

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Global Partnership for Education is a global fund and partnership that was formed to address educational challenges in some of the world's most demanding contexts. The partnership brings together developing country partners, donor nations, multilateral development organizations, civil society, teacher organizations, foundations and the private sector around a single shared vision: to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all.

This year's results report is the first in a series that will document progress on GPE 2020, the partnership's strategic plan, adopted in December 2015. The report will be used to help guide the partnership and drive our common focus on achieving strong educational results for children and youth in developing country partners.

The results report is structured around the three goals and five strategic objectives of GPE 2020, organized at the impact, outcome, country-level output and global-level output levels, as captured in the partnership's theory of change. Each strategic goal and objective is linked to a set of indicators—37 in all—with ambitious milestones and targets for 2020. The report also includes descriptive and financial data about GPE funding and its grant portfolio (for details see Appendix A and B). A summary of findings for the 37 indicators, coded using a traffic light system, is presented at the end of this report.¹

This report looks at 2015 and 2016—the baseline and first years of GPE 2020. Its main messages are focused on highlighting the progress made during 2016, the first year of our results framework and identifying the challenges facing the partnership at the starting point of our new strategy. The report highlights continued progress in educational outcomes and the strengthening of education system capacity across the partnership. Overall, the partnership fully or partly achieved milestones in 16 out of a total of 19 indicators for which 2016 intermediate targets were set. Some of the partnership's strongest initial results are in the areas of domestic resource mobilization and improvements in pupil-trained teacher ratios. Milestones were not met in three areas: (1) pre-primary enrollment ratios, (2) gender parity in the proportion of children out of school, and (3) alignment of GPE grants with national systems.

THIS YEAR'S RESULTS REPORT IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES THAT WILL DOCUMENT PROGRESS ON GPE 2020, THE PARTNERSHIP'S STRATEGIC PLAN, ADOPTED IN DECEMBER 2015.

¹ Overall results for each indicator are represented as green (fully met); yellow (partially met); red (not met); or white (baseline). Indicator milestones are reflected as partially met if milestones for one educational level (e.g. primary) were achieved, but they were not for the other educational level (e.g. lower secondary).

IMPROVED AND MORE EQUITABLE LEARNING OUTCOMES

(Strategic Goal 1 – impact)

GPE FULLY OR PARTLY
ACHIEVED MILESTONES
IN 16 OUT OF 19
INDICATORS FOR WHICH
2016 INTERMEDIATE
TARGETS WERE SET.

The Global Partnership for Education is committed to improving learning outcomes for children and youth across the partnership.

At the starting point of GPE 2020, developing country partners of the Global Partnership for Education are demonstrating that learning outcomes and developmental indicators can improve even in the most difficult circumstances. Thirteen out of 20 developing country partners have shown improvement in learning outcomes, while two-thirds of children between the ages of 3 and 5 were developmentally on track in the 22 countries with available data.

Attesting to the difficult circumstances that many of GPE's partner countries face is the fact that the availability of data is limited. Thus, more needs to be done across the partnership to strengthen the availability of data for monitoring learning and developmental outcomes. Just over a third of developing country partners had trend data that would allow for reporting on the learning outcome or nationally representative data to report on child development indicators.

The partnership will continue to support governments and international efforts to ensure improvements in national assessment and monitoring systems, through financing for learning assessment systems and child development indicators in its implementation grants, and through the knowledge and capacity-building activities funded through the Assessment for Learning (A4L) initiative.

EQUITY, GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

(Strategic Goal 2 – impact)

Highlighting its commitment to equity and inclusion, the Global Partnership for Education tracks progress using seven indicators. In year one of GPE 2020, these indicators presented a mixed picture.

On the one hand, there has been progress in the proportion of children completing school, and many gains in equity across the partnership. The

partnership supported an estimated 13.2 million children in 2016.² Overall, 745,000 more children completed primary school across the partnership in 2014 than in 2013, while 816,000 more completed lower secondary education. Milestones for gender parity in primary and lower secondary completion were met. Furthermore, 22 out of 59 countries with available data saw at least a 10 percent improvement in an equity index of parity in gender, location and household wealth.

However, findings in this report also emphasize the importance of targeting efforts in countries where progress is slow, and an urgent need to pay attention to the equity implications and trade-offs being made when expanding education access across multiple educational levels. Key challenges include the following:

- Pre-primary education: Access is not improving and services are often not available to the poorest and most marginalized children.
- Primary completion rates are below 90 percent in 21 developing country partners.
- Out-of-school rates at the primary level are not declining quickly enough to reach GPE 2020 targets.
- The gender parity rate of out-of-school children deteriorated between 2013 and 2014, with significant disadvantage for girls. This highlights the need to focus on bringing excluded girls into school. Furthermore, concentrated attention is needed in the 18 developing country partners where the gender parity index for completion rates sits below 0.88 at the primary level (and in the 21 countries where it is below 0.88 at the lower secondary level).

