Annex A: GPE's Role in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts

I. Context

The global education landscape is being reshaped by a proliferation of crises that are growing in scale, complexity and duration. An estimated 234 million crisis-impacted children and adolescents require urgent education support, as conflict, displacement and climate-related shocks continue to disrupt learning systems at unprecedented levels. Simultaneously, significant cuts in education financing have widened the gap between needs and available resources. These compounding factors risk deepening the global learning crisis and further undermining progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

In parallel, shifts in the global aid architecture, driven by the humanitarian reset, are accelerating a transition toward locally led emergency coordination and response mechanisms. This evolution places greater emphasis on national and local ownership, requiring stronger alignment of actors across the humanitarian-development continuum to support the institutionalization of emergency coordination, preparedness and response into national systems, accompanied by sustainable financing models.

Within this complex and evolving context, this paper seeks to provide clarity around GPE's mandate and mission in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAC). It also differentiates GPE's work from Education in Emergencies (EiE) by emphasizing GPE's distinct role and mandate across diverse operational contexts, from institutional fragility to protracted emergencies. The paper traces strategic choices made by the GPE Board over nearly 15 years, articulating key elements and principles of GPE's engagement in FCAC, followed by lessons learned and their implications for GPE 2030.

II. GPE: System strengthening in FCAC

GPE has a clear mission: *To mobilize partnerships and investments that transform education systems in partner countries, leaving no one behind.* Our goal is *to accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century.* Since its founding in 2002, GPE has supported public education systems in partner countries to deliver quality education for the most marginalized girls and boys. Throughout, GPE's core principles of country ownership, inclusive partnership, development effectiveness and mutual accountability have remained unchanged.

As an increasing number of GPE partner countries have been affected by fragility and conflict, GPE has evolved its approaches to strengthen education systems before, during and after crises. Our eligibility and resource allocation formula ensures that fragile and conflict-affected contexts are given priority to help address the heightened needs, protect core education functions and reach the children most at risk of being left behind.

Between 2021-2025, nearly 70 percent of children (over 170 million) reached through GPE grants were in countries and territories affected by conflict and fragility (GPE, 2024). These countries fall into two broad sub-categories: (1) countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility, identified based on indicators that measure the quality of policy and institutions, and manifestations of fragility; (2)

countries affected by violent conflict, identified based on a threshold number of conflict-related deaths relative to the population. These categories cover a wide range of circumstances, each requiring its own context-based approaches (World Bank). Currently, 38 of GPE's 92 partner countries are categorized as FCAC.

GPE partner countries affected by fragility and crisis*



*The West Bank and Gaza is not a partner but has received GPE funding based on GPE BOD approval.

Education in Emergencies (EiE) is a different concept from FCAC, referring to programming and support to ensure the right to education during crises, including crucial protection elements—both physical and psychosocial—that can be lifesaving and life-sustaining during emergencies (Economy and Education network). Common situations of crisis in which education in emergencies is essential include conflicts, situations of violence, forced displacement, disasters and public health emergencies. EiE is a wider concept than 'emergency education response' which is an essential part of it (INEE, 2018).

EiE is not GPE's mandate. Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is the global fund dedicated to rapid education response in crisis settings,

Federal Rep. of Somalia - Reviving an education system

Somalia is one of the most compelling examples in GPE's portfolio of what sustained, long-term engagement can achieve. GPE began supporting Somalia in 2012 following decades of armed conflict, when public social services had collapsed and education was largely provided through private "umbrella" organizations. The newly established Ministry of Education lacked basic visibility into how many schools existed, who ran them, where they operated and what curricula were in use. GPE's early support therefore focused on mapping, coordination, and setting up the education management information system (EMIS) unit, helping revive Somalia's public education system post-civil war. In more recent years, as a key part of its cooperation with GPE, Somalia has also focused on building its fiscal capacity for education financing. GPE's approach has prioritized rebuilding national systems even as recurrent crises, conflict and drought, continued. Nearly 15 years into the collaboration, 75 percent of GPE funds are channeled to schools through government systems, alongside unprecedented government recruitment of teachers that strengthens state legitimacy and public trust.

to protect learning continuity, provide safe and protective learning environments and safeguard children affected by crisis.

