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CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH EDUCATION



As part of a safety drill exercise, students explain a hazard map to their peers, indicating various escape routes or safe places to go to within the school compound in Phalombe District, Malawi.

GPE/Trans.Lieu

Extreme climate events and environmental degradation negatively affect children's well-being and their ability to learn, but education is largely absent from the climate policy agenda. Investing in education is the missing link to tackling climate change and transitioning to greener societies. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) harnesses the power of education for climate action through grants, technical assistance and climate partnerships to finance climate-smart education systems that reinforce school resilience and develop students' green skills.

THE CHALLENGE

- Global estimates suggest that extreme weather events lead to roughly **US$4 billion in annual losses** to education. Still, education receives only a marginal share of global climate finance (often less than 1%), highlighting a persistent mismatch between the rising costs of climate impacts on learning and the limited investment in climate-smart education systems.
- Extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods and heat waves are increasing in frequency and strength, threatening children's lives. In 2024 alone, at least **242 million children had their education disrupted** by extreme climate events.
- Climate-related shocks have severe impacts on **equity**. For children who are the most vulnerable—those living in contexts impacted by fragility and conflict, girls and children with disabilities—**extreme climate events** multiply the risks that they will never receive or never return to a quality education.

GPE RESULTS

$2.5 BILLION SAVED since 2021 by partner countries in potential damages thanks to GPE investments in climate-smart schools.

$584 MILLION invested (as of 2024) through grants to support climate mitigation and adaptation measures in partner countries. Since 2021, the grant portfolio focus on climate has more than doubled.

$21 MILLION toward the Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative (CSESI).

EDUCATION AND CLIMATE ACTION

Education gives people the knowledge and tools they need to adapt to the impacts of climate change and the risks it poses. Education can also be a powerful driver for more sustainable development, including a transition to greener societies.

GPE Transforming Education

MULTIPLY POSSIBILITY FUND EDUCATION

For all sources visit https://www.globalpartnership.org/data.

- Quality education dramatically reduces deaths from weather-related disasters. Girls' education in particular has been shown to be the most important socioeconomic factor that reduces country vulnerability to climate-driven disasters.
- Quality education can drive behavior change toward more sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods, empowering citizens to demand faster action from governments and businesses on the climate agenda.
- Inclusive basic and secondary education is essential for developing a workforce that can adapt to climate change and transition to a low carbon economy.
- Education systems typically account for the public sector's largest workforce and network of facilities. Low-carbon, resilient infrastructure and practices that preserve the environment can save lives and livelihoods and reduce schools' carbon footprint.

GPE APPROACH

To address the catastrophic consequences of climate events to education, GPE focuses on: increasing grant support for climate resilience, avoiding economic losses due to climate events, providing technical assistance at scale and leveraging climate investments in education. GPE financing supports climate-smart education systems through analysis, planning and capacity development centered on country **preparedness**, **response and recovery** and **sustained investment**.

- GPE's **framework for climate-smart education systems** provides governments with strategies and practices to include climate risk in education planning, increase capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts and support greener, more ecologically conscious societies.
- **The Climate Smart Education Systems Initiative (CSESI)**, a collaboration between GPE, Save the Children and UNESCO, provides technical assistance to education ministries to mainstream climate change and environmental sustainability into education sector policy, plans and budgets, increase education-climate sector coordination and access joint financing. CSESI supports 35 partner countries and territories.
- A joint initiative between GPE, the Green Climate Fund and Save the Children, **Building Resilience of Children and Communities through the Education Sector (BRACE)** provides an unprecedented $47-million investment to build climate-smart schools where they are needed the most including in Cambodia, South Sudan and Tonga.
- GPE developed a practical policy reflection and dialogue tool—**Educators at the Heart of Greening Education: A Climate Resilience Toolkit for Policymakers**—in collaboration with Education International and UNICEF as co-chairs of Pillar 3 of the UNESCO-hosted Greening Education Partnership.
- The **GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)** has set up **regional observatories on education systems resilience** to develop shared country practices for climate disruptions by generating research and evidence. Observatories are active across hubs in Africa (KIX Africa 19 and 21), Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific (KIX EMAP), and Latin America and the Caribbean (KIX LAC).

MALAWI

A GPE partner country since 2009, Malawi is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries where recurrent floods, droughts and cyclones disrupt schooling, damage infrastructure and exacerbate inequalities in how girls and boys access education. Through CSESI, Malawi is making its education system climate smart by linking national policy to local action based on climate risk analysis and a combined education-climate strategy that includes financing. CSESI has also supported the creation of school-level standard operating procedures covering disaster preparedness, safe evacuation and education continuity. Evacuation drills allow schools to test readiness, refine procedures and build confidence among students and teachers. Lessons on climate change and disaster risk reduction are now part of teacher training so that students learn practical skills to respond to climate events. For students like Kondwani, these changes are already personal: "I am not worried about disasters anymore because I know how to stay safe."