GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

**BOD/2016/06 DOC 16**
**Meeting of the Board of Directors**
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# OPTIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR STRENGTHENING COUNTRY CAPACITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE EXCHANGE: REPORT FROM THE STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE

**For Decision**

## 1. STRATEGIC PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the Board of Directors for GPE's Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange Strategy, as recommended by the Strategy and Policy Committee and presented in Annex 1 to this paper.

1.2 The paper also recommends the pre-designation of two initial KGPE activities for targeted financing – the Assessment for Learning platform (A4L) and the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale initiative - as presented in Annex 2 and Annex 3.

1.3 The GPE Strategic Plan 2016–2020 (GPE 2020) calls upon GPE to develop its knowledge and good practice exchange activities in order to better support the achievement of the Partnership's goals for improved learning outcomes, enhanced equity, and stronger educational systems. This paper responds to Board decision BOD/2015/10-04 requesting the Secretariat to work with the Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC) to develop a costed options paper to drive GPE's global and cross-national role as a convener, advocate and broker of knowledge and good practice. It also responds to Board decision BOD/2015/12-15 requesting the Secretariat to work with interested parties to explore the potential for targeted funding, which includes specific support for financing knowledge and good practice exchange (KGPE).

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Drawing on lessons from the Global and Regional Activities (GRA) program and other related GPE investments since 2010, the KGPE Strategy proposes a two-stage approach for developing a stronger approach to KGPE for the Partnership. The strategy establishes that the goal of all KGPE is to strengthen national policies and capacities, which in turn increases the potential impact of GPE financing. KGPE activities will be focused in three core domains identified as key goals in GPE Strategy 2020 – improved and more equitable learning outcomes through quality teaching and learning; improved equity, gender equality and inclusion; and strengthened educational systems. All

KGPE activities will be designed to leverage improvements in sector planning, mutual accountability through inclusive and evidence based policy dialogue, and by enhancing the capacity of developing countries to more effectively utilize GPE grants and finance (reflecting Strategic Plan Objectives 1, 2 and 3).More specifically, KGPE activities will catalyze improved capacity to plan sector strategies that are focused on the implementation of effective solutions to key challenges in the education sector, enhancing value for money in the educational investments made by governments and donors.

2.2 Stage 1 (July 2016-December 2017) will be a developmental phase, leading in to larger scale initiatives proposed for funding after GPE's replenishment. This developmental stage offers an opportunity to prepare for larger initiatives after replenishment, and to pilot the use of targeted financing for KGPE activities. It also responds to the increased need for external funding, given that GPE Fund resources during Stage 1 are already allocated to country grants, and there will be a gap in available funding for GPE KGPE activities once GRA grants are completed in FY 2017.During the developmental phase, the Secretariat, working with the Strategy and Policy Committee, will:

- continue Global and Regional Activities (GRA) and Secretariat-led activities linked to GPE's three Strategic Goals;
- map key KGPE gaps, canvassing Developing Country Partners' needs in each domain, in order to prepare a business case for larger-scale investments that can become part of GPE's replenishment campaign; and
- pilot two targeted financing initiatives in FY 2017: Better Early Learning and Development at Scale; and the Assessment for Learning Platform (as laid out in Annex 2 and 3); and explore additional targeted financing initiatives for FY 2018 in the domains identified as central to GPE 2020.

2.3 The KGPE Strategy proposes interim safeguards and procedures for receiving targeted KGPE funding during Stage 1. These are intended to ensure that there are no undue transaction costs from targeted financing; that such financing does not have undue influence on the Secretariat, Trustee or Partners; and that targeted financing for KGPE activities is additional to funding to the GPE fund. Lessons from Stage 1 will be shared with the SPC-GERF Strategic Financing Working Group (SFWG) to inform their strategic financing proposals for replenishment.

2.4 The paper also proposes that the Board endorse an indicative level of ambition for GPE's KGPE work during Stage 2 (January 2018-December 2020). Such a level of ambition is important as it will drive the design of Stage 2 programs and shape initial fundraising from new and nontraditional donors who are particularly interested in financing KGPE. Based on comparison with industry standards (including with the health sector) and GPE's own past experience, the paper recommends

that an indicative allocation in the range of 5% of total annual GPE Fund disbursements would allow GPE to contribute to the widely acknowledged gap in international financing for global public goods in education. Based on independent technical review of merit, GPE would in turn be able to finance proposals that address the key data, evidence and capacity gaps essential to the delivery on GPE 2020 and SDG4.

2.5 The paper also recommends setting a level of ambition for targeted financing for KGPE. Based on initial market analysis, and levels of funding-raising by comparator organization for their KGPE activities, it suggests that a minimum of 40% of total KGPE investments should be raised through targeted financing.

## 3. REQUESTED DECISION

3.1 The Strategy and Policy Committee recommends the following decision to the Board of Directors:

**BOD/2016/06-XX—Proposal for Strengthening Country Capacity Through Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange (KGPE):** The Board of Directors:

1. Endorses the broad goals and objectives in the KGPE strategy set out in Annex 1 to BOD/2016/06 DOC 16, including the ambition to allocate a minimum of 5% of GPE disbursements to knowledge and good practice exchange activities during GPE's next replenishment period, and to raise at least 40% or more of this amount through targeted financing.
2. Approves the procedures and safeguards proposed for accepting targeted funding for KGPE initiatives from foundations and other donors on an interim basis for the period July 2016-December 2017, as set out in Annex 1 to BOD/2016/06 DOC 16, recognizing that these safeguards will be replaced by a comprehensive safeguards policy in December 2016.
3. Approves the pre-designation of two thematic initiatives for target financing for KGPE investments: Assessment for Learning (A4L) and Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS), as set out in Annex 2 and 3 to BOD/2016/06 DOC 16.
4. Approves the principle that all incremental costs, including for staffing, required for the development, management and monitoring of specific KGPE activities will be assessed and included in the costs of initiatives for consideration by the Governance, Ethics, Risk and Finance Committee and approval by the Board.
5. Requests the Secretariat to develop a full case for Stage 2 (post-replenishment) investment in KGPE in three main areas of learning, equity and systems, drawing on lessons from Stage 1

investments and the Finance Commission report. The case should be presented for review by the Strategy and Policy Committee and the SPC-GERF Strategic Financing Working Group (SFWG) and inform GPE's strategic financing proposals for replenishment.

## 4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

4.1 The proposed KGPE strategy harnesses the knowledge and expertise of GPE Partners and its operations, meets developing country partner demands, and ensures that shared knowledge and capacity building drives GPE2020 through improved country level outcomes in the areas of improved learning outcomes, equity, gender equality and inclusion, and effective and efficient education systems. It builds on GPE's significant comparative advantage for work in this area.

4.2 The multi-year, staged approach will allow GPE to meet immediate needs, sharpen the procedures and safeguards for receiving targeted financing for KGPE investments, and develop mechanisms for supporting KGPE that are flexible and responsive to moments such as report from the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities in September, and the subsequent refinement of GPE's approach to strategic financing and its replenishment strategy.

4.3 GPE's ambitions in this area are benchmarked against support for global public goods by other global actors in education, and calibrated with what experts in the field deem realistic for GPE to support in order to catalyze the impact of country-level grants without substituting contributions to GPE pooled fund or detracting from its core work.

4.4 In addition to increasing the impact of GPE financing, knowledge and good practice exchange, supported by appropriate safeguards and effective procedures, strengthens education sector planning and policy implementation (Strategic Objective One) by developing country-level capacity. It also helps to builds the Partnership (Strategic Objective 5), and provides an entry point to engage new funders, including foundations and the private sector.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR SECRETARIAT RESOURCES

5.1 Suitable levels of staffing will be required to ensure KGPE outputs link effectively to country level processes. Where necessary, resources will be incorporated into the targeted financing raised for KGPE initiatives.

**6. PLEASE CONTACT** Karen Mundy at kmundy@globalpartnership.org for further information.

## 7. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Options and proposal for building country capacity through knowledge and good practice exchange (p. 6)

Annex 2: Better Early Learning and Development at Scale Concept Note (p. 25)

Annex 3: Assessment for Learning Concept Note (p. 35)

## ANNEX 1 – OPTIONS AND PROPOSAL FOR STRENGTHENING COUNTRY CAPACITY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE EXCHANGE

### 1. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1.1 The Global Partnership for Education's Strategy 2020 calls upon GPE to develop its knowledge and good practice exchange activities, in order to better support the achievement of the partnership's goals for improved learning outcomes, enhanced equity, and stronger educational systems.

1.2 Two strategic objectives in GPE Strategy 2020 set out this commitment: **SO1: Strengthen education sector planning and policy implementation** – "Enhance sector plan implementation through knowledge and good practice exchange, capacity development, and improved monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning and equity and inclusion"; and **SO5: Build a Stronger Partnership** – "Effectively use global and cross-national knowledge and good practice exchange to bring about improved education policies and systems, especially in the areas of equity and learning.

1.3 GPE's Board of Directors further emphasized this important role for the partnership in **BOD/2015/10-04** which endorses GPE's global and cross-national role as a convener, advocate and broker of knowledge and best practice; and requests the Secretariat to develop an options paper that follows four principles:

- Aligns with t to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan
- A focus on country needs, ownership and sustainability
- Draws on operations, experience and expertise of the partnership
- Learns from the past

1.4 In response to these Board decisions, this paper presents a strategy for enhancing GPE's knowledge and good practice exchange activities to strengthen the capacity of national education systems. It recommends a staged approach allowing for a first stage of 18 months of start-up and development work, during which time GPE will prepare for scaled up KGPE initiatives supported by funding from its next replenishment (Stage 2).

1.5 The paper identifies three areas for KGPE focus, directly linked to GPE's Strategic Goals: strengthening sector planning, monitoring and data; improving learning outcomes; and supporting

progress in equity, gender equality and inclusion (paying particular attention to fragile states). Subdomains for KGPE activities are identified under each major area.

1.6 The paper also lays out interim safeguards and procedures for receiving targeted financing for a small number of knowledge and good practice exchange activities during an initial period, between July 2016 and December 2017 during Stage 1. Stage 1 will allow GPE to test the market for targeted financing before replenishment, responding to the request in BOD/2015/12-15 to "improve the prospects for increasing available resources to support the achievement of its strategic goals" by exploring targeted financing. Interim safeguards will be replaced by the Board's adoption of a final safeguards policy..

## 2. PRIMARY AIMS AND APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE AND GOOD PRACTICE EXCHANGE

2.1 At the core of GPE's theory of change is the idea that improvements in education sector planning and monitoring, alongside catalytic financing and improved accountability for results, will lead to stronger achievement of results in learning and equity across GPE's 65 member countries. A wide range of international research suggests that cross-national knowledge and good practice exchange can strengthen countries' own capacities for planning and designing effective solutions to educational challenges. (Steer and Smith 2015; Frederikson 2013; Isenman, Wathne and Baudienville 2010; Kerkhoff and Szelzak 2006.) [1]

2.2 Investments in knowledge and good practice exchange will be organized to support GPE's funding model – which is designed to leverage better education sector planning; better use of data; improvements in domestic financing; and more participation in the monitoring of results from these plans. KGPE initiatives will reinforce GPE's funding model by helping governments access the very best information about the successful implementation of sector reforms at scale.