In contexts of severe or protracted crisis, the lines between system strengthening, minimizing impact of crises on systems and emergency programming can be blurry. These situations require close coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus at both country and global levels.

To work effectively across all partner countries, GPE recognizes the importance of developing strong and sustainable education systems across diverse contexts, including the heightened challenges of fragile and conflict-affected settings, by meeting countries where they are. In FCAC, this requires maintaining a focus on system strengthening, advancing sustainable financing—including domestic resource mobilization where feasible—and carefully navigating political economy dynamics to manage complex relationships, foster inclusive dialogue and support robust coordination.

GPE's framework for operating effectively in FCAC

GPE's engagement in FCAC has evolved from an initial conceptual framing (a 2007 progressive framework developed for the Fast Track Initiative) to a more integrated model. This evolution has been driven by successive Board decisions:

2012: Guidelines for Accelerated support in Emergency and Early Recovery Situations (BOD/2012/11-12), allowing rapid disbursement of up to 20 percent of GPE indicative allocations in crisis settings;
2013: An Operational Framework for GPE's engagement in FCAC (BOD/2013/05-10) established procedures for adapting programs and implementation arrangements in situations of crisis;
2018: A set of dedicated Principles for GPE engagement in fragile and conflict affected states (BOD/2018/12-06), reinforced commitment to context-sensitive programming;
2020: Board decision BOD/2020/09-02 reinforced GPE's role in strengthening resilience and mitigating the systemic impacts of crisis;
2022: A revised Operational Framework, currently in effect, reaffirmed the importance of GPE adapting to changing contexts in partner countries to support continuity of education (BOD/NO/2022/05-04).

These Board decisions have enabled GPE's funding model to be flexible and layered, adapting support to countries' evolving needs across crisis, recovery and stabilization, supporting learning continuity while building long-term resilience and strengthening systems. GPE's core grants support structural reforms and institutional strengthening, but also actions to keep education systems from collapse. By

Yemen - Sustained engagement to save the system from collapse

A decade of conflict has left over 4.5 million children in Yemen out of school, damaged or destroyed more than 2,500 school buildings and strained teacher payment systems across much of the country. These shocks deepened existing weaknesses: limited data coverage, low rural girls' enrollment and chronic financing constraints. Through successive GPE grants totaling over US$120 million, GPE worked with the Internationally Recognized Government and partners including UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank and the CSO Coalition to help revive the local education group. Support focused on the essentials: rural female teacher incentives to keep girls in school, extended EMIS coverage, stronger school leadership and gender-responsive school rehabilitation. Yemen is not a story of restored normality. It shows what education support looks like amid system collapse, where keeping girls learning, sustaining a teacher base and restoring data flows are prerequisites for recovery.

design, GPE does not have an emergency response window, but does have the ability to advance or shift resources and implementation arrangements to mitigate the impact of crisis on education systems (Accelerated Funding).

III. Lessons from GPE's engagement in FCAC

GPE's engagement in FCAC has generated a significant body of operational experience and evidence. Several themes have emerged from portfolio reviews, country-level and thematic evaluations and partner feedback. These inform GPE's continued engagement under GPE 2030:

System transformation must ensure maximal use of government systems to strengthen capacity and sustainability, while being flexible to ensure education continuity in even the direst circumstances: The main principles of system transformation—country leadership, coherence and alignment, financing for results, inclusion and resilience[1]—may be operationalized differently in FCAC. In some settings, meeting countries where they are means advancing structural reforms to improve system performance; in others it may begin with restoring or preserving core system functions, strengthening institutional resilience, or building the foundations for longer-term reforms. Working through governments to strengthen education systems takes time but is essential. However, when systems do not reach certain populations, the balance between system strengthening and ensuring no one is left behind needs to be calibrated to best meet the context. In such cases, GPE grant agents need to work with decentralized levels of the education system where feasible, and accompany rather than substitute for local capacity.

