High-level forums—from Monterrey in 2002 to Busan in 2011—have affirmed development partner commitments to the effective use of aid. Across these gatherings, participants recognized the adverse impacts of uncoordinated aid in terms of duplicated and fragmented efforts. Bi- and multilateral agencies, development banks and global funds also acknowledged the impacts of weak coordination on governments’ capacities to absorb aid and deliver at scale. Partner approaches (including through the work of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, or GPEDC) favor alignment with national policies and systems, streamlining procedures and transitioning from donor-driven dialogue to country-owned coordination. In the education sector, partners work alongside governments through local education groups (or the equivalent) to support national priorities, understand bottlenecks and manage the growing complexity in the development landscape.

**WHAT DO YOU A DEVELOPMENT PARTNER GAIN THROUGH COORDINATED ACTION?**

Information that flows to all partners for more strategic targeting of aid

Your interactions with government, teacher organizations, civil society organizations and foundations benefit from information sharing, collaboration and partnership building.

Regular participation in sector dialogue further enables you to

- Engage in constructive dialogue around current sector policies, budgets and programming, and build consensus around future plans, priority reform areas and investment needs;
Identify areas where you might support system transformation and benefit from more relevant, aligned and harmonized programming through pooled funding, complementing partner actions or sharing resources, or entering into cooperation or partnership arrangements; and

Incentivize broader investments and revenue streams (for instance, through innovative financing mechanisms such as catalytic funding, impact investing and multiplier grants) to improve learning outcomes for girls and boys, students with learning difficulties, remote and displaced populations and other learner groups affected by complex challenges.

**A better grasp of the political economy as the basis for aid effectiveness**

With newer actors now at work in the education space, and more diverse funding modalities, you can keep abreast of changes in partner dynamics within the policy environment insofar as they affect cooperation modalities.

Regular coordination enables you to

- Understand government motivations behind shifts in education policy focus and approach, as well as the impacts of public administration, local government and civil service reforms;
- Appreciate areas where government, private sector, nonstate and development partner interests now intersect more closely, and the potential for smart partnerships and cross-sector collaboration;
- Assess how different actors perceive policy change (in terms of risks, threats and benefits) to identify points of resistance and overcome bottlenecks to collaboration; and
- Listen to the perspectives of constituencies representing the most vulnerable population groups and understand how far their needs are reflected in current policy instruments and partnership dynamics.

**More effective alignment of financial aid, reporting and accountabilities**

Concerted dialogue on technical cooperation and development effectiveness can also lead to less aid fragmentation and more robust public financial management, including in crisis-affected education landscapes, thereby enhancing system capacities and resilience.

Dialogue with stakeholders across the education community enables you to

- Discuss how external financing, programming approaches and technical support could be aligned more coherently across country systems, institutions, procedures and human resources as part of system strengthening, and in consideration of countries’ absorption capacities;
- Understand suitable options for aid alignment—from on-budget cofunded projects or pooled funding to earmarked budget support; and
- Reinforce trust, and contribute to greater transparency around development actions, through discussions about your financial and operational reporting, and involvement in joint reviews of progress toward mutually agreed commitments, as well as results-based financing.

**Insights and learning for evolving development cooperation**

In countries with rapidly changing policy environments, or those moving toward decentralized education management and service delivery, you can play an influential role in adapting and monitoring the modalities for development cooperation.

Inclusive discussions can generate new insights, learning and renewed commitments around

- How to optimize the benefits of (or offset potential trade-offs to) coordination for emergent nonstate actors, especially where newer partners might see coordination as a distraction from their engagement in more dynamic or innovative programming at the local level;

“Education sector coordination is a key component of effective education systems. It ensures that resources are allocated equitably and efficiently, policies are coherent and consistent, and all actors are working together to achieve common objectives.”

*Education Commission*
Joint measures to improve the quality and efficiency of education dialogue are helping development partners to better respond to sector challenges.

Dialogue between development partners within the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), which includes six focal groups covering specific subsectors, planning, finance, monitoring and evaluation, and research, has benefited from a shift from project-based dialogue to more dedicated consultations around policies, budgets and priority reforms of the Ministry of Education and Sport. This shift has enabled development partners to better understand key sector challenges and priorities, such as specific issues related to teacher budget allocations and deployment at the subnational level, and to align their support more closely to national priorities.

