145/FPR_countries_report.pdf/d84aa3df-2190-c99d-5272-832821142319; Independent Evaluation Unit. 2020. Performance Review Of The GCF (FPR). [online] Available at: < https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/evaluations/fpr

[58] MOPAN | Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network. 2020. Global Fund 2015-16. [online] Available at: <http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/globalfund2015-16/>

[59] MOPAN | Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network. 2020. 2017-18 GEF. [online] Available at: <http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/gef2017-18/>

[60] As mentioned earlier, this analysis defines LEG strategic effectiveness as the LEG discharging core policy dialogue functions and is operationalized through the 2 different measures presented in the previous section.

[61] The factors have been identified through a combination of correlation analysis, qualitative contribution analysis (QCA), thematic analysis (TA), and benchmarking. Correlation analysis is always supported by evidence coming from QCA or thematic analysis, which explains and nuances why a correlation has or has not been found. The factors identified through correlation and QCA rely on the difference in the mix of factors that are present where LEGs are more or less strategically effective. The thematic analysis of CLEs is instead relying on information that already has a causal quality: the factors have been identified through contribution analysis.

[62] One extra principle – clear governance arrangements – is only associated with one measure of strategic effectiveness.

in effective LEGs with a positive contribution and seems sufficient for LEG effectiveness.[63] The implication for action is clear: this is the first dimension of LEGs that, if possible, LEGs should strengthen. The least CLEs report information on this dimension, suggesting the possibility that good performance in this dimension might not be widely shared across countries. However, the evaluator cannot exclude the possibility that good performance on this dimension is more common than found in the analysis, because the CLEs did not set out to collect information on this dimension systematically.[64]

Other than monitoring and learning, positive cases of effective LEGs meet at least two other principles, which reflects the importance of exploring combinations between them. Similarly, the cases where LEGs have been less effective in their policy functions have negative contributions under three principles or more.

QCA suggests strong government ownership where government is effective as a pathway to LEG strategic effectiveness through government establishing effective LEG governance structures. However, when effective governments[65] — such as in Bangladesh — do not buy into GPE's sector-wide approach and instead own other processes, for example at the sub-sector level, LEGs have been less effective in discharging their core functions.

[63] Information on mutual accountability is only available in eleven CLEs, which leads to the need to be careful in interpreting it.

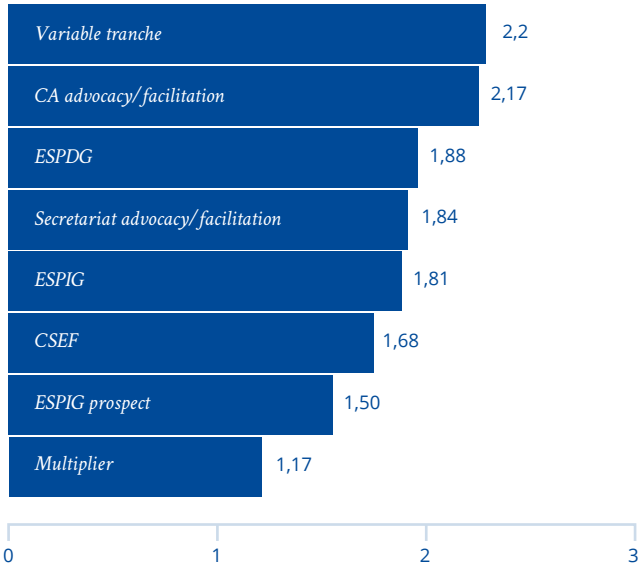
[64] 11 out of 28 CLEs report information on mutual accountability

[65] Effective compared with the sample of countries selected for the CLEs, meaning that their government effectiveness is substantially higher than the sample average.

Table 5.2.3 Explanatory factors for LEG Strategic effectiveness

What worked well for LEG strategic effectiveness	*Bottlenecks to LEG strategic effectiveness*
1. *Combination of LEG principles and context factors: Monitoring and learning; OR combining strong government ownership AND government effectiveness AND clear LEG governance; OR combining strong GPE and CA support AND weak education sectors that offered opportunities to motivated external actors. These pathways appear sufficient for LEG effectiveness (QCA)* 2. *Clear working arrangements within LEGs, but only together with at least other three principles (QCA)* 3. *Effective participation, but only together with either mutual accountability or at least three other principles (QCA)* 4. *Secretariat advocacy (COR and TA)* 5. *Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) funding for civil society (TA)* 6. *UNICEF in its role as a coordinating agency (TA)*	1. *DCPs preference for platforms of dialog and models of monitoring other than LEGs and JSRs (TA)* 2. *Donors and DCP governments inability to send senior education specialists to LEG meetings (TA)* 3. *JSRs leading to too many recommendations that are not prioritized or tracked (TA)* 4. *Trade-off between wide participation and efficiency (TA)* 5. *ESP RF framework not tracking the output and outcome level (COR + TA) OR not tracking the activity-level (TA)* 6. *Rotation or lack of the coordinating agent (COR + TA)* 7. *WB and USAID as CAs (COR + TA): only in a few cases* 8. *LEGs not being comfortable using system-wide approaches to education system reform (TA)*
Enabling contextual factors	*Hindering contextual factors*
1. *Motivation of LEG members that is coherent with LEG effectiveness (COR + TA)* 2. *Leverage of LEG members that are motivated to support LEG effectiveness (COR + TA)* 3. *Donors or civil society have an interest and ability to speak with a common voice to DCPs* 4. *Positive change in the space for civil society in DCPs (COR + TA)* 5. *Absence of other dialogue fora (COR + TA)* 6. *Low turnover in government, donors, and CSOs (TA)*	1. *Conflict (absolute level) in DCPs (COR + TA)* 2. *Disasters (COR + TA)* 3. *High inequality (income, cultural, and ethnic) (COR)* 4. *State of dialogue being strong at baseline, preventing further progress (COR + TA)* 5. *CSOs capacity constraints (TA)* 6. *Sector hosting only few donors (TA)* 7. *Limited inter-ministerial coordination (TA)*

Figure 5.2.5 Average level of contribution per mechanism of GPE ToC on a scale from 1 (limited contribution) to 3 (visible contribution)



Strong GPE support in countries where the education sector actors are weaker is a second pathway to LEG effectiveness and passes through strongly-motivated Secretariat CLs an CAs supporting progress on all principles, e.g. by using consultants (which might create gaps in sustainability).

In addition, the principle of participation and engagement does not appear to be a driver of LEG effectiveness, but rather an added value that requires LEGs to meet other principles to unlock its potential. However, thematic analysis reveals an additional concern here: the extent to which the CSOs and TUs that participate in LEGs actually represent their constituencies.[66]

Similarly, QCA reveals that good working arrangements are only present in positive cases together with at least two other principles, suggesting that it is a useful intermediate step on the causal chain to LEG effectiveness rather than the driving force.

Weak sector governance in societies that large, populous, very diverse, and very stratified OR conflict pre-empt most LEG principles from being present, resulting in relatively weak LEGs.[67]

Correlation analysis and QCA reveal that a clear mandate and healthy partnerships have a particularly weak association with LEG effectiveness. For a clear mandate, a thematic review of CLEs suggests that it might be because mandates are not implemented, sufficiently simple, or adequate.

The lack of association between the healthy partnership principle and LEG effectiveness can be explained by the particular definition used and what information is available in CLEs.[68] A healthy partnership is defined in the LEG effectiveness principle as a collegial relationship and the absence of undue power dynamics. However, LEGs that discuss important decisions — in short, LEGs that are strategically effective because they conduct important policy dialogue functions — increase incentives for members to exercise forms of power in influencing decisions and challenging other members.[69]

The role of GPE contribution to sector dialog and monitoring

The CLEs report that mechanisms in GPE's operational model that most strongly contribute to dialogue are the VT, CA, Secretariat CLs, ESPIGs, and ESPDGs (see Figure 5.2.5). By contrast, CSEF and multiplier had a more modest average contribution to dialogue and monitoring.[70]

The thematic analysis and follow-up interviews nuance these findings. On the role of the CAs, UNICEF stands out for its positive contribution, because of its ability to work in difficult contexts, coordination and facilitation

[66] It was reported as a concern by the CSEF evaluation, the evaluation of GRA on teachers unions and acknowledged through interviews with Education International and UNESCO.

[67] By complex society, here the analysis means:

[68] At least according to the limited information contained in the CLEs, which were not designed with the aim to collect information on dynamics inside LEGs. The analysis does not exclude that a data collection focused on exploring partnership dynamics could lead to different findings.

[69] The theory used for the organizational effectiveness part of the evaluation suggests, but this only speculative, that perhaps "healthy" should be defined in a different way, recognizing that clashing and using one's power to further legitimate goals in the partnership is part of the game, and that partnerships become unhealthy only when the distribution of power is completely unbalanced or the goals of partners at cross-purpose.

[70] The analysis has used the CLEs scoring of these mechanisms to sector dialogue and monitoring according to a three point scale: visible contribution (3), modestly visible contribution (2), and limited contribution (1). The analysis has collected the CLE rating, together with the reasons why the CLE rated contribution in a particular way, excluded the cases where the CLEs do not report information for that particular mechanism, which happens for example for variable tranches and multipliers, and reported average values for the cases where there is information on these mechanisms.

are functions close to its core mandate as a neutral UN agency. Interviews with the CLE evaluators suggests that its staff dedicates more time to the CA role. According to the CLE evaluators, USAID and WB come to CAs with a more partial agenda, which is not necessarily a negative feature as country partners, but is potentially conflicted with the CA's role as facilitator and mediator.[71] However, the evidence on the latter proposition comes from only a few cases and does not allow for generalizations.

Interviews with representatives of civil society and of the current ongoing endline evaluation of CSEF and earlier evaluations[72] suggest that this form of support is highly appreciated by civil society and needed if civil society is to participate effectively. The CSEF contribution was in the form of establishing in-country umbrella coalitions for civil society and strengthening the ones that already existed, for example in planning and implementing activities relavant to the GPE model, engaging their constituency, and building effective organizational structures. National Education Coalitions have been particularly active in providing independent evidence and research on education issues that are important to their constituencies.

However, bottlenecks have prevented the Coalitions from leading to effective participation, such as the limited space that government affords civil society in LEGs, limitations in the ability (and sometimes willingness) of civil society to represent its own members, and deficiencies in CSOs' capacity for understanding and adapting GPE model for their activities.[73]

According to the 2018 CSEF evaluation, the strength of the approach of building National Education Coalition is that CSOs are more likely to be heard when presenting a common front with DCP government. The weakness is that this approach has sometimes created rivalries for funds between members of the umbrella coalition, and has created consensus position that did not represent the entire constituency.[74]

Correlation analysis suggests that contribution from most GPE mechanisms is not associated with LEG effectiveness across CLEs. QCA supports this finding. E.g. in Burkina Faso, a LEG that is strategically effective (discharge important policy-dialogue functions well) exists in a situation where the CLE reports the least possible contribution from the instruments in GPE model shown in Figure 5.2.5. In South Sudan, the CLE reports strong GPE contribution in a situation where the LEG is not stratefically effective. The thematic analysis helps explain the situation: the correlation is likely generated by the fact that GPE's contribution is usually stronger where needs are greater, which are often also situations that are least conducive to effective LEGs. The evaluator interprets this finding as positive, because it suggests that GPE is targeting its support when it is needed the most.

Contributions from variable tranche (VT) and Secretariat CLs are the exception and are associated with LEG strategic effectiveness. The strong association between VT and effective dialogue is reasonable when exploring the causal pathway at play. The variable tranche provides a clear point of joint discussion, whereby stakeholders design and monitor results indicators together and have clear incentives in focusing their attention on the topics linked to those indicators.[75] The role of Secretariat CLs is through explaining GPE procedures and principles from a neutral stance, i.e. not from the interests of particular LEG members.

GPE's country model as described in corporate-level documents is not consistently applied in all countries.[76] For example, DCPs have used presentation-style conferences or regular itinerant inspection visits as

[71] Evidence comes from the Universalia's evaluators' assessment of USAID role's as CA in Bangladesh and South Sudan. The World Bank is much more commonly in the position of GA than CA. It acted as CA in Ivory Coast, where the CLE reports that that it was not effective because it came with its own agenda and also acted as GA.

[72] Oxford Policy Management (2018), Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)'s support for civil society engagement; Grijalva K and Izenberg M (2018), CSEF 2016-2018 Mid Term Review

[73] The interview with Education International and the current ongoing CSEF endline evaluation team point to instances when government chairs of the GPE did not share information with CSOs sufficiently in advance of the meeting, which meant that they came unprepared. CSEF has helped national CSO coalitions to be ready to operate at short notice.

[74] Oxford Policy Management (2018), Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)'s support for civil society engagement

[75] At the same time, the variable tranche have led in some cases (for example Malawi) LEG members to focus on the topic covered disproportionately from their importance.

[76] The guidance for JSRs come with quality standards that JSRs should meet. GPE does not expect JSRs to meet all principles, but aims for them to meet enough principles, three out of five, that the model is still recognizable. GPE. Results Report 2020. Washington DC, USA: GPE.

main tools of sector monitoring instead of the dialogue-based JSRs. The application of GPE's model has also been modified by barriers; for example, given that donors do not always appoint education specialists to the LEGs. Finally, GPE's model does not specify what roles consultants play in supporting LEGs, what should be avoided, as well as their effect on sustainability. The thematic analysis of CLEs information on the role of consultants suggests that they have a mixed role. Consultants have been contracted for supporting plan develoment, and also for developing and implementing models of monitoring and reporting that work but do not necessarily generate knowledge owned by the country or build country systems. However, they have also been used effectively for supporting the CA in discharging its mandate in difficult situations.[77]

In summary, thematic analysis of CLEs suggests that the level of contribution to sector dialog and monitoring by GPE mechanisms within countries depends on whether a mechanism is fit-for-purpose given highly and variable contextual factors. Some mechanisms — such as VT, CA advocacy, and CLs facilitation and advocacy — are evidently more effective than others. QCA also suggests that the effect of GPE contributions on LEG effectiveness is less in the least favorable contexts and often less needed in more favorable contexts. The section now turns to these contextual factors, starting with factors associated with the individuals and entities sitting on LEGs and then on broader structural factors.

[77] Thematic review of the CLEs. See annex 6.1 for more details.

Capacity, motivation, and leverage of LEG members

Capabilities, motivation, and leverage are properties of individual LEG members, and they influence LEG performance according to the role of each LEG member.[78]

Correlation analysis shows that technical capability in DCPs is not associated with LEG strategic effectiveness.[79] Nonetheless, thematic analysis of CLEs suggests that this is not because technical capability does not matter; rather, different countries experience different capability gaps, although almost all fall short against the level of capability assumed under the GPE model. In a partnership where each member is needed for the overall country-level result, capability constraints in only a few members may seriously hinders the overall LEG strategic effectiveness. Table 5.2.6a presents an overview of the capability dimensions in which gaps are found.[80]

[78] The present analysis relies on the CLEs' definition of capabilities, motivation, and leverage. The CLE synthesis report 2020 defines capabilities as: "knowledge, skills, experience", motivation as: "incentives, habitual patterns of decision making", and leverage as: "capacity to influence country-processes". The present analysis has relied on information that was already causal in nature, because the CLEs investigated capabilities, motivation, and leverage as part of a contribution analysis on the role of these factors in explaining change. The correlation analysis has translated the rich qualitative information in the CLEs into a three point scale: -1 if the CLE reports that gaps in capacity, motivation, or leverage had negative contribution to sector progress and dialog, +1 if they had a positive contribution, and 0 if the situation was mixed. The thematic analysis has then used the rich qualitative information in the CLEs, giving prominence to the facets of motivation, capabilities, and leverage that are more frequent across CLEs.

Table 5.2.6a Capacity dimensions in which gaps are found

Actor	*Dimensions of capability in which deficiencies are found*
CSOs	*Capacity for advocacy, in particular research skills* *Capacity to communicate to the regional and global level*
CSOs and TUs	*Organizational capacity (HR, finance, etc.)*
DCPs	*Coordination capacity across government (local – central, inter-Ministerial, across agencies)*
DCPs	*Capacity to establish an effective system for collection and analysis of integrated, timely, and quality data*
Donors	*Capacity to operate in hard-to-reach environments*
LEGs overall	*Capacity to use system-wide analysis and strategies*

[79] As mentioned earlier, this analysis defines LEG strategic effectiveness as the LEG discharging core policy dialogue functions and is operationalized through the 2 different measures presented in the previous section.

[80] According to the CLEs, CLE synthesis, evaluation of CSEF support, Evaluation of GRA 10 on teachers unions. The table reports only capacity gaps that have been mentioned in at least three different CLEs or sources.

Correlation analysis suggests that motivation to participate in and contribute to a sector-wide multi-stakeholder partnership is associated with LEG strategic effectiveness. Thematic analysis of CLE findings and interviews with CLE evaluators (Table 5.2.6b) provides an insight into what motivates or does not motivate LEG members. The list reports from top to bottom the themes that come back most often across CLEs. The particular mix of motivational factors will be unique to each country, with the implication that it is important to explore what motivates members of a given LEG before engaging with it. The categories in the list help in making sense of the individual case, without expecting all types of motivation to be present in each LEG.

Correlation analysis shows that the leverage of LEG members, the ability to put in place strategies for influencing country-level processes, is also associated with LEG strategic effectiveness. Thematic analysis helps here as well in exploring why this might be so and in identifying the most common themes across CLEs. First, speaking with a common voice and being part of an alliance grants donors and civil society increased leverage with DCPs, but at the expense sometimes of a more limited variety of views. Secondly, funding an ESPIG that is relatively large as a percentage of international donor funding is associated – as expected – with more GPE leverage. Finally, leverage has also been enhanced by shared values on dialogue, common standards, and evidence-based policy-making between all actors.

Table 5.2.6b Motivation of LEG members

What motivates LEG members?
• *For donors, development results from their own contributions*
• *For DCPs, providing better education, enhancing transparency, expanding dialogue, if these are part of the social contract*
• *Across government, incentives (e.g. revenue sharing)*
• *For donors and DCPs, the opportunity to also hold bilateral discussions*
• *For all actors, crises motivate collaboration*
• *Media attention*
• *For teachers' unions, teachers' salaries*
What does not motivate LEG members?
• *For DCP ministries, cooperating across the government*
• *For DCP governments, being held accountable to other members in the LEGs: donors and non-State actors*
• *For all actors, having to participate in multiple bodies with similar mandates*
• *For donors, lack of trust in DCP systems*
• *For DCPs and donors, implementing commitments of previous governments*

Structural factors

The ISE has explored the relationship between the LEGs and broader structural factors that surround them.[81]

Correlation analysis suggests that the structural political and economic factors associated negatively with LEG effectiveness are inequality (income, ethnic, and linguistic), the absence of other fora for dialogue in the education sector,[82] limited space for civil society, conflict, and disasters.[83]

[81] The analytical framework for identifying the relevant structural factors has been a reconstruction of the core policy-dialog functions of LEGs according to the effective partnership review and GPE ToC, as well as a reconstruction of the LEGs' place in the education system. This has yielded a long list of potential structural factors. The literature was usually clear on the direction of putative causation. For example, the literature on inequality, both for the US and for the developing world, usually points out that ethnic and cultural inequality makes dialog more difficult. The correlation analysis led then to a shortlist of factors that appeared prima facie associated with LEG strategic effectiveness. The ISE has not interpreted these associations as being causal and direct. Rather, it has enquired with the CLE evaluators, about their opinion over whether these factors were important in the countries that they had evaluated, how, and with what implications for the LEGs. These conversations have allowed the analysis to move forward in identifying the concept of social contract as promising for making sense of the relationship between LEGs and the structural factors that surround them.

[82] The thematic review of CLEs highlights that there instances of complementary between LEGs and other dialogue fora but usually, these take the form of the LEG being used as a more task-oriented group for ESP and ESPIG development and monitoring, while larger questions and more relevant monitoring for the sector are dealt with by other bodies.

[83] The measures of inequality used are the ones commonly used in the economic policy literature as presented in James Fearon (2003). "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country". Journal of Economic Growth. 8: 195–222. doi:10.1023/A:1024419522867 and Alberto Alesina; et al. (2003). "Fractionalization" (PDF). Journal of Economic Growth. 8: 155–194. doi:10.1023/a:1024471506938. The measure of space for civil society comes from the Global Governance Index of the World Bank, values for 2015 and 2018, for conflict from the Global Peace Index of the Institute of Economics & Peace, and for disasters from the Annual Disaster Statistical Review of the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED).

These factors are clearly outside of the control of GPE. The analysis considers them from the perspective of whether GPE has systematically adapted its approach to what is possible given the constraints that they pose.

A thematic analysis of CLEs content and, especially, follow up interviews with CLEs evaluators have shed some light on this. The concept of the social contract has emerged as a way to make sense of the structural constraints and opportunities that LEGs face. The social contract is an abstract contract that captures the tacit legitimacy links between governments and their constituency.[84] The interviews have suggested that the evolution of LEGs' policy functions and the shape and positioning of the LEG depends to a large extent on whether the social contract includes (a) a dialogue between goverment and society (and how hierarchical this is), (b) strong performance in delivering education, or transparency and anti-corruption being an important legitimacy source for the government, and (c) an attention for reducing inequalities across groups.

These findings suggest that there are no silver bullets for enhancing the strategic effectiveness of LEGs across countries; rather, the evolution of LEGs might be better served by exploring how each LEG fits in its social contract, maintaining a drive towards improvement on key dimensions, such as participation, but without expecting that each LEG will fulfill the same core policy-dialog functions in the same way.

[84] Interviews with CLEs evaluators.

The Country-level partnership Model

This section explores the role of the country-level Partnership model in driving strategic LEG effectiveness. It builds on a review of what has worked well and less well in other partnerships (GAVI, Global Fund, GEF, and GCF) as inspiration for GPE. The findings rely on available evaluations and limited interviews with key informants and should be considered tentative because the available information is neither consistent nor complete.

The analysis relies on identifying key similarities and differences between GPE and comparator partnerships on dimensions connected to the mandate, models of organization, approach to support participation (especially of civil society), and available resources.

A review of mandates and models across the comparator global partnerships suggests that requiring a sector-wide focus for planning and monitoring in a multi-stakeholder partnership is a unique feature of GPE's model, and that this is the model most difficult to implement effectively. The country-level multi-stakeholders platforms of the Global Fund and GAVI focus on specific subsectors in the health sector and on reviewing the partnerships' investments rather than the subsector as a whole. GEF has a sector-wide focus for environment, but its focal points are designated representatives of governments, not multi-stakeholder fora and report only on GEF's portfolio of investments. The GCF has a cross-sectoral focus, because climate change connects issues in agriculture, forestry, land-use, industry, cities, food security, disaster management, and energy sectors (at least). But, again, its NDAs focus on GCF investments, whether they are consistent with the national framework and produce results, and are not multi-stakeholder platforms, even if they consult CSOs through country-level workshops or other fora.[85]

Similarly to GPE, all comparator partnerships provide support to civil society in a way that is relevant to the country-partnership model. GAVI and the Global Fund provide dedicated support mechanisms for effective participation by civil society in their multi-stakeholder fora, recognizing that this is a necessary condition for CSOs' effective participation. GEF finances CSOs' involvement through its enabling activities (EAs) and through the GEF CSO Network as well as provides small grants to CSOs in its Small Grant Program administered by UNDP. GCF also supports domestic CSOs to get ready for accreditation as direct access entities.

The Global Fund has a particularly strong instrument to boost participation of CSOs in designing grant applications. At least 15 percent of the Funding Agreement amounts for Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM, equivalent of GPE's LEG) has to be allocated to support constituency engagement for non-governmental sector activities, including civil society and key population groups, and to promote and improve the quality of stakeholder participation[86]. Also, the Community,

[85] The NDAs are also required to report climate change commitments and progress to the UNFCCC, but that is a separate obligation from the obligations they have under the GCF.

[86] https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/3266/core_operationalpolicy_manual_en.pdf

Rights, and Gender Strategic Initiative provides technical assistance to support the engagement of civil society, key populations, people living with or affected by the diseases, and women's networks and organizations, independently or in partnership with the CCM.

All partnerships expect the chair of the local multi-stakeholder platform, focal point, or Nationally Designated Authorities to be a senior official in the Ministry responsible for the sector. The GCF, however, grants more flexibility, with the results that there is more variation in where its NDAs are located. Some of them are located in the Ministry of Finance rather than in the Ministry responsible for environment. In all cases, the appointed senior government officials has other functions in government aside from chairing the multi-stakeholder partnership or being GCF's focal point/ NDA. This suggests that this bottleneck is difficult to solve, because it comes back in different sectors and partnership models.

All partnerships seems to mix dedicated technical assistance for planning with additional technical assistance provided by other development partners, for example the German BACK UP Initiative.

Chapter 6.2 presents figures for annual disbursements between Funds. For this analysis, it suffices to say that GPE's annual disbursement figures are substantially smaller than all other comparator partnerships.

This is relevant for understanding the balance of costs and benefits in the partnership model from the perspective of country-level stakeholders. The benchmarking suggests that the GPE country-level partnership requires the most effort to work effectively in exchange for the least amount of funding. The unique sector-wide focus and high-benchmark for participation, a permanent multi-stakeholder platform that aims to include all actors State and Non-State that are relevant for ESP implementation, are the key elements that raise the effort.

5.2.4 System coherence - LEG effectiveness and related factors

This section aims to bring together the partial explanations outlined in the previous sections in a unified model. The model builds on the analysis proposed by Lant Pritchett.[87] Its main insight is that variation in learning outcomes depends by the interactions of actors in the education system and, in particular, by how coherent principal-agent relationships are to the objective of improving learning outcomes.[88] A LEG is neither principal nor agent, but principal-agent relationships exist in education systems, principals and agents sit together in the LEG, and the LEG is relevant for some of these relationships.

Education policy and planning is the prerogative of DCP governments. However, LEGs are an instrument to avoid inconsistencies in the process that translates education policy into a plan.[89] ESPs balance actions that the government implementing agencies, service providers, and schools are called to implement with the available resources and assign responsabilities accordingly. They also coordinate the support provided by development partners. The participation of all stakeholders (government agencies, service providers, non-governmental agencies, final beneficiaries, and donors) should ensure that plans are more relevant, realistic, and owned. LEGs have been effective in contributing to plans that meet GPE requirements but weaker in creating plans that are rated as implementable in the budget, partly because not all stakeholders participate with the same voice and partly because of financing gaps.[90] Stakeholders participate to meet requirements rather than create the most appropriate plan, and/or high-level voices from the MoF are absent.

[87] Pritchett, Lant. Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes: Making the Transition from Schooling to Learning. Dec. 2015.

[88] A principal-agent relationship occurs when one person (the agent) is allowed to make decisions on behalf of another person (the principal). The premise for this analysis is that relationships of accountability in education systems are like a "principal-agent" relationship. The "principal" designs the tasks it expects the agent to conduct and the agent chosen responds to these design elements in a way that is influenced also by determinants of individual behavior other than the mandate, such as intrinsic motivations, professional norms and standards, and organizational practices.

[89] DCP governments establish LEGs through legislation or secondary regulation, establishing their mandate and function in the national policy framework. DCP governments have assigned to them functions related to policy dialog and monitoring, rather than direct responsibility for promulgating government policy.

[90] The Annex Four contains more information on the barriers to participation posed to civil society, teacher unions, decentralized actors, and faith-based or private sector actors, which is based on the CLEs, CSEF evaluation, and interview with a representative of education international.

JSRs provide information on the extent to which agents implementing the plan – which have their own individual incentives – have performed as planned. LEGs have struggled in mitigating the inconsistencies between planner and implementer due to deficiencies in technical capability and motivation for reporting against plans.

The LEGs could in theory help to mitigate inconsistent actions across different ministries and levels of governments, although in practice they have not currently done so. Here, the relationship is not between the principal and agents, but rather *inter pares*, which creates limited incentives for ministries and government agencies other than those in charge of basic education to participate in LEGs.

The LEG has helped in partly healing the inconsistency between donors and DCPs, depending on the DCP country context. Donors are accountable to their tax payers for an international development agenda supported domestically, and to the DCPs' government and citizens for actions in their countries. LEGs reduce this inconsistency but cannot completely solve it because important decisions that shape donors' behavior happen in their capitals, and because there may not be agreement on priorities within the LEG.

The LEG cannot help much to mitigate inconsistencies connected to flaws in the balance between education policy and government budget because both — and especially the budget — are set at a higher level by the Cabinet and Ministry of Finance, also based on balancing priorities across sectors, budget constraints, and individual preferences of elites in power that may have little to do with education.

The implications that the ISE draws from the partial explanations, their combinations, and the focus on principal agent-relationship are as follow.