2.3 KGPE initiatives will be organized under three key thematic domains, each aligned to the GPE Strategy 2020 goals and targets for results:

- Strengthening Sector Planning, Data and Monitoring to Support Stronger Systems
- Improving Learning Outcomes
- Improving Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion

[1] Fredrikson,B. (2013). More Effective Education Aid. NORRAG NEWS July 23, 2013; Steer, L. and Smith K. (2015) *Financing Education: Opportunities for Global Action*, Brookings Institute; Isenman, P., C. Wathne, and G. Baudienville (2010). *Global Funds: Allocation Strategies and Aid Effectiveness*, ODI, p. 18-20; Kerkhoff, L. and N. Szlezak. 2006. *Linking knowledge with global action – examining the Global Fund through a knowledge system lens*. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, vol. 84 pp. 629-635.

2.4 While the primary purpose of GPE's knowledge and good practice activities will be strengthened capacity within developing country partners, KGPE activities will also aim to foster stronger contributions from GPE and its partners to the data and evidence gaps acknowledged as a key barrier to the achievement of SDG4.

2.5 In addition to principles proposed in **BOD/2015/10-04**, KGPE activities will also:

- Meet clearly identified needs in GPE partner developing countries;
- Prioritize issues where GPE can play a unique or catalytic role because of its focus on systems, planning and inclusive policy dialogue; and
- Draw upon GPE's unique ability to convene diverse stakeholders for mutual problem solving.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

3.1 Key to the success of KGPE initiatives will be identifying approaches that draw on the combined strengths of GPE's membership.

3.2 To this end, KGPE activities will be carried out in partnership with others, building on technical strengths from across the partnership. In practical terms, this means that under each thematic area, a portfolio of linked activities will be launched that uses a mix of direct contracting and requests for proposals. Selected activities will aim to amplify (not duplicate) the mandate and initiative of others, while focusing on GPE's comparative advantage as a partnership that brings members together to support improved planning, policy dialogue and financing at the country level.

3.3 Developing Country Partners will be engaged in the identification and development of KGPE activities, through consultations at the pre-board DCP constituency meetings.

3.3 Furthermore, because all of GPE's work is country-driven and by definition based on a partnership approach, all modalities proposed focus on bringing key stakeholders together to jointly address key problems at the country and regional levels. GPE has a distinctive opportunity to bring educational officials from developing country partners together with representatives from civil society, the private sector and foundations, and teacher organizations, donor and multilateral organizations around problem solving initiatives that utilize peer exchange and sharing of good practice as central modalities.

3.4 Based on GPE's comparative advantage and lessons from other organizations, three main modalities suggest themselves as most likely to support the achievement of strong country level outcomes from KGPE activities:

- synthesis and exchange of policies and innovative approaches to key challenges – shared through mutual problem solving and peer review processes across groups of GPE countries;
- development of methodologies and diagnostic tools for improving data and monitoring combined with related investments in national capacity; and
- small-scale, catalytic financing to support country requests for innovative pilots and better evidence and research in specific thematic areas.

## 4. LESSONS FROM GPE AND COMPARATOR ORGANIZATIONS

4.1 In developing the KGPE strategy, the Secretariat looked closely at the significant investments in knowledge and good practice exchange GPE has made since 2010. This includes 15 GRA programs; development of guidelines and policy tools in such areas as Sector Analysis, Sector Planning (including for fragile and conflict-affected contexts), Gender Responsive Planning, School Health and Nutrition, domestic financing and Sector Monitoring (among others); and a variety of workshops where tools and guidelines have been shared. These include activities undertaken as part of the DCP constituency meetings. More recently GPE has invested in the development of "quality standards" in areas such as education sector planning, national data strategies and domestic financing. These standards are part of the GPE Strategy 2020 Results Framework and are being used to support improvements in country practices.

4.2 Perhaps the central lesson learned from GPE's KGPE activities is that while country-level stakeholders (especially governments and other national stakeholders) voice a strong demand for KGPE, the activities that GPE invested in under its Global and Regional Activities program (GRA) were not well linked to GPE's other forms of country level support. Thus the Independent Evaluation (Volume IV) concluded that GRA programs are not well known or understood by local stakeholders engaged in GPE-supported processes, and poorly linked to GPE investments in sector planning and sector program implementation grants..[2]

4.3 On the other hand initiatives which have focused on country-level planning and policy processes – such as GPE work on Gender Responsive Sector Planning, School Health and Nutrition, and the Sector Monitoring Initiative – were more successful in yielding improvements in technical

[2] Results for Development & Universalia. 2015. Independent Interim Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education. Vol. IV, pp 69-77; Global Partnership for Education. 2015. Annual Portfolio Review, pp. 65-69.

capacity and planning outputs, as recognized by GPE developing country partners (DCPs) and other national stakeholders during strategic plan consultations.[3] Future investments must be driven by country needs, and be designed to catalyze better planning and improved use of GPE's financing.

4.4 In developing its approach to knowledge and good practice exchange, GPE can also learn from the stakeholder consultations held during the development of its Strategic Plan. Across 9 thematic consultations, in pre-board constituency meetings with developing country partners, and through an online survey that reached out to all GPE developing country partners, there was strong consensus that GPE should do more to support national capacity for generating and sharing evidence and good practices in key thematic areas – particularly in sector planning and monitoring; equity; and teaching and learning.

4.5 Finally, GPE can learn from the examples of other international development organizations, on how to structure these investments so that GPE KGPE investments are catalytic; and in terms of the appropriate scale of KGPE investments that GPE should make.

4.6 On the first issue, a wide literature acknowledges that KGPE investments have the ability to catalyze policy change and strengthen national capacity to design and implement programs that target key policy challenges. There is widespread recognition that there is a gap between global-level evidence about what policies work, and the capacity of national level stakeholders to contribute to and utilize cross-national evidence (Fredriksen 2011). Furthermore, recent analyses emphasize significant national capacity gaps in the collection and utilization of data for policy processes in the education sector (Crouch 2015; Crouch and de Stefano 2016).[4] The need for more country-driven approaches to knowledge and good practice exchange, the importance of South-South and South-North-South forms of peer learning is also widely acknowledged (World Bank).[5] For these reasons, international development organizations such as DFID, the World Bank and GAVI (among others) have all experimented with different ways of investing in the cross-national generation and exchange of knowledge, including through stronger global level investments in data and the use of peer exchange about key policy challenges.

4.7 Yet international evidence suggests that knowledge and good practice exchange activities are underfunded in the education sector as compared to the health sector – and that there is a particular

[3] As part of the DCP constituency meetings, focal points developed a Communication and Action Plan that identified country needs. Indeed one of the direct objectives of the CAP (as communicated to the Board in December 2015) was "to support the needs of DCP constituencies in the area of capacity development and knowledge exchange, also with the aim of promoting South-South learning".

[4] Crouch, L.A. (June 2015). A relevant data revolution for development: RTI Press Publication No. PB-0007-1506. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI Press.; Crouch, L. and De Stefano, J. 2015. A Practical Approach to In-Country Systems Research. DFID/RISE Initiative. http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/RISE/14_Crouch-DeStefano.pdf

[5] See for example the World Bank's South-South Facility http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/page/south-south-facilitys-background.

gap in the translation of research into applied practice at the country level. Recent estimates suggest that less than 3% (or approximately US$ 242 million) of development assistance for education support global/cross-national knowledge, research and exchange of good practice –as compared to US$4.7 billion, or 23% of total ODA for health in 2013.[6]

## 5. A STAGED APPROACH

5.1 The KGPE strategy proposes a staged approach to making GPE KGPE investments over the five years of GPE's Strategic Plan. An initial 18-month period, from July 2016 to December 2017, will allow for program development, initial design, and the piloting of procedures for receiving and managing targeted financing. A second stage, from January 2018 to December 2020, would see initiatives in the three proposed domains brought to scale. In this second stage GPE partners will be prominently engaged in the delivery of KGPE activities, either through direct contracting or the competitive call for proposals in each of the three activity areas.

5.2 Since the GPE Fund has already committed its resources to the end of 2017, no new funding from the GPE Fund is available for KGPE in Stage 1, beyond those committed for the GRA programs. Modest funding to support KGPE work has been included as part of the Secretariat's administrative budget request. Any other funding for KGPE before 2018 will need to rely on targeted fundraising.

5.3 Stage 1 (July 2016-December 2017) will therefore be a developmental phase, leading in to larger scale initiatives proposed for funding after GPE's replenishment. The developmental stage offers an opportunity to prepare for larger initiatives after replenishment, and to pilot the use of targeted financing for KGPE activities. During the developmental phase, the Secretariat, working with the Strategy and Policy Committee, will:

- continue Global and Regional Activities (GRA) and small scale activities funded under the Secretariat's administrative budget.
- map key KGPE gaps, canvassing Partners' needs and policy innovations in each domain, in order to prepare a business case for larger-scale investments that can become part of GPE's replenishment campaign; and
- pilot two targeted financing initiatives in FY 2017 (and explore up to two additional initiatives for FY 2018); and use these to contribute lessons learned to the work of the joint SPC/GERF Strategic Financing Working Group .

[6] Schaferhoff, Evans, Burnett et. al. 2015. Estimating the Costs and Benefit of Education from a Health Perspective. Background Paper for the Oslo Summit on Education for Development, p. 6. http://www.resultsfordevelopment.org/sites/resultsfordevelopment.org/files/resources/SEEK.pdf.

5.4 Stage 2, from January 2018 to December 2020, will see the implementation of a KGPE strategy that brings to scale a range of knowledge and good practice activities to support better planning and improved policies in the three domains of learning, equity and systems/planning/data. It will be designed and presented to the Board for approval in December 2017, and form one part of GPE's case for replenishment. The full KGPE strategy will:

- provide a mapping of key knowledge and policy gaps, as well as innovations or strengths, across GPE partner developing countries in the domains of learning, equity and systems;
- assess GPE's comparative advantage in bringing together partners to support capacity development in GPE countries;
- incorporate lessons learned during Stage 1 on the use of targeted financing for KGPE initiatives, through consultation with the SPC/GERF Strategic Financing Working Group; and
- respond to key actions set out in the final report of the Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities, which is expected to present a roadmap for investments in global public goods.

## 6. KEY AREAS OF FOCUS IN STAGE 1 OF THE KGPE STRATEGY

6.1 Table 1 below identifies three main domains, and 8 subdomains that will be the focus for KGPE activities in Stage 1 of the KGPE strategy. Each subdomain is linked to GPE's Strategic Goals and Objectives, and will contribute to the achievement of targets in GPE's Result Framework.

6.2 It is important to note that activities in each of the identified subdomains are ongoing, either through existing GRA programs, or through support from the Secretariat and key partners, and are supported by technical experts within the Strategy and Policy Team of the GPE Secretariat. As an example, the Secretariat budget request for FY2017 includes US$ 480,000 for capacity building activities with Developing Country Partners, as well as the creation of guidance and tools to support stronger sector planning and policy dialogue in core areas of the strategic plan (learning, equity, systems and financing). The FY 2017 budget request also includes proposed funding for the Gender Strategy and Action Plan. GPE benefits from other partnership initiatives, as for example through participation in the Teachers Task Force and the Global Book Fund.

