INDEPENDENT SUMMATIVE EVALUATION: INITIAL FINDINGS

Please note: Board documents are deliberative in nature and, in accordance with the GPE Transparency Policy, are considered public documents only after their appraisal by the Board. It is understood that constituencies will circulate Board documents among their members prior to Board consideration for consultation purposes.

Recommended by: SIC

Committee Consideration:

The SIC welcomed the presentation of the initial findings and stressed the pivotal role of the ISE for the strategy. The SIC agreed that the ISE should make its initial findings available for the strategy process.

The Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) reviewed the Interim Report before it was circulated to the dedicated SIC working group and the Board. The Evaluation Team (ET) will now proceed with the second stage of the evaluation in accordance with an Inception Report that has been reviewed by the IEC.

Policy Reference: SIC/2018/10 DOC 07; SIC 2019/02/ DOC 04; SIC/2019/10 DOC 02

1. OBJECTIVE

1.1 The purpose of the document is to introduce the Initial Findings of the Independent Summative Evaluation Report to inform the Strategic Plan discussions.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Independent Summative Evaluation aims to be instrumental in helping to shape GPE's new strategy. It will also serve as an update of the findings of the last independent evaluation of GPE that was conducted in 2015. The initial stage of the ISE (mid-August 2019 to mid-November 2019) consisted of an elaborate desk review of the rich body of evidence available in order to prepare an initial response to the evaluation questions. The SIC was presented with these initial findings during their October meeting. The second stage (January 2020 to March 2020) will address existing evidence gaps for a comprehensive assessment of GPE's performance.

2.2 An Independent Evaluation Committee (IEC) was nominated by the SIC to steer the work of the Evaluation Team and ensure the independence and quality of the evaluation. Both the SIC and the IEC have the responsibility to make sure that the ISE informs the strategy process and monitor the timeline to ensure multiple points of connection.

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 The SIC working group, the IEC and the ET will meet after the Board meeting to launch the second stage of the evaluation, while taking into account feedback from the Board discussion.

3.2 The draft Final Report will be presented to the SIC in April 2020 and Final Findings shared with the Board for the June 2020 meeting.

ANNEX A: Interim Report



Independent Summative Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education 2020

Interim Report

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation team of MDF Training and Consultancy undertaking the Independent Summative Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education would like to express their sincere appreciation to members of the Independent Evaluation Committee for their guidance and support. The evaluation team would also like to thank staff of the Global Partnership for Education for their helpfulness in providing relevant documentation, and sharing their insights during and after the evaluation team's visit to Washington DC in September 2019.

Photo by Nikhita S on Unsplash

List of Abbreviations

ASA	Advocacy and Social Accountability
CA	Coordinating Agency
CLE	Country Level Evaluation
CSEF	Civil Society Education Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CY	Calendar year
DCP	Developing Country Partner
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPG	Development Partner Group
EMIS	Education and Management Information System
EPR	Effective Partnership Review
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Plan Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Program Implementation Grant
FCAC	Countries affected by fragility and conflict
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected State
FFF	Financing and Funding Framework
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
FY	Financial Year
GA	Grant Agent
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEC	Internal Efficiency Coefficient
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ISE	Independent Summative Evaluation
JSR	Joint Sector Review
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LAS	Learning Assessment System
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCA	Maximum Country Allocation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
NFM	New Funding Mechanism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

OECD DAC	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OOS	Out of School
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PDG	Program Development Grant
PTTR	Pupil Trained Reacher Ratio
QA	Quality Assurance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TEP	Transitional Education Plan
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UKFIET	United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US$	United States dollar
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VfM	Value for Money

Executive Summary

Evaluation purpose and approach

The Independent Summative Evaluation (ISE) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) aims to help shape the latter's post-2020 strategy, by drawing lessons from its performance since 2015. In addition, ISE is a means through which GPE aims to be transparent and accountable for its actions and results.

The first stage of ISE (mid-August 2019 to mid-November 2019) consists of an elaborate desk study with the aim of finding an initial response to the evaluation questions, making optimal use of the rich available documentation. Stage one will be continued in December, leading to an inception report (December 2019) that will describe in detail how, in the second stage (January 2020 to March 2020), evidence gaps will be addressed to arrive at a comprehensive assessment of the GPE's performance.

This report is structured according to two main evaluation criteria, each sub-divided into four components. The first criterion, Development Effectiveness, covers Effectiveness, Efficiency, Likely Sustainability, and Relevance. The second criterion, Organizational Effectiveness, covers Governance and Management, Administrative Efficiency, Country-Level Arrangements and Processes, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Development Effectiveness

Findings on effectiveness

Under the effectiveness criterion, the ISE presents GPE performance in progressing towards its outcome-level (goal 3) and output-level results (objective 1 to 5) and reviews likely factors contributing to observed progress towards GPE's objectives.

GPE countries have shown signs of progress in strengthening their education systems and implementing ESPs. This progress, however, has been weaker than expected during planning or, in some countries, insufficient progress to meet the most pressing needs in basic education. The main drivers of progress reported in the Country Level Evaluations (CLEs) are connected to DCPs, in terms of political will to progress on education, country capacity, and resources. GPE has provided a small but meaningful contribution to kick-start progress on the sub-sectors of the education sector plan that the ESPIG was funding.

The quality of Education Sector Plans and connected strategies produced by GPE countries has significantly improved. GPE quality assurance processes and standards for ESPs and GPE financial and technical support, also provided by coordinating agencies and grant agencies, are closely associated with better quality planning. Nevertheless, country capacity at baseline still plays an important role in determining the quality of planning.

GPE countries have progressed towards inclusive sector dialogue, especially at the stage of planning for the sector-wide plan and in terms of wider participation of civil society, but less than expected and hoped for in the following phase of dialogue on plan implementation and monitoring. The Joint Sector Review (JSR) led by the DCP Government and conducted through the Local Education Group (LEG) is the model proposed by GPE for monitoring and improving sector plan implementation. Despite GPE guidance for JSRs, challenges remain related to lack of clarity in responsibilities and the level of effort required for undertaking a JSR. A variety of challenges bar the way to effective dialogue and monitoring that translates into mutual accountability. A weak tradition of dialogue between the government and civil society prevents strong dialogue, as did the structure of dialogue in many fora with different levels of inclusions and formality.

Education Sector Program Implementation Grants have constituted the lion's share of GPE grant funding at the country level and aim to support the implementation of parts of the sector-wide plan. They are relevant for GPE's

goals, mostly on track to achieve their main outputs and objectives, and are considered relevant and significant by stakeholders despite the fact that they represent only a fraction of funding for ESP implementation.

GPE has experienced mixed progress in raising international funding for education and aligning international funding with government systems. GPE demonstrated success in mobilizing unprecedented domestic and international funding commitments in the past few years. In terms of *better* (i.e. more aligned and harmonized) funding, domestic factors, such as the strength of country Public Finance Management and the presence of established pooled funding mechanisms contributed to donors' and GPE's alignment with national systems. CAs and GAs contributed well to coordinating donors and managing the grants, but the effectiveness of GPE's advocacy efforts targeting donors to further align their funding and provide pooled funds remains limited.

GPE has overachieved on its targets related to building a stronger partnership. At the same time, concerns remain about the quality of partnership dynamics both at global and country level. This relates to issues like: country ownership, the complexity of effective constituency consultations, level of delegation between the Board, its committees and the Secretariat, creating a spirit of mutual accountability, and balancing inclusiveness with practical functionality. The on-going Effective Partnership Review process aims to address these challenges, in particular at country level, but its roll-out and effects will take considerable time.

Findings on efficiency

Efficient use of funds is a key aspect of country-level objective 3 in GPE's Theory of Change which includes efficient GPE financing. The implementation of GPE's grants in-country is generally efficient but challenged by capacity constraints especially in FCACs. Efficient use of funds may be contingent upon an efficient operational environment that goes beyond fund management and includes other components of an efficient education system.

A very high percentage of grants are on track and exceed milestones. Reduced timeframes for grant approval processes by GPE and grant disbursements to Development Country Partners contribute to efficiency gains in grants' pre-implementation stages. Delays in grants' approval and disbursements are currently being addressed by GPE through the Secretariat's Grant Process Streamlining project.

Findings on sustainability

Sustainability of outcomes requires longer-term perspectives that exceed the lifespan of the traditional project cycle. The absence of a specific sustainability criterion may undermine ESP's sustainability of outcomes. Enhancement of DCPs' EMIS and other data-collection and reporting systems is a priority for results-tracking and sustainability. Capacity constraints of ministries of education, particularly in a context of decentralization, are a challenge in creating sustainable outcomes. GPE support at present does not systematically include initial capability assessments and capacity-building measures that would help overcome these constraints.

Findings on relevance

GPE is well aligned with SDG 4 vision, targets and indicators for basic education. Its grants are well aligned with GPE's higher-level goals of improved and more equitable learning outcomes and increased equity, gender equality, and inclusion in education. GPE grants are also well aligned with education sector plans, with weakness in terms of prioritizing inclusive education.

Regarding funding based on needs, the GPE allocation formula prioritizes funding to Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries, more populous countries, lower-income countries, and countries that are more vulnerable in terms of education needs. Other parts of the GPE operational model aim to incentivize country performance, rather than respond to needs, such as the requirements of having quality ESP endorsed as a condition for receiving ESPIG funding.

The Theory of Change (ToC) in design contained in the Strategy 2020 is clear in its logic, as it identifies and connects GPE's objectives and goals. It justifies the need for improved equity and quality education referring to external research and explains that these goals require an improved education system. It contains the logic that GPE's three country-level outputs will lead to this with inclusive policy dialogue increasing the quality of policies and plans. This in turn should lead to better funding and implementation of programs for strengthening education systems. The ToC was constructed with limited available evidence, meaning that many of the causal linkages, though carefully considered, had to be assumed. The ToC furthermore includes assumptions that partially refer to external factors for success, and partially provide an elaboration of GPE's intervention logic. This illustrates the scope for refinement in reflecting causal connections and in filling gaps in the pathways of change.

In practice, the ToC connections between GPE support and quality sector planning, ESPIG implementation, and strengthened education system appear valid, under the assumption that a country is not affected by open conflict and support is tailored to country implementation capacity for sector plans. The causal connection with strengthened education systems, requires effective ESP implementation, which is a different process from ESP planning, and which has seen weaker progress than planning and ESPIG implementation. The reported evidence that demonstrates the connection between GPE support and inclusive dialogue and monitoring and between GPE support and more and better financing remains limited at present.

Organizational Effectiveness

Findings on Governance and Management

The Board and its sub-committees have made deliberate intensified efforts to provide strategic direction and management oversight since 2015. In terms of resource mobilization and partner engagement, the Board has been successful in the past few years in mobilizing unprecedented funding commitments of DCPs and Donor Partners that remain to be translated into actual investments. Signs of increased engagement of various constituency groups are reported as well. To make this possible, the Board relied primarily on the Secretariat, which has been provided with additional resources to deliver an increasing number of outputs in response to Board decisions.

The Board and management have paid substantial attention to convening and aligning stakeholders. The results in aligning donors with DCP priorities, systems and procedures, however, remains an issue on which limited progress is made. The GPE Board and Secretariat have been successful in sustaining political will in financial terms, but securing country ownership with DCP government's clearly taking the lead in ESP implementation remains a concern.

The GPE has consciously communicated its vision in all its main publications and made information about its results publicly accessible. At the same time, the GPE management has been rather self-critical about the quality of its external communications. The development of a new advocacy and communication strategy that addresses the need for more tailored an approach that is more user-friendly and tailored to target audiences illustrates the Secretariat's drive towards improvement.

Findings on Administrative efficiency

The Secretariat has made increasing efforts to manage partnerships and external relations. The Secretariat has also enhanced its efforts to serve country-level processes and has shown flexibility and responsiveness to FCAC's needs to receive more, faster, and enhanced flexible funding. Notwithstanding those efforts to tailor its approach in grant application processes, making these sufficiently context-specific remains challenging given the wide variety among FCACs.

The Secretariat has provided adequate attention to administrative efficiency, and intensified fiduciary oversight on which it has performed satisfactorily, though the need for this increase is not always obvious. The overall increase in volume and diversity has made the work of the Secretariat more complex, leading to questions about prioritization and coordination. This potentially affects the clarity of purpose of the Secretariat's work with the risk of creating inefficiencies both at the global and country level.

Findings on country-level processes

Local stakeholders' perceptions of in-country arrangements are generally positive. CLEs indicate that country-level stakeholders express appreciation of GPE's contribution to improved sector dialogue (through the innovative practices of inclusive sector platforms) and, especially, to sector-wide monitoring of ESPs (through guidance in conducting Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs). LEGs have promoted dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, especially in enhancing the quality of Education Sector Plans and Transition Education Plans. Both country-level arrangements and the Secretariat support have aimed to strike the right balance between inclusion and participation in Local Education Groups and the need for their effectiveness. CLEs also highlight a need to enhance the quality of sector dialogue by improving inclusiveness of consultations as well as by keeping the sector-wide forum active post-Education Sector Plan completion, and on increasing the utility of Joint Sector Reviews for learning and decision making.

For the LEGs' effective contribution to the implementation of Education Sector Plans and Transition Education Plans, JSRs are seen as a step in the right direction. Collaborative sector monitoring processes of ESP/TEP led by government has been taking place in countries where sector-wide platforms have existed for a long time. In countries with weaker LEGs, joint sector monitoring has been limited, while also lack of monitoring data and unclear responsibilities concerning JSR implementation have been inhibiting factors.

The effectiveness of Coordinating Agencies (CAs) in being the communication link between the government, LEG partners, and the Secretariat as well as bringing Development Partners together to support the government seems to be highly dependent on context. More successful CAs get appreciated for not only being an ESPIG-oriented secretariat and mailbox but also for being promoters of broader inclusion, facilitators of discussions, and brokers of knowledge exchange. Where CAs roles have been carried out by the GAs, this has created uncertainties with respect to their roles and responsibilities and has been perceived as interference in the ownership of the ESP/TEP by the national governments. A dominant GA or CA has been reported to be undermining the LEG.

Although in some cases GPE mechanisms have increased donor confidence and coordination, GPE's influence on donors' harmonization remains weak. However, there have been GPE actions that have arguably raised donor confidence in other ways such as encouraging others, by GPE's example to channel funds through a pooled fund, and supporting provision of a clearly defined plan that attracts donor support.

Local stakeholders appreciate financial support from GPE to implement parts of the ESPs/TEPs, guidance in and support of collaborative sector-wide processes, the technical assistance by the CA and the GA, the inputs and insights from Secretariat in the preparation of ESP/TEP, the constructive interaction between the CA, the GA and the Secretariat during the preparation of ESPIGs, and the grant application review by the Secretariat. There are also some constraints experienced concerning complex and time-consuming processes such as QA, increased dialogue, and the lack of clarity regarding the roles of different actors.

Findings on Monitoring and Evaluation

The Secretariat has made extensive M&E efforts in line with GPE's Monitoring and Evaluation strategy. Effective monitoring and evaluation at the highest results (impact) level has been hampered by having to rely on country data, which has been limited and often out of date. The annual results reports structured around GPE's Results Framework provide a comprehensive and transparent review of GPE's progress in relation to its existing Theory of Change, including comparisons over time. However, the Results Framework measures complex issues in just one or a few indicators, in which cases learning and accountability may be based on narrow information. The Secretariat has made clear efforts to use M&E findings to extract lessons from monitoring and evaluation work and used these primarily to inform global decision-making, in particular in relation to shaping GPE's Effective Partnership Review process.

CLEs have been largely consistent in methodology and have provided a systematic overview of progress and contribution to country-level objectives and system-level change (outcome level). Individual summative CLEs have been indirect and diverse in reflecting country-specific lessons and by design have not included country-level recommendations. The synthesis evaluation has included generic lessons and recommendations that have contributed to strategic steering at the global level.

Overarching observations

Following its findings, the ISE has formulated some 'overarching observations' as it would be premature at the present stage to share final conclusions. These observations, structured around the five GPE objectives and meant to stimulate reflection that might be of use in the on-going post-2020 strategy development process, are as follows;

Substantial progress has been made concerning the development of ESPs meeting GPE quality standards, though access to reliable and up-to-date data on the equity and quality of education remains a bottleneck in designing sound evidence-based plans, especially in FCACs. Progress in ESP implementation remains a concern, hampered by significant resource gaps, weak mutual accountability and limited country ownership.

Inclusive policy dialogue and functioning mutual accountability are key processes in getting the content of education policies right and implementable. This reconfirms the importance of GPE's success in stimulating more inclusive ESP and ESPIG planning and design processes, but sustaining this during implementation remains challenging. To address this, GPE has articulated and stimulated various mechanisms, frameworks, and tools, which each country adapts and applies differently with different levels of success. These varied collective experiences offer an enormous potential for learning, in particular at country-level.

GPE has made good progress towards mobilizing more and better domestic financing for ESP implementation, be it still below what is needed and targeted for. and ack of funds is still mentioned as a main inhibiting factor for overall ESP implementation. This means that resource mobilization remains a key issue but also stresses the importance of financial feasibility in ESP development.

GPE has performed well in terms of mobilizing *more financing* with unprecedented commitments by an increasing number of donor partners that partially replace rather than add to earlier donor contributions. This relates to the broader concern of fungibility when the increasing contribution from one partner is used as an opportunity by another partner to divert funding. Progress toward *better financing* remains modest, given that GPE has not (yet) been able to meet its targets in alignment and harmonization of funding with unknown effects on aid efficiency.

Both the Board and the Secretariat have intensified their efforts to build a stronger partnership leading to improved clarity of roles, processes and procedures. At the same time, partnership dynamics remain a concern at global and country level that are further complicated by GPE aiming to be both a global fund, requiring solid accountability systems, and a vibrant agile multi-stakeholder partnership relying on the motivation of autonomous partners to spend time and energy in contributing to the success of GPE.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background about set-up and purpose GPE

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the successor to the Education for All - Fast Track Initiative (FTI) established in 2002. The GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that mobilizes global and national support for education in Developing Country Partners (DCPs). The vision and mission of GPE are focused on achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

The partnership brings together DCPs' governments, donor partners, the private sector and philanthropic organizations, as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) including teacher organizations. At the global level, GPE is governed by its constituency-based Board of Directors comprising representatives of different constituencies across the partnership. GPE's Secretariat provides operational and administrative support. At the country level, partners come together through Local Education Groups (LEGs, or whichever names apply in respective DCPs). LEGs are government-led and coordinated by a designated Coordinating Agency (CA). Grant funds are managed by a Grant Agent (GA). GPE's Theory of Change (ToC) and country-level planning model illustrates how the partnership's objectives and goals are expected to be achieved.

1.2 Purpose of the ISE

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the ISE of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) clearly states the purpose and scope of the ISE. The ISE is intended to be instrumental in helping shape GPE's post-2020 strategy and will run parallel to the latter's planning process organized separately by GPE's Strategy and Impact Committee. The ISE will also serve as an update of the findings of the last independent evaluation of GPE that was completed in 2015.

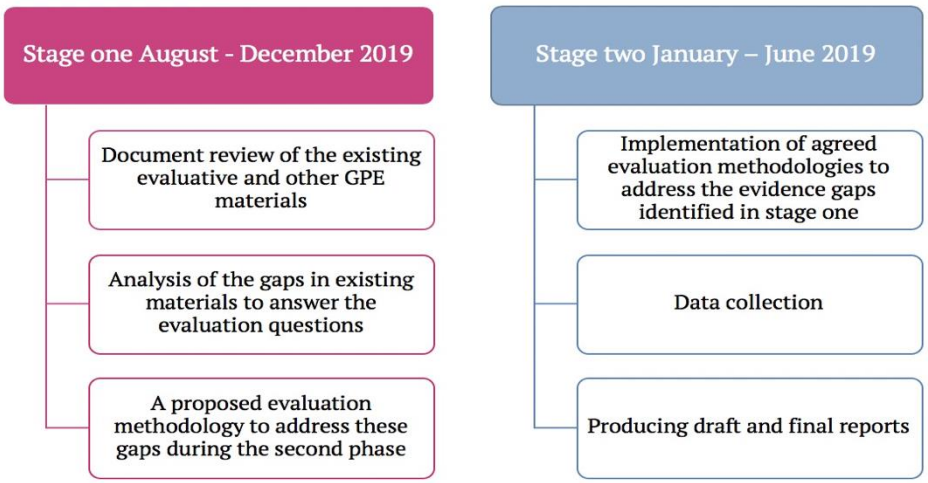
The four aims of the ISE, as stated in the evaluation ToR, are as follows:

- Learning: To understand which aspects of the GPE 2020 strategy are working and which need improvement in the next GPE strategy period
- Accountability: To determine progress towards results and whether GPE partners are fulfilling their expected roles and responsibilities effectively
- Transparency: To communicate findings and achievements to all stakeholders
- Effectiveness: To determine the extent to which the GPE operational model is fit-for-purpose

1.3 Scope of the Evaluation

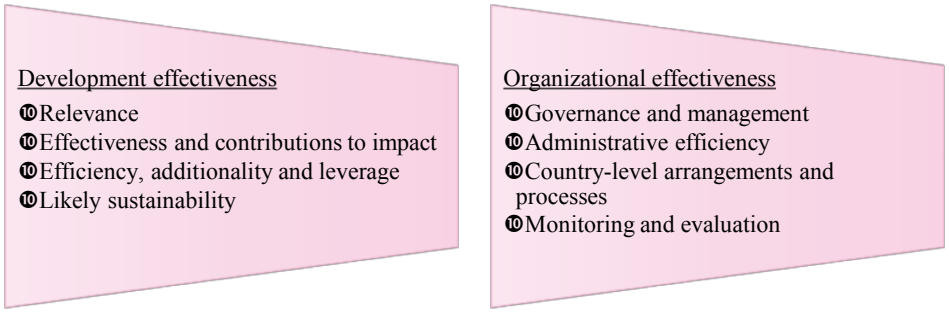
The Independent Summative Evaluation (ISE) in its entirety is structured in two stages (see Figure 1):

Figure 1 Process steps ISE



The scope of the evaluation covers the evaluation issues stated in the ISE TOR (see Annex 1.3.1), in the areas of development and organizational effectiveness (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Scope of ISE



The evaluation questions in each of these areas are relevant and comprehensive and are appropriately influenced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria. An inception report, following approval of this interim report will present the proposed methodology for stage two.

1.4 Structure of the report

This interim report has five main sections. Following the introduction, a description of the methodological approach is described in chapter two. Chapter three provides a description of GPE's ToC and country-level planning cycle. Findings by the evaluation team regarding development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness are presented in chapters four and five respectively. The report concludes with general observations, including the next steps.

2. Methodology and Approach

2.1 Overall ISE approach

The methodological approach described below concerns stage one of the ISE, which primarily consists of a desk-study and initial interviews with GPE secretariat staff. The methodological approach to the second stage of the ISE will be described in a separate Inception Report in December 2019.

