

BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PARTNERS

Working Together for Effective Partnership

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GPE PARTNER?

SUMMARY

Bilateral and multilateral partners are critical to the Global Partnership for Education. GPE relies on this diverse group of partners for funding, governance, technical collaboration and support to sector coordination and grant delivery at country level. Bilateral and multilateral partners also provide essential financial and technical support to GPE partner countries through their own channels.

Bilateral and multilateral partners participate actively in guiding GPE's development through participation in GPE's Board and governance committees. As such, they are co-owners of GPE alongside other constituency groups.

In addition to financing education sector strategies and programs, GPE aims to leverage harmonized and aligned partner support to strengthen data and analysis, promote inclusive and evidence-based policy making, and consolidate efforts to build partner countries' capacity for strengthened education systems. The GPE Board has defined accountabilities around these partnership aspects of GPE as well as for grants. All GPE partners share the responsibility for enabling an effective partnership at country level.

How Bilateral and Multilateral Partners Contribute to an Effective Partnership

The goal and objectives agreed by GPE's Board can only be achieved through the joint efforts and commitments of partners. Although partner countries, coordinating agencies, grant agents and the GPE Secretariat have key roles to play, all partners share the responsibility for enabling an effective partnership.

GPE mobilizes partners to act on the belief that harmonized, inclusive collaboration is the most effective way to support countries in achieving a quality education for every child.

Bilateral and multilateral partners engage at global and country level to make GPE a stronger, better and more inclusive partnership. They participate in 'building' GPE by weighing in on GPE strategies, policies and grant decisions through representation in GPE's governance structures. Through participation in country-level coordination mechanisms, they support partner governments in the development, financing, implementation and monitoring of sector plans and policies.

Most bilateral and multilateral partners are represented in GPE's Board through a donor or multilateral constituency. Others, such as technical bilateral partners, are not directly represented but may have their government represented as a donor. You can find out here whether your organization 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.

The Role Played by Bilateral and Multilateral Partners 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 effect beyond the funding. GPE processes should lead to:

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

The roles bilateral and multilateral partners play differ from context to context, depending on how local education groups are organized. Bilateral and multilateral partners provide both funding and technical support to the development, implementation and monitoring of jointly agreed sector policies and strategies. In doing so, they support government leadership and contribute to building capacity for a strong, effective education system.

Bilateral and multilateral partners also engage in GPE grant processes including discussions on the scope of the grant, implementation modalities, the selection of a grant agent, reviewing and providing

feedback on grant proposals, and engaging in discussions and updates on implementation. Alongside other partners, bilateral and multilateral partners can give feedback to the government, grant agent and/or local education group if they have information on implementation issues. Some partners 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.

Both bilateral and multilateral partners can consider becoming a GPE grant agent. Please see the grant agent portal door for more information.

Bilateral and Multilateral Partner 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 accountabilities of bilateral and multilateral partners are defined under the 'development partner' category.

The Accountability Matrix recognizes that development partners 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 the government's efforts to achieve SDG 4 and SDG 5 goals and objectives
- Provide support to sector analysis and development, implementation and monitoring of government owned education sector plans, including through meaningful and effective support to address the complex challenge of delivering education services
- Endorse good quality education sector plans and align support to their implementation (endorsement is defined as 'offering public support')
- Assist the government in mobilizing long-term and predictable financing, inform the government about annual funding commitments and actual disbursements as well as indicative rolling expenditure plans
- Monitor and promote progress towards better harmonization and alignment of all 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 in the processing and endorsement of grant applications
- Contribute to monitoring progress of GPE-financed programs within broader education sector monitoring

Bilateral and Multilateral Engagement in Practice and How to Get Involved

Bilateral and multilateral partners play multiple roles in GPE as donors, decision makers in GPE's governance structures, local education group members, grant agents, coordinating agencies, and in the case of the World Bank, as GPE Trustee and host of the GPE Secretariat. It is important to distinguish between these roles and to be clear and consistent in communication and messaging across them. Likewise, the Secretariat seeks to manage these multi-faceted relationships in a way that is connected and optimizes collaboration.

Bilateral and Multilateral agencies join other GPE partners in setting strategic agendas at the highest level in GPE. It is therefore important that their representatives at country-level reinforce GPE messaging on principles and priorities and support the achievement of GPE's goals and objectives.

At country level, GPE is manifested in local education groups. While bilateral and multilateral partners are usually represented in the local education group through a technical lead, it is important that heads of agencies stay on top of developments and challenges and engage at key moments in sector level processes. For example, development partner country representatives or directors can play a key role in improving harmonization or alignment, promoting strengthened domestic financing commitments, or reiterating partner commitments and promoting continuity in sector reforms.

The GPE principle of mutual accountability means that all partners share the responsibility to help local education groups work effectively, including by promoting inclusive and harmonized policy dialogue, joint sector reviews and aligned sector support. Development partners at the country level have a share in the responsibility for raising concerns and offering solutions and support to get things on track.

Local education group composition varies in different countries, and so does the number and kinds of development partners represented. In some countries there are few development partners. On one hand this can enable partners to establish close working relationships, but on the other hand it can mean that development partners have limited collective capacity to contribute to policy dialogue. In countries with many development partners, dialogue can be more complex, increasing the reliance on an effective representation and coordination mechanism. GPE's [Principles Toward Effective Local Education Groups](#) can provide ideas and resources for strengthening group effectiveness.

Technical collaboration should strengthen national expertise. Bilateral and multilateral partners play a key role in building national capacity as well as in identifying and facilitating cross-national experience sharing. GPE partner country constituency meetings, communication mechanisms, and Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) can also provide opportunities for identifying relevant practices and knowledge to strengthen education systems. The GPE strategy for 2021-2025 aims to enable additional strategic partnerships, including cross-sectoral ones.

International bilateral or multilateral representatives in local education groups are not always education specialists, and some do not have in-country education staff. Some partners have one person covering several social sectors. This should not prevent or limit local education group engagement. National staff who are education specialists can engage in deeper technical

conversations. They often stay in their roles longer, know the context well, and can build institutional knowledge around education sector collaboration over time. International staff can play a complementary role. Their engagement is an important sign of commitment to the sector and to harmonized policy dialogue. In addition, people who cover more than one sector can be helpful in identifying relevant links between education policy and other sectors such as finance, health, water and sanitation, or nutrition.

You can find information about GPE's engagement in a country by clicking ['Where we work'](#) on GPE's website, then identify the country. You will be able to see which partner holds the coordinating agency role and who the Secretariat contact person for the country is. You will also find a copy of the country's education sector plan, as well as grant documents for GPE grants. This can help you identify the best entry point for connecting.



TESTIMONIALS

A key strength of GPE that matters to us is its inclusion of the most vulnerable at the center of education initiatives.

I think all partners recognize GPE's support is most effective when there's strong country ownership, and strong flexibility, and adaptation to country needs. It's great to see GPE's strategic plan is moving solidly in that direction of greater country contextualization.

Stephen Close

Assistant Director, Health and Education Finance Section
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australian Government

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 Engagement](#)

[Terms of Reference for Grant Agents - ESPIG](#)

[Terms of Reference for Coordinating Agencies](#)

[Knowledge and Innovation Exchange \(KIX\)](#)

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