DECEMBER 4-5, 2024

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EMIRATES OF DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

MEETING REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a high-level summary of decisions and key discussion points. The agenda and documents for the Board meeting can be found on the GPE website. The list of participants is included in Annex 1.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1 The Board Chair called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. H.E. Reem Al Hashemi, Minister of State for International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), welcomed the GPE Board and expressed her enthusiasm with hosting the meeting in Dubai. She highlighted UAE's commitment to GPE's main objectives and goals, including advancing gender equality. She reminded that UAE was one of the main sponsors of the Declaration on the common agenda for education and climate change, which was launched at COP28 in Dubai.

1.2 Prof. Nasser Al-Aqeeli, Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Ministry of Education of Saudi Arabia addressed the Board as special guest of the Board Chair. He commended GPE's role in the global education architecture and highlighted Saudi Arabia's commitment to the GPE mission.

1.3 The Vice-Chair of the GPE Board, Christine Hogan, welcomed members to the meeting and highlighted the importance of the topics for discussion, especially those related to the GPE 2030 strategy. She further commended the UAE for its leadership in bringing together the education and climate change agendas at the global level.

2. CEO Report

2.1 Laura Frigenti, GPE CEO, presented an overview of GPE's performance in the last six months as included in DOC 02.

Discussion

2.2 **GPE's overall performance.** Members welcomed the increase in disbursement levels and grants approvals. They congratulated the Secretariat for the operational hub in Nairobi and acknowledged improvements in the reporting of incidents related to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). Partner countries constituencies urged GPE to further explore ways to make use of country systems. Members congratulated the ongoing work on enhancing the complementarity and coordination between GPE and Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

2.3 **Replenishment:** Members suggested that further efforts are needed to make results available, particularly in view of the upcoming replenishment. They urged the Secretariat to explore ways of working with national parliaments, from both donor and partner countries, as well as with ministries of finance. Members highlighted the centrality of global and country-level advocacy at the global around a common narrative will be key for a successful replenishment campaign.

3. Finance

3.1 Nesmy Manigat, Chair of the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC), provided a summary of FRC deliberations. Padraig Power, from the GPE Secretariat, presented the Financial Forecast and Semi-Annual Corporate Risk Report.

Discussion

3.2 **Disbursements.** Members welcomed the increase in disbursements levels.

3.3 **Safeguarding measures.** Members stressed the need for safeguarding measures, particularly against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH), and clear dialogue with grant agents on prevention and reporting. The Secretariat noted that with respect to misuse of funds, the number cases reported to GPE is in fact an encouraging sign, indicative of the policy's effectiveness. With respect to SEAH cases, the number of reported cases is low but consistent with reported cases in comparator organizations in other sectors, and therefore increased vigilance by all GPE partners is needed. The Secretariat added that having adequate procedures in this area is a requirement for grant agent accreditation and that efforts to strengthen Secretariat capacity are ongoing.

3.4 **Resource mobilization.** Members identified resource mobilization as a significant risk and noted concerns about cash balance and disbursement rates. Members highlighted the importance of mid-term reviews (MTR), political engagement and

advocacy, addressing debt issues as well as delivering results and value for money to offset this risk.

3.5 **Collaboration within the global education sector.** Members considered collaboration with ECW, IFFEd and other institutions in the sector as crucial for minimizing duplication of efforts and leveraging available resources.

4. Non-Profit Legal Entity

4.1 David Boutcher, Private Sector Board member and member representing the Ad-Hoc Working Group, provided an overview of the work of the group. Tim Nielander, independent legal advisor who oversaw the analysis, presented the details.

Discussion

4.2 The Board member representing Private Foundations and the Board and Alternate Board members representing Donor 1 declared a conflict of interest.

4.3 The Board commended the Ad Hoc Working Group for their efforts and expressed support for the creation of the non-profit legal entity (NPLE), emphasizing the need for alignment with GPE's mission, robust governance, transparency and reduced transaction costs. Members welcomed the establishment of the entity to attract new funding sources and to enhance donor confidence and stressed the need to include this entity in the 2026 replenishment.