1. There is never only one explanation for why LEGs are successful or less successful in discharging their core policy-dialog functions. There are patterns across CLEs, but the combination of 26 main factors in 28 CLE countries leads to an enourmous amount of possible combinations
2. There are several entry points for GPE actors aiming to strenghten LEGs. These are the mechanisms that have proven more effective in carrying GPE contribution across CLEs and the organizational and collaborational dimensions of LEGs that have been found most closely associated with LEG strategic effectiveness. They offer a place to start for thinking about how to improve a LEG's strategic effectiveness, together with the overview of the most recurrent challenges in capabilities and motivation
3. Nevertheless, the focus on structural factors and system-wide principal-agent relationships brings home the point that LEGs exist in a context and that they are self-aware and also aware of that context and its changes. LEGs perceive and interpret the actions of actors aimed at influncing them and react to them. Additionally, they are themselves fora where actors negotiate different priorities. Therefore, the effectiveness of acting through an entry point cannot be assumed *a priori*, just because it has worked in the past or in (even most) other countries, but needs to be built for each case by adapting to the initial conditions, the context, and to the motivation and priorities and capabilities of LEG members
4. Finally, the benchmarking with other partnerships imply that GPE actors have taken on a bigger challenge than comparator partnerships in establishing the sector as focus for policy dialog and monitoring in country-level multi-stakeholder partnerships. They must be commended for proposing a model that pushes the envelop for what is possible in terms of effective partnership and country ownership. At the same time, they should be aware that they have taken on a unique challenge for which it is not easy to find possible solutions in the experience of other partnerships.

5.2.5 Conclusions LEG effectiveness

Progress on LEG effectiveness across the policy cycle has been uneven across countries: More LEGs have been effective for discussing ESP and ESPIG development and ESPIG monitoring, and fewer for influencing ESP implementation and strategic choices.

Particular combinations of organizational and collaboration principles proposed by the Secretariat explain LEG effectiveness, although LEGs do not need to meet all principles to be effective. Mutual accountability has the closest association with LEG effectiveness. Other than that, positive cases of effective LEGs meet at least two principles. The combination of principles and contextual factors that seem most associated with LEG

strategic effectiveness are strong government leadership and strong LEG governance, or strong GPE initiative and influence in countries where the education sector actors have weaker capacity. Weak sector governance in complex societies or conflict pre-empt most LEG principles from being present.

Technical capacity gaps within complex government systems for the delivery of education and data collection is an issue for all LEGs in discharging their functions, especially in closing the feedback loop between action in implementing the ESP and reflection on what has been achieved, what has not, and why. The motivation and leverage of LEG members explain whether they contribute to effective LEGs or not.

Structural political and economic factors are associated with LEG effectiveness, including inequality (income, ethnic, and linguistic), the absence of other fora for dialogue in the education sector, limited space for civil society, and the impact of conflict and disasters. The relationship between LEGs and the structural factors that surround them can be summarized under the concept of social contract, which influences whether inclusive dialogue on education based on accountability is possible.

LEGs struggle to find solutions that require system thinking because they imply changing the behavior of teachers and education actors, which requires exploring how their motivation, incentives, and leverage interact in principal-agent or collective action problems. Other global funds adopt a similar multi-stakeholder partnership model at the country level and show similar challenges. Compared with other funds, GPE's unique sector-wide focus requires the highest level of effort to ensure that the LEGs as country-specific multi-stakeholder platforms work as intended.

5.3 Efficiency and Use of funds

***Core question**: To what extent has GPE been making the best use of the funding at its disposal?*

***Main findings**: The ISE confirms that GPE's grant allocation processes are time consuming and a large share (GPE QAR process) takes place outside of the country at stake, affecting the sense of national ownership. Grant implementation is judged to be efficient, as majority of grants are on track. The ISE also found GPE Secretariat to actively monitor progress in implementation and fund disbursement and undertakes regular efforts to analyze and propose options for improved efficiency of processes. Funds are allocated to over 70 countries prioritizing the support of basic education in LICs and LMICs in line with GPE's mission. Funds are distributed over a broad range of activities, balancing the provision of financial support to improve learning quality, equity and systems financing, reflecting the diverse needs of countries and the varied interests of GPE's multiple constituency groups.*

5.3.1 Introduction

The ISE has reviewed the (time) efficiency of GPE's grant cycle from grant application to approval and from approval to actual grant disbursements. For this part, the ISE relied largely on the Grant Process Streamlining project (GPSP) results, commenced in May 2019 by the Secretariat with the objective to streamline the process by identifying the major obstacles affecting timelines, workload, as well as identifying and recommending solutions to streamline the process and increase the Secretariat's capacity.[91]

In addition, the ISE has reviewed the allocation / use of funds within the GPE's portfolio, to understand and assess patterns in fund allocation in light of GPE's ambitions. In doing so, the ISE mapped out GPE's overall grant portfolio to see how available GPE funds have been distributed in terms of country allocations (I.e. FCAC/ non-FCAC, LIC/LMIC/UMIC), commitments by sub-sector (pre-primary, primary, secondary), and by thematic area (learning, equity, systems). Finally, a light benchmarking of grant application and disbursement processes of four other global funds has been undertaken to see how these compare with GPE's in the expectation this might lead to further insights about how best to shape these processes.

[91] GPE Secretariat (2019), Project Summary for Grant Process Streamlining Project – Phase I DELIVERABLE 6-13-19.

5.3.2 Efficiency of GPE's grant application process

In undertaking this analysis, the ISE has primarily relied on the earlier work of the GPSP, which analyzed 27 ESPIG applications submitted in 2017 or 2018. This resulted in the following timeline of the ESPIG application (Figure 5.3.2).

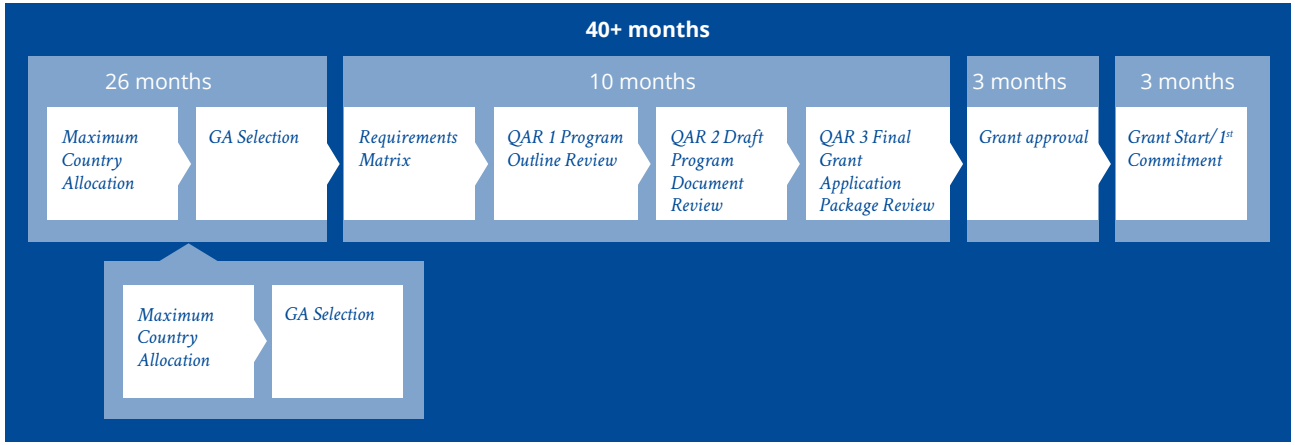
The Figure 5.3.2 shows that the average duration of the grant application process (calculated from the announcement of the MCA to the grant start date[92]) is around 39 months, while it takes on average another three months until the moment that the first disbursement is made. This period is somewhat misleading, as the timing of the MCA process is linked to replenishments and may take place when an earlier ESPIG is still be on-going. This means that the MCA does not mark the start of a country-level sector analysis and planning process, which happens (sometimes much) later[93]. Nevertheless, the MCA is the first moment in which GPE funds are formally committed to a DCP as beginning of a process that ultimately leads to the start of a new ESPIG.

The MCA process of GPE is similar to ones of GF and GEF, whereby resources allocated to partner/recipient countries for the entire replenishment cycle[94] are calculated based on a formula[95]. *In comparison, GAVI and GCF allocate available funds among grant proposals being considered, on a first come first served basis within their overall general guidelines such as, in the case of GCF, 50/50 split for mitigation and adaptation and 50 percent of adaptation resources to Africa, LICs, and SIDS*[96].

GPE grant application process then moves to, among others, undertaking the ESA and ESP development, as necessary inputs to complete the requirements matrix, which serves as the basis for the ESPIG application. This process, on average, takes two years, making the first steps in the grant application process the longest, notwithstanding the detachment between the MCA announcement and the country-level processes.[97]

After the requirement matrix is submitted, the quality assurance review (QAR) process takes on average around ten months. Although project cycles of benchmarked partnerships do not exactly match, a comparison can be made to the average time for the GCF's projects to move from full proposal submission to

Figure 5.3.2 Portrait of historic timeline of ESPIG application



[92] Grant start date = grant effectiveness date: the moment the grant is registered in the administration.

[93] This may still take a significant amount of time, but the GPSP report does not provide details on the average time-gap between MCA and start of the ESA process.

[94] GEF has a four-year replenishment cycle while GF has three-year one.

[95] In the case of the Global Fund, this formula takes into account disease burden and economic capacity of a country. In case of GEF, the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) takes a combination of GEF benefits index, GEF performance index, and a social and economic index based on GDP.

[96] Small Island Developing States https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/gcf-small-islands-developing-states-factsheet

[97] "The timeline analysis done under the streamlining project does not yield information on whether the grant application process was smooth or troublesome, it only indicates the duration. The duration of time for grant application depended on many factors, including for example, whether the country was developing a new education sector plan in parallel (and not due to a delay), whereas the MCA had already been decided at a certain time (based on the inflow of funds to the Secretariat)" (Interview, Grant Process Streamlining Project Team, February 2020).

the GCF Secretariat to approval by the Board, through 3-staged review processes[98], that reportedly has been reduced from eleven months in 2015 to nine in 2019[99]. GEF, with its new Project Cancellation Policy[100] has been trying to reduce the time that, on average takes a full-sized project (FSP) to move from approval of the concept note by the Council (somewhat comparable to getting to QAR 1 of GPE) to CEO for endorsement to 12 months and to actual CEO Endorsement (somewhat comparable to QAR 3 of GPE) to 18 months. GAVI and GF have different processes, especially when related to the procurement of vaccines/medicines that allows them to have reduced the time it takes from the application to disbursement to 10 months in the case of GAVI and to 9 moths in the case of GF[101]. Notwithstanding the imperfect comparisons, due to different grant processes of benchmarked partnerships, it can be inferred that ten months of GPE's review does not stand out as inefficient.

After the review processes are completed, ESPIG approval takes an additional three months and the grant start/first commitment another three months, which all together makes the overall grant application process, as presented by the ESPIG timeline, rather lengthy. Unsurprisingly, the GPSP analysis, confirmed by CLEs, has revealed that one of the main bottleneck in the protracted GPE's grant application process is the need to comply with fixed requirements (an independently appraised and endorsed quality ESP/TEP, an evidence of commitment to finance it, and the availability of/strategy to develop capacity to produce critical data and evidence for data planning, budgeting, managing, monitoring and accountability) to enter the QAR process. In particular, the perceived rigidity with which requirements related to the government's domestic financing commitment, the completion of the previous grant and the credibility of data on education have been applied reportedly led to lengthy processes.

Further, despite the earlier inference that the QAR processes are comparable with other partnerships in their length, and reported by some CLEs as reasonable (Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe), in many CLEs and interviews the 3-staged review has been viewed as (too)

Textbox 5.3.2 Selected potential efficiency improvements in the GPE grant processes

Quick wins

1. *Allow ESPIGs to overlap*
2. *Lighten ESPDG and PDG application processes*
3. *Portal for grant document submission, similar to GAVI's online country portal[102]*
4. *Train GAs on financial requirements of ESPIG*
5. *implify/ clarify QAR forms and guidance[103]*

High-impact solutions for discussion with the Board

1. *Meet countries where they are (analyze maturity of DCPs education sector), similar to GF's differentiation framework[104]*
2. *Board delegates grant approval to the Secretariat, depending on the size of the grant, similar to the GEF's medium-size project (MSPs) grant application processes[105]*
3. *Rolling MCAs, country chooses application and grant timing*
4. *Implement process portal and dashboard*

Source: GPE Secretariat (2019), III Short List of Early Implementation Recommendations - Grant Process Streamlining-PHASE III DELIVERABLE and results of ISE benchmarking study, Annex 6.1

[98] 1st stage is for completeness check and preliminary review, 2nd stage is for interdivisional secretarial (technical) assessment, and 3rd – for technical assessment by the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP).

[99] Green Climate Fund. 2019. [online] Available at: <https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/documents/977793/1474145/FPR_countries_report.pdf/d84aa3df-2190-c99d-5272-832821142319>

[100] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Project_Cancellation_Policy_20181220.pdf

[101] MOPAN's assessment of GF's efficiency was satisfactory (a 3 on a 4-scale assessment) in 2015-16, with an emphasis on procurement rather than process of disbursement. The report highlighted significant improvements in Procurement mechanisms and Supply Chains including savings by introducing pooling procurement, etc. MOPAN | Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network. 2020. Global Fund 2015-16. [online] Available at: <http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/globalfund2015-16/>

[102] Gavi's new online country portal facilitates countries having quick and easy access to up-to-date information about its portfolio of Gavi support as well as apply for new funding support

[103] With a note that GCF has been piloted and evaluated a Simplified Approval Process (SAP) to conclude that it presents no efficiency gains. SAP is an application process for smaller-scale projects or programmes with simpler documents with significantly fewer pages, easier questions and clear guidelines for more concise responses for each section, avoiding the duplication of information. More information available https://www.greenclimate.fund/projects/sap

[104] GF has been organizing its support countries with the differentiated approach, particularly by reallocating Grant Management Division's (GMD) resources between Focused, Core and High Impact country portfolios. Based on the country portfolio categorization, the Secretariat has also introduced a differentiated approach to grant application, review and approval processes. Global Fund. 2017. Global Fund's Strategic Review 2017 available online https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8343/terg_2017strategicreview_report_en.pdf?u=637166000190000000

[105] https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/EN_GEF.C.52.Inf_.06.Rev_.01_Guidelines_on_the_Project_and_Program_Cycle_Policy_0.pdf

burdensome, complex and time-consuming in light of its value in improving the ESPIG application.

Finally, another set of factors identified as causing time lags in the grant processes relate to the capacity and dedication of key actors in the process (i.e. government, GA, CA, and LEG) to understand and implement the application processes expediently (see section 5.4.4).

While ISE joins the GPSP in acknowledging that GPE is subject to various external factors, it also recognizes the value of the following quick-wins and high-impact solutions suggested by the GPSP for discussion with the GPE Board (see Textbox 5.3.2). Two of the quick wins related to the pre-application stage, while an additional two relate to the QAR process and one relates to the practical handling of submissions.

In addition, as part of the efforts to further improve the efficiency of GPE, the Secretariat has initiated a work program specifically targeted at raising awareness and action to achieve Value for Money (VfM)[106] The VfM framework identifies key entry points for strengthening GPE's VfM approach.

(i) strengthening of Local Evaluation Groups (LEGs) and Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs),
(ii) improving the sustainability and impact focus of ESPs and ESPIGs
(iii) monitoring of costing and outcome data under the ESPIGs, and
(iv) identifying greater evidence on impact and innovation, as core areas for the consistent use of VfM principles.

5.3.3 Efficiency of GPE's grant disbursement process

The efficiency of GPE's grant disbursement concerns the process from grant approval to the actual activation of the grant (i.e. the first disbursement) and the progress of disbursements throughout the implementation process.

Assessing the ESPIGs financial data recorded by the GPE Trustee for the 2012-2020 period[107] shows that the average time between grant approval and the actual grant start date is 116 days (less than four months), ranging from one day (CAR, Chad) to more than 300 days (Benin, Congo DR, Yemen). These considerable differences in observed time lag are explained by various factors:

- Different GAs adopting different administrative practices and requirements.[108] For example, the World Bank takes an average of 163 days, while UNICEF takes on average 58.[109]
- The modality of grants, with co-financed projects taking on average 170 days, while stand-alone projects and sector pooled projects take 110 and 106 days, respectively.
- The GPE strategy cycle, with significantly fewer grants approved and started in the first and final years of a strategy (2011/12 and 2015/16/17).

Overall, the average time lag of 116 days illustrates a significant improvement from the GPE Results for Learning Report 2014-2015[110], which showed a significantly higher number of average months between approval to first disbursement for the period prior to 2012 (between 11.3 and 20.6 months). When compared to for example the Green Climate Fund (GCF) – for which data is available, the GPE process from grant approval to first disbursement seems rather efficient, as the GCF reports reducing the average time from the Board approval to post-approval execution from 12.4 months in 2015 to ten months in 2019[111].

When assessing the efficiency of fund disbursements during grant implementation, from Table 5.3.3a and Figure 5.3.3 we can observe that 81 percent of the funds received were committed during the period under review, while 96.5 percent of committed funds were transferred to recipients. In particular, it took four years for cash transfers to catch up to commitments after the initial surge of paid-in contributions after FY2012.

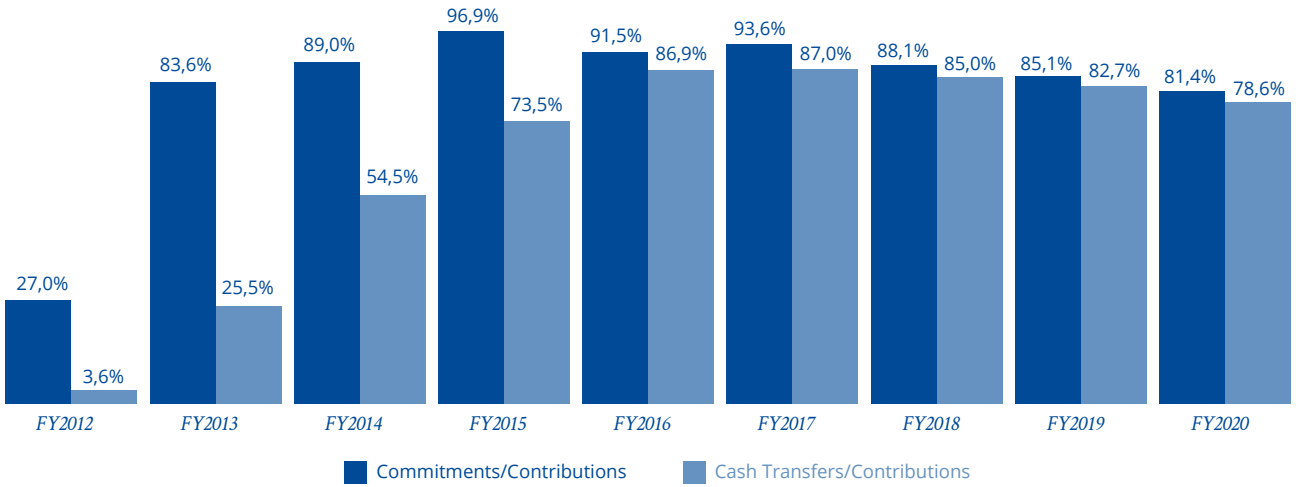
[106] GPE Secretariat (2019), VFM Final Conceptual Framework. 30June2019
[107] GPE Trustee financial data for 2012-2020 (up to 31 December 2019), complemented with GPE Secretariat Disbursement Data, shared by David Glass (February 2020).
[108] GPE Secretariat (2019) Annual Grant Performance Review 2019.
[109] In most cases where international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) or UN agencies are GAs, the expected start date indicated in the approved grant application form is also the effectiveness date, unless otherwise indicated by the GA. However, where the World Bank, DFID, SIDA, or AFD is the GA, regardless of what is indicated in the grant application form at approval, the grant implementation does not commence until the grant agreement has been signed between the GA and the government (source: GPE Annual Grant Performance Review 2019).
[110] GPE Secretariat (2014), Results for Learning Report 2014 – Basic Education at Risk.
[111] Green Climate Fund. 2019. [online] Available at: <https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/documents/977793/1474145/FPR_countries_report.pdf/d84aa3df-2190-c99d-5272-832821142319>

Table 5.3.3a GPE fund donor contributions, commitments and disbursements per financial year (in US$ millions)

Fiscal Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Annual									
Donor Contributions	373.9	366.5	393.4	498.5	255.7	447.1	580.8	584.9	375.7
GPE Commitments	101.0	517.9	390.3	573.4	145.8	456.4	383.6	411.1	175.6
GPE Cash Transfers	13.6	175.2	429.2	581.6	440.4	392.8	446.2	418.1	148.2
Cumulative									
Donor Contributions (cumulative)	373.9	740.4	1,133.8	1,632.4	1,888.1	2,335.2	2,916.0	3,500.9	3,876.6
GPE Commitments (cumulative)	101.0	618.9	1,009.1	1,582.6	1,728.4	2,184.8	2,568.3	2,979.4	3,155.0
GPE Cash Transfers (cumulative)	13.6	188.8	617.9	1,199.5	1,639.9	2,032.7	2,478.9	2,897.0	3,045.2
Ratios									
Commitments / Contributions	27.0%	83.6%	89.0%	96.9%	91.5%	93.6%	88.1%	85.1%	81.4%
Cash Transfers / Commitments	13.4%	30.5%	61.2%	75.8%	94.9%	93.0%	96.5%	97.2%	96.5%
Cash Transfers / Contributions	3.6%	25.5%	54.5%	73.5%	86.9%	87.0%	85.0%	82.7%	78.6%

Source: author's calculations based on GPE Fund data

Figure 5.3.3 cumulative commitments and cash transfers as percentages of paid-in donor contributions (end of each fiscal year; fy2020 to 31 December 2019 only)



Source: author's calculations based on GPE Fund data

A similar gap between donor contributions and GPE commitments is observed since 2018, when GPE received an increase in donor contributions. Because of that commitments as a share of contributions has declined in FY2018 and FY2019, but cash transfers have remained a high percentage of commitments. This indicates that it takes some years for GPE to disburse the available funds. Overall, GPE has a relatively high percentage of commitments compared to other Financial Intermediary Funds (FIFs), since the GPE, unlike other FIFs, does not commit the entire approved amount of an ESPIG grant at the time that it is approved, but only in stages, depending on progress and results in earlier stages.

GPE's Annual Grant Performance Report 2019 presents and analyzes disbursement patterns during ESPIG implementation, relating disbursement status to implementation status as follows (see Table 5.3.3b).

From Table 5.3.3b, a link between disbursements and implementation status can be observed, illustrating that disbursement delays are largely explained by delays in implementation. Most delays (49 percent) were caused by operational challenges (mainly issues related to more complex large-scale or international procurement; 26 percent), while 32 percent were due to unforeseen changes and external circumstances such as armed conflict, pandemics or a change of government's leadership or policies during the project cycle (see Annex 5.3.5 for a detailed overview).

Table 5.3.3b List of ESPIGs by disbursement and implementation status (as of June 30, 2019)

Disbursement status FY19	Implementation status FY19	Number of ESPIGs	List of ESPIGs
On track	On track	7	Gambia, Kenya, Lao PDR, Nigeria, Pakistan (Balochistan), Somalia (Puntland), Togo
On track	Slightly behind	10	Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, OECS, Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Uzbekistan
Slightly behind	On track	1	Madagascar
Slightly behind	Slightly behind	5	Cambodia, Central African Republic, Liberia, Nepal, Zimbabwe
Delayed	Slightly behind	2	Comoros, Ethiopia
Delayed	Delayed	4	Chad, Congo DR, Lesotho, Yemen
Total		**29**	

Source: GPE Annual Grant Performance Report 2019

The Grant performance report (GPR) also provides an analysis of disbursement patterns over the grant duration (see Annex 5.3.5), and reports on particular measures taken to address delays. Reported measures include: restructuring of the Results Framework; implementation support from the GA, LEG and Secretariat; hiring a national program coordinator to overcome coordination challenges; and better prioritization in the implementation process. Altogether, these illustrate comprehensive and thorough efforts by the Secretariat to monitor and improve GPE's efficiency in grant disbursement.

5.3.4 Role of in-country actors in grant processes

The efficiency of grant application and implementation at the country level depends on the performance and cooperation among a number for key GPE actors, notably the GA, CA, and DCP government. GPE's internal reviews (GPMP and GPR) and ISE interviews bring to light a number of actor-related issues that reportedly influence the overall grant performance.

For instance, the GPMP observes that the QAR processes do not sufficiently address governments' (implementation) capacity.[112] In particular, the number of review rounds placed a strain on already-stretched staff at the ministry involved. In addition, having several ministries involved complicates progress, while the turnover of staff at any of the organizations involved is also quoted as a factor that affects in-country collaboration.[113]

Unsurprisingly, the GAs are widely seen as a crucial actor in GPE's grant processes. GA performance is reportedly varied, reflecting earlier-mentioned differences in administrative requirements as well as capabilities and interest in working on behalf of GPE. As a result, the perceived quality of GA-Secretariat cooperation also varies from country to country. Training of GAs to improve their understanding of GPE's financial requirements may be one of the quick wins identified by the GPMP, but as long as GAs and other in-country actors still perceive GPE application requirements as overly complex in light of the size of grants, the results of such training can be expected to be limited.

CAs are important actors in coordinating and facilitating in-country cooperation between relevant government and non-government actors, which is an important factor influencing the quality and pace of policy dialogue and monitoring processes. Across countries, the absence of GPE financing for the CA role is perceived as a risk, as it limits the respective organizations' ability and willingness to facilitate sector dialogue and monitoring. This risk

[112] Universalia, (2020), CLE Synthesis Report.

[113] Oxford Policy Management (2018) Examination of key actors' roles in GPE's country-level operational model – Final report Volume I.

is also being addressed in the EPR process, which has initiated pilots to compensate CAs for their efforts.

5.3.5 GPE's use of funds

As a further measure of GPE's efficiency, trends in grant allocation by country, education sub-sector and thematic area have been mapped out and analyzed in light of GPE's ambitions.

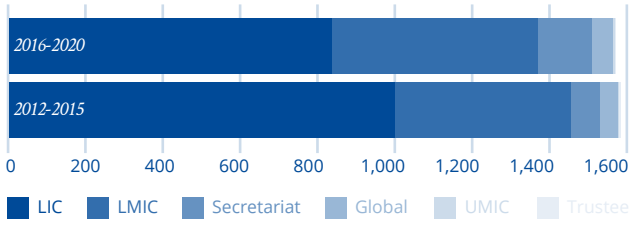
GPE's total portfolio of commitments from 2012-2020 was US$ 3.155 billion. This includes all commitments made for country-level project grants like ESPDGs and ESPIGs, regional or global projects like CSEF, ASA, A4L, or KIX. It also comprises agency fees, supervision allocation, GPE Secretariat and trustee costs. Altogether, country-level commitments make up 90 percent of the portfolio, while 7 percent was committed to the Secretariat and 3 percent for global (or regional) grants (see Annex 5.3.6).

Overall, between 2012-2020, a total of 70 countries were supported through a total of 115 grants. Of the US$ 2.834 billion committed to country-level projects (LICs, LMICs, UMICs), 65 percent was committed to 33 LICs, 35 percent to 33 LMICs and 0.2 percent to five UMICs (Figure 5.3.5a).

Comparing the distribution of GPE commitments to LICs, LMICs, and UMICs as part of total GPE commitments for the GPE 2015 Strategy and the GPE 2020 Strategy operational periods, it is observed that between 2012-2015, a higher portion of the funds were committed to Low-Income Countries (63 percent of total GPE commitments) than during the 2016-2020 period (53 percent of total GPE commitments). This does not so much reflect a 'choice' of GPE itself, as commitments depends on country capacities to timely submit their applications. Besides, the status and with that the number of countries will have changed over the two strategic periods, making that the reduced share of commitments to LICs does not reflect a deliberate change in GPE's funding strategy. The share of funds committed to LMICs has increased from 29 percent (2012-2015 period) to 34 percent (2016-2020 period). This seems to contradict with the ambitions of the new MCA formula that was designed with the intention to allocate more funds to the countries that were the most in need. On the contrary, a decrease in commitments to Low-Income Countries is observed in the 2016-2020 operational period.

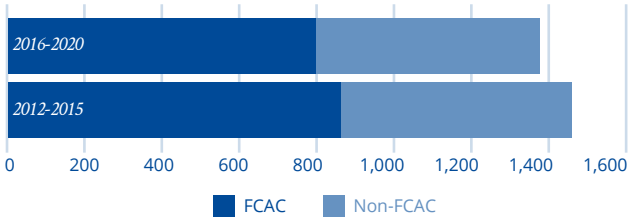
The fourth component of the MCA formula adjusts allocation with 15 percent for FCACs, which could affect funding commitments to countries in most need. A total of 59 percent of all country-level commitments to LICs, LMICs, and UMICs is allocated to 33 fragile or conflict-affected countries (FCACs), with 24 countries categorized as LICs and nine as LMICs. The other 41 percent was thus allocated to 38 non-FCACs, of which 24 were categorized as LMICs, nine as LICs and five as UMICs. The commitments to FCACs range from 47 percent in 2018 to 100 percent in 2012. Comparing the GPE 2015 and 2020 strategy periods shows that there are no significant differences between these periods, with nearly 60 percent of funds devoted to FCACs in both periods.

