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# **Examination of key actors' roles in GPE's country-level operational model towards GPE 2020 delivery**

Final Report

Volume I – Main report

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

This report was shared with GPE's Board of Directors and discussed at their meeting on 13 June 2018. The report and presentation included OPM's recommendations which have been moved to Annex M to differentiate them from the Board's own recommendations.

The team are grateful to our colleagues at the GPE Secretariat who guided the inception phase and gave great logistical support to the study's data collection and analysis phase, including the mapping of Secretariat functions and overviews of GPE workstreams. These colleagues include, but are by no means limited to, Janne Kjaersgaard Perrier, Raphaelle Martinez, Margarita Focas Licht, Karen Mundy, Padraig Power, Johanna Van Dyke, Tongai Makoni, and Maria Jose Olavarria Perez. The team is also grateful to Wendy Wei Chang from the World Bank for managing the translation of the report and intermediary products.

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The study has been guided and supported by members of the Grants and Performance Committee, who provided detailed comments on versions of the inception report and comments on an earlier draft of the final report.

Finally, we owe our thanks to the many members of the Partnership who participated in this study as respondents, whether through written responses, telephone interviews, or webinars. The time they gave to preparing and taking part in the study was critical to the success of the data collection and analysis. We hope these findings will be useful to all partners in working together towards the shared aim of delivering improved learning for all.

## Executive summary

### Introduction and background

This report presents the findings from a study to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of key actors in the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) country-level operational model.

GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that focuses on supporting developing country partners' (DCPs) efforts in building effective education systems to improve equity and learning. GPE's 2016-2020 strategic plan, 'GPE 2020', sets out the Partnership's ambitions and objectives (GPE, 2016a). The vision aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

Partnership is at the core of GPE's objectives. This is evident through the country-level operational model, which seeks to strengthen education systems through partnership, with the division of the roles and responsibilities of key actors underpinned by an ethos of mutual accountability. GPE recommends a country-level operational model that consists of several core actors: the DCP, the local education group (LEG), a coordinating agency (CA), a grant agent (GA) if there is a GPE grant, and the support of the GPE Secretariat. This country-level operational model is intended to be flexible to contexts and existing structures.

The operational model has evolved over time, and GPE 2020 commits to continually improving the way the Partnership works. Reflecting this, GPE's Board of Directors requested a study to look at the operational efficiency of the model, to deliver GPE 2020. Thus, the primary audience for this report is GPE's Board, who will use it along with other workstreams in deciding potential areas for change, development or further investigation.

The overall objective of the study was to examine whether the current design and working of the country-level operational model is fit for GPE's purpose: delivering improved equity and lifelong learning in education for all in developing countries. The study aimed to understand the perceptions and expectations of a range of GPE's partners concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of key actors in the country-level operating model. The key actors in question were LEGs as a multi-stakeholder platform, CAs, GAs, and the GPE Secretariat.

### Methodology

The study's framework questions asked whether the roles and responsibilities of these actors are clear and efficiently delineated, what challenges and enabling factors are faced in fulfilling these roles, what specifically are the issues for providing capacity development for DCPs, and what suggestions stakeholders have for improving the model. It looked at the responsibilities across all grant processes and more generally, as defined in ToR and grant guidelines (Annex J and K).

Responses were sought through primary data collection with 11 DCPs as the central actor in GPE's model, as well as 16 development partners (DPs) and two international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the CA, GA, and/or LEG roles, and six civil

society organisation (CSO) representatives. Data collection was in the form of telephone interviews, webinars, and written responses. Secondary data was included in understanding the evolution of the model to date and particularly the context of LEG effectiveness from other studies. Finally, the study was presented at the pre-Board DCP meeting in Mozambique in May 2018, and the findings from break-out sessions were fed into the report.

Finally, the study did not seek to be evaluative, by verifying responses and seeking to establish an independent view of reality, but instead acted more as a consultation on the positions on the key actors' roles and responsibilities currently taken by agencies, organisations, and, centrally, recipient governments in the Partnership.

## Overarching findings

The main high-level finding is there were no demands to overhaul the current design of the operational model. Where the findings show that things could be improved, it is mostly around interpretation and delivery of the model in practice, rather than a systemic challenge to how the model is set up. There were no loud calls to change the core structure of the key actors, and a few respondents expressed the view that the model needs more time to bed in, as well as reinforcement.

Broadly, responsibilities are felt to be clear on paper, and challenges and confusion occurs in practice due to individual circumstances. The guidelines set out the expected roles and responsibilities for key actors – particularly the CAs and GAs. There is more ambiguity about the Secretariat's role since the Country Leads (CLs) do not have a publicly available ToR. However in practice, context, individual interpretations and characteristics affect how key actors address their roles and thus how others have to respond accordingly. To some extent, this difference in interpretation is unavoidable with a flexible model and variations in human behaviour. However, respondents gave a number of suggested strategies for helping reduce confusion, inefficiency and tension. These include having a more active role from the Secretariat in giving advice and reminders on the roles, and ensuring more monitoring of these key actors' performance.

The DCP government's leadership and ownership is seen as critical to effective and efficient operation of the Partnership. Government leadership was seen as an enabling factor for key actors across a range of issues. LEG effectiveness is related to government commitment to driving the LEG as a consultative and inclusive platform. Successful fulfilment of GA responsibilities around planning and grant processes such as Education Sector Plan (ESP) finalisation and grant application are seen as linked to DCP ownership. Likewise, CAs feel that engagement and communication with the government is a major determinant of their success as a CA. Capacity development is perceived to be most effective when it is owned and requested by the recipient government rather than donor-driven. Thus DCPs have an important role in leading planning and grant processes to make sure the system and key actors work to support them.

## LEGs

The study finds that the conclusions of other reviews and evaluations are still pressing: LEGs sometimes exist in parallel to other multi-stakeholder groups, leading to confusion about what each group is for; there is disagreement over the extent to which

the LEG is a decision-making body; meaningful participation of varied stakeholders is still a challenge; and LEGs are often seen as a 'GPE-project' oversight body rather than a sector-wide policy and implementation discussion forum. There are success stories of LEGs being effective, regular, with strong participation, and this is often linked to government leadership.

## CA and GAs

The CA role is seen differently depending on context, ranging from a purely coordination role, to one of steering processes, through to technical input. This shifting of interpretation can lead to duplication with other key actors.

DCPs feel that a successful CA is related to identification of one nominated individual in the CA lead role, and that person's characteristics.

Lack of resources is often seen as preventing CAs from fulfilling their roles effectively, as CAs have their own programmes and cannot meet all the expected CA responsibilities. Many respondents feel that there are a disproportionate number of responsibilities designated to the CA given that there is no compensation. Some feel that GPE ought to provide resource to CAs, others see this as a contribution that some DPs are willing to make to the Partnership.

The GA's roles are generally seen to be clear, however confusion arises when other members of the LEG cannot visibly distinguish activity under GPE funding from activity under the GA agency's own programme and funds. However, having its own programme can mean the GA agency already has a positive relationship with the government. Relationships with DCPs are seen to be weaker when the GA's technical staff is not based in-country, and this also affects relationships with other key actors.

Partners recognise the improved diversification of GAs, but feel that in practice there is often no choice about who will be GA and therefore no real competition to make sure the GA has the capability to fulfil the role effectively. This also makes it harder to hold the GA to account. In fact some partners feel accountability of GAs is generally a problem, since GA performance is not being quality assured. Sometimes CAs feel they have to monitor the GA, yet this is not a responsibility designated to CAs. DCPs would like to see more country-level evaluations of the GAs for accountability and transparency.

While DCPs tend to see the GA and CA roles as clearly separate, some DPs feel that the boundaries between the respective implementation and coordinating roles are not always clear and vary by country. There are instances of GAs and CAs appearing to compete for influence, putting the government in a difficult position of deciding whose advice to take. Some CAs have found the GA takes charge, oversteps its role boundaries, and does not leave room for the CA to become involved appropriately. On the other hand, CAs and GAs feel they have to take on each other's roles when the other actor is not fulfilling its responsibilities. These situations and how they manifest depend on individuals' personalities rather than the ToR.

## The Secretariat and its interaction with GAs and CAs

The absence of specific and public-facing ToR for CLs is seen as contributing to confusion in the interaction with other partners in some areas. The Secretariat's role in

the implementation phase of grants is seen as underdeveloped by some DPs, and more clarity on the nature and outputs expected from the Secretariat, around monitoring and problem solving at all stages, is felt to be needed. There is a specific question about the extent to which the CLs should play only a facilitation role or be more directive. When a CL is more forceful in country, this can be seen as interfering, and on the other hand the CL can help make the GPE grant more visible. CLs are generally seen as playing a useful resolution function and unblocking bottlenecks, which is a particular support to CAs. For many DCPs and CAs, more support from the CLs would be valued and the current availability of CLs is felt to be limited.

For GAs, the main issue of duplication with the Secretariat occurs around the QAR processes. This seems to be specifically an issue for the World Bank since GPE's processes are modelled closely on the Bank's. The QA pilot currently underway is expected to address this issue.

## Capacity Development

This study identified that a number of examples of capacity development activities are taking place, yet respondents were not clear on what is meant by capacity development in GPE's model and what is expected from key actors. They felt that guidelines should be clearer if the Partnership wants actors to know what their responsibilities are.

GAs are seen as having the main role for capacity development within the key actor responsibilities, and many DCPs gave examples of GAs building their capacity through on-the-job exchange, training in domains such as procurement and finance, and through provision of technical assistance (TA).

Factors for successful capacity development would apply generally rather than only in the context of the GPE model. Government ownership is seen as key, and DCPs want to see a strategic and coordinated approach among partners. Use of government systems is felt to strengthen MOE capacities, and where TA is needed it is more effective if working *with* MOE staff rather than *instead of* MOE staff.

The identified challenges to capacity development include high turnover of government staff, particularly in fragile and conflict affected states, and the prioritisation of completing GPE processes by strict deadlines rather than taking time for building capacities.

Opportunities for cross-country exchange are seen as a valuable route to capacity development for DCPs, as a way to learn about GPE processes as well as best practice in the education sector.

## Recommendations

The findings of the report were presented to the GPE Board of Directors in June 2018 along with OPM's recommendations. The recommendations were grouped across four broad themes: (i) provide additional guidance and detail in various ToR; (ii) strengthen mutual accountability; (iii) differentiate the support from the Secretariat in the country level model; and (iv) create a strategy for capacity development.