Partnership compacts are relevant in FCAC: Delivering results at scale requires more than financing standalone projects; it depends on the alignment and coherence of system components including core system stakeholders, backed by political commitment and institutional capacity. Although system reforms can be challenging in contexts of fragility and conflict, GPE 2025 demonstrated that GPE's approach to aligning national and international stakeholders around the delivery of a priority reform is a relevant pathway to system strengthening even in partner countries affected by fragility and conflict. By June 2025, 34 of these countries had developed partnership compacts articulating priority reforms (GPE, 2025). For example, the Democratic Republic of Congo's partnership compact combines structural reforms with targeted actions in conflict-affected areas. During GPE 2030,

Democratic Republic of Congo - Transformation at scale

Since joining GPE in 2012, the Democratic Republic of Congo has increased its primary school completion rate from 29 to 70 percent, a remarkable gain in one of Africa's most populous and challenging education environments. Yet progress remains uneven across the country. Cycles of armed conflict, repeated health emergencies and governance constraints mean that one in five primary-age children remains out of school. GPE's current system transformation grant supports a two-pronged approach: investing in national structural reforms, including a teacher retirement scheme, merit-based recruitment and overhauled pre-service training, while supporting temporary learning spaces, teaching materials and teacher training on psychosocial support and gender-based violence prevention in conflict-affected areas in coordination with ECW and ECHO. The Democratic Republic of Congo demonstrates that in the most complex fragile settings, system transformation and humanitarian response are not sequential stages. They must happen in parallel, on multiple time horizons, sustained over many years.

[1] GPE 2030.

midterm reviews of these compacts will take stock of progress and identify adaptations, creating the basis for continued GPE grant support.

Sustainable education financing in FCAC requires robust analysis of fiscal constraints and carefully sequenced domestic and external investments: Key challenges include structural fiscal space constraints with low tax-to-GDP ratios and significant debt service interest burdens. During GPE 2025, partner countries affected by fragility and conflict made distinct progress in assessing equity, efficiency and volume of domestic finance for education, from 9 percent of countries in 2022 to nearly 90 percent in 2025 (GPE, 2025). Moreover, since 2021, nearly US$1.2 billion has been mobilized in cofinancing for partner countries affected by fragility and conflict, representing nearly a third of all cofinancing mobilized by GPE during this period. Going forward, GPE will need to lean into helping these countries sequence domestic and external investments, while ensuring that innovative financing options are context sensitive.

Ukraine - Partnership in the face of conflict

When Russia's full-scale invasion disrupted schooling for millions of Ukrainian children, GPE combined accelerated financing with its Multiplier instrument to mobilize over US$51 million in matched support from Google, Microsoft and UNESCO. The response was wide-ranging and practical: digital devices and platforms delivered to students, 39 Digital Learning Centers established serving around 12,000 children annually, catch-up learning supported for tens of thousands of students and mental health and psychosocial services scaled to educators nationwide. Ukraine demonstrates what GPE's financing architecture can achieve when its instruments work in combination, attracting private sector and partner resources that might not otherwise have reached an education system under active conflict.

Gender equality and inclusion must be approached as intersectional: Girls, displaced learners and children with disabilities face disproportionate barriers in fragile settings. Evidence from GPE 2025 demonstrates that strong attention to gender equality and inclusion has led to better evidence use, deeper policy dialogue and improved program design (Kellum and Tsolakis, 2025). Global data demonstrate that two-thirds of children who are out of school live in countries affected by fragility and conflict. Gender disparities intensify in conflict-affected contexts across education levels: girls are far more at risk of sexual violence in crisis contexts and displacement causes drop out. These patterns call for nuanced strategies that address contextual barriers. Sustained effort is needed to systematically address intersecting vulnerabilities, including at the system level to ensure that national data systems capture children who are left behind.