6.3 Two subdomains are proposed for initial pre-designation for targeted financing, and are highlighted in Table 1: Assessment for Learning and Better Early Learning at Scale. Exploration of targeted financing opportunities for the other subdomains will occur over the course of 2017

**Table 1: Domains Proposed for KGPE Activities During Stage 1**

| Domain | Sub Domains | Link to GPE Results Indicators |
|---|---|---|
| **Strengthening National Capacity for Planning, Monitoring and Data** (including Monitoring of Domestic Financing) | a) Strengthening Sector Analysis, Planning and Data Systems | # 10. Proportion of DCPs that have (a) increased their public expenditure on education; or (b) maintained sector spending at 20% or above.<br><br># 14. Proportion of DCPs reporting at least 10 of 12 key international education indicators to UIS (including key outcomes, service delivery, and financing indicators as identified by GPE)<br><br># 16.a Proportion of endorsed (a) Education Sector Plans (ESP) or (b) Transitional Education Plans (TEP) meeting quality standards<br><br>#17. Proportion of DCPs with a data strategy that meets quality standards |
| | b) Strengthening Monitoring and Accountability in the Joint Sector Review | #18. Proportion of JSRs meeting quality standards |
| **Improving Learning Outcomes through Quality Teaching and Learning** | c) Assessment for Learning (A4L)<br><br>** Initial pilot for targeted financing | # 1 Proportion of development country partners (DCPs) showing improvement on learning outcomes (basic education)<br><br>#15. Proportion of DCPs with a learning assessment system within the basic education cycle that meets quality standards<br><br># 20. Proportion of grants supporting EMIS/learning assessment systems |
| | d) Better Early Learning and Development at Scale<br><br>** Initial pilot for targeted financing | # 2 Percentage of children under five (5) years of age who are developmentally on track in terms of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being<br><br># 6. Pre-primary gross enrolment ratio |
| | e) Teaching and Learning | #11. Equitable allocation of teachers, as measured by the correlation coefficient between the number of teachers and the number of pupils per school in each DCP<br><br>#12. Proportion of DCPs with pupil/trained teacher ratio below threshold (<40) (at the primary level)<br><br>#16.b Proportion of ESPs/TEPs that have a teaching and learning strategy meeting quality standards |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion** | *f)* Gender Equality | #5. Gender parity index of completion rates for: (a) primary education; (b) lower secondary education<br><br>#8. Gender parity index of out-of-school rate for: (a) primary education; (b) lower secondary education |
| | g) Equity and Inclusion – Quality Standards for Sector Analysis and Planning and Planning Toolkit | #9. Equity index (considering sex/gender; geographical location; and socio-economic status)<br><br>#16.c Proportion of ESPs/TEPs with a strategy to respond to marginalized groups that meets quality standards (including gender, disability and other context-relevant dimensions) |
| | h) Supporting Inclusion of Refugee Education in Sector Planning | #7. Out-of-school rate for: (a) children of primary school age; (b) children of lower secondary school age (disaggregated by conflict and fragile affected)<br><br>#16.c Proportion of ESPs/TEPs with a strategy to respond to marginalized groups that meets quality standards (including gender, disability and other context-relevant dimensions) |

### a) Strengthening Systems: Improving Planning, Monitoring and Data

6.4 Anchoring all of GPE's KGPE investments is the conviction that improved planning, use of data and evidence, and more participatory monitoring and accountability for results help to build stronger education systems. This is the core of GPE's operational model, its theory of change and its ability to add value through its funding.

6.5 GPE has made significant KGPE investments in these areas for example through the sector monitoring initiative; knowledge exchange at the DCP pre-board constituency meetings; and GRA investments in pilot methodologies for improved data on education financing and out-of-school children. Furthermore, in 2015, GPE developed quality standards and related monitoring tools in four areas: quality of education sector plans; effectiveness of the Joint Sector Review processes; quality of data strategies (Education Management Information Systems and Learning Assessment Systems); and monitoring of public expenditures in education. GPE also rolled out its new funding model, which is designed to encourage governments to establish and deliver upon results in the areas of improved data systems, domestic financing, and equity, learning and efficiency.

6.6 The proposed work from July 2016 to December 2017 (FY 17 to through the first half of FY 18) concentrates on two key areas, each essential for strengthening GPE's operational model:

- Improved sector analysis and planning – including through knowledge-sharing on appropriate sub-sectoral policies, national data strategies, and improvements in monitoring of domestic financing to support the implementation of sector plans; and
- Improved effectiveness of Joint Sector Reviews (as an opportunity for monitoring and mutual accountability).

6.7 Modalities used for this work would engaging Developing Country Partners in cross-national review of country progress in each area; the identification and validation of good practices; further development of guidelines and tools for use by country-level actors; and capacity development workshops with GPE partners. Activities will build on the work of existing GRA programs and the work of key partners in the area of domestic financing for education. UIS, IIEP, UNICEF, and World Bank (among others) will be core institutional partners in delivering the technical components of this work.

**b) Improving Learning Outcomes**

6.8 Equitable improvement of learning outcomes is GPE's first Strategic goal over the next five years. GPE Strategy 2020 commits the partnership to supporting improvements in teaching and teachers, and in curriculum and learning materials. It also specifically mandates GPE to improve learning and developmental outcomes for children under five; and to support governments to improve learning assessment systems.

6. 9 In FY 17 KGPE initiatives are proposed in two areas of high priority from the point of view of GPE's Strategic Plan and developing country partners: one focused on enhancing national learning assessments systems, the other on supporting better planning for universal quality early childhood care and education (ECCE). These are areas where GPE investments to date have not been adequate for the realization of the goals laid out for the partnership in GPE Strategy 2020.

6.10 A third area – teaching and learning – will be explored during FY 17 for inclusion in Stage 2.

**6.11 Assessment for Learning – A4L (platform start-up phase)**

6.11.1 One of the strongest areas of demand among GPE partner countries is for increased support for learning assessment systems that are robust and capable of yielding policy-relevant evidence for sector planning and administration. Equally important is "continuous assessment"

and the opportunity to provide formative information to better guide the work of schools and classroom teachers.

6.11.2 Building from the proposal for an Assessment for Learning Platform that was developed through a consultative process as part of the Learning Metrics Task Force[7], GPE proposes a start-up phase that includes the establishment of small grants to countries to support diagnostics of national assessment systems; support for regional platforms aimed at problem-solving and policy exchange among Ministries of Education; and support for the development of international assessment indicators – particularly those related to SDG 4 objectives, including through the UNESCO Institute for Statistics Global Alliance for the Measurement of Learning (GAML) Initiative.

6.11.3 Initial expressions of interest in this work have been received from both foundations and bilateral donors, with the expectation that funding in the range of US$2.5 to US$3.5 million could be raised in the period between June 2016 and December 2017.

### 6. 12 Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS)

6.12.1 Under GPE Strategy 2020, the partnership has committed to supporting improvements in early learning and developmental outcomes for children under five, and to improving enrolment in pre-primary education. However, while GPE makes significant investments in ECCE through its sector plan development and sector program implementation grants, only one in three GPE ESPIG grants has an ECCE component. Furthermore, while GPE has invested in regional ECCE workshops as recently as 2014, GPE needs a more strategic approach for supporting country efforts to improve ECCE through knowledge and good practice exchange.

6.12.2 The BELDS initiative, described in the concept note attached as Annex 2, will seek to mobilize exchange of models for bringing good quality ECCE programs to scale.

6.12.3 BELDS would offer GPE partner countries eligible for a new round of GPE funding the opportunity to engage in a cross-national dialogue and knowledge exchange at the planning and program design stage – focusing on sharing best practices and innovative approaches to addressing ECCE challenges at scale. Countries would also receive small grants to strengthen the inclusion of ECCE in GPE funded grants for sector analysis and planning –allowing for the enhanced development of data and research on equity and learning outcomes as part of the planning process

[7] UNESCO Institute for Statistics and Center for Universal Education. 2013. Towards Universal Learning: Recommendations from the Learning Metric Task Force. http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/lmtf-summary-rpt-en.pdf

6.12.4 BELDS would work collaboratively with the Early Learning Partnership at the World Bank and the recently announced UNICEF/World Bank ECD Alliance.

6.12.5 Start-up funding for this initiative will primarily be sought from foundations. Four foundations – the Open Society Foundations, Comic Relief, Dubai Cares and the Hilton Foundation, have indicated an interest in providing up to US$2 million over two years to support the initiative.

### 6.13 Teaching and Learning

6.13.1 GPE makes significant investments in teacher professional development; in learning materials and in the development of curricula through its education sector program implementation grants; and through its GRA activities. There are increasing demands on governments and international donors to improve the effectiveness of investments in teaching and learning, and to pilot innovative and cost effective approaches (including through the use of technology).

6.13.2 During Stage 1 the Secretariat will remain engaged in the Teachers Task Force, the Norwegian Teachers Initiative, and the Global Book Fund, and will draw lessons from related GRA programs. It will conduct a mapping exercise with partners to explore the most appropriate KGPE activities and investments needed to support improved national policies in the areas of teachers, teaching, curriculum development and learning materials.

### c) Improving Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion

6.14 At the core of GPE's vision of "inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all" and its Strategic Goal 2, is the conviction that no one should be denied a good quality education, including those living in contexts affected by conflict and crisis.

6.15 GPE has made significant investments in KGPE in the areas of equity, gender equality and inclusion. Five GRA grants (US$9.8 million) are linked to the themes of out-of-school children, access and equity. These include support for the Out-of-School Children Initiative, which includes the development of methodologies and guidelines for improving the monitoring of out-of-school children; a mapping study of school-related gender violence; and the development and piloting of school health and nutrition plans in GPE countries. GPE has conducted a gender stock-take of education sector plans and gender-responsive sector planning guidelines have been piloted with UNGEI in three countries. It has also increased its financing for and developed an approach to transitional sector planning to support countries affected by crisis.

6.16 Funding for activities in this domain during Stage 1 will be requested through the GPE administrative budget in FY 2017. This will allow for the preparation of the Stage 2 KGPE strategy, as well as exploration of further potential for targeted financing.

**6.17 Gender Equality, Gender Responsive Planning and Gender Guidance**

6.17.1 GPE's Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan, which has been submitted for separate consideration by the Strategy and Policy Committee (SPC/2016/04 DOC 03), proposes a series of KGPE activities that build on the gender-responsive planning initiative that GPE developed in partnership with UNGEI and Plan Canada. This includes the development of guidance linked to the new funding model and delivering gender responsive sector analysis and planning workshops for DCPs; and developing and sharing knowledge products.

6.17.2 This portfolio of work will be managed by the GPE Secretariat and funded from a separate budget line requested under the Gender Strategy and Action Plan within the FY 2017 Secretariat budget request. Mainstreaming gender equality into GPE's Knowledge and Good Practice activities will be a core goal. The potential for raising additional targeted financing to support further expansion of gender equality work will be explored.

**6. 18 Inclusion**

6.18.1 GPE will work with partners to ensure stronger attention to inclusion and disability issues in education sector analysis and planning. Using the GPE Secretariat Budget, an Equity and Inclusion toolkit currently under development by the Secretariat in collaboration with partners, will be piloted in selected country-level participatory workshops, to support sector plan development and the design of effective strategies to respond to marginalized groups.

**6. 19 Enhanced Inclusion of Refugee Education in Sector Planning**

6.19.1 A large share of the world's refugee population lives within the geographic boundaries of GPE partner countries. Yet apart from a unique experience in Chad, few GPE countries address the education of refugees within their education sector analysis and planning process.

6.19.2 In 2016 and 2017, GPE will work with key partners to explore opportunities to improve attention to the issue of refugee education in the planning process now that the Transitional Education Sector Plan guidelines are finalized. Activities will include a mapping of refugee education issues within countries coming forward for GPE financing over the next three years, and knowledge sharing about good practices.

## 7. WHAT SCALE OF INVESTMENT FOR KGPE?

7.1 Looking towards Stage 2, this paper recommends that the GPE Board sets a high level of ambition for its KGPE activities in June 2016, and conveys this ambition to the SPC/GERF Strategic Financing Working Group for inclusion in its proposal for the next Replenishment.

7.2 As modelled in Table 2 below, it is proposed that GPE build its current annual investment in KGPE from less than 2.2% of total annual GPE disbursements (approximately US$500 million per annum), to 5% of estimated disbursements over the course of the Strategic Plan period, or US$25 million/annum for the period 2018-2020.