2.2 Approach to Stage One

Stage one of the ISE has taken place from August to November 2019. This first stage is meant to provide initial inputs into the on-going post-2020 GPE strategy development process based on the rich documentation available related to GPE's performance since 2015. The process of stage one has consisted of the following steps: 1) introduction and 'onboarding' of the ISE team, 2) intake meetings with Independent Evaluation Committee and the Secretariat, 3) desk study, 4) draft interim report and presentation to the SIC and 5) finalization of the interim report.

Introduction and 'on-boarding' took place in mid-August, immediately following the contract signature, whereby the Secretariat provided the ISE with an initial introduction to the goals and set-up of the GPE. From this moment onwards, the ISE has been working through the evaluation matrix in response to the 44 questions mentioned in the TOR (see Annex 2.2.1). At the same time, the Secretariat started sharing documentation with the ISE as inputs to the desk study. The list of documents consulted is contained in Annex 2.2.2.

Following an initial intake meeting with the Independent Evaluation Committee related to pending methodologies issues, and after having reviewed basic GPE documentation, an intake visit to the GPE Secretariat in Washington took place from 10–12 September. During this visit, evaluation team members met with various teams of the Secretariat to arrive at a better understanding of the set-up of the GPE, the activities carried out by the various teams, and the status and purpose of available documentation to be reviewed.

Subsequently, the ISE started an intensive desk study, reviewing the wide variety of documents made available by the GPE Secretariat (see annex 3). The results of this desk study were summarized in a draft interim report covering an initial response to all TOR questions that were submitted to the Independent Evaluation Committee on October 15th. This first draft report included findings that in some parts overlapped or appeared contradictory, as a result of providing a separate response to all the individual but interrelated evaluation questions based on documentation that on certain points reflected different views.

To facilitate comprehension of these initial findings, a presentation was prepared focusing on 22 key issues, which was delivered and discussed during a SIC meeting on October 29th in Paris. This presentation, together with the results of the SIC discussion and the Independent Evaluation Committee comments on the initial draft report, were used as the basis for shaping this final interim report, covering the following 22 key issues under the eight evaluation components (see Table 1).

Table 1 Key issues organized in eight research components

Development Effectiveness	Organizational Effectiveness
Effectiveness: 1. Achievement against GPE's Results Framework (up to outcome level) 2. Contribution and additionality of GPE 3. Analysis of what works well and less well	Governance and Management: 11. Board Performance 12. Performance in convening, aligning and sustaining political will among stakeholders 13. Communication of GPE's vision and achievements
Efficiency: 4. Efficient use of funds 5. Facilitators and barriers to the use of funds	Administrative Efficiency: 14. Performance of the GPE Secretariat 15. Adaptations to Countries Affected by Fragility and Conflict (FCAC) context 16. Fiduciary Oversight
Likely Sustainability 6. Sustaining country-level outcomes 7. Sustainability in the design of Education Sector Plan (ESPs) and GPE funded interventions	Country-level arrangements and processes 17. Performance of LEGs 18. Performance of CAs 19. Effects on donor confidence and coordination 20. Perceived added-value of GPE among country-level stakeholders
Relevance: 8. Alignment and coherence 9. Responsiveness to country needs 10. The validity of the ToC	Monitoring & Evaluation: 21. Quality and usefulness of the M&E strategy and Results Framework 22. Consistency and usefulness of the Country-level Evaluations (CLEs)

2.3 Challenges and Limitations of Stage One

The most important challenge has been to adequately prioritize and extract essential findings relevant to the evaluation questions from among hundreds of documents with varying degrees of perspicuity within a couple of weeks. At the same time, further documents such as additional Country-Level Evaluations (CLEs) and thematic evaluations became available, while other documents are not yet complete and will become available after the finalization of this interim report. Besides, some of the documents relate to important initiatives like the Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA) mechanism (now labeled as Education Out Loud), and Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) that were only recently launched, meaning that no information about their performance is available yet.

Another important challenge has been that the ISE has not generally been in the position to assess the accuracy and validity of documented information. This means that the ISE has had to treat documented findings as facts, while it is known that documents have been produced under varying time-pressures, variable access to reliable data or insufficiently diverse resource persons. To the extent possible, documented findings have been triangulated with findings from other documents, but an objective interpretation remains difficult when documents offer contradictory or multi-interpretable findings, e.g. does a performance that is improved against baseline but falling short of targets constitute progress?

A further challenge has been to avoid duplication in the presentation of findings in response to various evaluation questions that by nature are interconnected. E.g. the issues of alignment and resource mobilization/leveraging of resources materialize in various questions under both Development and Organizational Effectiveness. It is for this reason that the ISE has re-arranged the TOR questions into the 22 key issues covered by this interim report.

A final challenge has been the interpretation of a variety of concepts referred to in the evaluation questions and GPE documentation. This concerns issues like:

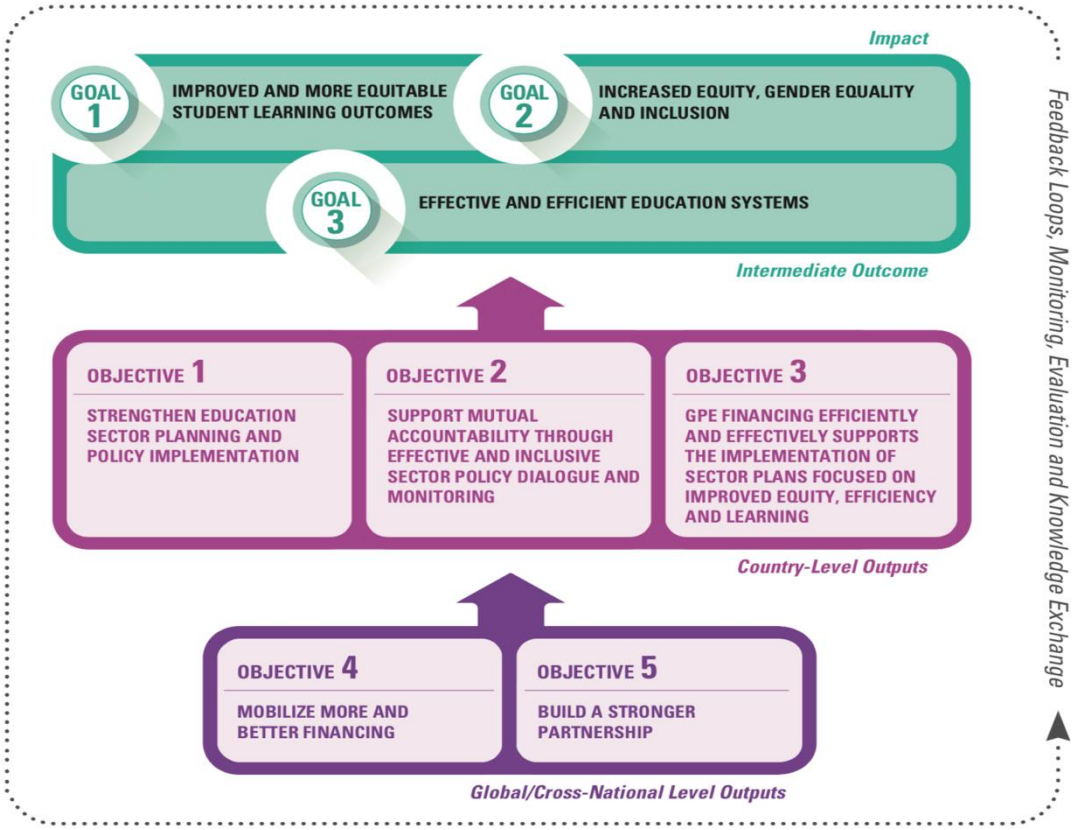
- Alignment for which GPE distinguishes 10 dimensions of alignment;
- Donor confidence, which cannot be measured directly but can be manifested in a diversity of ways;
- Country, national and DCP ownership, which imply different levels of ownership without being directly measurable;
- Sustainability, which has both financial and institutional dimensions.

In response to this challenge, and where applicable, the ISE's interpretation of these concepts is reflected in the report.

3. GPE's conceptual framework

The GPE has constructed the following ToC as part of its 2020 strategy (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 GPE's Theory of Change



This ToC connects GPE's global outputs (objectives 4 and 5) to its country-level outputs (objective 1 to 3). The ToC places the three country-level objectives: 1) strengthened sector planning and implementation, 2) mutual accountability and inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring, and 3) GPE financing in support of ESP implementation, as complementary processes at its core. Together these three processes serve as the main pathways towards effective and efficient education systems (goal 3 = outcome), which in turn is expected to contribute to GPE's vision of equitable and quality education (goal 1 and 2 = impact).

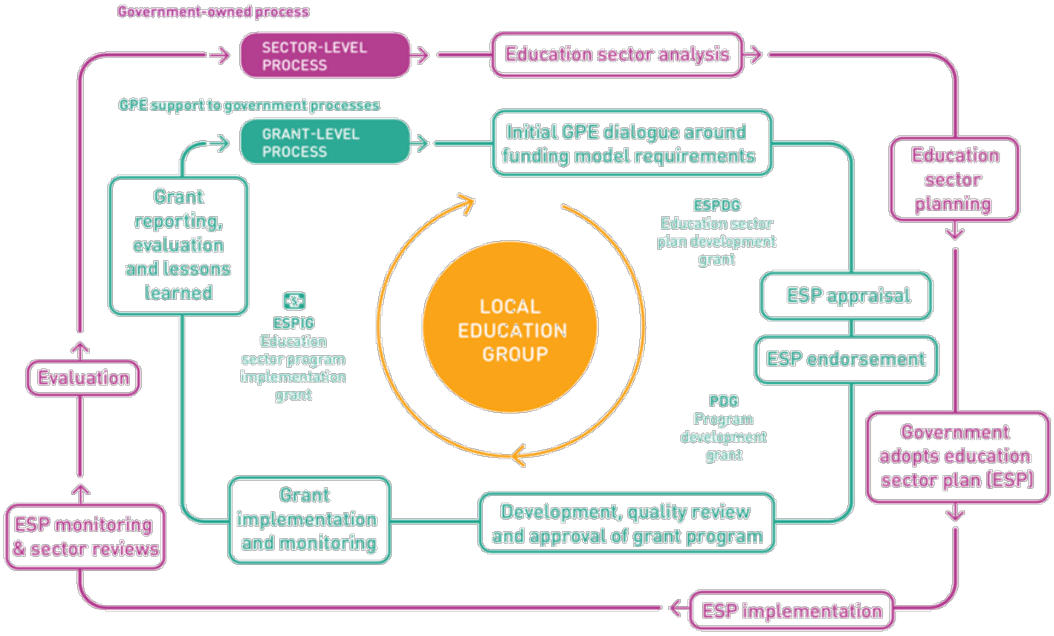
This ToC was approved by the Board in December 2015 and included 11 assumptions from global outputs to impact level[1]. By referring to objective 1 to 5 as outputs, goal 3 as an intermediate outcome, and goals 1 and 2 as impacts, this report assumes this reflects GPE's original interpretation of how to distinguish its sphere of control (outputs) from its spheres of influence (outcome) and concern (impact). At the same time, it is understood that clearly delineating the sphere of control of a partnership is complicated, as the behavior of individual members is not controlled by the partnership, but decisive for the performance of the partnership. It is furthermore acknowledged that a more detailed generic country-level ToC was developed as part of the inception of the CLEs. This ToC distinguishes planning from implementation and incorporates 24 assumptions (17 assumptions related to country-level outputs, five assumptions to outcomes and two assumptions to impacts).

[1] As part of the inception process of the country-level evaluations, a more detailed generic country-level ToC has been worked out (see Annex 3.1)

The global ToC forms the basis of GPE's Results Framework, which includes 37 indicators through which GPE's performance is measured and reported upon. Given that the ISE concerns an evaluation of the partnership as a whole, its global ToC and the related Results Framework have been used by the ISE as the main frame of reference in assessing GPE's development effectiveness. In this connection, it is important to note that the TOR expects an assessment up to outcome level (goal 3), placing GPE's contribution to impact level results (goals 1 and 2) outside the scope of the ISE.

Another important element of GPE's conceptual framework that illustrates GPE operations at the country level is GPE's planning cycle (see Figure 4). This picture places the Local Education Groups (LEGs) at the core of GPE's activities at the country level, whereby GPE's support processes are embedded within broader government-owned sector-level planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

Figure 4 GPE's country planning cycle



The Figure 4 also illustrates where the various GPE grants — Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG), Program Development Grant (PDG), and Education Sector Program Implementation Grant (ESPIG) — fit within the broader government-owned process. The ISE has used this planning cycle in assessing development effectiveness and governance arrangements at the country-level.

4. Development Effectiveness

The four evaluation criteria for development effectiveness are discussed in the following order: effectiveness; efficiency; sustainability; and relevance.

4.1 Effectiveness

This chapter reviews GPE progress against its objectives up to goal three, identifies the factors most closely associated with progress or lack of it, and discusses GPE added value and what has been working well and less well.[2]

4.1.1 Achievements against Results Framework

This first chapter reviews progress and contribution for goal 3 (Strengthened education system) and Objectives 1 - 5 (see Table 2 - 6). Each table presents progress and contribution as measured using key documents that summarize GPE progress, such as GPE results report 2019, the CLE – Synthesis Evaluation, the portfolio review 2018, and compares and validates the findings with a review of 12 CLE selected for this summative evaluation. The analysis distinguishes progress against the milestones that the GPE had set for itself and progress against values registered at baseline, which, unless otherwise specified, refers to 2015. Each table is preceded by a short summary of the main findings on progress and followed by analytical remarks on contribution. Please see Annex 4.1.1 for a summary table from GPE result report and Annex 4.1.2 for an overview of the 12 CLEs and criteria that justified their selection.

Goal 3 – strengthening education systems. The section has focused primarily on the dimensions of education systems that GPE recognizes as targets under goal 3, but also used the CLEs to provide additional context-specific instances of strengthened education systems (see the footnote for the definition of education system used).[3]

Table 2 shows that **GPE countries have shown signs of progress in strengthening their education systems and implementing ESPs, which however constituted weaker progress than expected during planning** or, in some countries, insufficient progress for meeting the most pressing needs.

[2] This section excludes progress against goals 1 and 2, the impact level, following the TOR as developed by the Independent Evaluation Committee.
[3] This section defines the "education system" in line with the CLE – Synthesis: "the collection of institutions, actions, and processes that affect the educational status of citizen in the short and long run". The CLE – Synthesis goes on to specify that the education systems are: "are made up of a large number of actors (teachers, parents, politicians, bureaucrats CSOs) interacting with each other in different institutions (schools, ministry departments) for different reasons (developing curricula, monitoring school performance, managing teachers)".

Table 2 – Goal 3: Strengthened Education Systems

Progress reported in high-level documents related to indicator 10 – 15.
Result report. Aggregate data is available for four indicators for goal 3:[4] • GPE countries did not improve against the target of increasing the share of education expenditure against government expenditure. • However, they met the 2018 milestone for establishing and maintaining quality learning assessments. • Overall, GPE countries missed the target for reducing the pupil/trained teacher ratio to under 40, but improved against baseline values. Values for Countries Affected by Fragility and Conflict (FCAC) have regressed against the baseline. • GPE countries missed the target of reporting at least 10 out of 12 education indicators to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics but improved against the baseline. The CLE – Synthesis Evaluation[5] clarifies that in six of the seven summative evaluations it reviewed, domestic financing had increased in absolute terms, even if not as a share of government expenditure. According to this document, six of the seven summative evaluations reported progress in terms of strengthening education systems, with the most commonly cited improvements being related to improving school infrastructure, increasing the number of qualified teachers, and improving the education sector management (including Education and Management Information System (EMIS)).
Summary of signs of progress from a review of 12 CLEs.[6]
CLEs defined progress variously in terms of strengthening data systems, increasing domestic financing for education, expanding infrastructures for education, expanding the supply and allocation of trained teachers, reforming sector governance and management arrangements, but also on other dimensions that were relevant in the particular context. In only one case, South Sudan, the education system deteriorated, which was connected to the particular conditions of open civil conflict from 2013 to 2018. Six CLEs reported that progress was moderate overall but uneven, meaning that the countries progressed on some dimensions against their targets but not on others, and left important gaps and inefficiencies in the system unaddressed (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Malawi, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe). Five CLEs reported robust progress across all or almost all dimensions (Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, and Senegal). Five out of 12 CLEs report that countries made robust/strong progress in implementing ESPs (Guyana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, and Rwanda), five that the progress was moderate and uneven across dimensions of education systems (Cambodia, DRC, Malawi, Senegal, and Zimbabwe), and one that progress was weak (Pakistan). The CLE for South Sudan reports that the ESP became irrelevant because of the civil conflict that erupted in 2013.

[4] Aggregate data available for pupil / trained teacher ratio and data reported to UIS suffers from the fact the data was collected in 2016 (then reported by UIS in 2018 and by the GPE in 2019).
[5] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[6] The CLEs identify contribution and preventing factors to progress using contribution analysis, which is a theory-based approach that explores the process of change in terms of actual connections between intervention and signs of change at the outcome level and the causal mechanisms transmitting or preventing change.

Main contributing factors according to the 12 CLEs, from the most common to the least common, listing only contributory factors that appear in at least two CLEs (the full list is available in Annex 4.1.3 and Annex 4.1.4):

Enablers

- Political will of the government for education sector reforms and funding (Cambodia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zimbabwe)
- GPE small but meaningful support in the forms of ESPIGs contributed to start-up progress on ESPs and to dedicated sub-sectors of basic education (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Senegal, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe)
- Strong leadership of Ministry of Education (MoE) in securing funding from Ministry of Finance contributed to increased domestic finance (Cambodia and Senegal)
- The Secretariat reported that one of the main instruments for contribution to better learning outcomes assessment, which is the contribution to Access for Learning (A4L), operates at the global level and would not be picked up by the CLEs.

Barriers

- Weak capacity at the decentralized level of government and higher requirements for coordination between central and decentralized levels prevented more progress in ESP implementation (DRC, South Sudan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Rwanda)
- Rapid population growth increased the stress on education systems (DRC ,Malawi, Mozambique)
- Concerns around abuse of donors' funds weakened donors' confidence in the DCP government and GPE funding contributed to restoring it (Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique)
- Country had weak capacity and resources for implementing the ESP and GPE did not include an effective strategy for capacity building for implementation (DRC, Malawi, Pakistan).

Table 2 shows that **the main drivers of progress are connected to DCP governments and societies**, in terms of political will to progress on education and country capacity and resources, including at decentralized levels of governance and service delivery. It also highlights that, in this context, **GPE had provided a small but meaningful contribution** to the kick-start progress on the ESP sub-sectors that the ESPIG was funding.

Objective 1 – Better ESP planning.

Table 3 shows that the quality of ESPs and connected strategies produced by GPE countries has significantly improved. Objective 1 includes in its title "planning and implementation". Yet, its indicators are tracking only "ESP planning", which is the reason why Table 3 focuses on planning, and Table 2 included progress on ESP implementation.

Table 3 Better ESP planning (objective 1)

Progress reported related to indicators 16– 17 of the Results Framework

Results report. GPE met four out of five of its 2018 milestones under objective 1. GPE met the milestones for:

- percent of ESPs that met at least 5 out of 7 ESP quality standards
- percent of strategies for equity that met at least 4 out of 5 quality standards
- percent of strategies for efficiency in education that met at least 4 out of 5 quality standards
- and percent of countries applying for GPE funding that published national-level data.

GPE only missed the milestone for percent of teaching and learning strategies that met quality standards. On this dimension, nevertheless, GPE progressed significantly against the baseline.[7]

[7] The percent of strategies on teaching and learning that met quality standards increased by 41 percent against the baseline. The percent of strategies for efficiency that met quality standards increased by 37 percent.

In the 2019 results report, ESPs scored particularly well under the criteria of being "attentive to disparities" and being "evidence-based", but comparatively worse, even if showing improvement against the baseline, on the quality of being "achievable". This quality is connected with ESP making realistic assumptions on costs and resources available and linking actions with appropriate funding.[8]

The CLEs – Synthesis evaluation confirms that in most reviewed countries sector plans improved, with weaknesses in terms of achievability and varying degree of attention to equity issues.

Summary of signs of progress from a review of 12 CLEs

11 out of 12 CLEs report that sector planning met quality standards, improved from the previous experience of planning, and was inclusive and participatory. The partial exception was Guyana, where planning was not inclusive of civil society. One CLE, Mozambique, reports that the planning process improved in terms of operationalization of ESP into annual frameworks for implementation, but also that the latest planning process was weaker than the previous one because it was conducted together with the ESPIG application and rushed.

Nevertheless, the CLEs do report some weaknesses remaining in the ESPs. The most common are: being operationalized poorly in terms of implementation capacity, annual plans, budgets, and connection with implementing agencies (5 CLEs), being gender or inclusion-blind (3 CLE), being weak in terms of sector analysis or use of data (3 CLE), and prioritizing actions poorly (2 CLEs).

Main contributing factors according to the 12 CLEs, from the most common to the least common, listing only contributory factors that appear in at least two CLEs (the full list is available in Annex 4.1.3 and Annex 4.1.4):

Enablers

- GPE Quality Assurance (QA) process for ESPs contributes to ESPs that are better quality (10 CLEs).
- Strong planning capacity in the government contributed to quality planning (7 CLEs: Cambodia, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Senegal)
- ESPDG support contributes to better quality plans (4 CLEs: Cambodia, Kenya, Malawi, and Pakistan)
- Conditionality from ESPIGs, also through the variable tranche, contributes to countries accepting GPE QA process and quality standards (4 CLEs: Cambodia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe)
- GA and CA contributed to better planning (but also dialogue, monitoring, and implementation) including through advocacy and technical assistance (5 CLEs: Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zimbabwe).

Barriers

- The review of the CLEs did not pick up major barriers to quality ESPs that were widespread across the cases. Practical barriers exist, but there are no strong patterns across CLEs. For example, the CLEs have identified that it was a challenge when plan development processes were rushed or done at the same time as another major planning process or application (Mozambique), planning was not owned across the DCP Government (Senegal), and the context in which the plan was to be implemented changed dramatically (South Sudan).

Table 3 shows that GPE QA processes and standards for ESPs, financing and technical support for quality planning provided through GAs, CAs, and the Secretariat are closely associated with better quality planning. Nevertheless, country capacity at baseline still plays an important role in determining the quality of planning. Additionally, an ESP that meets GPE quality criteria was not always achievable in terms of financing, or relevant to a changed context. Please see chapter 5.3. for more information on the role of the GA and CA in the country-level process.

[8] The quality standards for ESPs are: 1) guided by an overall vision, 2) strategic, 3) holistic, 4) evidence-based, 5) achievable, 6) sensitive to the context, 7) attentive to disparities. Achievable is defined as "based on an analysis of the current trends and thoughtful hypotheses for overcoming financial, technical, and political constraints to effective implementation.