Myanmar - Collective action in a complex crisis

When Myanmar's military takeover in 2021 threatened learning continuity for millions of children, GPE worked with ECW, UNESCO, civil society organizations and local education providers to ensure a coordinated response, reprogramming a US$50 million grant to deliver safe learning spaces across conflict-affected regions without direct engagement with de facto authorities. A further US$20.18 million in cofinancing was mobilized from Australia and the United Kingdom, and an additional US$18.11 million grant is generating evidence on cost-effective delivery for the hardest-to-reach children. The response demonstrates what well-coordinated collective action can achieve. Building on this foundation, the Joint Response Framework II (2026-2030) will align partner investments around shared priorities, with GPE continuing to support coordination and evidence-building in one of the world's most complex education environments.

In crisis-affected contexts, sector coordination must connect development dialogue with humanitarian and refugee coordination: Education sector coordination in FCAC is critical to inform

programming and ensure optimal use of resources. Coordinating agencies play an indispensable role. For example, UNESCO coordinated the development of the Joint Response Framework in Myanmar, while Transitional Education Plans in Sudan and Yemen illustrate promising practices in strengthening coordination and harmonizing decision-making on education priorities across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Recent years have also brought strong engagement at both global and country levels between GPE and humanitarian actors, including the Initiative for Strengthening Education in Emergencies Coordination (ISEEC) and the Education Cluster, which has helped improve coordination between local education groups and humanitarian partners in several GPE partner countries. In addition, ongoing collaboration between GPE and ECW country teams has demonstrated the value of coordinated financing and partnership in supporting system resilience in tandem with education in emergencies. This will be further enhanced through joint country level guidance for contexts supported by both funds.

Inclusive dialogue in situations of fragility and conflict requires deliberate efforts to ensure representation from affected populations: Evaluation evidence has underscored the fundamental role of civil society in establishing inclusive, quality education systems, confirming the role of Education Out Loud (EOL) in supporting effective engagement and influence of civil society organizations (INTRAC, 2025). EOL currently provides support to civil society grantees in 37 countries affected by fragility and conflict. As of 2025, 25 of these countries included civil society and teacher organization representatives in their local education group, while 46 percent of National Education Coalitions supported by EOL have among their membership at least one group that represents internally displaced persons or refugees. Support for access to policy dialogue for civil society, teachers and youth, including those affected directly by conflict and crisis, is essential to strengthen civil society's critical role in building resilience in the face of conflict and fragility and addressing the education needs of affected populations.

System transformation in FCAC must tackle cross-sectoral challenges: The learning crisis is deeply connected with forces outside the education sector, such as climate change, malnutrition and violence in and around schools. These forces undermine education systems and individual learning; at the same time, education spurs solutions to address them. During GPE 2025, GPE launched technical assistance initiatives that bring together partners to co-create solutions and work across ministries and sectors to improve coordination and delivery. For example, in South Sudan, where floods damaged nearly 900 schools in a single season (2021–2022), GPE combined its financial resources with the Green Climate Fund to support the adoption of a national climate-education policy, revise school construction standards to integrate hazard-resistant and gender-sensitive designs and pilot 75 green schools in flood and drought-prone areas.

Syria - Speed and coordination in crisis

When a devastating earthquake struck Syria in February 2023, nearly 3,000 schools were damaged, and learning was disrupted for 7 million children. Within three weeks, and in close consultation with the United Kingdom and the United States as co-chairs of the Development Partners Group, GPE mobilized US$3.75 million in Accelerated Funding, working with ECW, UNICEF and Save the Children to establish 61 temporary learning spaces reaching over 16,000 children, including children with disabilities. A further US$15 million followed to repair schools and restore learning. This example demonstrates GPE's ability to move fast when it matters, while keeping sight of the longer-term system recovery that follows every emergency.