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## List of abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
ASA	Advocacy and Social Accountability
BMZ	The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
BOD	Board of Directors
CapED	Capacity Development for Education (UNESCO programme)
CA	Coordinating Agency
CL	Country Lead
CONFEMEN	La Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des Etats et gouvernements de la Francophonie
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CST	Country Support Team
DCP	Developing Country Partner
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DP	Development Partner
ESA	Education Situation Analysis
ESP	Education Sector Plan
ESPDG	Education Sector Plan Development Grant
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
EU	European Union
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
FFF	Financing and Funding Framework
GA	Grant Agent
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GPC	Grants and Performance Committee
GPE	Global Partnership for Education

IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JSR	Joint Sector Review
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
LEG	Local Education Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCA	Maximum Country Allocation
ME	Managing Entity
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PDG	Programme Development Grant
QA	Quality Assurance
QAR	Quality Assurance Review
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SE	Supervising Entity
SIC	Strategy and Impact Committee
PASEC	Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems
TA	Technical Assistance
TEP	Transitional Education Plan
ToR	Terms of Reference
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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# **Part A: Introduction, background and methodology**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to the study

This report presents the findings from a study to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of key actors in the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) country-level operational model, in the context of the ambitions to deliver GPE's strategy, which is known as GPE 2020.

GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that focuses on supporting developing country partners' (DCPs) efforts in building effective education systems to improve equity and learning. The Partnership has membership of more than 60 developing country governments and more than 20 donor nations, plus international organisations, civil society, philanthropy, teachers, and the private sector.

The primary audience for this report is GPE's Board of Directors. The Board is committed to reviewing the functioning of the operational model and ways in which it could and should be improved. The report will be used by the Board along with other workstreams in deciding potential areas for change, development, or further investigation. The report will also feed in to other workstreams being managed by GPE's Secretariat where the findings give cause for additional investigation.

The study aims to understand the perceptions and expectations of a range of GPE's partners concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of key actors in the country-level operating model. The key actors in question are local education groups (LEGs) as a multi-stakeholder platform, coordinating agencies (CAs), grant agents (GAs), and the GPE Secretariat. The study's framework questions ask whether the roles and responsibilities of these actors are clear and efficiently delineated, what challenges and enabling factors are involved in fulfilling these roles, what specific issues relate to providing capacity development, and what suggestions stakeholders have for improving the model to achieve GPE's aims.

Responses were sought through primary data collection with DCPs as the central actor in GPE's model, as well as development partners (DPs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the CA, GA, and/or LEG roles, and civil society organisation representatives. Secondary data was included in understanding the evolution of the model to date and particularly the context of LEG effectiveness from other studies. Finally, the study does not seek to be evaluative, by verifying responses and seeking to establish an independent view of reality, but instead acts more as a consultation on the positions on the key actors' roles and responsibilities currently taken by agencies, organisations, and, centrally, recipient governments in the Partnership.

The scope was guided by the GPE Secretariat following consultations with GPE's Board and agreed with the Grants and Performance Committee (GPC), which is tasked with overseeing this study. Drafts of this report were shared with the DCP focal points at the pre-Board meeting in May 2018, the GPC in May 2018, and the Board in June 2018. The report has been finalised based on comments from each of these groups.

## 1.2 Structure of this report

This is Volume I of the report, which contains the report itself. Volume II contains the annexes. Volume I is structured in three parts:

- **Part A** introduces the study, setting out the background and context as well as the methodology.
- **Part B** presents the findings and evidence. There are five chapters: the first four are organised according to the four key actors: LEGs (Chapter 4), CAs (Chapter 5), GAs (Chapter 6), and the Secretariat (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 addresses the wider theme of capacity development, which cuts across the key actors.
- **Part C** summarises the findings from Part B and draws out implications for the Partnership.

## 2 Background and context

### 2.1 The Global Partnership for Education

GPE is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that focuses on supporting DCPs' efforts in building effective education systems to improve equity and learning. Established in 2002, the Partnership is a collective endeavour that represents more than 60 developing country governments and more than 20 donor nations, plus international organisations, civil society, philanthropy, teachers, and the private sector. It regroups the major education stakeholders both at global and country levels to work effectively together to ensure that: (i) education plans are sound, credible, effectively implemented, and rigorously monitored; (ii) development aid is better coordinated and invested in underfunded, strategically important elements of the plans; and (iii) partners' comparative strengths are leveraged.

#### 2.1.1 GPE 2020

GPE launched its strategic plan for 2016–2020 in 2016 (GPE, 2016a). GPE 2020 sets out the Partnership's ambitions and objectives for the four-year period, aligning the vision with Sustainable Development Goal 4, 'to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

GPE is a fund and a partnership that aims to address the most significant education challenges in developing countries by supporting governments to improve equity and learning, by strengthening their education systems. The strategy explains GPE's unique role in agreeing standards for education planning and policy-making as well as mobilising development financing from public and private donors around the world to implement and monitor those plans. GPE 2020 goes on to identify three overarching goals, and five objectives, of which three are at the country level, as set out below.

#### **Goals:**

1. Improved and more equitable learning outcomes
2. Increased equity, gender equality, and inclusion
3. Effective and efficient education systems

#### **Country-level objectives:**

1. Strengthen education sector planning and policy implementation
2. Support mutual accountability through inclusive policy dialogue
3. Ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support

#### **Global-level objectives:**

1. Mobilise more and better financing
2. Build a stronger partnership

## 2.1.2 Capacity development in GPE 2020

GPE 2020 has a clear emphasis on strengthening national education systems to be effective and efficient, in order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This aspect of strengthening systems is itself about developing national capacities, and hence capacity development underpins many of the aspects of GPE 2020. In a number of ways, the Partnership aims to improve the quality of education sector planning, implementation, and monitoring, all of which are primary functions of government in the education system.

The strategy is explicit about how this type of capacity development can take place through various approaches, including needs analysis, efforts to strengthen technical capacity at strategic moments of the policy cycle and continuously, bringing in the talent and resources of others, providing technical support and investments, and knowledge and good practice exchange.

One of the main ways that capacity development is expected to take place is through the roles of key actors at country level in the country-level operational model.<sup>1</sup>

## 2.1.3 GPE's country-level operational model

Partnership is at the core of GPE's objectives. This is evident through the country-level operational model, which seeks to strengthen education systems through partnership, with the division of the roles and responsibilities of key actors underpinned by an ethos of mutual accountability. GPE recommends a country-level operational model that consists of several core actors.

At the centre of the model is the DCP itself, where the focal point for GPE is usually the Ministry of Education (MOE). The DCP governments are the primary policy-makers, implementers, and funders of education in the developing countries GPE seeks to support. Thus, the DCPs are critical to owning and leading the GPE model.

Then there are three key actors at the country level: the LEG, which is multi-partner collaborative body; the CA; and, in the case of a country receiving a grant from GPE, the GA. A summary of these actors' roles is given here but a complete mapping of the roles based on ToR, grant guidelines, and other key documents was conducted by the Secretariat (GPE, 2017c, Annex J).<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, the Secretariat plays a role in supporting key actors to deliver on GPE 2020.

The LEG is intended to be a collaborative forum for education sector policy dialogue under government leadership, where the primary consultation on education sector development takes place between a government and its partners. LEGs are expected to consist of all country-level education partners, usually including stakeholders from government (which may include ministries of education, finance, and planning, and

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is not the only way that capacity development is expected to be leveraged by GPE. A large portion of grants are used for capacity development and technical assistance. However, the focus of this study is on the country-level operational model and thus on capacity development in this context.

<sup>2</sup> Annex J contains references for the various guidance

possibly representing local government), civil society, teachers' representatives, private education providers, and DPs.

The CA is one of the members of the LEG, selected by the LEG in agreement with the DCP to facilitate the LEG's work under the leadership of the government. It is intended to support the government in implementing the core principles of the Partnership, especially those relating to ensuring inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue – the second country-level objective in GPE 2020. It is expected to play a key role in coordinating the education stakeholders in-country to ensure harmonised support for planning and monitoring.

If the DCP has a grant from GPE, then there is a GA. The GA is selected and approved by the government and endorsed by the LEG as part of the grant application process, to oversee implementation of the GPE grants. Three types of grant are available for DCPs: the Education Sector Plan Development Grant (ESPDG), the Program Development Grant (PDG), and the Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG). The GA disburses GPE funds to implementing partners (usually government) and provides fiduciary oversight and technical support relevant to the grant.

The Secretariat has a supporting role throughout the national education sector policy cycle in promoting inclusive and robust policy dialogue, providing guidance and reviewing the processes for the GPE grants, providing sector planning guidelines and tools, leading GPE's quality assurance review (QAR) procedures, and processing documents for GPE Board review.

While this sets out a framework for how the country model could work, it is intended to be flexible to contexts and existing structures, rather than introducing parallel systems.

## 2.2 Changes over time

This operational model has itself evolved over time, in response to needs, new developments, and how the members of the Partnership wanted to work together. For example, a relatively substantial review and reform of the Operational Platform took place in 2015. Moreover, GPE 2020 commits to continually improving the way the Partnership itself works:

*We will continue to strengthen our operating processes and organizational efficiency and effectiveness by creating stronger systems for quality assurance, risk management, country support and fiduciary oversight. We will also continue to improve the capacity of the Secretariat to serve the partnership.*

*GPE 2020 requires clarity about roles, responsibilities and accountabilities. Therefore, we will promote and coordinate consistent country-level roles, responsibilities and accountabilities among governments, development partners, grant agents, civil society, teachers' organizations and the private sector, through strong coordination mechanisms and a strengthened operational model. (From global level objective 5: Build a stronger partnership)*

To understand more about how aspects of the country model have developed in recent years, in terms of the actors and procedures, Box 1 sets out key steps since the 2012 Evans Report of the 'Hosting Review' until the present. In addition to the Evans Review, the 2015 Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) Evaluation

of Norwegian Multilateral Support to Basic Education and the 2015 Independent Interim Evaluation of GPE are core evaluation sources from recent years.<sup>3</sup>

### **Box 1: Changes to the operational model since 2012**

#### **LEGs**

The issue of diversity of membership, particularly the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs), was raised in the Evans Review (2012) and the Interim Evaluation (2015), though seen to be improving. Following the Interim Evaluation, the Board agreed to the recommendation from the Secretariat that roles, responsibilities, and minimum standards should be defined for LEGs, in response to calls for more clarity and addressing weaker activity of LEGs in the implementation and monitoring phases of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) cycle. As part of the proposal for a More Effective Operational Platform (2015), the Secretariat began drafting LEG minimum standards and monitoring LEG performance in the Results Framework. However, the draft standards were challenged on two fronts: as not providing sufficient support and guidance, and because expecting enforcement could distort local contexts. Now, the Secretariat is developing guidance and tools for LEGs as part of a LEG workstream, overseen by the Strategy and Impact Committee (SIC).

#### **CAs**

The CA role has not experienced any major changes over recent years. The 2015 Interim Evaluation found that CAs provide valuable support, particularly up to grant approval. However, it found that DPs in the role may stifle LEGs and local participation, thus suggesting that whether national actors could also take the role be considered.

