



GPE RESULTS REPORT 2015/2016: MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2016 Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Results Report provided important insights into the partnership's progress with respect to its three goals and five country-level and global objectives. This note summarizes the main conclusions and learning from that report, and it highlights the partnership's actions in areas for improvement.

2. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ACTIONS AT A GLANCE

2.1 The sections below discuss the accomplishments and areas for improvement in each of the results areas.

Partnerships Goals: Learning, Equity, and System Efficiency and Effectiveness

2.2 A key partnership goal is to improve learning outcomes. Sixty-five percent of Developing Country Partners (DCP) with data improved on learning outcomes, with a positive finding that improvement in learning outcomes is possible even in the most difficult circumstances.

Yet, only one third of DCPs have rigorous data on learning. To address this significant gap in data on learning and to build capacity for learning assessments, GPE introduced a strengthened requirement that all countries have without robust data systems (including learning assessments) must include such components in their application for GPE ESPIG financing. GPE also launched its, assessment for Learning (A4L) initiative in 2017 which support capacity for stronger national assessments systems. In addition, GPE is working directly with countries on their education sector plans (ESPs) and through the education sector plan implementation grants (ESPIGs) to strengthen countries' learning assessment and data systems. Work is proceeding with identifying countries with upcoming ESPs and ESPIGs to focus on the quality of data systems, teaching and learning strategies, and strengthening nascent learning assessment systems.

Data also show that more children are completing school at the primary and lower secondary levels and the partnership is on track with respect to gender parity for school completion. At the same time, gender parity for out of school children at these levels did not meet targets. Pre-primary access also did not improve. To address pre-primary access and focus on early childhood education, the partnership will continue to work with countries to include gender equality and early childhood education in their sector plans and where planned, include ECCE and Gender equality components in their implementation grants. GPE also launched two cross national initiatives in 2017: the Better

Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative, which supports improved capacity for planning quality early learning; and the Gender Equality Strategy, which includes efforts to strengthen capacity for gender responsive sector planning

The partnership has made an excellent start in improving education system efficiency and effectiveness, meeting the 2016 milestones for teacher/pupil ratio and DCP provision of data to UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Progress was especially strong on domestic financing, with the majority of DCPs either increasing spending or maintaining sector spending at 20 percent or above of public expenditure. Nonetheless, key aspects of the system need to be improved: teacher/pupil ratio, equitable teacher allocations, and dropout and repetition. The partnership will drive improvements in efficiency and effectiveness through enhanced support to sector planning and implementation, as discussed under country-level objectives.

The partnership's goals will take time to materialize through targeted long-term investments and improvements in sector planning and implementation. In addition, to incentivize results, 30 percent of the implementation grant allocations are based on the achievement of targets in learning, equity, and efficiency. The partnership anticipates further strengthening its programmatic approaches as well as deploying contextualized solutions at the country-level (discussed below). In the interim, fluctuations in annual samples and data availability are also likely to affect yearly results.

Strategic Objectives – Country-Level

2.3 The GPE theory of change posits that, at the country-level, quality education sector plans (ESP) developed and implemented with the engagement of stakeholders and supported with effective and efficient financing will drive the strategies that contribute to the partnership's goals. Achievements in these country-level objectives are largely within the control of the partnership.

GPE is the largest funder of ESPs, and, as of 2016, more than half of partnership-financed ESPs and transitional education plans (TEPs) met the partnership's quality standards in the baseline years of 2014 and 2015. All plans were based on analyses and addressed inequalities and disparities in the education system. The quality of joint sector reviews, the mechanism for engaging all stakeholders and ensuring mutual accountability, also improved over time. At same time, fewer than half of the GPE countries had participation of both civil society and teacher organizations in their Local Education Groups (LEG).

