Ministerial Communique
on GPE's Institutional Arrangements
Paris, January 16, 2023

Background

We, the Ministers of Education representing partner countries on the GPE Board of Directors, met in Paris on January 16, 2023, within the context of ongoing recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, a contracting global economy, food and energy shortages, supply chain disruptions, rising debt burdens and a worsening climate crisis. These overlapping crises continue to exacerbate quality teaching and learning losses for the children in the close to 90 GPE partner countries we represent.

This communique responds to the Board's request for partner countries to articulate our future aspirations and desired capabilities for GPE to continue rendering the much-valued support for our education sectors. In the spirit of collectively finding a way forward that responds to the strategic imperatives facing both GPE and the education sector, this document reflects our discussions as well as responses from 47 partner countries to a survey sent to all GPE partner countries following our December Board meeting.

For some time, we have called on GPE to be more ambitious and to support our efforts to deliver on the transformation of our education systems by mobilizing partnerships and investments behind our priority reforms. The strength of GPE comes from its emphasis on the ownership and centrality of partner countries and the recognition that the transformation of a country's education system is only possible through strong country leadership. The GPE Charter further promotes these principles of country ownership, mutual accountability and transparency across the partnership at global, national, and local levels.

As we collectively work to guarantee the right to quality education and seek support from the international community to deliver on our commitments, we recognize the importance of the decision currently before the GPE Board of Directors to consider the optimal path forward for GPE. We would also like to express our appreciation for the role the World Bank has played in GPE's growth since its inception and recognize the importance of a good relationship with the World Bank moving forward.

Key Messages

Given the pressing global challenges our countries continue to face, it is imperative that we transform education at scale. We renew the call we made in our Ministerial Communique on the occasion of the Transforming Education Pre-Summit for the Global Partnership for Education:

To transform education at scale to accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century;

To catalyze more resources for education in ways that support increased pathways for countries to invest in education;

To improve aid efficiency, harmonization and alignment behind our systems and national priorities and commitments for transformation, and to address key bottlenecks to progress in education;

To strengthen and diversify partnerships that support context-specific solutions particularly to address the adverse impacts of climate change and protect education in conflict and crises, including improving our capacity to deliver digital learning, especially for the most marginalized children.

We believe that education financing must be prioritized within the global aid architecture. The current education aid architecture needs to evolve to recognize the central role of partner countries to own and deliver education transformation. GPE plays a unique role in helping convene all partners and mobilize resources to align with country priorities and systems. The global education architecture should reflect this country led reality and the urgent need to confront the multiple crises facing partner countries in a coordinated and efficient manner. GPE must accordingly adapt to be fit for purpose.

We believe GPE must embody mutual trust, respect, and ensure an equitable balance of power, and have the following key capabilities:

1. A fully autonomous Board of Directors for GPE with final decision-making authority over GPE's strategic vision, direction, funding, partnerships, and programs, to drive more efficiency, maximize value for money, and reduce conflicts of interest, so the voices and intentions of partner countries can translate into actions;
2. Greater in-country flexibility and use of funding in alignment with country policy priorities to strengthen country systems and ownership of the design and implementation of evidence-based programs, including the ability for governments to hold grant agents accountable;
3. A form of direct access guided by the appropriate fiduciary and operational safeguards and policies scaled by country capacity and that makes more strategic and cost-efficient use of GPE's model to enhance transparency, implementation speed and impact. This should be an added option while continuing to maintain the choice of the grant agent approach;
4. The freedom to enter into agreements and partnerships that can be customized to meet partner country needs. For example, GPE would benefit from a more robust hedging solution to safeguard pledges made to GPE, to protect the value of country allocations, and improve the predictability and value of GPE investments.

Conclusion

We believe for GPE to meet these aspirations and adapt to future changes in the global education architecture, the next strategic plan should further center on partner country delivery of education transformation and incorporate these capabilities. GPE will need to have institutional arrangements that are more flexible.

We recommend that GPE takes a strategic approach to these issues and develop a plan that will allow these capabilities to be achieved and phased in over a suitable period of time, that balances the risks of a challenging global context with a recognition that this same context compels the need for a bold and innovative response.