#### **GAs**

Discussions of how to diversify the GAs have been ongoing. The 2012 Evans Review found that the World Bank almost had hegemony over supervising/managing entity (SE/ME: the predecessor to the GA) roles and stated that more DPs needed to step up into the role. Evans and the Norad evaluation (2015) encouraged accreditation, recognising the fiduciary risk involved. The Interim Evaluation found that, although the number of SEs/MEs had increased, there was still reliance on the World Bank and SEs/MEs were not accountable to DCPs and LEGs.

The 2015 Operational Platform review brought in the 'GA' terminology and suggested a number of developments, including minimum standards for GAs, transparent and consistent cost recovery, criteria for GA selection, reporting standards and timelines, and looking at situations where a GA is not required.

In 2016 the Governance, Ethics, Risk and Finance Committee set out a paper looking at options and implications for 'direct access', where funds would go directly to a national entity. This could be considered in contexts such as where grants are small, country public financial management systems are strong, and there is already a pooled fund. Direct access would not be possible under the current hosting arrangement.

#### **Secretariat**

The Evans Review recommended there should be more Secretariat presence in-country to distinguish GPE from the World Bank. The Norad evaluation still found country leads (CLs) to be spread too thinly, and the Interim Evaluation found that more clarity on the Secretariat's roles, and the resources for it, was needed.

The quality assurance (QA) process has evolved since Evans suggested setting up an independent technical advisory group for quality assurance of ESPs and grant applications. As part of the 2015 Operational Platform review, the Board requested a system for

<sup>3</sup> See Annex G and Annex H for a more detailed review of changes to actors' roles and GPE since 2014.

independent technical appraisal of ESPs at the country level, for which the Secretariat provided guidance, and set out to establish minimum standards for QA of grants.

### Context

GPE's flexibility in responding to context was raised in the Evans Review, and both the Norad and Interim Evaluations of 2015 found that more technical assistance (TA) or Secretariat support is needed in fragile and conflict-affected settings. In light of this, the Operational Platform review led to development of the Operational Risk Framework, which looks at country and sector grants, allowing for a differentiated risk-based approach to monitoring.

Sources: GPE (2012, 2015a, 2016c, 2018b), Universalis and Results 4 Development (2015), Norad (2015). See Annex G for a more detailed review of changes to actors' roles based and Annex H for an overview of GPE's evolution since 2014.

Against this backdrop, the Partnership continues to examine how the operational model is working and how it might be improved.

In March 2017, the GPE Board approved a new Financing and Funding Framework (FFF), which aims to create an expanded platform for resource mobilisation and deployment across DCPs. The FFF calls for enhancement of GPE's core funding mechanisms, and one of the mechanisms for this is by focusing on improved operational efficiency as a partnership to achieve country-level objectives. This relates to a December 2016 Board request to look at the operational efficiency of the model:

*The Board of Directors requests the Secretariat with the support of an external firm to examine the issues and options for ensuring Grant Agents, Coordinating Agencies, and Local Education Groups are operating efficiently and effectively as well as learning from past experience to deliver GPE 2020. This process will take into consideration other related work at the Secretariat. (BOD/2016/12-19)*

## 2.3 Other relevant workstreams

This study is one effort among many which will provide insights into how the Partnership works and how it might be improved. As part of the Secretariat's work on facilitating optimal support to DCPs, there are several ongoing workstreams that look to improve and support specific aspects of the operational model and related strategic issues (see Annex I for a complete mapping). These workstreams, overseen by different committees (GPC and SIC), relate to:

- **LEG effectiveness**, examining the basis for success and challenges facing LEGs, to engage with countries to enhance the effectiveness of their LEGs and provide relevant guidance. Oversight: SIC.
- **Alignment**, implementing a roadmap to support greater alignment of development aid/GPE grants with national systems for the effective and efficient implementation of education sector plans. Oversight: GPC.
- **Variable part**, implementing a roadmap to leverage the potential impact of the variable part at country level. The variable part was introduced as part of the 2015–2018 funding model and requires that 30% of a country's ESPIG is accessed on the basis of meeting indicators related to equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes. Oversight: GPC.
- **QA**, piloting an adapted QA process with the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to reduce duplication between the Secretariat and GAs. This will include developing differentiated QA processes by GA, revising existing

QA tools and processes to minimise transaction costs, and differentiating QA approaches by grant size. Oversight: GPC.

- Operational Risk Framework, implementing a management tool to ensure that Secretariat resources are aligned to mitigate key risks, and therefore reducing the likelihood of duplicating GAs' own risk assessments or risk mitigation activities. Oversight: GPC.
- Institutional arrangements/direct access, considering feasible options for channelling funds directly to governments or national NGOs in certain low-risk contexts. Oversight: To be decided.
- Support in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS), reviewing the existing mechanisms in FCAS and examining options for funding in regional crisis situations and cross-border support to broaden and improve the existing operational framework. Oversight: GPC.
- Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX), recently adopted funding window, aiming at improving the capacity of partner countries to use knowledge and policy and programmatic innovations to strengthen their education systems. Oversight: SIC.
- Advocacy and Social Accountability (ASA), newly adopted funding window, supporting effective civil society representation and engagement in national education sector policy dialogue. Oversight: SIC.
- Summative country evaluations – a series of country evaluations throughout the GPE 2020 strategy period on GPE contributions to strengthening education systems, including the relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness of GPE's theory of change and country-level operational model. The first seven (out of 22) summative evaluations (looking back over previous grants) will have reported by June 2018. The first annual country mission reports for the eight prospective evaluations are expected in June 2018. Oversight: SIC.

Findings of this study may be relevant to these workstreams to various degrees and thus feed into them *downstream* in follow-up mechanisms. These linkages that we are aware of are identified in the Conclusions and Recommendations. Meanwhile, the study is drawing *upstream* from the LEG effectiveness workstream by using the LEG survey and desk study on LEGs as secondary data in the analysis of LEGs.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Objectives and scope of this study

The overall objective of the study is to examine whether the current design and working of the country-level operational model is fit for GPE's purpose: delivering improved equity and lifelong learning in education for all in developing countries. In other words, does the current country-level operational model allow effective and efficient delivery of GPE 2020?

This has arisen from a perception that the operational model may not be optimal, that its evolution may or may not be in the right direction, and that this is critical to supporting DCPs in delivering quality education. Key questions to understanding the problem include: Are the roles of key actors clearly defined, understood, and adhered to in practice? Do they reflect the functions required by the model and are actors well equipped to perform them, and how can they best be supported to do so? Do they make up an effective and efficient cooperation system through which the Partnership can best be leveraged? What can be learnt from the success stories? And, finally, what solutions might improve the operational model?

The study is not intended to be an evaluation of the model, but rather an opportunity to seek the views of stakeholders in the Partnership. It thus provides an independent collation and analysis of the perceptions and expectations of key members in the model: DCPs, GAs, and CAs, other members of the cooperation system including other DPs and CSOs, and the Secretariat.

#### 3.1.1 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:<sup>4</sup>

- Assess the perceptions and expectations of GPE key actors (GA, CA, Secretariat and LEGs as a body) of their respective roles and responsibilities in the country-level operating model as well as their views on the cooperation system between the DCP, GA, CA, LEG as a multi-stakeholder body, and the Secretariat;
  - Identify major areas of concern, including commonalities and divergent views.
  - Identify factors that enable or impede actors in carrying out roles.
- Undertake a more detailed diagnosis of common challenges to effectively and efficiently engage in capacity development support as part of the roles and responsibilities of the model.
- Identify response mechanisms to address identified bottlenecks, duplicative efforts, ambiguities and capacity gaps, and issues relevant to the operational model not working optimally.

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<sup>4</sup> These were set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and further elaborated by the Secretariat in conjunction with the GPC during the inception phase.

- Formulate and provide recommendations and options to the Board, demonstrating a meaningful response to country needs as the central focus, and supporting in-country accountabilities and dialogue to work efficiently as a Partnership.

### 3.1.2 Which partners were in scope?

This study focuses on the roles and responsibilities of GAs and CAs, the cooperation system between GAs, CAs, and the LEG as a body, and how these actors cooperate with the Secretariat.

It also includes consideration of what the Secretariat's roles are, if and where there are duplications, as well as challenges and enabling factors in fulfilling the roles, and what it should do less of and what it should do more of.

This study does not explicitly focus on the role of the DCP (in terms of whether DCPs fulfil their responsibilities in the model). However, DCPs are a core respondent for the findings on the other actors, and the number of interviews with DCPs has increased compared with earlier versions of the study design. DCPs were also consulted on a draft version on this report at a meeting in May 2018.

### 3.1.3 Which roles and responsibilities were in scope?

In preparation for this study, the Secretariat conducted a mapping of roles and responsibilities for GAs, CAs, and LEGs (GPE, 2017c; see Annex J). The mapping looks at the responsibilities of these three actors across all the grant processes and, more generally, as taken from their ToR and grant guidelines. The mapping demonstrates that each key actor has a significant number of expected responsibilities, within which there are many identified entry points for capacity development. The mapping provides the underlying *normative* view of what key actors are currently *expected* to do in the operational model, and thus a baseline and starting point for the review. Although the data collection has not allowed an exhaustive review of perceptions against all these roles and responsibilities, these provide the backdrop against which respondents have described ambiguities and challenges.

During this study, the Secretariat conducted a mapping of its own activities against the roles and responsibilities in the GPE Charter (see Annex K). This was based on internal consultation around what the Secretariat does in practice. The Secretariat includes many roles, some but not all of which interact with the country-level model. The most relevant staff role in the Secretariat is the CL, for which there are no publicly available ToR.

### 3.1.4 Whose viewpoints were included?

The primary data collection strategy aimed to seek a range of perspectives across actors: DCPs as the central actor in the country model, DPs who take the roles of GAs, CAs and wider LEG members, INGOs who take the role of GAs, and CSO representative groups. For all the stakeholders, with the exception of the DCPs, the interviewee responded on behalf of the institution, thus providing an institutional perspective, and therefore was expected to have sought inputs on the realities of experiences for their country staff 'on the ground'. For DCPs, the respondents were expected to speak to their own experience, although they could refer to other countries'

experiences if they had those references. Successful data collection has been dependent on the readiness and willingness of interviewees to prepare and reflect on issues beforehand.

The GPE Secretariat has provided an input in terms of mapping its own role, which was done by the Secretariat managers. Members of the Secretariat were not included as key informants for the data collection on the roles of other key actors in the study.