Figure 5.3.5a distribution of GPE commitments by operational period (in us$ millions)



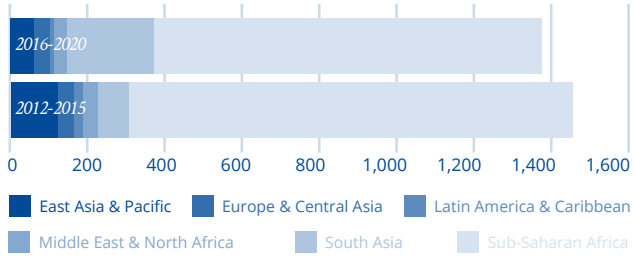
Source: author's calculations based on GPE Fund data

Figure 5.3.5b GPE commitments per FCAC/non-FCAC 2012-2020 per strategy period (in US$ millions)



Source: author's calculations based on GPE Fund data

Figure 5.3.5c GPE commitments per GPE region per strategy period (US$ millions)



Source: author's calculations based on GPE Fund data

The regional distribution of commitments shows that the majority of funds were committed to Sub-Saharan Africa (76 percent), followed by commitments to South Asia (11 percent), 6.6 percent to East Asia and Pacific, 3 percent to Europe and Central Asia, 2.6 percent to Middle East and North Africa and 1 percent to Latin America and Caribbean (see Figure 5.3.5c). The regional distribution shows that GPE has expanded the allocation to the different regions over the years, although the majority of funds remained committed to Sub-Saharan Africa. Comparing the GPE strategy until 2015 and GPE strategy until 2020 shows that over two-thirds of funds committed to East Asia and Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean were prior to 2016. For South Asia, the opposite applies: three-quarters of funds were committed during the 2020 strategy period. For Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Central Asia and Middle East and North Africa, both periods account for around 50 percent of funds allocated to the region.

Among comparator partnerships, the GPE and GAVI are more focused than the others on supporting LICs and FCACs. The GEF allocates resources more broadly among all developing member countries including UMICs and HICs. The GCF gives priority to SIDS as well as Africa and LICs. The GF gives priority to high-burden countries, some of which are UMICs.

Funding priorities: Commitments per sub-sector

The Results Report 2019 includes the distribution of funds by education level for the 2004-2017 period (see Annex 5.3.8). This shows that the pre-primary level remained fairly stable at around 5 percent, while primary increased in 2008 to remain stable since then at around 65 percent. The secondary level is seen to be fairly stable, but slightly reducing to around 10 percent. Grant allocations for which the level could not be specified since 2012 have slowly grown to around 20 percent. The latter includes the allocations for system-level investments, like EMIS and teacher management. The share of funds characterized as 'other' has reduced to 0 percent over the years. Overall, this shows that no major shifts have occurred in terms of commitments per sub-sector changes, and thus it reflects GPE's continued emphasis on supporting primary education.

Commitments per strategic goal/results area

In order to determine the efficiency of the funds allocated by GPE, the ISE explores the funding priorities that were traceable in the Results Framework and other sources of information on GPE strategies. Evidence of investments done by GPE and the results of those investments is only partial and was not available comprehensively for the entire portfolio period.

The GPE Secretariat's Grants Performance Report 2019[114] includes an overview of the grant allocation according to the GPE 2020 Strategic Goals, based on US $ 1.4 billion in 34 grants active at end of the 2018 fiscal year.[115] Overall, grant activities related to learning (Strategic Goal 1) were allocated 40 percent of the total grant funding, while activities related to equity (Strategic Goal 2) accounted for 26 percent, and activities related to systems (Strategic Goal 3) 29 percent. The activities that receive the most funding include standards, curriculum development and learning materials / books, and teacher development (under learning), and education facilities, including school construction (under equity). These are also results areas that are explicitly mentioned in the Results Framework, which is fair since these three aspects are well measurable and use a large share of the financing. *Nevertheless, this also carries the risk that these results are being considered priorities in ESPIG development. The interviews indicate that the RF influences the thinking and design of ESPIGs.*

The grant allocation overview per strategic goal illustrates that EMIS (2.5 percent) and LAS (2.7 percent) receive relatively small amounts of funding, although these activities are part of almost all ESPIGs. It furthermore illustrates that gender equality explicitly receives 4 percent, although other typical inclusiveness-related activities (out-of-school children and children with special needs) remain limited with 1.7 percent and 0.2 percent, respectively. Finally, a relatively equal distribution can be observed for system improvements at the central, decentralized and school level.[116]

[114] GPE Secretariat (2019), Annual Grant Performance Report 2019.
[115] This grant allocations per strategic goal suggests a direct financing of these goals, without reflecting the interrelations between the goals (in particular goal 3 contributing to 1 and 2) as reflected in GPE's ToC.
[116] GPE Secretariat (2019), Annual Grant Performance Report 2019.

When comparing GPE's financing towards different strategic areas with literature on the rate of return for educational interventions, it indicates that there is no general consensus on what the most efficient area of investment is, given that many contextual specific factors hinder the comparison and generalization of research findings. Nonetheless, one of the aspects of consensus is that early childhood development and pre-primary education are areas of intervention that have a high return on investment.[117] In terms of types of intervention, it appears that cash transfers have positive effects on enrollment and attendance rates, with stronger effects for girls than boys, and conditional cash transfers having stronger impacts than unconditional cash transfers.[118] In addition, improving school infrastructure and building more schools leads to increased enrollment — especially for girls — and it also leads to improvements in test scores.[119] Textbooks are a cost-effective intervention, although books must be available, regularly used in class and produced in a language that is widely understood. [120] Textbooks need to be available to at least 50 percent of the students to have a positive effect.[121] Apart from qualified and committed teachers, no other input is likely to be more cost-effective than making high-quality learning materials available to all students.[122] Additionally, teacher training interventions are more effective focusing on collaborative, professional environment than individuals.[123] In summary, there is no conclusive evidence yet on what is the most efficient area for educational interventions to invest resources, although the quality and relevancy of the intervention are certainly supporting factors.[124] This reflects the broad scope of GPE's areas of intervention and calls for careful planning and close monitoring of the results of the activities conducted.

GPE currently analyses the VfM for some thematic areas. The aim of the VfM efforts[125] is to develop detailed and user-oriented guidance notes on three thematic areas: books and learning materials; education infrastructure and school construction; and teachers and teaching. This effort is commendable and could lead to a good understanding of VfM of investments in these areas that potentially steers the global debate on rate of return on educational interventions.

5.3.6 Conclusions concerning grant application, disbursement and use of funds

On grant application

GPE's grant allocation process from MCA to first disbursement takes more than 40 months on average, which strains the level of commitment to the process among in-country actors. The first 26 months of this period include an initial delay, as the timing of the education sector planning process is not linked to the MCA announcement. Subsequently, a significant amount of time is consumed to complete a complex sector-wide participatory analysis and plan development process. Altogether, this consumes about 2/3rd of the 40 months, which is different from other global funds that have a more issue-based/ thematic focus and are less demanding in term of inclusiveness and quality requirements. If only looking at grant review and disbursement parts of the application process, than GPE is more efficient than other partnerships for which the comparable data is available.

Once the sector plan development is completed according to GPE quality standards together with other funding requirements that are partly beyond the scope of control of GPE, the actual grant application can start. In addition, in-country actors (DCP government, GA and CA) determine the pace and quality of these applications, each having their own capacity and/or institutional constraints affecting grant application efficiency.

[119] Plaut, D. et al. (2017). Chapter 22 : Getting to Education Outcomes: Reviewing Evidence from Health and Education Interventions. Child and Adolescent Health and Development, 3rd edition. The World Bank, Washington.

[120] Frederiksen, B., Brar, S. and Trucano, M. (2015). Getting Textbooks to Every Child in Sub-Saharan Africa : Strategies for Addressing the High Cost and Low Availability Problem. World Bank Group.

[121] Global Education Monitoring Report (2016). Every Child Should Have a Textbook [Policy Paper]. ED/GEMR/MRT/2016/PP/23 REV.

[122] Frederiksen, B., Brar, S. and Trucano, M. (2015).

[123] Kraft, M. A. and Papay, J. P. (2014). Can Professional Environments in Schools Promote Teacher Development? Explaining Heterogeneity in Returns to Teaching Experience. Educ Eval Policy Anal, 36(4), p. 474 - 500. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4392767/

[124] AIMS (2016). AIMS Institutional Model and Programs : A Value for Money Assessment [Final Report].

[125] GPE Secretariat (2019), VFM Final Conceptual Framework. 30June2019

Furthermore, having a three-staged QAR process outside of the country at stake leads to an external and time-consuming process that affects the sense of national ownership, shifting the focus of the LEG to being a fund applicant rather than an inclusive partnership for education. GPE Secretariat is taking commendable steps to address efficiency issues through the GPSP, GPR, VfM and EPR processes.

On grant disbursement

Overall, GPEs commitment of funds is affected by the long application process. However, grant funds that are committed are largely disbursed, although delays often occur mainly due to operational challenges during implementation. The evaluation shows large differences per grant project in getting started after obtaining approval. The differences are influenced by practices and requirements of the GA, grant modality and the phase of the GPE strategy cycle. The ways in which delays are handled illustrate comprehensive and thorough efforts by the Secretariat to monitor and improve GPE's efficiency in grant disbursement.

The role and performance of the actors involved (GA, CA, DCP government) varies widely and influenced overall grant performance. A number of factors are identified, with the most crucial ones relating to DCP government and GA capacity and motivation to work with GPE requirements, as well as CAs having limited to no resources to fulfill their role. Again, GPE is piloting suitable solutions to improve on various efficiency issues within their scope.

On the use of funds

Donor contributions are largely committed, although since 2018 there is a gap between the increased donor contributions and commitments made as the process to commit funds takes time. The vast majority of funds go to LICs and LMICs with an increase of funds committed to LMIC during the 2016-2020 strategy period compared to the 2012-2015 strategy period. This shift is influenced by the timeliness of applications and changes in country status and does not reflect a deliberate strategic choice. . Additionally, the distribution of funds between FCAC and non-FCAC has remained fairly stable over the years, with a larger share to FCACs and showing no real change in prioritization since 2013 despite the MCA formula and strategic focus on disbursing to countries that are most in need.

In terms of education level, the focus was and remains on basic education, but without shifts to the pre-primary level despite progressing insights into the rate of return of investment in the pre-primary level. In addition, the share of funds allocated to system-level activities has only slowly grown over the years, not fully supporting GPEs strategy.

GPE reports on the use of funds per result area show a concentration of funds for school (re)construction, books and teacher development, areas that also happen to be the three main indicators in the Results Framework. Literature provides evidence of positive effects of these intervention areas, yet it is inconclusive of the return on investment for different areas. GPEs ongoing efforts to analyze the VfM for these areas are promising. Funding for EMIS, LAS and equity remains relatively limited, despite also being key parts of the GPE strategy.

Overall, more than 70 countries have access to ESPIGs, through which a variety of activities are funded as proposed by the LEGs. The use of funds is in line with the strategic choices of GPE, i.e. focus on basic education, slightly more money to FCAC and actual allocation of funds left to the partnership consensus of the LEGs. We conclude that the policies of GPE are respected in how the funds are used, while efforts to connect commitments to results areas, as presented in the 2019 results report, are a good step towards better understanding GPE's value for money. The use of funds reflects an (inclusive) partnership consensus rather than an exclusive deliberate choice. Making such choices is also hampered by uncertainty about what areas of the ESP will be funded through other domestic and international channels.

5.4 The GPE's Role in International and Domestic Financing for Education

***Core question**: What explains the main trends in international and domestic financing for education, and what is the role of the GPE therein?*

***Main findings**: The ISE observes that globally education-related ODA has stagnated since 2008/2009, which is partly attributed to the aftermath of the global financial crises. A myriad of existing traditional and emerging non-traditional donors, funding channels, and available lending options imply a fragmented aid landscape. The overall prominence of the GPE as a fund within the international aid architecture for education is rather limited, representing an average 5.6% of education-related ODA (and up to 11.8% relate to basic education) in GPE partner countries between 2012-2018, while the effect of the GPE's advocacy on increased public spending on education is limited. The position of the GPE within this aid landscape highly depends on strategic choices made by contributing partners, developing country partners, as well as the GPE itself. The ISE sees scope to further strengthen the strategic focus of the GPE in terms of what, where and how to provide financing, and to pursue a more deliberate and complementary role vis-à-vis other education development funding vehicles. More particularly domestic resources mobilization advocacy efforts and GPE funding should encompass more strategic areas of support including to Public Financial Management and macro-economic dialogue.*

5.4.1 Introduction

Historically, education development has played a key role in donor development assistance portfolios, as re-confirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (i.e. as SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning).

The GPE is an important contributor to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for SDG4, being a global partnership and fund, inclusive of both donors and developing country partners, designed with the sole purpose to support and empower developing countries in building stronger education systems.

However, the global financing landscape for education development comprises a fragmented web of donor agents, recipient partner countries, and different types of aid channels and aid modalities. Furthermore, it involves a fast-growing number of new actors (e.g. new non-traditional donors with substantial investment portfolios have emerged, such as China, India, or Brazil) and newly-operationalized and to be established funding vehicles (e.g. such for the education domain Education Cannot Wait and the International Financing Facility for Education). For GPE, as an enabling intermediary agent (i.e. with on the one side funding partners contributing to fund the GPE, and on the other side with the GPE enabling DCPs to access financial and technical support through the available grants as well as through leveraging support through other channels), it is critical to reflect on its role within the international financing landscape for education development. Moreover, this section analyses trends in education funding to obtain an impression of the choices made by development partners in channeling financial support.

More specifically, it takes a financial perspective[126] on development assistance globally and for education in specific, to illustrate the funding choices made by both the international donor community as well as by developing countries, and the functioning therein of the GPE within this context.

5.4.2. Facts and findings

It is important to get a picture on the level (starting with all official development support, narrowing down to assistance to education in specific) of support that is made available to developing countries, and in particular GPE partner countries, both from the perspective of funding choices made by donors, and from the perspective of whether DCPs can access sufficient funding (i.e. since Low-Income Countries, Lower-Middle Income Countries, Fragile States typically are characterized by resource constrained public sector environments).

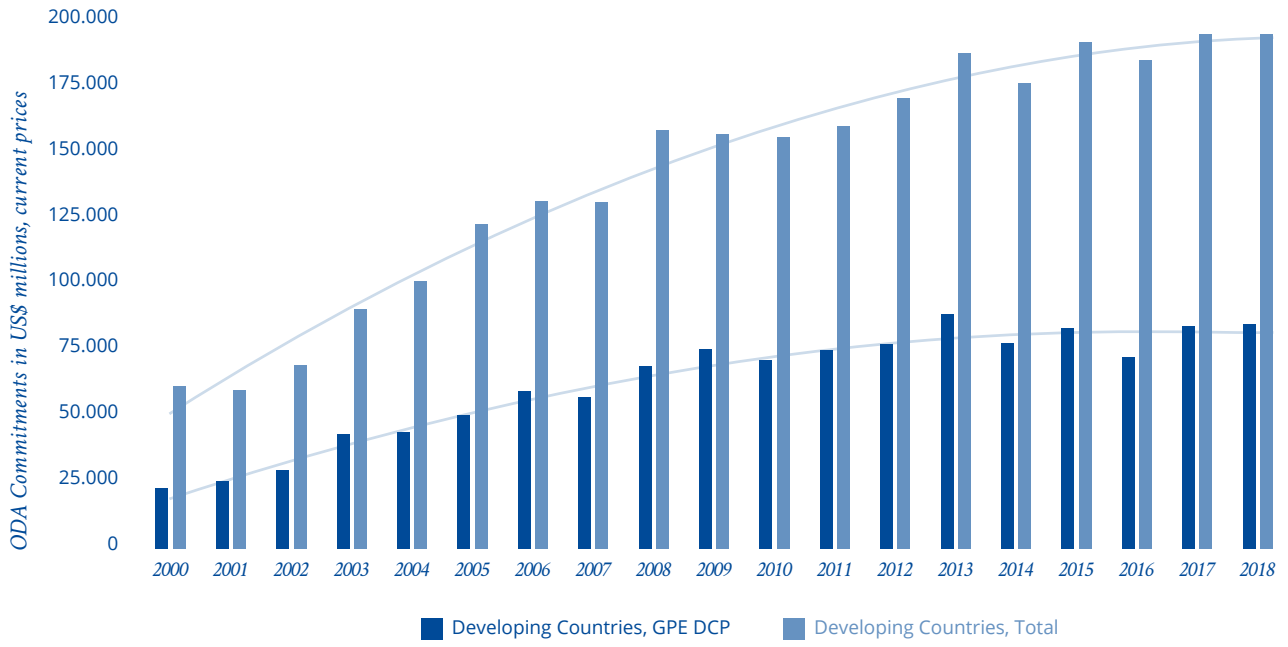
[126] By triangulation of OECD CRS data on ODA commitments, GPE Results and Evaluation Reports, interviews with Secretariat Staff and GPE donors, GPE financial data provided by the GPE Trustee, and publicly available international literature.

Global ODA and Commitments to GPE DCPs

Starting from global commitments of Official Development Assistance (ODA)[127] to developing countries, we can construct a picture of how the overall level of ODA commitments has developed in the past 20 years, specified for all developing countries and for the 76 GPE partner countries in specific (see Figure 5.4.2a). Overall ODA commitments to developing countries between 2000-2018 show an increase both in absolute terms using current prices (more than triple) and in real terms using constant prices (more than twofold). The bulk of ODA commitments is targeted at developing countries in Africa and Asia. Within the global group of Developing Countries, the group of 76 GPE DCPs represents less than half of the total ODA commitments (see Annex 5.4.3)[128].

When compared with the overall ODA commitments trendline[129], the countries marked as GPE partner countries show a similar trend, but follow a more flattened curve from 2008/2009, and even a declining trend in absolute terms (current prices)[130] since 2013/2014. This declining trend indicates that less resources are made available to the countries with the greatest need of support (since the majority of GPE DCPs constitute Low-Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries and a multitude of fragile states). This is supported by the most recent OECD data on Official Development Assistance, which indicates that, although total ODA commitments are steadily increasing overall since 2000, external finance flowing to developing countries most in need of support stayed far below the internationally agreed target of 0,7% of total GNI of OECD member countries (although a number of countries contributing to the GPE generally meet this target, incl. the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway).

Figure 5.4.2a Total ODA commitments to All developing countries and to 76 GPE partner countries



[127] As recorded in the OECD CRS database. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is defined by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries. ODA data captures aid flows from official donors (Governments) to multilateral development agencies and developing countries. The GPE is not officially listed in the OECD CRS under donor or multilateral agency, and hence GPE contributions are accounted for in the ODA figures from individual countries.

[128] See Annex 5.4.3 for a breakdown of ODA commitments based on data extracted from the OECD CRS database.

[129] The trendline included in the graph represents a polynomial fit, which is used to analyze data that fluctuates. The curve represents the best fit with the pattern of ODA commitments, and breaks from a straight linear trend.

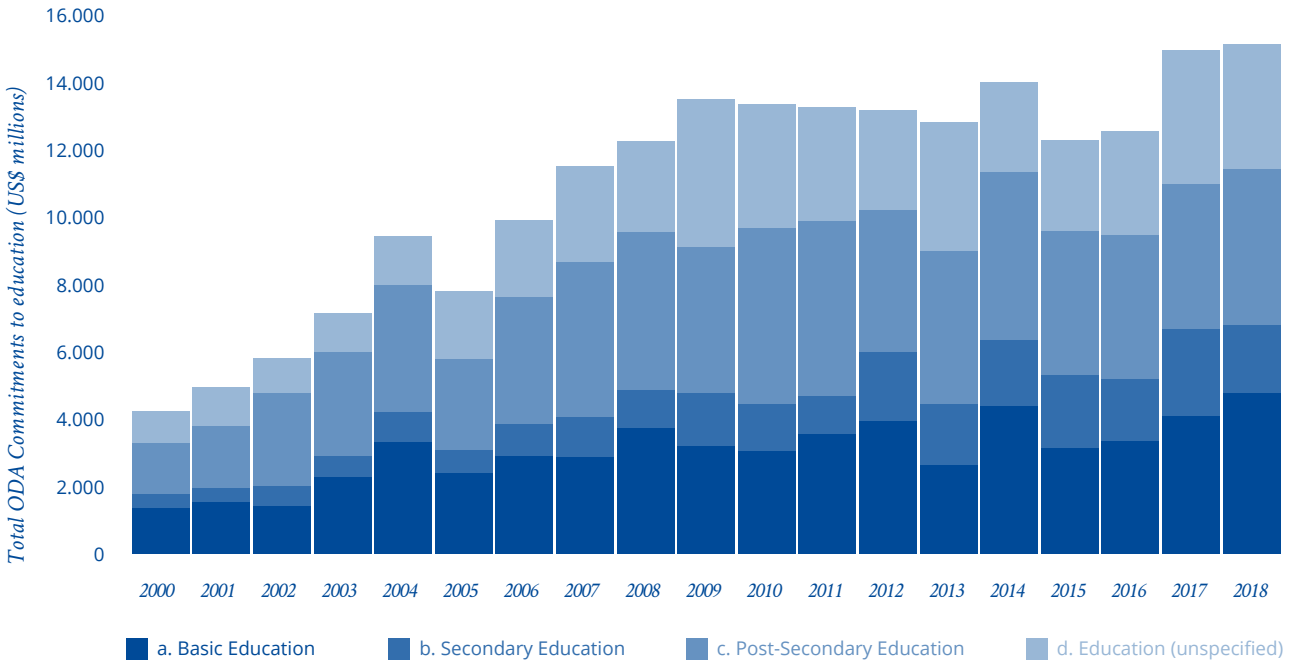
[130] In the remainder of the section, current prices are used as a basis for comparison, since GPE financial data is presented in current prices.

While total ODA commitments have seen a steady increase, the trendline suggests that in effect, ODA commitments to GPE DCPs have stagnated since 2009. The stagnated commitments (measured in current prices) to GPE DCPs imply that less funding is available for GPE DCPs in real terms (i.e. when measured in constant prices, corrected for inflation), in effect this means that GPE countries are supported with less funding for development.

In addition to ODA provided through traditional donors, there is now a myriad of non-traditional sources of development finance, including from non-DAC donors (e.g. China, India, and Brazil), private sector organizations, philanthropist foundations (e.g. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and social impact investors (e.g. the Lego Group). Private sector financial commitments represent a relatively small amount (approximately US$ 6.5 billion in 2018) when compared with traditional ODA commitments.[131] However, non-DAC donor countries increasingly provide significant sums of development finance, which is not accounted for in the official OECD CRS data on ODA flows. For example, China provided more than US$ 350 billion in aid to developing countries between 2000-2014, mostly addressing infrastructure-related development.[132]

The emergence and increasing significance of non-traditional sources of development finance, suggests that 'traditional' donor aid from OECD-DAC countries is becoming less important as a source of development finance. The growth of the less traditional actors within this changed context has led to changes in the global architecture in terms of reaching agreement on aid effectiveness issues. In this increasingly fragmented aid landscape, DCPs tend to make more strategic choices concerning the division of labor between different providers of development assistance (traditional and non-traditional sources), and strategically manage the overall financial envelope available to DCPs to fund development[133].

Figure 5.4.2b Total education-related ODA Commitments, split by Education Sub-Sector (current prices)



[131] See Annex 5.4.5 for contributions from non-traditional donors (e.g. foundations, private sector, etc.).

[132] Dreher, Axel, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin M. Strange, and Michael J. Tierney. (2017). Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset. AidData Working Paper #46. Williamsburg, VA: AidData. See also: https://www.aiddata.org/data/chinese-global-official-finance-dataset

[133] Greenhill R., Prizzon A., Rogerson A. (2016). The Age of Choice: Developing Countries in the New Aid Landscape. The Fragmentation of Aid. Rethinking International Development series. Palgrave Macmillan, London

Education-related ODA and Commitments to GPE DCPs

When applying a sectoral lens[134] to ODA commitments to developing countries, it is observed that while the overall level of ODA commitments increased during 2000-2018 (see figure 5.4.2a), the part of ODA that is allocated to education sector development (see figure 5.4.2b) has stagnated and remained at the same level since 2009 (around US$ 13.5 billion per year), before increasing again in 2017 and 2018.

Following the OECD CRS construct of education ODA[135], the GPE generally funds actions in DCPs within the *a. Basic Education* and *d. Education (Unspecified)* domains, although in some instances support is also targeted at lower-secondary education programmes.

While it would be expected that the level of education-related ODA would increase (in line with the incremental increases in the total level of ODA commitments, as seen in Figure 5.4.2a) following the renewed commitments of the international development community to the 2030 Agenda and SDG4, education has become less of a funding priority for development partners during the past decade, with the share of education in total ODA gross disbursements declining from 8.9% in 2010 to 7.9% in 2018[136], indicating that considerably less attention is paid to education by OECD DAC development partners.

Table 5.4.2a Education ODA commitments as a Share in total ODA between 2012-2018

US$ million (current prices)	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*Average*
Total ODA commitments to developing countries (DCs)	*171,819*	*189,110*	*177,538*	*193,284*	*186,541*	*196,240*	*196,438*	*187,282*
ODA commitments allocated to education	*13,195*	*12,843*	*14,004*	*12,303*	*12,601*	*14,987*	*15,126*	*13,580*
Education ODA as share of total ODA	*7.7%*	*6.8%*	*7.9%*	*6.4%*	*6.8%*	*7.6%*	*7.7%*	*7.3%*

This picture is also confirmed by OECD CRS data on ODA commitments, specifically taking the GPE operational period from 2012 to 2018 *(with 2018 is the latest year where complete OECD data is available)*, where it is observed that the share of education in total ODA commitments has averaged to 7.3%[137], summarized in the table below (which combines data from Figure 5.4.2a and Figure 5.4.2b)

A generally-acclaimed explanation regarding why ODA for education has stagnated (effectively since 2009 as seen in Figure 5.4.2b) is the effect of the global financial crisis in 2008[138]. In various research, it is established that aid disbursements by donors fall during recessions at decreasing rates[139], and that high public debt levels in these contributing countries are associated with a contraction in aid flows in the aftermath of recessions[140]. This meant that many countries in the world (and thus donors of development aid) were faced internally with increasing wealth inequalities and austerity policies. In some instances, this has manifested itself as well in a shift with the political landscape, with the rise of populistic regimes in some important donor countries and establishment of more conservative governments[141]. This has translated into declining or stagnating budgetary allocations to

[134] ODA is the constructed total of cumulative aid provided to different sectors, such as Health, Education, Environment, Humanitarian Aid, Debt Relief, etc.

[135] OECD CRS education-specific ODA is comprised of four sub-sectors, including: a. Basic Education (incl. Primary Education; Basic Life Skills for Youth and Adults; Early Childhood Education; School Feeding); b. Secondary Education (incl. lower and upper Secondary Education; Vocational training); c. Post-Secondary Education (incl. Higher Education; Advanced Technical and Managerial Training); and d. Education Unspecified (incl. Education Policy and Administrative Management; Education Facilities and Training; Teacher Training; Educational Research).

[136] OECD CRS Database, official development assistance gross disbursements to developing countries (based on US$ million, 2018 constant prices). See also: https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1

[137] Commitments in current prices. Applying 2017 constant prices would result in 8.2% (2000-2010) and 7.0% (2011-2018) respectively.

[138] Dang, H.A., Knack, S., and Rogers, H. (2009). *International aid and financial crises in donor countries.* Policy Research Working Paper Series 5162, The World Bank.

[139] OECD: Aid to developing countries falls because of global recession. See also: https://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/developmentaidtodevelopingcountriesfallsbecauseofglobalrecession.htm

[140] Dabla-Norris, E., Minoiu, C., and Zanna, L.F. (2010). Business Cycle Fluctuations, Large Shocks, and Development Aid: New Evidence. IMF Working Papers 10/240, International Monetary Fund.

[141] E.g. Australia, which has significantly reduced funding to the GPE in the past 10 years. See also Annex 5.4.5: Evolution and Distribution of Donor Contributions to the GPE.

development aid and changes in policy priorities that emphasize national and bilateral interests over support for multilateral engagement for sustainable (education) development, or marked by a shift in funding priorities to other thematic areas.

In addition, during the past 15 years, other pressing global crises took a flight in dominating the international development debate, including global climate change, which has drawn the attention of donors and now has been mainstreamed as a priority in many development programmes[142]. The recent COVID-19 induced crisis (and potential future pandemics), will mark a major point of debate for the coming years. In this respect, *there are preliminary signs that the on-going COVID-19 crisis will have a major impact on health and education sectors, and will deeply impact the global economy. This will be reflected in ODA flows, although the direction and magnitude of change will remain speculative (see Textbox 5.4.2a).*

During the 2012-2020 operational period of the GPE, the GPE has committed a total amount of US$ 3.155 million (i.e. representing all GPE commitments, incl. to LICs, LMICs, UMICs, Global Programmes, Secretariat and Trustee) from a total of US$ 3.876 million contributions received from donors in the same period. Based on this, the overall prominence of the GPE (as a global fund) within the global ODA landscape for education, amounts to an average of 2,7% over the 2012-2018 period[144].

[142] 2018 is the latest year for which a complete OECD CRS ODA data set is available.