GPE policies allow for rapid adaptation, but there is room for more agility: While GPE's flexibility and adaptability have enabled GPE's flexibility and adaptability have enabled over US$ 6 billion in funding in over 40 FCAC since 2002 certain structural elements of GPE's operating model require concerted efforts for consistently effective, timely support and impact:

- **Effective implementation of grants** in FCAC requires oversight and continuous dialogue, in particular with grant agents. The reorganization of Secretariat regional teams resulted in enhanced grant oversight capacity and consequently grant performance in FCAC has improved markedly, with on-track grants now at or slightly above the overall portfolio average. Improved implementation oversight also helped reduce the number of active Accelerating Funding grants from 21 to 4 in 2025 despite new grants being approved during the same period. The Secretariat needs to continue to work closely with grant agents to build on this trend.
- **Mobilizing a diverse range of partners around key grant decisions** does not always lead to timely actions. Policies and guidelines interact with political factors and a diverse range of interests. For example, hesitation to change current grant agent arrangements can lead to delayed decisions at country level. While reinforced Secretariat support through regional teams is helping address this, further policy changes, including delegated authority to the Secretariat, would be necessary to guarantee timely transitions in all cases.
- **Diversifying the range of accredited and active grant agents** has provided a broader range of options to deliver effectively in fragile settings, including through organizations with deeper humanitarian experience. This allows governments to find, through the grant agent selection process, the most appropriate and streamlined grant agent arrangement in each context. Going forward, these processes should ensure adequate attention to working optimally through government systems, including at decentralized levels.
- While significant resources have been raised through the **Multiplier in FCAC**, further nuance may be required to lean more into adapted sustainable financing options such as disaster risk insurance. There is also flexibility under GPE 2030 for the lowest income countries to reallocate Multiplier indicative allocations to regular system transformation grants if they are unable to mobilize additional financing, ensuring that such countries do not risk losing out on funding.
- **Simplifying operating procedures** – from partnership compacts to grants and reporting – will make GPE more adaptable, less transaction heavy and easier to understand in all contexts, including FCAC. The Secretariat is identifying such opportunities for simplification and will consider FCAC-specific changes if needed. Simplification options identified already could reduce transactions by as much as 20 percent. The Secretariat will incorporate some changes immediately into GPE 2030 guidance and will hold consultations and seek comments on others, especially those that will require committee and Board approval.

ECW-GPE complementarity needs to be defined clearly at global level and be supported through effective collaboration and clear guidance at country level: GPE is committed to continued and improved collaboration with ECW to maximize efficiency and impact (see the ECW-GPE Complementarity Note). In the sub-set of countries where ECW and GPE are both engaged (23 of 38 GPE partner countries categorized as FCAC in 2025), GPE's work with governments to prepare for and respond to crises and minimize their impact on education systems seeks to build coherence with ECW investments designed to fill gaps in crisis readiness, emergency response, and continuity of learning

(GPE, 2025). ECW's approaches to school- and community-level resilience are critical to identifying cost-effective, context-specific solutions to sustain learning continuity—insights that can inform national policy and be scaled through GPE's operating model to strengthen system resilience. By linking investments in risk reduction, preparedness and anticipatory action with long-term system strengthening, GPE can help humanitarian responses contribute to more resilient education systems and sustain learning continuity in the face of recurrent shocks.

South Sudan - GPE and ECW in action

South Sudan illustrates how GPE and ECW financing instruments can work together over time and complement one another. US$75 million in grant funding from GPE are focused on system-level recovery, while an additional US$10 million Accelerated Funding grant was programmed as additional financing to ECW's US$40 million Multi-Year Resilience Program, addressing more immediate needs. The result is a coherent, complementary response that neither GPE nor ECW could have achieved independently, and a practical demonstration of what the humanitarian-development nexus looks like when it works.

IV. The path forward: GPE's FCAC engagement under GPE 2030

GPE 2030 places fragile and conflict-affected contexts at the center of its strategic ambition. The strategy commits to a financing model that combines flexibility with sustainability, supporting learning continuity during crises while investing in longer-term system recovery and resilience to ensure no child is left behind. It also emphasizes preemptive education planning, stronger inclusion of humanitarian actors in national planning processes, and a more intersectional approach to disadvantage that addresses poverty, gender, disability, displacement and climate vulnerability.

