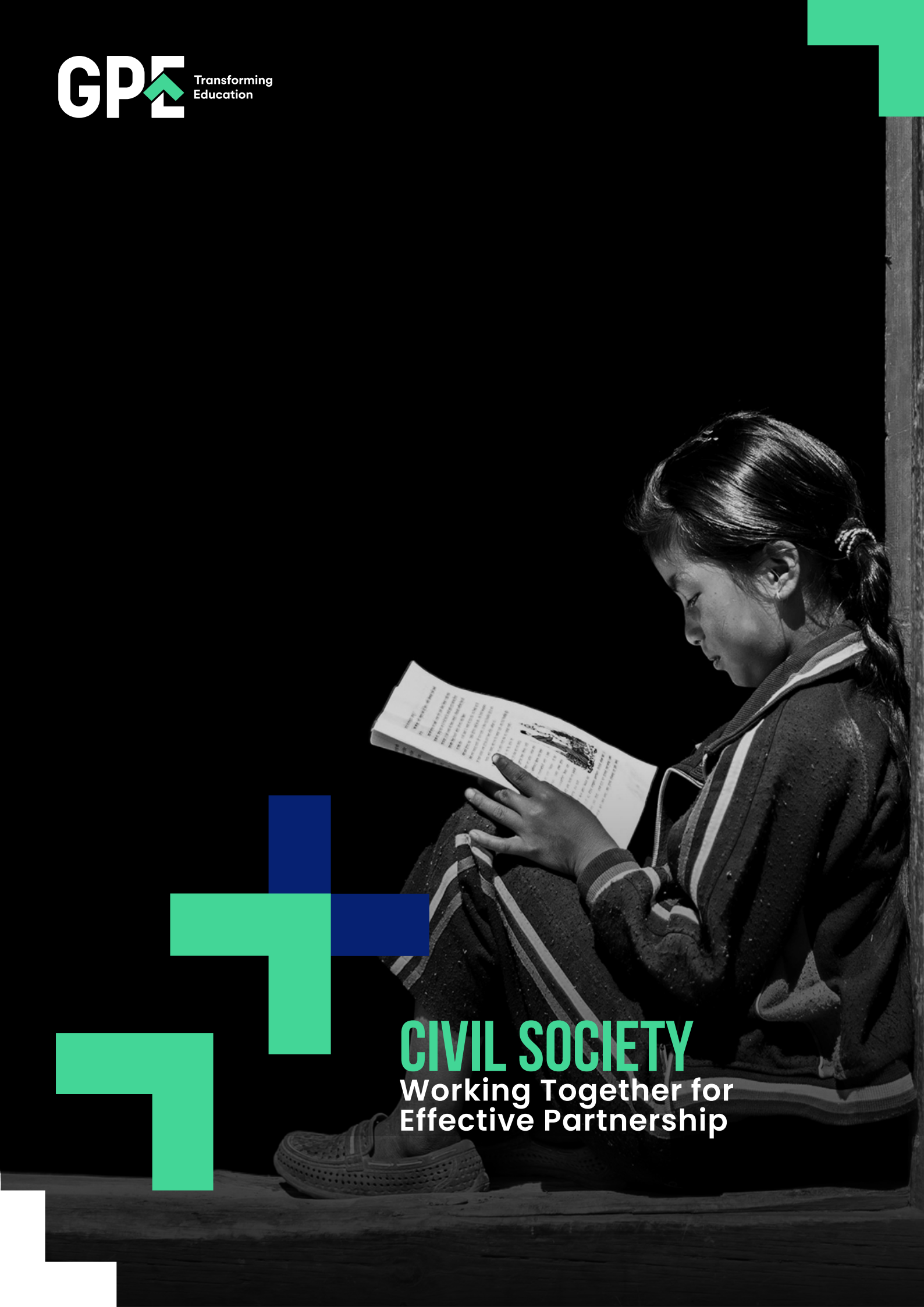
GPE Transforming Education



CIVIL SOCIETY

Working Together for Effective Partnership

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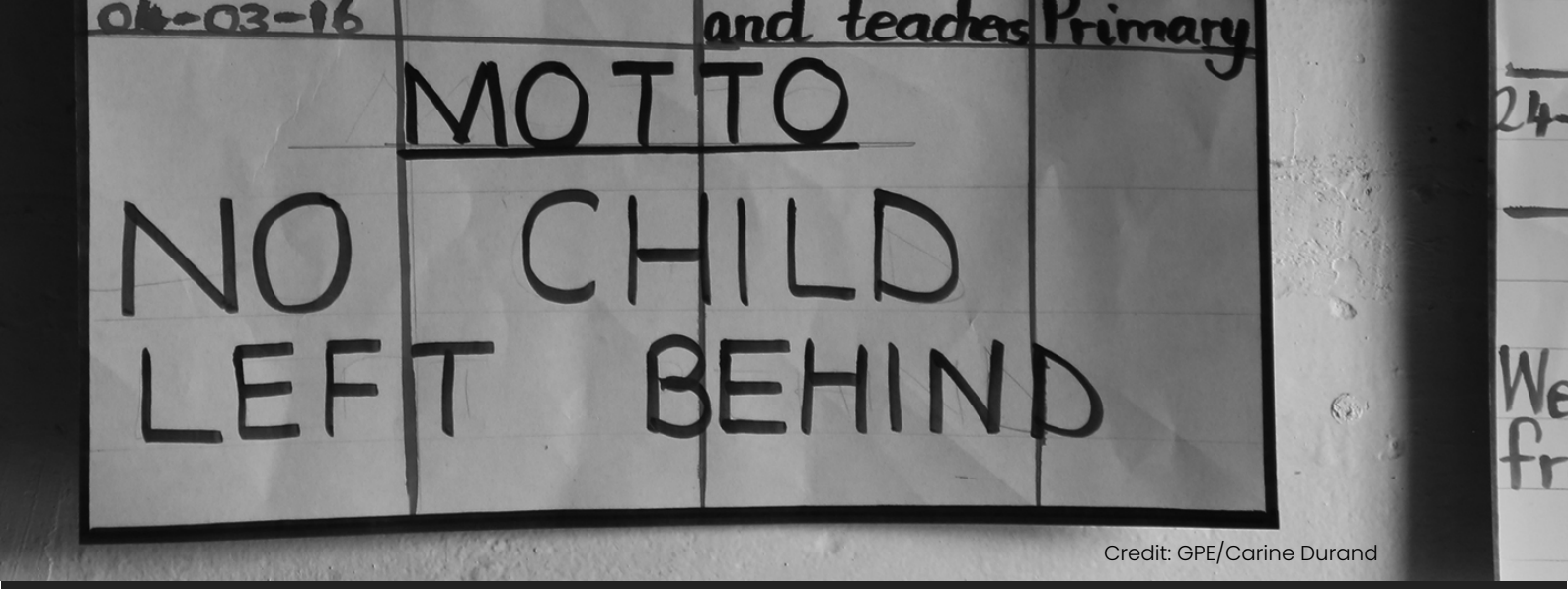
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Credit (this page): UNICEF Burundi/Colfs

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNER IN GPE?



Credit: GPE/Kelley Lynch



Credit: GPE/Carine Durand

SUMMARY

Civil society plays a pivotal role in the achievement of GPE's goals and objectives. Civil society partners engage at global and country level to make GPE a stronger, better, and more inclusive partnership.

GPE seeks to mobilize partners to act on the belief that inclusive collaboration is the most effective means of achieving development results. In partner countries, GPE seeks to ensure meaningful inclusion of civil society organization (CSO) representatives in local education groups. CSOs have an important role to play in bringing the voice of marginalized and excluded groups into policy dialogue. This is a critical element of GPE's aim to leave no child behind.