4.4 The Secretariat provided assurances on these points and highlighted the potential benefits of the new entity. The Secretariat also acknowledged that while the entity would be independent, the sole purpose of the entity would be to support GPE's mission, and this would be guaranteed with the MoU between the entity and GPE.

4.5 **Review mechanism.** Board members stressed the need for clear success metrics and for regular reviews (every 2-3 years) to ensure the entity is meeting its proposed objectives.

4.6 **NPLE and the World Bank.** The Board member representing MLA3 emphasized the necessity of establishing a clear firewall between the NPLE and the World Bank and introduced an amendment to the proposed decision language which was later endorsed by the full Board.

4.7 The Secretariat thanked the governments of France and Switzerland for their offers.

4.8 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2024/12-01— GPE Non-Profit Legal Entity: The Board of Directors:

1. Refers to its decision on GPE's operational flexibilities from June 2024 (BOD/2024/06-04) and welcomes the progress made to advance the actions set out in a roadmap in the consultant's report (BOD/2024/06 DOC 07 Annex C) for the creation of a non-profit legal entity in Switzerland or France.

2. Expresses its appreciation for the work of the Secretariat working with external legal support, the World Bank, and in cooperation with relevant and interested GPE partners including the Ad Hoc Working Group, the Executive Committee, and the Governments of France and Switzerland.
3. Determines its support for the creation of a non-profit legal entity in Geneva, Switzerland as outlined in BOD/2024/12-DOC 05 with the sole purpose to support GPE's mission and objectives, particularly around resource mobilization.
4. Requests the Ad Hoc working group and Government of Switzerland under the oversight of the Executive Committee , to take the necessary actions to support the establishment of the non-profit legal entity, including but not limited to the creation of terms of reference for the Board of Directors of the non-profit legal entity, and the development of founding documents for the non-profit legal entity, and a coordination Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the non-profit legal entity and the GPE Board, to be presented for GPE Board decision as soon as practicable in 2025.

5. Results and Evaluations

5.1 Natasha de Marcken, Donor 6 Board member, introduced the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). Susanne Steensen, Head of the MOPAN Secretariat, presented the MOPAN evaluation of GPE. Judith Herbertson, Chair of the GPE Performance, Impact, and Learning Committee (PILC), and Donor 3 Alternate Board member, provided an overview of the Committee's discussions on the 2024 Results Report (DOC 06). Nidhi Khattri, from the GPE Secretariat, presented the main findings of the Results Report. Laura Frigenti, GPE CEO, provided an overview of the Secretariat responses to the findings of the MOPAN assessment and GPE's Results Report.

Discussion

5.2 Members welcomed the findings of both the MOPAN assessment and GPE's Results Report, as well the CEO's response. While members praised operational improvements and organizational reforms implemented in the past six months, they also expressed concerns with the lack of availability of aggregated data on learning outcomes. They recognized that it is a sector-wide challenge and welcomed the proposed focus of GPE 2030 on incentivizing standardized data collection and analysis linked to SDG 4.

5.3 Members welcomed progress on the coordination with Education Cannot Wait.

5.4 Members further suggested that GPE pay closer attention to the inclusiveness of country level process, including the diversity of local education groups and the process to select grant agents.

5.5 The MOPAN Secretariat informed that it will be conducting assessment of other organizations in the education sector and that the findings of these assessment, combined with the findings of the GPE assessment, will provide an overarching picture of where the sector stands on critical issues. It also highlighted that the GPE assessment is not only on the Secretariat performance but on the entire partnership, including members around the table. Improvements on some of the findings will depend on action from all partners.

6. Grant Agent Selection Process

6.1 Padraig Power, from the GPE Secretariat, provided an overview of the independent assessment of the current grant agent selection process and the proposed changes to improve the process fairness, inclusivity and effectiveness, as set out in DOC 08.

Discussion

6.2 Board members representing MLA1, MLA2, MLA3, Donor 1, Private Foundations, CSO1, CSO2 and CSO 3, as well as the Alternate Board members representing MLA1, MLA3, Donor 1, Donor 2, Donor 3, Donor 5, CSO1, CSO2 and CSO3 declared conflict of interest.