Textbox 5.4.2a Potential impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic

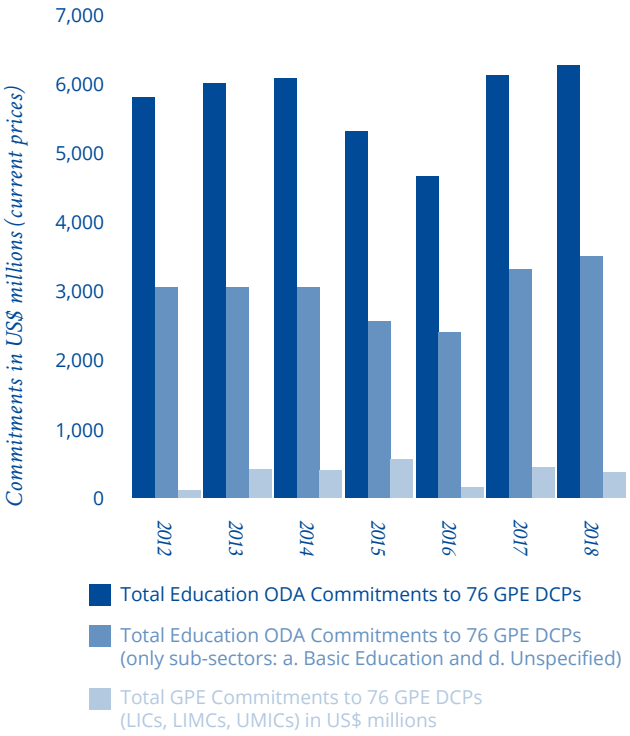
The OECD estimates that the overall direct impact of COVID-19 crisis on GDP will be between 20-25 percent in many major advanced economies[143].

Although still speculative in nature, many countries affected will enter into a period of "repairs", where at the national level significant sums of investment will be redirected to health care systems strengthening and resilience building, and absorbing the blow to their economies.

This may also affect many of the donor countries' political priorities, long-term budgets, and their foreign policies. For the GPE, this could potentially imply that less funding may be made available in the next years, as it is likely that (temporarily) more funds will flow to humanitarian aid and health sectors (including health information systems, capacity building of national health care agencies, emergency response, vaccination programmes, etc.) See also Annex 5.4.2.

When assessing the overall level of ODA commitment to the 76 GPE partner countries during 2012-2018, the GPE's role is significantly firmer, with GPE accounting for approximately 0.4% of the development assistance landscape in GPE partner countries. From the total level of ODA commitments, the GPE represents 5.6% of ODA allocated to education. When education-related ODA is broken down into sub-sector commitments, the GPE would constitute approximately 11.8% of ODA commitments in Basic Education[145] in the 76 listed GPE partner countries (see Figure 5.4.2c).

Figure 5.4.2c Prominence of the GPE within 76 GPE Partner Countries



[143] See also Annex 5.4.1: Education Financing Gap for Reaching the 2030 SDGs on Education.

[144] OECD (March, 2020). Evaluating the initial impact of COVID-19 containment measures on economic activity.

[145] Includes ODA to Basic Education and ODA to Education Unspecified. Data transposed from overall ODA shares to education by education sub-sectors in which the GPE is primarily active: a. Basic Education (incl. Primary Education; Basic Life Skills for Youth and Adults; Early Childhood Education; School Feeding) and d. Education Unspecified (incl. Education Policy and Administrative Management; Education Facilities and Training; Teacher Training; Educational Research), and transposed to the 76 GPE DCPs as a % share based on available ODA data on sub-sector allocations.

Table 5.4.2b Prominence of the GPE within the global Education ODA landscape (2012-2015)

US$ million (current prices)	2012-2015				
	2012	2013	2014	2015	Average
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs[146]	78 405	89 690	78 597	84 470	82 791
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs allocated to Education[147]	5 798	6 005	6 078	5 301	5 796
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs allocated to a. Basic Education and d. Education (Unspecified)	3 045	3 046	3 053	2 551	2 924
Total GPE commitments to 76 DCPs (LICs, LMICs, UMICs)[148]	96	492	335	535	365
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs	**0.1%**	**0.5%**	**0.4%**	**0.6%**	**0.4%**
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs allocated to education	**1.6%**	**8.1%**	**5.4%**	**10.0%**	**6.3%**
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs allocated to a. Basic Education and d. Education (Unspecified)	**3.3%**	**13.9%**	**12.8%**	**22.5%**	**13.1%**

Table 5.4.2c Prominence of the GPE within the global Education ODA landscape (2016-2018)

US$ million (current prices)	2016-2018			
	2016	2017	2018	Average
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs[149]	73 349	84 926	86 216	81 497
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs allocated to Education[150]	4 654	6 127	6 268	5 683
Total ODA to 76 GPE DCPs allocated to a. Basic Education and d. Education (Unspecified)	2 400	3 307	3 502	3 070
Total GPE commitments to 76 DCPs (LICs, LMICs, UMICs)[151]	142	385	368	298
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs	**0.2%**	**0.5%**	**0.4%**	**0,4%**
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs allocated to education	**2.9%**	**5.9%**	**5.5%**	**4,8%**
• GPE as a share of total ODA in 76 DCPs allocated to a. Basic Education and d. Education (Unspecified)	**6.1%**	**13.4%**	**10.5%**	**10,0%**

When split for the two operational periods of the GPE, and applying commitments to country level only, taking the 76 GPE Partner Countries as reference group, the following picture emerges:

These average shares per operational period provide ample evidence that the relatively small amount of financial resources (i.e. GPE commitments) available to the GPE is divided over a relatively large pool of partner countries. It can be induced that although on average the GPE constitutes a share of 13.1% (2012-2015) and 10.0% (2016-2018) respectively, within the ODA sub-sector niche (a. Basic Education; d. Education Unspecified), this share implies a relatively modest role for the GPE.[152] A more focused funding approach (with less DCPs) could de facto significantly increase the share of the GPE in education ODA in the GPE partner countries, thereby further increasing its prominence.

GPE and Domestic Resource Mobilization

It is expected that the total costs of education more than triples in Low-Income Countries[153], implying that between 2015-2030 total annual government spending on education in Low-Income Countries (excluding post-

[146] For the 2012-2018 period, the figures include 76 DCPs that are listed as GPE partner countries (March 2020).

[147] Transposed from all Developing Countries to 76 GPE DCPs, based on overall % share of ODA allocated to education (Table x: Education ODA as a Share in Total ODA between 2012-2018).

[148] Funds committed at DCP country level, excluding Secretariat, Grant Agent, and Trustee fees (based on GPE Trustee financial data).

[149] For the 2012-2018 period, the figures include 76 DCPs that are listed as GPE partner countries (March 2020).

[150] Transposed from all Developing Countries to 76 GPE DCPs, based on overall % share of ODA allocated to education (Table x: Education ODA as a Share in Total ODA between 2012-2018).

[151] Funds committed at DCP country level, excluding Secretariat, Grant Agent, and Trustee fees (based on GPE Trustee financial data).

[152] Also note here that one of the GPE's conditions is that partner countries allocate at least 45% of their education budgets to primary education (primary education sub-sector is generally the priority of LICs and LMICs)

[153] UNESCO (2015). Pricing the right to education: The cost of reaching new targets by 2030. Policy Paper 18 for the EFA Global Monitoring Report.

secondary education) will have to increase by at least 50 percent as a share of GDP[154], which is not a realistic endeavor.

Domestic financing constitutes by far the most important source of funding for education development, accounting for 79% of total education spending globally,[155] and mobilizing more domestic resources to address the education funding gap will remain the most critical challenge in the coming decade. In this respect, when assessing sources of actual expenditure on education, donors account for approximately 12% of education spending in *Low-Income Countries,* [156] implying that 88% of education spending comes from domestic and other financing sources. For the GPE, this would imply that increasing funding to LICs would potentially lead to obtaining a more prominent role within the LICs' education budget when compared with funding LMICs.

The GPE strongly advocates that partner countries increase their national education budgets, and that partner countries exert more effort in mobilizing more domestic funding for education. Domestic education expenditure targets are included as an indicator in the GPE Results Framework (under Indicator 10). The GPE domestic resource mobilization requirements target the share of public expenditure spent on education (e.g. 15-20 percent). This requirement is intended as a leverage factor to ascertain the willingness of DCPs' governments to engage in education sector improvement, and advance an open dialogue with GPE partner countries on education sector development.

Table 5.4.2e GPE Results Framework Indicator 10 (DCPs' public expenditure on education)

Results Framework Indicator 10		Baseline		Intermediary targets				Target
Proportion of DCPs that have:	CY:	2015		2016[157]	2017[158]	2018[159]	2019	2020
a. increased public expenditure on education;	All:	65%	Target:	76%	83%	85%	88%	90%
b. maintained sector spending at 20% or above;			Actual:	69%	65%	70%	-	-
	FCAC:	57%	Target:	74%	81%	82%	84%	86%
			Actual:	60%	55%	65%	-	-

Source: Based on the Draft 2020 GPE Results Report (detailed underlying data and by components a and b is unconfirmed)

However, the percentage of education public expenditure as such does not provide an indication about the "quality of domestic funding", as the share could increase even with an absolute decrease in the budget allocated to education (as it is a relative share of overall government spending). In addition, the indicator does not enable assessing sub-sector priorities and expenditure trends unless the budget is assessed and recorded in further detail and analyzed over an extended period of time.

Overall, based on the data and calculation method contained in the draft GPE Results Report 2020[160], it can be concluded that GPE partner countries have managed to either maintain or increase public expenditure on education compared to the 2015 baseline (see Table 5.4.2e). The Results Framework Indicator 10 is based on the proportion of DCPs that "comply" with the requirement (a binary method of calculation, recording either a yes or no). However if we look at actual expenditure data recorded by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics[161], a slightly less positive picture emerges.

[155] Un.org. (2019). Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2019 | Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development. [online] Available at: https://developmentfinance.un.org/fsdr2019

[156] UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report (2019).

[157] 2016 available data includes 43 partner countries (of which 20 FCACs), including sub-regions for Pakistan (Sindh) and Tanzania (Zanzibar), and it also includes partner countries that have not received GPE grants (e.g. Albania).

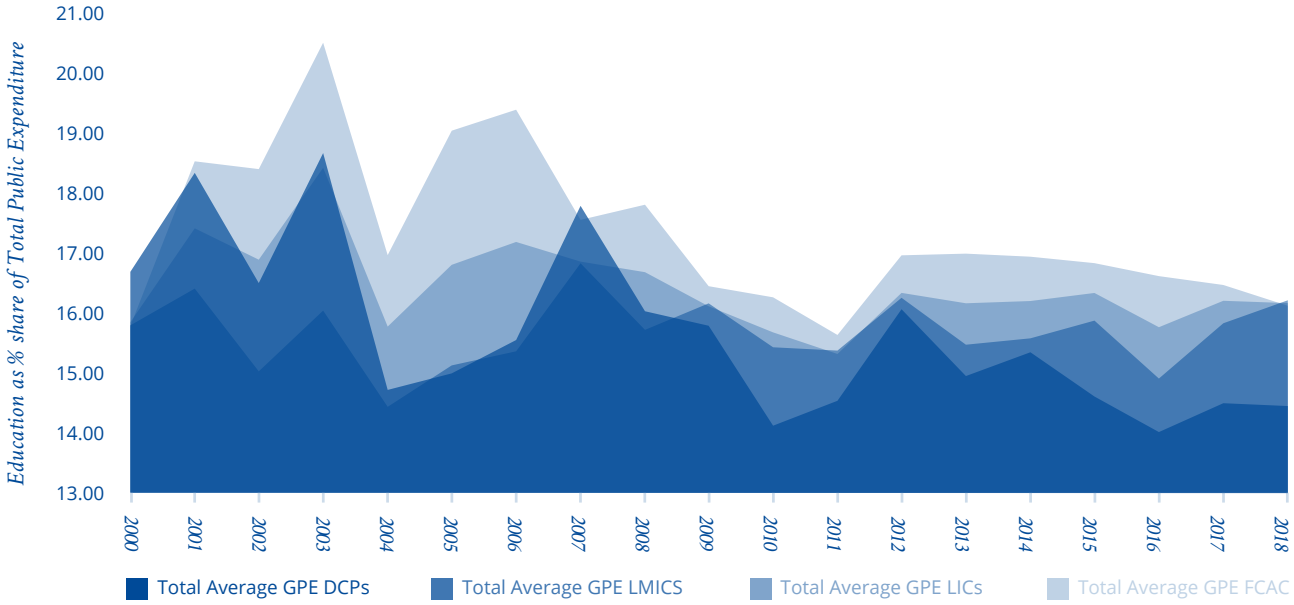
[158] 2017 available data includes 46 partner countries (of which 20 FCACs), including sub-regions for Pakistan (Balochistan and Sindh) and Tanzania (Zanzibar), and it also includes partner countries that have not received GPE grants (e.g. Albania).

[159] 2018 available data includes 33 partner countries (of which 13 FCACs)

[160] The draft GPE Results Report 2020 includes revised baseline data for RF indicator 10. The targets and milestones for were calculated using baseline data collected in 2016 on public education expenditure in 2015. Since then, Indicator 10 data were revised in 2017, 2018 and 2019 as updated information became available. Because the original baseline was higher than the revised baseline, it led to higher target-setting for later years.

[161] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (http://uis.unesco.org/), with latest update 9 April 2020.

Figure 5.4.2d Public Expenditure on Education in GPE DCPs (as % of total Government Expenditures)



Based on the UIS database containing public expenditure data recorded by country we can construct a picture (see Figure 5.4.2d) on actual government spending on education a share of total public expenditure, taking the GPE partner countries as group of analysis[162].

As can be derived from Figure 5.4.2d, a rather erratic pattern emerges on the share Education Public Expenditure. Overall it is observed that the education expenditure as a share of total public expenditure in GPE partner countries shows a decreasing trend between 2000-2018. GPE partner countries with an FCAC or LIC status tend to perform below the total average in all GPE DCPs, while LMICs perform slightly better.

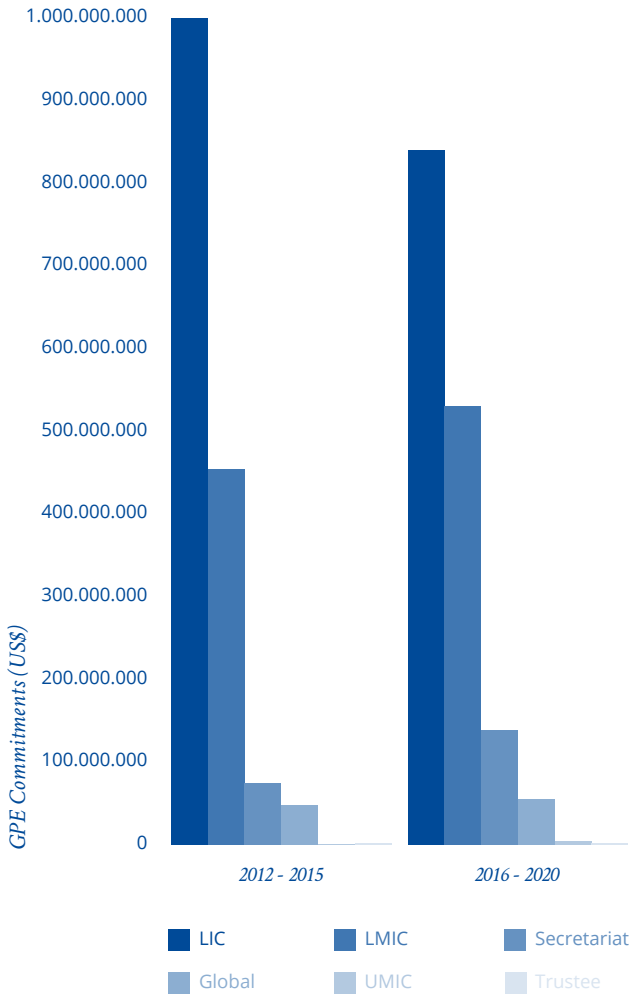
The general bandwidth for all GPE DCPs (LICs, LMICs, FCACs) show that the share of education public expenditure is between 14%-17% of Total Public Expenditure for the 2012-2018 period. When split by GPE operational periods, between 2012-2015 decreases are observed in the share of education in total public expenditure for all GPE DCPs, after which an improvement is noticed during 2016-2018 (except for LMICs). Overall this implies that the GPE advocacy efforts for domestic resource mobilization have not (yet) resulted in significant increases in domestic spending in GPE partner countries.

It is therefore observed that public spending on education in GPE LICs remains a challenge. If the GPE's grant portfolio is assessed in terms of commitments per strategic operational period, it is found that indeed overall LICs are prioritized for GPE funding, although for 2016-2020 GPE commitments to LICs have decreased and GPE commitments to LMICs have slightly increased.

Generally, poorer countries prioritize education more in their public expenditure on a percentage-wise basis (due to the relatively low levels of GDP and the corresponding low level of tax revenues).
However, when comparing spending per pupil in primary education, a vast funding gap is visible between low-income (i.e. less than US$ 100 per pupil per year according to some CLEs) and high-income countries (approximately US$ 8,000 per pupil per year). For GPE, this would imply that allocating more of GPE's funding to LICs would potentially result in a higher gain in spending per pupil in primary education in LICs compared with increasing funding to LMICs. In addition, Low-Income Countries may have less access to funding from global lending facilities compared to Lower-Middle Income and Middle Income Countries (due to lower credit ratings tied to income status). Supporting system level change in LICs and supporting the conditions for effective implementation of education sector policies, would also increase the potential for LICs to source additional funding from international and domestic markets, including from development partners.

[162] See also Annex 5.4.4: Distribution of spending on education sector by country income status..

Figure 5.4.2e Distribution of GPE Commitments per Operational Period



Source: Reconstructed from GPE Trustee financial data

The distribution of GPE's financial commitments show that overall, 58 percent of GPE commitments are allocated to Low-Income Countries (LICs), while 31 percent is committed to Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs)s.

A very small amount of GPE commitments is allocated to a number of Upper-Middle Income Countries (UMICs), mainly Small-Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean and Pacific.

The principal funding modality employed by the GPE consists of stand-alone projects, representing 59% (US$ 2 billion) of the GPE's grant portfolio.

Sector pooled funding represents 24% (US$ 800 million), and project pooled funding represents 18% (US$ 607 million) of the applied funding modalities in the GPE's grant portfolio.

For LICs and LMICs to increase their tax revenues and increase domestic public spending on education, strong administrative and policy reforms[163] are required[164]. In order to increase the prospects of achieving the global goals for education, effective, good quality education policies, strategies and programs must be in place (as advocated through GPE's commitment to high-quality ESP development and implementation). However, the scale of the required investments in education in low-income developing countries is a challenge that necessitates support from all stakeholders, including the private sector, development partners, philanthropists, and international financial institutions.

It is within this sphere of support where development partners such as GPE can play a key role (i.e. continue the forging of long-standing partnerships at the country level through the LEGs, and supporting systemic reform aimed at building systems' resilience). In this respect, in addition to the current advocacy efforts, the GPE could engage in strategic dialogues with DCP Ministries of Finance on issues around taxation and revenue collection, debt management, austerity, macro-economic policies, public sector wage bills (i.e. focus more on Public Financial Management aspects in DCPs that directly affect the level of resources available to a government to spend on public sectors).

[163] For instance, strengthening macroeconomic management, combating corruption and improving governance, strengthening transparency and accountability.

[164] Gaspar, V., Amaglobeli, D., Garcia-Escribano, M., Prady, D., and Soto, M. (2019). Fiscal Policy and Development: Human, Social, and Physical Investment for the SDGs. IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/19/03, January 2019.

Complementarity and Funding Channels

Taking a global perspective, in order to address the existing and foreseen financing gaps in education, one of the many potential responses could be to advocate for a more balanced use of funds between multilateral and bilateral channels, as well as improving and increasing the use of partnerships and innovative funding mechanisms[165] (e.g. such as the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, and the recently-established International Finance Facility for Education) to channel and concentrate funds on education in developing countries as opposed to increasing funding through bilateral channels, which would lead to a more fragmented education aid landscape.

In this respect, selection decisions made by donors to provide aid to developing partner countries based on rational criteria are widely assumed to contribute towards aid effectiveness. Generally, aid effectiveness is thought to be enhanced if aid is provided to the poorest countries (in terms of targeting development needs) and better-governed countries (in terms of aid being well spent). Recent studies show that donors apply certain filters (e.g. governance criteria, systems capacity) when deciding how to fund specific sectors, and through which channels (i.e. bilaterally or multilaterally), and they consider what level of control is desired regarding the spending of aid.

These considerations may also be present for donors contributing to GPE, as can be shown in the rather fragmented and erratic pattern of contributions received by GPE during 2012-2020 (see also Annex 5.4.5). GPE relies on a number of "staple" donors such as the United Kingdom, Norway, and the United States that have provided a more or less "reliable" stream of contributions, while other countries have scaled back financial support in recent years (e.g. Australia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain).

First of all, donors make a choice on what type of channel to use for their development assistance (i.e. through multilateral agencies, or through their own bilateral channels). For donors, thinking strategically about the choice of what, where, and how to provide aid is becoming increasingly important. Donors use bilateral channels (i.e. prefer direct relationships with recipient country) when motivated by the need to control, account and be visible, while multilateral channels are opted for when motivated by the donor imperative of pooling and advancing a common global cause[166].

Thematically, donors may not necessarily have the same education priorities as GPE for their education spending of ODA, which do not necessarily align with the goals and objectives of GPE. For example, Germany – which is a large donor of global ODA – prioritizes technical and vocational education programs, a sub-sector that is not the core focus of GPE. In addition, donors only tend to opt for bilateral channels to invest in primary education when the recipient country can demonstrate a strong control of corruption.[167]

Funding through bilateral channels appears to display a greater selectivity of recipient countries based on institutional quality, while multilateral channels rather emphasize the needs of the recipient country.[168] In addition, multilateral channels appear to be less politicized, more demand-driven, more selective in terms of poverty criteria and they provide a better conduit for global public goods. Bilateral channels emerge as more politicized, more selective on governance criteria, having slightly lower administrative costs and being much more fragmented. Indeed, this finding is supported by interviews with various donors to GPE. For example, although the European Commission is a large contributor to GPE (US$ 301 million since 2017), it prefers to maintain more direct bilateral relations with recipient countries over providing increasing support through multilateral channels.

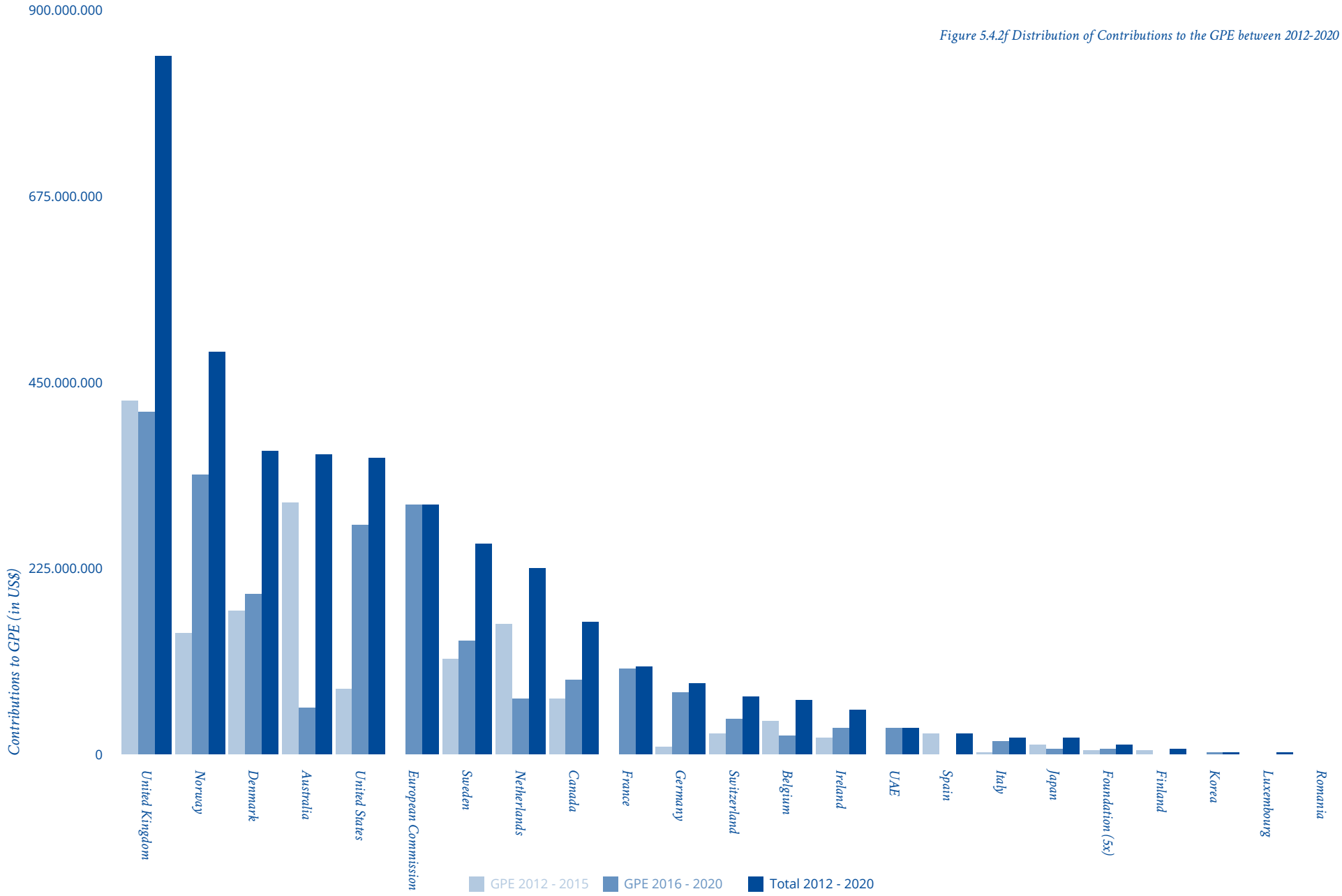
[165] Gulrajani, Nilima (2016). Bilateral versus Multilateral Aid Channels: Strategic Choices for Donors. Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

[166] Result of interviews conducted with several GPE Board Members representing GPE Donor constituencies, and confirmed in international literature.

[167] Christensen, Z., Homer, D. and Nielson, D.L. (2011). Dodging Adverse Selection: How Donor Type and Governance Condition Aid's Effects on School Enrolment? World Development 39(11): 2044-2053. Available at: http://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2011.07.018

[168] Gulrajani, Nilima (2016). Bilateral versus Multilateral Aid Channels: Strategic Choices for Donors. Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Figure 5.4.2f Distribution of Contributions to the GPE between 2012-2020



Second, if donors choose a multilateral channel, several funding vehicles for education development co-exist (for example, GPE, Education Cannot Wait, and the International Financing Facility for Education), each with different priorities and scope.

In this respect, a comparison is made between GPE, the International Financing Facility for Education (IFFEd), and Education Cannot Wait (ECW) (see Annex 5.4.6 and 5.4.7). Although each financing vehicle has its own characteristics and specificities, there are similarities and overlapping areas in their overall goals (commitment to reaching SDG 4), scope (geographical, recipient income level status), and the donor base of each vehicle. While GPE and ECW operate as grant mechanisms, the IFFEd is designed to operate as a loan vehicle (i.e. backing up loan operations of multilateral development banks to recipient countries). GPE and ECW have active grant operations in the same type of countries (both operate in the same FCACs and LICs). The IFFEd intends to target lower-middle income countries, potentially the same LMICs that are eligible for GPE funding. The most significant difference is observed in the condition that GPE DCPs are required to spend at least 45 percent of public education spending on primary education, while IFFEd and ECW do not necessarily apply a sub-sectoral focus.

Overall, as a fund GPE is larger in size compared with the ECW (with GPE averaging US$ 308 million in commitments per year during 2012-2020, and ECW around US$ 85 million in annual disbursements in partner countries), although the number of countries in which ECW is currently active is much smaller (33 active countries). As the ECW just started operations, for the years to come the ECW might grow as a stronger competitor for funds, as the ECW will experience a learning curve by both donors and partner countries. The start-up capital that is currently put into the IFFEd amounts to more than US$ 600 million (with the UK and the Netherlands as principal donors), which is expected to leverage US$ 2 billion in loans to LMIC developing countries.

Based on the above, for GPE this implies that in order to mobilize more funds from its respective donor base and profile itself as "the" channel for funding education in developing countries, it may need to show donors that its contributions provide the value for money in their choice to spend their education ODA compared with existing bilateral options. Hence it is worthwhile for GPE to consider cost reduction strategies to minimize administrative and managerial costs (including Secretariat, trustees, grant agent fees, costs associated with chosen funding modality for grants), compared to the lower costs associated with bilateral channels[169], and improve the existing conditionality principles in relation

Textbox 5.4.2b Examples of Education Sector Systemic Barriers

Examples of system level bottlenecks, that affect overall sector accountability and the "fundability of a sector", and that need to be addressed to shape the conditions for more effective and efficient education service delivery (ESP implementation).

Key to the effective formulation of education policies as well as to planning and corresponding funding of education service delivery, is the availability of facts-based information, statistics, and financial data (both quantitative and qualitative) on the state of education, starting with the organization and collection of information at school level, decentralized level (provincial MoE departments), and at central level MoE. At each level the corresponding capacities are needed to effectively collect, organize, process, and analyze information and utilize it in the appropriate setting. Well-functioning EMIS, HRMIS, and FMIS are needed to analyze policy options and the results of policy implementation, support decision-making, and increase accountability of the sector.