Objective 2 - More inclusive dialogue and mutual accountability. Table 4 shows that GPE countries have progressed towards inclusive dialogue and monitoring, but less than expected and with variations across countries.

Table 4 Support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring (objective 2)

Progress reported in Results Report related to indicator 18 – 19 Results Framework
Results report 2019: • GPE met the 2018 milestone for the indicator on percent of LEGs that are inclusive of civil society and teacher organizations. • It missed the milestone for the indicator of percent of Joint Sector Review (JSRs) meeting quality standards.[9] The Report explains that JSRs have scored especially poorly on two indicators: "being a policymaking instrument" and "being inclusive and participatory". On the latter criterion, it is usually the absence of parents' organizations from JSRs that pushes the score lower, because national and international civil society is well represented. According to the CLEs – Synthesis Evaluation, sector dialogue improved in most countries at ESP plan development stage. It remains weaker during the phase of ESP implementation and monitoring. CSOs are represented on all reviewed LEGs, but that the degree of their involvement varies and is strongly dependent on the willingness of the respective DCP government to engage these actors. The Synthesis evaluation also reports that several types of non-government actors have not yet been included in LEGs (such as non-basic education stakeholders, and private, including faith-based, and informal education providers). The Effective Partnership Review (EPR)[10], which reviewed the state of the Partnership at the country level, found that LEGs sometimes exist in parallel to other multi-stakeholder bodies, are not always a decision-making body, and do not always allow for meaningful participation of varied stakeholders . The CLEs – Synthesis evaluation also reports that JSRs, or equivalents, have been carried out at least once in all countries for which summative CLEs are available, with the exception of Guyana, but not regularly. Most of these JSRs approached GPE quality standards of being comprehensive, evidence-based, participatory and inclusive, but faced challenges, among which were the lack of government ownership and leadership, more limited participation compared to dialogue, and missing or only broad recommendations deriving from sector reviews, with no clear allocation of responsibilities and timelines for addressing them. Additional challenges were due to data gaps or quality.
Summary of signs of progress from a review of 12 CLEs
All CLEs report that the countries, with the exception of Guyana, have an established LEG (the CLE for South Sudan reports that South Sudan has only a body that *de facto* operates as LEG for purpose of planning and ESPIG application). 6 out of twelve CLEs report that dialogue improved and LEGs are now more inclusive of CSOs and TOs (Cambodia, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, and Zimbabwe). Overall the CLEs report progress but also problems with the quality of dialogue. 3 CLEs report that the dialogue is not two-way, and that the government does most of the talking (Cambodia, Guyana, and Pakistan). 3 CLEs report problems with duplication of dialogue in different fora (Cambodia, DRC, and South Sudan). 2 CLEs report that dialogue is not entirely government-led (South Sudan and Zimbabwe), as donors had a more prominent role in the dialogue.

[9] The quality standards for joint sector reviews are: 1. Participatory and inclusive: Includes effective and transparent participation from all education sector stakeholders. 2. Evidence-based: Is informed by evidence including reliable education and financial data. 3. Comprehensive: Addresses all the subsectors (early childhood, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education and training [TVET], and higher education) as well as non-formal education and adult literacy. 4. Monitorable: Monitors sector performance and key indicators to help better identify ESP/TEP implementation issues and achievements. 5. Policymaking instrument: Recommendations from the JSR effectively feed into addressing weaknesses in the ESP/TEP implementation

[10] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume I – Main Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.

The CLEs report problems with effective monitoring through JSRs. Only 1 CLE (Nepal) reports that the country conducted JSRs all years according to quality standards. 2 CLEs report that monitoring improved even if gaps remain (Mozambique and Zimbabwe). 5 CLEs report problems with monitoring that are connected with the lack of monitoring data (DRC, Malawi, Nepal, Senegal, and South Sudan). 4 CLEs report problems in translating monitoring into action (Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan and Zimbabwe). 2 CLEs report that JSRs did not happen (Guyana and Kenya). 1 CLE reports that the quality of sector dialogue and monitoring regressed (DRC). 1 CLE (Cambodia) reports that a mid-term evaluation of the ESP was effective in reviewing, updating, and improving the ESP and its implementation, but that the JSRs are not as effective for mutual accountability.

The Practical Guidance for JSRs[11] presents a model of monitoring that is based on accountability for results that leads to corrective actions taken during the following year. It proposes a model with a high level of effort from the government in terms of data collection, stakeholder engagement, and organizational arrangements (six months from start for the writing of the annual report and integrating recommendations in the annual operation plan).

Main contributing factors according to the 12 CLEs, from the most common to the least common, listing only contributory factors that appear in at least two CLEs (the full list is available in Annex 4.1.3 and Annex 4.1.4):

Enablers

- The country tradition of government and civil society dialogue played a role in three cases. Senegal's strong tradition of effective dialogue contributed to effective dialogue. Rwanda's and Cambodia's less strong traditions prevented mutual accountability. The EPR confirms that DCP government ownership is a key factor at play in the proper functioning of dialogue at the country level.
- GPE contributed through its convening power to expanding LEG participation and JSR. This is confirmed more generally by the CLE – Synthesis evaluation

Barriers

- Duplication of structures prevented sector-wide dialogue or made the dialogue less effective in two cases. In South Sudan, for example, donors separated dialogue in humanitarian and development fora.
- Lack of ownership of the ESP across different government Ministries and departments prevented effective monitoring in two cases. In Senegal, one directorate in the MoE had dominated the planning process, with the result that other Ministries and directorates in the MoE felt less ownership of the plan. In South Sudan, the plan was developed in a period of peace, which meant that it was irrelevant once the conflict started
- The model of LEG-based dialogue through formal meetings and the JSR model of monitoring based on accountability was not always adequate to country conditions. For example, Guyana has only a few donors and actors active in the education sector. In Cambodia, the formal setting, a large Congress, chosen by the government for the sector-wide monitoring was too formal for effective two-way dialogue.

Internal analysis done by the Secretariat for developing the new "principles towards effective local education groups" (2019) confirmed the presence of challenges to proper dialogue and monitoring, including:

- Confusion around the LEG mandate and functions
- The complexity of sector governance arrangements
- Weak communications and working arrangements
- Difficulties in sustaining country leadership
- Diverse influences affecting partnership dynamics.

[11]GPE. 2018. Joint Sector Reviews in the Education Sector: A practical guide for organizing effective JSRs. Washington DC, USA: GPE.

Table 4 shows a complex picture where **a variety of challenges bar the way to effective dialogue and monitoring that translate into mutual accountability**. A weak tradition of dialogue between the government and civil society prevents strong dialogue, as did the structure of dialogue in many fora with different levels of inclusion and formality. The GPE guide for JSRs also may contribute to challenges at the country level, because of a lack of clarity on responsibilities for monitoring and follow up and the high annual level of effort required for operating this mechanism.

Objective 3 - Efficient and effective in-country financing. Table 5 shows that ESPIGs are relevant for GPE's goals, mostly on track to achieve their main outputs and objectives, and are considered relevant and significant by stakeholders despite representing only a fraction of funding for ESP implementation.

Table 5 Efficient and effective delivery of GPE - in-country financing (objective 3)

Progress reported in Results Report related to indicator 20 - 25 Results Framework
Result Report. GPE met and exceeded milestones for all four indicators for which aggregated data is available. These indicators track the extent to which grants' aims are consistent with GPE vision and higher-level goals, and on track to achieve all major grant-level outputs and outcomes. Data was available only for a few countries for the two indicators showing progress with introducing the variable tranche of the grants, a mechanism through which countries receive funding based on performance in meeting certain targets. The initial signs are positive, but not yet representative of GPE portfolio. The Portfolio Review 2018 found that the number of ESPIG grants allocated to DCPs grew markedly in 2018, after a slump in 2017, and is expected to increase significantly in the years ahead. It also found that FY 2018 saw an improvement compared to FY 2017 fiscal year, in terms of the performance of ESPIGs. In FY18, six out of 28 active grants were rated as on track in both disbursement and implementation, and seven grants were rated as delayed in either disbursement or implementation. It also found that the rate of delayed grants had however not improved compared with 2015. The CLE – Synthesis evaluation reports that ESPIGs made notable contributions to specific sub-sectors and introduced innovative approaches and mechanisms. Examples of innovative approaches are the "gender-neutral/gender-free" schools in Pakistan, extending conditional payments to Koranic schools for reaching out-of-schools in the Gambia, and a community approach to school construction in Cote d'Ivoire. The review of the completion report carried out by the Secretariat has found that completed projects in the period 2016-2018 have largely delivered on their objectives.[12] The Secretariat has started a grant process streamlining project for reducing the interval between publishing Maximum Country Allocation (MCAs) and grant start. The project estimates the grant-making process to take around 40 months, with 26 months between when the Board publishes the Maximum County Allocation and the LEG selects a GA, 10 additional months to the final review of the grant application, and 6 months between this and grant start.[13] This translated into the presence of funding gaps in 72 percent of GPE countries with an average of 15 months between the end of an ESPIG and the start of the following one.

[12] Gaubatz, J. (2019). Review of completion reports for the Global Partnership for education's education sector plan implementation grants 2016-2018. 18 of the 19 WB ICRs rate overall project outcome in the satisfactory range. Similarly, all 10 of the 10 ICRRs rate overall outcome in the satisfactory range.
[13] The Global Partnership for Education Secretariat (2019). Grant Application and Approval Process Streamlining Project – Phase II Project Summary.

Summary of signs of progress from a review of 12 CLEs
6 CLEs report explicitly that the ESPIG was a small fraction of funds for ESP implementation (Cambodia, Guyana, Nepal, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe)). The exceptions were Mozambique and DRC, where ODA covered 50 percent of the ESP implementation and the ESPIG was a substantial part of it. Nevertheless, stakeholders in 10 out of 12 CLEs (Cambodia, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe) reported that the ESPIG made limited but significant contributions to ESP implementation. The CLE for South Sudan reports that funding feels short of needs. The CLEs report issues about GPE funding, but no clear patterns emerge across CLEs: • In DRC, stakeholders expressed concerns about clarity on deciding how to use GPE funds • In Malawi, the ESPIG design process did not identify effective institutional/operational arrangements for the ESPIG • In Cambodia, the ESPIG design process was challenging, especially in designing the variable tranche.
Main contributing factors according to the 12 CLEs, from the most common to the least common, listing only contributory factors that appear in at least two CLEs (the full list is available in Annex 4.1.3 and Annex 4.1.4):
• The scale of ESPIG funding against domestic funding was a factor in determining how significant an ESPIG was in ESP implementation. • The role of the GA was important in ESPIG management. 3 CLEs mention that the strong role played by the GA in managing ESPIG implementation was appreciated by stakeholders (Pakistan, Rwanda, and Kenya). • The portfolio review 2018 reviews the operational challenges in implementing ESPIGs, and found that these are related to issues faced by government departments or units as issues pertaining to the implementation of procurement activities. Another major cause of delay was unforeseen changes and external circumstances, such as changes in government leadership or policy, and in weather and security conditions.

Objective 4 – More and better financing, and Objective 5 – A stronger partnership. Table 6 shows mixed progress in raising international funding and aligning international funding with government systems, areas where GPE has not progressed as far as expected.

Table 6 • More and better financing (objective 4) and a stronger partnership (objective 5)

Progress reported in Results Reports related to indicator 26 -37 Results Framework
Result Report 2019. Regarding objective 4, GPE did not meet the 2018 milestones for: • percent of grants that align with national systems • percent of grants provided through a sector-pooled or co-financing arrangement. On this latter indicator, GPE performance even regressed to below 2015 values. • percent of donors maintaining or increasing their education funding. Here, GPE performance remained on baseline values. Chapter 4.4, the relevance section, covers in more depth performance on aligning GPE grants with DCPs national systems and providing funding through co-financed and sector-pooled arrangements. Chapter 5.2 covers in more detail the Board and Secretariat performance in influencing funding to GPE and also explains that GPE has raised a record amount of funding from donors, even if it did not meet its target framed as percent of donors.
GPE met three 2018 milestones for: • funding received from non-traditional donors • donors fulfilling funding pledges, • and country missions by the Secretariat discussing finance.

Objective 5 – Results Report 2019. GPE met 5 out of 6 2018 milestones tracked the number of technical products[14], advocacy events, and country missions conducted, audit issues solved, and evaluations published. It did not report on the last indicator on the clarity of roles in the partnership. Regarding publications, the majority has been evaluative material (29 publications), followed by technical guidelines (10), policy briefs (6), working papers (4).[15]

Summary of signs of progress from 12 summative CLEs

2 CLEs (Guyana, Cambodia) report that international financing for education to the country increased, at least relative to total ODA. 2 CLEs (Senegal, Pakistan) report that the percent of education ODA on total ODA fell.

7 CLEs (DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, and Senegal) report that donors are improving in coordinating, including under the dimension of co-funding and sector pooled arrangements. However, the CLEs include in this definition improved coordination by donors that does not translate into co-financing (for example through stronger coordination mechanisms). 2 CLEs (Cambodia, Guyana), report no progress in coordination. 3 CLEs did not report this judgment.

2 CLEs (Rwanda and Senegal), report improvements in alignment of GPE and donor funding with PFM national systems. 3 CLEs report explicitly that there was no progress in the country (Cambodia, DRC, and South Sudan).

One CLE, Zimbabwe, reports that GPE contributed to strengthening the partner country PFM systems.

Main contributing factors according to the 12 CLEs, from the most common to the least common, listing only contributory factors that appear in at least two CLEs (the full list is available in Annex 4.1.3 and Annex 4.1.4):

Enablers

- The starting capacity of national PFM systems and presence of strong pooled funds contributed or prevented donors' behavior in using them (CLEs for DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, and South Sudan)
- The presence of only a few donors in the education sector made coordination easier (CLEs for Guyana and Zimbabwe)
- The commitment and competence of the CA and GA had a positive influence on the coordination of international funding (CLEs for Nepal, Kenya).
- The fact that the GPE provided funding through the WB arrangements for grant management (Kenya) or used sector-pooled mechanisms that were already available (Malawi and Mozambique) contributed partly to restore the confidence of donors after abuse in the use of funding

Barriers

- GPE advocacy was ineffective in increasing donor funding coherence (4 CLEs: Cambodia, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Senegal)
- Limited evidence up to now that the multiplier was leveraging additional external financing that was not yet forthcoming
- A country's economic growth influenced donors' funding, as rising domestic revenues justified decreased aid (CLEs: Guyana and Senegal)

Table 6 shows that **domestic factors**, such as the strength of country PFM systems and the presence of established pooled funding mechanisms, contributed to donors' and GPE's alignment with national systems and co-funding. CAs and GAs **contributed well to coordinating donors, but GPE does not seem to have been effective in its advocacy with donors to further align their funding and provide pooled funds**.

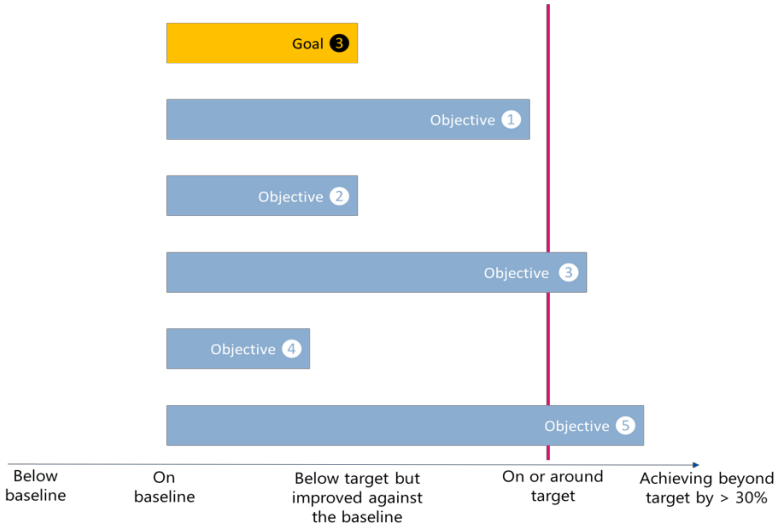
[14] The Secretariat has classified its publications in 1) Policy briefs, 2) Working papers, 3) Technical guidelines & tools, and 4) Monitoring and evaluation reports. For more information see GPE. Methodology Sheet For Global Partnership For Education (GPE) Indicators https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological_sheet_for_indicator_33.pdf

[15] There is also an "other" category.

4.1.2 Overall assessment of achievements and added value

Figure 5 presents a summary overview of GPE progress against the various results levels in GPE's strategic plan. The assessment is only qualitative and represented in graphical form for ease of exposition. [16] In the graph, the horizontal axis shows goal 3 and the objectives and the vertical axis a qualitative judgment on progress.

Figure 5 All countries: level of progress on goal 3 and objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

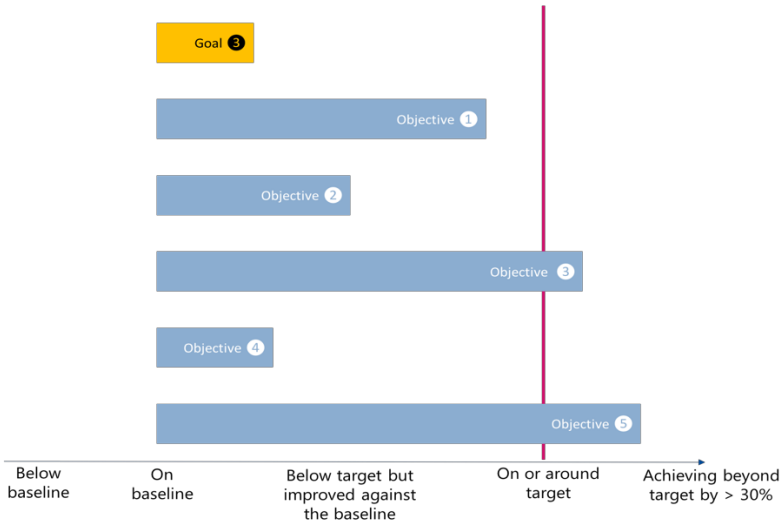


In summary, GPE progress has been stronger on quality sector-wide planning, effective and efficient grant making, and creating a Secretariat with high technical quality. It has been weaker in strengthening education systems, supporting effective dialogue and monitoring at the country level, and providing more and better quality financing. Weaker progress at the level of strengthening education systems is understandable because this is further from and at a larger scale than what GPE Board, Secretariat, and individual GPE partners can control and directly change. Change and contribution are also more difficult to track at that level for the same reasons. Instead, weaker progress towards effective dialogue and monitoring and more and better financing is a much greater challenge.

Figure 6 presents the same information for the sub-set of countries that are classified as Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS). At this level of summary, **progress in FCAS takes the same shape as progress for overall countries, even if the values for individual indicators are generally a little worse than for the overall set of countries.**

[16] In the picture, the bars show the same ordinal scale with values: achieving beyond target by more than 30 percent (+3), on or around the target (+2), below target but improved against the baseline (+1), on baseline (0), below baseline (-1). Each indicator in the Result Framework for which there is an aggregated value from post-2016 data is assigned one value according to the scale. Value to dimensions of progress coming from the CLEs was also assigned. In the graphic the simple average of all values are reported.

Figure 6 FCACs: level of progress on goal 3 and objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5



The CLEs include claims on GPE contribution,[17] which take place in a complex context with many other contributing factors at play. GPE's contribution may appear small in the bigger picture, even if contributions appear to be of high significance to stakeholders.

- The most common contribution claim made in the CLEs is that **GPE contributed to improving sector-wide planning**.[18] However, almost half of CLEs qualify the contribution as small due to the fact that the DCP governments had a strong capacity for planning even in the absence of GPE.
- The second most common contribution claim is that **GPE contributed to meeting sub-sector targets of sector-wide plans, mainly through ESPIGs**.[19] Again, more than half of the CLEs qualify the contribution as small, reflecting the fact that ESPIGs cover only a small percentage, with exceptions, of sector plan funding.
- Half of the CLEs report that **GPE contributed to improving sector dialogue and monitoring**, but most of them qualified GPE contribution as small.[20]
- 3 CLEs report that GPE contributed to strengthening education systems (Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal), but qualified GPE contribution as small. Additionally, one CLE reports that GPE contributed to strengthening the country PFM system.
- 2 CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving the quality of international funding (Kenya, Senegal). The CLE for Senegal qualifies the contribution as limited. The other 2 CLEs report that the GPE using an established mechanism for pooled funding contributed to strengthening it (Malawi and Mozambique).

The CLEs – Synthesis evaluation confirms that contribution to positive change is most evident for strengthening ESPs and least evident for more and better education sector financing.

[17] Contribution claims come from a review of 12 CLEs. This analysis defines contribution claim as a claim that something (a factor, an actor, an event, or an event type) was causally relevant for something else. The CLEs formulated their claims based on triangulated evidence and using a contribution analysis approach, which identifies contribution factors by using a pre-defined theory to identify expected causal connection for research and then explore if they held in practice based on data collection. Only contribution claims noted in at least 3 different CLEs were taken into account. In Annex 4.1.4, the complete list of contribution claims is appended, with sources about the CLEs they come from.
[18] 10 CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving planning (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, and South Sudan). 4 CLEs qualify the contribution as small: Guyana, Nepal, and Pakistan, Rwanda
[19] 8 CLES report that GPE contributed to implementing some ESP sub-sectors (Cambodia, DRC, Guyana, Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Zimbabwe). 5 CLEs qualify the contribution as small: Guyana, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe
[20] 6 CLEs report that GPE contributed to improving dialogue (Cambodia, Guyana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Zimbabwe). 5 CLEs qualified the contribution as small: Guyana, Nepal, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Senegal

GPE's additionality compared with other types of funding is not clear, because the CLEs review only GPE funding and do not compare it with other sources of funding. The CLEs are able to identify that the GPE support has been part of a set of causes that has been sufficient for change but do not make claims about what would have happened in the counterfactual situation where the GPE support were absent.

Annex 4.1.4 unpacks further contribution by dividing the factors at play into contributing and preventing mechanisms that are internal to the GPE TOC logic and contributing and preventing mechanisms connected to the context.[21]

4.1.3 Preliminary conclusions in terms on what works well and less well

In light of the above, this section provides tentative conclusions about what works well and less well in GPE's approach.[22]

What works well?

ESPIG funding worked well for implementing sub-sectors of the ESPs and introducing innovative approaches (for example Early Childhood Education in Guyana, scholarships in Cambodia, ICT for learning and learning for students with disabilities in Rwanda, and "gender- neutral" schools in Pakistan).

GPE quality standards and QA process work well in raising draft ESP plans to the quality standards, helped in this by the conditionality with ESPIG funding, which incentivizes countries to accept the quality process. Financial and technical support for planning from the GAs, CAs, and Secretariat also worked well for strengthening sector plans.

The GA and CA role work well in supporting countries during planning processes, and in managing international funds and ESPIG grants. For more information on the roles of GAs, CAs, and the Secretariat in the country level processes, see chapters 5.2 and 5.3 in the Government Effectiveness section of this report.

