

The GPE Secretariat Management Response On Independent Interim Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education

The GPE Secretariat welcomes the Independent Interim Evaluation, and the useful analysis and lessons it provides. The Independent Interim Evaluation reviews GPE over a five-year period, from 2010-2014. It provides timely and effective recommendations for consideration during the development of the Global Partnership's next five year Strategic Plan, which the GPE Board of Directors will finalize in December 2015.

The Secretariat thanks the Independent Evaluation Committee for its oversight of this Evaluation. It appreciates the opportunities the IEC provided for fact checking of the report, and acknowledges the important role the IEC played in ensuring an evaluation of the highest quality and independence. In particular, the Secretariat would like to thank the IEC for ensuring that the Secretariat had the chance to meet with the Committee and the external evaluators to discuss the evaluation findings and recommendations, and to explore in detail with them their key findings on how to improve GPE's Operational Platform.

The Secretariat considers all of the Independent Evaluation's findings to be fair and it agrees with the four recommendations made in the Evaluation. We welcome the findings that highlight the serious efforts the GPE Secretariat has taken, along with the Board of Directors, to address the recommendations of the 2010 evaluation of the EFA Fast Track Initiative. As the Evaluation notes, these efforts have "strengthened the Global Partnership both strategically and operationally." The Secretariat believes that the fourth recommendation in the evaluation is imperative. It will be up to the GPE Board of Directors to determine what steps it wishes the Global Partnership to take in responding to the Evaluation's recommendations formally.

A more detailed response to the Evaluation Recommendations is provided below:

Recommenation 1: The GPE Board should agree on where and how the Partnership aims to add value, what constitutes 'success' in view of its mission, and the types of results for which the Partnership can realistically hold itself accountable.

1.1 The GPE Secretariat, in collaboration with the Board, should continue to develop and finalize a theory of change (or one theory each for the global and the country level) that spells out the goals and objectives of the Partnership and the types of changes it intends to influence.

1.2 The GPE Board should decide the future directions of the Partnership's grant-making function in terms of thematic and geographic scope and priorities.

1.3 The GPE Board should decide whether the Partnership will continue to aspire to fill a global role beyond resource mobilization and grant-making, and, if so, what this role will be, how it will be implemented, and with what envisaged results.

1.4 *The GPE Board should clearly articulate the value-added of being a partnership and how it will make use of the combined contributions of its partners to better fulfil its mission.*

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The GPE Secretariat fully supports this recommendation. It has been working closely with the GPE Board over the past 12 months to develop a Strategic Plan which further defines the Partnership's value proposition and the building blocks necessary to deliver it. These building blocks will include a Theory of Change and Results Framework and some critical changes to GPE's Operational Platform.

At its meeting in October 2015, the GPE Board will be considering items 1.2 and 1.3 of this recommendation. The geographic and thematic scope of its grant funding is an important question for the partnership, particularly in light of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals. The question of how the Global Partnership makes better use of its country-level grants in leveraging system-wide change and mobilising additional financing for the education sector is one of the highest priorities identified in the Strategic Plan consultation process held over the summer of 2015.

The GPE Secretariat believes that consideration of a global role for the Global Partnership beyond resource mobilization and grant making is also critical, and looks forward to Board's deliberation on this issue as part of the strategic planning process. The Secretariat is mindful of the importance of not overlapping with the roles and activities of other partners on advocacy and sharing of lessons learned.

Recommendation 2: The Global Partnership should develop a Strategic Management Framework that is based on the new Strategic Plan and that includes a results framework, monitoring plan, formal feedback mechanisms, and an evaluation plan.

2.1 Based on the agreed Theory (or Theories) of Change, the GPE Secretariat should develop a Results Framework to define the Partnership's envisaged contributions to results.

2.2 The GPE Secretariat should develop a draft monitoring plan for Board approval to facilitate the use of the Results Framework.

2.3 The Global Partnership should develop formal feedback mechanisms to better monitor its performance as a partnership.

2.4 The GPE Board should reconsider the plan to conduct an Impact Evaluation, currently envisaged for 2017.

2.5 The Secretariat should develop an evaluation plan that incorporates an independent external evaluation in or around 2020, as well as one or more periodic evaluations between 2016 and 2020.