Another barrier towards effective resource allocation and management in education to enable education service delivery, encompasses the country's and the sector's full spectrum of financial management capacities, finance and budget systems, and linked strategic functions. Financial resources made available to the sector require sufficient absorption capacity, i.e. capacities and transparent systems are needed to procure, manage and implement education service delivery (i.e. textbook procurement, school feeding programmes, teacher salary management) and to design and implement specific projects (i.e. school construction). Improvement of Public Financial Management and Processes increases internal accountability within the education sector (at central MoE level as well as at decentralized level provincial MoE departments and schools) and overall external accountability. Improved linkage of budgeting and expenditure management with the sector planning process increases the ability of the MoE and the Ministry of Finance to effectively plan and adapt for the needs of the sector at all levels.

[169] Gulrajani, Nilima (2016). Bilateral versus Multilateral Aid Channels: Strategic Choices for Donors. Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

to recipient countries (or direct some of the GPE efforts towards funding system-level interventions that address governance).

Furthermore, as the ECW and the IFFEd aim to work on opposite sides of the education development spectrum (i.e. from direct emergency support to provision of more advanced loan opportunities to fund education) with the GPE in between these two funding vehicles (focused on systems strengthening), the GPE could aim to increase alignment efforts with the ECW and the IFFEd and further solidifying their niche position within this spectrum; for example, by focusing more on Low-Income Countries taking over where the ECW scope of work stops (system building), and by prioritizing funding in Lower-Middle Income Countries aimed at improving education system resilience and geared towards eliminating systemic barriers to education development, so that these LMICs' readiness and eligibility for more advanced lending options through the IFFEd improves.

5.4.3. Conclusions related to GPE's past and current role in the domestic and international financing for education

Inequalities in ODA commitments remain prevalent, partly caused by changes in the status of ODA recipient countries (e.g. countries may promote in income level or fragility status), and shifts in donor priorities on how, where, and what to fund. The attainment of the 2030 Agenda and the work on the SDGs — including SDG4 on education — are threatened by large gaps in required funding. For education development, the estimated annual funding gap amounts to US$ 39 billion during 2015-2030 for reaching universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education of good quality in low and lower-middle income countries.

Bilateral relations remain the most important channel for donors to support partner countries in education development and commit ODA. From a financial perspective, the prominence of GPE within the overall aid landscape is rather modest. GPE funding averages between the range of 5.6% (of total education ODA) to 11.8% (of ODA specified for the basic education subsector) committed to the 76 GPE DCPs. When comparing GPE funding relative to ODA allocated to education sub-sectors Basic Education, the GPE constitutes on average around 11.8% of the ODA education share annually in the 76 partner countries.

Domestic revenue mobilization is one of the most critical development priorities for the coming decade, as it is essential to financing sustainable development investments. Since 2000, overall, a decrease can be observed in education spending by GPE partner countries (measured as a share of their total public expenditure). Although GPE has actively advocated developing partner countries to increase their national education budgets, despite unprecedented pledges in 2018, the results of GPE's advocacy for structural increases in domestic education remain below the targeted amounts.

The total funds contributed by donors to GPE amount to US$ 3.9 billion during 2012-2020 (US$ 1.6 billion during 2012-2015; US$ 2.2 billion during 2016-2020). However, GPE's donor base is rather narrow (20 sovereign countries but only a handful major contributors, and five foundations) and it relies on several "staple" donors, while GPE's recipient base is rather wide in scope (76 DCPs). On the contribution side, this results in an erratic pattern of donor contributions, while on the recipient side scarcely-available resources have to be divided among a large group of DCPs. The donor base of GPE mostly comprises traditional donors, which also provide significant sums of development assistance through bilateral relations as their preferred channel due to the higher level of control over spending and the greater quality of diplomatic relations associated with bilateral finance options. Principal reasons why traditional donors provide funding to GPE include the notion that GPE may work in countries that are not direct partner countries of the donor, and the possibility to participate in shaping the global education development agenda.

There is a considerable potential overlap in the geographic scope (LIC, LMIC, FCAC) of GPE compared with ECW and the IFFEd (currently under establishment), although GPE can be a complementary funding vehicle when strategically positioned and aligned with ECW and IFFEd. Donors that fund ECW and IFFEd also provide funding to GPE.

6

Organizational effectiveness

Under Organizational Effectiveness, the ISE presents the results of a benchmark study among four other global funds as basis for reviewing Fit-for-Purpose governance and management arrangements of GPE. Besides, findings related to the overall Health of the Partnership, the Functionality of GPE's main conceptual frameworks and its M&E performance are presented in this chapter.

6.1 Fit-for-purpose governance and management arrangements

***Core question**: how do GPE's governance and management arrangements compare with others?*

***Main findings**: The ISE observes GPE standing out in following principles of country ownership, through LEGs, financially supporting the preparation of sector-wide plans and capitalizing on existing sector-wide monitoring and promoting mutual accountability through JSRs. The ISE sees scope in diversifying ways to support technical assistance, especially during grant implementation and in pursuing more collective action in monitoring and learning.*

6.1.1 Introduction

The ISE has been expected to assess GPE's current governance and management arrangements as a basis for providing inputs to GPE's post-2020 strategy development process. Previous chapters have shown how GPE faces typical partnership challenges at the global and country levels in translating its strategy into a fit-for-purpose structure (i.e. its aspiration to become a country-focused, agile partnership adapting its operations to different country contexts). To complement ongoing efforts to address these challenges through the EPR process, the ISE has undertaken a systematic benchmarking exercise of four other global partnerships: Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF), the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), and Green Climate Fund (GCF). These four have been selected from a wider range of global partnerships[170] based on the criteria of being comparable in scale and maturity, dealing with similar partnership challenges, bringing together multiple constituencies, having different hosts, using different governance models, and the availability of recent external evaluations. This benchmarking study provides insights into how GPE's governance arrangements compare with others in dealing with the typical global partnership challenges/issues outlined below:

A. Strengthening country ownership/government leadership;
B. Translating global arrangements/principles into effective local structures;
C. Organizing supporting structures/arrangements to bring about effective implementation; and
D. Motivating collective action and mutual accountability.

The chapter starts with basic facts about the four comparator partnerships and then proceeds with sections on each issue, presenting a description of the ways in which the partnerships address each particular challenge. Each section also contains selected relevant lessons from recent evaluations and ends with an account of how the comparator partnerships' arrangements are similar to and different from GPE's. A concluding section suggests how these findings are relevant for GPE. Annex 6.1 provides greater detail on all aspects of the comparator partnerships' management and governance arrangements discussed in this report.

[170] The ISE acknowledges that the pool of global partnerships is large, making it impossible to systematically review the entire pool as a basis for selection. Instead, known global partnerships have been compared with the selection criteria to derive a small sample that is sufficiently comparable with the GPE to serve as a benchmark.

6.1.2 Overview of benchmarked global partnerships

GAVI, GF, GEF, and GCF are mature global partnerships with significant fund management responsibilities. GF's annual disbursements are the largest of the four at US$3.5 billion in 2019, while GAVI's and GEF's are around US$2.0 billion and GCF's is under US$ 1.0 billion in the same year. By comparison, GPE's annual disbursements in 2019 were US$418 million. These partnerships are comparable with GPE in terms of maturity, with GEF being the oldest and GCF the youngest.

GAVI, GF, and GCF are independent legal entities in their own right, although GAVI and GF were initially housed/serviced by UN organizations[171]. GEF's secretariat – like the GPE's secretariat – is housed in the World Bank, which has its advantages and disadvantages[172]. The GF has the largest secretariat (over 700 staff), followed by GAVI (over 300), GCF (240), GPE (108) and GEF (71). While the sizes of the secretariats differ, the ratios of the administrative costs to annual disbursements are comparable. None of the partnerships have country offices since they view themselves as financial mechanisms, not implementing entities. The donors have supported the establishment of these partnerships to provide additional funding in their respective areas, but have opposed setting up new multilateral implementing organizations like the MDBs and UN agencies that do have staff located in DCPs.

GPE is the only partnership that is focused on a particular economic or social sector. GF and GAVI are focused on strategic public health issues, namely, controlling three major infectious diseases and expanding childhood vaccinations. GEF and GCF are focused on environmental issues such a climate change and biodiversity conservation that cut across many sectors.

The essential voting representation on all five boards are sovereign nations (both donors and recipients). GAVI, GF, and GPE have extended their voting representation to other constituencies such as CSOs and the private sector. While GEF and GCF have not done this, probably due to their mandates to assist signatory countries in meeting the objectives of international environmental conventions, CSOs and the private sector are active observers at GCF Board meetings and GEF Council meetings.

As financial mechanisms, the partnerships rely mostly on accredited implementing entities to carry out the projects that they fund. While these projects/programs are typically executed by government agencies, the accredited entities are ultimately responsible for both programmatic and fiduciary oversight of implementation and results. GAVI is an exception since it provides direct access to funding for governments to purchase vaccines. Other exceptions include some of GF's principal recipients (PRs) and GCF's accredited entities (AEs), which may be government agencies in certain instances. The GEF and GPE mostly operate through accredited implementing entities.[173] More detailed information on governance, administration, and grant processes of these partnerships can be found in Annex 6.1, Tables 6.1a-6.1d.

6.1.3 Issue A: on strengthening country ownership/ government leadership

This section explores the execution of grants, application for grants through government-led structures, alignment with national priorities, and seeking co-financing as defined by each of the partnerships.

Overall, all four partnerships promote country ownership/government leadership in similar ways. The first and clearest manner is by having governments execute most of the funded projects/programs.

Many of the additional ways to galvanize such government leadership and country ownership are focused on the grant preparation phase. One is to require grant applications to be endorsed by government focal points

[171] GAVI was initially housed in UNIECF (from 2000–2008) and GF had an administrative services agreement with WHO (from 2002 to 2008) under which WHO provided a range of administrative and financial services, including human resources, finance, administration, procurement, and IT services.

[172] Elaborating on pros and cons of being housed in the World Bank is not within the mandate of this ISE. For further reading on the Bank's recent guidance on facilitating its engagement in global partnerships and financing mechanisms through Financial Intermediary Funds (FIFs) like GPE refer to World Bank document (2019): Financial Intermediary Fund Management Framework. [online] Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/286451569595398435/Financial-Intermediary-Fund-Management-Framework>

[173] There are a few exceptions, such as direct access to up to 500,000 US$ for EAs of the GEF.

Table 6.1.3 Overview comparison of main ways to strengthen country ownership

Ways to strengthen country ownership	GPE	GAVI	GF	GEF	GCF
DCP executing grants[174]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grant application through government-led structures	Government-led multi-stakeholder forum - LEG	Similar to GPE's LEG, multi-stkh forum	Similar to GPE's LEG, multi-stkh forum	Different - through government representative	Different - through government representative
Alignment with national priorities assessed by MOPAN	Highly satisfactory	Highly satisfactory	Highly satisfactory	Highly satisfactory	N/A
Domestic co-financing	"Hard" requirement	"Hard" requirement	Incentive	No requirements	No requirements

(FPs)[175] or government-led multi-stakeholder platforms. In the cases of GEF and GCF, member countries designate government officials as FPs for fund-related activities; and in the cases of GAVI and GF, member countries establish multi-stakeholder forums similar to the LEG in GPE.

Another way in which these partnerships promote country ownership during grant preparation is by ensuring that funding applications/requests are aligned with the national priorities. For this purpose, GAVI and GF employ requirements similar to GPE, namely having a credible strategic plan to qualify for ESPIG. In the case of GAVI, it is a condition for funding that a country application for new vaccines is reflected in its multi-year national immunization plan, and in the case of GF, funding requests must be strategically focused and aligned with existing national plans.[176] Other partnerships — GEF and GCF[177] — strive to ensure funded projects are based on the national priorities through building this into the responsibilities of the FPs.

The partnerships use the mechanisms of both external and domestic co-financing to ensure country ownership during the grant preparation phase, albeit in different ways. Similar to GPE's grant requirement that DCPs commit to a minimum of 45 percent of the sector funding allocation to primary education, GAVI has formalized "hard" requirements for recipient governments. GAVI's (domestic) co-financing policy requires them to pay an increasing part of the vaccine price as their ability to pay grows, as determined by their GNI per capita. By contrast, GF uses (domestic) co-financing more as an incentive: it typically makes 15–30 percent of the fund's country allocation accessible when the government invests additional domestic resources to the same cause. By contrast, GEF and GCF do not impose minimum thresholds and/or specific types/sources of (external) co-financing in their project/program reviews; instead, they recommend seeking co-financing on a case-to-case basis.

Finally, some partnerships also employ incentives to increase national efforts, similar to GPE Multiplier, but do so in targeted focal areas such as the GEF's impact programs on sustainable cities and sustainable forest management. Countries that allocate a portion of their quadrennial GEF allocation to these impact programs receive additional matching funds at a ratio of 2:1. GF uses catalytic investments, 7 percent of overall resources, to catalyze the use of country allocations to increase impact and the use of available funds to accelerate the end of the epidemics[178] for priority issues e.g. finding missing TB cases.

[174] In most cases, for largest grants

[175] GCF works through National Designated Authorities (NDA) or FPs. The GEF works through operational and political FPs.

[176] https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/6385/trp_whattechnicalreviewpanellooksforinconceptnote_report_en.pdf?u=637166000630000000

[177] The GCF uses country ownership as an investment criterion. The latest evaluation recommends abandoning country ownership as an investment criterion (a prioritization tool), but rather using it as a minimum standard (eligibility). https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-b25-03.pdf

[178] Catalytic investments are based on identified priorities determined through a prioritization approach in consultation with partners and under the oversight of the Strategy Committee, per strategy period. The mentioned example of priority - finding missing TB cases – was for 2017-2019 period. More can be found in the detailed explanation of the allocation methodology https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/5642/fundingmodel_allocations2017-2019detailedexplanation_report_en.pdf?u=637182418540000000

In its institutional assessment reports of GAVI, GF, and GEF, MOPAN[179] rated strengthening ownership by these partnerships as "highly", as measured by the alignment of project/programs with national priorities (3–4 points on a four-point scale). MOPAN also assessed their adherence to the Busan[180] commitment of using country systems with the highest score. While there is no MOPAN assessment of GCF, GCF's recent Forward-Looking Performance Review[181] (2019) similarly concluded that the fund has been supportive of country ownership by working through a National Designated Authority (NDA)/FP in every country and that it has been strengthening this ownership through a wide variety of activities.

Nonetheless, despite these favorable assessments, recent evaluations have found that partnerships face challenges in fostering certain aspects of country ownership. The GF grants showed uneven alignment with national systems, with funded programs that moved toward transition from GF support demonstrating greater use of country systems.[182] The GEF's 2019 Annual Performance Report found insufficient government commitment during implementation to be a common factor in underperforming projects.[183] The GCF's recent Forward Looking Performance Review revealed weak ownership by non-government entities, caused by the focus on alignment to government priorities instead of also enabling broad-based stakeholder involvement.[184] In response to a 2015 evaluation finding of weak country capacity coupled with poor planning,[185] GAVI has introduced a Joint Appraisal, has streamlined its Health System Strengthening (HSS) guidelines, and has adjusted HSS grant design to an iterative country dialogue between the government, GAVI, and other in-country stakeholders. In addition, GAVI has increased support to governance structures, including the Health System Coordinating Committees (HSCCs), on country leadership, management, and coordination.

In conclusion, GPE's mechanisms for promoting ownership are largely similar to other partnerships in executing grants by governments, grant application through government-led structures, aligning grants with national priorities and seeking domestic and external co-financing. GPE is ahead of the curve in terms of using government-led structures for boosting ownership during grant application, as CLEs report on broader participation of CSOs and TUs in LEGs. GPE seems unique in providing funding to support the development of credible national sector plans and making them a prerequisite for its main grant, the ESPIG. However, this has had costs in terms of delays in project preparation, as indicated in section 6.1.4. Furthermore, apart from GAVI, GPE differs from the other partnerships in requiring that DCPs commit certain domestic funding to education, and for countries that have not reached Universal Primary Education, an additional commitment to the sub-sector of primary education. Section 6.1.5 further expands on mechanisms to strengthen government ownership during implementation.

6.1.4 Issue B: on translating global arrangements into effective local structures

This section explores further the role that local structures play in grant-related decisions such as applying for and appraising/endorsing grants, nominating implementing entities and developing proposals. Moreover, it explores mechanisms for engaging non-governmental actors in these structures.

As indicated in section 6.1.3, all four partnerships — similar to GPE — require grant-related decisions to be endorsed by multi-stakeholder platforms or FPs (both interchangeably referred to in this chapter as local

[179] MOPAN 2015-16 Assessment: Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (The Global Fund) http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/globalfund2015-16/; MOPAN 2015-16 Assessment: Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/gavi2015-16/index.htm MOPAN 2017-18 Assessment: the Global Environment Facility (GEF) http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/gef2017-18/

[180] In full: the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

[181] GCF's Forward-looking Performance Review 2019 https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/evaluations/fpr

[182] The Technical Evaluation Reference Group (TERG)'s Thematic Review on Sustainability, Transition and Co-Financing Policy (2020) https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/updates/other-updates/2020-01-31-technical-evaluation-reference-group-thematic-review-on-sustainability/

[183] GEF's Annual Performance Report 2019 https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/annual-performance-report-apr-2019

[184] GCF's Forward-Looking Performance Review 2019 https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/evaluations/fpr

[185] The updated meta-review published in 2019 analyzes six additional evaluations of HSS support completed in 2016-2017. "Update to the 2015 Meta-Review of Gavi HSS Evaluations." GAVI Evaluation Team, 2018. https://www.gavi.org/library/gavi-documents/evaluations/gavi-hss-meta-review--update/.

Table 6.1.4 Overview comparison of main ways to translate global arrangements into local structures

Mandates of local structures	*GPE → LEG*	*GAVI → ICC*	*GF → CCM*	*GEF → FP*	*GCF → NDA/FP*
Applying for and endorsing grants	*LEG prepares and submits grant proposal, no formal endorsement*	*ICC endorses Joint Appraisals on which funding requests are based*	*CCM prepares and submits funding request*	*FP endorses the funding proposal prepared by GEF Agency*	*NDA/FP endorses the funding proposal prepared by Accredited Entity*
Local structures nominate/ select implementing entities	*Yes*	*N/A*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Engaging non-governmental actors in local structures	*Central to LEG, guided by minimum standards*	*Central to ICC, guided by requirements and recommendations*	*Central to CCM, strengthened by minimum operating standard, and Eligibility and Performance Assessments*	*Degree of engagement left up to FP*	*Degree of engagement left up to FP*

structures). However, it should be noted that FPs can be rather different from multi-stakeholder platforms. It is up to a FP to organize multi-stakeholder platforms to inform its decision-making, which some do more than others. Having said that, taking a closer look at the decisions that each partnership requires from these local structures reveals that their authority applies to different aspects of grant-making, depending on the partnership's policies and procedures.

The GEF and GCF make the endorsement of project proposals a core function of FPs. The GEF Operational FPs endorse full-sized project (FSP[186]) proposals as well as the medium-sized project (MSP)[187] proposals and enabling activities (EAs)[188]. GCF's National Designated Authorities/FPs endorse projects proposals prepared by Accredited Entities by signing a no-objection letter to each proposal. Both partnerships make such endorsements a prerequisite for the funding proposals to be reviewed.

GF has an arrangement similar to GPE, whereby it requires funding requests to be prepared and submitted by the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM). In the case of GAVI, where governments have direct access to funding for vaccine support, the coordinating forums — Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee (ICC)/Health Sector Coordinating Committee (HSCC) — play a role in processing annual requests for renewing support. These endorse the full Joint Appraisals (JAs) on which such requests are based. Like GPE, the local structures of the other three partnerships that work with implementing entities (i.e. GF, GEF and GCF) nominate/select them. However, except for the CCM of GF, an implementing entity takes the lead in developing funding proposals/ request, with the local structures playing more of a consultative role. By contrast, the CCM of GF is responsible for preparing the grant proposal and getting it approved before nominating a Principal Recipient.

In the case of GPE, there is no formal endorsement of an ESPIG application by the LEG, although its mandate includes developing an ESPIG as well as an ESPDG or PDG applications and organizing ESP/TEP endorsement[189] by partners.

The extent to which partnerships promote the engagement of non-governmental actors highlights an exception in the case of GF, which has mandated eligibility requirements and minimum operating standards for CCMs (as of 2015) as well as imposing accountability measures for such requirements. According to GF, the "minimum standards" for CCMs include having balanced representation of men and women, a minimum of 40 percent representation from national civil society actors, and sharing oversight results quarterly with the Global Fund Secretariat and in-country stakeholders.

[186] More than US$ 2 million, implemented through GEF Agencies.

[187] Up to US$ 2 million, developed by a wide range of stakeholders.

[188] Up to US$ 1 million, accessed by countries GEF agencies directly.

[189] The term endorsement in all GPE documentation means offering public support. It does not imply formal approval or decision-making. GPE Charter https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-06-gpe-charter_0.pdf

These standards have helped to support stakeholder representation in the CCMs, notably civil society, vulnerable groups and marginalized populations. Based on its experience, GF believes that CCMs have performed best when they are adequately staffed and equipped and have transparency and accountability measures in place. Therefore, the fund provides grants (ranging from USD 15,000 to USD 200,000) for a three-year period to cover the operational costs of a CCM and its secretariat. Funding for a CCM is linked to its performance.[190] GF has recently further worked on strengthening CCMs through a CCM Evolution project that adopts a differentiated approach based on a CCM's level of maturity.[191]

Of the five partnerships, GEF and GCF have had a more hands-off approach to local structures — NDAs/FPs — with a smaller number of required responsibilities and a list of recommended best practices, including engagement with non-governmental actors. However, like GPE, they have instituted specific grants for preparing funding proposals with the broader participation of stakeholders, such as GEF's Project Preparation Grant[192] and GCF's Project Preparation Facility.[193] Further, GEF – similar to GPE's Education Out Loud fund – finances CSOs' involvement through its EAs and through the GEF CSO Network[194] as well as providing small implementing grants to CSOs in its Small Grants Program administered by UNDP. GAVI supports CSOs by allocating grants in the framework of health systems strengthening (HSS) grants and strengthens CSOs' capacity and engagement in immunization through its Partners' Engagement Framework (PEF). Among other activities, GF allocates at least 15 percent of the CCM Funding Agreement to support constituency engagement for non-governmental sector activities and to improve the quality of stakeholder participants, including civil society and key population groups.[195]

In conclusion, LEG's mandate in grant-related decisions is similar to that of the other partnerships in nominating implementing entities. In terms of a LEG's composition, it is most comparable with GAVI's ICC/HSCC and GF's CCM. In terms of applying and appraising/endorsing grants and developing proposals, LEG's mandate is more active: instead of endorsing a grant, LEG's mandate includes developing grants (ESPIG, ESPDG, and PDG), albeit without having a separate budget to cover operational LEG costs. These arrangements contribute to fulfilling GPE's ambition of having credible multi-annual sector plans promoting education system-level improvements as a basis.

6.1.5 Issue C: on support during grant implementation

This section explores the arrangements concerning technical assistance through grants and multilateral and bilateral partners support, performance-based financing, and additional programming support during grant implementation.

To ensure that sufficient technical assistance (TA) is available during implementation, the partnerships encourage applicants, through their secretariats during the proposal development/grant application process, to include TA in the grant proposal. Therefore, support for TA is most commonly part of a core grant and overseen by an implementing entity. This is true for this type of support provided by GEF, GCF and GF, as well as GPE.

Meanwhile, GAVI supports TA by providing funding to multilateral partners (primarily WHO and UNICEF) to support implementation: so-called One TA as part of its PEF.[196] 'One TA' is based on the demand and needs identified by the countries themselves and it mainly comprises staff who are permanently based in partners'

[190] https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-b25-03.pdf

[191] https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/country-coordinating-mechanism/evolution/

[192] Unlike the other partnerships, the GEF Council approves project proposals at the Concept Stage. After Council approval, the GEF Agency (equivalent of GPE's GA) receives 40% of the budget to prepare the project, and the remaining 60% after the project has been CEO-endorsed.

[193] Reported as having been underutilized in improving the quality of FPs and balancing the portfolio (https://ieu.greenclimate.fund/documents/977793/1474145/FPR+Final+Report/5c2929d3-ccc3-0b70-ca39-42e4a54110db)

[194] An independent global alliance of CSOs working to address global environmental challenges in areas linked to the six GEF focal areas dates back to 1995. In November 2017, the GEF Council approved an Updated Vision to Enhance Civil Society Engagement with the GEF (https://www.thegef.org/council-meeting-documents/updated-vision-enhance-civil-society-engagement-gef)

[195] https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/3266/core_operationalpolicy_manual_en.pdf

[196] The support under PEF is divided into three areas: targeted country assistance (so-called One TA), strategic focus areas and foundational support.

country offices (WHO and UNICEF) to support countries' immunization programs. GF makes use of a comparable arrangements, albeit like in case of without direct funding, i.e. through so-called *bilateral 'Set-Asides'*[197] — a partnership of GF with bilateral government donors where they channel a proportion of their total contribution (usually 5 percent) directly to country partners (including WHO, Roll Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria, STOP TB, UNAIDS and others) to be used alongside Global Fund-managed programs. GF does financially support provision of technical expertise under the Strategic Initiatives: agreements with technical partners such as WHO and StopTB, for example, for Finding Missing TB Cases.

Table 6.1.5 Overview comparison of main ways to support local structures during grant implementation

Ways to support local structures during implem.	*GPE =*	*GAVI → ICC*	*GF → CCM*	*GEF → FP*	*GCF → NDA/FP*
TA as part of main grants	*Yes*	-	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
TA through multilateral and bilateral partners support	-	*One TA: funding to multilateral partners*	*Bilateral 'Set-Asides and funding technical partners as part of Strategic Initiatives*	-	-
Performance-based financing	*Variable tranche*	-	*Annual assessment of country program and conditional disbursement*	*Taking into account the terminal evaluation results of previous GEF projects in the next country allocation*	*Results-based payments in the specific area of reducing deforestation*
Additional programming support during grant implem.	-	-	*Funding special initiatives*	-	-
Other	-	-	*Institutional partnerships come up with innovative solutions to long-standing problems*	-	-

Other ways to support TA without grant or direct monetary contribution include GF's institutional partnerships with global health organizations, policy, and academic groups and countries, termed by the ITAD evaluation[198] as *technical support enhancing model*. This refers to a practical partnership formed and based on comparative advantage and forged to come up with innovative solutions to long-standing problems such as specific dimensions of health system strengthening or development approaches, creating opportunities for GF to link its disease focus to global health goals. However, promoting implementation through such arrangements requires increased involvement in the continuous monitoring and boosting of outcome-level achievements in addition to reporting based on agreed M&E data from grant implementation. GF has an additional mechanism — special initiatives — not to improve grant implementation per se but to achieve impact at the outcome level. GF's Secretariat funds global health/other intergovernmental organizations for centrally-managed approaches that cannot be addressed solely through country allocations but are critical to delivering against GF's strategy.

[197] Set Aside funding being used to fund UN agencies (including WHO, Roll Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria, STOP TB, UNAIDS and others) to provide specific capacity building support. https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8792/terg_partnershipmodelreview_paper_en.pdf?u=637233413210000000

[198] https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8792/terg_partnershipmodelreview_paper_en.pdf?u=637166002040000000

Partnerships use grant-level M&E to incentivize the implementation through performance-/results-based funding, albeit in different ways. GF considers the whole country allocation as the main incentive, assesses and grades grants annually, automatically disbursing "A" grants and disbursing below "A" grants along with agreements to address shortcomings. GCF utilizes results-based payments in the specific area of reducing deforestation as part of (the final phase in) REDD+. The GEF incorporates performance aspects differently by taking into account the terminal evaluation results of previous GEF projects: a project's high/low performance has consequences for the next cycle of country allocations as one of the indexes in GEF's STAR[199] allocation formula. GAVI used to have a similar incentive but halted its use of performance-based funding to support HSS, after an evaluation concluded that PBF was not useful in adding value to the projects.[200] Instead, GAVI organizes JAs — comparable to JSRs in GPE — that formalize regular (annual) participatory reviews of implementation. More on this can be found in section 6.1.6.

In conclusion, GPE's most similar arrangement to promote implementation is including support for TA in ESPIGs. In using performance-based financing, GPE's arrangement of the variable tranche as a results-based financing incentive is most similar to GCF's deforestation results-based payment for REDD+. GPE's JSRs are similar to GAVI's JA in enhancing implementation through regular participatory review, although GAVI's focus is on its own contributions to improved immunization outcomes while JSR's focus is placed on the wider sectoral level (beyond ESPIG). To draw inspiration from other ways of promoting implementation through supporting TA, Annex 6.2 provides selected lessons and recommendations from recently-conducted evaluations that might resonate with GPE's challenges.

