GPE Transforming Education

COORDINATING AGENCIES

Working Together for Effective Partnership

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GPE PARTNER?

SUMMARY

As conveners and facilitators of partnership, coordinating agencies play a critical role in delivering on GPE's vision, mission, goals and objectives.

Coordinating agencies provide an essential service to GPE partner countries. This can strengthen the coordinating agency's relationship with the government partner and position the agency as an influential local education group partner. It can also make these relationships more complex.

Clear information on roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, objectives and processes is necessary for coordinating agencies to do their job effectively and to manage expectations from governments, other local education group partners and the GPE Secretariat. Coordinating agencies should set up effective feedback loops within their own agencies, and with the government partner, local education group and GPE Secretariat to ensure effective and timely problem-solving, as well as to help GPE to be a learning partnership.

What is a Coordinating Agency?

The term 'coordinating agency' is used by GPE to refer to country-level partners who support the government with the coordination of education sector policy dialogue. Usually appointed through an agreed, country-specific mechanism, coordinating agencies support governments in coordinating the government-led local education group. They are also often the elected chair of the development partners group in countries where this exists.

Coordinating agencies play a vital role as facilitators of harmonized policy dialogue by acting as a communication link between government partners and other local education group members, as well as between the local education group and the GPE Secretariat. By mobilizing and including partners from different stakeholder groups, coordinating agencies help build broad and inclusive partnership around education.

The Role Played by Coordinating Agencies in GPE's Country-Level Work

As a multi-stakeholder partnership, GPE is built on mutual accountability. Since partners contribute to the education sector in different ways, effective dialogue is an important foundation for coordination and complementarity, and through these, for optimal use of resources to deliver results. The relationships and communication between partners should be built on clarity, transparency and a shared vision for education sector progress and priorities.

It is therefore important to have a government-led sector dialogue mechanism to ensure effective and efficient collaboration. Coordinating agencies can help governments mobilize and lead sector coordination groups, referred to as local education groups.

By supporting governments to convene partners, coordinating agencies play a vital role to help ensure that education plans and reform agendas are built on evidence and have a broad base of agreement and support. This can involve liaising with different partners and supporting the participation of key stakeholders in sector dialogue, including civil society representatives. In this manner, coordinating agencies help fulfill core principles of GPE, with a specific focus on ensuring inclusive dialogue, promoting country ownership and enabling mutual accountability.

Coordinating agencies also have a range of responsibilities around GPE grant processes. It is critical for coordinating agencies to have a robust understanding not just of the steps and requirements of grant processes, but of the broader intended impact of these, including: improved harmonization and alignment of development aid; mobilization of stakeholders around evidence-based sector plans to improve equity and education quality; and coordinated partner support to governments to strengthen capacity. When well informed, coordinating agencies can provide critical perspectives on how to best achieve these impacts in the country where they work, while ensuring that the transactions around GPE grant processes are aligned and add value to the broader policy dialogue.

Coordinating Agency Accountabilities

In 2019, GPE's Board of Directors adopted an 'Accountability Matrix' to clarify what is expected from different GPE stakeholders to enable the partnership to achieve its vision and goals.

Coordinating agencies play a pivotal role in promoting mutual accountability relative to the GPE Charter in three key areas:

01

Sector coordination

Build relationships and transparency between development partners and the government to aid alignment, analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring

02

GPE grants and related work

Aid in the selection of grant agents and provide technical support towards meeting GPE requirements, navigating GPE application processes, and providing ad hoc support to the GPE Secretariat to engage with the host country government and other partners

03

Communication

Support the government to report on progress of education sector plan implementation, joint sector reviews and key GPE results framework indicators to the Board through the Secretariat

Coordinating agencies are accountable as partners to the government and local education group members. Their accountabilities include:

For the partnership –

- Support governments through harmonized policy dialogue
- Facilitate inclusive sector coordination and local education group collaboration
- Lead development partners in development and analysis support, independent appraisal, endorsement, implementation and joint monitoring of sector plans and reforms
- Facilitate communication between government and development partners, and between development partners and the Secretariat
- Oversee conflict resolution when necessary