6.3 Members welcomed the proposal and noted that it addresses long-standing issues in the selection process. They also acknowledged that while this is a clear step forward, additional adaptations may be needed in the future to tackle other challenges that are not currently covered by this review.

6.4 Members requested that the Secretariat provide regular updates on the implementation of the reform and its effectiveness. They asked if instead of reviewing all grant agent selections, the independent consultant could just focus on a sample of cases to save costs and avoid delays. Members also asked whether the new process should apply to other grants.

6.5 The Secretariat thanked the Board for its comments. It explained that to ensure that the process is fair, transparent and inclusive in all countries, the proposal is to have an independent review of all grant agent selections above US$5 million with some exceptions. The Secretariat explained that for other grant types such as the smaller system capacity grants or accelerated funding, flexibility and speed are important. Hence, if the same process is required to these grants, it would place a significant burden on members of the local education groups. There will be consideration, in the context of the future of the technical assistance initiatives, on whether some of these arrangements would be applicable for grant agent selection. The Secretariat also stressed that updates on implementation will be provided to the Executive Committee and its advice will be sought should additional changes be needed, in the spirit of GPE as a learning organization.

6.6 Following the discussion, the Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2024/12-02—<u>Grant Agent Selection Process:</u> The Board of Directors:

1. Noting the importance of a transparent and equitable process to select grant agents that can best support partner countries to deliver on their system transformation priorities, approves the proposed revisions set out in Annex A of document BOD/2024/12 DOC 08 to strengthen the grant agent selection process.
2. Requests the Secretariat to develop the necessary procedures to operationalize the selection process for the selection of grant agents for GPE2030 allocations.
3. Further requests the Secretariat to ensure consultation, training, and relevant support is provided to stakeholders to ensure efficient application of the revised process.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024

7. Thematic Session: Advancing school-to-work transition: A role for GPE?

7.2 Members emphasized the need for better-equipped schools, especially in rural areas, and the importance of aligning education with labor market demands, including soft skills. The role of partnerships, including with the private sector, was considered crucial in addressing these challenges and ensuring that education systems are responsive to the needs of the economy and society.

8. Thematic Session: GPE's approach to Gender Equality and Inclusion

8.1 Members considered the importance of an intersectional approach to gender equality and discussed the existing barriers and the opportunity for GPE to enhance the scope of its efforts in this area. They highlighted the need for inclusive education, and evidence-based approaches while addressing challenges such as data and the technical language of gender inclusion. Members called for more ambitious goals for the inclusion of children with learning disabilities and refugees and stressed the importance of practical implementation and measuring progress.

9. GPE 2030: Update, Discussion and Decisions

Strategic Choices

9.1 Judith Herbertson, PILC Chair, opened the session with a summary of the Committee's deliberations and recommendations. Jo Bourne, from the GPE Secretariat, recalled what had already approved for the next strategic period, and presented the proposed scope for GPE 2030 and the focus on leaving no one behind (DOC 09).

Discussion

9.2 **GPE 2030 Scope.** Members largely agreed with the proposal, which maintains GPE current scope. They noted the importance of mainstreaming inclusion and gender equality as well as addressing climate change. They agreed with the proposed focus on supporting teachers and transition from school to work. Members welcomed the proposed amendment on further including youth in GPE and highlighted the importance of school meals and nutrition to improve students' attendance and retention.

9.3 **Leave no one behind.** Members expressed their support for the proposed decision. They agreed with prioritizing low- and lower-middle-income countries. Some members expressed support to further discussing the inclusion of upper-middle-income countries based on a set options to be presented by the Secretariat in the next meeting. Members also welcomed the increased attention to the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on learning outcomes.

Financing and Funding of GPE 2030

9.4 Nesmy Manigat, FRC Chair presented the Committee's discussions on Financing and Funding of GPE 2030. Padraig Power, from the GPE Secretariat, presented the proposed recommendations (DOC 10).