In addition to the viewpoints sought from primary data collection, secondary data on the views from DCPs and LEG members have been used in the analysis. The sources of these viewpoints are a summary note of a feedback session with DCPs on the roles of key actors (DCP meeting, Washington DC, September 2017) and an online survey of LEG members. A further document for secondary data analysis was a desk-based review on the effectiveness of LEGs, produced to gather evidence for better understanding of the basis for success and challenges facing LEGs as part of the LEG effectiveness workstream.

### **3.1.5 What analysis was in scope?**

This study involved analysis drawing on the primary data collected through the methods set out here, as well as the four secondary input documents provided by the Secretariat. Further document review was conducted as part of understanding the background context and links to other ongoing GPE workstreams (the bibliography provides details). The analysis allowed judgement of the weight to be placed on the various issues, and therefore a prioritisation of which issues and/or response mechanisms the Board may choose to further investigate and develop.

### **3.1.6 Development of the scope**

The scope was set out in the final inception report following consultations with Board members, the GPC, and the Secretariat. The original request for this assignment came from the Board in December 2016 to look at the operational efficiency of the model:

*The Board of Directors requests the Secretariat with the support of an external firm to examine the issues and options for ensuring Grant Agents, Coordinating Agencies, and Local Education Groups are operating efficiently and effectively as well as learning from past experience to deliver GPE 2020. This process will take into consideration other related work at the Secretariat. (BOD/2016/12-19)*

Later, in recognising in March 2017 that a core part of the operational model is country-level capacity development, the Board recommended that urgent action was needed to improve the funding model by:

*Clarifying responsibility and optimizing approaches for capacity building and technical assistance including in fragile and conflict affected states, requesting that this work be incorporated into the work tasked under BOD/2016/12-19 to commission an examination of the efficiency and effectiveness of Grant Agents, Coordinating Agencies, and Local Education Groups to deliver on GPE 2020. (BOD/2017/03-06)*

The Secretariat issued ToR responding to this request. Through further consultation with the Board on the ToR (December 2017) and the GPC on draft inception reports (January to February 2018), the scope was further developed. Most significant for the

scope, these developments included having a wider look at all roles and responsibilities in the country model rather than only capacity development, as well as bringing the role of the Secretariat itself into the study. An account of the consultation process around the scope and methodology is given in Annex B.1.

## 3.2 Guiding framework

The starting point for this study is the mapping of the roles and responsibilities of the key actors, which was conducted by the Secretariat. An initial 'key actors mapping' consolidated the roles and responsibilities of CAs, GAs, and LEGs as a body according to their ToR, grant guidelines, and the GPE Charter. The mapping also identified entry points for capacity development within the roles and responsibilities. A second mapping was carried out of the Secretariat's roles, based on internal consultation on responsibilities and activities against the GPE Charter (there are no public ToR for CLs).

The key actors mapping indicates that these three key actors have a large number of responsibilities. Similarly, the Secretariat undertakes many activities. The varied responsibilities can be generally categorised into six types:

- **Inclusive dialogue and collaboration:** Structured and facilitated conversations that welcome and encourage contributions from representatives of various stakeholders including the government, DPs, civil society, teachers' organisations, and the private sector.
- **Technical support and capacity development:** Provision of expertise and the process of strengthening the capacities of individuals, organisations and institutions to develop sustainable, effective and efficient systems.
- **QA:** Process of checks and reviews to ensure outputs meet the quality standards agreed and adopted by GPE.
- **Fiduciary oversight:** Responsibility for ensuring finances have been processed and used in accordance with the purposes intended by GPE, and are properly accounted for.
- **(Mutual) accountabilities:** The whole concept of GPE as a Partnership is underpinned by an ethos of mutual accountability throughout the education sector and national cycles. However there are some specific responsibilities for key actors related to fulfilling grant processes in order to move the GPE grant process forward.
- **Aid effectiveness approaches:** Efforts to ensure key actors and GPE programming follow and encourage aid effectiveness approaches as outlined in the Paris Declaration.

At the same time, the responsibilities within these categories take place across various points of the national education system cycle: sector planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Similarly, the responsibilities may fall under specific grant processes, ESPDG, PDG and ESPIG, although some may fall outside of a grant process (see Figure 1 below).

In addition, key actors in the country-level model may facilitate access to learning and knowledge exchange across countries. The KIX is expected to strengthen and reinforce these aspects in the country-level model. Likewise, the ASA is an important effort to strengthen transparency and civil society participation in sector planning, implementation, and monitoring. These two new funding windows, although also

regional and global in scope, may become relevant to the in-country operational model in the future.

**Figure 1: Roles and responsibilities across the education system cycle and categories**



Source: Authors, based on mapping

A hypothesis for this study is that there must be some areas where bottlenecks and challenges (or enabling factors) are experienced in delivering the roles and responsibilities envisaged for GPE 2020 and other areas where roles and responsibilities may not be sufficiently specified. The study thus looks at the realities for key actors in playing their roles as integral to the Partnership and how the operational model might be adapted to strengthen the cooperation system for supporting national systems.

The key actors mapping does identify some specific areas where capacity development is mentioned in the roles and responsibilities. However, the mapping also rightly shows that capacity development may be a part of almost all the responsibilities, where many interactions of a key actor with government may provide an opportunity for strengthening government capacity. Thus, capacity development may be something that key actors are able to consider across the full scope of their roles, within grant processes and as part of general best practice in the education sector (we note that GPE also leverages capacity development through the grants, which is outside the scope of this study). Consistent with the Secretariat's consultation with DCPs in September 2017, we adopt the following definition of capacity development: 'the process of strengthening the abilities of capacities of individuals, organisations and institutions to develop sustainable systems with effective and efficient use of resources'.

Capacity can exist at the individual level, at the organisational level and in the wider institutional environment, and hence bottlenecks and enabling factors may exist at these levels too. Individual-level capacity reflects the competencies of people in the organisation, including skills, knowledge, and attitudes. The organisational level comprises the structures, processes, and procedures of the organisation, while the institutional environment encompasses the broader system of institutions, laws, policies, and regulations within which an organisation operates, and in this case where the actors interact. The responsibilities and activities of the country-level model key

actors are most likely to focus on individual capacities or organisational capacities through tools and systems. However, GPE in the wider context may target all three levels of capacity through its global influence and significant grant funding. The current study focuses only on the level of capacity development supported by key actors as part of their roles and responsibilities.

### **3.3 Framework questions**

This study seeks to answer four broad framework questions, each of which has several sub-questions. These formed the guiding questions for interviews.

- 1. Is there clarity of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key actors?**
  - i. Which areas are less clear?**
  - ii. Where are duplications, inconsistencies and ambiguities perceived?**

This question intends to uncover where there are problems with the understanding of responsibilities between what is expected (as per guidance) and what is perceived. As the mapping documents demonstrate, there is a multitude of responsibilities; therefore, the intention is not to assess understanding of each and every responsibility but rather to allow obviously problematic areas to arise. Probing under this question would include: Are there duplications or ambiguities between the GA and the CA? Are there duplications between the GA or CA and the Secretariat or DCP?

- 2. What are the core enabling factors and bottlenecks to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities effectively?**

This question seeks to understand realities of delivering responsibilities. It is anticipated that bottlenecks and enabling factors might relate to the individual and organisational level, or the broader institutions including the expectations from the GPE model, the role of the DCP, the Secretariat, and variation in context.

- 3. What changes would further support key actors in fulfilling their roles effectively?**

This question aims to canvas options and strategies to improve the ability to deliver on GPE 2020. These options may relate to improving the current operational model as it is, for example through adjustments to the responsibilities or additional support from some actors. On the other hand, these options may relate to changed modalities in the operational arrangements and set-up at country-level. We seek to present key actors' views on what change would be beneficial, which along with the findings to the first four research questions, inform our recommendations.

- 4. How do key actors approach the responsibility for capacity development, and how could capacity development be delivered more effectively?**

Although technical support and capacity development is one specific area of responsibility, as the mapping shows, capacity development can take place through almost all the categories of responsibilities and phases of the education system. This question intends to give an opportunity for specific focus on the issue of capacity development. A thorough exploration of the approach to

capacity development could be the subject of an entire study, so within this study the intention is more to uncover key actors' understanding of capacity development. Further, the study does not include an evaluation of all capacity development leveraged by GPE such as through the grants.

Each of these questions was considered for the four groups of key actors (CAs, GAs, LEGs as a multi-partner platform, and the Secretariat) and their interactions as well as relative to the role of the DCPs. The questions also probed for variation by context, such as the implications of fragility and emergencies.

The study team purposefully limited this list of questions to allow more time to ask respondents about the reasons behind their answers and the perceived magnitude of an issue. Many specific issues were raised by stakeholders in the inception period as topics that this study could try to investigate. However, the team judged that an open and inductive approach<sup>5</sup> to the study would allow the real priority issues and suggestions to emerge, rather than leading participants to discuss a narrow set of predetermined issues.

When analysing the data, we found that issues of interaction between two actors were expressed as part of the focus of each of those two actors (such as the CA and GA). For ease of reviewing the relevant information about an actor, we have included this analysis in both of the relevant chapters. For example, duplication between CAs and GAs is included in both the CAs and GAs chapters. Initially we intended to treat capacity development in the same way. However, we found that many of the responses about capacity development were more general, rather than specific to a key actor, and thus applied across all actors. For this reason, capacity development is presented as a separate chapter.

### 3.4 Data collection

This study involved primary data collection via interviews and consultation with GPE partners, as well as review of secondary data in a small number of key documents. In addition, the study has involved consultation through the governance structure with the Board and GPC at inception and the report has been revised following consultation with the DCPs and GPC in May,<sup>6</sup> and finalised following the Board meeting held in June.

A summary of the primary data sources is given in Table 1, while a summary of the secondary data is given in Table 2.

**Table 1: Summary of primary data sources**

Primary data
<b>Telephone interviews with DCPs:</b> 8 telephone interviews 3 written responses*

<sup>5</sup> An inductive approach starts with open questions to observe patterns and themes, and later make hypotheses. This is different to a deductive approach, which starts with hypotheses and aims to test these.

<sup>6</sup> A summary of the DCP meeting break-out sessions is given in Annex L.

<b>Telephone interviews with DP HQs</b> who represent many CAs and/or GAs: 12 telephone interviews
<b>Telephone interviews with INGO HQs</b> who represent GAs: 2 telephone interviews
<b>Webinar with DP HQs</b> who have fewer or no CAs/GAs but are also on LEGs: 1 webinar participant 3 written responses*
<b>Webinar with CSOs</b> who represent CSO membership of LEGs: 6 webinar participants
<b>Written consultation with GPC members</b> on the Secretariat mapping: 4 written responses

\* Written responses were invited instead of telephone interviews/webinar participation when participants were not able to find an appropriate time for the call.