GPE guidance and advocacy have worked well for expanding the inclusion of civil society and teacher organizations' involvement in LEGs. Additionally, the LEGs do appear to work well during the ESP planning processes.

What works less well?

The combination of capacity gaps in the DCP government for implementing ESPs and ESPIGs with a lack of a sufficiently targeted and attentive GPE approach to build country capacity prevented further progress on ESP implementation. In some cases, capacity gaps were situated at decentralized levels of government, such as provincial government, municipalities, and districts, which however had responsibilities under devolved forms of government for sector governance, resource management, or service delivery. The Effective Partnership review confirmed that there is no clear model of capacity development in GPE's model and what is expected from key actors and that GAs are seen as having the main role for capacity development. The review also identified that challenges to capacity development in DCP governments include a high turnover of government staff and the prioritization of completing GPE processes by strict deadlines rather than taking time for building capacities.

The approach and guidance on JSRs did not work as well as the approach, guidance, and QA for ESP planning. Lack of clarity on roles, expectations, and responsibilities, and lack of openness in DCP governments

[21] A causal mechanism is the feature of the story that explains, at least partly, why the change happened and that did the causal work in promoting or preventing change. We report only mechanisms reported by at least three different CLEs and rank them from the most to the least common.
[22] Annex 4.1.4 provides the sources for these findings in this findings in this section: see internal contributing factors and internal preventing factors

for inclusive monitoring appear to have been part of the problem in different CLEs, as was the lack of sufficient data and tools for monitoring.

The Secretariat's advocacy and lobbying at the country level do not appear to be very effective in influencing donors' and DCP government decisions on raising additional and better funding for education.

4.2 Efficiency

4.2.1 Efficient Use of funds

Regarding the efficient use of funds, the analysis in this sub-section is made on grants' implementation, value-for-money (VfM) and GPE's risk management architecture. These are followed by barriers and enablers of efficient use of funds. The overall section on efficiency ends with initial conclusions, including those relating to GPE's ToC.

The Independent Interim Evaluation of GPE (2015)[23] found that the cumulative disbursement rate of GPE funds had remained above 50 percent per year since 2010, compared to a previous cumulative distribution rate that was below 50 percent, and that this was indicative of improvements in GPE's efficiency in disbursing committed funds. It also found that despite some improvements in monitoring and reporting at sector and grant level, GPE's, ability to track and demonstrate its contributions to results remained weak (Finding 10). It further reported that GPE's Board and the Country Grants and Performance Committee played no significant role in assessing and tracking grant performance in programmatic terms.

Also in 2015, DFID[24] noted that reporting by GAs to the Secretariat has not been consistent. However, it also noted that GPE's Secretariat had developed and piloted standard reporting templates for its grants and had rolled out reporting formats for these. The aforementioned DFID report stated that GPE's Secretariat should implement standard reporting formats for GAs and clarify reporting timelines, and acknowledged GPE aimed to fully implement standard grant reporting templates for ESPIGs. **DFID also noted that in terms of efficiency, GPE improved its ability to assess program grants**, had developed better guidelines for requirements under New Funding Mechanism (NFM), and strengthened grant oversight. GPE's Secretariat also increased support missions to partner countries from 59 visits to 44 countries in FY 2014 to 84 visits to 52 countries in FY 2015. GPE's Board decided that minimum standards should be adopted for all GAs. GPE also strengthened its risk management, program oversight, monitoring, and reporting. Since the 2015 evaluation of GPE, it has undertaken a number of initiatives, including the development of its current Strategic Plan, M&E Strategy and Results Framework. **In its 2015 review, DFID concluded that GPE continues to represent Value for Money (VfM) and has made progress on a significant number of organizational reforms during 2015.**

GPE's 2016 results report noted that 20 percent of grants suffered implementation delays, while an additional 52 percent were slightly behind in their implementation. Similarly, GPE's 2018 results report found that less than 80 percent of grants were on track in terms of implementation, slightly short of the milestone for 2017. However, **according to GPE's 2019 results report, significant progress was made in FY 2018, with 89.3 percent (25 out of 28) of grants on track,** above the 2018 milestone of 14. For FCACs, 15 out of 16 grants (94 percent) were on track. Only one FCAC grant was rated as delayed, due to conflict. The overall recent trend is one of improvement, with milestones being met. GPE's 2019 VfM situational analyses found that in FY 2018, 25 percent of the 28 active grants were delayed in either disbursement or implementation, down from 31 percent in the previous year. This too shows recent year-on-year improvement. Comparisons between findings of the aforementioned GPE's result report and VfM situational analyses suggest that delays are primarily at the pre-implementation (disbursement) stage. In terms of funds management, Universalia[25] found that **GAs are generally efficient in managing funds.**

[23] Universalia. 2015. Independent Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education Volume 1 Final Evaluation Report. Universalia. Montreal, Canada.
[24] DFID. 2015. Annual Review of GPE. DFID. London, UK.
[25] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

The recent review of ESPIGs 2016-2018[26] noted that completion reports focused on the achievements of program outputs rather than outcomes. The review also found that the prevalence of broader VfM analysis (utilizing the DFID approach of combining efficiency with effectiveness, economy, and equity) varies between GAs. For example, among World Bank grant documents, almost all contain explicit VfM analyses at project appraisal and completion stages. However, none of the appraisal and completion documents of other GAs contain such an analysis. This renders efficiency comparisons between grants managed by the World Bank and other GAs difficult. GPE currently pays limited attention to VfM in guidelines for program documents in general. For example, neither the GPE's ESPIG guidelines nor those for additional MCAs refer to VfM. GPE's Secretariat tracks all expenses using a cost-analysis report, tracked through World Bank systems, which reviews costs at an activity-level and analyses of fixed and variable costs against the approved budget. MOPAN[27] also noted that Secretariat staff interviewed as part of its evaluation reported many DCPs are not using the results-based model to implement their programs.

The aforementioned 2019 review of ESPIGs' completion reports noted that **obtaining valid and reliable data is often problematic.** The World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, cited in the aforementioned ESPIGs' recent review, found that project completion documents report on aspects of GPE's work funded through ESPIGs, but not on broader GPE processes and goals or ESPs as a whole. GPE's Secretariat's Finance and Risk Committee[28] noted that GPE's 2019 VfM framework identified ESP as the central point to improvements in the application of VfM and there is a need to improve the level of realism and priority-setting in many ESPs. It also noted that systematic collection of cost data related to the achievement of outputs, outcomes and longer-term impact is critical. There is no requirement either for GAs or CAs to report on aspects of GPE's country-level model. Although GAs receive compensation for their funds' management, CAs' costs for coordination are not covered by GPE.

GPE's increasingly comprehensive financial management procedures address fiduciary risk. A suite of documentation comprising GPE's risk management architecture has recently been prepared. This includes GPE's 2019 risk management framework which outlines a comprehensive approach to risk management, with distinctions between operational and strategic risks, risk perception and risk appetite. It also includes GPE's operational risk framework which differentiates risks by country, sector, and grant. It further includes GPE's risk management policy and risk management matrix which are formally reviewed every two years. A risk management report is presented to GPE's Board twice a year, which highlights the risk rating scores and the effect of mitigation actions on them. However, MOPAN[29] states that risk assessment is not sufficiently stringent. It argues that although systems are in place and appear to be satisfactory, concerns have been raised by some GPE staff that GAs adopt different approaches to reporting risks, thus raising concerns regarding accuracy, consistency, and comparability of data. Nonetheless, GAs are subject to periodic audit reports (except when they are UN agencies, which have a single audit principle).

4.2.2 Barriers and enablers to efficient use of funds

This section itemizes barriers and facilitators to efficient use of funds as noted in the literature.

Despite the upward trend in grants achieving their objectives as noted above, delays in actual disbursements have been identified by different actors in a number of reports over time. Norad[30] identified delays in project proposals reaching GPE approval stage. This was partially a consequence of GPE's Board only convening twice a year. Efforts by the GPE Secretariat to reduce the amount of time for GPE-supported projects to reach the approval

[26] Gaubatz, J H (2019). Review of completion reports for the Global Partnership for education's education sector plan implementation grants 2016-2018. Washington, USA, GPE.
[27] Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network - MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[28] FRC/2019/10 DOC XX Finance and Risk Committee Meeting October 21 – 22, 2019 Paris
[29] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[30] Norad. 2015. Evaluation of Norwegian Multilateral Support to Basic Education: Synthesis Report. Evaluation Department.

stage to seven months were noted. Norad also identified potential bottlenecks in the transfer of funds from GPE to DCPs, partly due to differing procedures and capacities of PFM procedures in recipient countries. This was mentioned by Secretariat staff in Washington to the ISE team in September 2019. It should be noted that GPE is currently engaged in exploring possibilities and innovations in grants application and approval processes **with the goal of identifying possible efficiencies to reduce current timelines, through GPE's Secretariat's Grant Process Streamlining project.**

GPE's 2016 and 2017 Portfolio Reviews identified three generic causes of delays in funds' disbursement and implementation i.e. technicalities in the methodology used to assess grants, unforeseen country-related challenges, and capacity, system or program design issues. GPE's 2018 results report found that delays in grant implementation were due to country challenges, such as changes in political leadership and/or national education policy, conflict-affectedness and lack of accessibility due to security concerns, or withdrawal of a funding agency. Other delays are caused by challenges in planning and setbacks at the launch or roll-out stage. Additional delays include recruiting for key positions for implementation of grant activities, delays in approvals from government authorities, and delays in the development of needs assessment or action plans. Other reported causes, particularly during the roll-out of interventions, include irregularities in procurement at the country level, irregularities in safeguard procedures, delays with technical support from development partners, weaknesses in EMIS, weak PFM, and coordination issues between the GA and government (MOPAN)[31]. GPE's 2019 results report found the majority of implementation delays were related to operational challenges (57.9 percent), such as procurement and program management issues, followed by unforeseen changes and external circumstances (24.8 percent) and activity preparation (12 percent).

According to GPE portfolio reviews 2016, 2017 and 2018 challenges can be circumvented by negotiating agreements and arrangements between development partners, implementation agencies and other providers at the project preparation stage and by investing more time and resources in thorough assessments of needs and capacity at project appraisal stage. Challenges in implementation due to program design issues can be prevented with a clearly defined scope, and targets of the program and activities that are achievable during the project timeframe, given country contexts such as the security situation, government capacity, and availability of contractors. GPE's 2019 VfM situational analysis states that several measures are being undertaken to address implementation delays, including project restructuring and extension, provision of technical assistance, improved coordination between grant agents and governments, and facilitation of in-country dialogue by the GPE Secretariat to reach a common understanding of implementation issues.

MOPAN[32] cites World Bank analyses of four country-level programs which found positive results for enhancing efficiency. GPE's 2019 results report found over a third of education spending was used to cover costs of repetition and dropout at the primary level in 25 GPE-supported countries with available data. Optimizing the internal efficiency coefficient (IEC) by reducing repetition and dropout rates may potentially enable more efficient use of teachers and potentially increase the efficient use of public expenditure.

A number of CLEs identified specific factors impeding finance efficiencies, which are mainly due to uncertainties and lack of clarity in the introduction of new fiscal decentralization processes, or the nature and extent of decentralized arrangements where they have been fully implemented. The lack of disbursement of allocated funds for implementation was a major factor hindering the execution of ESPs in Pakistan[33]. Despite Sindh and Baluchistan provinces disbursing more than 90 percent of overall allocated education financing during 2012-2016, there was retention of capital spending due to provincial and national fiscal uncertainties of which only 65.9 and 50.7 percent were disbursed in Balochistan and Sindh respectively. Intended activities were not carried out due to a lack of disbursed funds, caused by revenue shortfalls owing to the overall nature of fiscal federalism in the

[31] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[32] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[33] Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Pakistan (Balochistan and Sindh Provinces). Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

country. In Burkina Faso[34], financing inefficiencies related to lack of capacities to absorb financing and lack of coherence between some sector targets and national implementation capacities. In Zimbabwe[35], the CLE identified challenges in government PFM systems which impacted implementation. These included the need for improved discipline in budget management, managing expenditure arrears, strengthening payroll controls, strengthening internal and external audits and improving accountability and transparency. In Nepal[36], decentralization processes posed challenges for budget preparation and approval, and fiscal management within a new federal framework being developed. In Nigeria[37], the CLE found disparate decentralized structures, whereby funding is delivered through state ministries of education rather state universal education boards (given the latter did not have adequate fiduciary safeguarding systems in place). Overlapping mandates of different decentralized structures impacted on the efficiency of funds. Despite the aforementioned issues, GPE's 2019 review of completion reports noted that decentralized implementation arrangements can be appropriate if accountability systems are in place. The table in Annex 4.2.1 summarizes the barriers to efficient use of funds, and enabling factors which can obviate or mitigate these. Obviously, some factors could be both enabling factors and barriers e.g. changes in political leadership and/or national education policy.

4.2.3 Preliminary conclusions regarding efficiency

Reduced timeframes for grant approval processes by GPE and grant disbursements to DCPs would contribute to efficiency gains in grants' pre-implementation stages (although that would not necessarily transfer into efficiency gains at the implementation stage). Improvements in financial management aspects of grants in-country could improve the efficient operationalization of grants, such as GA staff being inducted into the relevant financial procedures and using them. Specific and feasible guidance on VfM for all GAs and strengthened capacity for valid and reliable data collection would be likely to enhance VfM analysis as part of a focus on efficiency.

Efficient use of funds may be contingent upon an efficient operational environment, which goes beyond fund management and includes other components of an efficient education system. CAs do not receive compensation for their LEG coordination activities, which may impact on LEGs' efficiencies. Differential efficiencies of LEGs may be an aspect for stage 2 of the ISE.

The implementation of GPE's grants in-country is generally efficient but is challenged by capacity constraints especially in FCACs. Unforeseen country-level challenges are unavoidable, particularly those related to policy changes and security conditions. Enablers contributing to efficient use of GPE funds include investing more time and resources in adequate assessments of DCPs' needs and capacities during the project appraisal stage. This will obviously often differ between countries, given their respective circumstances.

Efficient use of funds is a key aspect of country-level objective 3 in GPE's ToC, which includes efficient GPE financing. Documents referenced above suggest efficient use of funds is contingent upon efficiencies in other aspects of the education system. This includes country-level objectives 1 and 2 related to ESP development and evidence-based decision-making through enhanced EMIS, as also noted above. **A very high percentage of grants are on track and exceed milestones. Delays in grants' approval and disbursements are currently being addressed by GPE, as noted above through GPE's Secretariat's Grant Process Streamlining project.**

[34] Universalia, 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Burkina Faso, Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[35] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – Zimbabwe. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[36] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – Nepal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[37] Universalia. 2019. Country-Level Prospective Evaluations First Annual Report: Nigeria. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

4.3 Sustainability

4.3.1. How to sustain outcome level achievements

This sub-section discusses issues related to the sustainability of outcomes. The following sub-section examines sustainability vis-à-vis project interventions in the context of ESPs. The overall section on sustainability ends with initial conclusions, including references to GPE's ToC.

In the context of GPE's ToC, country-level objectives are assumed to lead goals related to the intermediate outcome and impacts. Sustainability of the former is a requirement for the sustainability of the latter. In turn, these are contingent upon the sustainability of ToC objectives 4 and 5 relating to financing and partnerships respectively. As noted in the methodology chapter above (chapter 2), sustainability is a concept open to interpretation. The OECD-DAC definition[38] of sustainability is utilized for the purposes of this chapter insofar as it is the outcome of OECD-DAC members' deliberations and those of the academic evaluation community. OECD defines sustainability as: the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed; the probability of continued long-term benefits; the resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

GPE has recently intensified work on assessing long-term risks to sustaining benefits post-intervention such as macroeconomic outlook, fiscal situation, and systemic weaknesses including lack of resources, weak government capacity, lack of a national strategy for scaling up improvements, weaknesses in EMIS, and weak public finance management[39]. These issues are discussed below with reference to sustainable funding, sustainable institutions, country ownership, and resilience.

Regarding sustainable funding, the amount of donor funding to GPE is expanding. In 2018, donors contributed US$638 million, the highest level of annual paid-in contribution since its inception. Donor pledges to GPE for 2018-2020 increased by more than US$1 billion over the previous three-year period. **Despite the increased volume of funds, a strategy of funding diversification, and leverage of domestic and international resources, key factors in facilitating long-term funding are not identified.** Sustaining targets such as GPE's Pupil Trained Teacher Ratio (PTTR) for example (i.e. 40:1) involves financial challenges for DCPs in addition to those challenges involved in actually achieving them. The pressure to achieve GPE's target PTTR in conditions where salaries consume a large proportion of a country's education budget places additional burdens on government expenditure in the absence of concomitant additional resources.

Lack of guaranteed long-term funding is undermined by project-based funding which, by its very nature, is not long term. There is little guarantee that GPE interventions necessarily leverage support from other donors using their discrete funds to support their own interventions. In federal states and states with high levels of political devolution and administrative delegation, the extent of potential sustainability may differ according to policy agendas and implementing capacity. For example, in at least one GPE-supported country different states at sub-national levels have their own ESPs[40]. In countries with unitary arrangements, significant decentralization may result in sub-national ministries of education having their own particular priorities, so that priorities for sustainability may differ.

Regarding sustainable institutions, financial sustainability is not necessarily concomitant with relevant institutional traction and longevity. Capacity limitations of ministries of education constrain sustainability due to their key roles in national planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). **GPE's approach to capacity-**

[38] OECD. 205. Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. OECD, Paris, France.
[39] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[40] GPE. 2019. 2020 Country-Level Prospective Evaluations First Annual Report: Nigeria. Montreal, Canada: Universalia

building is not always well-defined[41]. **The paucity of appropriate and adequate data-collections systems in-country that are able to capture, store, analyze and disseminate timely reliable and valid data, including EMIS, is an impediment to evidence-based results-tracking**. **There is scope for further strengthening of EMIS, including at decentralized levels and school-based levels**[42]. This includes addressing challenges of data collection especially in remote areas, capacitation of technical staff for data-cleaning, recording, storage, analysis, and dissemination. CLEs indicate that some countries have a comparatively well-developed EMIS such as Cambodia[43], but in others further capacitation is required such as Ethiopia[44].

The notion of "country ownership" has been deemed problematic and is being addressed by GPE's Secretariat[45]. A process that may be government-led is not necessarily synonymous with being country-owned. Buy-in from a lead ministry such as that for education is a necessary condition for country ownership, but this may not necessarily reflect broad-based and diverse civil society stakeholders. GPE's Board noted in 2015 during its meeting in Senegal (BOD/2015/12 DOC 09 Rev.) two shortcomings in the ESP appraisal process i.e. no agreed standards or criteria for the selection of independent experts hired to carry out the independent assessment of ESPs; and use of the ESP appraisal methodology developed by the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) and the Secretariat is neither mandatory nor systematic, which leads to a lack of consistency among partner countries on how their draft ESPs are assessed against the minimum standards as defined in the 2015 guidelines for ESPs' preparation. In 2018 and 2019 respectively, guidelines were prepared by GPE for ESPDGs and ESPIGS.

However, in a number of countries (i.e. Burkina Faso[46]; Cote d'Ivoire[47]; Guyana[48]; Liberia[49]; Sierra Leone[50]) ESPs do not guarantee that stakeholders will use them as common reference documents to guide ongoing work of country-level stakeholders (including DCPs' governments and development partners). Reasons for this differ between countries, but include the following: Burkina Faso and Guyana - limited consultation processes (ESPs not widely known or relevant outside ministries of education); Cote d'Ivoire – national stakeholders, including the ministries of education used the ESP to attract external donors' investments, not as a planning document for the sector; Liberia – the ESP was developed after development partners developed their own plans, and the ministry of education developed its own operational plan with an unclear relationship to the ESP; Sierra Leone and Liberia – ESPs' relevance challenged by changing external contexts. Furthermore, sector plan relevance and application may be affected by joint ownership by a number of education ministries, none of which have a leadership role (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo[51]). In this case, operational plans provided insufficient evidence on which respective entities are responsible for achieving ESP targets. In Nepal[52], the ESP was developed during an ongoing process of decentralization, resulting in potentially substantial modifications[53].

[41] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[42] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[43] Universalia. 2019. Summative Country Program Evaluation – Kingdom of Cambodia. Montreal, Canada. Universalia.
[44] Universalia. 2019. Summative Country-level Prospective Evaluations. First Annual Report: Ethiopia. Montreal, Canada. Universalia.
[45]Universalia. 2019. Evaluation of the GPE's Support to Sector Plan Development. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[46] Universalia, 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Burkina Faso, Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[47] Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Côte d'Ivoire, Final Report). Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[48] Guyana Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Guyana, Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[49] Liberia Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Liberia, Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[50] Sierra Leone Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Sierra Leone, Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[51] Universalia. 2019. DRC GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[52] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – Nepal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[53] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

Resilience as an approach in education planning and implementation attempts to obviate or mitigate risk and ensure sustainable outcomes. However, sector-wide and project-based provisions for resilience may be undermined in conditions of extreme instability and uncertainty, and significant resource constraints for flexible and adaptable responsiveness. As noted in the previous chapter, a suite of documentation comprising GPE's risk management architecture has recently been prepared. This includes GPE's 2019 risk management framework which distinguishes between operational and strategic risks, risk perception and risk appetite. It also includes GPE's operational risk framework which differentiates risks by country, sector, and grant.

However, at country and project levels, the nature and extent of risk and appropriate mitigations related to outcomes may not be sufficiently geographically nuanced, given differing levels of susceptibility to risks and vulnerabilities in different geographical areas. **Although risk analysis may be included in ESP appraisal such as sensitivity to context, this is only one of seven criteria stated in GPE's 2019 ESPDG guidelines**. Given that meeting five out of seven criteria is sufficient for ESP approval, adequate context-based risk analyses could be overlooked in ESP approval.

4.3.2. Sustainability in the design of GPE supported ESPs and specific interventions

ESPs are normally the DCPs' major planning instrument for the education sector over the short to medium term although they differ widely in scope, prioritizations, and monitoring provision. This reflects DCPs' differing policies, circumstance, and constraints. ESPs are not necessarily reflective of the education sector as a whole. Standalone interventions may be undertaken by development partners and implementing partners which are not included in a country's ESP. **ESPs are not necessarily aligned to a country's development strategy or national development plan because the prime government actors and key stakeholders invariably differ within respective processes of developing different planning instruments over time**, as noted in Universalia's synthesis report[54].

Sustainability is not currently a criterion for GPE approval of ESPs and they do not necessarily focus on sustainability (although it may be implicit in some ESPs). This is an issue which the ISE hopes to explore in stage 2. Although risk management and context factors may be given attention, as noted above, this is not compulsory for GPE approval. The aforementioned 2019 review of completion reports[55] focuses on ESPIGS, not on ESPs as a whole. Although EMISs may be responsible for gathering data on outputs and outcomes of the education sector as a whole, their limitations will impact assessments of ESPs and their supporting projects.