745,000 MORE CHILDREN COMPLETED PRIMARY SCHOOL ACROSS THE PARTNERSHIP IN 2014 THAN IN 2013, WHILE 816,000 MORE COMPLETED LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION. HOWEVER, THERE ARE EQUITY IMPLICATIONS AND TRADE-OFFS OF EXPANDED EDUCATION ACCESS AT HIGHER LEVELS.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS

(Strategic Goal 3 – outcome)

A strong start was made in four out of six aspects of system capacity that are tracked at the outcome level under Strategic Goal 3: effective and efficient education systems.

² GPE estimates the number of equivalent children reached using a methodology that can be found at: <http://www.globalpartnership.org/content/results-framework-methodology>.

78% OF DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTNERS WITH AVAILABLE DATA DEVOTED 20% OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE TO EDUCATION OR INCREASED THEIR PUBLIC EXPENDITURE BETWEEN 2014 AND 2015. THEY ALSO EXCEEDED 2016 MILESTONES FOR DATA AVAILABILITY.

Some of the partnership's strongest initial results are in the areas of data and domestic resource mobilization. Seventy-eight percent of developing country partners with available data devoted at least 20 percent of public expenditure to education or increased their public expenditures between 2014 and 2015. Developing country partners exceeded 2016 milestones for data availability, with 26 out of 61 (43 percent) reporting on 10 out of 12 key UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) indicators in 2014, up from 18 (30 percent) in 2013.

However, system efficiency, as measured through dropout and repetition, remains a challenge across the partnership. Fewer than one in three developing country partners (32 percent) had learning assessment systems that met quality standards. Furthermore, the issue of teacher availability and their equitable allocation remains an urgent challenge. Pupil-trained teacher ratios remain low, but are improving—29 percent of developing country partners had ratios at or below 40:1, up from 25 percent in 2013.

STRENGTHENING EDUCATION SECTOR PLANNING

(country level – Strategic Objective 1)

The Global Partnership for Education continues to be the largest international funder of education sector analyses and planning for countries in the developing world, providing US\$8.9 million in funding for 27 education sector plan development grants (ESPDGs) to 29 countries in 2016. Reflecting this, the partnership places credible, evidence-based sector planning as the first of its country-level objectives.

More than half (58 percent) of education sector plans (ESPs) and transitional education plans (TEPs) met the partnership's minimum quality standards in the baseline years of 2014 and 2015. All ESPs analyzed were based on sector analyses, and each addresses inequalities and disparities in the education system. Detailed findings point to several areas for improvement: the need to use evidence more consistently to identify priorities, and to translate priorities into achievable, costed, operational plans.

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE POLICY DIALOGUE AND MONITORING

(country level – Strategic Objective 2)

The Global Partnership for Education supports strengthened engagement of all stakeholders in planning and monitoring the national priorities set out in education sector plans. The results report gives early findings on the quality of two specific mechanisms for education sector engagement and mutual accountability: joint sector reviews (JSRs) and local education groups (LEGs).

Joint sector reviews are government-led annual events that bring stakeholders together to monitor education sector plan implementation and propose course correction. GPE overall milestones for the quality of JSRs were met in 2016. Forty-five percent of JSRs with available data met quality standards, up from 29 percent in 2015. Outcomes were less robust in countries affected by fragility and conflict, where 36 percent met quality standards - not unexpected given the often difficult circumstances in these countries. Areas for improvement include the need for JSRs to draw more thoroughly on evidence and data, and to link recommendations generated from JSRs better to national planning and policy cycles.

Local education groups are multi-stakeholder bodies convened by governments to support financial and technical support for ESPs and ensure inclusive participation in planning and monitoring processes. At baseline, 44 percent of LEGs had participation from both civil society and teacher organizations. The partnership's continued support of civil society engagement through its Civil Society Education Fund and forthcoming GPE research on best practices in local education groups are each aimed at catalyzing improvement in participation and inclusion in LEGs.

GPE OVERALL MILESTONES FOR THE QUALITY OF JOINT SECTOR REVIEWS WERE MET IN 2016. ALSO, AT BASELINE, 44% OF LOCAL EDUCATION GROUPS HAD PARTICIPATION FROM BOTH CIVIL SOCIETY AND TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT FINANCING

(country level – Strategic Objective 3)

GPE 2020 commits the partnership to providing effective financing to provide governments in the implementation of their national education sector plans. The report highlights trends in the volume, geographic and thematic

allocations of the partnership's major grant investments, demonstrating a strong alignment between grant allocations and GPE 2020 goals. It also reports on six indicators used to track the partnership's support for sector plan implementation.

GPE HAS PROVIDED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND DATA SYSTEMS, AND SUCCESSFULLY ROLLED OUT THE NEW RESULTS-BASED FINANCING TRANCHE IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS. BUT, CHALLENGES REMAIN IN THE RISING PROPORTION OF GRANT-IMPLEMENTATION DELAYS.