7.3 Setting a high level of ambition at this point in time has several advantages. It will allow GPE to proceed with confidence in developing a business case for financing key data, evidence and capacity gaps essential to the delivery on GPE 2020 and SDG4. It will allow us to set indicative benchmarks for targeted financing. It will also allow for the Strategy and Policy Committee to explore specific financing arrangements for larger scale proposals, and develop improved procedures for competitive application and independent technical review of proposals that balance GPE commitment to working through partners with key lessons from the GRA program.

7.4 An annual investment of US$25 million or 5% of total disbursements would represent a significant contribution to the gap in international financing for knowledge and good practice exchange and global public goods in the education sector. It would raise GPE's KGPE investments to the levels originally envisaged under the original GRA program (US$60 million over three years). It also compares well to the investments made in comparator organizations, like GAVI and the World Bank.[8]

7.5 A key component of this proposal is the introduction of fundraising for targeted financing for KGPE initiatives. A preliminary proposal is to grow targeted financing for KGPE activities from a modest 20% or just over US$2 million in FY17, to US$10 million or more per annum, or at least 40% of KGPE disbursements in FY 2019-2021.

[8] Gavi, for example, spends the equivalent of about 9% of its total country grants, or US$160 million/annum, on technical assistance, development of global norms, and other studies, contracting partners for specific activities. The World Bank has several trust funds devoted to KGPE in education, including the REACH Partnership at the World Bank pools US$14 million of funding for KGPE activities to support results based financing in the education sector; the SABER initiative has raised more the US$30 million; and the Early Learning Partnership more than US$20 million.

http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/reach#4

7.6 In Stage 1, total expected expenditures are modest – dropping below 3% of the total expected value of GPE disbursements. Targeted financing of approximately US$6 million will be raised on a pilot basis during this period (July 1 2016 to December 17, 2017).

7.7 Note that total funding in FY17 includes estimated costs of completing existing GRA programs.

7.8 Depending upon the Board's decision on the date and approach to the next replenishment, and the success of this replenishment campaign, the table below then assumes that a new stream of funding for KGPE activities (Stage 2) could be launched in the middle of FY 2018 (January 2018), allowing for the scale-up of KGPE initiatives.

**Table 2: Indicative Level of Ambition for KGPE Investments (Amounts in US$)**

| | FY 17 | FY18 Replenishment Year | FY 19 | FY 20 | FY 21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Proposed KGPE Investment*** | 12,500,000 | 5,000,000 | 25,000,000 | 25,000,000 | 25,000,000 |
| indicative % of estimated GPE Disbursements | 2.5% | ≥ 1% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| | | | | | |
| **KGPE Activities Estimated by Domain** | | | | | |
| **GRA costs (actual committed)** | 9,300,000 | - | - | - | |
| **Assessment for Learning** | 1,200,000 | 3,000,000 | tbd | tbd | tbd |
| **Better Early Learning and Development at Scale** | 750,000 | 1,250,000 | tbd | tbd | tbd |
| Other activities to be decided | tbd | tbd | tbd | tbd | tbd |
| | | | | | |
| **Balance GPE Fund vs. Targeted Funding** | | | | | |
| % of total proposed from Targeted Fundraising | 20% | TBD | 40% | 40% | 40% |
| US$ from Targeted financing | 1,975,000 | 4,250,000 | 10,000,000 | 10,000,000 | 10,000,000 |
| Amount from GPE Pooled Fund | 10,625,000 | TBD | 15,000,000 | 15,000,000 | 15,000,000 |

**Notes:**

a) Estimates are provided by Fiscal Year. FY 17 = July 1 2016 to June 30th 2017.
b) Annual estimates based on approximated total of $500 million disbursements per year.
c) FY 2017 estimates include committed costs for the GRA program.
d) FY 18 assumes only targeted financing raised in Stage 1.

## 8. OVERSIGHT AND INTERIM PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING TARGETED FINANCING DURING STAGE 1

8.1 During Stage 1 of the Strategy, the Board will be asked to endorse fundraising for the initial costs of a small number of thematic initiatives – two in 2016, with others to be developed during 2017, aligned to the list of thematic domains identified in Table 1 above.

8.2 It is proposed that oversight and review of KGPE proposals and activities be tasked to the Strategy and Policy Committee. The SPC will work with the Secretariat to develop the overall KGPE proposal that will form part of the GPE replenishment campaign, and will recommend this to the Board for its final decision. SPC will review all concept notes before these proposals are shared with the Board for final endorsement. SPC will be provided with an annual report on KGPE activities prepared by the Secretariat, which shall include a rolling plan of activities. In this model it is not funders that drive the identification of initiatives. In Step 1 (see Figure One below), the Secretariat in consultation with the Strategy and Policy Committee recommends KGPE initiatives, which the Board pre-designates for fundraising.

8.3 Furthermore, in alignment with BOD/2015/12-15–Addressing the Funding Gap in the Current Replenishment Period, the Governance, Ethics, Risk and Finance Committee (GERF) will be the responsible Committee for reviewing and endorsing the terms of any targeted funding arrangements agreed during Stage 1. The GERF will be responsible for ensuring that any funding agreements meet key guidelines and safeguards, and for recommending the final approval of any funding arrangement.

8.4 The interim procedures and safeguards for targeted KGPE financing identified in Table 3 below, build on the four safeguards and three procedural guidelines established in BOD/2015/12-15–Addressing the Funding Gap in the Current Replenishment Period. Additional guidelines and procedural safeguards are also proposed to establish restrictions on the percentage of funding that foundations, traditional bilateral donors, and new or other non-traditional donors may earmark for KGPE activities; to limit the use of separate Trust Funds; to incorporate GPE's conflict of interest guidelines; and to ensure sufficient resources are in place for management and monitoring of proposed activities.

**Table 3 Interim Guidelines, Safeguards and Procedural Considerations for KGPE Targeted Financing During Stage I**

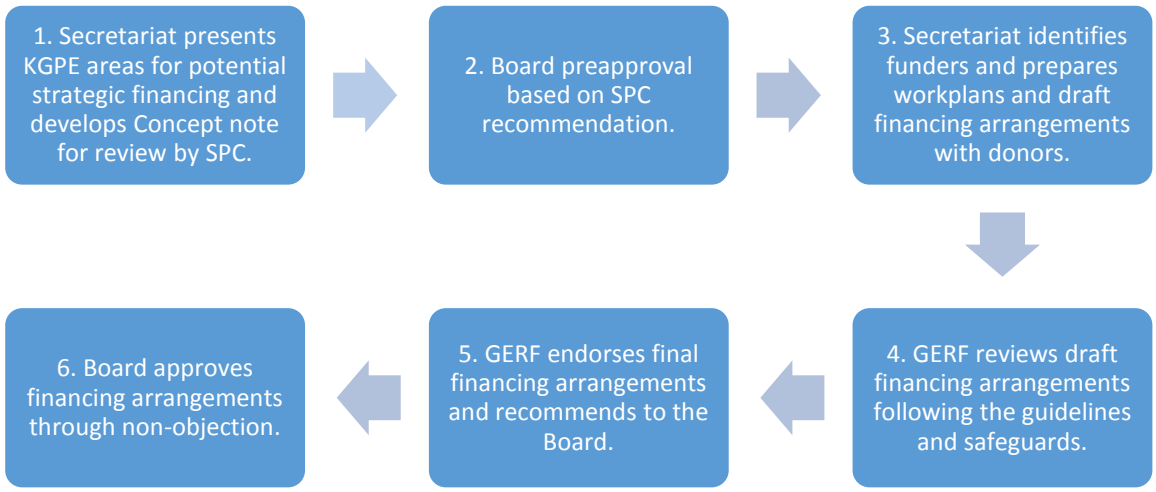
| **Guidelines**<br>**BOD/2015/12-15–Addressing the Funding Gap in the Current Replenishment Period.** |
|---|
| 1. Alignment with the strategic plan and GPE charter. |
| 2. Delivery in such a way that no undue transaction costs are implied. |
| 3. Delivery in such way that the funder has no undue influence on the Secretariat, Trustee, Grant Agents, and Implementers. |
| 4. Targeted funds shall not be in place of unrestricted financing contributions to the GPE fund. [*see related safeguards proposed below*] |
| **Procedural Requirements**<br>**BOD/2015/12-15–Addressing the Funding Gap in the Current Replenishment Period.** |
| 5. Targeted funding areas for Knowledge and Good Practice Areas can be pre-designated as eligible by the Board. |
| 6. Funding offers must be reviewed by the GERF. |
| 7. Funding offers must be approved by the Board. |
| 8. Targeted funding that requires the opening of a separate Trust Fund from the GPE Fund will be subject to prior approval by the GERF in consultation with the Trustee. |
| **Additional Guidelines and Safeguards Proposed During Stage 1** |
| 9. Targeted Financing from existing bilateral (sovereign) donors for Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange initiatives shall be limited to no more than 5% of their total contribution to the GPE fund over the 2015-2018 replenishment period, and funding must be additional to any existing unconditional pledge. |
| 10. Financing from new sovereign donors to GPE will not be subject to this ceiling in Stage 1 provided the total contribution is less than $10 million. For amounts in excess of this, there must be at an equivalent unrestricted contribution to the GPE Fund. |
| 11. Targeted Financing from Private Foundations will not be subject to any ceilings or co-financing requirements in Stage 1. |
| 12. Targeted Funding shall be facilitated through a notional allocation approach where the total value of contributions made to the GPE Fund will be notionally matched to the value of |

| |
|---|
| allocations for KGPE activities. Only in exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to opening a separate Trust Fund and this will be subject to Guideline 8 above. |
| 13. Where more than one funder contributes to an initiative, all funders will agree to a harmonized reporting arrangement. |
| 14. All Funders formally disclose any conflicts of interest and (where relevant) indicate their formal agreement to GPE's Corporate Guidelines.[9] |
| 15. Targeted financing contributions shall include sufficient funding to allow for appropriate management and monitoring of all proposed activities. |

8.5 Figure 1 below outlines the proposed procedures for receipt of targeted financing during Stage 1, outlining oversight roles for the Board, the SPC, the GERF and the Secretariat.

8.6 As an example of this process, take the first two proposed pilot initiatives for targeted financing – the A4L platform and the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale initiative (Annex 2 and Annex 3). The SPC reviews a concept note and recommends these as predesignated areas for targeted financing. With the Board's predesignated approval, the Secretariat would then develop targeted financing arrangements with key funders, and prepare a brief requesting final approval by the GERF based on compliance with the safeguards and guidelines.

**Figure One: Targeted KGPE Financing procedures**




[9] GPE's current Conflict of Interest Policy (BOD/2011/11-06) is limited to the Board decision-making processes. A revised conflict of interest policy will be developed by December 2017 to include specific guidance related to targeted financing. GPE's Corporate Guidelines are available online (GERF/2016/04-01).

## 9. IMPLICATIONS FOR GPE SECRETARIAT BUDGET AND CAPACITY

9.1 The approach to KGPE proposed in this document will have modest implications for GPE Secretariat resources and capacity in Stage 1 – between July 2016 and December 2017. Education specialists in the Strategy, Policy and Performance Unit, with support from the Country Support Team, will carry out the work described for Stage 1.

9.2 The GPE Secretariat presently has one dedicated specialist in each of three areas: learning, equity and systems/planning, as well as one specialist dedicated to knowledge and good practice exchange. A half time staff position has been requested from the Board in the FY 2017 budget request (with the other half time spent managing CSEF) to support KGPE activities.