**Table 2: Summary of secondary data sources**

<b>Secondary data</b>
Mapping of roles and responsibilities of GAs, CAs and LEGs (see Annex J)
Mapping of the Secretariat's roles, provided by the Secretariat (see Annex K)
Summary of DCP Consultation
Summary of LEG survey
Desk-based review on LEGs, including summary
Other sources as relevant to findings (see the bibliography)

### 3.4.1 Primary data

Most of the data for this report are primary responses from stakeholders in the partnership model. We conducted individual and group semi-structured interviews by telephone/webinar and collected written responses from various stakeholders. The various methods largely used an *inductive* rather than *deductive* approach, meaning we sought to ask open questions and follow up with probing.

#### Instruments

The team developed five instruments for the primary data collection:

- **A semi-structured topic guide for interviews with DCPs.** This worked through the framework questions with further prompts and probes. They focused largely on the roles of CAs and GAs, but also on how those two roles relate to the Secretariat and the LEG. These interviews lasted around one hour. The interview guide is given in Annex E.1. Some interviewees preferred to send a written response rather than undertake a telephone interview, and for this a simplified questionnaire template was sent.

- **A semi-structured topic guide for interviews with CAs and GAs.** This again worked through the framework questions with further prompts and probes. The questions focused on the role of the key actor being interviewed, but also on how the role relates to the other key actors. Where an agency represents both CAs and GAs, the questions were covered for both key actors. The interview guide is given in Annex E.2. These interviews lasted one to two hours.
- **A questionnaire sent to CA and GA HQs in advance, for them to send to their colleagues in country roles to seek 'on-the-ground' experience and examples of the key actors' roles.** Country colleagues were asked to return the questionnaires to their HQ colleagues and to copy them to Oxford Policy Management (OPM).
- **A presentation and guided questions for facilitating two webinars with a focus on LEGs.** One webinar was held with CSOs and the other with DPs, but the materials and questions were largely the same. Where partners were not available to attend, they were given the choice to send a written response to a questionnaire that reflected the webinar questions.
- **A written consultation questionnaire focusing on the roles of the Secretariat, in response to the Secretariat's own mapping.** This again reflected the framework questions but with a focus on the Secretariat. This was sent to members of the GPC.

The nature of this data collection means that not all respondents covered every possible topic, i.e. every framework question for every key actor role. This means that, where respondents have not spoken about a topic, we cannot say there is the absence of something to say in their case (or by that conclude that it is or is not an issue). That said, we are confident that enough responses were provided to each question to offer a robust degree of triangulation.

## Sampling

The sampling approach was agreed in inception after discussion and improvement from the GPC, following an initial proposal by the Secretariat in consultation with OPM. The broad parameters for the purposive approach and specific details for choosing respondents were:

- **To get a representation of DCPs across constituencies.** The Secretariat selected the Board and Alternate Board member countries. Within this, the DCP focal points were selected to be contacted. When the study team struggled to get hold of a critical number of DCPs, the Secretariat suggested a secondary list of DCPs/focal points from the same constituencies that were at risk of being underrepresented.
- **To hold in-depth interviews with agencies who cover the largest portion of GAs and CAs and diversity of types of agency.** This included multilateral, bilateral, and INGO partners. Within those agencies, the Secretariat selected staff members at HQs who have roles on GPE committees.
- **To give an opportunity for wider DPs to take part.** Other DPs who are not GAs/CAs in a large number of countries were invited to the webinar. Within those agencies, the Secretariat selected staff members at HQs who are focal points for GPE.

- **To get a representation of civil society's views.** The Secretariat selected a number of CSOs who were invited to the webinar. Again from those agencies, the Secretariat selected staff members who are focal points for GPE.
- **To get a range of views across Board constituencies on the Secretariat mapping.** For this, given the limited time available for additional interviews, the Secretariat proposed to seek written responses from GPC members who were asked to further consult their Board constituencies as they had with the inception report.

The Secretariat's sampling approach is set out in Annex C, along with the list of participants contacted and who responded to the study.

## Confidentiality

**The data collected for this study were not anonymous or confidential.** The Secretariat asked that all interviews be recorded to aid processing of the interview data and in case further analysis of the interviews was later required. Interviewees had the opportunity to object if they preferred not to be recorded. The Secretariat also initially asked that all recordings, interview notes, or written responses be shared with the Secretariat. These were to be shared because the study originally was not emphasised by the Board as being independent, although this emphasis later changed. The Secretariat has since confirmed that it does not need to receive the recordings.

The views of agencies were not to be anonymous in line with the Partnership's approach to transparency and accountability. The study is designed to be an open consultancy in order to seek institutional positions and understand divergent views. Opinions need to be attributable in order for the Partnership to remediate and find consensus. The views of DCPs are to remain unidentifiable in the report, and similarly any country examples given by agencies that would be traceable to specific individuals are to be unidentifiable. However, all institutions and names of respondents are noted in this report in Annex C.

These data collection protocols were explained to participants when contacted by email and at the start of their interviews. A few respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this approach as they felt it would hold them (and others) back from giving a full and uninhibited response. For these responses, the OPM team confirmed before the interview that the audio recordings will not be shared with the Secretariat but the interview notes will be shared.

## Organisation of data collection

For all the interviews, OPM contacted the invited respondents directly, giving background information about the study, an indication of the interview questions (for the CAs/GAs this included the questionnaire for them to send out to colleagues), and a suggested time for the interview. Suggested dates for interviews were at least one week later for DCPs, and at least two weeks later for CAs/GAs to allow time for preparation. OPM sent follow-up emails and made telephone calls to invited respondents to arrange the schedule for the interviews.

The invitations to the webinars were sent two weeks in advance by the Secretariat on behalf of OPM. During the webinar itself, the Secretariat provided hosting support but the Secretariat's officers managing this study were not present.

The written consultation request was sent to GPC members by the Secretariat on behalf of OPM, with a request for responses within two weeks. To secure more responses, OPM extended this to three weeks.

All interviews and webinars were carried out by five education specialists from OPM. Data collection was carried out in English, French, and one DCP interview in Spanish. The interviewers then wrote notes (in English) from the interview, using audio recordings if necessary for clarification. The interview notes were not verbatim transcripts and as such direct quotations are not used. Translation was carried out by the trilingual researcher when writing up the notes into English. Written responses were processed by the same five team members.

## Limitations

Several limitations to the primary data collection should be noted:

- The lack of anonymity and confidentiality undoubtedly affected some respondents, inhibiting their willingness to express the full views of their agency or country experience. This is not an approach OPM would usually use but was the request in this case given that the study was considered an open consultation.
- The quality and depth of responses was very mixed. For GA/CA agencies, this generally depended on the extent to which they had sought responses from country colleagues and prepared for the interview. (That said, some interviewees did not review country-level questionnaires but still had strong views to put forward from HQ.) For DCPs, a challenge was either that the respondent was very new to the role and so not yet familiar with GPE, the key actors or the procedures, or that they sent a written response that was variable in the depth of explanation.
- This study is not an evaluation, and therefore does not use methods to uncover the varied realities of the model 'on the ground'. Rather, it uncovers perceptions of the situation as collated at agencies' HQs, and as respondents choose to report them to us.

### 3.4.2 Secondary data

The GPE Secretariat prepared five inputs for this assignment that have been used at various points in the study. These were:

- **The mapping of roles and responsibilities** for CAs, GAs, and LEGs, as per all relevant GPE guidance (grant guidelines, ToR for CAs and GAs, GPE Charter, and ESPIG policy), outlined along the different grant processes, and a specific focus on their respective roles in capacity development. This was largely used in the initial scoping phase and to prepare the study team ahead of interviews.
- **The mapping of the Secretariat's activities**, elaborating what Secretariat does against the responsibilities set out the Charter.
- **A summary of the DCP Consultation session** on key actors' effectiveness at performing their responsibilities, held in September 2017, with two sub-groups of DCP representatives. This was coded in the qualitative research software NVivo 11 and has been analysed alongside the primary data, although it presents high-level summaries to which the primary data seeks to bring more depth.

- **A desk-based review on LEG effectiveness**, conducted in view of developing technical guidance to strengthen the overall effectiveness and functioning of LEGs based on evidence.
- **Results from an online survey of LEG members**. In total 154 respondents completed the survey from across DCPs, GAs, CAs, national CSOs, and other DPs, collecting opinions of stakeholders regarding the functioning of their LEGs. These two documents on LEGs have fed into the analysis for the chapter on LEGs in this report.

The study team also reviewed a number of background documents to provide context to the evolution and likely further developments of the operational model. These included a number of further background documents prepared by the Secretariat, including the historical overview of GPE's evolution (Annex H), and the overview of other workstreams (Annex I).

### 3.4.3 Analysis

Analysis took place in various stages, intended to assure consistency and quality across the process. First, interview notes were written up following a standard template by the team member who conducted the interview. As mentioned above, the notes are not verbatim transcripts but reflect the points being put across by interviewees. Moreover, the interviewers added some commentary (clearly marked as such) where they had a privileged interpretation of what the respondent said from having been present in the interview.

All the interview notes and written responses were coded in NVivo 11. This is an analytical process, in which notes and transcripts are read systematically and findings tagged against thematic nodes. The contents of these nodes can then be turned into an output, producing a secondary body of material, now collated by thematic code, which greatly facilitates and improves the quality of writing. Overall, 36 sources of primary data were collected, which requires a systematic method of processing to navigate the key themes and consistent and diverging views. A coding structure was set up by the study lead that categorised findings by key actor, sub-framework questions, or cross-cutting theme. Each team member coded their own interviews and some additional written responses. The study lead reviewed the team's coding as they proceeded, for consistency and to deal with ambiguities. Where a passage in the notes related to multiple key actors, it was tagged against the multiple relevant codes.

The study team came together for a half-day workshop to discuss the key findings from the interviews/responses they had coded, and to begin formulating the main evidence and findings to go into the report. Team members each then drafted chapters of the report, using the data exported from NVivo under the relevant codes and referring to the background documents for further evidence or context. The study lead and qualitative research specialist provided feedback and QA at various stages in the analysis and writing process. Finally, team members reviewed each other's chapters for consistency in findings and themes, or to resolve differences in interpretation of the data.

### 3.5 How to read this report

Part B of this report sets out the findings organised first around the four key actors, then followed by a chapter specifically on the cross-cutting issue of capacity development. Each chapter is structured in the same way, covering first the clarity on the roles and responsibilities, then the bottlenecks and enabling factors, followed by respondents' suggestions for changes, and finally brief conclusions. OPM's own recommendations, drawing on our analysis in Part B, are set out in Part C.

We aim to be clear on the source of views, i.e. whether we heard something from DPs, CSOs, or recipient governments, and across what volume of respondents. Where a view has come from a DP, sometimes this reflects the HQ's view and other times it relates to feedback the HQ has heard from their colleagues in-country – though these could be colleagues in the CA, GA, or LEG roles depending on the context. Thus, we often refer to 'DPs' more generally, and where possible we specify 'GAs' or 'CAs' where we know they were representing the views of their colleagues in these positions.