Findings on objective 3 indicators highlight the significant support provided by GPE grants for learning assessment and data systems, and the successful roll-out of the new results-based financing tranche in the partnership's implementation grants in five developing country partners.

Challenges were identified in two areas: the timely delivery of planned grant components (in particular classroom construction) and the rising proportion of grants that face delays in their implementation. Many of these problems occur in countries affected by fragility and conflict. The partnership has improved its approach to quality assurance and grant oversight to address these challenges, which suggest a need for more realistic grant design and stronger follow-up during implementation.

More broadly, the following trends in the volume, geographic and thematic allocations of the Global Partnership for Education's major grant investments are presented in the report:

- GPE grants are focused on countries with high levels of need. As of June 30, 2016, 54 education sector program implementation grants (ESPIGs) were active in 49 countries with a total value of US\$2.23 billion. Twenty-nine (56 percent) of the 52 developing country partners receiving implementation grants in FY2016 were classified as low-income countries and 23 (44 percent) as lower-middle-income countries. A majority of GPE grantees were countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- The partnership targeted 60 percent (US\$294.5 million) of all its disbursements during 2016 to countries affected by fragility and conflict. Burundi, Chad and Yemen and each used the partnership's mechanisms for rapid and responsive funding in emergencies to receive finance for emergency needs.
- Thematically, GPE grants continue to focus investments on improving teaching and learning systems; enhancing equity and gender equality and inclusion; and improving the management

capacity of systems at the national and subnational levels, as 36 of 54 active grants at the end of 2016 supported the development of learning assessment systems, while 29 grants supported education management information systems and 28 grants included targeted initiatives for gender equality. Finally, 18 grants targeted the needs of children with disability.

MOBILIZE MORE AND BETTER FINANCING

(global level – Strategic Objective 4)

Harnessing the strength of the partnership at the global level to leverage improvements in the quality and volume of financing available for education in low-income and lower-middle-income countries is the Global Partnership for Education's fourth Strategic Objective. Findings from four of the six indicators used to monitor this objective suggest a strong starting point in financing for the partnership.

In the area of raising and diversifying international financing for education—including for the partnership itself—a mixed picture emerges. Overall aid to education has declined between 2013 and 2014, including from GPE donors. The partnership has met its financing milestones, by diversifying its donor group and securing all signed contributions, yet these achievements come against a backdrop of currency exchange weaknesses and ongoing challenges in converting pledges into signed contribution agreements. In response, the partnership has set ambitious targets for its 2018 replenishment, and it has adopted a new financing and funding framework that diversifies its ability to leverage expanded resources for education.

One area where there is a pronounced need for improvement is the alignment of GPE grants to country systems. Such alignment is fundamental for strengthening national capacity and underpins the future sustainability of GPE investments. Less than a third of the implementation grants were adequately aligned to national systems. Thirty-nine percent of GPE grants used co-financing or pooled grant modalities.

AID TO EDUCATION DECLINED BETWEEN 2013 AND 2014. GPE HAS MET ITS FINANCING MILESTONES, YET THIS COMES AGAINST A BACKDROP OF CURRENCY EXCHANGE WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES IN CONVERTING PLEDGES INTO SIGNED AGREEMENTS. IN RESPONSE, GPE ADOPTED A NEW FINANCING AND FUNDING FRAMEWORK, AND SET AMBITIOUS REPLENISHMENT TARGETS FOR 2018.

BUILDING A STRONGER PARTNERSHIP

(global level – Strategic Objective 5)

The fifth objective in GPE 2020 is to strengthen the Global Partnership for Education’s most important asset: the power of partnership. Six indicators are used to monitor partnership outputs and strength.

Findings from these indicators highlight the significant progress the partnership has made at an organizational level. The Secretariat has successfully prioritized country-facing activities in its work-plans and budgets, and the partnership has improved its business processes for quality assurance, risk management and fiduciary oversight. Furthermore, the partnership enhanced its delivery of key knowledge and evaluation products. These improvements in organizational effectiveness were achieved while keeping Secretariat operating expenses at less than 4 percent of total expenditure in FY 2016. For this reason, the United Kingdom, the partnership’s largest donor, awarded the partnership an “A” rating in its 2015 and 2016 annual reviews.

At the same time, an initial survey of developing country-level partners suggests that while there has been improvement in perceived clarity of country-level roles, responsibilities and mutual accountabilities over the past year, further improvements are still necessary. The Secretariat took key steps in 2016 to respond to this challenge. It has prioritized staff time for supporting country-level processes, and it refined its business processes, enhancing communication, guidance and support to its country-level partners. The partnership also embarked on an effort to better monitor, understand and disseminate effective approaches to partnership at the country level. These actions will lead to significant enhancement of the partnership’s work at the country level.

THE PARTNERSHIP HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS WHILE KEEPING SECRETARIAT OPERATING EXPENSES AT LESS THAN 4% OF TOTAL EXPENDITURE IN FY2016.