ENDORSEMENT LETTER

Based on our technical appraisal of the Kyrgyz Republic's Education Development Strategy for 2012-2020 (EDS 2020) and the Action Plan for Education Development 2012-2014 (APED 2012-14), and building on consultations held around these documents, the members of the Education Sector Group in the Kyrgyz Republic would like to draw the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) attention to this summary statement.

The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has held a steady commitment to education reform for the last decade, although it has been a period of high internal social and political unrest. Despite serious fluctuations in GDP growth (from 8.5% in 2007 to -0.5% in 2010), education expenditure has been steadily growing from 4.4% of GDP in 2002 to 6.1% in 2012. Successive governments have maintained a collaborative relationship with international development partners and synergy in the priorities for, and approach to, education reform

The education system in the country requires comprehensive reform. Its enduring features include the consequences of a cumulative lack of adequate investment since the collapse of the Soviet Union: inadequate support for teachers, the decline a teaching profession, falling quality, rigid pedagogy and content unresponsive to changing economic and social realities, increasing inequity, poor management, a lack of accountability to communities and parents and a loss of public confidence in the education system. The EDS 2020 conceives a restructuring of the education system to rebuild confidence, enable teachers and create conditions for increased quality and equity. It affirms compulsory schooling as the core investment a country must make in its future while acknowledging the importance of early childhood interventions in laying the foundations for quality and equity, as well as the need for meaningful options for school-leavers and in adult education to provide individual incentives and to respond to the country's needs. The strategy recognises the need for strong management based on adequate information, systems and human resources, while stating a commitment to minimal regulation with maximum accountability.

The Kyrgyz Republic appears to have made strong progress on its action plan for implementing the strategy after the first year. It has managed to lead on its priorities despite the wide range of reforms the plan tackles, particularly expanding access for young children, reworking the curriculum to make it more relevant, strengthening teacher professionalism and improving systems and management. While the priorities the GPE emphasises are pertinent, the government leads on a configuration of these priorities that builds on the consensus of donor partners to address the country's needs in education.

Aid effectiveness in the country satisfies the OECD-DAC requirements for ownership, managing for results and mutual accountability and is making progress with regard to donor alignment and harmonization. A Joint Statement on a sector-wide approach to education that is intended to realise a further US$80 million in coordinated donor support to the education sector between 2012 and 2015 was signed by the Government of Kyrgyzstan and donor partners in March 2013. The SWAp makes provision for a range of technical measures that will support the progress in achieving better donor alignment and harmonisation.

Despite the overall positive environment for reform, the education donor partners in Kyrgyzstan would like to emphasise the following five concerns.

1 – The country's commitment to social sector spending, including education, is heavily debt dependent. Debt currently amounts to over half of GDP and requires 13% of the country's budget to service. National budget deficits are in the region of 6-7% of GDP. This presents a real risk for the reform agenda, particularly if economic growth does not improve consistently beyond the 4% average GDP the country has been able to achieve.

2 – The current reforms in expanding access to early childhood programs and the reforms envisaged in the new GPE proposal are particularly donor dependent and reliant on entities such as AKF and UNICEF for innovation and leadership. While passage of the recent pre-school law and the increase in salaries for pre-school teachers in line with the increases for school teachers are strong indications of government commitment to this important foundation stage for an improved national compulsory education system, the EDS does not make clear what will happen if donor support is not forthcoming or what alternative arrangements will be made if donor support were to decrease. However, in 2014 a provision exists for a mid-term review of EDS 2020, in order to take into consideration the changing circumstances and the next programming cycle of the various Donors.

3 – Economic growth, infrastructural development and the delivery of social services are distributed regressively across the country. These trends are compounded by poor management, bureaucratic inertia, weak systems, perceptions of widespread corruption and a loss of confidence in government. Uneven development has also exacerbated ethnic tensions and increased inequality and marginalisation in the country; it presents a persistent and yet unresolved challenge to stability that requires national leadership that is committed to rebuilding trust and social justice.

4 – While the government has made genuine efforts to consult stakeholders and while collaboration with and between donor agencies remains strong, civil society in Kyrgyzstan is not an equal partner in the education reform process. Their role is overlooked by donor agencies as much as by government and both need to reach out to civil society to ensure its more central involvement. The associations of people with disability, teachers unions and NGOs working on social issues and advocacy need to be more actively engaged in the conceptualization, planning and delivery of education reform.

5 – Overall capacity within central and local government for planning, delivering and monitoring reform remains inadequate despite the hard work of committed individuals at all levels in the system. Problems include changes in middle and senior management, insufficient legislative and regulatory provisions, weak management and administration, a significant need for technical skills and a lack of coordination between government ministries. These areas have been identified and the government is working with donor partners to close these gaps.

Conclusion

The undersigned donor partners in Kyrgyzstan support the country's Education Development Strategy for 2012-2020 and the Action Plan for Education Development (APED) for 2012-2014 and consider the consultation process around these documents to be generally adequate. While reforming an education system cannot, on its own, achieve national growth and social rejuvenation, through reforms in education, the government has committed to uphold principles that promise to deepen and sustain economic growth and promote social cohesion. Education sector reforms in the country are gathering momentum and a measure of clearly demonstrable success is within reach. In our view, this is a crucial moment for international development partners to express our ongoing support to education sector reform in Kyrgyzstan.

Signatures of donor partners who recommend the Education Development Strategy 2012-2020 and the Action Plan for Education Development 2012-2014 in Kyrgyz Republic for support are:

Agency	Signature
Ms. Rie Hiraoka Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Kyrgyz Republic	
Mrs. Nurjehan Mawani Head of the Representation, Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)	
Mrs. Chantal Hebberecht Ambassador, The Delegation of the European Union in the Kyrgyz Republic	
Mr. Shamil Ibraghimov Executive Director, Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan	
Mr. Jonathan Veitch Representative, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	
Mr. Carey Gordon Representative, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Kyrgyz Republic	
Mr. Alex Kremer Country Manager, World Bank (WB) in Kyrgyz Republic	
Ms. Elisabeth Baehr Regional Director Central Asia, German International Cooperation(GIZ) in Kyrgyz Republic	