In Sierra Leone, GPE reportedly made transformative contributions to sector planning by providing incentives, guidelines, and resources for sector plan development[56]. However, according to GPE's 2019 results report, **a third of ESPs, mainly in FCAs, are rated as "not achievable"** i.e. they do not adequately address financial constraints and implementation challenges. Consequently, the sustainability of implementation and of outcomes is challenged from the outset. ESPs are not necessarily tailored to focus on sustainability and there is little work yet carried out on verifying how sustainability may be promoted in conditions of capacity constraints. According to a study recently published by OPM[57], **GPE has insufficiently addressed the notion of strengthening national capacity**, and there is ambiguity about what is meant by this term. This finding is supported by Universalia[58], which sees individual or organizational capacity as incorporating capabilities (i.e. knowledge, skills experiences), motivation, and opportunity, but county-level stakeholders and GPE documents such as the ToR for CLEs regard capacity as synonymous with capabilities.

[54] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[55] Gaubatz, J H (2019). Review of completion reports for the Global Partnership for education's education sector plan implementation grants 2016-2018. Washington, USA, GPE.
[56] Universalia, 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – Sierra Leone, Final Report. Montreal, Canada.
[57] Ruddle, N, Casey K and Elte, G et al. 2018. Examination of Actors' Roles in GPE's country-level operational model towards GPE 2020 Delivery. Oxford. Oxford Policy Management.
[58] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

Although GPE grants are aligned to ESPs, GPE's 2019 results report notes that **two-thirds use standalone mechanisms that are poorly aligned with national systems,** meaning that GPE continues to use relatively fragmented aid implementation mechanisms. Achieving sustainability (however defined), is occluded within project-based short-term interventions. This is due to three main reasons: projects are time-bound, and normally cover a period of about three or four years (subject to extension); donors' post-project funding and support is invariably not guaranteed and in any case, is usually conditional on project performance; domestic funding is subject to DCPs' socio-economic circumstances, as well as changeable regional and global policy priorities. **The GPE model of funding for sector-wide work through ESPDGs and ESPIGs intentionally attempts to strengthen systems, but the positive impact of GPE on change and system reform is not well-evidenced[59].**

GPE documentation does not elaborate on the sharing of appropriate practice regarding sustainability. Stakeholders have suggested that **GPE should do more to communicate best practices** emerging from different contexts and to connect countries to other partners who share similar experiences[60]. **It may be useful to promote JSRs which assist in highlighting sustainability issues from the perspectives of a variety of stakeholders**[61]. It is noted that fewer than half of DCPs held a JSR in 2018, with only just over a quarter meeting quality standards and certain CLEs indicate weaknesses in a number of countries[62]. However, although JSRs are intended to review the education sector as a whole and not only GPE-supported interventions, they are potentially an important sector-wide mechanism to track and help sustain outcomes. These should help to ensure GPE interventions are aligned with countries' ESPs and national development plans, (assuming JSR quality standards are met).

4.3.3. Preliminary Sustainability Conclusions

Sustainability of outcomes requires longer-term perspectives that exceed the lifespan of the traditional project cycle. Projects are time-framed and normally comparatively short-term (approximately three years). Therefore, commensurate project-based funding is not long-term. Sustainability of outcomes requires the sustainability of inputs, especially financing, whether self-generated or from external sources.

The absence of a specific sustainability criterion may undermine ESP's sustainability of outcomes. The process of ESP development, which provides the framework for ESDPs and ESPIGs, may not necessarily be consistent with national development strategies or plans. The **enhancement of DCPs' EMIS and other data collection and reporting** systems especially at decentralized levels including school-based data collection, is a priority for results-tracking and sustainability.

Capacity constraints of ministries of education and implementing partners could be addressed by initial capability assessments and capacity-building measures as part of GPE support. Sustainability, as defined by DAC referred to above, is not a feature of GPE's ToC or country-level processes. Assuming DCPs attain results commensurate with country-level objectives using the current GPE model, agreed approaches to GPE-supported capacity development may contribute to sustainability.

[59] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[60] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[61] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments- Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[62] Universalia, 2019. Summative GPE Country Program - Zambia, Evaluation Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia; Universalia, 2019. First Annual Report: Mali. Montreal, Canada, Universalia.

4.4 Relevance

This section starts by reviewing in-depth GPE performance on dimensions of alignment with SDG 4. Then it reviews the extent to which GPE grants have aligned with GPE higher-level goals of equitable learning outcomes and access to education and DCP policies and systems, and co-channeled through co-financing arrangements with other partners. Then, it reviews the extent to which GPE funding has been based on needs. Finally, it reviews the validity of GPE TOC in terms of its logic and practice.

4.4.1 Alignment and coherence

GPE has adopted as its vision Sustainable Development Goal 4: To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.[63] GPE aligned its targets and indicators with those SDG 4 targets that relate to basic education, which are 6 out of 10 SDG 4 targets.[64] In its Results Report 2019, GPE presented what data was available on five out of six indicators, with the limitation that reporting was limited to available data and most GPE countries did not have updated data on most indicators. Additionally, GPE supports the global dialogue around learning- and skills-related targets and indicators of SDG 4, primarily through the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning. This platform supports national strategies for measuring learning and enables international reporting against the learning- and skills-related indicators of SDG 4. [65] GPE is also involved in a new initiative aimed to create a comprehensive database to track aid flows to SDG targets.[66]

The GPE results report tracks progress on textbook provision, teachers trained, and building and renovation of classrooms, because it considers these activities particularly **relevant for GPE higher-level goals.** GPE surpassed its milestones for 2019 on all three of these indicators.

Looking at figures for ESPIGs by mid-2018, which represents the vast majority of funding allocated and disbursed,[67] GPE has allocated 40.5 percent of its active grant funding to activities designed primarily to improve learning, 25.9 percent to improve equity, and 28.8 percent to strengthen systems.[68] According to the review of closed grants conducted by the Secretariat, GPE has maintained a focus on funding basic education, with limited investments in pre-primary and secondary education.[69]

The Result Report 2019 classifies funding related to learning in five categories: standards, curriculum and learning materials, teacher development, teacher management, learning assessment systems, and use of ICT in education. It classifies funding for equity as funding for education facilities, gender equality, access for out-of-school children, health and nutrition in school, adult learning, support to children with disabilities, cash transfers and other incentives for students.

[63] GPE (undated). Country-Level Guide: recommended education sector and GPE grants processes. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[64] SDG targets i.e. the ones on reaching equitable and relevant learning outcomes in basic education; access to quality early childhood development; care and pre-primary education; eliminating disparities based on vulnerabilities, and "increasing the supply of qualified teacher". The remaining SDG 4 targets focus on vocational, secondary, and higher education, promoting skills and knowledge for sustainable development, and expanding the number of scholarships available globally
[65] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[66] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[67] According to the Result Report 2019, by 2018, the vast majority of allocated GPE funding was at country level and spread over three grant types: ESPIGs (USD 5,107 millions), with much lower amounts in the form of ESPDGs (USD 26.8 millions) and Program Development Grants (PDGs) (14.1 millions). Additionally, GPE provided two categories of global and cross-national grants for supporting civil society and thematic work: the Global and Regional Activities Grant and the Civil Society Education Fund, for an allocated value of USD 29.7 and 48.3 millions respectively. Two new grant types have recently been launched i.e. Education Out Loud and KIX, for which there is no breakdown of funding available yet.
[68] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[69] Gaubatz, J. (2018). Review Of Completion Reports For The Global Partnership For Education's Education Sector Plan Implementation Grants 2016-2018.

According to the results report 2019, the top five areas of cumulative GPE investment are: standards, curriculum, and learning materials (USD 294.56 million in activities), education facilities (USD 256.57 million), teacher development (USD 150. 98 million), systems strengthening at the school level (USD 141.30 million), and school strengthening at the central level (USD 125.08 million). The completion report conducted by the Secretariat confirms that frequently planned interventions are supply-side (teacher training, provision of improved teaching/learning materials, and classroom construction). It also reports that interventions in the GPE thematic area of "Learning" most frequently aim to improve teaching and learning conditions (teacher training, provision of materials, classroom construction) but less so to equip Ministries and schools to assess learning outcomes.

As for inclusivity, 4.2 percent (USD 60.2 million) of cumulative GPE investment went to activities primarily focused on gender equality, 1.8 percent (USD 25.73 million) on access for out-of-school children, and 0.2 percent (USD 2.69 million) for children with disabilities and special needs. These appear limited investments, especially for children with disabilities, but the GPE did not have a target for providing at least a threshold of funding to these areas, which means that it is not possible to say that funding is lower than expected. The GPE brought children with disabilities into the spotlight during 2017-2018 through stock take by the Secretariat on the extent to which DCP ESPs and GPE grants focus on disability and inclusive education, and through a partnership with UNICEF, IIEP-UNESCO, and the World Bank for supporting methodological guidelines for sector analysis that has a focus on children with disabilities.[70]

Alignment is defined by the OECD as when "donors base their support on **partner countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures**". GPE operationalizes the definition of alignment with a score-card system based on 10 dimensions of alignment that move from alignment with ESPs up to full alignment with DCPs governments' systems of public financial management and accounting.[71] Distinct from this is **co-financing**, which is the situation where GPE provides project funding together with other DCPs or donors, rather than being the only source.

The Results Report 2019 reports that, during the fiscal year 2018, **all grants aligned with the ESP priorities**, and more than half with ESP annual implementation frameworks, Medium-Term expenditure frameworks, and national budget information. Less than half of the grants used national procurement rules and specific budget appropriations. **Less than 20 percent of them used Treasury systems for PFM, the national accounting system, and the national external process**. Additionally, as seen in section 4.1, effectiveness, GPE missed its 2018 milestone for co-financing of projects, where performance regressed to below 2015 values (even if the values are higher than pre-2015 values).

The Result Report 2019 finds that **performance in alignment is partly connected to the delivery modality chosen**, as sector-pooled funds and budget support are logically and also in practice associated with the use of country systems, but are the least used modalities.[72] Instead, co-financed projects, where GPE funds a project together with other donors or DCP partners, are not more aligned with national systems than stand-alone projects. GPE introduced a multiplier mechanism in 2017, which uses GPE's funding for mobilizing additional funding on a ratio of USD 1 in extra GPE funding for each USD 3 in partner funding. The multiplier is an incentive for expanding co-financing, but not for increasing alignment with national systems.

[70] The Global Partnership for Education (2018). Disability and Inclusive Education A Stocktake of Education Sector Plans and GPE-Funded Grants. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019). The Use of UIS Data and Education Management Information Systems to Monitor Inclusive Education. [online] Available at: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip60-use-of-uis-data-and-emis-to-monitor-inclusive-education.pdf

[71] The 10 dimensions are described in the methodological note for GPE indicator 29 https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological_sheet_for_indicator_29.pdf

[72] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.

4.4.2 Needs-based approach

The allocation formula introduced in 2014 recognizes "need" as an important criterion for identifying a Country Maximum Allocation, [73] because it includes weighting for the allocation of the number of out-of-school (OOS) children, GDP per capita, and conflict/fragility status. In 2015, the Interim Evaluation had already reported that **the newly introduced allocation formula had led to revising MCAs and favoring more fragile, lower-income, and more populous countries.**[74.]

Countries wishing to access their fixed MCAs (70 percent of the MCA) must satisfy requirements that are not connected with needs, but rather with the areas that GPE aims to incentivize: endorsed ESP or TESP, commitment to finance the ESP or TESP, the availability of sector data or a strategy to develop capacity to get the data. Countries that want to access the variable tranche of their MCAs (30 percent of the MCA) must meet additional incentive-based requirements. The incentive-based requirements under the fixed and variable tranche move the focus away from funding based exclusively on needs, and introduce, among other things, a connection between a country's capacity and willingness to go through the ESP and ESPIG application process and the amount of funds it will receive.

At the country level, the ESP planning process and the grant application are the main instruments for prioritizing support based on country needs. The CLEs for DRC and Guyana have reported challenges in the prioritization of actions during the ESP planning process, but overall CLEs do not raise remarks about ESPIGs not being targeted on areas of support where there are needs. In some cases, like South Sudan, they do suggest, however, that country-level funding is still a fraction of what is required to meet country needs.

The 2018 Portfolio Review shows that GPE funding is reasonably targeted to prioritize low-income and FCAC countries assumed to have the greatest education needs. The 55 percent of DCPs classified as low-income received 63 percent of total ESPIG allocations. 53 percent of DCP ESPIG beneficiaries classified in the FCAC category received 59 percent of all ESPIG allocations.[75]

In terms of meeting emergency needs, **since 2012, GPE has had an instrument for providing accelerated funding to countries in an emergency,** to an amount up to 20 percent of the indicative allocation for ESPIGs applicable to the country.[76] The portfolio review 2018 does not present aggregated figures for emergency funding, but it appears that in 2018 GPE provided US$8.3 million to the Government of Bangladesh for the schooling of Rohingya refugees, US$6.3 million to the Government of the Central African Republic to support children whose education has been upended by civil war, and US$6 million for children caught up in the conflict in South Sudan.[77] In the case of South Sudan, GPE funding constituted 13 percent of the funding that UNICEF appealed for as education cluster lead and contributed to meeting and over-shooting the required amount for the sector.[78]

[73] The GPE (2015). Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Education Sector Program Implementation Grant Guidelines1. [online] Available at: http://file:///E:/DataGFE/Downloads/2015-06-espig_guidelines-english.pdf [Accessed 9 Nov. 2019].
[74] Universalia. 2015. Independent Interim Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education, Volume 11 Case Studies. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[75] The GPE (2018). Portfolio Review 2018.
[76] Guidelines for accelerated support in emergency and early recovery situations. (2019). [online] Available at: https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-04-16-gpe-guidelines-for-accelerated-funding.pdf [Accessed 9 Nov. 2019].
[77] ReliefWeb. (2019). Global Partnership for Education provides emergency education funding for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and displaced children in the Central African Republic - Bangladesh. [online] Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/global-partnership-education-provides-emergency-education-funding-rohingya [Accessed 9 Nov. 2019].
[78] UNICEF (2018). UNICEF South Sudan Cluster Leads Annual Report 2018. [online] Available at: https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/reports/unicef-south-sudan-cluster-leads-annual-report-2018 [Accessed 9 Nov. 2019].

4.4.3 Validity of the TOC

The ISE assesses the validity of the GPE's global ToC as presented in chapter 3 on two aspects. 1) Validity in design – the extent to which the ToC in design is evidence-based, logical and complete, and 2) Validity in Practice – the extent to which the ToC has proven to be valid in practice.

ToC Validity in design. The GPE constructed its global ToC through a consultative process using the evidence available about how to improve national education systems. The TOC reflects GPE's conceptual thinking at that time when the Board approved it in December 2015. The ToC justifies the need for improved equity and quality education referring to external research. It explains that improved equity and quality in education require an improved education system and describes the assumption that GPE's three country-level outputs will lead to this. The ToC document does refer to research that suggests that inclusive policy dialogue increases the quality of policies and plans, illustrating a causal linkage between objective 1 (improved sector planning) and 2 (inclusive sector dialogue) that in the ToC are presented as parallel processes. Finally, these country-level outputs are linked to two global outputs: Objective 4 - Better and more financing, referring to external research, and Objective 5 -. Strengthened partnership. As such, the ToC document explains and justifies the logic of GPE's results chain, but is limited in its references to existing evidence/research that supports this logic.

The ToC document includes assumptions reflecting "the GPE's best understanding of the conditions necessary for success referring to associated risks". However, the one Output to Outcome assumption states "Global Partnership support for planning, inclusive policy dialogue, and GPE grant resources, will together lead to stronger education systems with the capacity to focus on equity and learning". This statement summarizes the existing intervention logic but does not reflect key external factors/risks that may affect GPE's success and therefore require monitoring or mitigation strategies. In contrast, some of the seven global to country-level assumptions do refer to such factors, primarily related to the behavior of individual GPE partners (i.e. partners willing to work together at country-level, DCP's increasing financing and creating an inclusive mechanism for dialogue). Others however refer to steps needed to complete the pathway from global to country outputs (e.g. capacity development and adaptation of GPE's business model to context). These steps are not explicit in GPE's ToC but are certainly targeted by GPE support; hence they reflect more the 'intermediate' steps needed to complete GPE's intervention logic than external conditions for success like political stability or policies and practices of influential actors outside GPE's sphere of control.

During the inception of the CLEs that are carried out as part of GPE's M&E strategy, **the global ToC has been worked out into a more detailed generic country-level ToC**. This country-level ToC addresses some of the constraints of the global ToC by distinguishing planning from implementation processes and by articulating an additional set of generic assumptions (i.e. the same for all countries) that more closely relate to external conditions for success (e.g. stakeholders having the capability, opportunity and motivation to work in partnership). These adaptations add to the completeness (and complexity) of this ToC, though the use of this ToC is at present limited to the GPE Secretariat and the CLE researchers.

Finally, evidence of progressive insights related to 'gaps' in the ToC was demonstrated during meetings with the Results and Performance team of the GPE Secretariat. Particular examples include the strengthening of country-level partnerships to bridge the gap from a strong global partnership to an inclusive dialogue mechanism at a country level and improved public service delivery to bridge the gap from improved education systems to impact. The Secretariat stated that these will become part of its inputs into the post-2020 strategy development process.

Validity in practice. The findings presented below on the validity of the TOC in practice draw on GPE performance, presented in section 4.1, the effectiveness section, but are partial and tentative, and better understood as hypotheses to explore in phase 2 using additional CLEs.

The pathways between GPE support and sector-wide planning and efficient and effective ESPIG grant-making and implementation, and then between these and strengthening education systems appear valid in most country

contexts. These connections have been valid in contexts, like DRC, of extreme fragility, breaking down, partly, only for the case of open civil conflict in South Sudan. It is also valid in contexts where government effectiveness is higher (for example Malawi) and in conditions of strong economic growth and higher human development (Kenya and Senegal), where, however, the added value of GPE support in these areas is smaller in the face of stronger country capacity for planning.[79] The assumption that seems needed here is that support is provided in a way that is sensitive to country planning and implementation capacity. The pathway from effective sector-wide planning and strengthening education systems appears to pass through the distinct step of effective ESP implementation, as reconstructed by the TOC presented in the CLEs. The connection between GPE and ESP implementation is weaker because the latter is further from the sphere that GPE can directly control (ESPIGs are a small fraction of ESP implementation funds). Additionally, domestic financing for education, which in the TOC is one of the dimensions and targets of strengthened education systems, appears to be as much a pre-condition for effective ESP implementation as a consequence.

The connection between GPE support and effective dialogue and monitoring and between GPE support and more and better financing does not appear to be as valid (yet) in practice, not even under the best country conditions (which in our sample of CLEs are constituted by Kenya and Senegal).[80] At this point, reaching a clear conclusion on why these connections do not appear to be working is not straightforward. The ISE, therefore, identifies two areas for deeper investigation during phase 2 of this evaluation.

- Evidence related to the importance of advocacy for inclusive dialogue and conducting quality JSRs to achieve progress in mutual accountability and joint monitoring of implementation. Linked to this is the role of advocacy in progressing towards more and better financing (objective 4).
- Evidence related to the effect of strong annual (joint) monitoring versus the use of strong periodic (participative) evaluations (mid-term and end-line) combined with a much lighter annual monitoring, as practiced in Cambodia.

[79] See Annex 4.2.1 for more detail.
[80] See Annex 4.2.1 for more detail.

4.4.4 Preliminary conclusions regarding relevance

GPE is well aligned with SDG 4 targets and indicators for basic education. Its grants are well aligned with GPE higher-level goals and with ESPs, with weakness in terms of prioritizing inclusive education. GPE grants are not aligned with national systems but improved to a limited extent against baseline values for this dimension. The same is not true for co-financing projects with other donors, which is an area where performance did not improve against the baseline.

GPE model combines instruments to target funding based on needs and instruments that make funding conditional on country performance on dimensions important for GPE. In practice, GPE is providing funding to FCACs and lower-income countries that is more than proportional to their numbers.

The ToC is clear in its logic, as it identifies and connects GPE's objectives and goals. The ToC was constructed with limited available evidence, meaning that many of the causal linkages, though carefully considered, had to be assumed. At the same time, the document refers to research related to causal linkages between the country-level outputs (improved sector policy and inclusive policy dialogue) that are not apparent in the ToC visualization. The ToC furthermore includes assumptions that partially refer to external factors for success and partially provide an elaboration of GPE's intervention logic. This illustrates the scope for refinement in reflecting causal connections and in filling gaps in the pathways of change.

The initial ToC has been refined as part of the CLE inception process, particularly by distinguishing planning from implementation and by articulating assumptions that reflect an improved understanding of the external (pre-)conditions for success. At present, this refined ToC remains within the working domain of the Secretariat in its cooperation with the country-level evaluators but illustrates that progressive insights are available to improve the ToC as part of GPE's post-2020 strategy.

The connection of GPE support and sector-wide planning and effective and efficient ESPIG implementation with strengthened education system appear valid in practice, under the assumption that a country is not affected by open conflict and support is sensitized to country implementation capacity for sector plans. This connection passes through effective ESP implementation, which appears a different process from ESP planning, and which has seen weaker progress than planning and ESPIG implementation. The connection between GPE support and inclusive dialogue and monitoring, and between GPE support and more and better financing does not appear to be as demonstrated in practice (yet).

5 Organizational Effectiveness

The four evaluation criteria for organizational effectiveness are discussed in the following order: governance and management; administrative efficiency; country-level arrangements and processes; monitoring and evaluation.

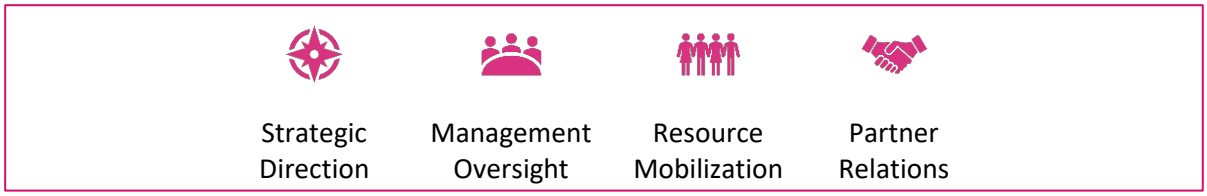
5.1 Governance and management

This section reviews GPE's Board and management performance in its core functions of directing, overseeing and contributing to GPE's ambitions. An initial assessment has been made by comparing the expected roles and responsibilities of GPE Board and management as reflected in key documents (e.g. GPE's Charter and related Board decisions) with documented information related to actual performance and deliverables since 2015.