The space for CSOs to engage in policy dialogue varies from context to context. This means that strategies for enabling CSO participation in local education groups need to be context sensitive. GPE promotes and monitors the inclusion of CSOs in local education groups and provides funding to strengthen civil society.



Credit: GPE/Midastouch

How Civil Society Contributes to an Effective Partnership

Civil society plays a pivotal role in the achievement of GPE's goals and objectives. GPE's vision of a quality education for every child, underpinned by the principle of education as a public good and human right and with a focus on gender equality, inclusion, mutual accountability and transparency, aligns closely with what CSO education partners are working towards.

GPE seeks to mobilize partners to act on the belief that inclusive collaboration is the most effective means of achieving development results. Civil society partners engage at global and country level to make GPE a stronger, better and more inclusive partnership. At the global level, CSOs work closely with the GPE Secretariat on advocacy and resource mobilization. They participate in 'building' GPE by weighing in on GPE strategies, policies and grant decisions through GPE's governance structures.

CSO partners also play a critical role at the country level by engaging in policy dialogue in local education groups and by providing technical assistance and programmatic support to promote learning, experience sharing, advocacy and accountability.

GPE is governed by a constituency-based, multi-stakeholder Board of Directors, including three constituencies representing civil society (global south, global north, and the teaching profession). Each constituency selects a Board member and an alternate Board member, who serve on a rotational basis. CSO constituencies also nominate members to GPE's various governance committees.