6.1.6 Issue D: on motivating collective action and mutual accountability[201]

Table 6.1.6 Overview comparison of main ways to motivate collective action and mutual accountability

Ways to motivate coll. action and mutual account.	*GPE*	*GAVI*	*GF*	*GEF*	*GCF*
At global level: boards role in country allocations	*Board approves country allocations*	*Boards approve policies for resource allocation*	*Board approves country allocations*	*Board approves country allocations*	*Boards approve principles for resource allocation*
At global level: boards role in grant approval	*Board approves ESPIGs/Multiplier grants of more than US$10 mln, the rest - delegated to Secretariat*	*Board delegates to Secretariat allotting funding to individual programs*	*Board issues no-objection to disbursement-ready grants*	*Board only approves Full-Sized Projects at the concept stage, the rest is delegated*	*Board approves the reviewed (full) proposals*
At local level: local structures involvement in joint monitoring and reporting	*Mandate of LEG plus additional guidance and support of JSRs*	*Through guidance and support of participatory Joint Assessments*	*CCMs oversee the grant implement-tation*	*FPs provide feedback on GEF activities*	*NDAs/FPs participate in M&E*
At local level: guidance to promote mutual accountability	*Guidance for JSRs to boost sector-wide dialogue during sector plan implementation*	*Accountability framework to clarify the roles and respons. of funding channeled through partners*	-	-	*GCF emphasize the participatory monitoring approach*

[199] The System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) that GEF Secretariat uses to allocate resources in an indicative way to its eligible countries in a replenishment period.

[200] Specific lessons in the Review of GAVI's Performance-Based Funding (PBF) Component of its Health System Strengthening (HSS) Support.

[201] Mutual accountability is defined, in accordance to the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness, as donors and partners accountable for development results (with specific indicator measuring regular reviews assessing progress in implementing aid commitments.

This section considers arrangements that partnerships employ at the global and local levels to promote collective action and mutual accountability. At the global level, this focuses on the Board's involvement in resource allocation and grant approval and at the country level on joint reviews.

Common ways in which the collective action is promoted at the global level include making collective replenishment efforts and deciding on the resource allocations among countries and grant proposals. Setting aside how the boards assign voting seats, the boards are involved in defining country eligibilities for funds/allocations and approval of funding in some way.

GF Board and GEF Council, similar to GPE Board, approve country allocations for the entire replenishment cycle.[202] These allocations are calculated based on a formula, which in the case of GF is predominantly based on each country's disease burden and economic capacity and in the case of GEF on a combination of an environmental benefits index, GEF performance index, and a social and economic index based on gross domestic product. Boards of GAVI and GCF do not establish country allocations but rather define frameworks and principles/policies to be used for resource allocation. The GAVI Board approves the scope and approach of GAVI's engagement with different country groups as part of its five-year strategy as well as the GAVI Programme Funding Policy and — from time to time — a financial forecast. The GCF Board has decided to keep the business model of resource allocation theme/activity-based, i.e. allocating GCF resources to adaptation, mitigation, and the Private Sector Facility as well as a special focus on African countries, low-income countries, and Small Island Developing States.[203]

Further, partnership boards participate differently in grant approvals. GCF's Board meets several times a year to approve the proposals reviewed (at the full proposal stage) and recommended by the GCF Secretariat, using the independent Technical Advisory Panel's (ITAP) assessments. The GF Board usually issues no-objection to disbursement-ready grants presented by the Grant Approvals Committee. GF relies on its management team for grant-making processes including the recommendations from the Technical Review Panel (TRP) and the Grant Approvals Committee of the Secretariat. The GEF Council also makes use of the non-objection mechanism, although the GEF Council only approves FSPs at the concept stage as part of the entire Work Program comprising PIFs pre-screened by the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP).[204] The GEF Board delegates the approval of MSPs to its CEO. The GAVI Board — similar to GF — delegates allotting funding to individual programs based on approved financial forecasts. The GAVI Secretariat does so by ranking country proposals for New Vaccine Support recommended by the Independent Review Committee (IRC). The CEO of GAVI also approves vaccine support renewal and extension requests based on recommendations of the High-Level Review Panel (HLRP).

In addition to country allocations and grant approval decisions, the key moments of collective action at the global level are the discussion, update and approval of key strategies, policies and plans and following up on recommendations of partnership-wide/strategic evaluations. This is regularly undertaken by all partnerships.[205]

The partnership efforts stimulating collective action at the country level during planning/grant application processes are described in section 6.1.2. In terms of the collective action during the implementation, as mentioned in section 6.1.5. GAVI is among the exceptions in making an explicit effort to promote participatory JAs, similar to GPE's efforts to capitalize on existing sector-wide dialogue through JSRs. GAVI's JA is as an annual, in-country multi-stakeholder review of the implementation progress and performance of GAVI support to the country, as well as its contribution to improved immunization outcomes, and it should not be viewed as a review of the national immunization program. In addition, GAVI has also put in place the

[202] GEF has a four-year replenishment cycle while GF has three-year one.

[203] https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-handbook.pdf

[204] However, this approval is still subject to endorsement by the CEO at the full proposal stage. It has to be mentioned, that STAP's influence is relatively small in comparison to the GEF Secretariat's in the reviewing and screening process.

[205] As mentioned in section 6.5, when it comes to carrying out comprehensive evaluations, GAVI is an exception as they stopped with comprehensive evaluation and focused their attention to two streams of evaluations: so-called decentralized (program team/country-led) and centralized (evaluation unit-led) evaluations at multiple country/strategy/policy level.

Alliance Accountability Framework to clarify the roles and responsibilities of funding channeled through GAVI partners, namely WHO and UNICEF. Other partnerships rely on local structures described in section 6.1.4 for such accountability, whereby some like GCF emphasize the participatory monitoring approach and encourage NDAs/FPs to organize country portfolio reviews.

In conclusion, GPE's arrangements to motivate collective action and mutual accountability at the global level in terms of the Board's involvement in strategy and resource allocation are similar to those of GF and GEF, as the MCA is based on a formula and approved by the Finance and Risk Committee of the GPE Board. However, in terms of reviewing project proposals, the GPE stands out as the only partnership that draws solely on its Secretariat for quality assurance; all the other partnerships make use of independent expert panels. When it comes to approving project proposals, GPE Board practices are more similar to those of GCF and GEF, except that the GEF Council approves projects at the concept stage. GPE's newly-introduced practice of delegating ESPIG/Multiplier grant approval of up to US$10 million to the Secretariat is similar to the case of GEF's Medium-Sized Projects. In terms of stimulating collective action and mutual accountability at the local level, GPE's JSRs stand out as an attempt to achieve this at the sectoral level. This closes the circle as GPE starts with investing in sector-wide plans and then attempts to encourage country stakeholders to be mutually accountable for their efforts at the sector level. GPE seems to be ahead of the curve in this respect.

6.1.7 Conclusions fit-for-purpose governance and management arrangements

Having reviewed the benchmarked partnerships, we have observed that the challenges faced by GPE are shared by others, despite having somewhat different governance and management arrangements and business models. Having said that, it has to be noted once more, that comparisons are not easily drawn because of the unique combinations of such arrangements in line with their purpose and scale. Acknowledging that benchmarking does not offer easy and immediately applicable solutions to GPE's challenges, the following conclusions may still be drawn.

In comparison to others, GPE stands out in following principles of country ownership, especially on sector-wide participatory consultations. During the grant application process, GPE is making progress in strengthening this ownership through LEGs, financially supporting the preparation of sector-wide plans and lifting their importance by making ESP a prerequisite for its main grant, the ESPIG. Although ESPs face implementation challenges and a prerequisite is not uniformly welcomed, potentially impacting effectiveness, GPE's persistent efforts in getting relevant stakeholders together under government leadership to agree on long-term sector-wide direction is commendable. GPE is also ahead of the curve in capitalizing on existing sector-wide monitoring and promoting mutual accountability — through JSRs — to boost sector-wide dialogue during sector plan implementation. Here, too, as the quality of JSRs has been flagged as an issue, GPE continues to work on ways to promote and demonstrate concrete achievements from participatory approaches in sector-wide processes. The mutual accountability process through EPR has also been an exceptional practice.

GPE could learn more from other partnerships in terms of diversifying the ways in which it could support TA during implementation. Arrangements by GF and GAVI could be especially relevant, such as framework agreements/collaboration with multilateral and bilateral partners, financial support to the coordination function (equivalent of CAs) as well as additional — special initiative — grants for emerging areas of TA.

To promote mutual accountability at global level, GPE has organized its governance and management of grant allocation and disbursement, similar to GEF and GCF[206], with more involvement of the board. Possibly to balance out the power of consensus derived from reaching joint agreements in such multi-stakeholder settings with efficiency concerns, GF and GAVI have delegated more authority to their secretariats, including — in the case of GF — maximum use of overall funding as an incentive to scale-up impact in targeted healthcare areas. By recently-introduced practice of delegating ESPIG/Multiplier grant approval of up to US$10 million to Secretariat GPE seems to have embarked on the way of seeking balance between high legitimacy of grant-making (through direct representation of DCPs in its processes) and efficiency (through delegation of some of it to the Secretariat).

[206] Although resource allocation is also similar to the Global Fund's.

6.2 Health of the partnership

***Core question**: to what extent the GPE has made progress towards being a strong and healthy global partnership?*

***Main findings**: The ISE observes a positive balance between the costs and benefits of being part of GPE for most partners, while significant, and maybe too much, progress has been made in clarifying structures and systems, making the partnership document-heavy. The ISE sees scope to further strengthen the health of the partnership, in particular in stimulating and challenging existing members to optimize their contribution, in balancing attention for structure and content, and in pursuing more collective action in monitoring and learning.*

6.2.1 Introduction

Since 2015, both the GPE Board and Secretariat have intensified efforts to build a stronger partnership. GPE's annual results reports illustrate that progress towards building a stronger partnership (objective 5) has exceeded beyond its targets. This progress is tracked by indicators in the RF that measure progress through clarifying roles and responsibilities, the number of knowledge products generated, advocacy events undertaken and audit issues addressed, as well as the proportion of Secretariat time spent on country-facing functions, and the number of results and evaluation reports published. Altogether, this indicates significant transformation in the functioning of the Board, its sub-committees and the Secretariat, particularly in steering and managing the performance of GPE at the global level.

Notwithstanding the importance of the aforementioned achievements, Board members and Secretariat staff have also raised concerns about partnership issues that are not captured by the existing RF, many of which are also reflected in EPR-related documents. These concerns relate to more intangible partnership dynamics within GPE, like the quality of cooperation (being document-heavy and with slow decision-making) and the level of delegation to the Secretariat, the optimal use of complementary qualities within the partnership, the complexity of sound and timely constituency consultations, etc.

Therefore, the ISE has taken stock of the actual status of these less tangible elements related to partnership dynamics, to find a broader answer to the question "*to what extent the GPE has made progress towards being a strong and healthy global partnership?*"

To answer this question, we describe the current partnership dynamics using the four patterns of interaction distinguished by the Circle of Coherence model,[207] which together determine the vital space and energy that drives the performance of the partnership (see Annex Two for more details on the methodology). This description and analysis is primarily based on interviews with Board (committee) members, in-country stakeholders (GAs, CAs, Government Focal points in selected countries), and Secretariat staff and the virtual sense-making workshop in late April 2020[208].

6.2.2 Partnership dynamics in patterns of interaction

Based on interviews and supported by EPR documentation, the ISE describes and assesses the balance of four patterns of interaction, which together have an important influence on the overall partnership dynamics and performance. These are summarized in Figure 6.2.2 and described, in turn, below.

Exchange

The dimension of exchange refers to the (perceived) balance between give and take in taking part in GPE. In other words, how do different constituencies assess the cost-benefit ratio of their GPE membership, with costs relating to investments in time, money and energy or in sacrificing autonomy. Benefits relate to the extent to which the expectations of being part of GPE are indeed being met.

[207] Exchange, challenge, structure, and dialogue see Wielinga E. (2014), Network Dynamics, available at: www.toolsfornetworkers.nl.

[208] Due to the Covid-19 crisis, we have not been able to interview as many stakeholders as hoped for. Ultimately, we have managed to interview 14 global stakeholders (5 DPs, 3 DCPs, 2 CSOs, 2 MLAs, 1 private sector, 1 private foundation representatives, and 2 external consultants), 16 in-country stakeholders (4 Government, 9 CAs, and 3 GAs) and around 25 Secretariat staff.

Figure 6.2.2 Summary of patterns of interaction



At the Board level, GPE comprises a broad range of different stakeholders within the educational sector, including DPs, DCPs, CSOs, private sector actors, private foundations, and multilateral agencies. The majority of the Board members interviewed indicated that they appreciate their involvement in the partnership as this allows them to contribute to a cause in which they believe, as well as offering useful first-hand information on developments within the sector and possibilities for mutual learning among partners. More specifically, for DPs, being part of the GPE Board increases their reach and provides the possibility to influence different actors within the education sector, irrespective of the size of their contribution.

Most interviewed board members from DPs and MLOs consider the GPE an important platform for setting the international education agenda, whereas CSOs appreciate the platform for having their voices heard (i.e. their points are considered and — if necessary — put up for debate) and gaining knowledge about global-level GPE processes and decisions to support communication with constituency groups at the country level. Finally, DCPs see strong potential for the partnership in terms of sharing experiences, taking their responsibility in the global community and accessing funds, even though this is limited relative to total education costs.

In terms of 'costs', Board members confirm investing a considerable amount of time and energy in the partnership, not only through attending Board meetings but also in preparing for these meetings in advance and

reviewing the many documents disseminated by the Secretariat. Despite this considerable time investment, most of the Board members interviewed still confirm to find a positive balance between what they get out of the partnership (e.g. contributing to a cause, increased reach, influencing other actors, access to information, having their voice heard) and what they invest in it.

At the same time, many Board members express that they see room to further improve this balance, in particular by getting things decided and done more quickly, delays being partly caused by the drive for consensus in the Board and partly by limitations in follow-up that largely depend on the Secretariat

Similarly, at the country level, GPE's different stakeholders recognize the added value of the partnership, albeit more critically. For example, several GAs, CAs and government officials have stressed the added value of the LEG in improving sector dialogue. They highlight GPE's potential to make global education knowledge and expertise available in different countries and appreciate initiatives like KIX but claim that this potential remains insufficiently tapped, making the 'cost-benefit ratio' less positive than it could be. In addition, country-level actors critically comment on time-consuming procedures to meet requirements for a relatively modest grant, while global actors comment on the rather diverse performance of LEGs and GAs in complying with grant application and management processes.

Challenge

The dimension of challenge refers to the recognition and use of the diverse complementary qualities that different members bring to the table.

In GPE's Charter, the different roles and responsibilities of the various constituencies are recognized in light of their respective positions in the education sector. However, the interviewees generally agree that these complementarities are insufficiently called upon. Interactions are mostly described as polite and respectful, seeking consensus rather than constituencies constructively challenging each other's contributions. This is said to be illustrated by all constituencies being part of all Board Committees without their nominations ever being challenged. Others observe that constituencies use GPE more as a platform for advocating their own interests, while there is felt to be insufficient space to for using 'grass-root' experiences of CSOs, in particular teacher organizations, to inform policy decisions. Another observation relates to GPE being more preoccupied with expanding the partnership rather than getting the best out of the existing partnership. In this connection, the interviewees refer to the increasing number of DCPs, the drive for donor diversification and having the number of LEGs with CSOs as an indicator of success. A final example relates to the Secretariat calling upon external expertise to support the implementation of the gender strategy rather than mobilizing this expertise from within the partnership.

At the same time, some DCP representatives express the sentiment that they, rather than the in-country partnership as a whole, is held accountable for country-level results. In line with this, DCP representatives experience a diminishing yet noticeable 'donor-recipient' accountability dynamic. This sentiment is reinforced as they see insufficient diversity in terms of country representation among senior Secretariat staff. Nevertheless, clear appreciation of the Secretariat staff's performance remains. They certainly acknowledge efforts of the Secretariat and the chair of the Board to stimulate a more prominent recognition and contribution from DCP representatives (e.g. through pre-Board meetings and deliberate efforts to create more space for the voice of DCPs), which most interviewees agree is achieving an effect.

The ongoing EPR roll-out process is making progress in addressing similar challenges at the country level, and it has been pushing for a stronger demonstration of mutual accountability. Some interviewees comment on the challenge of mutual accountability in connection with strong donor coordination, where donor countries tend to take a joint and — by definition — powerful position before engaging with other stakeholders in the LEG. Given that the EPR roll-out is still in its early stage, the effects of this process are not yet clear.

Finally, the mere fact that GPE brings together all key stakeholders in education is one of the main reasons for many actors wanting to be part of GPE. In other words, GPE's (aspired) inclusivity is one of its main strengths. Many respondents believe this strength can and should

be used more prominently, for example, in accessing or leveraging funding, or using expertise present among partners. This requires deliberate leadership and action.

Structure

The dimension of structure refers to the balance between efforts to establish clear and transparent structures and systems, and the need to retain flexibility and freedom to adapt to different and changing circumstances.

In terms of putting clear and transparent structures in place, extensive Terms of Reference exist that elucidate the roles and responsibilities of partners operating at the global and country levels. However, many Board and Secretariat interviewees feel that there is room for improvement in terms of better alignment and workload distribution among the Secretariat, Board Committees, and Board members. Board members indicate that although discussions and sector-wide consultations at Board meetings are appreciated, they are time-consuming and focus more on discussing guidelines and processes rather than content (i.e. how best to put GPE's Theory of Change in practice). At the same time, interview respondents see improvements in the rearrangement of work among Board Committees (at the outset of the current strategy) and transferring responsibilities to the Secretariat (e.g. the delegation of approval of grants up to US$ 10 million, as decided during the Board meeting in December 2019).

Similarly, at the country level, partners have to deal with an elaborate set of rules and procedures in the grant application and implementation process, which leaves limited room for creating better partnership dynamics. Country-level partners repeatedly report that stringent rules and procedures of the GPE hamper implementation and have not been supportive of partnership dynamics. As also found in the CLEs, partners indicate that GPE rules and procedures allow for limited flexibility to align with the reality on the ground (e.g. the disconnect between the financial management systems used by the World Bank and those used by governments).

Whereas about half of the DCPs express their appreciation for flexible funding mechanisms of the GPE (e.g. variable tranche) as well as no-cost extensions that were considered based on the country context, they also express criticism related to GPE's stringent rules and procedures. For example, CAs consider the process of identifying stretch indicators as time-consuming and undermining the partnership with the government, as a lot of back-and-forth communication is needed for revision and quality assurance by the Secretariat. Therefore, the Grant Streamlining Project is considered highly relevant for improving the effectiveness of the partnership.

Generally, most interviewees see 'structure and systems' as dominant factors in global partnership interaction, making GPE 'document-heavy' in the eyes of many. This is partly explained by GPE's rapid expansion since 2012, as well as partly by the Secretariat giving thorough follow-up to an increasing number of Board decisions, as evidenced by the expanding set of documented tools, guidelines, and operating procedures. A further contributing factor is that GPE originated — and is still primarily seen — as a global fund, requiring clear and transparent funding requirements, accurate financial administration, and sound risk/fiduciary management. Besides, an increasing recognition of and attention to facilitating partnership dynamics has recently been demonstrated, among others by the EPR process, the establishment of the Governance team, initiatives like the pre-Board meetings of DCPs, and ideas to more clearly distinguish fund management and partnership facilitation functions in a possible restructuring of the Secretariat.

Dialogue

The dimension on dialogue refers to the extent to which there is willingness and effort to undertake collective action that is jointly monitored and learned from.

As mentioned earlier, global GPE interactions are perceived to be dominated by creating clear and transparent systems and structures, while interview respondents from Board Committees and the Secretariat both comment on the limited time for joint reflection. Indeed, one respondent refers to Board discussions as a "ticking the box" exercise when working through agenda points rather than exchanging views. Others comment that the GPE Board often does not take a joint position on issues in the international debate on good and equitable education (e.g. referring to the right to education for all, irrespective of disability, ethnicity, sex, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). They see this as a missed opportunity because a common position by GPE

would carry a lot of weight due to being inclusive and relatively free from cultural bias. Especially, since GPE also represents the voice on non-governmental actors, whereas UNESCO can only play such a 'normative' role on behalf of governments.

Nevertheless, several findings are supportive of the notion that learning is increasingly facilitated through the partnership. One such positive example is found in the fact that the GPE has set up the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) fund to support sharing of evidence-based solutions and building capacity to produce, integrate and scale knowledge and innovation in GPE partner countries. Moreover, a government official indicated how regional DCP meetings facilitated by the Secretariat are appreciated for their contribution to learning and exchange at the regional level. Furthermore, at the country level, various interviewees refer to JSRs as useful joint reflection processes, even though GPE's results report and the CLEs refer to many of these JSRs as not meeting GPE's quality standards.

6.2.3 Conclusions concerning health of the partnership

When assessing the health of the partnership based on the extent to which GPE has found a good balance in the four key patterns of interaction, the ISE concludes the following:

At the global level, there is a positive balance between the time, resources and energy invested in the partnership, and the benefits that it provides. GPE is the only global partnership in the sector that is composed and jointly led by a range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, which makes it a unique and valuable platform for partners to exchange views, exert influence and stay informed about the international agenda for education. Nevertheless, this balance requires continued attention, in particular in terms of pace in decision-making and action, for instance related to the EPR process.

At the country level, the majority of GPE's stakeholders see the potential of the partnership but remain critical about the extent to which the partnership aspect is achieved. For many, the 'costs' of meeting funding and partnership requirements still outweigh the benefits realized, which leads to the widely-agreed notion that this needs to be one of GPE's key priorities for the coming years. Several interventions are already ongoing, like the EPR and the Grant Process Streamlining project, pursuing specific and practical improvements, although these have taken time to unfold with the risk of losing energy and interest.

GPE is recognized and appreciated for having an inclusive and diverse constituency-base, although it has not yet found the suitable balance in terms of using the partners' complementary qualities. There is little evidence of partners being challenged and called upon to make their best possible contribution, aside from DCPs being held responsible for country-level progress. However, this takes place in the absence of a functioning mutual accountability system, which reduces the sense of GPE being a genuine partnership. At present, GPE focuses more on expanding the partnership than getting the best out of the existing partners. At the country level, the EPR has aimed to improve mutual accountability and thus optimize the use the diverse qualities of GPE's constituency groups, although it is too early for this process to demonstrate results.

Structure and systems play a dominant role in GPE's interactions, which is partly understandable given its history as a global fund and its rapid expansion as a global partnership. At the same time, these have made GPE processes document-heavy with (too) little flexibility to adapt to the different and changing circumstances of its many DCPs, and (too) little time to reflect upon and discuss the content of GPE's core business of improving education systems. Both the Board and the Secretariat recognize this in their deliberations, in the EPR and in the proposed strategic shifts for the post-2020 strategy.

As a result, there is (too) little time for joint monitoring, reflection and learning, especially when judged against GPE's own quality standards. Besides, GPE takes too little advantage of its unique position as a global inclusive partnership in education, for example, by agreeing to a joint normative position on good and equitable education. At the same time, it can be argued that UNESCO should be the appropriate UN-organization to do so, but since UNESCO is an inter-governmental organization, GPE's representation of non-governmental actors is stronger and therefore its voice therefore carries a different weight.

In summary, the ISE observes a positive balance between the costs and benefits of being part of GPE for most partners, while significant, and maybe too much,

progress has been made in clarifying structures and systems. The ISE sees scope to further strengthen the health of the partnership, in particular in stimulating and challenging existing members to optimize their contribution, in balancing attention for structure and content, and in pursuing more collective action in monitoring and learning.

6.3 Functionality of Conceptual frameworks

***Core question**: to what extent have GPE's overall conceptual frameworks (ToC, RF and Gender Strategy) served their respective purposes?*

***Main findings**: Even though there is scope for technical improvement in presenting more comprehensive pathways of change or in delineating GPE's sphere of control, the GPE has made significant progress since 2015 in the elaboration of its conceptual thinking in a range of frameworks that have improved the clarity and transparency of GPE's ambitions, the rationale behind its interventions, and how it will hold itself accountable for results. So far, the GPE has used these frameworks primarily and successfully for communication and accountability purposes but less as tools to steer and learn from its operations.*

6.3.1 Introduction

GPE's overall conceptual thinking is reflected in its 2016 - 2020 strategy, which summarizes GPE's guiding principles and way of working, and presents its global ToC[209] and Results Framework (RF) that were developed in response to the interim evaluation in 2015. The GPE 2020 strategy is supplemented by various more specific or thematic strategies like the gender strategy, strategies for engagement with foundations and the private sector, the M&E strategy, etc. This has resulted in an extensive and complex constellation of policies and strategies that are meant to provide direction to the different aspects of GPE's work.

The intended purposes and logics of these frameworks and policies are reflected in respective Board documents. In this chapter the ISE assesses the functionality of GPE's conceptual frameworks, focusing on the question to what extent have GPE's overall conceptual frameworks served their respective purposes?

For this exercise, the ISE selected the overall ToC and the RF as they form the core of GPE's Strategic Plan 2016-2020, and the Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020[210] as equity and gender equality has been a critical component of GPE's Strategic Plan.

6.3.2 Functionality of GPE's overall ToC

In December 2015, the Board approved GPE's first overall ToC[211] with the objectives (1) to visualize how GPE will deliver value to all of its partners, (2) to show how inputs generated at the global level are to support a stronger country-level operational model and how country-level outputs are to support stronger and more efficient education systems, in turn leading to impact in the area of equity and learning, and (3) to highlight where GPE's existing grants feed into its overall intervention logic.

All partners are referred to as the intended users of the ToC, although it is left open what is expected in terms of use beyond being informed. Looking at actual use, the visualized ToC extensively features in external and internal communications (website, strategy documents, and publications). This contributes to a broader clarity and common understanding of GPE's intended pathways towards its ambition of improved and more equitable education. In terms of program design, the ToC is used as the basis for structuring GPE's RF and through this its annual results reports. In addition, we observe the ToC being further refined in a country-level ToC for the CLEs. In terms of learning, the R&P team at times reflects on the ToC and discusses gaps and scope for improvement, although no regular (e.g. annual) or systematic review of the ToC is evident, apart from ongoing efforts in preparation of the post-2020 strategy.

At the country level, some interviewees (e.g., in Cambodia and Afghanistan) refer to the use of the ToC to align their ESPIG applications, to either frame (i.e. using ToC as the starting point) or verify their ESPIG design (i.e. checking afterwards whether and how the ESPIG fits with GPE's overall conceptual framework).

[209] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2020-theory-change

[210] https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2017-05-gpe-gender-equality-at-a-glance.pdf

[211] GPE, 2015, BOD/2015/12/DOC08-annex 1.

It is also apparent that communication and facilitating accountability have been the ToC's primary intended purposes and use when assessing the technical design of the ToC based on selected current literature. The ISE furthermore sees strong features in the ToC as it comprehensively covers GPE's intervention logic from global funding to impact at the country level, and provides a relatively straightforward and logical overview of GPE's aspirations. Another strong point is that the ToC reflects a formally approved consensus among GPE's diverse constituency groups regarding what GPE is supposed to be about. These strengths ensure that the ToC is easily communicable as a legitimate reflection of GPE's conceptual thinking.

At the same time, development practitioners and academics consider ToC as a potentially useful tool for program management,[212] while suggesting a variety of design features to ascertain the usefulness of a ToC. These include caution against oversimplification to avoid significant gaps in the pathways of change, recognizing the capacity needs for actor-specific behavioral change, distinguishing the sphere of control from the sphere of influence and concern, and using assumptions explaining why (based on which evidence) causal linkages can be expected to occur. The ISE observes that a number of these design features are missing from GPE's ToC, while some (e.g. assumptions reflecting why a causal relation is expected to hold) were present in earlier versions of the ToC design,[213] which were revised following feedback from Board members. Interview findings and the CLE final synthesis report refer to similar shortcomings related to gaps in the intervention logic (e.g. no reference to capacity and behavioral change), and oversimplification (e.g. combining planning with implementation).

Following this, Secretariat staff from the external relations and results & performance teams perceive the ToC as useful in helping to shape advocacy and M&E efforts. Board members and in particular donor partners consider having a ToC as a step forward in reflecting the joint ambitions of GPE's partners. At the same time, no explicit use of the ToC in the Board's steering of the 2020 strategy implementation is reported (e.g. formal adaptation of GPE's intervention logic based on progressive insights), except in the ongoing development of the post-2020 strategy. At the country level, occasional usefulness is confirmed when the ToC has been used as a tool to align the ESPIG application with GPE's overall ambitions. Finally, thematic strategies/policies do not consistently align with the overall ToC, while the CSEF evaluation acknowledges that the extent to which the ToC is understood remains limited.

In conclusion, given that this is the first time that the GPE has used a ToC approach to guide their 5-year strategy, positive aspects as well as several shortcomings can be observed. The ISE observes that the ToC has served its purpose as a communication tool and enabled improved accountability for results towards GPE's multiple stakeholders, although its potential as a management tool has remained underutilized. This means that the ToC has certainly proven to be a step forward in clarifying GPE's purpose and ambitions, while scope for improvement remains in terms of technical quality and utility focus, especially if the ToC is to serve as a management tool during the next strategy period.

6.3.3 Functionality of GPE's Results Framework

GPE's RF was adopted in December 2015 as part of the GPE 2016-2020 Strategic Plan with the purpose of (1) measuring progress towards the goals and objectives of GPE 2020, (2) holding all members of the partnership accountable, and (3) testing the effectiveness of GPE's operating model and the validity of the ToC.[214] Adopting this first RF was recommended by the 2015 interim evaluation, and in particular donor partners encouraged a framework that clarified what GPE wants to achieve and how it will be accountable to justify continued funding. In response, the RF was designed primarily to serve a global accountability purpose. The M&E strategy adopted in 2016 – with reporting on the RF as one of its four workstreams – has explicitly added a learning and steering purpose to GPE's M&E efforts (see also section 5.3).