The quality of dialogue within the ESWG on priority themes has further benefited from joint preparation of a dedicated annual agenda and workplan, and enhanced communication between the Ministries of Finance, Investment, Home Affairs and Health on the types of integrated financing and capacity support needed for critical reform areas. These developments were all important steps in the planning and implementation of the Sector Reform Contract (initiated in 2018) and the Basic Education Support Program which provides support to education management at provincial and district levels, data management and analysis, and pedagogical mentoring and support to primary and lower-secondary teachers.

**WHY DO DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS MATTER IN DIALOGUE AROUND TRANSFORMING EDUCATION?**

- You recognize the value of policy innovations and doing things differently, especially where actions have catalytic potential to accelerate progress toward education goals and address stubborn bottlenecks.
- You provide seed funding to system transformation through major funding windows and through the trialing and scaling of localized innovations in education pedagogies, delivery modalities and governance, including through smart partnerships with nontraditional partners and across sectors.
- Your sharing of data, evidence and programming information contributes to more nuanced policy design and the strengthening of reporting and monitoring arrangements.
- You lead by example when applying international norms around effective development aid, particularly when you reduce fragmentation by aligning your funding, resources and capacities to government priorities and country systems, and encourage other actors to do the same.
- Your leadership also supports more regular and effective stakeholder engagement in joint monitoring and sector reviews, especially where monitoring
MOZAMBIQUE

Development partners’ coordination around the pooled Education Sector Development Fund (FASE) has been key to increasing the efficiency of education sector budgets and alignment of partner assistance over the past two decades. FASE functions as both a financing and a sector coordination instrument, ruled by a memorandum of understanding between nine partners and the Ministry of Education. Education partners coordinate their support to the fund through a variety of dialogue structures, specifically the high-level joint coordination group (restricted to immediate financing partners), the broader local education group and technical working groups. Through FASE, Mozambique has benefited from strengthened education management and governance, beginning with the harmonization and alignment of partner financing behind national priorities and the mobilization of additional support from FASE financing partners and other education stakeholders, including civil society organizations. FASE has also supported increased efficiency by reducing time and energy spent in managing administrative processes and minimizing the duplication of financial reporting and audits.

The development of the Strategic Education Plan for 2020–2029 provided an opportunity to undertake an evaluation of FASE in 2020, to collectively learn and to identify key strengths and core challenges, resulting in the renewed FASE Memorandum of Understanding in 2021. This also included the assessment of dialogue structures, streamlined and refined in the Terms of Reference for Policy Cycle and Dialogue System (MoU Annex). Development partners continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Education to adapt coordination practices, including scoping how to use grants (such as the GPE-funding) to tackle the main shortcomings identified and to improve the country’s capacity to implement and operationalize the Strategic Education Plan through the Fund.

Involves collective learning and adaptation as part of an iterative process of systems transformation.

Your support for inclusive sector dialogue spaces enables all education stakeholders to be heard, especially civil society organizations, and the resources you mobilize to support coordination lay the critical building blocks for countries’ own coordination capacities and institutional strengthening.

“Coordinated approaches to education financing can be more effective in ensuring that resources are targeted towards those most in need and that progress towards education goals is measured and tracked. Coordinating with other donors, governments, and civil society can help to maximize the impact of investments and reduce duplication of effort.”

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

ADDITIONAL READINGS:

- Working in partnership to create lasting change. GPE. July 25, 2022.
- Aligning aid for education with national systems: Supporting system transformation and better education outcomes. GPE. November 11, 2021.
- Principles Toward Effective Local Education Groups. GPE. February 2020.
- Making development co-operation more effective: How development partners are promoting effective, country-led partnerships. OECD and UNDP. 2019.

Also see the “Bilateral and multilateral organizations” page on “Partners Portal” to better understand GPE’s and development partners’ roles and responsibilities in the partnership.

OTHER BRIEFS IN THE SAME SERIES:

Ministries of education
Civil society organizations
Humanitarian actors
Teacher organizations
Private sector
Private foundations