9. 3 Additional activities related to the A4L platform start-up and the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale initiative will require modest staffing to allow for management and monitoring of these initiatives. Concept notes will clearly indicate the amount of funding required from any targeted contribution to a KGPE initiative to cover the general costs of administering the program including staff time and indirect costs.

9. 4 Resources needed for Stage 2 will be presented alongside the KGPE proposal that will be developed for presentation to the Board in 2017.

## ANNEX 2 – BETTER EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT SCALE CONCEPT NOTE

**Global Partnership for Education (GPE)**
**Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange Concept Note**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Name** | Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) |
| **Geographic scope** | Country-level and cross-national/global |
| **Duration** | Phase 1 - 24 months (2 years) |
| **Objectives** | 1. Convene and build **knowledge and good practice exchange** on how to strengthen quality early childhood education within national education systems in order to improve learning and equity.<br>2. Strengthen capacity of developing country partners to **plan and implement nationally owned education sector plans** that include sufficient focus on quality and equitable early childhood education.<br>3. Promote **inclusive and evidence-based national policy dialogue** on early childhood education.<br>4. Strengthen **global and cross-national commitment to effective and efficient financing** for early childhood education. |
| **Expected outcomes and contributions to longer-term impact** | Increase in the planning and implementation of education sector plans that include quality early childhood education, and crowd in domestic and other sources of finance to ensure that early childhood education is better resourced.<br>➢ Increase in the percentage of children under six (6) years of age who are developmentally on track in terms of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #2).<br>➢ Increase in the pre-primary gross enrolment ratios (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #6). |

### *1. Problem Statement*

The foundations for lifelong learning are established in early childhood. The 2,000 days from a child's birth to the transition to primary school build brain capacity and learning capabilities for all subsequent stages of learning and wellbeing. Learning inequalities rooted in socioeconomic status that appear in the early years (i.e. by ages 5 and 6) persist throughout the school years. For this reason, action to reduce inequalities and improve learning outcomes must start from early childhood.

Convinced of the importance of quality and equitable early childhood care and education (ECCE), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has renewed its commitment to the subsector by including ECCE in the Partnership's Strategic Plan (2016-2020).

- GPE's goal is to support improvements in early learning and developmental outcomes for children age 5 and under, and to improve equitable access to quality early childhood education through building stronger education systems.

- GPE's support prioritizes education for the poorest and most marginalized, with a focus on children living in countries affected by fragility and conflict.

**Current state**

Currently, access to early childhood education is highly inequitable between children from the poorest and richest households,[10] and overall attendance rates are as low as 1 percent in countries affected by or emerging from conflict. Many children, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable communities, are starting school without the foundational early learning skills needed for subsequent learning and success in school.

The international community has taken a stance of elevating ECCE in the Sustainable Development Goals (By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (SDG 4.2, United Nations, 2015)). The inclusion of ECCE in the SDGs marks a pivotal moment to galvanize national and global efforts to improve funding, knowledge and political will to bring better early learning to scale and, in doing so, improve equitable access to early childhood education and early learning outcomes.

**Key challenges**

GPE plays a global role as an advocate for education on the international stage and convener of international partners. To progress towards achievement of SDG 4.2, GPE has identified the need to catalyze policy change, jointly problem-solve, and strengthen national capacity to design and implement early childhood education programs that target key policy challenges, including:

**1) Limited knowledge and good practice of how to bring early childhood education to scale within national education systems**

Since 2010, there has been more research generated on ECCE program and policy implementation in developing countries than the past 30 years combined: however, the evidence has focused largely on what works to improve early learning and not how to bring early learning to scale within education systems, in order to improve equity and learning outcomes. Although many developing countries have pockets of success where early childhood education programs have been implemented effectively –these successes often do not happen at scale. On the other hand, early childhood education programs brought to scale in some regions are under-resourced, low quality and fail to improve early learning outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.[11]

**2) Developing country partners are not including early childhood education in education sector plans**

GPE has been providing funds towards ECCE in its member countries; however, most countries still have very low levels of preprimary enrollment rates and do not make significant investments for ECCE in GPE grants. Currently, only 27 of 73 program implementation grants (ESPIG grants) have an ECCE component in their education sector plans.

[10]UNICEF (2012). *Inequities in Early Childhood Development. What the data say: Evidence from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys*. New York: UNICEF.

[11] Van der Berg, S. (2013). *The Impact of the Introduction of Grade R on Learning Outcomes*. Pretoria: Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.

### 3) Financing for early childhood education is inadequate and not coordinated

There is widespread recognition that there is a gap between global-level evidence about what works and the capacity of national level stakeholders to contribute to and utilize cross-national evidence.[12] The global evidence indicates that quality ECCE is one of the most critical and cost-effective investments a country can make to reduce the link between early disadvantage and poor learning outcomes; however, many governments in developing countries spend only between 0.1 and 0.2 percent of GNP on pre-primary education, far below the recommended 1 to 2 percent minimum.[13]

## 2. *Strategic Response*

To address these challenges, GPE aims to launch a new initiative, Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS), to provide a convening role and improve knowledge and good practice of "what works" to ensure equitable access to quality early childhood education within education systems. The initiative will bring diverse stakeholders together to support the planning and implementation of education sector policies that include early childhood education.

Strengthening early childhood education within education systems requires the combined efforts of many stakeholders. BELDS would work collaboratively with the Early Learning Partnership at the World Bank and the recently announced UNICEF/World Bank ECD Alliance, among other key stakeholders – including developing country governments, donor partners, international organizations, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

Due to the nature of GPE's work, the initiative would focus on children ages 3-6, addressing early learning challenges in preschool and pre-primary. However, being aware that health and nutrition are strongly linked to success in early learning, BELDS would engage with Ministries of Education to bring to the table and collaborate with other relevant ministries (Social Affairs, Health, Women Affairs, for example). With the support of partners' expertise, where relevant, BELDS would also include initiatives that support children's development and care, such as parental training, day cares, and community centres.

The uniqueness of the BELDS initiatives would be through its focus on improving **knowledge and good practice exchange** to leverage improved education policies and systems in the area of quality early childhood education, and to strengthen the capacity of developing country partners (DCPs) to **plan and implement nationally owned education sector plans** that include a focus on early childhood care and education. The BELDS initiative will seek to coordinate its investments with the activities of the Early Learning Partnership, which focuses on what works to scale access to quality early learning within World Bank programs, to ensure the widest possible reach.

The entry point for GPE is the **poorest and most marginalized** countries, including fragile and conflict-affected states, where children are most in need of ECCE programs but among the least likely to have access to quality ECCE programs.

GPE can play a pivotal role in increasing advocacy and building momentum for improved funding for early childhood care and education. During its 14 years of working with countries at a systems level and coordinating education funds, it has positioned itself as an organization that focuses on enhancing countries' capacity to improve results in basic education in equity, inclusion, learning,

[12] Fredrikson,B. (2013, July 23). More Effective Education Aid. NORRAG NEWS. Retrieved from https://norrag.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/more-effective-education-aid-the-challenge-of-achieving-more-evidence-based-aid-allocation/

[13] http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/earlychildhooddevelopment/overview

through building stronger education systems. GPE distinguishes itself from other organizations focused on ECCE through the following:

- GPE reaches the **poorest countries and fragile and conflict-affected regions** at a systems level, engaging with them throughout their policy cycles. Almost 50% of GPE funds go to countries affected by fragility and conflict, accelerating support to the most vulnerable.
- GPE raises attention to education issues in ways that bring a **wider array of stakeholders** to the table to support the sector plans in thematic areas such as early childhood education. GPE advocates on behalf of developing countries to ensure they receive adequate external aid from bilateral and multilateral donors to implement the education sector plans developed by the local education groups.
- GPE works outside of a project based approach. GPE's business model allows it to use **various entry points** (annual Joint Sector Reviews, Education Sector Analysis and Education Sector Development Plans, Local Education Group and GPE funded grants, among others) to ensure that important thematic work is highlighted in policy discussions that lead from conception to implementation.
- GPE's work is **demand driven**. Countries decide what part of their education sector plan will be funded and implemented through GPE funds. This bottom-up approach allows for countries to focus on their most pressing education needs and ensures country ownership.

## *3. Current GPE Investments*

Since 2002, GPE has invested US$$80 million in technical and financial support to strengthen ECCE analysis, policies and strategies; grants to finance ECCE programs; and capacity development and knowledge sharing on effective and good practices for ECCE policies and programs. GPE has aligned its new Strategic Plan (2016-2020) with SDG4.2 and has committed to improving equity and quality in pre-primary education and supporting improvements in learning and developmental outcomes for young children.

GPE's financial and technical support to ECCE has contributed to the construction of mobile ger-kindergartens in remote areas of Mongolia; intensive pre-service training for early childhood educators in Cambodia, and building infrastructure for early childhood education centers in Nicaragua. In developing country partners, the gross enrollment ratio in pre-primary education is 27 percent overall, based on latest estimates (2014/15 Results for Learning Report). Public institutions account for 68 percent of enrollments in pre-primary education, but there has been growth in the private sector during this time.

The partnership values the crucial role of bilateral, multilateral and other donors in leveraging greater investments in sustainable national education systems.

**There is good practice is some places.** In 12 developing country partners, including Vietnam, Ghana and Moldova, the pre-primary gross enrollment rates are over 50 percent. Most countries with relatively high pre-primary gross enrollment rates also have primary completion rates higher than 90 percent. In several countries, impressive gains of 3 to 7 percentage points annually were made in the pre-primary gross enrollment rates, between 2008 and 2013. These countries included Mongolia, Nepal and Albania. Notably, most of the countries with the largest gains in pre-primary gross enrollment rates had strong primary education systems in place.

**But more support is needed in the hardest places.** In 16 countries, however, less than one in ten children have access to pre-primary education. Of these countries, 70% are fragile and conflict-affected countries.

## 4. *Planned Objectives and Activities*

During recent consultations, partners called for GPE to play a stronger role in supporting them to effectively use global and cross-national knowledge and good practice exchange to bring about improved early childhood education policies and systems. BELDS will provide a space for collaboration for country level partners, experts and organizational partners across the partnership involved in ECCE work in various sectors and at different points of the system - local, national, regional, global – in order to enable them to work with and learn from one another on similar ECCE policy issues and challenges, avoid duplication, and fill gaps in need.

### Overall objectives

The BELDS initiative will provide a collaborative and participatory platform that will take a phased approach starting in 2017.

The initiative has the following specific objectives:

1. Convene and build **knowledge and good practice exchange** on how to strengthen quality early childhood education within national education systems in order to improve learning and equity.
2. Strengthen capacity of developing country partners to **plan and implement nationally owned education sector plans** that include sufficient focus on quality and equitable early childhood education.
3. Promote **inclusive and evidence-based national policy dialogue** on early childhood education, through government-led local education groups (LEGs) and the joint sector review process, with participation from civil society, teachers' organizations, the private sector, and all development partners.
4. Strengthen **global and cross-national commitment to effective and efficient financing** for early childhood education.

