COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION: FEEDBACK ON THE CONCEPT NOTE

For Information/Input

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is: (i) to inform the Board of Directors regarding the comments received on the concept note for the design of the independent evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education; and (ii) to facilitate a discussion with a member of the Independent Steering Committee during the November 2013 Board meeting in Addis Ababa.

2. RECOMMENDED DECISION

This paper is for information/input only and no decision is being sought at this time from the Board of Directors.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 On 1 July 2013, the Secretariat circulated to the Board of Directors for comment, the concept note for the design of the evaluation, the draft Terms of Reference ("TOR") for the Independent Steering Committee ("ISC"), and a proposal for the experts that could be considered for ISC membership. Based on comments received, the Secretariat finalized the ISC TOR and presented it to the Board for approval.

3.2 On 7 October 2013, the Board approved the ISC TOR and appointed the ISC for the evaluation of the Global Partnership (BOD/2013/10-02).

3.3 The feedback from the Board on the concept note raised some critical issues that need to be discussed and agreed upon in order to allow the ISC to finalize the note. The critical issues are grouped under the following three categories:

(i) Timing, cost, and interim outputs: Concerns were raised on the proposed timeframe and completion date for the evaluation (2014-2016). Board members requested interim outputs to inform the formulation of a new strategic plan and the post-2015 agenda.

(ii) Design: Concerns were raised on the proposed timeline for the evaluation and on the possibility of replicating work already undertaken by the mid-term evaluation. In addition, more detailed evaluation questions, as well as the use of a more rigorous (quantitative) approach to assess the impact of the Global Partnership at the country level were also requested.

(iii) Other comments: Board members made several suggestions. These include an analysis of the functioning, transparency and inclusiveness of the country level process, as well as modalities that prevail in the grant application. In addition, detailed definitions of key terms used in the concept note and corrections of factual errors were requested.

3.4 The summary of the comments provided by six Board constituencies is presented in Annex 1 of this paper.

4. NEXT STEPS

Based on the feedback provided at the November 2013 Board meeting, the ISC will finalize the concept note for the comprehensive evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education.

ANNEX 1- SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON THE CONCEPT NOTE OF THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

Timing of evaluation	• Six Board constituencies expressed concern about the evaluation timeframe. • Deliver results in a shorter timeframe. Ideally, results should be ready by 2015, which is a critical year for the post-2015 agenda and forthcoming Strategic Plan. • The findings of the evaluation will not be taken into account for the elaboration of the new Strategic Plan 2016-2019 under the current timeframe (2014-2016). • The concept note is not clear on how the evaluation will link up to the formulation of a new strategy plan from 2016-2019 or the post-2015 goals. • Tighten the time table to have interim and final results earlier that will inform decision-making. This can be done either by: reducing the time between the inception and the start date (currently 14 months) or by reducing the time spent on the contracting process. • Plans for the dissemination and communication of the evaluation also need to be included in the timeline of the evaluation.
Cost of evaluation	• Three Board constituencies raised concerns about the cost of the evaluation. The budget appears to be high for an evaluation that does not include a lot of primary research. Other impact evaluations have been undertaken at much lower cost. • The greatest value from available resources will come from investment in short feedback loops that provide information to inform decision-making. • Two constituencies suggest revising the budget in terms of: (i) the number of working days for the ISC (the reviewing function seems very intense); (ii) travel costs (seem high); and (iii) number of country studies included in the evaluation.
Demand for interim outputs	• Six Board constituencies requested interim outputs from the evaluation. • Most of them highlight the importance of incorporating the findings of the evaluation into the next Strategic Plan. The concept note should reflect the link between the evaluation and the coming strategy planning process. • Some evaluation questions can be answered as work progresses. • The GPE needs a solid theory of change as a starting point for the evaluation. • Evaluation should be part of the broader M&E Strategy.
Scope of the evaluation and role of the FTI mid-term evaluation	• Five Board constituencies raised a concern about the period of analysis for the evaluation and replicating the mid-term evaluation. • Three constituencies believed the evaluation should focus primarily on the post-2010 period. The mid-term evaluation should be considered as a building block to assess the impact of the Global Partnership after 2010. • The concept note should explain the value of including the pre-2010 time period (e.g. through an improved methodology or evidence based). • The evaluation should pay more attention to an overall progress of Education For All (EFA) vis-à-vis the year 2015. • The purpose as well as the justification of the evaluation should be clear in the concept note. The nature of the evaluation should also be clear: is it a formative or summative evaluation?

