GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

Aide Memoire
Ministerial Advisory Group
March 2020

Background

The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) convened an audioconference call on March 12, 2020 and thereafter continued the discussion on the urgency of the learning crisis, made more acute in recent weeks by the global spread of COVID-19 that has critically strained education systems and government response capacities. With over 87% of enrolled learners in 165 countries affected by school closures, the Global Partnership for Education's Strategic Plan is now even more important than ever, and the aspiration and sense of urgency for the Strategic Plan contained in the Nairobi Board decisions even more relevant. The MAG wishes to express its appreciation for the ongoing leadership of Minister Thiam, Vice-Chair of the Board of the Global Partnership for Education, beginning with the meeting of the MAG in Dakar on November 2, 2019 until the present. This aide memoire highlights the key messages of the MAG to the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education in its consideration of the Strategic Plan.

Key Messages

Real Progress Requires a Paradigm Change

We reaffirm our call to the Global Partnership for Education to break from business as usual, be proactive, with a bold and ambitious vision to transform education. This transformation needs to ensure education is inclusive, fair, data- and evidence-driven, and delivers a quality learning experience, especially for girls and the most marginalized. We endorse the call from Developing Country Partner Focal Points at their meeting in Paris, on February 19-21, 2020, for an ambitious Strategic Plan that leaves no-one behind, focuses on gender equality, and creates the conditions necessary to transform education systems to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Strengthening Government-Led Systems is Core to Transformation

We reaffirm the critical role that the Global Partnership for Education plays in strengthening national education systems and governments' ability to deliver quality learning. We renew our call for the Partnership to focus its efforts on achieving system-wide impact to improve outcomes in equity, efficiency and learning at the country level. In order to make progress against the learning crisis, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Partnership must leverage its collective resources and knowledge in support of a country's own national education plans, reinforcing and strengthening national systems and capacities. Transformative, resilient and sustainable education systems are essential for national development.

The learning crisis and the teaching crisis are inseparable. In this regard, the new Strategic Plan should focus on supporting national policies and reforms to recruit qualified teachers, and to train and support them in classrooms, including with assessment of performance.

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An Increased Focus on Mutual Accountability is Key

The Global Partnership for Education is a significant global fund. Its value as an education donor is matched with being a dynamic partnership, bringing together partners in policy dialogue, and able to promote and support better alignment of technical and financial resources with national systems. However, we are concerned with the unbalanced nature of the Partnership, including heavy requirements placed on Developing Country Partner governments, who are in turn unable to hold donor partners, Grant Agents, and Coordinating Agents accountable. We urge the Partnership to accelerate the implementation of the Effective Partnership Rollout recommendations and, indeed, we urge that the new plan to go further, particularly in strengthening mutual accountability.

We call for strengthening government ownership, coordination, and coherence of country-level interventions that are more responsive to the domestic realities we face as Ministers. We believe that it is the Developing Country Partners who ultimately communicate the value proposition of the Partnership envisioned in the new Strategic Plan.

A Differentiated Incentives-based Approach Will Achieve Greater Impact

In line with the bold and aspirational vision for the Partnership, and in recognition that enhanced country-level ownership is critical to the Global Partnership for Education, we urge the Partnership to be groundbreaking in finding and scaling solutions that address common education challenges facing developing country partners. This would include promoting innovative external financing solutions, leveraging domestic financing and promoting cross-sector solutions to achieve better education outcomes that address the needs of the whole child, and especially of girls. We envision a more differentiated and sophisticated approach to GPE funding that takes country contexts into account, that is lighter and combines incentives and support for reform minded leadership. Such an approach will be vital in the years to come as we confront the impact of the pandemic or other exogenous shocks.

As Ministers of Education, we affirm that working with and being supported by the Global Partnership for Education is crucial as we face unprecedented challenges in our countries. We are committed to playing an active leadership role in the Partnership and we stand ready to support the development and realization of an ambitious strategic plan for the Global Partnership for Education.

Meeting Record

1. **Quorum** (The participant list is included as Appendix 1)

   - There was quorum for this meeting.

2. **Meeting Objectives**

   - The meeting objectives are included in the meeting agenda, (see Appendix 2).

The Global Partnership for Education held the first meeting of its Ministerial Advisory Group in Dakar on November 2, 2019. The meeting opened with a discussion on country education priorities and what it meant to be part of GPE. Key points:

- **The importance of political will and national aspiration**, and working across sectors, and with families and the community to ensure no one is left behind; the need to address exclusion from school due to poverty, gender, geography, disability; the challenges of improving the quality of education; the importance of mother tongue education and anchoring education in national culture, identity and values. The importance of strengthening education governance, decentralization and delegating power to local authorities for better management of education.
- **Role of GPE as an advocate and partner for education globally and at national levels**, especially in addressing issues of equity, and galvanizing support for education from Heads of State.
- **The critical and complementary financial contribution of GPE to supporting reforms** and investments in basic education – given that most domestic financing supports recurrent costs and salaries; the need for continued advocacy for all external financing to be aligned behind government plans; positive experience of GPE's results-based financing; desire for GPE to work flexibly, given different country contexts.
- **The importance of focusing on teachers and teaching** including looking at the challenges of teacher motivation, teacher training, and addressing teaching disruptions and disturbances in schools.
- **Desire for knowledge exchange** and facilitation of technical discussions and sharing of experiences, including between Ministers.
- **The need to look at education holistically**, including the importance of going beyond academic skills – literacy, numeracy, digital literacy to include soft skills, or 21st century skills, attitudes and values.