The partnership will improve how it delivers to these two objectives. One specific area for improvement is to use data consistently for identifying sector priorities, developing operational plans, and conducting joint sector reviews. GPE has strengthened its quality assurance procedures and is reviewing countries' data strategy as part of this work. All grant applications require countries to have a robust data strategy. GPE has also trialed guidelines for inclusive sector analysis in two countries and will review how this work will be mainstreamed across the partnership. Overall, forthcoming endorsed ESPs and transitional education plans are expected to meet quality standards. Another area for improvement is to ensure engagement of all key stakeholders in LEGs. GPE will revitalize stakeholder engagement through its upcoming work in Advocacy and Social Accountability, provide improved, research-based guidelines on JSRs, and develop a toolkit to facilitate effective LEG practices. Both areas of work will be completed in 2018.

GPE is committed to supporting governments in the implementation of their sector plans. To fulfill the objective of providing effective and efficient financing, ESPIGs are focused on countries with high levels of need, prioritizing difficult country contexts. Countries are required to improve their planning, data systems and domestic financing of education. ESPIG, and receive 30% of their grants upon meeting agreed targets for improvements in equity, learning and efficiency. ESPIG grants

provided significant support for learning assessment and data systems, given their importance for measuring learning and for developing robust sector plans. However, one issue of concern is timely delivery of planned grant components (classroom construction in particular) and the rising proportion of grants facing implementation delays. GPE will identify the causes of the delays, address issues related to program implementation with grant agents, and emphasize more realistic grant design and stronger implementation follow up. In addition, the GPE will apply a focused risk-based approach to in-coming applications, using an operational risk framework. GPE is also exploring how to improve its variable financing in ways that further strengthen national commitment to results.

Finally, the Secretariat is utilizing disaggregated country-level data and upcoming evaluations to assess where specific improvements can be leveraged.

Strategic Objectives – Global

2.4 Global-level objectives pertain to harnessing the power of the partnership – financial and organizational – to continue in the right direction to achieve desired impacts.

The partnership is on track with respect to diversifying its donor base and securing all signed agreements, using co-financing mechanisms, and addressing domestic financing issues. The partnership has also set ambitious targets for its 2018 replenishment and has adopted a new financing and funding framework that diversifies its ability to leverage expanded resources for education.

One area of improvement is with respect to alignment: less than a third of the implementation grants were adequately aligned to national systems. Disaggregated data show that while all grants were aligned with countries' ESPs, government accounting systems and main revenue account were much less frequently utilized in the non-aligned grants. Grants in FCAC are less likely to be aligned. Additional research and analysis regarding alignment is underway to understand the issues and provide improved guidance to grant agents on this topic.

The partnership has improved its organizational effectiveness in several ways while keeping Secretariat operating expenses at less than four percent of the total FY16 expenditures. The Secretariat prioritized country-facing activities in its work-plans and budgets, and the partnership refined its business processes for quality assurance, risk management, and fiduciary oversight. It also enhanced its delivery of key knowledge and evaluation products. However, a survey of developing country-level partners suggests that clarity is needed regarding country-level roles and responsibilities. To address this issue, GPE will strengthen its guidance on roles and responsibilities for all partners, including grant agents, coordinating agents, and LEG members at the country level, taking into account the funding and operational models, beginning now and continuing into 2018. Finally, the Board's Finance and Risk Committee will discuss a draft value-for-money framework centered around overall economy, efficiency, effectiveness in October 2017.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

3.1 The Results Report demonstrates that the partnership has made good progress with respect to its objectives. It also highlights areas where it needs to invest more effort: development and use of quality learning assessment systems, collection and use of data and evidence, improvements to the processes underpinning the development, implementation, and monitoring of sector plans (including alignment with country systems), providing quality and timely financing, and helping all stakeholders understand and invest in their roles and responsibilities.

3.2 GPE is undertaking improvement efforts based on the findings of the results report. The partnership is developing targeted actions for addressing programmatic and organizational issues (such as investments in early childhood programs and timely financing). Improvements will require a nuanced approach to the issues facing individual countries as well, using country-level data, monitoring, and in-depth knowledge from the forthcoming evaluation stream. This work has begun in 2017.

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