As a tool, the RF is meant to hold all members of the partnership accountable, although it does not explicitly

[212] E.g. John Mayne, 2015, Useful Theory of Change Models, Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation; Dr. Dana H.Taplian a.o., 2013, Theory of Change Technical papers, ActKnowledge.

[213] GPE, 2015, BOD/2015/10 DOC 04

[214] GPE Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, Improving learning and equity through stronger education systems.

state to whom. Given that mutual accountability is one of GPE's guiding principles, it is assumed that the RF is meant as a tool to help ensure accountability across the partnership (i.e. all members are accountable to each other). According to interview respondents, the RF is primarily meant to ensure accountability to the global board as other processes are in place (notably JSRs) that serve accountability at the country level.

Looking at the actual use of the RF, the GPE Secretariat has clearly used this framework to structure its internal and external communication about results, with the annual results reports as its centerpiece. In the design of the 37 indicators that make up the RF, deliberate efforts have been made to link up with reporting systems of other global education actors (UNICEF and UNESCO). Reference to use of the RF in Board or committee meetings among interview respondents is mixed, ranging from claims of a "massive improvement" to being "limited at most". It is difficult to attribute managerial decisions directly to the results reports, but these reports address many key performance issues that are regularly debated in the Board and the Secretariat, such as funding requirements, the availability of reliable education data and learning assessment systems, alignment, and the use of JSRs. Having these issues covered in the RF means that relevant factual and regular data related to output-level results is available to inform these debates.

At the same time, interviews with Board members and Secretariat staff have raised issues that are missing in the RF, which thus reduces its (perceived) usefulness. Such issues include the quality of cooperation at the country level, the performance of GAs, and progress in ESP implementation. In addition, in many instances a more fundamental concern was raised about the lack of mutual accountability within GPE,[215] which is not addressed by the indicators of the RF.

When assessing the technical quality of the RF based on prevailing M&E insights and interview responses, one of the RF's strengths is that it comprehensively covers the different results levels in GPE's ToC. The Secretariat made extensive efforts in close consultation with the Board to design a RF that was meant to be practical, relevant and transparent, maximizing the use of existing data and reporting systems. The majority of indicators meet all or most of the SMART criteria and in particular they are change-oriented at the impact and outcome level. In addition, methodological notes have been developed for all 37 indicators to enhance the transparency and rigor of the RF.

At the same time, a comprehensive review of all RF indicators by the R&P team of the Secretariat in combination with interview findings brings to light a number of critical observations. For instance, some interviewees point out that impact indicators have to rely on international sources like the UIS which in turn depend on country-data that is often incomplete and of varying reliability especially on out-of-school numbers, while important results that feature in many ESPs are not captured, e.g. non-formal education, provisions for children with special needs, the employability of school leavers, the inclusiveness of the system in terms of disabled and ethnic minority children and the psycho-social well-being of children over five.

Donor partners in particular are critical about the inability to attribute changes at the outcome and impact level to GPE's efforts, which in itself is accepted as inherent to the complexity of GPE's ambitions. This then suggests that spending time on data collection at these levels of the RF holds limited use for accountability and learning. The RF design is primarily based on formulating SMART indicators, although these assume a quantifiable and logical predictability of the results, as they do not fully capture qualitative, non-linear and unforeseen progress. Furthermore, the RF measures progress in grants but does not cover progress in ESP implementation, nor monitor factors that are likely to influence ESP implementation like the quality of cooperation at country level. Finally, several indicators related to the objectives at the country level and related to building a stronger global partnership are activity- rather than change-oriented (e.g. # of knowledge products developed versus member satisfaction with these products), thus reducing their relevance in measuring what they are supposed to measure.

In terms of (perceived) usefulness, the ISE notices and supports the consensus that this first RF is an improvement compared with the earlier situation without the RF. The RF is seen to have helped GPE in becoming more accountable for results in its thinking,

[215] This concern is also regularly documented in EPR-related documents and a key element in the strategic shifts proposed by the Secretariat during the Board meeting in December 2019.

framing of programmatic discussions and its reporting. The RF has also helped in providing factual data to inform many of these discussions, although its use and perceived usefulness have remained largely limited to accountability at the global level. In light of the EPR and proposed strategic shifts to place country processes at the core of GPE, there is scope to make the RF more relevant, complex-aware[216] and adaptable to country-specifics: in other words, making the RF more learning- and steering-oriented, including at the country level.

6.3.4 Functionality of Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020

GPE has had girls' education as one of its five objectives in the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan. Moreover, a Gender Equality Institutional Assessment (GEIA) completed in September 2015 has highlighted the need for GPE to work more broadly on gender equality, beyond its focus on girls' education. The GEIA has also pointed at strengthening efforts and engaging in integrated approaches to gender mainstreaming across all of the work of the partnership, as well as developing a more robust institutional approach for the Secretariat.[217] Building on the recommendations of the GEIA, the first and current Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020 document has been developed. The way in which the policy and strategy have been presented (i.e. within one document) might give the impression that the Gender Equality Policy (the Policy) needs to be periodically renewed while it has been developed to be evergreen (i.e. never to expire). Meanwhile, the Gender Equality Strategy (the Strategy) has been made for the 2016-2020 period and it sets out core output areas to frame and focus resources and efforts for the duration of the GPE Strategic Plan for the same period. In other words, the Strategy outlines the aspiration and intention of how the Policy will be put into practice over the period of the GPE Strategic Plan.

Upon first glance, the Strategy provides a comprehensive overview of how the policy is envisioned to be operationalized for the 2016-2020 period. To set the direction and focus for implementing the Policy during its first strategic planning cycle (2016-2020), the Strategy identifies six core output areas, which are aligned with the key components of the Policy. These six core output areas are:

1. mainstreaming gender equality into GPE operations and frameworks;
2. strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat, Board, and Committees to lead on gender equality;
3. gender-responsive sector analysis, planning, and implementation;
4. coordinating across sectors to advance gender equality in education;
5. monitoring and reporting on gender equality results; and
6. knowledge production, exchange, and management on gender equality.[218]

Next, for each output area, the Strategy sets out the main deliverables, the party or parties leading and the reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, it generally describes the roles and responsibilities for each actor group[219] and which resources are required for successful implementation of the Strategy. Although the Strategy sets out roles and responsibilities and identifies a leading party, it does not further specify this beyond the actor group (e.g. Secretariat, DCPs). This might limit the leadership of members of actor groups over an action or deliverable as roles and responsibilities are not appointed to people specifically. Moreover, further specification of the deliverables and how these (jointly) contribute to achieving results within the six output areas is not present.

This brief description of roles and responsibilities and deliverables can be explained by the fact that further operationalization of the Policy and Strategy has taken place through an Annual Report and annual action plan. The Annual Report includes a review of planned activities and deliverables, an overview of the progress on the six output areas of that year as well as an analysis of issues, challenges, and opportunities, recommendations, and key priorities going forward. On the other hand, the action plan presents a costed and prioritized set of key activities and deliverables. Both documents are prepared by the

[216] For instance, being able to capture the unpredictable and non-linear progress that is typical in the social change process.

[217] Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020.

[218] Ibid.

[219] Actor groups include i) Secretariat (i.e. Gender and Equity/Inclusion Staff and Other Teams), ii) Board of Directors, iii) Board Committees, iv) Developing Country Partners, v) Grant Agents, Coordinating Agencies and other Local Education Group members, and vi) other partners.

Secretariat. The 2019 Annual Report clearly outlines the progress on deliverables and the planned deliverables for the 2020 financial year. However, there is limited information on how the efforts under the output areas are aligned to jointly contribute to achieving progress, as well as who is responsible for the specific deliverables. Similarly, in the 2018 Annual Report and 2016 annual action plan responsibilities are only identified at the level of the actor group.

This reporting — along with interviews held — convinces us that the first steps towards more broadly addressing gender equality at GPE have been made and are illustrated by – for example – "Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans" jointly published by UNGEI and GPE, as well as the roll-out of a series of regional workshops. Moreover, the 2019 Annual Report on the Strategy states that the Secretariat has started several activities, including advocacy and communication activities (e.g., production of report to support policy advocacy around the G7 Women Deliver Summit), a review of GPE's operational frameworks and documents to propose revisions for including gender-responsive elements (i.e. identifying key leverage points where a gender perspective could be strengthened within indicators, guidelines, standards and HR processes), capacity-strengthening activities for GPE Secretariat, Board, and Board Committees (e.g., draft for design of online training modules on gender equality under internal review, institutional capacity and awareness built on prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment), and knowledge production (e.g., production of concept note and discussion paper for the Gender Equality theme under KIX, two analytical studies on the costs of gender equality and not educating girls completed). In other words, clear signs of progress have been reported upon, but many of the intended strategy outputs are still under review or redesign, have been repurposed, or are experiencing delays.

One explanation for this can be found in the Strategy itself, which stresses that implementation of the Strategy and annual action plans will require leadership, commitment, and participation across GPE and at all levels, identifying roles and responsibilities not only of Secretariat — specifically Gender and Equity/Inclusion — staff, but also other actor groups, such as the Board of Directors, Board Committees, DCPs, GAs, CAs, LEG members, and other partners. Involving as well as sensitizing multiple actors at different levels is understandably more time-consuming and could partially explain the delays.

Besides, in the Strategy, the Secretariat has been identified as a leading party on five out of the six core output areas, while DCPs are leading on one: gender-responsive sector analysis and planning. This fact coupled with ISE interviews leads us to conclude that the main implementers of the Strategy are the Secretariat staff rather than the partnership as a whole. It is also observed that the responsibilities for implementing the Strategy have largely been delegated to the Gender Equality thematic lead.[220] The fact that this position carries limited authority and decision-making power made it more difficult to achieve progress on the Strategy implementation, which thus helps to explain the delays. Furthermore, changes in decisions on the higher management level that affected the continuation of the process have also contributed to the delay in Strategy implementation.

Nevertheless, ISE interviews revealed that gender has recently been gaining increasing attention at the management level. This is seen through the fact that the oversight on the implementation of the Gender Strategy has been put to GPE's CEO office. Action on the Gender Strategy is quarterly reported to the CEO based on an internal action plan that exists next to the annual action plan. Nonetheless, working towards gender equality is felt to mostly lie with GPE Secretariat and Board Committees, with limited involvement of country-level partners in working on core output areas other than sector analysis and planning.

Nevertheless, at the country level progress is still being made in terms of achieving gender equality, with GPE's 2018 Annual Portfolio Review[221] noting that 31 out of 37 ESPIGs are investing in gender equality. Moreover, GPE's 2019 Results Reporting shows improving gender parity between boys and girls though it is difficult to clearly attribute progress at this level. Besides, US$372.8 millions of GPE's funding is allocated to activities specifically

[220] During the time that the ISE interviews were held, the position of Gender Equality thematic lead was combined with the Early Childhood thematic lead. Along with this combined position, additional resources were allocated to cover the Early Childhood portfolio and cover the gender portfolio through consultancy hours and time from the Chief Technical Officer. A new full-time thematic lead started mid-April 2020.

[221] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/2018-annual-portfolio-review

promoting equity, gender equality and inclusion.[222] As discussed earlier, the work on gender at the country level is supported by the Secretariat's efforts through — for example — the publication of "Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans". Moreover, financial resources are provided through grant financing (from the Children Investment Fund Foundation funds) in support of UNGEI and the Gender at the Center Initiative to advance gender equality at country level.

At the same time, however, it remains unclear to which extent the supportive work of the Secretariat and these financial resources have promoted country-level partners to prioritize efforts to work towards gender equality. Since the efforts at the country level seem to be mainly driven by country-level partners (e.g. government officials and DPs recognizing and advocating the importance of working towards gender equality), but are varying strongly per country, this could also indicate that the work towards gender equality is advancing due to other factors outside of GPE's involvement. Whilst this finding underlines GPE's country-driven approach, this, along with ISE interviews, also indicates room for improvement in coordinating efforts at global and country level to jointly advance GPE's work on gender.

In conclusion, GPE has made comprehensive efforts to translate its Gender Equality Policy into its Strategy and further into annual action plans but the overall RF has remained unchanged, keeping the results monitoring and reporting of the gender strategy separate from GPE's core M&E efforts. Although, the Policy and Strategy show the strong commitment of GPE towards gender — highlighting that the Policy is vital for realizing GPE's mission, strategic goals, and objectives — the translation of this ambition is not yet convincingly seen in practice. This is due to the fact that the amount of resources allocated to implement the Strategy was limited up until recently when the work on gender equality gained increased attention.

Moreover, despite visible efforts and subsequent progress towards gender equality at the country level, it remains unclear to which extent this is a result of coordinated efforts from the Secretariat (and other partners). This gives the impression that there is room for the Secretariat to involve country-level partners increasingly to learn from current best practices and advance the work on gender equality beyond gender-responsive sector analysis and planning. The ISE concludes that although strategies and plans towards gender equality have been developed and communicated as part of GPE's strategic ambitions, operationalization of the strategies and plans, in particular at the country level, are only at an early stage considering the fact that results are most clearly visible in the preparation of documents and workshops.

6.3.5 Conclusions concerning Functionality GPE's concept frameworks

Even though there is scope for technical improvement in presenting more comprehensive pathways of change or in delineating GPE's sphere of control, the GPE has made significant progress since 2015 in the elaboration of its conceptual thinking in a range of frameworks that have improved the clarity and transparency of GPE's ambitions, the rationale behind its interventions, and how it will hold itself accountable for results. So far, the GPE has used these frameworks primarily for communication and accountability purposes and less as tools to steer and learn from its operations. The ToC and RF are clearly aligned, and initial signs have been found of these frameworks being used to guide or validate operational plans, but this has not yet become common practice throughout GPE. Clear efforts have been made to translate the Gender Equality Policy into action plans, but the extent to which this is reflected in GPE's RF and can be seen to have an effect on GPE's overall performance remains limited.

[222] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/results-report-2019

6.4 M&E performance

***Core question**: to what extent GPE's M&E performance has been successful in serving its intended purposes beyond the already confirmed accountability purpose?*

***Main findings**: the significant investments in GPE's M&E function since 2015 have certainly improved GPE's M&E performance. More systematic information related to GPE's progress towards intended results has become available and has helped to improve the quality of programmatic discussions both within the Secretariat and the Board. At the same time, the perception that despite these efforts, M&E information does not sufficiently answer the right questions makes that the cost-benefit ratio of GPE's M&E efforts requires continued attention.*

6.4.1 Introduction

GPE's M&E strategy has largely been implemented according to plan, resulting in the wealth of M&E information that GPE has collected and publicly reported. This means that the four workstreams of the M&E strategy — (1) results monitoring, (2) grant monitoring, (3) evaluation, and (4) dissemination of results — have extensively covered the Board's demand for M&E information, largely meeting its accountability purpose. The ISE sees GPE's RF as a carefully-considered product of a challenging process to reach a widely-agreed measurement framework for GPE's achievements.

In addition to accountability, GPE's M&E strategy serves the purposes of (a) stimulating learning, (b) improving performance and (c) facilitating decision-making among Board, Secretariat and national stakeholders. The ISE has therefore explored the question to what extent GPE's M&E performance has been successful in serving its intended purposes beyond the already-confirmed accountability purpose.

For this purpose, the ISE has collected additional evidence concerning the use of M&E information, and its perceived usefulness for set purposes. The ISE has also collected information about M&E approaches of other global partnerships, which has been used to enrich the assessment of GPE's M&E performance (further details about the methodological approaches can be found in Annex Two).

6.4.2 M&E purposes and deliverables

In 2016, GPE adopted a new M&E strategy with three purposes, namely, to strengthen the accountability of GPE's work, stimulate learning and improved performance across the partnership, and facilitate organizational decision-making by the Board, Secretariat, and national stakeholders. The four workstreams of the global M&E strategy have resulted in a wealth of M&E information primarily targeted at the global level, including:

- Annual Portfolio Reviews, providing a factual update of the composition and performance of the GPE grants portfolio;
- Review of 2016-2018 completion reports, providing a review of project outcomes (improved learning, equity or systems) and lessons from GPE projects;
- Review of Value for Money practices in closed GPE grants over the 2016 – 2018 period;
- Annual Results Reports, providing a systematic (analytical) overview of trends and progress towards the 37 indicators of GPE's RF;
- Twenty Summative and eight Prospective country-level evaluations, providing an overview of progress and GPE contribution towards country objectives and goals;
- Three programmatic evaluations, examining the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of specific GPE grants or instruments; and
- Six thematic reviews/studies reflecting an analysis of GPE's coverage and performance in key thematic areas.[223]

At the country level, GPE has stimulated the use of Joint Sector Reviews as a key M&E process, although these are not considered as part of GPE's corporate M&E strategy. According to the 2019 Results Report, 26 out of 61 countries have undertaken a JSR, with only seven countries (i.e. 27%) meeting GPE quality standards. The draft 2020 results report[224] reflects a significant improvement with 20 out of 28 JSRs (i.e. 71%) meeting three or more quality standards.

[223] Data, Early Childhood Care and Education, Equity and Inclusion, Gender Equality, Learning Systems, Teachers and Teaching.

[224] Draft Results Report 2020 – version April 22nd, 2020.

6.4.3 Use and usefulness of M&E information

All mentioned M&E deliverables have been made publicly available, providing transparency and accountability to the wider public regarding GPE's achievements. Within GPE, the diverse M&E deliverables have primarily targeted global audiences (i.e. the Board and the constituents that it represents, specific Board Committees and/or the Secretariat). Looking at the use of M&E information in GPE's documentation and according to interviewees, the ISE observes the following:

First, unsurprisingly, different audiences at the global level use different parts of the M&E information. For example, the GPC is particularly interested in GPE's annual portfolio overviews. Board members report a stronger use of the Annual Results Reports, selecting issues that hold particular interest to them. Among the Board members interviewed, only donor partners referred to the use of evaluation reports, although they have different views on their usefulness and are largely critical about the cost-benefit ratio of all such evaluations. The Secretariat — in particular the R&P team — seems to be the most intensive user of evaluation findings, reportedly using these findings in its own analysis, the annual results reporting and in shaping their thoughts for the post-2020 strategy. In this way, M&E results reach and influence the Board, albeit in a less direct and obvious way. The Secretariat's Country Support Team primarily refers to the use of the more project-specific information (e.g. completion reports) and less to the use of broader M&E results, indicating that they lack the time for regular and broader reflection and learning from M&E results.

Second, most country-level interviewees claim to have made little use of M&E deliverables that are not specifically directed at them. They express reasonable satisfaction with JSRs and are positive in particular about opportunities for peer exchange with other countries, which seems to contrast with the quality of JSRs as presented in the CLEs and Results Reports.

Third, when reviewing in further depth how M&E results influence programmatic discussions, it appears unlikely that M&E results have steered the nature of discussions, but they have influenced their quality. Interviewees with Board members and R&P staff state that many issues would have also been discussed without many of these M&E deliverables. Examples of such issues include funding requirements, alignment and harmonization, the need for better data and learning assessment systems, and the quality of JSRs. However, having these issues included in the RF and addressed in various M&E products has added more regular and factual information, which has helped to sensitize Board members and management in raising the quality/evidence base of their discussions.

Nonetheless, the majority of interviewees within and outside the Secretariat express the sentiment that GPE's current M&E efforts are beyond what can be processed and absorbed. In addition, various interviewees from partner countries indicate that the M&E information is not answering the appropriate questions to perform better at the county level (e.g. level of ESP implementation, quality of LEG performance, and quality of the GA). Besides, a number of interviewees representing global partners question the extent to which particular external evaluations provide information that is not already known by country-level actors. At the same time, multiple Board documents include references to external studies (e.g. EPR and CLEs) as 'objective' justifications and explanations for the need to debate and take action on issues like mutual accountability, alignment, adaptability to the country context, etc.

6.4.4 M&E in other global funds

The ISE has mapped how other global funds (GAVI, GEF, GCF, and GF) have organized their M&E function (see details in Annex 6.1). Looking at the most remarkable differences and similarities with GPE, the ISE observes the following:

- GPE appears to have been one of the first to adopt a ToC. GCF has a fund-related ToC that features less prominently in its external communication, GAVI has only recently started using ToCs at the country level and working towards developing a ToC approach as well as a broader ToC to show how GAVI intends to achieve its strategy 5.0, while GF and GEF do not have an overall ToC.
- Similar to GPE, all partnerships work with (strategic) RFs and use a set of indicators to measure progress. GEF has recently simplified its framework to eleven core indicators, while GCF tracks 43 indicators, aggregating results from grant projects that report on four to six selected indicators.

- All funds have separate systems for grant-specific and corporate reporting. The GEF has three levels of reporting (grants, country and corporate). GCF has aligned its reporting systems by having its corporate reporting aggregating grant-specific results.
- GF subcontracts external fiduciary monitoring at the country level to a Local Fund Agent, separate from the Principal Recipient, the latter being the GF equivalent of the GPE's GA.
- Like GPE, all funds rely on a combination of different evaluation efforts, including prospective, retrospective, thematic (cross-country), country-level and performance/corporate evaluations. GEF also undertakes separate impact evaluations. GAVI, exceptionally, has stopped commissioning comprehensive evaluations after receiving several confirmations that its model works. Purposeful deliberations on the usefulness, quality, and independence of evaluations led GAVI to focus on usefulness and quality principles whereby the former is ensured by the GAVI Secretariat proposing and leading the evaluations and the latter - quality of evaluations- is overseen by the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC) peer reviews.
- In particular, GAVI has shifted its evaluation efforts towards undertaking more targeted reviews and fewer overall comprehensive evaluations as the results of these evaluations were considered lacking specificity for learning on how to effectively operationalize a confirmed model.
- The independence of the evaluation function of GEF and GCF is more strongly secured by having an independent evaluation office/unit that reports directly to the Board.
- GPE's M&E Strategy is most similar to that of the GEF, whose Independent Evaluation Office prepares an Overall Performance Study every four years timed to influence the objectives of next replenishment cycle. The IEO lays out a program of evaluations to contribute to the Overall Performance Study, much like GPE's M&E Strategy did.

Within the limitations of the acquired data, it is clear that all global partnerships face a similar challenge of finding practical ways to collect relevant corporate M&E information that serves both learning and accountability purposes. For the grant level, this seems to be less of a challenge. All funds are seen to use a combination of different M&E processes, which are subject to regular updates based on progressing insights. The remarkable trend in this continuous streamlining process is the aim to reduce the number of indicators while allowing country-specificity. There are examples – albeit in a nascent stage – of making M&E more participatory and learning-oriented. This increased emphasis on learning and strengthening the independence of the evaluation function may be worthy of further consideration by GPE.

6.4.5 Conclusions concerning GPE's M&E performance

In line with its M&E strategy, GPE's M&E efforts are concentrated at the global level, designed and successfully implemented in meeting its accountability purposes. At the same time, there are convincing signs of M&E results influencing the quality of programmatic discussions by adding regular factual data on key issues related to GPE's overall performance like progress in alignment, trends in funding, JSR application, etc. However, a deliberate learning agenda or convincing signs of GPE using M&E results for collective learning remain limited. The volume of this information is however not easily absorbed nor discerned from other inputs, which explains the mixed perspectives concerning the usefulness of M&E findings.

Despite the apparent use of M&E results, overall M&E information in its current shape does not sufficiently address key questions related to GPE performance, in particular related to the quality of cooperation and ESP implementation at the country level. Various Board members have clear and strong ideas about how to improve this, albeit which have not (yet) found their way into GPE's RF. In line with this, current M&E information holds limited use for steering, learning and mutual accountability at country level, which are key elements for the success of the ongoing EPR roll-out process. At the country level, GPE's M&E efforts primarily rely on the successful implementation of JSRs, which reportedly remains a challenge in terms of meeting GPE standards despite positive feedback from DCP representatives.

Monitoring information reflected in portfolio and grant performance reviews holds particular use for the GPC and the CST, although both have insufficient time to systematically reflect on and learn from this information given existing grant management-related workloads. The learning effects of the extensive

external evaluation efforts are visible in the Secretariat but are not as obvious to many Board members.

Finally, GPE's M&E function is not fundamentally different from other global funds, with all funds facing similar challenges and demonstrating efforts towards constant improvement. It would be premature to draw specific lessons from other funds, although their efforts to emphasize learning and bring the M&E function closer to the Board to have more impact on decision-making are at least worthy of further consideration.

Overall, the significant investments in GPE's M&E function since 2015 have certainly improved GPE's M&E performance. At the same time, the perception that despite these efforts, M&E information does not sufficiently answer the right questions makes us also conclude that the cost-benefit ratio of GPE's M&E efforts requires continued attention.

7

Overall Conclusions

Being strategic in nature, the ISE has reviewed both the development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness of GPE, looking at eight strategic areas of investigation and presenting its findings and conclusions for each specific issue. At the same time, we recognize that all of these issues are inter-related and in combination reflect the overall performance of GPE. In this penultimate chapter, the ISE presents its overall conclusions related to development effectiveness, efficiency and trends in financing and organizational effectiveness.

Development Effectiveness

GPE has demonstrated progress towards all its outcome- and output-level objectives, but its effectiveness per objective varies. At the global level, targets for *building a stronger partnership* have been exceeded, while targets for *more financing* have been achieved although progress in *better financing* (harmonization and alignment) remains a challenge. At the country level, GPE's effectiveness has been relatively convincing in *creating more inclusive sector plan development processes resulting in ESPs/TEPs that increasingly meet GPE's quality standards.* GPE has successfully supported the financing of ESP implementation through ESPIGs that are largely on track and generally perceived to be relevant, despite covering a small portion of the total funding requirements for ESP implementation.

GPE's effectiveness towards ESP implementation and its subsequent contribution to more effective and efficient education systems remains a challenge. These goals reflect relatively broad sector-wide ambitions when compared with other global funds. Progress towards these goals depends on the successful contribution of GPE's interventions in combination with a range of factors at the country level, including funding abilities, implementation capacity, institutional setting, conflict and fragility, and socio-economic conditions that are partially and sometimes completely beyond GPE's sphere of control.

A further analysis of contributing factors revealed that GPE's achievements in terms of creating better plans, more inclusive sector dialogue and monitoring processes, and financing are positively associated with ESP implementation. This illustrates the validity of GPE's ToC in the sense that the combination of GPE-supported outputs are relevant building blocks for making progress in ESP implementation. The ISE also observes that progress in improving plans has moved at a faster pace than improvements in dialogue and monitoring, which progressed in the same more modest pace as ESP implementation. This indicates that improving sector plans may be important but on its own is insufficient to ascertain satisfactory plan implementation.

At the same time, the ISE observes that higher ratings of the GPE contributions to sector planning, dialogue and monitoring is associated with lower ratings of implementation performance. This is explained by the fact that GPE support towards inclusive planning processes is adapted to support needs, which are typically strongest in countries with relatively weak plan implementation capacity. Consequently, the GPE contributions should be highest in countries where it ESP implementation is most likely to be difficult. Finally, stimulating inclusiveness implies getting more actors involved. This leads to sector plans that are more comprehensive but also more complicated as they would have to address the needs and interests of a larger group of stakeholders. Overall, this points to the significance of other factors that are not directly part of GPE's interventions.

Some of these factors lie within GPE's sphere of influence, and relate to implementation capacity, funding, and the motivation of key factors involved in ESP implementation. These factors are recognized in GPE's ToC and have been confirmed to hold relevance for ESP implementation, although in practice it appears that GPE has had relatively little influence on them. A key emerging area of attention in this has been the importance of inter-government

relationships and cooperation, in particular between the ministries responsible for education, the Ministry of Finance and sub-national government entities.

In addition, the ISE examined factors outside GPE's sphere of influence related to the institutional and socio-economic context, which according to literature can be expected to hold relevance for ESP implementation. From this, it appeared that the absence of conflict and fragility and the presence of rule of law are important institutional factors that facilitate ESP implementation. At the same time, socio-economic features like higher population density (i.e. making it easier to reach higher numbers of students) and lower ethnic fractionalization and cultural diversity (i.e. less variety in languages, cultural norms and habits to be integrated) are enabling factors for ESP implementation.

At the country level, GPE depends on the LEG for advising the education policy cycle from ESP/TEP development to ESPIG application and ESP implementation. Progress in LEG effectiveness has been uneven across countries. More LEGs have been effective for discussing ESP and ESPIG development and ESPIG monitoring, and fewer for influencing ESP implementation and strategic choices.

Particular combinations of organizational and collaboration principles proposed by the Secretariat explain LEG effectiveness, although LEGs do not need to meet all principles to be effective. Mutual accountability has the closest association with LEG effectiveness. Other than that, positive cases of effective LEGs meet at least two principles. The combinations of principles and contextual factors that seem to be most strongly associated with LEG strategic effectiveness are strong government leadership and strong LEG governance, or strong GPE initiative and influence in countries where the education sector actors have weaker capacity.

Technical capacity gaps within complex government systems for the delivery of education and data collection is an issue for all LEGs in discharging their functions, especially in closing the feedback loop between action in implementing the ESP and reflecting on what has been achieved, what has not, and why. The motivation and leverage of LEG members explain whether or not they contribute to effective LEGs.

