GPE Transforming Education

GOVERNMENT/ MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Working Together for Effective Partnership

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GPE PARTNER?

SUMMARY

Partner country governments play a critical role in the Global Partnership for Education, both at global level through representation in the constituency-based Board and at country level as the primary policy makers and funders of education systems.

GPE emphasizes the importance of government leadership and inclusive, consultative policy dialogue. Coordinated efforts among all stakeholders will help to meaningfully transform education and provide all children with a quality education.

While GPE's grant funds can be of great value to partner countries, the latter can achieve even greater impact if the partnership aspect of GPE is effectively leveraged.

How Partner Countries Engage in GPE

Partner country governments, through ministries of education, are at the core of GPE's country-level work. They are the primary policy makers and funders of their education systems. A robust understanding of GPE and its processes can help partner governments achieve impact beyond what is delivered through GPE funding.

GPE partners generally understand GPE as a fund that contributes grant funding to education sector plan development and implementation.

However, how GPE – as a partnership – seeks to contribute to education sector development beyond the grants is not always well understood. Government partners who have a good understanding of the partnership aspect of GPE as well as GPE's processes and mechanisms have used their engagement with GPE to strengthen overall sector collaboration, resource mobilization and implementation.

GPE is different from other education donors in that it is governed by a constituency-based, multi-stakeholder Board of Directors, with constituencies including different categories of partners – including donors, multilateral agencies, civil society partners, representatives of the teaching profession, private sector and foundations, and partner countries (sometimes described as developing country partners, or DCPs). There are six region-based partner country constituencies and each selects a Board member and an alternate Board member, with members changing on a rotational basis. Board and alternate Board members are usually ministers of education or other high-level government education officials. If well informed and well prepared, these Board members have a unique opportunity to influence and guide.

GPE to address the needs and ambitions of partner countries. They can promote strategic discussions at Board level to drive the global agenda and ensure GPE processes and grants are fit for purpose to deliver GPE's strategic goals and objectives.

To enable the partner country constituencies to function as forums of dialogue, consultation and consensus-building, ministers of education appoint a government focal point for GPE (DCP focal point). DCP focal points serve as the official liaison between the ministry of education and the GPE Secretariat. DCP focal points represent their ministers in partner country constituency meetings, which serve two purposes: (1) to consult on proposed Board decisions and policies and agree on input provided to their Board members; and (2) to share experiences and lessons learned from GPE-related country-level processes and more importantly, from education sector policies and strategies. DCP focal points have a critical role in connecting GPE governance with its country-level work. In order to play this role effectively, they need to be able to dedicate time and have the level of authority to address GPE matters on behalf of the minister or ministry of education.

GPE's constituency structure is of significant value to partner countries. A dynamic dialogue environment has developed over the years and has helped build relationships and opportunities for learning between countries. You can find out here whether your country is represented in a GPE constituency and if so, which constituency as well as who your Board and alternate Board members are. You can also find out more about representation in GPE's Board committees.

How GPE Supports Partner Countries to Develop Stronger Education Systems

GPE recognizes that fragmented, projectized education development aid is inefficient. It can be transaction heavy for ministries of education to meet with each partner separately, to meet different requirements, organize separate monitoring of activities, and to report on implementation through many different formats. In addition, externally driven projects do not necessarily align with sector priorities and often set up duplicative management structures that do not strengthen the capacity of the education system. GPE's approach can help improve partner countries' collaboration with donors and partners and secure better alignment with national priorities for more sustainable impact.

GPE therefore seeks to incentivize and support harmonized policy dialogue and aligned donor support. It does so in multiple ways, including by requiring that GPE grants are discussed and agreed within a government-led coordination structure, or local education group. Moreover, GPE requires that its grants finance implementation of strategies and activities within government-owned sector plans developed through evidence and inclusive planning processes; that its grants should preferably be implemented through aligned modalities; and that monitoring of GPE grants be integrated within broader sector monitoring. These approaches are complemented by advocacy for more effective aid and monitoring through the GPE results framework. In these ways, GPE grants are meant to help trigger or reinforce government-run sector planning cycles.

To optimize harmonization and alignment, local education groups should engage in all stages of the education planning cycle, bringing together bilateral partners, multilateral organizations, teacher organizations, civil society, and private sector partners and foundations engaged in the education sector. From GPE's perspective, the local education group is accountable to the children and youth of the country and local education group members mutually accountable to one another.

Because the local education group is central to GPE's effectiveness, GPE provides tools, guidance and evidence to support the group's effectiveness, and seeks to provide information on good practices that can be shared between countries.

Tools and guidance are meant to be discussed and adapted to the structures, capacities and collaboration dynamics of partner countries. The Secretariat's country focal points, or 'country team leads', are available to advise and provide guidance.