It should be noted that not all respondents spoke to all topics and key actors equally. For example, the role of the LEGs was explored in most depth with CSOs and a small number of DPs who themselves are very infrequently CAs (and never GAs). Thus, the findings on LEGs draw heavily from these sources but cannot tell us what other respondents might have said about LEGs had there been more time for this discussion.

We found that when respondents would speak about 'GPE' they could mean a range of different things. For some, this is the whole Partnership, led by the Board of Directors. For others, this is the Secretariat generally, and for some respondents such as DCPs they would see GPE as specifically the CLs who represent what they know of the GPE. We have interpreted which meaning of GPE we feel their responses were referring to.

A final caveat to bear in mind in reading the findings is that, across many of the responses, participants recognised that there is great variation in what happens in practice across different individuals. Thus, where both positive and negative comments are made – particularly by agencies speaking collectively for a range of country experiences – these comments relate to some occasions and individuals and not a homogenous picture. Further, respondents also recognised that this sort of variation is bound to occur within these sorts of structures and organisations.

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# Part B: Findings

## 4 LEGs

The LEG is a multi-partner collaborative group that constitutes one of the key actors in the GPE operational model. While its form and composition vary across DCPs, the LEG is expected to bring together the diversity of education stakeholders within a country as a platform to engage in education policy dialogue, alignment, and harmonisation around the planning, implementation, and monitoring of country-owned ESPs or transitional education plans (TEPs).<sup>7</sup> Generally created and led by the country's MOE, the LEG can include representatives of government (e.g. ministries of finance, higher education, civil service, women and children, health, etc.), bi- and multilateral development agencies, teacher unions, parent groups, students, education implementation partners (e.g. private or non-governmental organisations), religious organisations, and CSOs representing diverse population groups.<sup>8</sup> Financing partners can – and usually are -- involved in LEGs. A full mapping of a LEG's responsibilities is provided in Annex J and Box 2 below gives an overview. LEG is a generic term at the global level created by the GPE for naming this coordination mechanism, and is utilised throughout this report for clarity. Examples of alternative names used in country include Education Sector Development Committee, Joint Education Sector Working Group, Education Technical Working Group, and ESP Consortium (GPE, 2017a).

This chapter focuses on how the key actors and other education stakeholders view the LEGs in regard to the first three framework questions (see Section 3.3). It begins by seeking to understand how key actors regard the clarity of the roles and responsibilities of the LEGs. It then focuses on the practical experiences, including challenges and enabling factors, which have an impact on the ability of the LEGs to perform their defined functions. The chapter goes on to identify suggestions from the respondents on how to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the LEGs. Finally, the chapter ends with brief conclusions.

The LEGs represent a broad range of organisational models and activities, and the small scale of this qualitative study provided some depth about experiences of LEGs.<sup>9</sup> Experience with LEGs was the focus of the webinars with CSOs and DPs (who tend not to be GAs or CAs), and discussed more briefly with DCPs, CAs, and GAs. Additional research information for this chapter was gathered from a set of documents, including a desk-based review of LEG effectiveness, a LEG survey, and the 2017 DCP Consultation meeting. This chapter will depict the diversity of LEG experiences and highlight the influence of the national context and dynamics to enrich the understanding of the model's effectiveness in-country. The voices of CSOs and DPs are pronounced in this chapter, as their consultations were specifically focused on the LEGs, but, to the greatest extent possible, these are balanced with the experience of other key actors.

<sup>7</sup> Several GPE documents have provided definitions of the LEG – see Annex F.

<sup>8</sup> The GPE encourages the participation of national representatives of CSOs (e.g. coalitions of CSOs) to make the participation more manageable given the diversity and myriad of civil society groups.

<sup>9</sup> In 2016, there were 61 LEGs in the 65 GPE member countries and each is unique in its composition and function (GPE, 2017g).

## Box 2: Roles and responsibilities of LEGs

The LEG lies at the heart of GPE and is founded on the principle of collective support for a single country-led process towards the development, endorsement, and implementation of an ESP. GPE's intent is to strengthen country-owned coordinating structures and decision-making processes for effective and inclusive policy dialogue. The LEG is therefore a collaborative forum for education sector policy dialogue under government leadership, where the primary consultation on education sector development takes place between a government and its partners.

The LEG is first and foremost accountable to the citizens of the country it serves, promoting sector progress and transparent reporting of sector results, including on learning outcomes. It operates through planning, monitoring, and review mechanisms and procedures that are both transparent and inclusive. The LEG designates the CA through consensus (including the government), and defines the tasks, accountabilities, and operational procedures of the CA in light of the existing country-level arrangements of the education sector.

In addition to responsibilities around contributing to sector dialogue and consultative forums, the LEG endorses the selection of the GA and serves as a forum for the organisation of ESP or TEP endorsement by partners.

The LEG is also expected to provide meaningful and effective support to the implementation of the ESP, bringing technical expertise, voice, innovation, and experience. It should also contribute to the organisation of effective government-led joint sector review or equivalent mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the ESP/TEP.

Source: GPE (2017c) (see Annex J).

## 4.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the LEG are defined through a variety of documents, which have been summarised by a desk-based review (see cited definitions in Annex F). According to these documents, the mandate of the LEGs is defined as encompassing a policy dialogue platform formed by a collaborative group, connecting national education partners with the government, or connecting DPs with the government. The main activities of the LEGs focus around the development, implementation, and monitoring of the ESP and GPE processes such as grant applications and GA selection. However, in practice, the understanding of the definition and role of the LEGs among key actors proves to be more complex. This section examines the identification of the LEG, its composition, and its activities.

### 4.1.1 Identifying the LEG

**LEGs exist in many countries, although they are sometimes called by another name or exist in parallel to another similar multi-stakeholder group.** Before the GPE grant application process, several countries already had a sector-wide, collaborative platform for the entire group of DPs in education. In these cases, once the GPE grant is sought, the group can effectively operate as the LEG. A few interviewees also mentioned that a new and separate LEG group had been constituted with some of the same members as the existing platform, but operates in parallel, with its scope limited to GPE-related processes. Finally, in those cases where no sector dialogue structure exists, the country is encouraged to create a LEG.

A few respondents suggested that it is not always clear which group is considered the LEG at the country level. One DCP identified the LEG as an education sector policy

dialogue platform chaired by two DPs and government with the CA taking on the coordination of the GPE fund, which appears aligned with GPE documents (Annex F). One DP mentioned that the creation of the separate, parallel LEG entity (in addition to an existing broader education sector platform) can cause an overload of work for members in both groups and much confusion as well. Several key actors, including CAs, CSOs and DPs, found that the identification of the LEG was not straightforward. Several other CSOs concurred with one CSO when they posed the following question during the consultation: 'When is a LEG a LEG?' This question summarises the confusion around the identification or constitution of a LEG and having a consultative multi-stakeholder policy group.

#### 4.1.2 Variability in LEG composition

**The composition of the LEGs varies among countries and this can underscore the confusion about the LEG identification within a country.** GPE clearly details guidance on LEG governance with a strong focus on inclusion, whereby members should emanate from three main stakeholder groups – the national government, bilateral and multilateral DPs, and other education DPs and civil society (GPE, 2015b and 2017a). The Results Framework also includes an indicator measuring the LEG's inclusiveness in terms of teacher and civil society representation (GPE, 2016c). Our research found that LEGs are composed most often, and at minimum, of senior members of the education ministry, line ministries, and DPs. Depending on its functions and individual representatives, that baseline group could cause confusion with the DP group, which has been established in many countries pre-GPE grants to improve harmonisation of donor-related investments in education. More inclusive LEGs include representation as promoted in GPE documents, namely that civil society, teacher unions, private sector, parent and student representatives, religious groups, and other stakeholders are invited by government to participate (GPE, 2016a). In recent years, the GPE has promoted greater inclusivity and active participation in LEG participation by investing in several country-level funds targeting civil society (the Civil Society Education Fund) and teacher organisations (the Global and Regional Activities programme). The new ASA mechanism also aims to strengthen civil society participation in education sector planning, policy dialogue and monitoring (GPE, 2017k).

**The extent of CSO inclusion – and CSOs' degree of engagement once they are members – was a focus of attention on the part of many respondents in this study as well as in the desk-based review.** During our interviews and consultations, CSO participation was cast as sometimes being weak by CSOs themselves, as well as by some GAs and CAs, because LEG participation is limited to those CSOs that already endorse the government or DPs. According to some GAs and CAs, if the representative voices of other CSOs are not considered, then the LEG process is not fully inclusive for improved sector policy dialogue. The desk-based review also found that the degree of engagement of CSOs is variable and a factor of their limited capacity or of the government's selective inclusiveness. For example, the CSOs in one country were invited during the initial ESP planning phase but not to the budget allocation decision-making meeting. This could lead to a reduction in the LEG's potential effectiveness if questions and issues are not properly channelled and debated within the LEG. During the DCP consultation in Maputo, some noted that LEGs need a better understanding of the importance of inclusiveness for LEG effectiveness and education outcomes more generally.

**In some cases, the participation of CSOs in the LEG can lead to a conflict of interest for both the government and the CSO.** A few global CSO constituents and DPs noted that, in certain countries, the relationship between the government and CSOs is tenuous, uncooperative, or oppositional. As such, a national CSO might not want to accept a government invitation to the LEG, because it would change other CSOs' perceptions of their dedication to challenging government programmes and policies. On the other hand, global CSOs have also observed that government might not want to encourage CSO participation in the LEG, which could increase conflict and reduce effectiveness. One DP noted that, while much effort to include civil society has been relatively successful at the global level, there is still much work to be done at the national level.

### 4.1.3 Degree and range of LEG activities

**Participants in this study, including DPs, GAs, CAs and CSOs, highlighted the intensity in the LEGs' activity as a main factor for effectiveness and participation.** According to interview data, the frequency of meetings either can be regular (quarterly or monthly) or can vary according to the degree of required LEG activity. For example, during the development of the ESP, LEG meetings can be as frequent as once per month. In some countries, where LEG members consider the LEG to be functioning properly, regular LEG meetings bring together the panoply of parties involved in education planning and implementation to endorse and oversee the implementation of the ESP. For example, according to several sources, the LEG in one country takes on many activities, including an annual review of progress of the ESP and the management of technical working groups, and the government holds regular plenary and subcommittee meetings.

In several countries, where LEGs are considered weaker, LEG meetings are held irregularly, and with short notice or no preparatory materials provided to participants (especially to CSOs). Further, the follow-up between meetings is limited. While these meetings could serve to share information with education stakeholders, they do not provide an adequate or timely platform for decision making or discussion, which can be frustrating to many participants. During the CSO consultation, one respondent noted that such perfunctory meetings tend to occur after a visit from the GPE country lead. An outlier DCP indicated that the LEG had to meet outside of the country – and could only do so twice a year – due to an active crisis situation.