Objective 1: Country-owned priority education reforms effectively implemented, fully integrating gender equality and inclusion of people with disabilities, refugees and other marginalized groups based on country context

Under GPE 2030, the shift from GPE 2025 is deliberate: from broad reform ambition and planning toward fewer, clearer priority reforms focused on delivery and results—including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and refugee-hosting countries. The central question is not whether system reform is possible, but **which reforms matter most and how they can be implemented credibly** under severe constraints. In some contexts, transformation will mean improvements in immediate service delivery; in others, it may mean stabilizing core system functions, sustaining learning through prolonged crisis, or preventing system collapse. GPE therefore centers its support on a small number of critical, country-owned policy and institutional reforms that can realistically be delivered, adapted over time, and make a tangible difference for the most marginalized children.

This focus on priority reforms is intended to sharpen accountability and **shift attention from planning to execution**. Partnership compacts align governments and partners around these reforms, while annual monitoring and mid-term reviews create structured moments to assess progress, course-correct, and refocus effort where delivery is lagging. Progress is measured not against ideal end-states but against credible movement along a reform pathway, grounded in political economy realities and focused on sustaining results over time.

Data systems are fundamental to this delivery agenda. Weak or fragmented administrative and learning data remain a binding constraint in many fragile settings, particularly in countries hosting large numbers of refugees, where parallel systems often obscure who is being reached and who is left behind. GPE therefore emphasizes strengthening education data and learning assessment systems that cover all children, including refugees, internally displaced learners, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. While there are strong examples of learning measurement in FCAC programs, these efforts can be projectized. Under GPE 2030, the emphasis is on supporting governments to build and sustain national learning assessment systems, so that learning outcomes for nationals and refugees alike can be monitored, sustained, and scaled. Gender equality and inclusion are integral to this approach, ensuring that system-level reform translates into tangible gains for those most at risk of being left furthest behind.

Objective 2: Domestic and external financing mobilized to support and sustain the effective implementation of priority reforms

Domestic public finance remains the cornerstone of sustainability. GPE will continue to support partner countries affected by fragility and conflict to improve the efficiency, equity and volume of domestic education spending through stronger planning, budgeting and public financial management. External financing remains essential, especially for the poorest and most crisis-affected countries. But it must be catalytic, not substitutive. In the context of declining ODA, GPE will have a more deliberate focus on deploying its own grant capital intentionally for i) safeguarding priority education spending and sustaining core system capacity, including in contexts where per-pupil spending remains below levels required to support quality improvements; and ii) leveraging external resources, particularly non-traditional aid, aligned behind country priorities. The path toward greater financing self-reliance does not happen by reducing support and hoping systems hold. It happens by using financing—intentionally, strategically—to build the institutions, incentives and fiscal foundations that make sustained domestic investment possible.

GPE's **sustainable financing** approach is relevant in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The approach requires attention to macro-fiscal realism, state capability constraints, delivery capacity and careful sequencing. In volatile environments, it is important to identify what an approach or instrument would concretely add rather than leading with any particular innovative tool. A key question in FCAC is whether sustainability should be anchored in government systems, decentralized structures or communities and partner delivery channels. The appropriate anchor will vary sharply between contexts where government engagement is feasible and contexts where it is constrained or prohibited. Similarly, mobilizing **aligned** cofinancing of different kinds in FCAC will be key, leveraging the comparative advantages of different sources of financing (e.g. innovation from philanthropy). As the sustainable financing agenda is operationalized further, these issues will be critical to address. For example, in Liberia volatility in external financing recently exposed the limits of a system without a domestic fiscal strategy to fall back on. Supported by GPE and partners, this triggered closer collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, shifting from competing priorities to building a shared investment strategy anchored in realistic fiscal trajectories.

Objective 3: Reforms driven and sustained by coordinated, effective, inclusive and accountable partnerships, including core system stakeholders

Transforming education systems depends on inclusive partnerships aligned behind evidence-based, country-owned reforms. This requires government engagement with development and financial partners, teachers, youth and civil society to strengthen accountability, reduce transaction costs, avoid duplication and improve aid effectiveness so reforms are more likely to be implemented and sustained. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, inclusive, coordinated and effective partnerships are essential to optimize resources, strengthen institutional capacity and resilience and ensure learning continuity. In the sub-set of these contexts where crisis is ongoing, recurrent or protracted, **partnership must extend across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus**.