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. Coordinating agencies can play a vital role in supporting country partners as facilitators of harmonized policy dialogue, acting as a communication link between ministry of education and other local education group members and between the local education group and the GPE Secretariat.

GPE's grant funding is a tangible way to support the development of stronger education systems. Because of its financial agreement with the World Bank as the Trustee of the GPE Fund, GPE is not able to give grants directly to governments but must deliver the grants via a grant agent. Grant agents are selected by the government through an open and transparent process, laid out in GPE's grant agent selection guidelines. Their selection is endorsed by the local education group. Grant agents must work closely with government and other partners to ensure that grant-funded programs are well designed and aligned with overall education sector plans, policies and systems.

Before considering options for who the best grant agent might be, the government and partners should discuss a scope of work for the grant program, as well as preferred implementation modalities to ensure optimal system strengthening. The grant agent that is best able to deliver on that scope of work with a preferred modality should be selected for the role. This means grant agent selection should be informed by consideration of the potential grant agents' capacity to use appropriately aligned and harmonized delivery modalities, their ability to support capacity building to deliver on the preferred scope of work, and their ability to provide relevant technical support.

Partner Country 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.

The GPE Compact set out in the GPE Charter links harmonized and more aligned donor support for education to GPE partner countries' policy performance and accountability for results. Governments provide the vast majority of education sector resources and have the primary responsibility for delivering quality education services to their citizens. Countries that benefit from GPE grants are also accountable to the GPE Board and local education group members. Their accountabilities include:

For the partnership -

- Facilitate a sector coordination mechanism to promote inclusive policy dialogue
- Set aside sufficient financial resources for education
- Develop, implement and monitor results-based education plans
- Facilitate collection and sharing of data to improve learning outcomes

For GPE grants -

- Manage GPE resources as per GPE policies and grant agent policies
- Implement grant activities in accordance with approved programs
- Facilitate the work of grant agents as they deploy resources towards education sector programs

The Partner Country 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.

Governments in need of education funding can find it difficult to say no to externally financed projects, even if these are not clearly linked to their own sector strategies and priorities. An evidence-based sector plan can help governments better ensure that support from partners contributes to advancing national education sector objectives. Likewise, an effective local education group can support governments to ensure a coherent approach to investments in the education sector.

Working collaboratively with a broad set of partners can also help bring together a comprehensive base of evidence, knowledge and ideas to ensure sector policies and strategies are well planned and address key challenges. This can also help in the mobilization of both financial and technical support for implementation.

Collaboration with civil society organizations and other partners that work at decentralized levels of the system can also be helpful in monitoring implementation and promoting accountability for the effective and efficient use of resources, as well as in identifying the need for course correction when strategies are not working as they should.

The above are some of the reasons why GPE grant funding involves requirements and processes that bring local education groups together around sector analysis, planning and monitoring. Nevertheless, these processes are time consuming and can be challenging. An understanding of the intended value of GPE requirements and processes can help government and local education group partners integrate GPE processes in ongoing policy dialogue in a way that contributes to the overall policy agenda and sector progress without excessive transaction costs.

For example, GPE's focus on domestic financing can provide opportunities to improve financing data, strengthen collaboration with the ministry of finance, and leverage additional budget resources for the education sector. Processes to identify strategies and indicators for GPE results-based financing, if included in broader sector dialogue, can help identify sector bottlenecks and determine strategies to address these. In addition, the required local education group consultations can bring partners together in contexts where this would not otherwise happen regularly.

Lack of capacity to handle voluminous requirements for GPE in addition to those of other international development partners, as well as a heavy load of other duties, can weigh heavily on ministries of education. If GPE processes do not

lead to more harmonized and aligned support, they can become burdensome instead of adding value. While GPE seeks to reduce transaction costs and ensure processes and requirements are better adapted to contexts, partner countries should use the feedback loops available through their Board members, DCP focal points, coordinating agencies, grant agents and the GPE Secretariat to highlight problem areas and needs for improvement. In this way, partner countries can help GPE improve and learn.

TESTIMONIALS

GPE brings together partnership, and brings together dialogue and support around sector strategy. There has been better alignment in the support that has been provided by partners. GPE has taught the lesson that we are not to leave out anyone in the policy dialogue. And I believe, too, that the technical advice that those groups bring are equally as important – or sometimes even more important – than the financial support that is being given by partners and others.

Marcellus Albertin

Head, Education Reform Unit OECS – Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

TESTIMONIALS

The trademark of GPE and the fact of giving impetus to this movement that aims to bring together local actors in education, particularly civil society, in a permanent dialogue for education, is quite appropriate.

Nesmy Manigat

Chair of the Governance and Ethics Committee, GPE

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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