**The level of active involvement in the LEGs' activities varies by category of key actor and by activity.** According to the LEG survey findings, GAs and CAs are the most active members of the LEG – more than DCPs – especially in relation to GPE grant application, implementation, and monitoring processes. Slightly more than half of DCPs indicated that they were actively involved in these processes (GPE, 2017h).<sup>10</sup> This study found that many CAs found their role to over-dominate that of the DCPs when these were less active than expected and the LEGs did not function effectively.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> On the question related to involvement in GPE grant application processes, 57% of DCPs answered that they were very involved, 14% somewhat involved, and 29% not involved. On the question related to involvement in implementation and monitoring activities, 62% of DCPs answered that they were very involved, 8% somewhat involved, and 31% not involved.

<sup>11</sup> A better understanding of the relationship between CAs and DCPs in the LEG would benefit from a more in-depth examination which would factor in the diversity of LEG compositions and setups across countries.

In one country, a joint group was responsible for developing, endorsing and monitoring the implementation of the ESP, but it was not clear to the DCP if that group was considered the LEG. A DP indicated that one country had technical working groups composed of multiple key actors, and each group was responsible for reviewing progress in one area or sub-sector per the ESP. Also, it was noted by one CA that the level of involvement of donors could be fragmented within a LEG, regardless of the degree of commitment of the government. CSOs tended to note that they are not consulted during the GPE grant application process or for other strategic decisions.

The desk-based review provided additional information with relation to specific GPE-related activities. An analysis of 14 ToR of LEGs in GPE member countries found that most LEGs make direct reference to supporting the ESP implementation (GPE, 2017g). Open ended questions in the LEG survey on implication of each key actors in the GPE grant and implementation processes revealed that there is much variance among countries.<sup>12</sup> Some CAs and DCPs were quite involved in monitoring the ESP, while in other countries, they felt that the GA was essentially controlling the grant-monitoring processes. DPs were invited in some countries to join in joint sector reviews (GPE 2017I).

**Part of the role confusion identified by DPs, GAs, CAs, and CSOs relates to the functions held by the LEG.** In some countries, the LEG operates more like a grant-management entity overseeing GPE's funding in a project-like fashion than as a sector-wide collaborative platform.<sup>13</sup> According to several DPs, GAs, CAs, and CSOs, this occurs when LEG roles and processes are not clear to its members. The critique of this grant-focused function is that there is a risk that GPE-funded activities are not included as part of a sector-wide discussion with other DPs and not necessarily aligning with other DPs' work or with the ESP more broadly. These practices are in contradiction with the intended purposes of the LEGs as outlined in the GPE documents (Annexes F and J) and put the principles of alignment and mutual accountability of the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness at risk. Several DPs envision that an effective LEG has the broader ability to transform the education sector, rather than act as another programme oversight committee.

**The definition of the LEGs' functions in the GPE guidance documents also lends itself to confusion.** The mapping and GPE documents indicate that the LEG lies at the heart of the GPE architecture and is the foundation of GPE's governance, being linked to GPE activities such as supporting government applications for GPE funds and engaging in the GA selection process (GPE 2017c; see Annexes F and J). The GPE documents also indicate that the LEG is a collaborative platform for education sector policy dialogue and for contributing to evidence-based exchanges. The LEG functions as a consultative body, but decisions are sovereign to the government (GPE Charter, 2016b). The World Bank reinforced this notion that the LEGs do not have veto power or the ability to make sector policy decisions, but recognised this was not well understood by LEG members or clear in GPE documents. The country example provided by the World Bank indicated that the consequence of the LEG members thinking they had more decision-making power than in reality was a lengthy six-month process for the GA selection, which effectively delayed GPE disbursements. In the LEG survey, more than half the respondents (81 of 154 total) stated that more clearly

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<sup>12</sup> Most answers did not specify the type of grant that was being discussed.

<sup>13</sup> This is inferred to relate to the ESPIG but was not indicated in the data.

defined roles and responsibilities for LEG members would improve their effectiveness (GPE, 2017h).

## 4.2 Bottlenecks and enabling factors

This study identified several areas around the engagement and the commitment of the LEGs that could act either as enabling factors contributing to the positive aspects of the LEG or as bottlenecks limiting its effectiveness and efficiency. These areas, which are discussed in this section, include the level of government leadership and ownership of the LEG and the technical capacity of LEG members.

### 4.2.1 Government leadership and ownership of the LEG

**The government's commitment and leadership in the LEG has direct implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of the LEG processes.** National ownership and government leadership of the LEG is underscored in GPE documents as the normative value for LEGs.<sup>14</sup> The desk-based review of LEGs found that government leadership contributed significantly to LEG effectiveness in practice (GPE, 2017g). Our analysis of the interviews and consultations strongly reaffirm these findings: partners feel that national uptake and government leadership are both critical, and without them LEG effectiveness is compromised. The non-government respondents identified strong government leadership, ownership, and direction as factors that enable the coordination and assertion of LEG effectiveness. Consequently, when government capacity and direction are weak within the LEG, this creates a bottleneck in engaging key actors to work together. Country examples provided by DCPs and DPs in this study linked the importance of clear LEG leadership structure to enabling multi-stakeholder participatory discussions and reaching consensus on challenging issues.

**The government ownership of the LEG process is considered by some key actors as a means to ensure mutual accountability between the government and its partners more generally.** According to GPE documents, LEG processes should be owned by the government. When there is weak ownership at the government level, it is not clear how the GPE grant mechanism is built into the government's sector objectives, regardless of the relative size of GPE financing among other DPs. In particular, if other DPs are not included – or do not want to participate – in discussions that occur within the LEG, the GPE grant functions in isolation from other programmes in terms of implementation and monitoring. In brief, low government ownership can lead to a lack of alignment of GPE processes with national education objectives. One CA noted that the sustainability of donor harmonisation requires the government to be in the driving seat.

**If the government's capacity to lead the LEG is weak, ineffective, or non-existent, other key actors sometimes take over grant application, management, or coordination responsibilities from the government.** The dominant DP can take over the grant application process from a disengaged government. Several DPs found that this low level of involvement effectively removes the government from any later

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<sup>14</sup> In the GPE documents and as reported in most countries reviewed in this study, the MOE is usually the chair of the LEG and determines governance and leadership arrangements.

engagement in the grant development and implementation processes. Several CAs mentioned that any greater level of involvement of the CA in LEG processes than those indicated in the mapping creates the risk that the LEG is seen as a donor or DP-led instrument and no longer as a government entity.<sup>15</sup> In the context of FCAS, where an organisation has been the education authority or country leader for some time, the newly created LEG and DCP might proactively defer to that organisation to become CA and take on additional responsibilities to support the LEG. This situation was highlighted as a positive achievement in several countries during the interviews.

**The expected role of the CA in supporting the government as chair of the LEG can lead to confusion, especially in cases where the government leadership capacity is weak.** According to GPE guidance documents, the government is chair and the CA facilitates the work of the LEG to reduce transaction costs for government. The CA's role is to actively support the government in coordinating the LEG activities (GPE, 2017g).<sup>16</sup> Yet this does not always work in practice. A couple of CSOs noted that when the MOE does not appear to be in the 'driving seat', the CA (or the GA) does not always take over the LEG leadership on its own. The CSOs provided one such scenario whereby they received unclear or evasive information from the government and the CA separately in response to their request to be invited to become a member of the LEGs.

**For a small number of respondents, the gap between the expected LEG functions and those observed in practice are troubling, since there is little oversight or external validation of the LEG's activities.** In a few countries, CSOs have described LEGs as being 'inactive', 'comatose', or simply non-existent, even though they are indicated as active consultative bodies in the GPE grant application. Some CSOs also noted that the Secretariat's oversight of the LEG is too superficial to determine whether the LEG is truly inclusive and functioning as expected according to GPE documents. The one form of Secretariat oversight on the LEGs is the collection of data for the Results Framework with regards to inclusivity. Given that the LEGs are owned by the government, these key actors noted that the Secretariat has little direct influence on the LEG functionality.

The data gathered in this study did not enable us to understand the factors that lead to weak government leadership.

## 4.2.2 Technical capacity

**The technical capacity of LEG members was raised as one of the major limitations or enabling factors of LEG effectiveness.** As reported in some countries, the LEGs have technical working groups composed of education specialists from DPs, ministries, NGOs, and other organisations, which meet regularly to discuss and resolve strategic issues around a specific theme or sub-sector. Several DCPs indicated that these regular meetings and open communication exchanges among LEG members were valuable learning opportunities for other LEG members. Conversely, when technical capacity is limited within the LEG, the individual members or organisations do

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<sup>15</sup> The CA's expected role with regards to the ESPDG and, at a later stage, the ESPIG is to facilitate inclusive consultation and coordination among DPs, the government, and other partners in the LEG (GPE, 2017c).

<sup>16</sup> In a country-based evaluation, this organisational structure was considered a success factor because time had been taken to ensure quality of management and coordination (Stegmann and Gasana, 2015).

not have the knowledge or experience to resolve the LEG's questions or understand specific issues. These knowledge gaps can cause significant barriers in planning, strategic analysis and policy dialogue. Several DPs and DCPs also indicated that MOE staff were not always aware of more recent developments in the field and could not find the time to increase their knowledge base. Moreover, technical capacity can be unbalanced within a group, causing the stronger technical lead to have a more privileged position with respect to other members of the LEG. Several CAs, GAs, and DPs, including the European Union (EU), Ireland, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), mentioned that the high staff turnover within ministries appears to reduce the organisational technical capacity of the LEGs.

**The LEG desk review found that utilisation of the capacity of individual LEG members is not maximised.** When the government does not utilise and benefit from the LEG members' expertise, a consequence noted by several respondents is unnecessary delays in achieving GPE-related processes such as grant applications and implementation and monitoring processes. Several CA and GA respondents noted that enabling factors for improved LEG effectiveness could include the participation of the multi-stakeholder group in annual joint sector reviews or education summits to discuss and seek agreement on specific issues.

### 4.3 Respondents' suggestions for changes

During the discussions about the LEG, the respondents raised various suggestions which are presented in this section.

#### 4.3.1 Improve clarity of roles for LEG members

**If the LEG was the only central, multi-stakeholder entity to oversee education planning, implementation, and monitoring, respondents felt that it would enable a more efficient and harmonised process around the joint implementation of the ESP.** This recommendation stems from two separate scenarios: first, in those countries where other multi-stakeholder education working groups operate and, second, when LEGs focus heavily on the GPE grants at the exclusion of other programmes. If the LEG became inclusive of the wider set of actors in the education sector – whether financing entities or not – the Partnership could facilitate a more effective and efficient transformation of the education sector. According to several CAs and GAs, the LEG needs to have a broader view of education and not limit its perspective solely to those activities financed by the GPE grant. These proposed roles for the LEGs are aligned with GPE expectations for the LEGs: the practical implementation of the LEGs is a concern at the country level.