The GPE Secretariat fully supports this recommendation and the overall need for the Global Partnership to pay greater attention to monitoring and reporting on its results. A Partnership-wide results framework and an accompanying monitoring and evaluation strategy are being developed for the GPE Board's consideration and will be implemented as part of the new Strategic Plan. The Secretariat is committed to improving its work using lessons learned from this evaluation and these new monitoring mechanisms.

Recent consultations across the Partnership for the new GPE Strategic Plan have indicated a strong interest in more careful monitoring of mutual accountability for all partners. The Board will consider specific recommendations in this regard at its October meeting.

The questions of timing of an Impact Evaluation and future external evaluations can only be answered by the GPE Board based on guidance from the Independent Evaluation Committee. That said, the Secretariat agrees that 2017 may be too early for an Impact Evaluation and fully supports periodic thematic evaluations between now and 2020. The Secretariat believes that future Independent External Evaluations are best timed when they can substantively inform the process of strategic plan development, as has been the case this year.

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Recommendation 3: The Global Partnership should further clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board Committees and the Secretariat.

3.1 The GPE Board should consider assigning clearly defined decision-making powers to either to the Coordinating Committee or to the Strategy and Policy Committee (in which case it should dissolve the Coordinating Committee). This would allow operational decisions to be made in between biannual meetings of the full Board, and would allow the Board to focus primarily on strategic issues.

3.2 The Partnership should revisit and agree upon the nature and scope of the role that the Secretariat is expected to play at both global and national levels, and ensure that it has the resources to do so.

The GPE Secretariat agrees with Recommendation 3.1. Further clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board Committees and the Secretariat would benefit all, reduce the time required for some decisions and increase the effectiveness of the Global Partnership. The Governance, Ethics, Risk and Finance Committee (GERF) is currently undertaking a detailed review of the functioning of the Board and Committees and will bring its recommendations to the GPE Board in December.

In regards to Recommendation 3.2, the Secretariat underwent a major organisational review in December 2014 with full endorsement by the GPE Board and approval for increased staffing and budget. Throughout 2015 the Secretariat has focused on strengthening its support to the countries its serves, including through improvements in grant management, quality assurance, monitoring and technical advisory capability. At its October retreat, the Board will consider further recommendations to strengthen GPE's operating platform through the creation of minimum standards, an enhanced quality assurance framework, a conflict resolution mechanism, and improved monitoring and evaluation, all within the broader context of mutual accountability. The Secretariat welcomes the prospect of greater clarity on its role at the global and national levels.

Recommendation 4: The GPE Secretariat should develop a proposal for review by the GPE Board on how to make Supervising Entity and Coordinating Agency arrangements more flexible and adaptable to varying national contexts.

This recommendation does not suggest abolishing the functions currently fulfilled by SE/ME and CA, but to explore whether in selected national contexts some or all of these functions can be fulfilled equally well by national actors. Where this is the case, transferring functions to these actors has the potential to enhance national ownership and capacity. This is reflected in the following specific recommendations.

4.1 The Secretariat, in consultation with DCPs, should explore other options for Supervising Entities.

4.2 The GPE Secretariat should explore whether in some countries there are alternative ways of ensuring the fulfilment of CA functions.

The Secretariat strongly supports this recommendation and would classify it as "imperative." As part of the current Strategic Plan process, the Secretariat is working closely with a Reference Group of the Board to evaluate and strengthen core aspects of GPE's country-level Operational Platform. The recommendations include defining roles, responsibilities and minimum standards for Local Education Groups and developing clear criteria for selecting a managing or supervising entity. The Board has requested the Secretariat to present a proposal by June 2016 that defines circumstances in which a supervising or managing entity would not be required for grant management.

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In closing, the GPE Secretariat thanks the Evaluators and the Independent Evaluation Committee for a strong and very useful report. The Independent Evaluation will undoubtedly be a key element informing Board decisions on the new Strategic Plan. We also thank the Evaluators for helping us to better understand options for further strengthening the work of the Secretariat and supporting improvements in the Global Partnership for Education.

Sincerely,



Alice P. Albright
Chief Executive Officer

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