Thematic session: GPE's Role in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts

Session Objectives:

1. To reflect on lessons emerging from GPE's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and the strategic role of GPE in these contexts given current global challenges
2. To discuss complementarity among partners across the humanitarian-development continuum, and how to maximize collective impact
3. To discuss how the Partnership as a whole will work together to achieve impact under GPE 2030 in fragile and conflict-affected contexts

GPE's Role in Fragile Contexts: Executive Summary

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 disrupt learning at unprecedented levels. At the same time, significant cuts in education financing widens the gap between needs and available resources, risking deeper learning losses and further undermining progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In response, shifts in the global aid architecture are placing greater emphasis on national and local ownership, requiring stronger alignment across the development-humanitarian-peace continuum.

Within this complex and evolving context, the related annex clarifies GPE's mandate and mission in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAC). It differentiates GPE's work from Education in Emergencies (EiE) by emphasizing GPE's distinct system strengthening mandate across diverse operational contexts.

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.* Over time, as an increasing number of GPE partner countries have been affected by fragility and conflict, GPE has evolved its approaches over 15 years through a series of Board decisions to strengthen education systems before, during and after crises.

To work effectively across its 92 partner countries—38 of which are currently categorized as fragile and conflict-affected—GPE recognizes the importance of developing strong and resilient education systems across diverse contexts by meeting countries where they are, including the heightened challenges of fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In these situations, it is critical to maintain a focus on system strengthening, advance sustainable financing—including domestic resource mobilization where feasible—and mobilize inclusive

partnership with particular attention to working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and including representatives from crisis-affected populations.

GPE has learned important lessons that have shaped and continue to shape our engagement in FCAS. These are detailed in the paper and include:

- System transformation must ensure maximal use of government systems to strengthen capacity and sustainability,
- Partnership compacts are relevant in FCAC, where driving results at scale requires the alignment and coherence of system components, backed by political commitment and institutional capacity.
- Sustainable education financing in FCAC requires robust analysis of fiscal constraints and carefully sequenced domestic and external investments.
- Gender equality and inclusion must be approached as intersectional, In crisis-affected contexts,
- Sector coordination must connect development dialogue with humanitarian and refugee coordination.
- Inclusive dialogue in situations of fragility and conflict requires deliberate efforts to ensure representation from affected populations.
- System transformation in FCAC must tackle cross-sectoral challenges such as climate change, malnutrition and violence.
- There is room for more agility in GPE systems and operating model.
- Complementarity with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) must be defined clearly and supported consistently.

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 and representatives of crisis-affected populations in national planning processes, and an intersectional approach to disadvantage that addresses poverty, gender, disability, displacement and climate vulnerability.

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.

Run of Show

Chair: TBC

Time	Description
(2 mins)	**Opening and Scene Setting –** GPE CEO Opening remarks to frame the strategic importance of GPE's engagement in fragile and conflict-affected contexts within the broader GPE 2030 agenda. The CEO will highlight why this discussion is timely in light of evolving fragility trends, shifts in the education architecture including those related to the EiE architecture dialogues, and the need to ensure GPE's FCAC engagement remains fit for purpose.
(10 mins)	**Implications of Evolving Education in Emergencies Architecture for GPE's FCAC Engagement** Brief update from Canada on recent discussions on the broader education in emergencies architecture This segment will provide context for Board discussion on how GPE's role and partnerships may need to continue evolving within a changing external environment.
(8 mins)	**Strategic Considerations for GPE's FCAC Engagement Under GPE 2030 –** Secretariat Overview of GPE's engagement in FCAC, including the scale and diversity of GPE's FCAC portfolio, key lessons from implementation to date, and emerging strategic considerations for GPE's FCAC engagement under GPE 2030, and key responses to the EiE dialogue recommendations.
(15 mins)	**Country Perspectives: System Transformation in Practice Across Diverse FCAC** Selected partner country Board members will share reflections on what system transformation and resilience-building looks like in their contexts, including how GPE's support has contributed to preserving, adapting, and strengthening education systems and what are the critical operational challenges and priorities for GPE 2030.
(8 mins)	**ECW: Strengthening Collective Impact Across the Humanitarian-Development Continuum** ECW will reflect on the evolving humanitarian-development landscape and discuss how development and humanitarian actors can work together to continue strengthening complementarity, coordination, and collective impact in support of crisis-affected children.
(45 mins)	**Board discussion**

	Board members will reflect on the strategic considerations presented and provide guidance on the proposed direction for GPE's engagement in FCAC under GPE 2030, including priorities for strengthening GPE's operational approach, financing modalities, and partnerships, and ensuring complementarity and alignment with ECW.
(2 min)	**Closing:** Chair closes