5.1.1 Board Performance

The GPE Board's major functions include strategic direction, management oversight, resource mobilization, and partner relations (see Figure 7). In providing strategic direction, the GPE 2020 Strategic Plan is a core document outlining GPE's principles and ambitions for 2016–2020 and summarizes its results framework based on a generic ToC. According to a MOPAN[81] assessment executed in 2019, this strategy provides adequate strategic guidance aligned to SDG 4. The overall strategy is furthermore complemented by a range of documents providing further guidance in shaping GPE's approach and operating processes[82]. In addition, the Strategy and Impact Committee has been established to oversee and advise the Board on the development of strategies and policies of GPE.

Figure 7 GPE Board's Major Functions



Partly triggered by the 2015 interim evaluation, the Board has demonstrated increasingly deliberate strategic steering efforts by requesting, discussing and approving an increasing number of strategy and policy documents. The steadily increasing number of Board Decisions published on GPE's website (up from 88 from in 2013–2014 to 113 in 2017–2018) illustrates this intensifying strategic steering, which is also experienced as such by Secretariat staff. The preparation for and follow-up of these decisions is primarily expected from the Secretariat in consultation with relevant Board committees. This means that the expectations from the Secretariat, tasked with the development and roll-out of most of GPE's expanding strategy and policy framework, have increased in the past years. In response to this, additional resources have been allocated to the Secretariat, which allowed for teams to be created or expanded to cope with the increasing workload.

At the same time, an expanded and more diverse strategy and policy framework has led to questions about prioritization and alignment of policy documents. This has been addressed less clearly in the documented Board decisions. In parallel, an effective partnership review process was undertaken by external consultants in 2018[83]. In response, the Board called for and endorsed an action plan that is now being rolled out by the Secretariat,

[81] MOPAN. 2019. 2017-18 Assessments Global Partnership for Education (GPE). MOPAN.
[82] E.g. Gender Equality strategy M&E strategy, Policy on Conflict of interest, Strategies for engagement with Foundations and Private Sector, LEG guidelines, ToR concerning the secretariat's country level role, Risk Management policy, and so on.
[83] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume I – Main Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.

addressing a number of strategic challenges at the country level related to clarification of roles, mutual accountability, and national ownership. Overall, the Board has undertaken extensive and well-intended efforts to provide strategic direction to many aspects of GPE's work, but the extent to which these efforts have been experienced as intended among partners at the country-level and the Secretariat is not documented.

Also, **in terms of management oversight, an intensification of efforts can be seen**, in particular through the establishment of five Board committees with dedicated ToRs outlining composition, roles, and responsibilities. A Coordinating Committee has the responsibility of ensuring that the closely related mandates of the committees do not lead to duplication or contradicting messages in the Board's oversight efforts. Each committee (see Figure 8) advises the Board on issues within its mandated area (Grants and Performance, Risk and Finance, Governance and Ethics, Strategy and Impact, and Coordination), providing inputs to the Board's deliberations and decisions. The Grants and Performance Committee, for instance, approves ESPIG grant proposals below US$ 10 million and makes recommendations to the Board for proposals above US$ 10 million. This process reportedly includes several rounds of feedback with the GA and takes up most of its time, leaving limited time for monitoring Grant portfolio performance.

Figure 8 GPE Board Committees



The Board committee self-assessment (early 2018) found that the majority of members felt that the committees deliver on their respective mandates and provide clear guidance to the Secretariat. Scope for improvement was reported in overseeing implementation, focusing on the right issues, individual member preparation and consultations with constituencies before and after meetings.

The **effect of intensified management oversight is visible**, in particular in the further elaboration and clarification of operational processes, and the tightening of risk management practices, for example. It is, however, difficult to find documented evidence about the effect of these efforts on the overall performance of the Secretariat and GPE as a whole. At the same time, **Board Committee members and Secretariat staff express concerns about finding the right level of delegation** to make optimal use of the capacity of the Secretariat without becoming too Secretariat-driven.[84]

In the GPE Strategy 2020, mobilizing more and better financing is an explicit global level objective and remains a core focus area of the Board and the Secretariat. The GPE financing conference in Dakar in February 2018 was a key-milestone event in this. Elaborate efforts, including active participation of many Board members, went into making this event a success, as it resulted in unprecedented domestic financing commitments of US$110 billion from developing countries and US$2.3 billion from donors[85] for 2018–2020. GPE's 2019 Results Report furthermore shows that donors contributed US$638 million in 2018, the highest since GPE's inception with donor partners fulfilling 100 percent of their commitments for the fourth consecutive year. At the same time, the Results Report refers to significant external funding gaps for education as a whole up to US$ 44 billion per year[86]. Besides, the Board has pushed for diversification of funding sources, resulting in a gradual increase in contributions from non-traditional donors up to US$ 11.4 million in 2018. **The Board's resource mobilization efforts are likely to have been instrumental in mobilizing more and diversified funding**, though no systematic analysis of the significance of this contribution has been documented.

[84] This issue is flagged for further investigation during phase 2 of the ISE.
[85] An increase by more than US$ 1 billion compared to the previous 3-year period.
[86] According to International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, chapter 5 GPE Results Report 2019.

In terms of partnership engagement, the Board has initiated many dedicated efforts to clarify expectations and improve the engagement of different existing constituency groups. In response, the Secretariat has intensified its work to assist DCP's in coordinating their inputs to GPE as a constituency group, developed and started implementing engagement strategies for the private sector and foundations, and is rolling out the Effective Partnership Review process to improve partner engagement at country level. Documented evidence demonstrating changes in levels of engagement of DCPs is primarily visible in the pre-board meetings, while initial changes in terms of the private sector and foundations contributing time, expertise and funds are visible as well[87]. It is too early for the EPR process to demonstrate its effects.

At the same time, the absence of certain constituency groups (e.g. parents, youth and disadvantaged groups) in GPE governance was flagged in the Interim Evaluation Report 2015. The report argued that the inclusion of ultimate beneficiaries as members or observers in the Board would enrich the dialogue, using the Global Fund and the Climate Investment Funds as examples. In addition, the 2014 GPE Civil Society Review recommended that the Board assess the potential of increasing the representation of these groups, but it is not clear to what extent this recommendation has been taken up.

5.1.2 Performance in Convening, Aligning and Sustaining Political Will among Stakeholders

The ISE evaluation team interprets 'convening stakeholders' as a process of creating space and opportunity for different GPE partners to come together and interact. This happens at both the country and global levels in many different ways. The Board and its committees are places where different constituency groups meet face-to-face periodically and increasingly online since 2017. In addition to the convening of stakeholders as part of GPE's governance arrangements, the Secretariat organizes regular advocacy events — according to Results Reports: 26 in FY 2016, 12 in FY 2017, 31 in FY 2018 — with the active participation of Board members. These events bring together diverse stakeholders and help in creating more mutual understanding and clarity about expectations amongst different partners. In addition, the Secretariat's efforts to convene stakeholders within specific constituency groups have been stepped up (see also Chapter 5.1.1).

The role of the Board and management in convening stakeholders at the country level is less direct, but here supportive efforts can be seen e.g. in the development of LEG guidelines and by clarifying the role of the Secretariat in this regard. The effect of these efforts on the functioning of the LEG, as the main country-level GPE stakeholders' platform, is still difficult to discern. At the same time, the EPR carried out in 2018, found that the sense of belonging and motivation of DCPs and other partners at the country level to contribute time and efforts to the GPE remains an issue of concern. The Secretariat aims to address this concern through the EPR roll-out, but it is too soon for this process to demonstrate results.

Grant alignment to national priorities is part of GPE's principles. In the GPE Charter, development partners, civil society and CAs resolve to pursue and monitor alignment. **Alignment, therefore, remains a continuing point for attention for which an alignment roadmap has been approved by the Board**. Nevertheless, annual Results Reports show little progress in grant alignment. Some external donor evaluations (e.g. the DFAT assessment in 2017) are more positive about this, among others referring to the Multiplier Fund that was created to stimulate harmonization and grant alignment. Alignment of policy and strategy papers with the overall GPE 2020 strategy and with SDG4 is adequate according to the MOPAN assessment in 2019 although from the documentation it is not evident how this translates into practice. In other words, a continued push for more increased alignment by both the Board and Secretariat is visible, but the effects of this remain a matter of concern.

Building and sustaining political will and commitment to education has been one of the main reasons for creating the GPE. **The Board and Secretariat continuously try to increase and sustain political will**, among others through its financing framework (with ESPIG approval depending on domestic budget allocation and the introduction of variable results-based grants), an increasing number of advocacy events and the application of a

[87] Education Data Solutions Roundtable and various initiatives mentioned on GPE website

range of innovative communications tactics including calling upon the help of political leaders and celebrities. Assuming that financing is a reflection of political will, the success of these efforts has been mixed. An increasing number of donor partners have provided a gradual increase in external funding, while DCPs have also invested more in education. At the same time, more than half of donor partners decreased education funding in 2018, which means that new donors partly have replaced rather than added to existing donors. In addition, the percentage of DCPs maintaining sector spending at 20 percent has been stable (around 65 percent) despite GPE's ambition to increase this, while significant funding gaps reportedly remain. When considering DCPs' ownership as another, albeit less easily measured sign of political will, clear challenges remain[88] that are being addressed in the EPR roll-out process that started mid-2019.

5.1.3 Performance in communicating the GPE vision and results

On the website and in most of its recent publications, **GPE reflects its vision of equitable and quality education for all**. At the same time, an external communications review[89] identified 10 important shortcomings to be addressed including GPE not making a good case for itself, remaining unknown in developing countries, and complex and uninspired messaging using outdated systems. The review suggested several strategic shifts in response to this, which the advocacy team of the Secretariat is now using to develop a new communications and advocacy strategy. In addition to these attempts towards improved communication, a recent presentation of the advocacy team (2019) reflects a diversity of advocacy tactics and communication channels being deployed to communicate GPE's vision to increase political will and financing for education.

GPE's vision is operationalized in its grant-making processes. **Attention to endorsement criteria for ESPs and Transitional Education Plans (TEPs) is guided by various indicators in GPE's Results Framework** (e.g. indicator 16, referring to the proportion of ESPs and TEPs having equity and equality strategies meeting quality standards. At impact level, GPE has to rely on external and often outdated data related to these indicators (see also the Monitoring and Evaluation section in this report), which limits GPE's abilities to use its monitoring findings for evidence-based learning and steering of its operations towards more equitable and quality education.

Communication of GPE's activities and achievements takes place by summarizing key results on-line and by publishing annual Results Reports. In addition, GPE publishes results through CLEs carried out in a range of countries. These reports, along with other publications reflecting GPE's achievements, are accessible to the public on the GPE website. According to Secretariat figures of November 2019, the Results Report of 2019 was downloaded 2,260 times in full and 595 in part. The 2018 report, that has been on-line longer, has been downloaded 3,397 times in full and 708 times in part. Approximately 80 percent downloaded the English version and 20 percent the French version. No particular targets were set for this.

Overall, **GPE does make information about its achievements accessible to all stakeholders**. GPE summarizes key results on its website, substantiated by publicly accessible but relatively heavy reports that have a reasonable outreach. In doing so, GPE relies on stakeholders having access to functioning internet connections, with limited tailoring of content to specific target audiences. Given that GPE works on education in almost 70 countries affecting millions of people, **substantial scope to expand its outreach remains.**

5.1.4 Preliminary conclusions regarding governance and management

The Board and its sub-committees have made deliberate intensified efforts to provide strategic direction and management oversight since 2015. These efforts contributed to a new overall strategy, expansion of GPE's policy framework, clarified roles, elaborated procedures, guidelines, and reports. In terms of resource mobilization and partner engagement, the Board has been successful in the sense that the last few years have seen unprecedented

[88] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume I – Main Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
[89] Christy Feig & Associates. 2018. Communications review & recommendations.

funding commitments of DCPs and Donor Partners, while signs of increased engagement of various particular constituency groups (DCPs, Private Sector, and Foundations) are reported as well.
To make this possible, the Board has relied primarily on the Secretariat that has been provided with additional resources to cope with increasing demands and expectations. The Secretariat has grown significantly in terms of budget, size, and responsibilities, although still within own targets and reasonable when compared with other global partnerships. This growth has also led to the delivery of an increasing number of outputs, many in response to Board decisions (see also chapter 5.2.1 immediately following).

The Board and management have paid substantial attention to convening and aligning stakeholders. The results in convening stakeholders are primarily demonstrated in an increasing number of advocacy events and progress in the engagement of specific constituency groups. The results in aligning donors with DCP priorities, systems and procedures, however, remain an issue on which limited progress has been made (see also chapter 4.4.1). The GPE Board and Secretariat have been successful in sustaining political will in financial terms, as they have secured increasing commitments from both DCPs and donors. Political will, as demonstrated by in-country ownership with DCP government's clearly taking the lead in ESP implementation, remains a concern.

The GPE has communicated its vision and made information about its results publicly accessible. At the same time, the GPE management has been rather self-critical about the quality of its communications and has demonstrated a drive towards improvement. After having commissioned an external review, the Secretariat is now developing a new advocacy and communications strategy with the aim to further professionalize and enhance the effectiveness of its external communications.

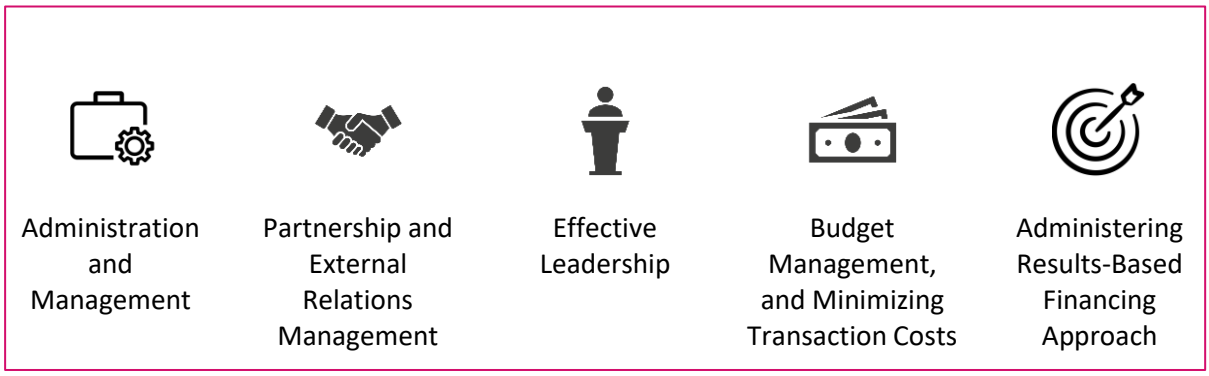
5.2 Administrative Efficiency

5.2.1 Performance of the Secretariat

This section reviews the Secretariat's efficiency in its core functions of administration and management; partnership and external relations management; effective leadership; budget management and minimizing transactions costs; and administering GPE's results-based financing approach (see Figure 9). An initial assessment has been made by comparing reviews in donors' reports and other documented information related to actual performance and deliverables since 2015.

Since 2015, demands on the Secretariat have increased to provide adequate administration and management for implementation of a strengthened operational model and delivering GPE's Strategic Plan 2016-2020, particularly in the areas of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), knowledge and good practice exchange, gender equality, and to accommodate the replenishment stream activities.

Figure 9 Main Functions of the Secretariat



In light of this, **the Secretariat grew from 74 staff (2015) and an operating budget of US$ 20.1 million (FY 2016) to 108 staff (2018) and operating costs[90] to almost US$35 million (FY 2019)**. This growth from four to seven percent of annual grant disbursements remains within the targeted range (five to seven percent) of disbursements. These costs are consistently assessed by donor reports (DFAT [91],[92] and DFID[93],[94]) as reasonable/modest/providing good VfM when benchmarked against other global partnerships costs.

The significant increase in the Secretariat's staff and costs comes with raised performance expectations, requiring additional tasks and targets. This has made the Secretariat's work increasingly complex, e.g. the Secretariat's 2017 work plan included 39 objectives with 78 activities. In the 2019 work plan, this increased to 49 objectives with 110 activities, many requiring significant time investments. One example of this has been in the area of partnership and external relations management, where the Secretariat followed-up on Board decisions providing extensive support to different constituent groups (in particular DCPs), preparing background material and convening them for deliberations on Board decisions. Another example has been intensified advocacy efforts by a dedicated advocacy team, with cross-Secretariat efforts leveraging Board members among others for the

[90] Operating expenses of the GPE Secretariat include fixed costs (staff, rent, IT, communications) and variable costs (consultants fees, travel, contractual services).
[91] Multilateral Performance Assessment the Global Partnership for Education. 2017. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the department of the Government of Australia (DFAT).
[92] The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is the department of the Government of Australia. 2018. "PERFORMANCE OF AUSTRALIAN AID 2016-17". Commonwealth of Australia, DFAT.
[93] DFID. 2016. Annual Review 2016. DFID
[94] DFID. 2017. Annual Review 2017. DFID

Dakar Conference. The Secretariat has become more involved in global advocacy and has showed stronger leadership in leveraging its members for raising the visibility of education at the global level.

Notably, the **Secretariat has increased its efforts to serve country-level processes as well**. According to the Oxford Policy Management review of 2018, approximately 42 percent of staff time and budget was spent on the country-facing functions in 2018, compared to 28 percent in 2015[95]. This addressed donors' recommendations, while some of them (DFID[96]) flagged transaction costs of DCPs using GPE guidance and tools to support improvements as an area for further GPE consideration. Fulfilling its function of managing budget and minimizing transaction costs**,** the Secretariat addressed the need to streamline GPE processes, especially to avoid duplication of QA of the grants by both the Secretariat and GAs[97].

To safeguard greater efficiency and standardization of the grant management approach, the Secretariat developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), invested in information systems related to grant management and results, and progressively rolled out systems to improve national capabilities[98]. The Secretariat made concrete proposals to reduce transaction costs and improve efficiency to the Board in June 2018. These included the suggestion to delegate grant approvals for small-sized grants to the Secretariat (up to US$10 million for approvals of small-sized costed restructurings), which at present is still part of the mandate of the Grants and Performance committee[99]. The Secretariat furthermore implements the Grant Process Streamlining process to identify and act on possibilities to increase administrative efficiency and reduce the time from MCA allocation to ESPIG disbursements. Besides, the Secretariat undertakes efforts to keep agency fees for all GAs within 7 percent[100], stimulates a systematic VfM approach, and attempts to harmonize costs across GAs and the Grant Processes.

5.2.2 Adaptations to FCAC context

To strengthen and tailor GPE's approach for FCACs, as a follow up on recommendations of the 2015 Interim Evaluation Report[101], the Secretariat has introduced TEPs as an adjusted form of ESPs including amended quality criteria, guidelines for accelerated support of FCACs, and procedures to make flexible and faster use of ESPIGs to respond to crises. In addition, the Secretariat has developed an operational risk framework paying attention to specific risks in FCACs and an M&E framework paying specific attention to FCACs.

In 2018, over 50 percent of ESPIGs were to FCACs, similar to the preceding year. There is evidence that GPE's processes to support work in emergency contexts proved relevant and valuable. For example, these enabled South Sudan to access more funding, through the enhanced Maximum Country Allowance formula for FCACs, to receive faster funding through GPE's Accelerated Funding Framework to enable the country to bridge a funding gap, and to receive flexible funding through GPE's operational framework for support to FCACs which allowed country-level actors to change ESPIG budget lines and target activities to fit the country context. For GPE to be effective in fragile governance settings such as in DRC however, the country evaluation report[102] concluded that a deeper political economy analysis and a stronger country presence of the GPE Secretariat might be required to provide fast, tailored and inclusive responses in a complex governance landscape.

[95] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume II – Annexes. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
[96] DFID. 2016. Annual Review 2016. DFID
[97] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume I – Main Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management
[98] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume II – Annexes. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
[99] GPE. 2018. Meeting of the Board of Directors BOD/2018/06. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[100] GPE. 2018. Portfolio Review 2018. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[101] Universalia. 2015. Independent Interim Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education, Volume I Final Evaluation Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[102] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – DRC. Montreal, Canada: Universalia

5.2.3 Fiduciary Oversight

A dedicated Board committee on Finance and Risk oversees and provides advice to the Board on matters related to risk management practices, financial management and audit arrangements of GPE and its resources. A separate Risk and Compliance Team within the Secretariat undertakes GPE's fiduciary oversight function relying largely on World Bank procedures. This team accredits and oversees GAs that are responsible for fiduciary oversight of GPE-financed programs using their own policies and procedures[103].

Triggered by the 2014 organizational review, GPE has taken significant steps to strengthen its fiduciary oversight systems and practices. It has also enhanced its approach to risk management, introducing a corporate risk management framework and an operational risk framework to monitor risks at the country level. This required allocating increased financial and human resources for fiduciary oversight and this trend continues with the operational budget for FY2020 showing a 16 percent increase for risk management and fiduciary oversight. These additional resources have helped in ensuring the accreditation of and intensified upstream (grant approval) and downstream (GAs' audit review) oversight over an increasing number of GAs (now 17). An elaborate Risk Management Framework has been developed (July 2019), while a more systematic VfM approach is being developed.

The results framework includes a key indicator related to fiduciary oversight (i.e. a number. of significant audit issues solved), and the annual Results Reports show that since the baseline in FY2016, 100 percent of issues from an increasing number of audit reports were solved (22 issues in 2018). According to GPE's portfolio reviews, the nature of issues found and reported is primarily technical and caused by systemic issues, although some occasions of misuse of funds on which corrective action were taken are reported as well. Examples include a case related to school canteens in Benin whereby initially US$ 69,300 was paid back while following further investigations an additional US$ 83,053 was reimbursed by the Government. Another case relates to the misappropriation of funds by cash custodians, which was reported to the local authorities. Besides corrective action, these cases also often led to preventive measures aimed at strengthening accountability systems. In light of this, the MOPAN assessment judged the fiduciary oversight functions to be satisfactory.

The newly developed risk management framework recognizes a range of strategic, operational, fund management and business continuity risks. This includes an ESPIG performance risk, reflecting the low-risk appetite for program extensions arising from gaps in implementation, and suggesting regular programmatic reviews to mitigate these risks.

5.2.4 Preliminary conclusions regarding administrative efficiency

The Secretariat has managed partnerships and external relations by a) providing extensive support to different constituent groups (in particular DCPs), b) by preparing background material and convening them for deliberations on Board decisions and intensified global advocacy, and c) by showing stronger leadership in leveraging its members for raising the visibility of education at the global level. The Secretariat has also enhanced its efforts to serve country-level processes and has shown flexibility and responsiveness in guidance for FCACs as these countries receive more, faster, and enhanced flexible funding. However, despite efforts to tailor its approach in grant application processes, making these sufficiently context-specific remains a challenge given the wide variety among FCACs.

The Secretariat has provided adequate attention to administrative efficiency, including GPE's results-based financing approach and budget management, with a focus on minimizing transaction costs (streamlining QA processes, developing SOPs, strengthening grant management-related information systems and operationalizing the VfM approach). The Secretariat has also given increasing attention to fiduciary oversight in the past few years and has performed satisfactorily since the baseline measurement in 2016 given that the Secretariat adequately deals

[103] GPE. 2018. Portfolio Review 2018. Washington DC, USA: GPE.

with 100 percent of reported significant audit issues. The intensified fiduciary oversight required an obvious and significant increase in resources, whilst the need for this continued increase is less obvious. At the same time, the Secretariat is developing more sophisticated financial oversight and risk management systems, but their practical applicability and subsequent added value remain to be proven.