Structural political and economic factors are associated with LEG effectiveness, including inequality (income, ethnic, and linguistic), the absence of other fora for dialogue in the education sector, limited space for civil society, and the impact of conflict and disasters. This relationship between LEGs and the structural factors that surround them can be summarized under the concept of a social contract, which influences whether inclusive dialogue on education based on accountability is possible.

LEGs struggle to find solutions that require system thinking because they imply changing the behavior of teachers and education actors, which requires exploring how their motivation, incentives, and leverage interact in principal-agent or collective action problems. Other global funds adopt a similar multi-stakeholder partnership model at the country level and show similar challenges. Compared with other funds, GPE's unique sector-wide focus requires the highest level of effort to ensure that the LEGs work as intended as country-specific multi-stakeholder platforms.

Efficiency and Financing

GPE's grant allocation process from MCA to first disbursement takes more than 40 months on average, which strains the level of commitment to the process among in-country actors. The first 26 months of this period includes an initial delay, as the timing of the education sector planning process is not linked to the MCA announcement. Subsequently, a significant amount of time is devoted to completing a complex sector-wide participatory analysis and sector plan development process. Altogether, this consumes about two-thirds of the 40 months, which differs from other global funds that have a more issue-based/thematic focus and are less demanding in term of inclusiveness and quality requirements. Once this process is completed in line with GPE's quality standards, the actual grant application can start. The application process includes a rigorous three-staged QAR process outside the country at stake, which can be lengthy and affect the sense of national ownership. GPE is taking relevant steps to address these issues through the GPSP, GPR, VfM and the EPR processes.

Overall, grant implementation is judged to be efficient, as the majority of grants are on track. Delays in grant disbursements are primarily caused by operational challenges (e.g. complications in procurement), which often lie beyond GPE's scope of control. The

Secretariat monitors progress in implementation and fund disbursement and undertakes regular efforts to analyze and propose options for improved efficiency. The Secretariat has grown in size during the current strategy period, mostly in response to Board decisions. Nevertheless, the costs of the Secretariat have remained within GPE's own targeted range and in line with other global funds.

Country allocations over the 2012-2020 period illustrate a continued focus on basic education in LICs and LMICs, with a slight emphasis on FCACs in line with GPE's MCA formula. Funds are allocated to a wide range of activities related to improving learning quality, equity and systems, reflecting a country-level partnership consensus rather than a specific prioritization. During the 2012-2018 period, a relatively small portion (5.6 percent) of all education-related ODA commitments to GPE DCPs has been channeled through GPE, and as much as 11.8 percent of ODA commitments to GPE DCPs when considering basic education as a sub-set of ODA. Since 2016, the GPE has seen unprecedented funding pledges and contributions from DCPs and donor countries, albeit far from what is needed to close the enormous funding gaps.

Domestic expenditure remains by far the most important source of funding for education. GPE has continuously advocated the importance of increasing domestic education budgets, although its influence is limited as domestic funding decisions are subject to many other considerations. Although a number of DCPs have structurally managed to increase or sustain domestic education budgets above 20 percent of their overall government budget, since 2000 the share of education spending within total public expenditures by DCPs has continued to decline.

Donors make deliberate choices in terms of what, where, and how they provide development assistance, with a preference for direct relationships with the recipient country, control over the spending of aid, and the quality of accountability and governance systems. Principal reasons why traditional donors provide funding to GPE include the fact that GPE may work in countries that are not direct partner countries of the donor, as well as the possibility to participate in shaping the global education development agenda.

The global landscape for education development is becoming increasingly complex, with developing countries graduating or demoting in income status or fragility, and a myriad of traditional and newly-emerging donors (e.g. private foundations, China, India, etc.), and recently-established funding vehicles such as the Education Cannot Wait and the International Financing Facility for Education. The 2015 interim evaluation already called upon GPE to consider a more specific position in the overall aid architecture for education. Since then, GPE has continued to be positioned as a broad and inclusive funding channel for basic education, although the call on GPE to position itself more strategically has been growing.

Organizational Effectiveness

GPE has overachieved on its targets for its global objective of *building a stronger partnership*, among others by clarifying roles and responsibilities, producing knowledge products and further professionalizing GPE's risk management and fiduciary oversight. In addition, substantial progress has been made in establishing a *strategic management framework* as recommended by the 2015 interim evaluation. This includes a ToC and RF, which has improved the clarity and transparency of GPE's ambitions and how it will hold itself accountable for results.

To date, GPE has primarily used these frameworks for communication and accountability purposes, and less as tools to steer and learn from its operations. The ToC and RF are aligned, and signs have been found of these frameworks being used to guide or validate operational plans, although this has not yet become common practice throughout GPE. Clear efforts have been made to translate the gender equality policy into action plans, although because GPE's gender strategy followed later its specific objectives did not find their way into GPE's overall RF. This separation means that it remains difficult to observe the effects of GPE's gender strategy on GPE's core results.

M&E efforts have been successful in increasing GPE's accountability at the global level. There are convincing signs of M&E results influencing the quality of programmatic discussions by adding regular factual output-related data on key issues such as progress in alignment, trends in funding, JSR application, etc. At the country level, GPE's M&E efforts primarily rely on the successful application of JSRs, which has remained a challenge in terms of meeting GPE standards despite

positive feedback from DCP representatives. Despite the apparent use of available M&E information, the results framework in its current shape does not sufficiently address key questions related to GPE performance, in particular related to the quality of cooperation, mutual accountability and ESP implementation at the country level.

In addition, concerns remain about the quality of partnership dynamics and the adequacy of managerial arrangements (e.g. governance structure, level of delegation and efficiency of decision-making processes) that are not captured by the existing RF.

GPE's principle of being an inclusive partnership has become an obvious part of GPE's DNA as it is reflected in GPE's structures and decision-making processes and practices. At the global level, this is visible in the composition of the Board and its five committees – all of which comprise the diverse constituencies of GPE – and the value placed on consensus in decision-making. It is also illustrated by the prominent role of these member bodies in decision-making related to grant appraisal and approval, financial oversight, internal practices and procedures. At the country level, it is visible in the (desired) composition of LEGs and the prominent role of this multi-stakeholder platform in the ESP development and grant application process, especially when compared with other global funds.

The ISE appreciates the benefits of GPE's efforts to put its principle of inclusiveness in practice, as it keeps GPE together as a unique global platform on which the multiple stakeholders in the education sector work together towards a common goal. At the same time, the ISE is cognizant of the costs of GPE's inclusive practices and gradual expansion of the partnership, in particular in terms of the pace and quality of decision-making in GPE's relatively heavy governance structures. This also makes it difficult to find time for joint reflection and learning on how to get the best out of the experience, knowledge, and capacities of existing members. Looking at how other global funds are organized, the ISE believes that there is scope for increased efficiency without jeopardizing GPE's important progress in becoming a truly inclusive partnership.

In terms of management arrangements, the Secretariat primarily plays a supporting role vis-à-vis the Board, its committees and – to a lesser extent – the LEGs. The pace of progress is often affected by the frequency of meetings of the Board (committees), whose mandates are not limited to strategic issues (the 'what' and 'why' of GPE) but also extend to more practical issues related to GPE's operations and organizational development (i.e. the 'how' of GPE). A direct consequence of this is the recurring challenge of finding the necessary time in the agenda of Board (committee) meetings to address all of the issues on which a dialogue and decision is required. In light of this, the Secretariat spends significant time carefully preparing and framing these discussions. Indeed, this facilitates a quick yet limited reactive debate, during which Board (committee) members are expected to reach the same level of insight as the Secretariat, albeit in much less time. Both Board members and Secretariat staff are critical about the current working arrangements, illustrating the need for further streamlining.

Comparing other global funds, we observe diverse management arrangements, mostly reflecting less intense involvement of the Board, despite being mindful of keeping members connected on strategic issues. For instance, their Boards decides on country allocations, funding key areas/priorities, and approval for larger investments, while the Secretariat follows up on priorities within country programs and approves individual grants, usually with the help of an independent thematic expert panel. In terms of strengthening national ownership/government leadership, GPE's mechanisms are largely similar but stand out by having a broader and inclusive sector-wide orientation, which increases the number of actors involved and complicates partnership dynamics. In supporting implementation, GPE has less diverse mechanisms for providing TA to respond to unforeseen emerging capacity needs, applies a Variable Tranche modality comparable to GCF's results-based financing and stimulates joint monitoring through JSRs similar to Gavi.

Finally, throughout the ISE process, the GPE Secretariat has demonstrated itself to be alert, active and capable of identifying and analyzing tactical and operational challenges. More than 40 internal and external reviews have been undertaken during the past five years of implementing the GPE 2020 strategy, leading to new insights for improved performance on which the Secretariat could act more rapidly, if empowered to do so.

8

Recommendations

In response to our findings and conclusions, and taking into account the results of the sense-making workshop, the ISE recommends the following:

> *1. Maintain a focus on sector-wide basic education, but concentrate on improving the ESPs/TEPs implementation by balancing the attention devote to content and processes, as well as addressing constraints in funding, capacity, and contextual factors (to be initiated during the first year of GPE's post-2020 strategy).*

Despite GPE's efforts to develop better and more inclusive sector-wide plans, ESP implementation remains limited. Substantial progress has been made in the quality of plans. Progress in the inclusiveness of policy dialogue and monitoring processes has also been made – albeit it somewhat less impressively – while the two in combination are seen as essential stepping stones towards successful plan implementation. Besides, funding gaps, capacity constraints and contextual factors continue to affect ESP implementation. The ISE therefore recommends a 'package' of recommendations, which together are meant to strengthen ESP/TEP implementation.

> *1.1 Match progress in the quality of implementable plans with the quality of the process*

GPE has made demonstrable progress in improving the technical quality of plans (i.e. meeting at least five of the seven quality criteria), including a significant improvement in the achievability of plans. On this aspect, GPE outperforms its other country-level ambitions, but apparently this is insufficient to ascertain successful ESP implementation, which remains to be challenged by a variety of internal and external factors. This does not mean that the ISE argues against the need of having a good plan, but it recommends placing a strengthened emphasis on the process-related requirements that can be expected to facilitate effective plan implementation. In practice, this means elevating the 'achievability' criterion to be treated as crucial precondition, and reinforcing/accelerating the ongoing EPR efforts in realizing more inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring processes at the country level.

> *1.2 Reduce the funding gaps by adapting the ESP content and process.*

ESPs are sector-wide national plans reflecting a wide range of education needs as identified by inclusive LEGs. The important GPE achievement of creating better sector plans deserves continuation, albeit with a stronger eye for fund mobilization. This could be helped by ensuring that future ESP/TEP documents are encouraged to include a more deliberate identification of funding priorities. This in the expectation that it will help DCPs and the LEGs to mobilize resources when being more specific about the issues to be funded first. More clearly identifying funding priorities will also facilitate connecting to donors that have more specific funding interests.

Most ESP/TEP development processes are not strongly linked to national budgetary processes, while relations with Ministries of Finance are important but generally weak. In theory, the sector plan development process goes through a few iterations with the Ministry of Finance to arrive at a plan that is fully funded, although in practice this appears to be challenging. As a result, ESP/TEPs are treated more as a requirement for ESPIG funding than a government-owned national education plan. Therefore, to strengthen linkages with national budgetary processes and increase attention to domestic resource mobilization, the ISE recommends that the Board should encourage and enable LEGs – with the help of the Secretariat – to intensify engagement with Ministries of Finance (and possibly other relevant

ministries) and more deliberately seek connection with the government's own policy and budgetary processes. Such engagement could include strategic dialogue around taxation and revenue collection, austerity, public sector wage bills, etc. (i.e. focusing more on public financial management aspects in DCPs that directly affect the level of resources available to education).

In this context, LEGs and the Secretariat will need to be encouraged to continue strengthening the credibility of appeals for more domestic or international funding by demonstrating the effective and efficient use of funds. The ISE therefore recommends continuing ongoing efforts to strengthen GPE's ability to measure value-for-money convincingly and capture this in GPE's corporate results framework (e.g. by identifying trends over time of VfM for selected investment cases) with the deliberate purpose of resource mobilization.

N.B. Even though the effects of the Covid 19 crises are beyond the scope of the ISE, we consider it appropriate to flag the importance of carefully monitoring the likely effects of this (health and economic) crisis on the funding situation of GPE. These effects may include reduced overall level of available ODA resources, a shift of resources in support of health care systems, or changing funding needs in support of distant learning systems, etc.

1.3 Strengthen national and sub-national implementation capacity.

In most countries, GPE focuses on formulating national education plans in which capacity constraints are identified and reflected in different ways but often insufficiently addressed and funded, in particular at the sub-national level. The ISE therefore recommends that the Board – with the help of the Secretariat – deliberately stimulates the inclusion of a more systematic capacity assessment approach as part of the ESA process, not by imposing such an assessment but rather by providing suggestions and guidance in the use of well-established partnership capacity assessment models.[225]

At the same time, we recommend that GPE should stay alert to capacity constraints that may emerge or become apparent during implementation. In line with this, we suggest introducing, testing and optimizing more flexible and varied mechanisms to provide TA support in response to emerging capacity constraints. Similar to other global funds, this can be supported by creating an implementation support fund, as well as by the Secretariat playing a more pro-active role in connecting GPE members that can help each other in addressing capacity constraints by exchanging knowledge, expertise and experience.

1.4 Adopt lessons to better adapt to the complexity of the institutional context.

A range of contextual factors beyond GPE's control influence progress in ESP/TEP implementation. The ISE recommends regularly adapting — starting in the current strategy development process — the overall ToC to provide experience-based guidance in identifying and managing the effects of contextual factors in ESP/TEP development. This can be further supported by including a political economy analysis as part of the ESA process, as well as by having categories of such factors recognized in GPE's corporate ToC. For instance, in practice this could mean that in cases where the involvement of multiple ministries complicates ESP/TEP implementation, plans are adapted by including action to facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation or developing sub-sector plans that better fit the institutional setting.

GPE supports ESP/TEP implementation in over 70 countries, which places GPE in the unique position to capture and share experiences with such mitigating adaptations if the Secretariat – and in particular the CST and R&P team – are tasked to include this as part of their monitoring and support efforts.

2. Strengthen the effectiveness of LEGs as inclusive government-led mechanisms adding value throughout the education policy cycle (to be initiated in the first year of the post-2020 strategy).

Varieties in national contexts explain differences in the shaping, mandate and subsequent performance of LEGs. The ISE therefore recommends continuing the EPR process to strengthen LEG effectiveness, starting from a country-specific reconfirmation of the mandate and ambition of the LEG to a periodic self-assessment of its performance.

[225] E.g. GIZ's Capacity works model or ECDPM's 5C framework.

2.1 Reconfirm country-specific mandates and ambitions of LEGs based on the prevailing political economy including the existing 'social contract'.[226]

The GPE regards LEGs as government-led, inclusive in-country mechanisms to add value throughout the education policy cycle. The shaping and functioning of LEGs is adapted to the country context, which is understandable and useful if their essence of being a relevant inclusive coordination and advisory mechanism for better (basic) education systems is secured. The Secretariat has identified and communicated a number of LEG principles, which in combination would help LEGs in delivering on their functions. Besides, more actor-specific features like the leverage, capacity and motivation of LEG members have proved to hold relevance. Given the multitude and complexity of factors influencing LEG performance, the ISE recommends a more systematic country-specific approach to optimize LEG effectiveness. In this respect, we recommend undertaking a political economy analysis inclusive of the roles and responsibilities of sector stakeholders as part of the ESA process (guided as needed by the Secretariat), in which the existing 'social contract' is mapped out, along with the prevalence of LEG principles and key features of the (potential) LEG members. Based on this analysis, the country-specific mandate and ambitions of the LEG can be reconfirmed, taking into account the context and existing coordination mechanisms in the education sector.

[226] A social contract refers to the tradition of dialogue between government and civil society, including the existence of dialogue mechanisms.

2.2 Assess and address LEG (member) capacity

It is clear that establishing a LEG does not automatically translate into its effective functioning. The ISE therefore recommends that upon reconfirmation of the LEG's mandate, the LEG should assess and address its main performance challenges in meeting this mandate, which are likely to be a combination of resources, capacity and motivation. Particular attention in this should be paid to the LEGs' capability to adapt (ability to deal with changing circumstances), connect (ability to engage and draw in other key partners) and contribute in the design, implementation, and evaluation of system-wide education reform.

2.3 Stimulate regular self-assessment and improvement of LEG performance

The Secretariat has already introduced a self-assessment guide for LEGs to facilitate them in reviewing their own collective performance. The ISE supports this initiative as a regular (annual) exercise, in which LEGs (as needed with Secretariat support) first address their *joint accountability for results (i.e. what results have been achieved together) and second their mutual accountability (i.e. member contributions to those results).* Ideally, such a periodic participatory review would also include an update of the political economy analysis, resulting in an action plan with clear priorities for improvement.

2.4 Allocate resources to in-country partnership development and facilitation.

The ISE sees a reinvigoration of efforts to strengthen in-country partnerships as an important precondition for strengthening LEG effectiveness. Such efforts would be country-specific and could include strengthening LEG capacity in negotiating for domestic and international funding (in line with GPE's advocacy for domestic resource mobilization), or the capacity of individual members to take part in and effectively contribute to policy dialogue or monitoring. However, all such efforts require resources for their implementation. In part, these resources are already available through the Education Out Loud fund, the pilot to finance CAs, and the program development grant. These resources could be combined in a dedicated in-country partnership development fund (with country allocations) offering more flexible funding at the country level. These funds would be under the purview of a GA, to be called upon by the LEG as a whole, and they possibly could also cover secretarial support arrangements (for example, housed within the government or the CA).

3. Sharpen the positioning of GPE and its financing, emphasizing support for enabling factors for effective ESP implementation.

The GPE is widely recognized as the leading entity in supporting the development of quality education sector plans that meet globally-accepted standards. However, when it comes to supporting overall education sector development in GPE partner countries, GPE funding

plays a moderate role (GPE constitutes an average of 5.6 percent of total education-related ODA commitments in GPE partner countries, and as much as 11.8 percent of ODA committed support for the basic education sub-sector). At the same time, the international education aid architecture has become increasingly complex with newly-emerging initiatives and funding channels. The ISE therefore recommends a more strategic positioning of GPE and its financing to more clearly articulate its added value to the sector and guide its financing priorities at the country level.

In line with this, and given the limited resources available to the GPE in comparison with overall funding needs, the ISE believes that GPE funding can add more value by being strategically selective rather than by co-financing a small portion of education sector plan implementation. The ISE therefore recommends prioritizing GPE funding more strategically on improving critical systemic conditions necessary for a government to effectively design, fund, manage, and implement education sector policies and plans. Accordingly, GPE would secure a more aligned and complementary position vis-à-vis other existing and emerging education funding channels, and support partner countries in bridging the gap between different types of funding modalities and types of assistance. More specifically, this would entail the following:

3.1 More deliberately position GPE vis-à-vis other (emerging) funds in the education sector (as part of the ongoing strategy development process).

GPE should clearly position itself to complement the support provided through other global education funds; for instance, by extending the emergency type of support provided by Education Cannot Wait and increase support towards enhancing system resilience in partner countries (especially in low-income countries and FCACs). Alternatively, support in lower-middle-income countries could be specifically directed to further strengthen and build accountability systems and governance processes, which would be critical elements for the graduation of funding modalities (i.e. from smaller grants to larger loans with more favorable low interest rates; for instance, facilitated through the future IFFEd), available to partner countries in their quest to access and mobilize more resources for education sector development. By filling the gap between emergency support, system reconstruction, system strengthening, and increased sector accountability, the GPE can play a bridging role between various available funding mechanisms and channels available to partner countries.

3.2 Identify bottlenecks and barriers to change during the ESA process (to be initiated as part of new ESA processes under the post-2020 strategy).

The ESA is the basis for ESP development and ultimately ESPIG application. The ESA should include an analysis of the institutional and system-level context/ enabling environment in which the sector plan is to be implemented. This analysis would identify system bottlenecks and barriers to change, and distinguish pre-conditions for effective ESP implementation (including sector accountability needs and EMIS development and operationalization) from education needs.

Based on this analysis and prioritization of the identified strengths and weaknesses, quick wins can be identified for accelerated financing, and a portion of the maximum country allocation can be directed to finance system-level improvements in parallel with ESP/TEP development. This has the added advantage of reducing the time between ESA and actual funding, which helps in maintaining commitment to the overall process among country actors. Furthermore, embedding such a provision could also enable mobilizing and fast-tracking support for emerging TA needs and supporting periodic country-level monitoring processes as proposed under recommendation 2.

3.3 Prioritize (part of) GPE funding for removing system barriers in support of effective ESP implementation (as part of the ongoing strategy development process).

It is recommended to concentrate (part of) available GPE funding on addressing system bottlenecks for ESP implementation, as well as helping to build core strategic functions of the Ministry of Education. Critical elements necessary for education policy formulation and effective sector plan implementation include national and sub-national planning capacity, policy development capacity (incl. policy research, M&E), public

financial management systems (incl. sectoral budgeting, expenditure management, procurement), governance and accountability processes, and national teaching force capacity.

3.4 Prioritize thematic areas for GPE support before selecting a grant agent (to be initiated as part of new ESA processes under the post-2020 strategy).

The ESP/TEP development process should be completed by a process of prioritization, in which LEGs jointly agree on the priority education needs and challenges to be addressed through a GPE grant application, keeping in mind the strategic focus of the GPE. Following this prioritization, it should be determined which grant agent has the most natural fit with this thematic area and is therefore best positioned to add value and support the partner country by overseeing the grant process, while respecting the prioritization of the partnership as a whole.

4. Improve and complement conceptual frameworks with utility-focused management tools and learning processes.

Following the 2015 interim evaluation, GPE has introduced a strategic management framework comprising a ToC and corporate RF, which have helped GPE in becoming clearer and more accountable for their ambitions and results. The ISE believes that these efforts should be taken further under the post-2020 strategy, drawing upon the success and lessons of the past. This leads to the following more specific recommendations:

4.1 Adapt the corporate ToC to reflect lessons from the past strategy period (as part of the post-2020 strategy development process).

The existing global ToC was GPE's first. It presents a clear and relatively straightforward logic from GPE's global efforts to improved learning outcomes and equity in education, which have served the purpose of communicating GPE's ambition and approach. Nevertheless, internal reviews and external evaluations – including this ISE – have revealed scope for further improvement that would do more justice to the complexity of GPE's work and could help in making the ToC more useful as a management tool. As such, the ISE recommends adapting the corporate ToC, taking into account the following insights gained over the past years:

- Distinguish planning from implementation, whereby implementation represents a higher results level to which inclusive monitoring and financing also contribute.
- Fill the apparent gap in GPE's causal logic between inclusive planning and implementation by referring to changes in capacity and motivation driving the behavioral change of key actors.[227]
- Similarly add a results level related to public service delivery, making it easier to measure progress from system improvement (goal 3) to learning outcomes and equity (goals 1 and 2).
- Recognize and distinguish GPE's spheres of control, influence and concern to better articulate what GPE itself is accountable for and what it aims to contribute to, as this determines the nature of remedial action that GPE can take. In particular, we recommend clearly articulating the government branch that leads the LEG, which is then by definition part of GPE (as opposed to other government branches that may not be part of the LEG and within GPE's sphere of influence).
- Be more explicit about where the different GPE constituencies fit in, which can help in sharpening mutual accountability frameworks.
- Incorporate assumptions related to known relevant contextual factors and how the effects of these factors will be mitigated or monitored to enable integrating better risk management in programmatic oversight.

4.2 Develop a more complex-aware RF aligned with a revised ToC (immediately after finalizing the post-2020 strategy).

Although the existing RF of the GPE 2020 strategy has enabled significant progress in GPE's accountability for results, important results are not sufficiently captured by the framework. These primarily concern qualitative results like the quality of cooperation at the country level, the quality and performance of grant agents, progress in mutual accountability and progress in ESP/TEP implementation, which are not easily measured by pre-set SMART indicators. To better capture these more complex qualitative results, the ISE recommends that the

[227] In line with the COM-B ToC model as introduced by Mayne, J., 2016.

Board tasks the Secretariat with developing an adapted RF that better captures the complexity of GPE's work. This can be achieved by introducing more complex-aware M&E methods like outcome mapping/harvesting, which would lead to a combination of behavior-oriented progress markers to measure changes in capacities and motivation, with a (reduced) number of key indicators. Obviously, a revision of the RF has to follow and be aligned with the revised ToC.

4.3 Ensure that GPE's (gender) equality ambitions are integrated at the operational levels of the corporate ToC and RF (as part of the post-2020 strategy development process).

At present, GPE's gender equality policy is reflected in a separate strategy document and its intended outcome and output-level results are not included and measured as integrated part of GPE's RF. This separation does not help the implementation of the gender strategy as part of GPE's core strategy. The ISE therefore recommends that the Board considers any 'equality' related strategy as an integrated part of its new post-2020 strategy. Following this, we would recommend integrating relevant (gender) equality results at the outcome and output level in the RF to ensure that progress towards these results is tracked and reported upon as part of GPE's core results.

4.4 Strengthen joint learning processes at the global and country level (to be initiated in the first year of the post-2020 strategy).

GPE's M&E strategy aims at stimulating learning and improved performance across the partnership as one of its three purposes. Improved performance requires new insights to be translated into practice, although many of the valuable M&E insights have not (yet) been translated into action due to time constraints or because this was not deliberately aimed for. The ISE therefore recommends that a future M&E strategy is more explicit about the specific learning purpose of its diverse M&E interventions. In addition, it is suggested to agree upon a more deliberate periodic reflection and learning process at both the global and country level to ensure that the benefits of GPE's extensive M&E efforts are fully utilized throughout the partnership.

For such learning processes to be effective, a deliberate prioritized learning agenda needs to be set, reflecting the learning interests of the targeted 'learners' and audience. The available M&E results — as reflected in the annual results reports, the CLE synthesis report and this ISE report — provide ample information to set such a prioritized agenda.

Finally, the ISE recommends that the Board treats learning results as core element of GPE's achievement, which means incorporating learning results in terms of changed practices and procedures in the corporate RF.

5. Implications for the Board and Secretariat to improve Organizational Effectiveness.

In the ToC, GPE primarily pursues organizational effectiveness under the global objective of building a stronger partnership on which GPE has overachieved according to its own targets. At the same time, it is recognized that these targets do not sufficiently cover the qualitative aspects of the partnership's cooperation and performance, and hence scope for improved partnership management arrangements remains. Organizational effectiveness is largely determined by the combined performance of the Board, its sub-committees, the LEGs and the Secretariat, which are the means towards development effectiveness. These final ISE recommendations are therefore phrased as 'implications for the Board and Secretariat' to illustrate that we consider these as means to enable the successful implementation of the earlier-mentioned recommendations.

5.1 Implications for the Board (to be initiated as part of the upcoming governance review and ongoing post-2020 strategy development process).

The ISE recommends that the Board concentrates more deliberately on the 'what' and 'why' of GPE, empowering the Secretariat to take charge of and report on the 'how'. This implies among others that the Board should formulate and approve GPE's strategy — including the ToC — sets GPE's ambition level in terms of inclusiveness, determine country allocations, and only be involved in the approval of large higher-risk grants

that hold strategic importance to the GPE. Furthermore, this would imply a continuation of the already-initiated process of delegating grant approval to the GPC and the Secretariat, with the aim of gradually freeing up time in the GPC to reflect on grant performance rather than grant approval.

This also means that the Board's involvement in revising the RF is focused on the formulation of key performance questions that this framework needs to help answer. In addition, the Board would have to use emerging M&E information to prioritize GPE's learning needs in the shape of a periodic (annual) learning agenda. Besides, the Board would empower the Secretariat to ensure the accelerated implementation of the EPR and GPSP and similar interventions, which address many of the operational challenges that the GPE is facing.

As part of the upcoming governance review, the ISE also recommends that the Board reviews the costs and benefits of having five standing committees that have rather different and fluctuating workloads but all regularly meet and require frequent Secretariat support. Following this, the Board may conclude that a different combination of standing committees and ad-hoc working groups is advisable. In this, it remains important that competent constituent representatives address emerging issues of strategic importance, advised and supported by Secretariat staff as needed.

5.2 Implications for the Secretariat (to be initiated as part of the upcoming governance review process).

In the light of the Secretariat's current thinking about organizational reform, the ISE recommends explicitly reconfirming the centrality of supporting in-country grant management and partnership facilitation processes as the Secretariat's primary process, with all other processes in support of or overseeing this. In line with this, we recommend that the Secretariat recognizes the distinct system and competency requirements of its fund management (e.g. financial administration, risk and compliance) and partnership facilitation functions (e.g. country support, partnership management, governance) and organizes itself accordingly. In addition, we suggest developing and managing separate work streams for mobilizing new partners and optimizing the contribution of existing ones. Finally, we recommend that the Secretariat prioritizes *utility over specificity* in developing its guidelines and support, allowing more time and space for adaptations at the country level.

The ISE realizes that these proposed implications are more about adapting practices and behavior than about procedures. Such adaptations start from deliberate decisions but require a carefully-designed and facilitated internal transition process to have a good chance of success.


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