Discussion

9.5 **Eligibility and allocation.** Board members highlighted the need for continued support for low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs). There were diverging views on extending GPE support to upper middle-income countries (UMICs) as some members considered demographic aspects of countries transitioning to this category and their specifics needs.

9.6 **Leveraging finance.** There was broad support for leveraging financing, with a further emphasis on domestic financing and the involvement of private sector and local stakeholders. There was also broad support for the need to move away from the Multiplier first-come, first-served approach to a more predictable and targeted financing model, to simplify top-ups and link this incentive to learning.

9.7 **Gender equality and inclusion.** Board members highlighted the need to mainstream gender equality and inclusion in all funding, reduce fragmentation and build on existing strategies.

9.8 **Debt relief and sustainable financing.** Members recognized the challenges faced by countries with high debt burdens and the need for flexible financing options and for exploring sustainable financing mechanisms, such as debt swaps. They encouraged better collaboration between finance and education ministers.

9.9 **Fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAS).** There was a call for a stronger understanding and accountability in FCAS contexts, with clear proposals around performance and specific targeted activities.

Strategic Parameters for GPE 2030 Funding

9.10 Judith Herbertson, PILC Chair, provided a summary of the Committee's deliberations and recommendation. Jo Bourne, from the GPE Secretariat, presented the proposed strategic parameters for GPE 2030 (DOC 11), highlighting the proposed changed vis-à-vis the strategic parameters of GPE 2025.

Discussion

9.11 Members welcomed the proposal and acknowledged that the focus on a limited set of areas eligible for top-up triggers represents much-needed simplification. They urged the Secretariat to ensure that areas that are no longer eligible for top-up under GPE 2030 continue to be mainstreamed across GPE grants. Members welcomed the focus on collecting standardized learning outcome data, but also raised that countries have their own national frameworks that go beyond the SDG indicators. Members agreed with the discontinuation of the Independent Technical Advisory Panel (ITAP).

9.12 The Secretariat reassured that the areas not eligible for top-ups will continue to be incentivized under GPE 2030. It also highlighted the importance of mid-term reviews in adapting countries' priorities.

9.13 Following the discussion, the Board Chair declared consensus on the following decisions, including on proposed amendments.

BOD/2024/12-03: GPE 2030's Scope: The Board of Directors determines that GPE 2030 should:

1. Maintain a scope of 12 years of primary and secondary education plus at least one year of pre-primary education. This includes evidence-based interventions to support integrated programing for younger children (3+), as part of programs focused on pre-primary education, and skills to work programming for youth enrolled in secondary education or equivalent non-formal or catch-up education and skills programs.
2. Continue to strengthen mainstreaming inclusion and gender equality across all aspects of GPE work, including a focus on addressing gender-based violence and inclusion of children with disabilities and refugees. This includes attention to school health and nutrition.
3. Strengthen approaches to addressing climate change in education systems and mitigating the impact of climate change on education delivery, recognizing that this is especially critical in fragile and conflict-affected countries with the most severe

impacts on the most vulnerable, including refugee children and children with disabilities.

4. Explore ways in which GPE engagement can strengthen the participation and capacity of teachers in shaping and delivering a country's priority reform, recognizing that any education system transformation is impossible without the active engagement of teachers, including teachers with disabilities and refugee teachers.
5. Explore ways in which GPE can meaningfully engage students, children and young people, in its mechanisms at all levels, recognizing that they should be at the forefront of shaping their own education.