Working in FCAC places additional demands on coordination, which is an eligible activity under the GPE system capacity grant. In efforts to reinforce GPE's focus on effective, well-coordinated local education groups, the Secretariat is mobilizing the Coordinating Agency Community of Practice to create opportunities for coordinating agencies in FCAC to share experiences, while engaging with global partners like the education cluster to foster global reflections on coordination anchored in concrete experiences at the country level.

GPE 2030 brings increased attention to whether populations affected by programs and reforms are consulted in their development. GPE's monitoring of inclusive policy dialogue will enable and incentivize strengthened attention to engagement of core system stakeholders in education policy dialogue and create opportunities to surface evidence on the impact of inclusive consultation on the implementation of reforms. In FCAC, these **stakeholders may include specific groups such as internally displaced populations, refugees or other marginalized communities**, including teachers from these groups. Through EOL, GPE will continue to strengthen civil society, teacher and youth advocacy and policy dialogue capabilities, while also linking this support more consistently to core GPE processes like partnership compacts and midterm reviews.

GPE will also continue its focus on fragility and conflict in its Knowledge and Innovations Exchange (KIX) program to ensure that knowledge and experience gained in one fragile setting benefit similar situations and feed into guidance, technical support and evidence uptake in policy development.

V. Conclusion

GPE's sustained engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts reflects a core conviction: that building strong, inclusive public education systems is both the most effective long-term investment and a necessary foundation for responding to crisis. GPE's comparative strength lies in its ability to accompany partner countries in laying these foundations while adapting to shocks as they arise, ensuring that progress toward system transformation is not lost, but reinforced, in times of disruption.

As the global humanitarian landscape shifts toward more locally led and nationally owned approaches, GPE is uniquely positioned to play a central role in supporting this transition in the education sector. By ensuring better alignment between system-level reforms and humanitarian action, GPE can help institutionalize emergency preparedness, coordination and response within national education systems, accelerating the transition from parallel delivery toward more sustainable, integrated models that strengthen resilience and sustain learning continuity. Central to this effort is GPE's approach to sustainable financing in FCAC, which prioritizes safeguarding core

education spending, strengthening domestic systems where feasible and deploying catalytic external financing in ways that build the institutional and fiscal foundations for longer-term resilience.

At the heart of this effort is GPE's partnership model. The progress achieved to date, and the success of GPE 2030, depends on the collective strength of diverse actors working in alignment: partner governments leading national agendas, local actors shaping contextually relevant solutions, development and humanitarian partners coordinating their support and donors sustaining predictable financing. Harnessing this collective capacity will be essential to building more resilient education systems capable of withstanding crisis and delivering learning for all children, regardless of context.

Annex 1. Country case studies

Country	Context	GPE instruments used[1]	Key results	# of children reached through GPE funding & cofinancing (2021-2025)[2]
Afghanistan	Political crisis, collapsed government authority	Accelerated Funding, Humanitarian Response Plan, implementation through UNICEF and Save the Children	~$110 million made available; distribution of teaching and learning materials to millions of children and directly supporting continuation of education for an additional 140,000 children through community-based education.	2.6 million (~19% of the school-age population)
Central African Republic	Post-conflict reconstruction	Accelerated Funding, system transformation grants	Crisis response and early system recovery investments	1.7 million (~67% of the school-age population)
Chad	Fragile state, hosting large refugee population	Accelerated Funding, system transformation grants	Rapid crisis response; progressive inclusion of displaced children in national system	7.6 million (~95% of the school-age population)
Congo, Democratic Rep. of	Fragile state, ongoing conflict in eastern regions	Multiple successive grants over many years	Improvements in enrollment, gender parity, and education infrastructure; ongoing system transformation	25.6 million (~61% of the school-age population)
Myanmar	Political crisis following military takeover	Reprogrammed implementation grants	Learning continuity maintained for 3.7 million children with limited access to schooling	2.3 million (~20% of the school-age population)

[1] Combines implementation grants, system capacity grants, education sector program development grants and program development grants.