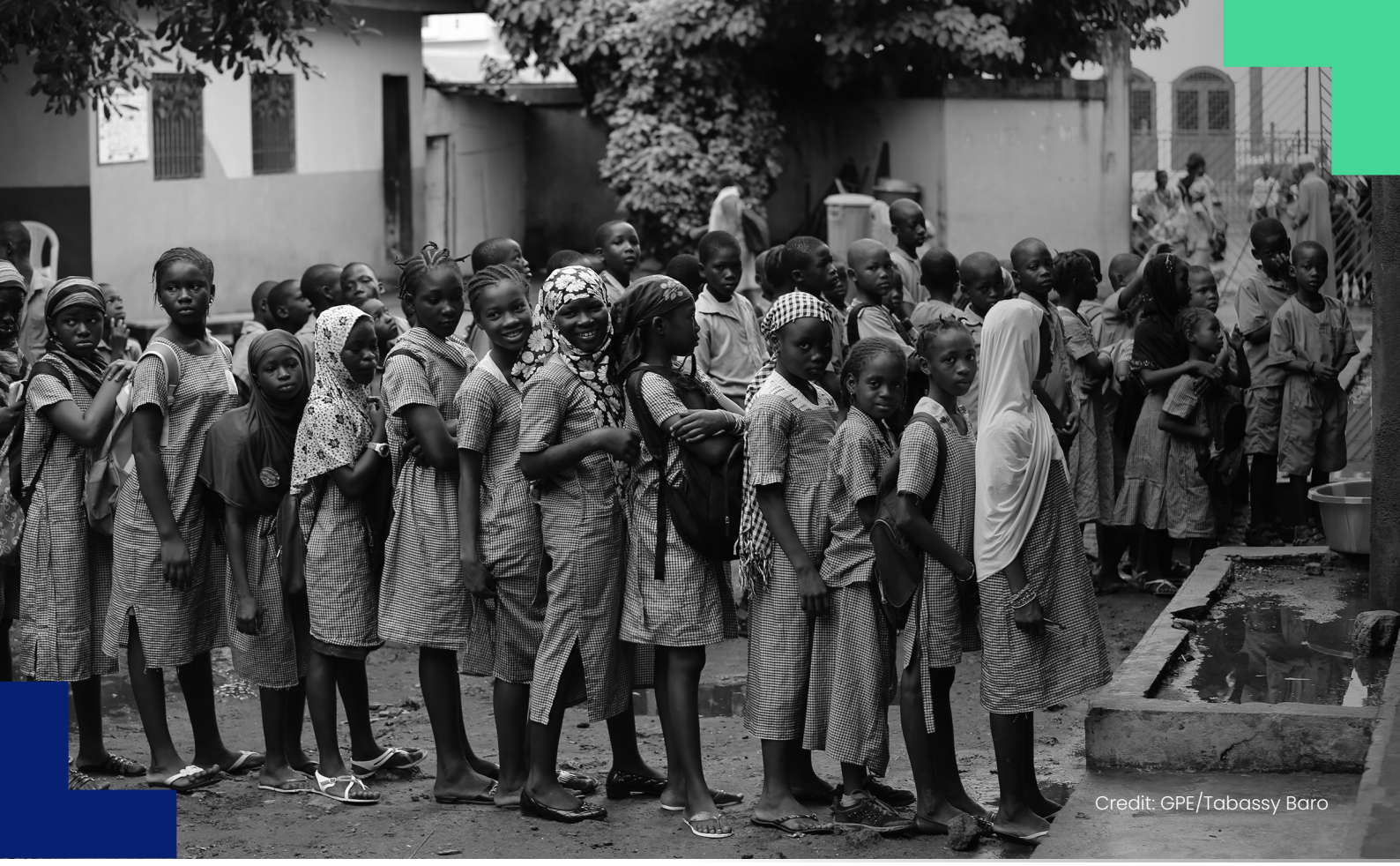


CSO representatives on GPE's Board and committees reach out to constituency members to consult on proposed Board decisions and policies and agree on inputs to GPE governance structures. You can find out here who the civil society Board and alternate Board members are. You can also find out more about representation in GPE's Board committees.

CSO constituencies represent a large and diverse set of stakeholders, which can make it challenging to ensure that consultation is inclusive and effective. For CSOs to be well represented in GPE, it is important to have structures that enable effective representation and engagement.

At country level, GPE seeks to ensure meaningful inclusion of CSO representatives in local education groups. The inclusion of civil society partners in policy dialogue can help ministries of education bring together a broad base of evidence, knowledge and experience to ensure sector policies and strategies are well planned and address key challenges. CSOs have an important role to play in bringing the voice of marginalized and excluded groups into policy dialogue. This is a critical element of GPE's aim to leave no child behind.

The space for CSOs to engage in policy dialogue varies from context to context. This means that strategies for enabling CSO participation in local education groups need to be context sensitive. GPE promotes and monitors the inclusion of CSOs in local education groups, but when CSOs are included in order to fill a GPE requirement this does not necessarily mean that inclusion is meaningful and effective. It is important to open the door to CSO participation in local education groups, and to support consistent participation that builds trust and meaningful participation over time.


Credit: GPE/Tabassy Baro

The Role Played by Civil Society in GPE's Country-Level Work

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 role CSO partners play differs from context to context, depending on how CSOs and local education groups are organized and how open governments and other local education group partners are to civil society engagement.