BOD/2024/12-04: Leave No One Behind: The Board of Directors determines that:

1. Low- and lower-middle-income countries should continue to benefit from GPE's traditional grant mechanisms (system transformation grant, system capacity grant) and innovative financing opportunities.
2. GPE should continue to strengthen country capacity to identify, track, and support children at risk of dropping out and out-of-school children, including directing GPE financing to children and youth outside the formal education system in some contexts.
3. More gender responsive, equitable and inclusive education systems should be supported, including through a stronger intersectoral lens and incentivizing the equity, efficiency and volume of domestic financing.
4. The GPE Secretariat should explore how to support, incentivize, and strengthen accountability across the partnership for measuring and using disaggregated learning outcome data, by sex, disability, protection status and age, to improve results

BOD/2024/12-05: Eligibility and Allocation: The Board of Directors determines that:

1. GPE's geographic footprint for the purpose of providing financial support shall continue to prioritize low-income countries, lower-middle-income countries, and IDA eligible small island and landlocked developing states (SILDS).
2. In line with the aim to leave no-one behind, and subject to availability of funds, GPE should explore options to support some upper-middle-income countries, including partner countries transitioning to such status, and in a targeted manner using differentiated approaches.
3. The basis for allocation of GPE funding shall continue to use needs-based allocation criteria that is equitable and prioritizes allocations to countries that have the greatest educational needs.

BOD/2024/12-06: Mainstreaming Resilience and Mitigating the Systemic Impacts of Crises including Climate Change: The Board of Directors determines that:

1. GPE funds, including through innovative finance mechanisms such as the Multiplier, should continue to support the strengthening of resilient education systems to better prepare for, respond to and recover from crises and changing contexts particularly the challenge of climate change.
2. In crisis situations, GPE's role is to sustain support to the government and partners to plan, respond and recover by promoting alignment and coordination including with ECW, strengthening capacity, sustaining continuity of education services, and building back better in terms of effective, responsive, and inclusive education system delivery. This includes promoting the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced populations into national systems. Noting that GPE grant funds play a critical role in supporting governments to prepare for and respond to crisis, they shall continue to be deployed through accelerated funding, and adaptations to the system transformation approach.

BOD/2024/12-07: Gender Equality and Inclusion: The Board of Directors:

1. Recognizes the need and opportunity to further mainstream both gender equality and inclusion through the system transformation approach while reducing fragmentation and transaction costs.
2. Requests the Secretariat to adapt the System Capacity Grant guidelines to strengthen its focus on capacity building specific to gender equality and inclusion.
3. Encourages the development of Multiplier proposals that leverage additional financing and commitment to gender equality and inclusion.
4. Requests the Secretariat to continue exploring ways to mainstream gender equality and inclusion through its core funding mechanisms, based on lessons learned.
5. Requests the Secretariat to propose options for the future of the Girls' Education Accelerator in GPE 2030.

BOD/2024/12-08: Leveraging Finance: The Board of Directors:

1. Refers to its decision (BOD/2024/06-07) to significantly scale up approaches including the Multiplier to mobilize additional financing and notes the ongoing technical analysis of suitable additional instruments for Board consideration in June 2025.
2. Determines that a partnership compact is required for all countries to access GPE Multiplier funds, and that Multiplier allocations should also have top up incentives linked to domestic financing and reporting of learning outcomes where appropriate.
3. To provide better predictability to countries to access the Multiplier, requests the Secretariat to propose adjustments to the basis of allocation for Finance and Risk

Committee recommendation and Board decision. Such adjustments should limit the necessity of a first come first served approach, while still emphasizing the importance of timely mobilization of resources and related programmatic implementation.

BOD/2024/12-09: GPE 2030 Strategic Parameters: The Board of Directors:
Recalling decision BOD/2023/07-01, and recognizing the need to adapt and learn from GPE 2025 implementation and country-level evaluations, approves the strategic parameters for GPE 2030 funding as set out in Annex A of BOD/2024/12 DOC 11. This includes:

1. Standardizing top-up triggers and limiting top-ups to the enabling factors of (i) progress on learning outcome data, and (ii) volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic financing.
2. Discontinuing the Independent Technical Advisory Panel.
3. Applying top-ups to all countries and GPE implementation grants over a threshold.
4. Setting the limit for top-ups at a maximum of 30% of the allocation (10% linked to improved reporting on learning outcomes indicator SDG 4.1.1a and 20% linked to improvements in the area of domestic finance).
5. Setting the limit for top-ups for countries affected by conflict and fragility at a maximum of 20% of the allocation, noting exemptions as set out in Annex A.
6. Making a Partnership Compact mandatory for all countries.