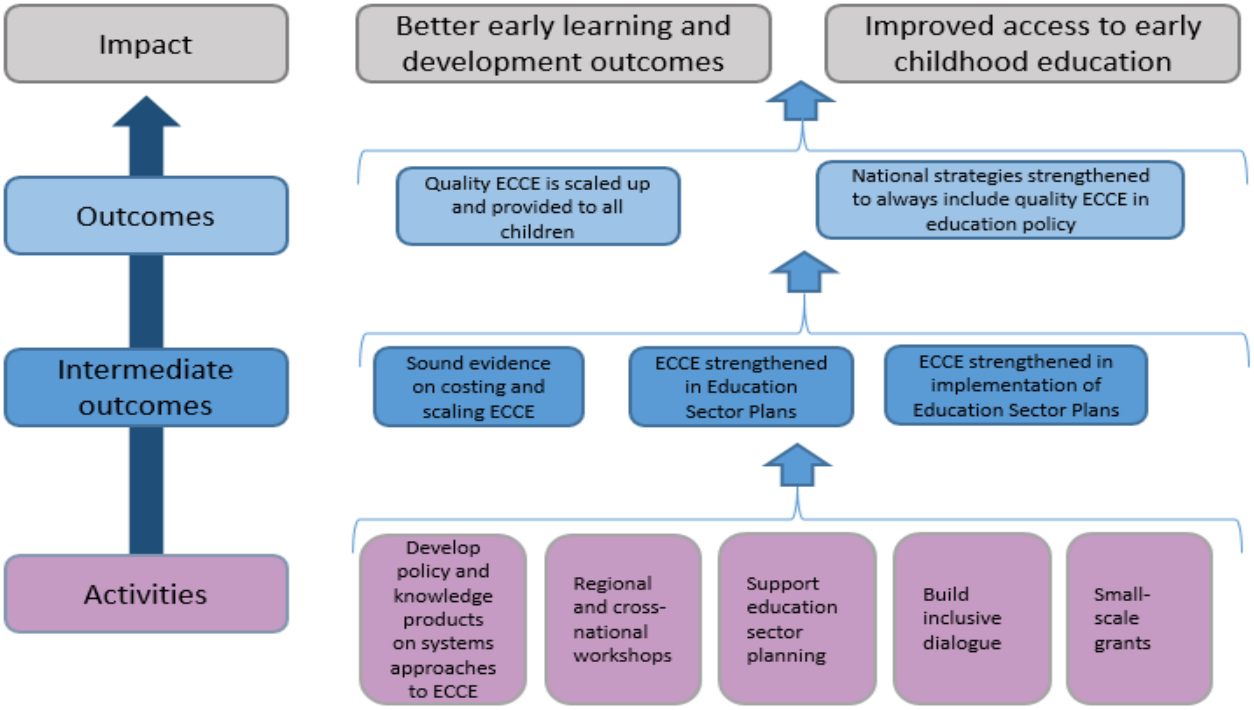
The theory of change for BELDS is outlined in Figure 1. BELDS activities will leverage the existing GPE policy planning and implementation model, enabling a cohort of developing country partners to improve knowledge, data, good practice, and address common challenges in early childhood care and education. Technical and financial support will be provided for the development of sustainable solutions and education sector implementation plans that include early childhood care and education.

The key **expected outcome of Phase 1** is that knowledge products and good practice exchange will contribute to the development of improved sector plans that include sufficient focus on quality early childhood care and education. BELDS activities will also raise attention and help to crowd-in funds from a broad array of funders for countries to support early childhood care and education in sector plans. Key outputs of Phase 1 include:

- Increase in the number of policy and knowledge products developed and disseminated that focus on systems approaches to quality early childhood education;
- Increase in the proportion of developing country partners utilizing knowledge and good practice derived from in workshops or other events supported by GPE in the area of early childhood education;
- Increase in the availability of financing for early childhood education planning and analysis;
- Increase in the number of collaborative initiatives undertaken with Partners and other external agencies to strengthen commitment and financing for early childhood education.

Longer-term, it is anticipated that BELDS activities will support progress towards the implementation of effective education plans that will improve enrollment in early childhood education (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #6) and create better early learning and developmental outcomes for young children (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #2).

**Figure 1.** BELDS Theory of Change (Phase 1 Activities, 2017-2019)




**BELDS Champions**

BELDS activities will be offered to 35 developing country partners eligible for funding in 2017, including 14 fragile and conflicted affected partners. It is anticipated that 4-5 of these countries will volunteer to form the first BELDS cohort. This and subsequent clusters would be comprised of countries depending on their policy cycle and on their interest in participating in the initiative.

The country partners will have the opportunity to engage in knowledge and good practice exchange and will receive additional financial and technical support to develop education sector plans that include sufficient focus on quality and equitable early childhood education. It is anticipated that several of the countries in the cohort will be affected by conflict and fragility, and will help to identify solutions and sustainable plans for early childhood education policies and systems in such contexts.

BELDS will enhance the knowledge base and understanding of key priorities and challenges related to the planning and implementation of ECCE activities for the most marginalized within education systems. The BELDS products and activities will contribute new knowledge and evidence on system actions that accelerate the overall pace of progress of bringing early learning to scale – identifying how system change happens and potential reasons why it doesn't happen. Knowledge products and workshops will build a platform for policy dialogue and serve to engage and energize partners on knowledge and good practices to addressing ECCE challenges.

**Activity #1**
**Develop policy and knowledge products on systems approaches to ECCE**
Knowledge products will be a core component of BELDS, and will be made available through GPE webpages with interactive visualizations, in order to provide an accessible and transparent way to see progress that countries are making in scaling up early childhood care and education. This will include updated lists of countries, allocations, coordinating/supervising entities, and timelines for education sector plans and projects. Knowledge products will contribute to public dialogue and knowledge on system actions that accelerate the overall pace of progress in scaling up early childhood education - and provide a platform for developing county partners to build on. Example activities are listed in Panel 1.

**Activity #2**
**Regional and cross-national workshops related to knowledge sharing and good practice of systems approaches to ECCE**
GPE will convene a series of regional and global workshops (including virtual participation) to bring together stakeholders facing similar challenges in early care and childhood education, accelerate knowledge-sharing, good practice and mutual problem-solving, and facilitate the sharing of relevant resources and common tools to support ECCE policy sector analysis and planning (e.g., costing, monitoring and assessment tools, evidence-based programs). GPE workshops provide highly valued spaces for peer exchange between South-South and South-North-South partnerships – and in this case, will create country-generated views of the challenges facing partners related to ECCE policy planning and potential solutions.

**Panel 1.** Proposed BELDS knowledge products on systems approaches to ECCE

1. **Mapping of ECCE components in education sector plans and GPE grants.** A mapping of ECCE activities that have been funded by GPE since 2002 will provide evidence on developing and implementing education sector plans that focus on ECCE – for example, the ways that indicators are set, financing and management, workforce development, and innovations produced. It will also be possible to access financial data to see who is contributing to a country's education financing and if a country is meeting its own goals, such as improving enrollments in pre-primary education.

2. **Process tracing ECCE from policy planning to implementation.** Tracking where ECCE activities have not been sustained in the policy process from policy dialogue, leading to sector analysis and planning, to sector plan development, to inclusion in a GPE grant. The exercise will be used to identify possible reasons why fail education sector plans that focus on ECCE sometime fail to translate into far-reaching policy reform.

3. **Case studies.** Case studies will be developed with national researchers from at least three developing partner countries (success case, difficult context case, unsuccessful case), in order to develop country-generated views of key challenges and successes in the area of scaling up early childhood education within education systems.

**Activity #3**
**Strengthening education sector planning**
The cohort would be highly collaborative and building what exists in each country and drawing from global expertise on how to build better education systems that include a sufficient focus on quality early childhood care and education. Developing country partners will have the opportunity to engage in knowledge and best practice activities (knowledge and good practice workshops, peer exchange) to support the development of education sector plans. GPE will facilitate the sharing of relevant

knowledge products, resources and tools for the BELDS cohort to use for policy planning and implementation. BELDS will leverage on GPE's business model to support the inclusion of early childhood education in sector planning and development. It will also support the process of crowding in domestic and other sources of finance to ensure that early childhood education is better resourced.

**Activity #4**
**Building inclusive dialogue**
A key area of GPE's work is promoting more inclusive dialogue by supporting LEGS and the engagement of civil society, teachers' organizations and others. It is recognized that ECCE government staff are rarely at the table for LEG meetings. The BELDS initiative will promote participation of ECCE government staff and stakeholders in education sector policy dialogue. The BELDS cohort will be linked to a global network to allow for experiences and lessons shared among regional and national stakeholders, contributing to a global knowledge bank of effective approaches and conditions that facilitate systems approaches to early childhood education. The iterative processes between knowledge and best practice exchange, combined with technical and financial support in the policy planning stage, will inform policy dialogue and help to identify local innovations that hold promise but require additional technical support, funding or capacity building to bring to scale.

**Activity #5**
**Small-scale grants**
The BELDS cohort would receive small grants and corresponding technical assistance to support the inclusion of early childhood education in sector analysis and planning. Funds could be used for the generation and analysis of data and research on equity and learning outcomes, such as disaggregating existing data to better capture ECCE services for underserved areas and populations (poor, the rural, children with disabilities, girls).

## *5. Impact and monitoring*

A range of indicators will be developed to assess progress against key outputs of each activity. These will be established following decisions on how many countries would comprise the cohort and what activities will be implemented in each.

| Key outputs | Indicators |
|---|---|
| Convene and build knowledge and good practice exchange on how to strengthen early childhood education within national education systems in order to improve learning and equity. | **Indicator #1:** Increase in the number of policy and knowledge products developed and disseminated that focus on a systems approach to early childhood education. |
| | **Indicator #2:** Increase in the proportion of developing country partners involved in workshops or other events supported by GPE that are related to knowledge and good practice exchange in the area of early childhood education. |
| Strengthen capacity of developing country partners to plan and implement nationally owned education sector plans that include sufficient focus on early childhood education. | **Indicator #3:** Proportion of ESPs/TEPs that have an early childhood education strategy meeting minimum standards. |
| | **Indicator #4:** Proportion of grants supporting early childhood education, out of the total planned. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Promote inclusive and evidence-based national policy dialogue on early childhood education. | **Indicator #5:**<br>Proportion of DCPs: (i) organizing Joint Sector Reviews (JSR); (ii) sharing JSR reports with GPE, with a focus on early childhood education. |
| Strengthen global and cross-national commitment to effective and efficient financing for early childhood education. | Increase in the number of collaborative initiatives undertaken with Partners and other external agencies to strengthen commitment and financing for early childhood education. |

## 6. *Indicative Project Budget*

This indicative budget below assumes that total funding of around $ 2 million is raised for use over FY 17 to FY 18. The budget includes the costs of one full time staff member who will focus on project management, technical work, and grant management of all activities. Additional support fro the initiative will include 25% time of one Education Specialist and 15% time from the Senior Specialist, Equity, Gender Equality and Inclusion.

| **Activity** | **Cost FY17** | **Cost FY18** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Develop policy and knowledge products on ECCE at scale. | ~$90,000 | ~$90,000 |
| 2. Regional and cross-national workshops related to knowledge sharing and good practice of ECCE at scale. | ~$225,000 | ~$225,000 |
| 3. Support education sector planning. | ~$150, 000 | ~$150, 000 |
| 4. Build inclusive dialogue. | ~$75000 | ~$75,000 |
| 5. Small scale grants. | ~$280,000 | ~$280,000 |
| 6. Staff time (1 FTE, inclusive of benefits) | ~$180,000 | ~$180,000 |
| Sub-total | $1,000,000 | $1,000,,000 |
| **TOTAL** | ~$2, 000, 000 | |

## 7. *Implementation partners and program management*

With its focus on systems and inclusive policy dialogue, the initiative will collaborate and complement the activities of the Early Learning Partnership at the World Bank and the recently announced UNICEF/World Bank Early Childhood Development Alliance, in addition to work of other non-governmental organizations and foundations. Its contribution to both initiatives would be through its focus on improving the education sector analysis, planning, and information systems needed to inform improvements at scale in ECCE. A specific request to the Board will be for permission from the Board to hire one specialist to support BELDS at the Secretariat, funded through targeted financing for the initiative

Given the strong complementary role that the Early Learning Partnership (ELP) will play with BELDS, efforts will be made to ensure that both initiatives focus on their comparative advantage while ensuring coordination, for the benefit or all GPE member countries. For BELDS that advantage would be working with countries outside of ELP's mandate (for example, countries that do not have

the World Bank as Grant Agent), reaching countries at a systems level to the poorest countries and fragile and conflict-affected regions. BELDS will also take a systems approach, using GPE's various entry points to countries' policy and operational sector work. GPE can also offer to raise attention to the issue in ways that may bring a wider array of funders to the table to support the sector plans in the ECCE area. The Early Learning Partnership might also provide top-up funding, similar to the role that German Back-Up Initiative has played with GPE.

