BOD/2011/11—DOC 02

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Copenhagen, Denmark, 9-10 November 2011

A STRATEGIC VISION FOR THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION 2011-2014

For Input and Decision

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1. Purpose

This brief paper sets out the Secretariat's vision of where the Global Partnership for Education can be in 2014, and what it will take to get there. It builds on the strategic directions papers prepared as background for the Replenishment Pledging Conference and the meeting of the Board of Directors taking place in Copenhagen, Denmark in November 2011 (see BOD/2011/07), with their focus on increased support for fragile states, improved quality and learning outcomes, and girls' education. This document is intended for discussion at the meeting of the Board of Directors. Feedback received will serve as the basis for the development of a comprehensive strategy paper for approval by the Board of Directors by mid-2012.

2. Background

The enormous progress on access to education in the past decade masks some enduring problems, including a global crisis in learning: around 200 million children are currently in school but learning very little. In addition, although the proportion of girls entering primary school in the past decade has increased, the transition from primary to lower secondary for girls is still much lower than boys. And finally, over 40% of the 67 million children currently out of school live in conflict-affected or fragile states.

At the same time, the Global Partnership for Education has gone through many governance and structural changes over the past two years since the Mid-term Evaluation. The Board of Directors has expressed, and the Secretariat agrees, that it is time for the Global Partnership to develop a strategic vision for the early to medium term. This paper is aimed at stimulating a

discussion by the Board of Directors at its November 2011 meeting in order to guide the Secretariat into developing such a strategy for the Global Partnership to be approved by the Board of Directors in the next six months.

3. Decision Requested

Following its discussion, the Secretariat proposes that the Board of Directors approves the following decision:

BOD/2011/11-XX – Strategic Plan for the Global Partnership for Education 2011-2014: The Board of Directors takes note of the paper entitled "A Strategic Vision for the Global Partnership for Education 2011-2014" (BOD/2011/11—DOC 02), and requests the Secretariat to develop a strategic plan and associated implementation plan and budget, for the Global Partnership for 2011-2014 (the "Strategic Plan"). The Strategic Plan shall be based on BOD/2011/11—DOC 02 and the comments made by the Board of Directors at its meeting on 11-12 November 2011 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Board requests that the Secretariat present a draft of the Strategic Plan at its next face-to-face meeting anticipated to take place in May 2011.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 A Vision for 2014

The goal of the Global Partnership for Education over the period 2011-2014 should be nothing less than a fundamental transformation in education systems across Global Partnership-developing country partners, characterized by an intense focus on improved learning outcomes. The phrase "All Children Reading" encapsulates what could be one of the most transformative global efforts in recent history, helping to bring the Education for All movement to a new level of relevance and impact. This should be a bold rights-based approach, meaning in part that the achievements sought in terms of improved learning outcomes will target the most marginalized and vulnerable groups of children.

4.2 Expansion

By 2014, virtually all low-income countries should join the Global Partnership for Education, including countries such as India which already have significant access to external financing but whose participation in policy dialogue and governance would enrich the Global Partnership as a

whole. The funding priority over this period should continue to be basic education (which includes primary education and transition into secondary), but secondary programs should also be eligible for support where countries have developed programs to increase girls' transition to and completion of secondary school.

The Global Partnership will need to take a decision on how best to accommodate the increasing focus on learning outcomes. Unlike the situation for access, countries classified by the International Development Association as Category 3 (currently ineligible for funding for education plan implementation grants from the Global Partnership), show little advantage over other low-income countries in this arena, and the case for greater inclusion in the policy dialogue and implementation of quality-enhancement programs is strong.

4.3. Outcome Targets

By 2014, schools that have been supported by the Global Partnership should be characterized by a shared expectation among all teachers and administrators, as well as the students themselves and their parents, that all children will be able to read with understanding within two years of entering primary school. By 2014, at least 20 developing country partners that have received Global Partnership financial support should have demonstrated the feasibility of this expectation by having cut the number of non-readers in half. Further, they should have done this while continuing to increase access for children, adding at least 29 million children in aggregate to their primary schools. This should also be a period where the efforts in reading are matched by the development of similar approaches to improved learning of mathematics.

6. Architecture and Mutual Accountability

Over the next three years, the Global Partnership for Education will need to make significant progress in determining who will take responsibility for gaps in the existing architecture around education. For instance, how will learning be tracked and by whom? How can targeted expertise be made available to countries on demand? How can the education and health sectors develop an operationally sound working relationship to achieve shared goals? How can reading and other learning materials be made systematically available to children in a language they use in their home? How can financing levels in the sector be brought in line with need, after a long

period of chronic underfunding? A purposive effort will be needed to address these questions, some of which can be informed through the Global and Regional Activities program.

4. Feasibility

It may seem unrealistic to attempt to resolve in a tight time frame what have been persistent challenges in the sector. Yet the Secretariat believes this vision, while ambitious, is within reach. Pilot programs across a dozen countries, involving thousands of students in each country, have already demonstrated the potential for quick gains in reading outcomes where school systems provide sufficient support to teachers and sufficient time to learn. These programs were designed for scalability, and already several Global Partnership developing country partners will be taking them to scale in the next year. Similarly, a number of quick wins can be gained in terms of helping children be better able to learn. De-worming programs to rid children of parasites that create fatigue and inhibit learning have proven their value and feasibility in low-income countries. The Global Partnership could provide a platform for collaboration with health sector and private sector partners to take these to scale, along with school health and nutrition programs. Virtually all children worldwide could be reached with such programs at low cost, and little diversion of time and energy from core programs. Similarly, partners in the Global Partnership could be enlisted to coordinate services for children with special needs.