[2] Methodology note: Cumulative estimates for the GPE 2025 period combine actual beneficiary data reported by grant agents in grant progress and completion reports with projections based on expected GPE grant disbursements and Multiplier cofinancing, using a median unit cost per child reached. For more details on the methodology see: https://www.globalpartnership.org/library/key-results-2021-2025.

Somalia	Protracted fragility, weak state capacity	Accelerated Funding	Emergency education financing; support for sector coordination	1 million (~14% of the school-age population)
South Sudan	Protracted conflict, low system capacity	Multiplier, system capacity grant, Girls' Education Accelerator	Integrated with ECW Multi-Year Resilience Program; sustained system-level investments during conflict	3 million (~64% of the school-age population)
Syria	Protracted crisis with limited or no engagement with central government in parts of the country; heavy reliance on humanitarian actors and parallel service delivery systems.	Accelerated Funding, system capacity grant, system transformation grant	~US$46m in grants; rapid earthquake response to support system recovery and learning continuity, establishment of the Education Dialogue Forum Secretariat, supporting non-formal pathways to education.	207,509 (~3% of the school-age population)
Ukraine	Active conflict, large-scale displacement	Multiplier ($25.5 million, matched by private partners)	60,000 professionals trained in psychosocial support; 79,000 digital devices provided	1.5 million (~25% of the school-age population)
Vanuatu	Climate-induced fragility characterized by recurrent shocks (cyclones, flooding, sea-level rise)	Accelerated funding, Multiplier/education sector plan implementation grant, system transformation grant, system capacity grant	Post-cyclone Harold and COVID-19 response: >7,600 teaching and learning materials distributed to preschools; pre-primary reading books for children with visual disabilities in large print (720 copies) and 23 audiobooks, at least 83 primary schools received water tanks; 13,800 students and 560 teachers benefited from water/handwashing facilities.	73,420 (~62% of the school-age population)
Yemen	Protracted armed conflict	Accelerated Funding, system	Learning continuity sustained during acute	4.6 million (~36% of the

	with fragmented governance, large-scale displacement and severe disruption to basic state functions. Education delivery is constrained by insecurity, weak data systems and limited fiscal space.	transformation grants, system capacity grant	conflict shocks, with a focus on girls' education and teacher support, including targeted assistance to rural female teachers, performance-based incentives and the implementation of learning assessments.	school-age population)

Annex 2. Key components of GPE's Operational Framework for Effective Support in FCAC

Basis for engagement	The best interests of children
	Protecting the system
	Humanitarian principles
Alignment and interim authority	Non-political engagement
	Alignment with UN/International arrangements
	Interim authority on GPE processes
	Function over form
Working with others	Commitment to a shared planning framework endorsed by key stakeholders as the basis for interventions
	Complementarity

Guiding principles: The framework is anchored in GPE's core values, including country ownership, mutual accountability, and a commitment to education as a fundamental human right, with a strong focus on gender equality and inclusive policy dialogue.

Specific operating principles for political crises: In situations of political instability or widespread violence where a recognized government may not exist, the framework adopts key humanitarian principles—humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence—to guide its actions, always prioritizing the best interests of the children.

System transformation focus: Aligned with the GPE 2025 strategic plan, the framework prioritizes strengthening the resilience of education systems. It supports gender-responsive planning and mobilizes coordinated action among partners, using context-specific analysis to guide interventions.

Flexible funding and adaptation: The framework includes mechanisms for rapid adaptation, allowing the GPE Secretariat to consult with partners immediately after a crisis to modify grants, reallocate resources, or access accelerated funding to mitigate the impact on education.

Partnership and coordination: It emphasizes a "function over form" approach to partnership, enabling GPE to align with international humanitarian structures like the UN Education Cluster or Development Partners Group (DPG) when traditional local education groups are unable to operate. This ensures that donor efforts remain coordinated and effective.