Evaluation questions	• Three Board constituencies raised concerns about the evaluation questions. • Evaluation questions remain broad. They should be sharpened. • Link the evaluation questions to the GPE Strategic Goals (according to the Strategic Plan 2012-2015). Explain which Strategic Goals will be evaluated. • The evaluation questions and/or methodological approach do not mention the shift towards a strengthened focus on learning outcomes (mentioned in the concept note). • The evaluation questions can be separated into four questions (or categories) to differentiate between the assessment of delivery of development outcomes and the assessment of GPE as an institution. Although different, these questions are complementary. The suggested categories are: (i) achievement of goals; (ii) effectiveness/ efficiency/ relevance; (iii) value-added; and (iv) governance. • Clarify the relationship between evaluation questions and cross-country analysis. Specifically, explain the level at which each question will be answered and whether there will be an interaction between levels of analysis (national and global). • Include definitions for "adequacy" of GPE governance and "added value" to the achievement of Strategic Objectives and Goals.
Design of evaluation	• Four Board constituencies raised concerns about the evaluation methodology, specifically stating that the concept note should consider quasi-experimental methods (developing a strong counterfactual) to evaluate the impact of the GPE at the country level. This is even more relevant if the emphasis of the evaluation is on the added value of GPE and linkages to outcome indicators. • The contractor should investigate the possibility of using experimental/quasi-experimental methods to measure the impact of GPE. Methods proposed by potential contractors can be examined and modified on review of proposals (including the use of contribution analysis). • Clarify a contradiction: the concept note excludes the possibility of an impact evaluation. However, the evaluation question "to what extent has GPE added value… over and above what would have been accomplished without the Partnership?" has been set up as a one that should be answered using an impact evaluation methodology (as it requires a counterfactual). • The concept note should be more specific about the methodology to evaluate the Secretariat (e.g. structure, communication, coordination). • Meta-analysis in the strict (statistical) sense is probably not feasible, given the heterogeneity of the studies and objects of the evaluation. A literature review would be useful. • Explain the treatment of key documents to retrofit the FTI (Strategic Goals, Charter, etc.) • There is confusion with the number of country studies in the quantitative and qualitative parts of the evaluation. Some constituencies request clarification on the number of countries that will be included in the evaluation. Others suggest reducing the number of countries (from 15 to 6 or 8 and from 15 to 2-3). • Explain the criteria for selecting countries to be included in the evaluation. • Qualitative case studies should be complemented with more rigorous quantitative evaluations in 2-3 countries where grants are in the initial stages of disbursement.

	• Explain the approach to evaluate GPE management structures (the Board, FAC, and Ethics Committee) and the Secretariat.
Suggestions: elements to evaluate	• In the assessment of governance, three Board constituencies suggested analyzing the role of the Local Education Group ("LEG"), Supervising Entity ("SE"), and Managing Entity ("ME"). Analyze functioning, transparency and inclusiveness of the country level process. • Two Board constituencies indicated that the evaluation should give more relevance to the question on financial modalities, relevance, effectiveness, and priorities prevailing in the grant application. Also include alignment and accountability. • Assess the application process (review of proposals, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement) and communication issues between management structures. • Adjust the budget to increase the amount of money allocated to more rigorous (quantitative) studies and reduce the amount allocated to the qualitative component. • Include an assessment of the constituency-based model. • Concrete questions: Has GPE been able to catalyze efforts in accordance to its objectives both at donor and recipient levels? Has GPE been able to ensure more harmonized approaches to education in developing countries? Has GPE been complimentary to donors' efforts (filled existing gaps)? To what extent has GPE encouraged policy dialogue and brought about consensus in the LEG on critical education issues? • The evaluation could analyze alternative models to GPE – this is currently not considered and may help the assessment of the value-added of GPE.
Suggestions: elements not to evaluate	• The World Bank hosting agreement has already been assessed and should not be included in the evaluation.
Effectiveness and efficiency	• Three Board constituencies raised concerns about the confusion of two terms in the concept note: efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The emphasis on cost-effectiveness results in some confusion between these two terms. • Differentiate between efficiency in economic terms (achieving maximum possible outputs with minimum possible inputs), and effectiveness of GPE added value explained by its influence on organizations implementing interventions (outputs leading to the desired education outcomes).
Factual errors in concept note	• Add supervising entities to management entities in Section 2.2 (p.11). • The amounts shown in Sections 2.10 and 3.9 are not the current ones. Include the date of the data presented. • Correct in Table 1 (bottom of p.13): The CEO is appointed selected jointly by The World Bank and the Board. • Use the list of the Fund governance document in Table 1 (p.14).