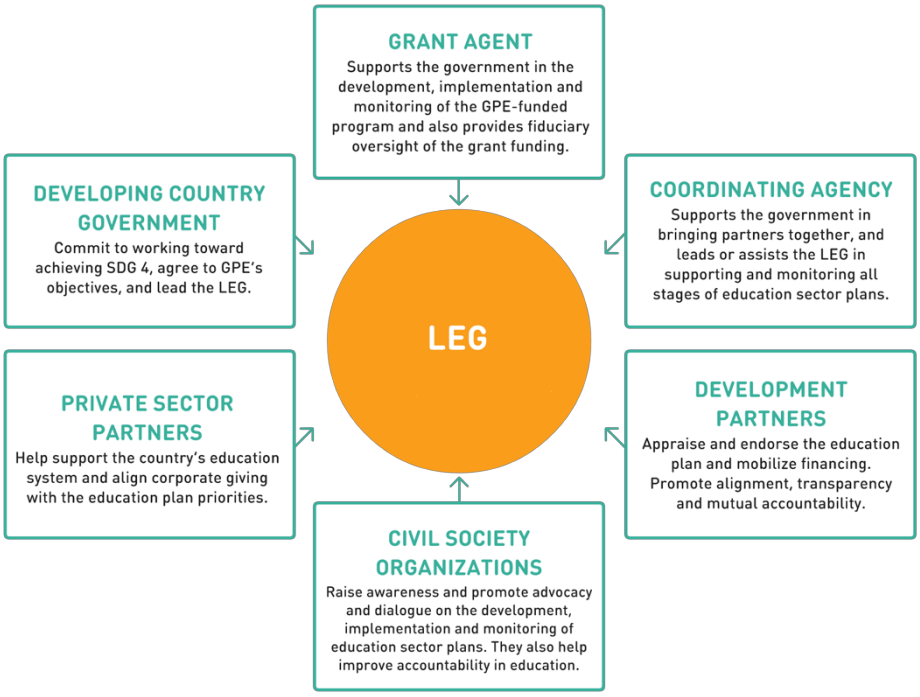
The overall increase in volume and diversity has made the work of the Secretariat more complex, leading to questions about prioritization and coordination that are often not addressed in Board decisions. This potentially affects the clarity of purpose of the Secretariat's work with the risk of creating inefficiencies both at the global and country level. The EPR process illustrates recognition of these risks at the country level and is therefore interpreted as an important and relevant undertaking helping the GPE to refocus its efforts and address key GPE governance challenges at the country level.

5.3 Country-level arrangements and processes

5.3.1 Performance of LEGs

This section makes use of the country-level planning cycle diagram (see chapter 3) explaining how GPE works in partner countries. GPE's country-level arrangements center around a strong, government-led, representative Local Education Group (LEG) as "a collaborative forum for education sector dialogue under government leadership, where the primary consultation on education sector development takes places between a government and its partners[104]" and "improved coordination of technical and financial support to long-term strategic planning, including the ESPs/TEPs"[105].

Figure 10 Composition of local education groups, GPE[106]



Although the specific composition, title, and working arrangements of the LEG vary from country to country[107], it generally includes the national government, bilateral and multilateral development agencies (chaired by the Coordinating Agency), other education development partners, such as CSOs, private education providers, members of the private/corporate sector and private foundations, and the GA (once such agent is selected to assist in developing and implementing an ESPIG) (see Figure 10).

Since 2015, **GPE has invested considerable efforts in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the LEG** by reworking key documents and producing additional ones, some of which have been referenced in preceding sections (see also seven references to LEG definitions in GPE documents produced by Oxfam Policy Management

[104] GPE. 2019. Charter of the Global Partnership for Education. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[105] GPE. 2019. Country-Level Guide. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[106] https://www.globalpartnership.org/about-us/how-0-work
[107] Since LEG is used as generic term to describe education policy dialogue forum, while education groups with similar functions include: education coordinating group, education consultative group, education sector development committee, joint education sector working group, etc., when referring to a LEG national structures formally assuming roles of a LEG in a country is included.

in 2018) [108]. Despite this effort, the examination of key actors' roles in GPE's country-level operational model by Oxford Policy Management (2018) [109] reports on the confusion around the LEG's roles, possibly due to the existence of multiple definitions plus how actors are perceived and work in different contexts. One of the key uncertainties, according to the same source, is whether LEGs serve as a broad sector-wide platform or merely as a GPE project oversight mechanism.

On governments leading the LEG, the 2015 interim evaluation of GPE found that the sector plans were indeed country-led in all 13 cases reviewed and the majority of consulted stakeholders attested to strong national ownership of the GPE-funded program(s) in most of the 18 countries surveyed[110]. Similarly, the majority of formative and summative CLEs carried out in 2018–2019 found government ownership of LEGs in all evaluated countries except Guyana[111], where there was no formally constituted LEG/equivalent mechanisms for systematic sector dialogue and coordination.

However, the **degree of government ownership varies**. In more stable countries, a high degree of ownership seems to correlate with the adoption of a sector-wide approach such as in Nepal, where pooled funding promoted government ownership and coordination of the development process[112]; and in Malawi, where the lack of high-level participation from the government ostensibly led to large amounts of DP funding being off-budget and, consequently, away from the SWAP approach to discrete projects[113]. In fragile governance settings such as DRC, the convening is still done through a sector-wide platform, but this is led by a development partner instead of the government – in this case by the Thematic Education Group chaired by UNICEF[114]. In countries affected by conflict such as South Sudan, sector dialogue happens through a multiplicity of fora: the National Education Forum is supposed to serve as the LEG, but has in practice become an annual event that coincides with the annual JSR while regular sector dialogue has largely taken place within the Education Donor Group, not chaired by the government[115].

Whether government-led or not, **LEGs in most countries seem to have been successful in serving as a collaborative forum** to consult on sector diagnostics and analysis, to design and endorse ESP/TEP, to select GAs, and to approve ESPIGs. Improved sector dialogue in LEGs was already mentioned in Chapter 4.1, namely that LEGs have been more inclusive of CSOs and teachers' organizations than before. The proportion of countries and federal states with both CSOs and teachers' organizations represented on their LEGs increased from 44 percent in 2016 to 59 percent in 2018. However, the degree of participation of teachers' organizations was still lower than that of CSOs, respectively 59 percent and 89 percent[116] as of 2018.

Evidence of sector-wide dialogue through LEGs can be illustrated by the following examples:

- In Kenya the LEG (the Education Development Partners Coordination Group - EDPCG) is a broad-based, highly representative stakeholder forum with CSOs being engaged extensively;

[108] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume I – Main Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
[109] Oxford Policy Management. 2018. Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model. Final Report Volume II – Annexes. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.
[110] Universalia, Results for Development. 2015. "Independent Interim Evaluation of Global Partnership for Education. Volume I – Final Evaluation Report". Westmount-Montreal, Quebec, Washington DC.
[111] Although, reportedly a LEG never properly emerged in South Sudan (meetings of the National Education Forum, expected to play the role of the LEG were frequently scheduled, but canceled given violence, crisis, or lack of funds), but since the Joint Steering Committee and/or the Education Donor Group (EDoG) have sometimes functioned as the de facto LEG equivalent, it is treated as existing LEG.
[112] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Nepal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[113] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Malawi. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[114] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - DRC. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[115] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation – South Sudan. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[116]Universalia. 2018. Summative Country Level Evaluations - Guyana. Montreal, Canada: Universalia

- In DRC the LEG (Thematic Education Group) includes four ministers in charge of education, seven DP representatives (World Bank, AFD, Belgian Cooperation, DFID, USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO) and representatives of CSOs and teachers' unions[117];
- In Cambodia the LEG (Joint Technical Working Group on Education – JTWG) is functional and well regarded among the 19 JTWG members, including an umbrella organization of 152 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in education[118]; and
- In Senegal, the review of the structure and functioning of the LEG in 2017 led to the creation of the new LEG (*Groupe national des Partenaires de l'Éducation et de la Formation* - GNPEF) that formalized the inclusion of nonstate actors as equal partners in sector dialogue[119].

There have also been examples where the sector dialogue has remained steady, and where government ownership and ESP quality has improved without any notable changes in the degree of inclusion of the LEG (as in Cambodia during 2014–2019[120]).

CLEs also highlight **a need to enhance the quality of sector dialogue.** Further to the areas mentioned in Chapter 4.1, there are reported needs as follows:

- to engage provincial-level actors (e.g. Mozambique CLE assesses the sector dialogue as overly centralized),
- to involve private and religious schools (e.g. Pakistan CLE reports on groups representing private and religious schools having limited participation),
- to improve proceedings of LEG meetings (e.g. Malawi CLE recommends allocating more time to have deeper/less rushed discussions during JSRs),
- to move the dialogue from procedural to strategic (e.g. Cambodia CLE reports on the LEG providing limited opportunity for strategic policy dialogue and Mozambique CLE recommends expanding the dialogue to the strategic level)[121], and
- to expand CSOs' inclusion beyond the "usual suspects" (e.g. DRC CLE reports on CSO participation being limited to a small circle of individuals connected to CSO Coalition for Education for All (CONEPT) and the *Observatoire Indépendant de l'Éducation (OIE)*[122]). Here, it is noteworthy to state that the level of participation of CSOs, as analyzed by the GPE's study into education joint sector reviews[123], depends on both country context (for example, the degree of governmental support of transparency of dialogue) and CSOs' capacity to actively contribute.

Further, in some countries, the **more agile consultations between governments and DPs take place through additional platforms.** Examples are Nepal, where the Local Education Development Partners' Group chaired by UNICEF serves a valuable purpose in sector dialogue and meets more regularly than the more broadly-based LEG[124]; and Zimbabwe, where the LEG — the Education Coordination Group — is deemed more effective in encouraging consultation and dialogue between the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and DPs, while the Education Sector Working Group is a broader forum than the LEG for dialogue with local NGO groups and CSOs[125]. Further still, there has been a concern that LEGs may become too large to be effective. One example of that is the CLE of Senegal which states that the new LEG (GNPEF) with a plenary group of 95 might be too large to foster meaningful sector dialogue, facilitate coordination or timely decision-making[126]. The GPE Secretariat has also expressed this concern in some cases such as Pakistan where the Secretariat Country Lead advised on means

[117] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - DRC. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[118] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Cambodia. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[119] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Senegal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[120] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Cambodia. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[121] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Mozambique. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[122] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – DRC. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[123] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/key-takeaways-effective-joint-sector-reviews-mutual-accountability-platforms
[124] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Nepal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[125] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Zimbabwe. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[126] Universalia. 2019. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Senegal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

to increase the LEG effectiveness through a reduction in its membership and the creation of technical working groups on thematic issues[127].

Government-led collaborative sector monitoring processes of ESP/TEP are reported in countries where sector-wide platforms have existed for a long time such as the annual appraisal of the ESP through *Reunão Anual de Revisão* (RAR) in Mozambique (since 2000), the regular annual JSRs of the ESPs in Malawi (since 2002), and the regular JSRs with broad participation of education stakeholders in Senegal (since at least 2009). In countries with weaker or no LEGs, the joint sector monitoring has been limited. In the examples, multi-stakeholder annual reviews are absent in Guyana, there has been limited monitoring of the ESP in South Sudan, and there have been problems with the inclusion of teacher, parent-teacher organizations and district-level government representatives in Joint Education Sector Reviews in Pakistan. There is also an example of sector JSRs not taking place while the ministry and DPs meet monthly to jointly monitor the ESPIG (Kenya). Other issues with JSRs such as lack of monitoring data, problems in translating monitoring into action, and unclear responsibilities and mandates of JSRs are outlined in Chapter 4.1.

5.3.2 Performance of CAs

The country-level arrangements, as defined by the GPE's country-level guide[128], foresee provision of the technical/financial support to the education sector, among others, by the development partner group (DPG). This group is generally comprised of the DPs and chaired by the CA — a DP designated by the LEG to facilitate the LEG's work. The country-level guide states that the CA, among others, serves as the communications link between the government, LEG partners, and the Secretariat, brings DPs together to support the government in all stages of ESP/TEP development, implementation and monitoring, and coordinates country-level partners' engagement with the GPE Secretariat.

In practice, **the degree to which CA has worked to fulfill these roles and responsibilities seems to be highly dependent on context**, including specific country-level arrangements of GPE-related processes. In some countries (e.g. Malawi, South Sudan, and Senegal) two DPs have operated the CA role. In Mozambique, three DPs have rotated annually the coordination function, while in other countries (e.g. Guyana and Rwanda) the CA roles have been carried out by the GAs. The latter situation has created uncertainties with respect to the roles and responsibilities of the CAs and has been perceived as interference in the ownership of the ESP/TEP by the national governments. A dominant GA or CA has been reported to be undermining the LEG[129].

More successful CAs manage to be not only an ESPIG-oriented Secretariat and mailbox but also promoters of broader inclusion, facilitators of discussions, and brokers of knowledge exchange. One CLE (Mozambique) reports on the significance of the CA's role in coordinating discussions around ESP development, resulting in broad participation from the donor, CSO, and government representatives, and playing a useful role in knowledge management and coordinating between donor and government activities[130]. Other CLEs also report on CA's role as a catalyst for the successful ESPIG application and implementation. The former (i.e. catalytic role in ESPDG application) is illustrated by the CLE of Senegal, reporting on the CA's (UNICEF and UNESCO) stewardship of the ESPDG application and resources that are seen by the stakeholders consulted on the ground as efficient contributions to sector planning[131]. The catalytic role in ESPIG implementation is illustrated by CLE of Pakistan, where in both provinces, the work of UNICEF as the CA was deemed crucial to the success of ESPIG implementation by consulted stakeholders[132].

[127] Universalia. 2018. Prospective GPE Country Program Evaluation - Pakistan (Balochistan and Sindh Provinces). Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[128] GPE. 2019. Country-Level Guide. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[129] Summative and Formative Evaluations of GPE's Country-Level Support to Education. 2018-2019. Universalia.
[130] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Mozambique. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[131] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Senegal. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[132] Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Pakistan (Balochistan and Sindh Provinces). Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

CAs seem to be less effective in complex political situations such as DRC (CLE of DRC assesses GPE partnership involving all partners having insufficient leadership/coordination exercised by the CA and the GA). CAs, as well as LEGs, appear too stretched to prioritize sector-wide processes in crisis contexts and facing specific challenges. For example, CLE of South Sudan reports on the coordination work expected from the CA (USAID) being challenging when it was barred by congressional orders from engaging directly with the government of South Sudan due to the crisis[133].

CLEs raise the difficulty in meeting multiple expectations of CAs in relation to the absence of compensation from GPE for CA's dedicated financial and human resource support. The GPE Secretariat is starting with a pilot, currently in the design phase, of financing for CA support to GPE processes outside general policy dialogue[134].

5.3.3 Effects on donor confidence and coordination in countries

The section addresses the hypothesis of GPE[135] that by contributing to the improved quality of ESPs/TEPs and ESPIGs, country-level arrangements (i.e. representative and functional LEGs, respectable CAs and trustworthy GAs) supported by country-level advocacy of the Secretariat will improve donor coordination and confidence. The evaluation team interprets donor coordination in line with the methodological note for GPE indicator number 30, where donor harmonization refers to coordination between technical and financial partners and mentions the project and sector-pooled funding as ways to ensure greater harmonization of external assistance[136]. The evaluation team also relates donor confidence with one aspect of the alignment – to basing support/funding modalities on DCPs' financial systems, frameworks and procedures (methodological note for GPE indicator 29)[137].

As elaborated in Chapter 4.1, GPE Results Reports[138],[139],[140] state that **the quality of national education plans has improved, by GPE standards**. GPE reports unswerving improvement in the proportion of education plans meeting overall quality standards[141] from 58 percent (11 out of 19) ESPs/TEPs in CY2014/15 to 96 percent (22 out of 23) in CY2016/17 and to 100 percent (28 ESPs) in 2018. This achievement is set in the context of intensified GPE guidance on plan preparation and appraisal, including guidelines developed with UNESCO's IIEP and the new QA process. CLEs (e.g. DRC, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, Guyana, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan) have found evidence supporting GPE's contribution to the improvements of national education plans.

Further, **GPE reports rate the overall implementation of ESPIGs as satisfactory**. As elaborated in the section 4.1, the proportion of ESPIGs classified as "on track"[142] on the basis of delivering their major/most outputs with moderate shortcomings kept steady at around 85-90 percent for overall grants (84.9 percent in 2015, and 89.3 percent in 2018), while FCACs saw improvement from 76.9 percent in 2015 to 93.8 percent in 2018. However, there has been limited evidence to conclude that this implementation rate is due to in-country arrangements.

[133] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation – South Sudan. Montreal, Canada: Universalia
[134] GPE. 2019. Meeting of the Board of Directors BOD/2019/06 Annex B3. The Global Partnership for Education.
[135] The hypothesis is derived from the question in TOR for this ISE "How effective have been the in-country partnership arrangements in formulating robust national education plans and the design and implementation of individual projects? To what extent have these plans led to greater donor confidence and enabled better coordination of donor efforts?"
[136] https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological_sheet_for_indicator_30.pdf
[137] https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/methodological_sheet_for_indicator_29.pdf
[138] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[139] GPE. 2018. Results Report 2018. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[140] GPE. 2016. Results Report 2015-2016. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[141] To qualify, the endorsed sector plans should meet at least five out of seven quality standards for ESPs and at least three out of five quality standards for TEPs.
[142] The assessment of ESPIGs being "on track" is done first by GAs and reported to the Secretariat, based on three determinants: (1) Progress of individual Program components; (2) Implementation arrangements (Program management, financial management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), etc.); (3) Disbursement status based on GA's calculation.

This improvement in both the quality of ESPs/TEPs and the satisfactory implementation of ESPIGs, however, has not been positively correlated with enhanced donor harmonization. The harmonization of DPs has differed: some countries have been assessed as having weak harmonization (e.g. RDC, Guyana, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan), and others strong (e.g. Kenya, Nepal, Mozambique). Among the countries with weak donor harmonization, most (except for Pakistan) are, unsurprisingly, the ones with ineffective sector-wide dialogue. Irrespective of whether a country has been found to have weak or strong donor harmonization, CLEs have found a limited influence of GPE on this. One CLE (South Sudan) concluded that the current country-level operational model might not be providing a strong mechanism for GPE to exercise its influence over donors and suggested the GPE possibly relies too much on 'soft' measures (such as 'advocacy') for funding harmonization instead of 'hard' measures (such as direct financial support or mandatory funding)[143]. The CLE of Malawi found that advocating for pooled funding was not as effective when GPE funding itself changed from sector-pooled modality to stand-alone project mode (Malawi)[144]. The CLE of Mozambique found that by channeling its funds through FASE, GPE has helped give the pooled fund its "vote of confidence" and has given other donors greater confidence in continuing to support, or in entering, the sector[145].

Further, when looking at donor alignment with DCPs' own financial systems, frameworks, and procedures, CLEs show that while GPE grants do align with the country's sector plan, the majority of GPE grants do not align with the government's finance, expenditure, accounting, and audit. In 2018, two-thirds of GPE's implementation grants still used stand-alone modalities that are weakly aligned to national systems. The percentage of overall GPE grants aligned with national systems in 2018 although notably the highest (36 percent) on record, has fallen short of the 2018 milestone (45 percent). For FCACs this has stayed at the level of 2017 (24 percent) with a slightly bigger gap between the target (35 percent) and actual[146].

In general, it is difficult to infer to what degree improvements in donor coordination (harmonization) and confidence (alignment of donor funding to country systems) are positively influenced by better sector plans and successfully managed ESPIGs. However, there have been **GPE actions that have arguably raised donor confidence in other ways**. This includes the example of channeling GPE funds through a pooled fund in Mozambique mentioned above, or the case of Kenya where the application of World Bank processes and rules by GPE and GAs demonstrated that misuse of funds can be avoided[147]. Another example is the case of Pakistan, where reportedly having a clearly defined plan, such as the Balochistan ESP, helped acquire donor support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, USAID, and the European Union, none of which had previously worked in the education sector in Balochistan[148].

5.3.4 Perceived added value of GPE at country level

Local stakeholders' perceptions of in-country partnerships are generally positive.

CLEs indicate that **country-level stakeholders express appreciation of GPE's contribution to improved sector dialogue**[149], whether through institutional improvements (by reviving the LEG or embedding JSRs), or procedural improvements (by broadening participation in the sectoral coordination meetings or JSRs). Prior to being part of the GPE processes, many of the existing sector-wide platforms had been comprised mainly of representatives of relevant ministries and donors. Since then, these platforms have broadened their membership by including representatives of CSOs and teachers' organizations (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo, Balochistan Province of Pakistan, Malawi). GPE has contributed to the inclusion of CSOs through the Civil Society Education Fund

[143] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation –South Sudan. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[144] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation –Malawi. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[145] Universalia. 2019. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation –Mozambique. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[146] GPE. 2019. Results Report 2019. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[147] Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Kenya. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[148] Universalia. 2018. Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation - Pakistan (Balochistan and Sindh Provinces). Montreal, Canada: Universalia.
[149] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations - Synthesis Report Financial Year 2018 Final Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia.

(CSEF), a global program set up in 2009 to support national civil society coalitions to engage in education sector policy, planning, budgeting, and monitoring. In 2017, the GPE Board agreed to establish the ASA mechanism as part of the Financing and Funding Framework (FFF), building on CSEF support for engagement of a broad range of civil society and advocacy groups in education sector policy dialogue at the national and global levels.

GPE support for sector-wide monitoring of ESPs is especially appreciated, as evidenced by CLE-collected feedback from stakeholders in Kenya who consider GPE financial support a key contributor for a more intense collaboration among sector stakeholders. Similarly, CLE of Malawi found that without the financial support of GPE it was unlikely for JSRs[150] to be conducted at all. Other major contributions to sector monitoring seem to be (a) introducing Disbursement-Linked Indicators (Mozambique) and (b) providing an incentive for inclusive and participatory sector dialogue by ESPIG- funding requirements plus the guidance by the Secretariat Country Lead on implications of these requirements (Balochistan and Sindh provinces of Pakistan).

Despite high appreciation of GPE's contribution to the sector dialogue around ESP/TEP and their translation to ESPIGs, and LEGs' relative success in facilitating this dialogue, **LEG's contribution to the implementation and sector-wide monitoring of ESPs has been less evident**.