In terms of changes in the global architecture for education, strategic alliances are already coalescing around key endeavours such as assessment, improved reading, demand-based provision of technical expertise, and girls' education. The Global Partnership has a number of tools and mechanisms at its disposal to support these alliances and build more.

5. Governance

The recent changes in the structure of the Board of Directors and trust fund management provide a strong governance basis for the needed evolution of the Global Partnership over the next three years. An issue yet to be resolved, however, is the degree of independence needed by the Global Partnership for optimal functioning over the coming years in order to achieve its goals. Several options have been proposed by outside observers over the past year. These generally posit two broad possibilities: an entirely independent partnership with separate legal status, able to attract greater support from private foundations and the private sector, or a partnership whose Secretariat continues to be hosted by the

World Bank or another multilateral partner, but with full functional independence in terms of operating procedures and management. These approaches have generally been addressed by external observers from the standpoint of creation of a stand-alone funding mechanism. Funding considerations are discussed in more detail in the following section, but a better lens for the Board of Directors in considering these options is the results focus and the attendant need for better provision of support to countries: to what extent would either of these options provide greater flexibility to the Global Partnership in achieving its goals, and do the necessary trade-offs justify the effort?

6. Financing/Disbursements

A substantial increase in funding to the sector is needed. This includes but is not limited to increase in the Global Partnership's fund levels. The replenishment campaign provides a good beginning. The Secretariat should maintain its recently enhanced fund-raising capacity, while working much more closely with the private sector to seek new opportunities. The next replenishment cycle should aim to at least double 2011-2014 fund levels, with 20% of those totals to be raised through innovative approaches to financing, support from emerging donors, and private sector/private foundation support.

A corollary to these targets is that disbursement performance will need to show further improvement, along with greater expertise within the Secretariat for risk management and dealing with potential misuse of funds and corruption.

By 2014, the Global Partnership should already have a solid track record for results-based approaches to financing, including successful performance-based top-ups provided to at least ten countries. The Financial Advisory Committee should be playing a strong technical advisory role including analysis of trends and emerging lessons from implementation experience. Early questions for consideration include whether the current three-year grant cycle is appropriate, and how best to handle lingering concerns about fund substitution.

7. The Change Process

A first important point in considering the process of change itself is that the greatest potential for achieving major gains lies in supporting the most marginalized children. Finland, for instance, came to have the highest reading scores in the world by targeting the children who were most at risk and learning the least. In the Global Partnership, this means systematically working with children in fragile

states, targeting girls, working with children living in extreme poverty, and identifying and providing services to children with special needs.

A second point is that change will require 'all hands on deck'. All partners will need to make explicit commitments about what they will bring to the table—in terms of financing, certainly, but also in terms of how they will become champions in areas for which new gains and new knowledge is needed, including, but not limited to:

- low-cost reading and math assessments
- provision of services for children with disability
- practical ways of tackling child labor
- exploring the potential of technology to accelerate progress
- championing the development of learning materials in local languages
- better integration of school health activities, teacher support, and professional development
- the challenges of developing and maintaining good schooling in fragile states
- Early Child Development

This must be a targeted, purposive mutual accountability with a results focus.

The policy commitments associated with the replenishment event are a good first step, and will appropriately feature commitments from both developed and developing countries. This event, however, will also show that the Global Partnership for Education is missing an important set of potential partners—middle-income countries that can bring to bear their own experience in scaling up programs under similar constraints. A seat or seats on the Board of Directors should be made available to this end.

A final point is that a strengthened conversation must be created around progress and lessons learned. The Global and Regional Activities program should be understood as one tool within the Global Partnership to further such an ongoing, evidence-based dialogue. More systematic attention and greater visibility for joint sector reviews in-country will provide another opportunity for the Global Partnership to ensure this conversation is grounded in operational reality.

The Secretariat has strengthened its team for the purpose of better supporting the change process. The Country Support Team has added senior staff members with operational experience at the country level, including work with fragile states. The Global Good Practice team is designed to be flexible, reflecting policy priorities as determined by the Board of Directors. The Finance, Administration and Board Services team has a strong capacity for administration and support to the governance structure, and will need to add capacity for financial analysis, portfolio review and risk management, including mitigating the risk of improper use of funds. Finally, the External Affairs and Communications team has developed greatly enhanced capacity for outreach as part of the replenishment process, much of which should be maintained to support ongoing outreach.

One recommendation of the recent consultancy around monitoring and evaluation, and its oversight committee, is to create monitoring and evaluation unit within the Secretariat. This will be brought to the Board of Directors for further consideration at the November 2011 meeting.

8. Future Considerations

The Mid-term evaluation brought a good deal of value-added to the Global Partnership, much of which is reflected in ongoing change processes. While a follow-up evaluation has tentatively been planned for 2015, to come at the end of the initial 15-year period of the Millennium Development Goals, it would be appropriate to begin at least a part of the evaluation process before the end of the 2011-2014 period. Such an evaluation would look at the extent to which the reform process within the Global Partnership is achieving appropriate change, and would inform the decision-making process about what comes next. While 2015 will be reached with major achievements in terms of the Education for All goals, much will remain to do and it is important to have an independent review of what the Global Partnership has achieved for the world's most vulnerable children, and its potential for achieving more.

9. Costs of Initiative and Source of Funding

All costs associated with the development of the strategic plan will be taken from the Secretariat's Work Plan for FY 2012.

10. Contact

Board members and others with questions on these matters are invited to contact Robert Prouty, Head of the Secretariat, at: rprouty@globalpartnership.org.