For GPE grants –

- Support a transparent grant agent selection process
- Support process to define appropriate implementation methods and scoping of grant programs
- Facilitate local education group consultation and grant application process
- Facilitate local education group updates on progress with GPE grants to help ensure GPE grant implementation complements other actions and is aligned to sector plans and policies

The Coordinating Agency Role in Practice

Although GPE's grants are often in focus at country level, the grant processes are meant to have an impact beyond the funding. GPE processes should lead to:

- Strengthened data and analysis
- Gender-responsive education sector plans and policies
- Sufficient and equitable domestic education financing
- Addressing underfunded priorities such as gender equality
- Capacity building for strengthened education systems
- Effective, harmonized and inclusive policy dialogue and aligned donor support
- Learning and adaptation for the achievement of results

All of these areas have a particular focus on vulnerable and marginalized populations.

The work of a coordinating agency can be resource intensive and transaction heavy. Currently, GPE does not provide financial support for the role. The GPE grant preparation phase is particularly time-consuming. It requires the coordinating agency to regularly convene with the government, the grant agent, development partners and the Secretariat for negotiations, problem-solving and endorsements.

High expectations and complex instructions on GPE processes — which change as GPE evolves as a partnership — can make it difficult to maintain open communication lines and a positive dynamic between country- level partners. In cases where the coordinating agency is requested to approach the government on behalf of the partnership to discuss sensitive issues such as domestic financing, it can inadvertently have a negative impact on the bilateral relationship.

However, there are also opportunities associated with the coordinating agency role. Coordinating agencies hold a leadership role in sector development and can guide relationships and outcomes. A robust understanding of the intent behind, and desired outcomes of, GPE processes can allow coordinating agencies to drive appropriate adaptations to contexts. GPE needs well-informed, critical partners to continually work towards greater effectiveness. To support the development of a more effective partnership, coordinating agencies can use their own agency's feedback loops to highlight where transaction costs are unreasonable relative to the value delivered, or where the GPE operating model leads to unintended negative consequences.

Coordinating agencies can also leverage their influence, role and relationships to promote clarity on how roles within the local education group are defined, including what is needed from the GPE Secretariat to best support the country. This can help avoid duplication and confusion.

Coordinating agencies can support the government to use the local education group self-assessment tools and guidance to help contribute towards effective collaboration. They can also request support from the Secretariat for the facilitation of related discussions.

Rotating the coordinating agency role builds understanding among partners of the demands on the role and enables peer support. While there is no global standard on rotation or term duration for coordinating agencies, many countries work with a two-year rotation, sometimes

using an arrangement under which three partners act as the coordinating agency lead on a rotating basis (outgoing, current and incoming lead). The coordinating agency arrangement needs to be agreed in each context within the broader framework for sector coordination.

You can find information about GPE's engagement in a country by selecting the country on the 'Where we work' section of the GPE website. You will be able to see the Secretariat contact person and which partner holds the coordinating agency role. You will also find a copy of the country's education sector plan, as well as documents for GPE grants.

TESTIMONIALS

GPE's recommendations for developing education sector plans are really useful because they allow the effective identification of the main needs of the sector. In particular, the fact that all the partners participate in the development of this plan alongside the government allows for a harmonized approach of support and complementarity.

Laurent Cortese

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RESOURCES

Country-Level Guide: Recommended Education Sector and GPE Grants Processes

Principles Toward Effective Local Education Groups

LEG Self-Assessment and Performance Feedback Tools

Terms of Reference for GPE Secretariat's Country-Level Role

Terms of Reference for Coordinating Agencies

Terms of Reference for Education Sector Plan Development Grants (ESPDG) Grant Agents

Terms of Reference for Education Sector Plan Implementation Grants (ESPIG) Grant Agents

Standard Selection Process for Grant Agents

Guidelines for ESPDGs

Guidelines for ESPIGs

Multiplier ESPIG Grant Application Guidelines

ESPIG Policy

Conflict Resolution Procedures

Policy and Communications Protocol on Misuse of GPE Trust Funds

Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)

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