The initiative will be carried out in partnership with government and development partners, building wherever possible on technical strengths from across the partnership. Selected activities will aim to amplify (not duplicate) the mandate and initiative of others, while focusing on GPE's comparative advantage as a partnership that brings members together to support improved planning, policy dialogue and financing at the country level.

Consultations with main ECCE actors (including but not limited to foundations, private providers, multilaterals) will take place every quarter, convened by the BELDS manager and GPE Secretariat CTO to inform on upcoming activities and seek guidance on where these actors can provide technical or additional financial support. BELDS will heavily rely on the experience and knowledge generated by these actors and will seek to connect countries needs to existing and successful ECCE initiatives.

## *8. Sources of funding*

A number of foundations have expressed initial interest in providing seed money to the GPE Secretariat to support a systems approach to ECCE through the Partnership's country work. Startup funding for this initiative will primarily be sought from Foundations. Depending on initial findings from the pilot, the program may add additional components or be brought to scale with funding from bilateral donors. $2-3 million is estimated for Phase 1.

Four foundations – OSF, Comic Relief, Dubai Cares and the Hilton Foundation, have indicated an in principle interest in providing up to $2 million for two years to support the start of the BELDS Initiative. Given GPE's experience in leveraging large funds for education and after the first 2 pilot years of BELDS, GPE will be in a position to attract funds from additional donors to support the sector plans in the ECCE area.

## ANNEX 3 – ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING CONCEPT NOTE

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
Knowledge and Good Practice Exchange Concept Note template

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Name** | Assessment for Learning (A4L) |
| **Geographic scope** | Country-level and cross-national/global |
| **Duration** | Phase 1 - 24 months (2 years) |
| **Objectives** | 1. Convene and develop **knowledge and good practice exchange** on how to strengthen national learning assessment systems in order to improve learning and equity.<br>2. Strengthen capacity of developing country partners to **develop sound national learning assessment strategies**.<br>3. Promote **inclusive and evidence-based national policy dialogue** on learning outcomes.<br>4. Strengthen **global and cross-national commitment to learning outcomes measurement**. |
| **Expected outcomes and impact** | Increase national capacity to develop sound national learning assessment systems and engage in effective policy dialogue based on learning outcomes<br>➢ Proportion of development country partners (DCPs) showing improvement on learning outcomes at the primary level (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #1).<br>➢ Proportion of DCPs with a learning assessment system within the basic education cycle that meets quality standards (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #15)<br>➢ Proportion of grants supporting EMIS/learning assessment systems (GPE Strategic Plan Indicator #20) |

### *1. Problem Statement*

The world is facing a learning crisis. According to the Global Monitoring Report of UNESCO, **250 million children have not learned basic numeracy and literacy skills**, even though half of them have spent at least four years in school[14]. As a result, there is a shift in emphasis at the global level from access to education to access *and* learning symbolized by the Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning."

At the heart of the challenge of improving learning, particularly in developing countries, is the measurement of learning. At the classroom level, measuring learning is critical to the learning process and at the core of teaching practice. At the system level, it is also crucial to measure learning

[14] EFA Global Monitoring Report Team. (2012). *2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work.* Paris, France: UNESCO. Retrieved from http://en.unesco.org/gemreport/report/2012/youth-and-skills-putting-education-work#sthash.LAUYHt4L.dpbs.

in order to inform policy-making and monitor its results, thereby ensuring appropriate resource allocation and equity of learning among schools, regions and population groups. In short, **measuring learning is key to improving it.**

However, it is possible to measure learning without improving learning, as illustrated by a high number of countries with persistently poor results in international assessments. In order to be powerful and effective, the **results must be used at classroom, school, and system levels to improve learning.** This is why national learning assessment systems[15] that ensure that results are used to inform policies and practices are critical for improving learning and thereby achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. However, the **current capacity of national learning assessment systems in the majority of developing countries is far from where it needs to be** to address the learning crisis[16]. Moreover, the availability and use of learning data to inform policy and practice remains a challenge[17].

## 2. *Strategic Response*

Given the critical role of national learning assessment systems in improving learning and the limited capacity in developing countries, there is a **need for a global platform to scale up support in a coherent and consistent way** in order to strengthen national learning assessment systems in developing countries. Support must be coordinated to deliver the level of capacity-building required to meet the needs of national learning assessment systems; improve the use of learning data to inform educational policies, teacher training, and classroom practices; increase the availability of learning data at country, regional, and global levels; and maximize synergies of global efforts. The Assessment for Learning (A4L) platform concept has been developed to meet these needs. A concept note for the A4L platform[18] was developed and refined through collaborative discussions and numerous consultations with representatives from 81 organizations and 71 countries[19].

The Assessment for Learning (A4L) platform concept **originated from the Learning Metrics Task Force** led by Brookings and UIS[20] to respond to the global need to improve learning and its measurement. The A4L platform has also been strongly influenced by the SDG agenda and the global architecture that will deliver on it, positioning itself to play a unique and critical role in supporting the monitoring progress and contributing to the realization of SDG4.

The A4L platform is fully aligned with the GPE 2020 Strategy and operating model. It would facilitate the achievement of all three of the Global Partnership's goals in the following manner:

- **A4L would improve learning outcomes** (goal #1) by empowering countries to regularly collect and analyze learning data to monitor progress and inform policies, teacher training and teacher practices.

[15] A national assessment system can be defined as "a group of policies, structures, practices, and tools for generating and using information on student learning and achievement" (Clarke, 2012).

[16] An analysis completed in August 2015 using publically available data and led by the GPE Secretariat found that out of its 60 member countries, only 2 have "established" learning assessment systems, 15 were rated as "under development," and the remainder need significant support to even begin the process.

[17] As shown by a recent study carried out by GPE Secretariat, this is not only due to lack of data, but also to the fact that when evidence was available, it was not systematically used to inform policy decisions.

[18] See here.

[19] Including presentations at the GPE Pre-Board Constituency Meetings in Dubai and Dakar in May 2015, and at the Strategy and Policy Committee meetings in April 2015 and April 2016.

[20] For further information on the link between A4L and the Global Alliance for Learning see http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/are-children-learning-two-initiatives-monitor-and-help-achieve-sdg-4

- **A4L would enhance equity** (goal #2) through its emphasis on disaggregating learning data to capture information on marginalized populations and combining learning data with contextual factors affecting learning. This information would allow a better understanding of who is not learning and why, enabling necessary corrections and an optimal allocation of resources to foster equitable learning.

- **A4L would build capacity at the system level** (goal #3) to strenthen national learning assessment systems. A4L will work with Ministries of Education and their partners to conduct a diagnostic of the current learning assessment system, develop a strategy that addresses identified weaknesses, and support the implementation of the strategy. Building institutional capacity to strengthen continuous assessment, administer assessments, analyze, and use results in a way that improves learning equitably is at the core of its efforts.

The A4L platform is also seamlessly aligned with the three key elements of GPE's country focused operational model.

- **A4L would strengthen sector planning by reinforcing the focus of learning in the national planning process (strategic objective #1).** Through its evidence-based approach that is integrated in the policy process, A4L will contribute to the robustness of education plans and their effective implementation in the critical areas of learning and equity. It will significantly improve the monitoring of learning outcomes during the plan's implementation.

- **A4L would promote government led, inclusive, and effective policy dialogue and monitoring (strategic objective #2)** by increasing the availability and transparency of learning data, and strengthening mechanisms to link the data to policy processes. The availability of learning data would also improve civil society organizations' capacity to monitor the sector and participate in the policy dialogue, leveraging social accountability mechanisms to enhance the delivery of results.

- **A4L would support countries to implement the GPE funding model (strategic objective #3)** by helping countries meet the funding model requirement to have a strong learning assessment system strategy. **A4L would also help inform countries how best to use GPE funding to leverage results** by facilitating the availability of data on learning outcomes, a key measure of the performance of the education system, leading to greater value for money. The availability of learning outcomes data will also **impact the selection of national targets for the variable tranche of GPE financing** by enabling countries to use strong indicators for results based financing.

## *3. Current GPE investments*

Although GPE already invests in the area of learning assessments, at the moment there is no systematic approach to its investments. There are currently 12 ESPIG grants with learning assessment components that range from establishing a learning assessment system to developing an

assessment policy or framework[21]. It reflects a growing demand from GPE developing country partners.

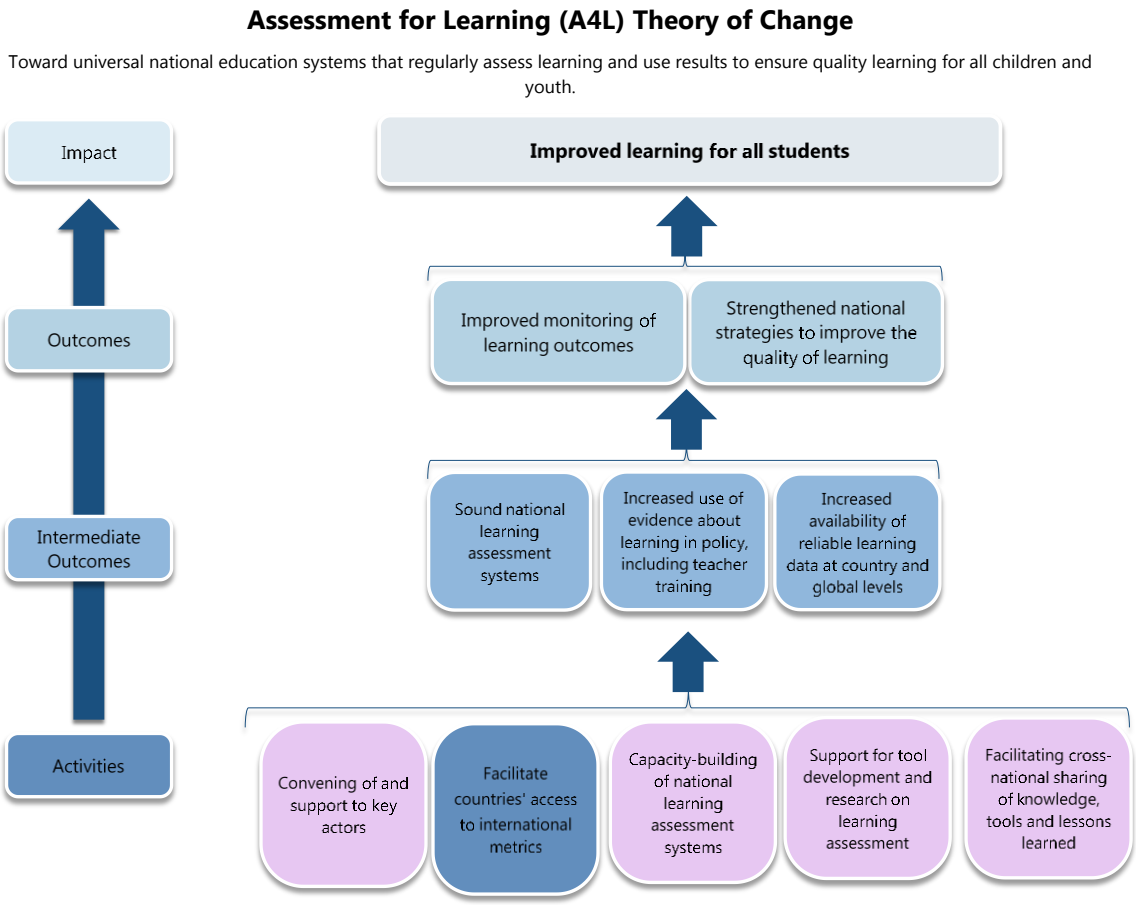
Under the GRA program, there have been three investments in the area of learning assessments. The Reading Assessment project, managed by UIS, has developed a catalogue of learning assessments in GPE member countries. The Pacific Early Grade Readiness and Learning (PEARL) program managed by the World Bank has conducted research, piloted interventions, built national capacity, and convened regional meetings, workshops, and conferences to support the measurement of early childhood outcomes, school readiness and early grade reading in Pacific Island countries. Lastly, the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP) managed by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education has produced a regional mapping exercise on existing learning assessments as well as a systematic review on the impact of large-scale learning assessment on policy and practices in the Asia-Pacific. It has also created a knowledge portal for assessment literature and held workshops to build capacity for data analysis and evidence-based policy-making.