10. Replenishment Update

10.1 Breanna Ridsdel and Karen Schroh, from the GPE Secretariat, provided an update on plan and timeline for the 5th Replenishment Campaign.

Discussion

10.2 Members welcomed the information shared by the Secretariat. They suggested avoiding an overlap of the replenishment event and schedule with the replenishments of other organizations such as the Global Fund and ECW. The Secretariat confirmed that it is coordinating with ECW to align timelines, with an in-principle agreement that GPE replenishment would be held in early 2026, and ECW's replenishment end of the same year.

11. Close of Meeting

11.1 Before closing the meeting, the Chair acknowledged the contributions of Christopher Thomas, Alternate Board member representing the Private Foundations constituency, and Annalena Flury-Angelotti, Alternate Board member representing Donor 1 constituency who will rotate off the Board.

11.2 Rahim Saidzoda, Minister of Education and Science of Tajikistan and Board member representing EEMECA took the floor to announce that his country would host the 2025 June Board meeting in Dushanbe. The meeting was adjourned at 17:10 hrs.

Annex 1:

List of Board Meeting Participants

	Name	Constituency	Role
	Board Members		
1	Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir	Africa 1	Board Member
2	Sérgio Paulo Cossa	Africa 1	Representing Alternate Board Member
3	Youssouf Tahir Ahmat	Africa 2	Board Member
4	Mohamed Abdallah Mayoub	Africa 2	Representing Alternate Board Member
5	Morufu Olatunji Alausa	Africa 3	Representing Board Member
6	Adama Jimba Jobe	Africa 3	Representing Alternate Board Member
7	Ismail Shafeeu	Asia and Pacific	Board Member
8	Wayne Mendiola Jr	Asia and Pacific	Alternate Board Member
9	Rahim Saidzoda	EEMECA	Board Member
10	Dan Perciun	EEMECA	Alternate Board Member
11	Daniel Esponda	Latin America and Caribbean	Board Member
12	Tonnica Dey	Latin America and Caribbean	Representing Alternate Board Member
13	Jean-Sébastien Conty	Donor 1	Board Member
14	Annalena Flury-Angelotti	Donor 1	Alternate Board Member
15	Line Nielsen Fribeg	Donor 2	Board Member
16	Helena Reutersward	Donor 2	Alternate Board Member
17	Barbara Curran	Donor 3	Board Member
18	Judith Herbertson	Donor 3	Alternate Board Member
19	Merete Lundemo	Donor 4	Board Member
20	Ilham Al Ghadiri	Donor 4	Alternate Board Member
21	Martin Seychell	Donor 5	Board Member
22	Heike Kuhn	Donor 5	Alternate Board Member
23	Natasha de Marcken	Donor 6	Board Member
24	Rhona McPhee	Donor 6	Alternate Board Member
25	Yona Nestel	CSO 1	Board Member
26	Susan Nicolai	CSO 1	Alternate Board Member
27	Solange Akpo-Gnandi	CSO 2	Board Member

28	Rasheda Khatoon Choudhury	CSO 2	Alternate Board Member
29	Haldis Holst	CSO 3	Board Member
30	Dennis Sinyolo	CSO 3	Alternate Board Member
31	Stefania Giannini	MLA 1	Board Member
32	Carmen Burbano	MLA 1	Alternate Board Member
33	Pia Britto	MLA 2	Board Member
34	Becky Telford	MLA 2	Representing Alternate Board Member
35	Luis Benveniste	MLA 3	Board Member
36	Idrissa Dia	MLA 3	Alternate Board Member
37	Andrew Cunningham	Private Foundations	Board Member
38	Christopher Thomas	Private Foundations	Alternate Board Member
39	David Boutcher	Private Sector	Board Member
40	Emily Friedman	Private Sector	Alternate Board Member
	Board and Committee Chairs		
41	Jakaya Kikwete	Board	Chair
42	Christine Hogan	Board	Vice-Chair
43	Judith Herbertson	PILC	Chair
44	Nesmy Manigat	FRC	Chair