In response to a discussion on GPE's next strategic plan, Ministers noted the following:

- A desire for greater ambition and more audacious goals.
- The importance of local leadership and local solutions, including supporting private sector engagement at national level.
- Support for the proposed shifts and greater flexibility – to respond to changing social, political and economic dynamics.
- A desire for more GPE presence at country level, to support national dialogue.
- The need to think about youth and migration and education's contribution to employment, peace and mitigating climate change.
- Address the teaching crisis.
- The need to build on past plans and address common issues across the Partnership – e.g. education in local languages.

This retreat marked an important turning point for GPE and once more emphasized the importance of the commitment from the ministers of developing countries. As this was their very first meeting, Minister Thiam suggested that thought be given to **the specific role that this advisory group should play moving forward** and to the following questions**: What does GPE membership mean** for the education ministers who occupy six seats at its Board of Directors? What should **their role, influence, and impact within the partnership be?**

The responses to these questions facilitated the identification of the broad lines of action that should guide the partnership's next strategic plan, and the following observations were derived:

- The most important role of the Group is to advocate individually and collectively the Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG4) regarding education in the context of their countries.
- The second important role is to better prepare the ministers to participate in the discussions of the GPE Board of Directors by actively contributing to the items on its agenda.
- While the GPE is embarking on its fourth Financing Conference, ambitious goals and results have been set to surpass those identified at the Dakar Conference.
- In this regard, it was planned that the ministers visit donor countries during the second half of 2020 in order to meet with policymakers, including members of parliament.

- It was agreed that the group has enough legitimacy to make valuable contributions to the main issues covered in the new strategic plan.

- It should therefore play a fundamental role on the initial discussions of the strategic plan and strongly defend the notions of inclusion and equity, as well as the need for a transformational approach to education based on country contexts (aligned with Shift # 1 of the strategic plan presentation).

- It was also agreed that the group should actively participate in the validation of the main issues covered in the strategic plan while avoiding delving into its details. In this regard,
    - The participants agreed that quality – inclusion – access and gender equity should be the areas of emphasis in discussions related to the next strategic plan;
    - The Group stressed the need to share experiences related to the notions of ambition and innovation based on country needs (aligned with Shift # 4 Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)), of the strategic plan presentation);
    - It was agreed that the ministers share and expand the analyzes and consultations to include the other ministers of their respective constituencies.

In conclusion, the first meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Group held in Dakar proposes the drafting of a memorandum as discussions take place and that this document be presented to the Board at its next meeting in December in Nairobi.

Next steps

- Share with Ministers absent from the Retreat, a brief summary report of the meeting
- Present to the Board in December the aide memoire developed during the meeting
- In the margins of the Board meeting in Nairobi, organize a dinner with the other country partners members and use that opportunity to discuss the ideas put forth at the Retreat. This will ensure that a consensus is reached on the official responses to be provided regarding the topics on the Board's agenda.
- The Secretariat to propose potential dates for a half-day meeting, organized around international events such as the UNESCO Conference or the United Nations General Assembly. It should also be noted that the Minister Rodrigues from Nicaragua has generously offered to host the next Ministerial Advisory Group meeting in Nicaragua.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm

Appendix 1: Participants in the Retreat



Ministerial Advisory Group – Retreat of November 2, 2019 - Dakar	
Constituency	**Member**
Chair	Minister Serigne Mbaye Thiam
Africa 1	H.E. Prof. Paul Mavima - Zimbabwe
Africa 2	H.E. Mr. Temore Tioulenta - Mali H.E. Mr. Mamadou Talla - Senegal
Africa 3	H.E. Mr. Deng Hoc Yai - South Sudan H.E. Mr. Alpha Osman Timbo - Sierra Leone
Eastern Europe, Middle East and Central Asia	H.E. Mr. Mohammad Mirwais Balkhi - Afghanistan
Latin America and the Caribbean	H.E. Ms. Miriam Soledad Raudez Rodriguez
GPE Chair of the Governance and Ethics Committee (GEC)	H.E. Mr. Nesmy Manigat
Secretariat Participants	
Alice Albright	Chief Executive Officer
Jo Bourne	Chief Technical Officer
Sinead Andersen	Global Advocacy Lead
Gisele Goudiaby	Operation Analyst & Special Assistant to the Board Vice Chair

Appendix 2 – Agenda

Time	**Item**	**Presenter**
8:30 a.m.- 8:50 a.m. **20 min.**	Welcome and introductions Objectives of the Ministerial Advisory Group	Minister Thiam
8:50 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. **10 min.**	Presentation of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and its contribution to the education sector	Alice Albright
9:00 a.m.-10:15 a.m. **1h 15 min.**	Open discussion: What does GPE membership mean and what steps should be taken to solve the global learning crisis?	Minister Thiam
10:15 a.m. -10:30 a.m. **15 min.**	Coffee Break	
10:30 a.m. -12:45 p.m. **2h 15 min.**	A unique opportunity to achieve results more quickly Initial discussions on the next GPE strategic plan	Minister Thiam Alice Albright/Jo Bourne
12:45 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. **1 hour**	Working lunch	
1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. **30 min.**	Memorandum from the Ministerial Advisory Group for presentation to the GPE Board	Minister Thiam
2:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **30 min.**	The role of the DCP Ministerial Advisory Group as a GPE champion	Minister Thiam
2:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. **30 min.**	GPE replenishment campaign	Alice Albright
3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. **15 min.**	Coffee Break	
3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. **30 min.**	Adoption of the Memorandum and Next Steps	Minister Thiam
4:00 p.m.	End of retreat	