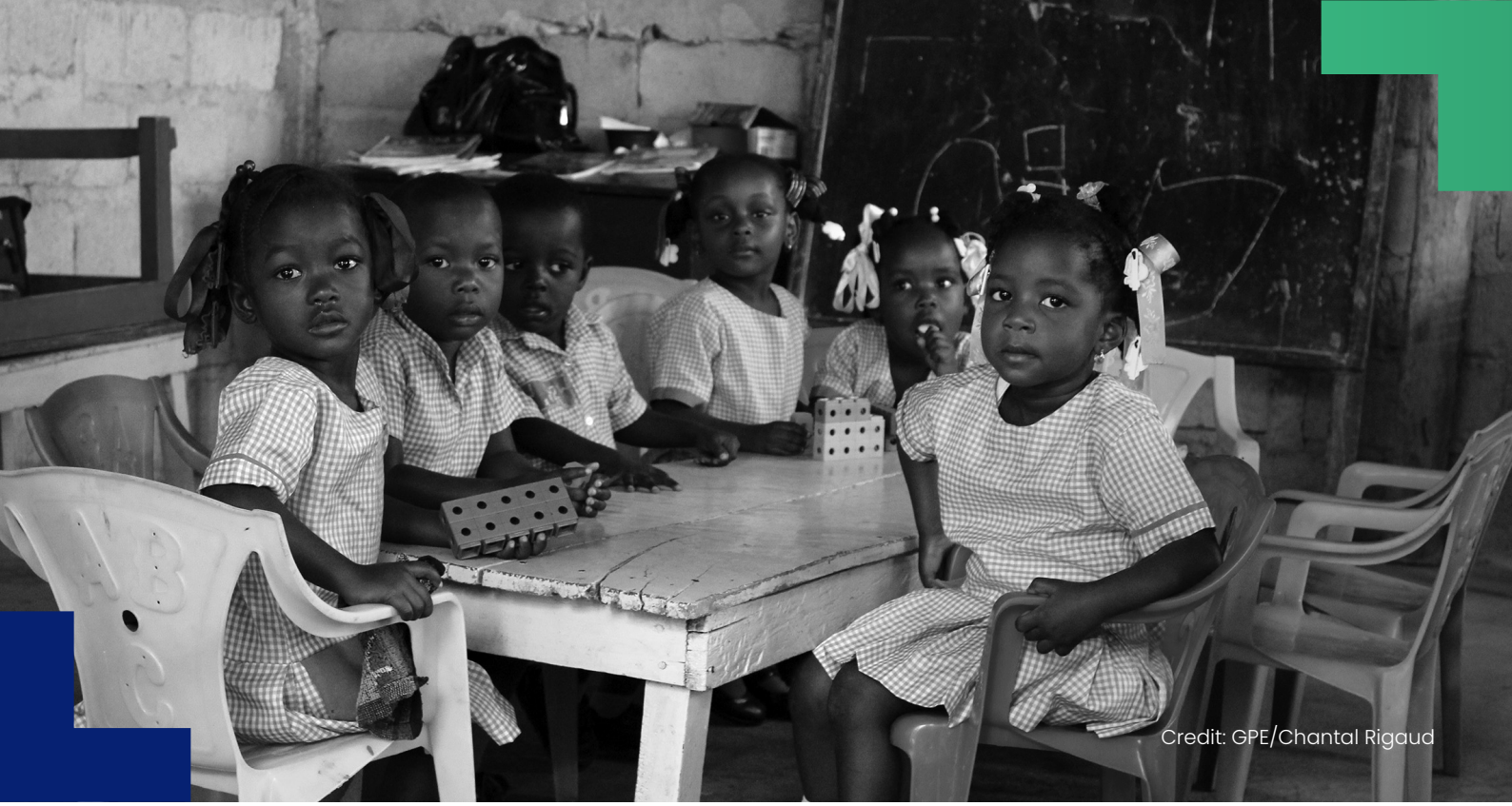
Through local education group representation, CSOs can be helpful in providing data, evidence and knowledge for the development of education sector policies and plans. They can also help monitor the implementation of education sector plans – both through participation in annual or biannual joint sector reviews and through their own monitoring mechanisms. Civil society roles can include promoting accountability for the effective, equitable and efficient use of resources, as well as advocating for sufficient domestic resources for education – a priority for GPE.



Credit: GPE/Chantal Rigaud

CSO participation in local education groups is best achieved through a representative, democratic structure. This enables CSO participants in the education group to draw on a wide range of knowledge and represent a broad base of interests and perspectives, both within and beyond the education sector. GPE has provided funding to CSOs to organize and build capacity since the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) was established in 2009. While this fund supported CSO coalitions established through the Global Campaign for Education, the more recent Education Out Loud fund has a broader reach.