Further, **GPE support at the country level is appreciated for fostering innovation.** Some of this innovation is seen in programming, e.g. the synthesis Study of GPE External Evaluations highlights GPE innovation through the FFF[151], and CLE of Nepal regards the current ESPIG (2018–2020) as innovative in comprising a program-based modality (the 'Fixed Part') and DLIs (the 'Variable Part'). Other innovations are seen through ESPIGs such as: (a) improvements in TVET curriculum reported as an innovation by CLE of Rwanda, and (b) the introduction of IT systems to integrate and improve the interface between the different education data systems and financial management applications within a single on-line application, highlighted among the innovations in the sector by the CLE of Senegal. GPE has been also promoting the development of innovation, most recently through KIX, a joint initiative between GPE and the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to respond to challenges in the education systems of DCPs. The first round of KIX grants will be allocated in 2020[152].

Some constraints on effective country-level arrangements have been experienced as well. Some CLEs report on QA processes being perceived as overly onerous (CLE of Malawi), overlapping, and duplicating efforts, e.g. the initial GPE Secretariat's comments and the independent appraisal (CLE of South Sudan). The collaborative nature of sector dialogue, although appreciated, has also been perceived as time- and personnel-intensive, placing a heavy burden on staff that are assigned to attend, especially in the layered dialogue mechanisms, where discussions have, at times, been redundant (CLE of Mozambique). Other constraints have been a consequence of increased participation affecting the efficiency of sector-wide consultations and the different perceptions of the expected roles and responsibilities of GPE actors at the country level (see also section 5.3.1).

5.3.5 Preliminary conclusions regarding country-level arrangements and processes

Following the findings above, the ISE is left with the initial impression that LEGs have promoted dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders, especially in enhancing the quality of ESPs/TEPs. Generally, governments have taken the lead in convening collaborative processes in the sector and have helped stimulate inclusive dialogue among stakeholders at the country level. Due to this, collaboration has increased and has reportedly happened through various mechanisms including JSRs.

We furthermore conclude that both country-level arrangements and the Secretariat support have aimed to strike the right balance between inclusion and participation in the LEG and the need for its effectiveness. At the same

[150] JSR is an item of authorized expenditure under the GPE grant.
[151] GPE. 2019. Synthesis Study of External Evaluations of GPE conducted during the GPE 2020 timeframe. Washington DC, USA: GPE.
[152] GPE. 2019. Meeting of the Board of Directors.BOD_2019_03 DOC 01 - Annex 3 - KIX Grant Agent Proposal March 2019. BOD/2019/06. The Global Partnership for Education

time, CLEs and the Examination of Key Actors' Roles in GPE'S Country-Level Operational Model stress that work still needs to be done on improving the inclusiveness of LEG consultations (in the area of expanding representation and deepening participation of teachers' unions and CSOs) as well as on keeping the sector-wide forum active post-ESP completion, and on increasing the utility of JSRs for learning and decision making.

There is less evidence of LEG effectiveness during the implementation of plans in comparison to the evidence available for the LEG's performance on stimulating collaboration in the education sector dialogue around the planning of ESP/TEPs. In addition, JSRs are seen as a step in the right direction for the LEG's effective contribution to the EST/TEP implementation. Furthermore, in some cases, GPE mechanisms have increased donor confidence and coordination. However, GPE's influence on donors' harmonization remains weak.

Local stakeholders' perceptions of in-country arrangements are generally positive. At the same time, some constraints have been experienced concerning complex and time-consuming processes such as QA and increased dialogue, and the lack of clarity regarding the role of different actors. Nevertheless, there are many appreciated aspects related to in-country arrangements. Among these are: financial support from GPE to implement parts of the ESPs/TEPs, guidance in and support of collaborative sector-wide processes, the technical assistance by the CA and the GA, the inputs and insights from Secretariat in the preparation of ESP/TEP, and the constructive interaction between the CA, the GA and the Secretariat during the preparation of ESPIGs. The grant application review by the Secretariat has been mentioned as helpful as well.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

This section first reviews the quality, use and usefulness of GPE's Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy and Results Framework and subsequently zooms in on the consistency and usefulness of the CLES, based principally on the 14 summative CLEs.

5.3.6 Performance of M&E Strategy and Result Framework

The GPE adopted a new M&E strategy in 2016 with three purposes: strengthen accountability for GPE's work; stimulate learning and improved performance across the partnership; and facilitate organizational decision-making by the Board, Secretariat, and national stakeholders. These purposes have been pursued through four workstreams: (1) results monitoring, (2) grants monitoring, (3) evaluation and (4) dissemination & learning for which the first three are meant to provide the main learning inputs. The M&E Strategy also recognizes the risk that monitoring activities by newly formed organizations such as Education Cannot Wait and potentially the Education Outcomes Fund, and the International Financing Facility for Education, are not adequately addressed[153]. At the same time, the M&E Strategy refers to the harmonization of CLEs with those of other organizations, building, e.g., on the model of the Joint Evaluation of External Support to Basic Education commissioned by 13 bilateral and multilateral donors to education in 2003[154].

Results monitoring has been carried out based on a Results Framework consisting of 37 indicators related to the three goals and five objectives reflected in GPE's ToC. The Secretariat produces a comprehensive annual Results Report reflecting and comparing indicator measurements with previous years, whilst offering an analysis of these monitoring findings. The Results Framework and Results Report are the products of a challenging process to come to an agreed measurement tool that is practical and provides adequate, comprehensive and relevant insight in GPE's progress towards its ambitions. A publicly available methodological brief provides clarity and transparency about how each of the 37 indicators is measured.

While recognizing the carefully considered constellation of the GPE Results Framework, the Interim ISE Report makes the following initial observations that partly relate to challenges faced by the education sector as a whole;

- Indicators at the highest results level illustrate that GPE's measurement of educational progress has been aligned with other organizations in the field. GPE furthermore has measured progress in learning outcomes and in increased equity in education in a way that allows for aggregation of country-level measurements. These measurements have relied on country data that has often been limited or inconsistent, which has made aggregation as a basis for decision making risky.
- The RF obviously can only include indicators for which information is likely to be available. This may explain why key issues often referred to in GPE documents like out-of-school children[155]; safety in schools; access and learning outcomes of vulnerable children (disability or ethnicity related); and faith-based or other forms of non-formal education[156] are not (yet) part of the RF (see Annex 5.4.1)
- Indicator number 2 includes progress in social and emotional health as an important outcome of pre-primary education. Yet, these dimensions are not covered in the measurement of learning outcomes at the primary and lower-secondary level that rely on the measurement of completion levels, which often emphasize Language, Mathematics and Science and give lesser attention to 'softer' subjects (see Annex 5.4.2).

[153] GPE. 2017. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. GPE
[154] GPE. 2017. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy. GPE

[155] UIS & UNICEF (2015) Fixing the Broken Promise of Education for All: Finding global initiative on Out-of-school children Montreal, UIS

[156] UNESCO, (2010) Marginalisation Paris, UNESCO GEM

- Indicators related to strategic objective 1 (Strengthened Education Planning and Implementation) appear to emphasize planning over implementation issues.
- Indicators under strategic objective 5 (Stronger Partnership) capture rather complex functions like fiduciary oversight and country-orientation in one single indicator each. This may keep the RF manageable but means that decision-making may be fed by rather 'narrow' information.

The GPE Secretariat has undertaken grants monitoring through an elaborate annual Portfolio Review, which is also publicly available. The reviews have contributed to many of the earlier described efforts to improve GPE performance, including clarification of roles, tightening of fiduciary oversight, and the on-going Grant Process Streamlining Project.

The evaluation workstream has been carried out by the Secretariat commissioning a portfolio of country-level, thematic and programmatic evaluations. CLEs were expected to examine progress and GPE contributions through 20 summative and 8 prospective evaluations in selected case countries (see further below). Thematic evaluations are designed to be small-scale desk studies intended to inform the partnership on VfM and best practice when making educational investments. These have included reviewing GPE investments in specific sub-sectoral areas considered within its ToC and in areas highlighted in the broader literature on educational development as requirements for the achievement of educational results[157]. Some thematic evaluations have related to the examination of early childhood care and education, Learning Assessment Systems (LASs), gender equality, strengthening data systems, equity and inclusion, and teaching and learning.

Programmatic evaluations refer to specific grant and financing windows or initiatives such as the Education Sector Programme Development Grant (ESPDG) for supporting the development of ESAs and ESPs, CSEF for supporting civil society participation in education sector policy and planning at national levels, and the GRA (and future KGPE grants) to provide support for research, capacity building, knowledge development and sharing of good practice at the country, regional and global level. CLEs and programmatic evaluations have collected an extensive amount of country-related data, which has been primarily intended for and used to inform global decision-making.

Learning and dissemination across the partnership are expected to result from the products of other workstreams. This is expected to be stimulated further through the KIX mechanism (US$ 60 million 2018–2021), but the implementation of this is still in its early stages, hence it is too early to assess its learning effects. Overall, the M&E strategy has resulted in a large output in the shape of Portfolio Reviews, Results Reports, Evaluation Reports, and Results Stories, supported by a wealth of country-specific and thematic data. Together this offers a massive data/evidence base, but it is unclear to what extent these outputs have reached and are being used across the GPE and beyond.

5.3.7 Consistency and usefulness of CLEs

According to the M&E strategy, 22 summative and eight prospective CLEs were to be scheduled. Reports of 14 summative and 8 prospective CLEs are available to date, while a first synthesis report covering eight prospective and seven summative CLEs was produced in early 2019.

The CLEs have been based on a generic country-level ToC that was developed by the Secretariat and the evaluation consultant and was derived from GPE's global ToC (see also chapter 4.4.3). The CLEs have been conducted according to a common evaluation matrix and have followed similar reporting templates, including in FCAC countries. This approach is understandable given that it leads to evaluation results that can be aggregated and, in principle, used for comparative analysis (e.g. to identify common success factors or challenges across countries), which helps serve their purpose to inform global decision-making. CLEs do not lend themselves for comparative

[157] Birte Snilstveit Jennifer Stevenson Daniel Phillips et al. 2015. Interventions for Improving Learning Outcomes and Access To Education in Low- And Middle- Income Countries: A Systematic Review. London, UK: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

judgments (country A does better than B) given contextual differences and the fact that the availability and reliability of data vary significantly between countries. This also leads to the question of whether using the same evaluation approach in FCAC countries as in non-FCAC countries is appropriate given the likely differences in accessibility, availability, and reliability of data.

All CLEs discuss the availability and use of national data (e.g. EMIS, school censuses and surveys, National Education Accounts, JSRs, public expenditure reviews). In some countries, part of GPE funding has been used to improve EMIS, reconfirming the importance of having access to up-to-date reliable education data for meaningful evaluation and evidence-based programming. Whilst duplication of effort in terms of programming or M&E is a possible risk, given a large number of actors involved in education, it is not identified as such in any of the 14 CLEs.

Summative CLEs have provided a systematic assessment and analysis of progress towards GPE's goals and country-level objectives and goals, including an analysis of GPE's contribution based on a 'light' contribution analysis methodology[158]. Individual CLEs have implicitly included 'lessons' referred to as 'good practices, strategic questions or cross-cutting observations'. Whilst the prospective CLEs present recommendation, the summative CLEs were not expected and therefore have not explicitly included recommendations. The CLEs have primarily served as cases for a broader synthesis meant to facilitate steering and learning at the global level.

The first synthesis report[159] produced in early 2019 reflects a careful and informative synthesis; although the ISE review of the 14 summative CLEs (see annex 5.4.3) suggests that the synthesis report was perhaps more pessimistic about the use of pooled funding at the time of writing (early 2019) and more optimistic about the quality of the JSRs (or equivalent). The synthesis report does include areas for improvement related to the functioning of the GPE operational model and presents *'suggestions for GPE's consideration'*. Several of these suggestions have been picked up and acted upon by the Board and Secretariat, among other things, in initiating the EPR process which is aiming to address challenges related to national ownership and mutual accountability. Some of these lessons can also be recognized in the strategic shifts proposed by the Secretariat as inputs into the post-2020 Strategy process.

5.3.8 Preliminary conclusions regarding Monitoring and Evaluation

The Secretariat has seriously implemented the various workstreams that makeup GPE's M&E strategy using the global ToC and the RF as the main framework to organize M&E findings. The effective implementation of the M&E Strategy has been hampered by having to rely on country data, which has been limited and often out of date. This has meant that issues like the level of violence experienced by children; and enrolment/drop out of disabled children or ethnic minorities are not (yet) part of the current RF.

Nevertheless, the RF with 37 indicators and the Results Report have resulted in a regular comprehensive and transparent review of GPE's progress in relation to its existing ToC, including comparisons over time. At the same time, practical considerations have constrained the relevance of the RF as complex issues like progress in implementation, advocacy, or fiduciary oversight are each captured in a single but limited indicator, which leads to the risk that decision-making may be based on information that is insufficiently rich.

The results of the impressive amount of M&E work are publicly available, which demonstrates that the M&E strategy serves its accountability purpose. The Secretariat has made clear efforts to extract lessons from the M&E work and used these primarily to inform global decision-making. There have been clear examples of the Board

[158] The term 'light' is used, as the contribution analysis investigates the generic causal questions derived from GPE's ToC and limits the identification of alternative contribution factors related to those generic questions as the basis for drawing conclusions about GPE's contribution. The analysis does not dissect the causal questions in a more detailed ToC, nor does it provide a systematic categorization and weighing of evidence supporting the various contributing factors. This would, however, have been much more time-consuming and therefore not practically feasible.
[159] Universalia. 2019. GPE Country-level Evaluations – Synthesis Report. Montreal, Canada: Universalia

and the Secretariat making use of M&E results, but whether the effects of the M&E results are proportionate to the level of effort and resources spent on M&E remains a question[160]. In addition, the learning effect from M&E results beyond the Board and the Secretariat, and in particular across the partnership at the country level appears limited (partly by design).

CLEs have been largely consistent in methodology and have provided a systematic overview of progress and contribution to country-level objectives. CLE results can be aggregated and used for limited comparative analysis, but not for comparative judgments across countries given major differences in context and availability/reliability of data. The CLEs were initiated by the Secretariat as part of the M&E strategy, while the LEGs had no decision in commissioning these evaluations. Therefore, individual summative CLEs have been indirect and diverse in reflecting country-specific lessons, and have not included actionable country-level recommendations. , which may have been a missed opportunity. The synthesis evaluation has included generic lessons and recommendations that have contributed to strategic steering at the global level.

[160] This issue is flagged for further investigation during phase 2 of the ISE.

6 Overarching Observations

This last chapter of the interim report presents a number of 'general observations' related to the overall performance of the GPE in relation to the partnership's own objectives. At present, these have the status of 'observations', as the ISE is still in its first stage and it would be premature to already draw final conclusions. Nevertheless, these observations are meant to stimulate reflection and discussion that may help in the on-going development of GPE's post-2020 strategy. These general observations are structured around the three country-level and two global-level objectives in the GPE ToC.

6.1 On planning and implementation of ESPs (objective 1)

Substantial progress has been made concerning the development of ESPs meeting GPE quality standards. The CLEs clearly establish GPE's contribution in this, although this contribution takes place within country contexts with many other actors and factors at play. An important bottleneck in this process appears to be the absence of reliable, complete and up-to-date disaggregated data related to equity in, and quality of, education. Many GPE-supported interventions aim to help solve this, but significant progress remains to be made to establish the sound evidence base needed for solid ESP development, especially in FCACs.

Progress in ESP implementation remains a concern flagged by many stakeholders and documents. ESP implementation is reportedly hampered by significant resource gaps, weak mutual accountability and limited country ownership. GPE is addressing these issues in the EPR process and these concerns feature prominently in the initial discussions relating to GPE's post-2020 strategy, but the envisaged solutions, including the ones pursued in the EPR process, are yet to materialize.

6.2 On mutual accountability, inclusive policy dialogue and monitoring (objective 2)

As recognized in GPE's own TOC document, an inclusive policy dialogue and functioning mutual accountability are key processes in getting the content of education policies right and implementable. This reconfirms the importance of GPE's success in contributing to the inclusiveness and functioning of LEGs, in particular during ESP and ESPIG planning and design processes. Sustaining inclusive policy dialogue and mutual accountability during implementation, however, remains challenging.

The GPE has articulated and stimulated various mechanisms, frameworks, and tools to facilitate in-country planning and implementation processes, ranging from LEGs to frameworks for mutual accountability to JSRs. Not surprisingly, given the widely varying contexts in over 70 DCPs, each country adapts and applies these mechanisms and tools in different ways with different levels of success. The collective experiences of all these efforts, both successes and failures, offer an enormous potential for learning, which is recognized in GPE's M&E strategy. The effects of this learning strategy are apparent at global level, but the learning effects at country level remain less obvious.

6.3 On efficient and effective (financial) GPE support (objective 3)

GPE has made good progress towards this objective in terms of ESPIG implementation, whilst using a range of measures in its new FFF to stimulate domestic financing, and by undertaking continuous advocacy efforts. As a result, the DCPs pledged unprecedented domestic resources for ESP implementation during the 2018 financing conference in Dakar, while an increasingly diverse group of partners are providing more donor funding.

Nevertheless, lack of funds is still mentioned as a main inhibiting factor for overall ESP implementation, only partly covered by ESPIGs. This means that resource mobilization remains a key issue for all partners with an interest in ESP implementation but also raises question about the way in which financial feasibility in ESP development has been considered.

Related to financing is the recurring discussion about alignment. GPE does not yet meet its targets for alignment, with many donor partners displaying a preference for financing stand-alone projects, managed and administered outside national systems. The effects of this limited alignment particularly in terms of aid-effectiveness remain unclear.

6.4 On more and better financing (objective 4)

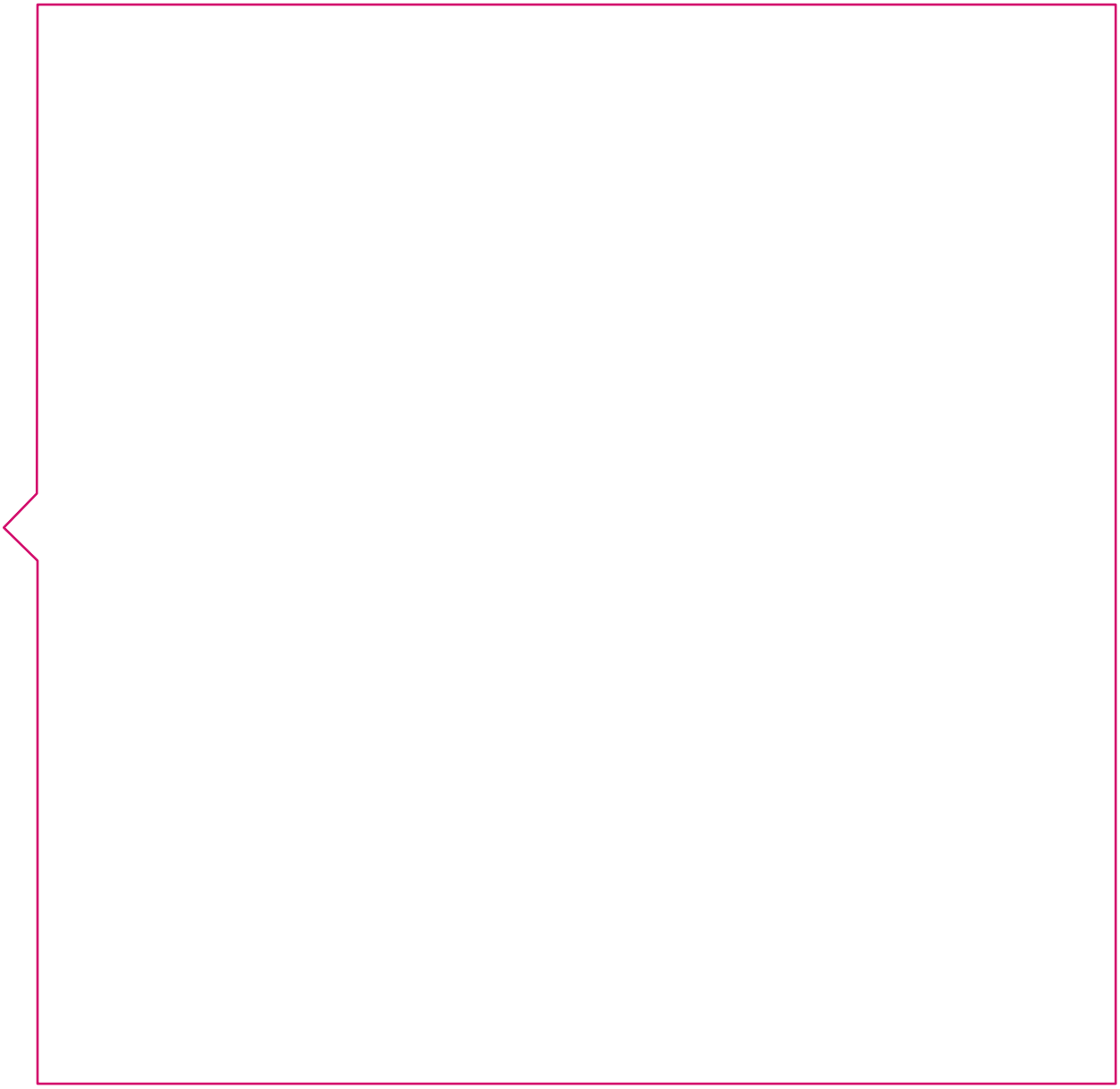
In 2016, the declining trend in ODA contributions to education was reversed and in 2018 an increasingly diverse group of donors contributed US$ 638 million, the highest since GPE's inception. As such, GPE has performed well in terms of mobilizing *more* financing. A major concern here is the significant proportion of donors that continue to reduce funding to GPE, meaning that new donors partially replace rather than add to earlier donor contributions. This relates to the concern of fungibility, when the increasing contribution from one partner is used as an opportunity by another partner to divert funding to one of the emerging alternative funds like ECW or to another sector.

Overall progress of GPE towards objective 4 remains modest, given that *better* financing relates to the coordination, alignment and harmonization of funding. On these dimensions, the GPE's performance has been rather stable despite having set clear targets for improvement.

6.5 On building a stronger partnership (objective 5)

Both the Board and the Secretariat have made increasingly intensive efforts to build a stronger partnership. Substantial progress has been made in clarifying roles, tightening oversight, increasing time spent focusing at country level, and communicating results. At the same time, concerns have been raised about the dynamics within the partnership. At global level, this relates to the collaboration and level of delegation between the Board, its committees and the Secretariat, but also to the complexity of realizing effective within-constituency consultations. At country level, challenges remain related to country ownership and government leadership, and about finding the right balance between inclusiveness and retaining a practically functional country-level partnership.

Partnership dynamics at global and country level are further complicated by GPE aiming to be both a global fund and a multi-stakeholder partnership for education. Effective fund management and administration requires solid, transparent and accountable systems and procedures. This is not easily combined with creating a vibrant agile partnership that, in a world of sovereign nations, represents collective action rather than a hierarchical organization, and therefore depends on the motivation of individual partners to spend time and energy in contributing to the success of GPE.



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