## *4. Planned Activities*

Four activities have been selected from the A4L platform proposal and are considered for implementation over the next 24 months[22]. In the diagram of A4L theory of change below, the areas where the activities were selected are in pink. However, the activities proposed do not cover the full spectrum of activities considered in the platform in each area. They constitute the essential building blocks of the platform that are necessary to be in place before the platform can be rolled out or will provide continuous support to ongoing activities in which GPE is investing. The proposed activities make up Phase 1 of A4L and are elaborated on the next page.

[21] Learning assessment components can be found in the ESPIG grants of the following countries: Benin, Cameroon, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, Sudan, and Togo.

[22] For more information on the full A4L platform, please refer to the A4L concept note.




Source: A4L concept note

**Activity 1: Development and piloting of a diagnostic tool for learning assessment systems**

This tool would support a diagnostic of existing national learning assessment systems that would be used to develop an evidence-based capacity building strategy. The diagnostic would cover all of the three main types of assessment**: continuous assessments, examinations, and large scale assessments**, aiming to ensure a robust feedback loop among the three. It would also assess the capacity of the learning assessment system as well as its cohesion and alignment with other components of the educational system, from curricula and textbooks to policy and pedagogy.

The diagnostic tool would draw from various resources and build on existing diagnostic frameworks, such as the SABER Student Assessment framework, with additional components like on continuous assessments. Development of the tool would require roughly 12 months of technical work. A first step would be to establish a technical reference group with experts from partner organizations and academia to guide the work. A second step would be to contract a few experts on learning assessments, with particular experience in continuous assessments, to lead the development of the tool in consultation with the technical reference group. The diagnostic tool would thus draw from the expertise of various partners and be subject to strong external validation. The coordination, management, and development of the work would be supported by the Learning Specialist at the GPE Secretariat.

The tool would be piloted in two GPE member countries through the GPE country process. Selected countries would need to express interest, ideally represent different contexts, and be at the first stage

of development of their education plan, in order to align to national processes. The diagnostic on learning assessment systems would be incorporated into the ESPDG process, with the results feeding into the development of the country's education sector strategy enabling the country to meet the funding model requirements on learning assessment systems. After the tool has been piloted in the two countries, the diagnostic tool and its implementation process will be finalized by incorporating feedback and lessons learnt for its improvement.

**Activity 2: Support to the implementation of diagnostics of national learning assessment systems**

Once the diagnostic tool is developed, small country grants (USD 50 to 200 000[23]) would be made available for countries to support a national diagnostic of existing assessment systems and needs, including analysis of the assessments themselves, assessment priorities for the purposes of policy use, and the subsequent development of a strategy for strengthening national learning assessment systems. These grants will be part of the Education Sector Plan Development Grant[24] (ESPDG) process to reduce transaction costs but also ensure alignment with the national sector planning cycle.

The diagnostic would cover all of the three main types of assessment: it would focus on classroom assessments, examinations and large-scale system-level assessments, and aim at ensuring a robust feedback loop among these. Formative and summative assessments can support and reinforce one another, as each provides teachers with a complementary perspective on student learning, gaps, and equity issues. In addition, it would assess the capacity of the learning assessment system as well as its cohesion and alignment with other components of the educational system, from curricula, textbooks, teacher training to policy and pedagogy.

This diagnostic would lead to the development of a robust strategy for strengthening the learning assessment system. This strategy would be a practical roadmap, and must include an action plan. It would address the key challenges identified by the diagnostic, and must be sound, relevant, coherent, and sustainable.[25]

**Activity 3: Support to the development of new assessment tools**

This support would be offered for the development of new assessment tools, particularly those that aim to support SDG 4 monitoring but also new areas such as Breadth of Learning indicator. As an illustration, two initiatives could be already considered:

- **The Global Alliance for Monitoring Learning (GAML)** is a new initiative that brings together national education authorities, assessment agencies, citizen-led initiatives and the international education community to ensure that countries have the high-quality data needed to improve the learning outcomes of all and to track progress on SDG4 globally[26]. Led by UIS, its mission is to find the most cost-effective way to link different assessment initiatives already underway to develop a set of global metrics that can be used to monitor progress across countries. To this end, its first priority will be to develop an internationally-comparable measure of reading and mathematics to monitor learning outcomes at the end of primary and lower secondary education. GAML and A4L have been developed in a cordinated fashion to tackle both global and national challenges[27].

[23] The size of the grant will depend on the size of the country and the complexity of the education system (e.g. federal States).
[24] As a top up of ESPDG.
[25] See J.M. Bernard and T. de Chaisemartin. (2015). "Education Sector Planning in Developing Countries: An Analysis of 42 Education Plans." Paper presented at the 13th UKFIET Conference on Education and Development, Oxford, UK.
[26] GAML's first meeting took place on May 11, 2016. For more information on the initiative see: http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/are-children-learning-two-initiatives-monitor-and-help-achieve-sdg-

[27] For more information see: http://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/are-children-learning-two-initiatives-monitor-and-help-achieve-sdg-4

- **Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes Project (MELQO)** aims to assess child development and learning upon entry into primary school as well as the quality of learning environments in early childhood education through a set of items and common constructs that are conceptually linked, open source, and can be used across countries. MELQO is co-led by UNICEF, World Bank, Brookings CUE, and UNESCO and is well positioned to inform monitoring of SDG2. To date, they have developed two sets of tools which are being further refined and revised through pilots in Tanzania and Nicaragua.

Initiatives supported through A4L would follow a partnership approach and involve key stakeholders working in assessment to ensure synergy and avoid duplication of efforts. Any tool developed with A4L financing would be placed in the public domain, with the proper safeguards to ensure its reliability.

**Activity 4: Support to regional assessment networks**

This support would be offered to two regional assessment networks, maintaining GPE support to important ongoing activities. At the final meeting of the LMTF it was decided that regional assessment networks, which have been fruitful mechanisms to engage the learning assessment community, would carry on the work of the group. This would include further development of existing organizations such as the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), which receives GPE support through the GRAs that are coming to a close, and the establishment of new regional assessment networks such as the Network for African Learning Assessment (NALA) which will be hosted by ADEA.

- **NEQMAP** is a membership network, currently composed of 35 member institutions from 21 countries, with the aim of enhancing the use of assessments with a focus on research, knowledge sharing, and capacity development. It is working to ensure assessment results impact on policy and practice and has conducted regional mapping studies, created a knowledge portal for assessment literature, and held workshops to build capacity for data analysis and evidence-based policy-making. Reflecting on its experince, NEQMAP sees the tremendous of advantage of working through a regional organization to harness networks, reach out to individual countries, and be able to convene and engage the diverse group of stakeholders in the learning assessment landscape.

- **NALA** is a regional assessment network currently being set up by ADEA that will sustain the momentum and collaboration around learning assessments in Africa. It originated from a recommendation from the LMTF that there was a need for cooperation between key actors at the global, regional, and country level. NALA will be aligned with the global 2030 SDGs, through Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025. ADEA will launch a workshop on the development of NALA's strategy, action plan, and terms of reference in Dakar, Senegal in mid-2016.

Together, these three activities will:

i. **Lay the foundation for the country level work of the A4L platform,** which aims to strengthen national assessment systems to ultimately improve learning for all students.
ii. **Promote global public goods to monitor progress on SDG4** by advancing work on key assessment tools and common metrics that can be made accessible to even the poorest countries.
iii. **Foster knowledge exchange and capacity building** through continued support to the regional assessment network in Asia-Pacific and establishment of a similar network in Africa.

## 5. *Results and monitoring*

The following are the expected results of the A4L Phase 1 activities:

- Diagnostic tool for learning assessments, guidelines for its use, and operationalization through GPE country processes produced and piloted in two countries;
- Technical diagnostic reports of the learning assessment systems in the two selected pilot countries produced and national capacity built in the process. Results of the diagnosis would be used to develop robust national strategies to improve learning, assist the country in meeting the funding model requirement, and lead to stronger indicators for the variable tranche of GPE funding;
- Diagnostic tool implemented in other interested countries to inform the development of learning assessment strategies;
- Advance the development of innovative assessment tools critical to monitor progress on SDG4, as they will increase the availability and comparability of broad and reliable data at country and global levels;
- Capacity building and knowledge sharing in participating Asia-Pacific and African countries through the regional learning assessment networks.

## 6. *Project Budget*

| **Activity** | **Cost FY17** | **Cost FY18** |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Development and pilot of a diagnostic tool | $400,000 | |
| 2. Learning Assessment Strategy Development Grant | - | $500 000-1,000,000 |
| 3. Support to assessment tools development and pilot[28] | $500,000-1,000,000 | $500,000-1,000,000 |
| 4. Support to regional assessment networks | $400,000 | $400,000 |
| | $1,300,000-$1,800,000 | $1400,000-$2,400,000 |
| **TOTAL** | $2,700,000-$4,200,000 | |

The Secretariat will provide the time of 2 technical staff, the Learning specialist and an Education specialist, who will dedicate 50% and 30% of the time to A4L Phase 1 activities respectively. Time will be used for project management, technical work, and grant management for support given to assessment tools and regional assessment networks. An additional position will be needed to implement Phase 1 activities.

## 7. *Implementation partners and program management*

The A4L Phase 1 activities will have a dedicated project manager at the Secretariat. The current Learning specialist at the Secretariat will oversee the technical work required as well and manage the initiative to ensure a successful implementation that is timely and efficient. An implementation roadmap for the A4L Phase 1 activities will be developed to plan individual tasks and monitor progress of the activities. The project manager will also benefit from the support of a second education specialist to support the coordination of the work.

[28] The level of funding will depend on the availability of funds. The objective is to finance at least two initiative.

The implementation of the A4L Phase 1 activities will involve other organizations in two regards, those that will contribute to the development of the diagnostic tool, and those that will be supported directly or indirectly by A4L for their activities. The A4L diagnostic tool would seek close collaboration with the World Bank, UIS, Brookings, the Australian Council for Education Research, UNICEF, IIEP, DFID, and USAID, as they have supported important work in the area of learning assessment. Implementing partners that will receive support through A4L Phase 1 activities could include MELQO, GAML, NEQMAP, and NALA. The collaboration with UIS is essential for the success of A4L Phase 1.

## *8. Sources of funding*

Several donors have expressed interest in the A4L platform, including Foundations. Firm commitments have not yet been made but the Secretariat assessment of the potential level of funding for the period is between 2 and 5 million USD.