CSOs also engage specifically in GPE grant processes including discussions on the scope of the grant and implementation modalities, the selection of a grant agent, reviewing and providing feedback on draft grant proposals, and engaging in discussions and updates on implementation. CSOs can give feedback to the government, grant agent or local education group if they have information on implementation issues. CSOs have ears and eyes on the ground and are well placed to capture how plans, programs and strategies are working and what might be done to improve their effectiveness.



Credit: GPE/Chantal Rigaud

Civil Society 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. These accountabilities were then added to the GPE Charter.

The Accountability Matrix recognizes that CSOs are accountable to the populations and constituencies they serve. As GPE partners committed to the partnership's aspirations, their key accountabilities include:

For the partnership -

- Support efforts to achieve SDG4 and SDG5 goals and objectives
- Provide support to sector analysis as well as development, implementation and monitoring of government-owned education sector plans
- Assist the government in mobilizing long-term financing
- Monitor overall alignment of financial and technical support to the education sector

For grants -

- Support GPE processes and principles in grant agent selection
- Aid in defining scope of grant programs, and processing and endorsing grant applications
- Contribute to monitor progress of GPE-financed programs

It is important to note that delivering on these accountabilities depends on the space provided by governments and other partners for CSOs to engage. Visit the other sections of this portal to see the accountabilities of these other stakeholders.



Credit: GPE/Sarah Beeching

Civil Society Engagement in Practice and How to Get Involved

There are various ways to connect with GPE processes in a specific country:

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.

If there is a coalition for education CSOs in the country, you can also enquire whether they are represented in the local education group or engaged in GPE, and discuss how you can get involved. CSOs from other development sectors such as health, nutrition, climate change and gender, are also encouraged to reach out to CSO education coalitions and engage with GPE.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) has a long-standing relationship with GPE. Its regional members and global Secretariat can be helpful in providing more information on how to engage with GPE. GCE plays a pivotal role in strengthening the capacity of its member coalitions and supporting their advocacy engagement in national and transnational policy spaces. They also promote youth engagement and work with young people.



Credit: GPE/Chantal Rigaud

Despite these resources, feedback from CSO partners suggests it can be difficult to find an effective path to engaging with the partnership. Access to local education groups, as highlighted earlier, depends on the conditions, arrangements and politics in each country. Linking with other CSOs and with coalitions is a good way to get started.

The GPE Secretariat as well as coordinating agencies have been helpful in promoting the access of CSOs to local education groups in many contexts. Some CSO partners have shared insights with the Secretariat on how they have been able to enhance their role through consistent participation in local education group meetings, relevant technical input to policy dialogue, and building trust with government partners over time.

A key challenge faced by civil society members involves finding the right balance between partnering with governments and holding them accountable to ensure equitable education services and increase domestic resources and ensure their effective and efficient use for education. Strategies and priorities must be context based, driven by CSOs themselves. The GPE Charter, strategy and principles can be helpful for guidance and advocacy.

CSOs do not represent a single agenda and do not necessarily have the same interests. It can be challenging to develop a CSO collaboration structure that is broad, representative and effective. It may be helpful to reach out to CSO partners in other GPE partner countries to see how these and other challenges have been tackled.

TESTIMONIALS

We know that without the Global Partnership for Education, it would have been difficult to have a multi-stakeholder dialogue mechanism. Today, this has become the case in most of the countries where GPE is active. Without GPE, the exchange of experiences that has made us true citizens of the world would not have been easy.

Cheikh Mbow

Executive Director,
COSYDEP
(Coalition of organizations working to defend public education)

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 Grant Agents - ESPIG

Education Out Loud

Planning Matters in Education: A Handbook for Civil Society Participation in National Education Sector Plan Activities and Processes

Learning Exchange Brief: A View From the Civil Society Education Fund's Engagement in Local Education Sector Planning Groups

Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education's Support for Civil Society Engagement: Final Report

Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)

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