LEG leadership needs to be oriented to ensuring the LEG contributes to achieving national education objectives. The government is in a unique position to align the GPE grant with a sector-wide vision and ensure that all DPs (including bilateral and multilateral institutions) do so as well. GPE may regard itself as part of a more global approach to grant-making in the education sector, and the LEG as an instrument in coordinating, discussing and monitoring the harmonised implementation of the ESP. Some DPs have been seen to develop education sector activities according to their own priorities – not necessarily aligned with ESPs – and developed separate monitoring processes. Bringing these programmes and activities together under the LEG umbrella would enable greater coordination and accountability among externally funded programmes – a point made by CAs, DPs, and CSOs.

**The government needs to lead the LEG effectively and benefit from the members' comparative advantage to maximise LEG effectiveness.** The challenge in setting the LEG as the main education stakeholders' group in a country is the government's commitment to the mechanism. The government's aspiration to work in a holistic manner across several sectors, with various DPs, advocates, and implementation actors, needs to be supported with strong leadership. As in many contexts, the momentum can occur with dynamic individual actors, higher-level political willpower, or a national vision for improved education outcomes. In one outlier situation, as cited by several DPs, the government no longer appears interested in coordinating with DPs, which has led the LEG to discourage the idea of a pooled fund or coordinating mechanism such as might otherwise be more efficient. One possible explanation for this situation is that the country is considered FCAS.

**All other members of the LEG should be identified with a particular functional objective within the LEG.** The LEG for each country could determine the roles for individuals themselves, and provide clarity with respect to the government's expected objectives. One DCP suggested that each key actor could have a specific role, respectively, in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the ESP, and suggested that donors provide funding support, multilaterals provide TA, and implementing partners support service delivery. Collectively, in this ESP process, they would contribute to institutional reform, capacity development, and national ownership for education sector policies. One CSO suggested that GPE needs to lay down stronger minimum guidelines for the expected functions to be attributed to LEG members during GPE processes.

### 4.3.2 Enable functional representation of education stakeholders in the LEG

**Creating more meaningful representation among the panoply of education stakeholders was cited as essential for improved effectiveness in planning and implementation processes.** Having a variety of DPs and NGOs present in a multi-stakeholder education group led by the government could enable better coordination among projects by theme (e.g. teacher training, early childhood, etc.) or by sub-region. As CSOs can be underrepresented within LEGs, there is a recognition among respondents (including CAs, CSOs, and DPs) that the substantive participation of civil society is required to improve sector policy dialogue. CSOs can often share their experience and knowledge of challenges and positive experiences at subnational levels, in remote regions, or among specific population groups. However, the concern of many DCPs about inclusiveness in the LEG is that it risks becoming unwieldy and they are not able to manage the related challenges, such as delays and stalemates. Other sources of concern include the nature of inclusiveness (e.g., What CSO should be included? What civil society coalition is representative?), and ensuring that each group has an active and participatory role. This is more complex in FCAS, as the government and CSOs or other parties might not have the means or interest to support the inclusion of all stakeholders.

**GPE documents identify LEG roles and responsibilities, but have less clear guidance on how to execute those functions** (see Annexes F and J). Many respondents (from all categories of key actors) said the GPE documents were clear – if too voluminous for some – but were concerned about the gap with the observed practices. The standard response to this issue was to state that GPE should provide more precise guidance on how to operationalise its expectations for the LEGs. One CA

warned that greater guidance would also be needed to ensure sufficient flexibility for adaptation with local and national contexts. One DCP suggested that the GPE Secretariat should provide case studies and examples of successful LEGs. The current Secretariat workstream around the development of LEG guidance and tools seeks to respond to the need for more precise direction, as well as to provide more formal support based on robust evidence and good practices.<sup>17</sup> The proposed support could be in the form of guidance documents and tools on specific issues such as conducting an effective joint sector review, self-assessments, and monitoring effectiveness of education sector processes. The Secretariat is currently in the design process for the development of guidelines for joint sector reviews (including a self-assessment tool and other tools) and on national budget monitoring, which will be available by end of FY2018.

### 4.3.3 Focus on transparency and accountability

**Accountability in the GPE grant processes requires monitoring from the LEG.** All the stakeholders that should be represented in the LEG – that is, government, DPs and implementation partners (including the private sector), and a broad representation of CSOs – should be conducting this monitoring jointly. Current monitoring practices seem to be insufficient and exclusive, as they can involve the GA, the CA, and the government separately, each following their own processes independently despite the fact they are all reaching for similar, broad sector-wide objectives. One CSO suggested that LEG guidelines could offer guidance on how to conduct joint sector reviews more effectively. The DCP consultation in Maputo also reinforced the need for greater fiduciary and operational accountability of GA grant management activities, which could take place through the Secretariat and be shared with DCPs as part of the LEG mechanism.

**With regards to GPE grants, the LEGs need to maintain more focus on the performance and results of the grant, rather than disproportionately on planning processes.** According to some CSOs and DPs, the LEGs should have to develop a series of national standards and guidelines measuring country progress. This has been recommended in the context of the current development of guidance documents for LEGs, which support greater effectiveness of LEGs (Annex I). According to one particular CSO, GPE's monitoring activities are about 'getting things done', holding closed-door side meetings with the GA and the CA. Improved transparency on these activities – combined with more meaningful representation – should be a priority.

## 4.4 Conclusions

Across the interview and consultation responses, in addition to the review of secondary sources, this study found that LEGs' roles and responsibilities are not always well understood and executed in practice despite the clarity in the GPE documents. This can lead to inefficiency and ineffectiveness. While LEGs exist in many countries (albeit often called by another name), they sometimes exist in parallel to other stakeholder groups and have varied memberships, which contributes to confusion. Moreover, regularising the level of inclusivity across LEGs could facilitate greater effectiveness. CSO participation is often not fully representative of civil society's views, due to

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<sup>17</sup> Reference: BOD/2016/06 DOC 08, Meeting of the Board of Directors, June 14–15, 2016, Oslo, Norway, Local Education Group Minimum Standards: Report from the Strategy and Policy Committee

reluctance from both the government and oppositional CSOs to have these views on the LEG. LEGs with regular meetings are felt to be more effective. The functions and mandate of the LEG are not always agreed upon: some LEGs focus too narrowly on GPE funding rather than wider ESP processes, and some members feel the LEG should have decision-making power, which can lead to disagreements and delays.

Given the current variation in LEGs, several bottlenecks and enabling factors emerge. Government leadership and commitment to the LEG is seen as key to efficiency and effectiveness, and provides a means to ensure mutual accountability in the sector. There is a lack of clarity about the CA's role in coordinating the LEG, particularly when the government's leadership is weak. LEG members bring technical capacity to sector dialogue, and where this capacity is low it affects how useful the LEG can be.

Finally, we have seen the suggestions from participants for more effective LEGs. Having one recognised body for sector dialogue – and dialogue that is wider than simply GPE processes – is very clearly felt to be more efficient. The government should maximise the use it gets from LEG members' expertise and capacity, and identifying specific objectives for members may be helpful. Respondents generally want to see LEGs have more meaningful representation, and to be given clearer guidance on how to fulfil their responsibilities as part of a comprehensive and harmonised vision of the education sector. Related to this, LEG members should have more involvement in monitoring implementation and GPE grant processes and would benefit from tools to support this.

## 5 Coordinating Agencies

CAs are designated a number of roles in grant guidelines, the ToR for CAs, the GPE Charter, GPE 2020, and other GPE documents. Before presenting the findings on perceptions of the CA role, it is helpful to establish the normative roles and responsibilities of the CA. A full description of CA roles can be found in Annex J, but a condensed description is presented here in Box 3.

This chapter presents study findings around the first three framework questions in Section 3.3, in relation to the CA. It begins by setting out the level of clarity of CA roles and responsibilities, separating understanding of the roles in 'theory' with ambiguities in practice. Additionally, the shifting responsibilities between actors and duplications that exist between the CA and other actors are discussed. The chapter will then outline bottlenecks and enabling factors experienced by the CA, focusing on relationships with DCPs, balancing demands and resources, and role dynamics with GAs and the Secretariat. The chapter moves on to suggested changes that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the model with respect to the CA role and finishes with overall conclusions.

### Box 3: Roles and responsibilities of CAs

The CA plays a facilitating role in implementing the core guiding principles of the Partnership, with specific ownership of supporting inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue, and engaging with DCPs, DPs, civil society, teachers, and the private sector. CAs are selected by the LEG and facilitate the work of the LEG. The CA supports dialogue to ensure the inclusion of civil society, the private sector, and NGOs within the LEG. CAs are expected to harmonise support for the government's education programmes, as well as to promote mutual accountability and transparency across the Partnership. The mapping outlines that the CA is expected to facilitate the work of the LEG to ensure DPs are collectively supporting the government. The CA fosters inclusive dialogue among LEG members and facilitates discussions towards consensus around GPE financing and support, so that the LEG endorses the application before submitting it to the Secretariat. CAs serve as a communication link between the Secretariat and the LEG, as well as with the government. Because the CA serves as a communication link between the Secretariat and the LEG, most of the information is channelled through the CA and the Secretariat relies on the CA for prompt and smooth information sharing on GPE and sector-related matters.

During the ESPDG, the CA supports consensus building in the GA selection process, ensuring that the GA criteria to build capacity are met. The CA facilitates inclusive conversation and coordination among the partners within the LEG, as well as inclusive sector dialogue and coordination among DPs during the planning process. During ESPIG (and PDG), the CA facilitates partner collaboration through the LEG, works with the GA to ensure that LEG members have necessary information, supports the DCP in identifying funding modalities, and works with the GA to facilitate in-country QA tasks. The CA supports the government to ensure alignment and harmonisation with ESP, and assists in organising effective Joint Sector Review (JSR) processes. Additionally, the CA facilitates discussion around and validation of the variable part within the LEG on strategies and indicators to select. Throughout the process, the CA facilitates gathering feedback and lessons learnt from the LEG on the grant application, as well as dialogue and the monitoring of milestones.

Source: GPE (2017c) (see Annex J)

## 5.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

While the various actors interviewed responded that the roles and responsibilities of the CA are clear in the official GPE guidelines, many also said that there is a lack of clarity on roles as they play out on the ground. This lack of clarity is a result of factors such as the expansion and contraction of responsibilities given the actions of other actors in the model, country context and individual dynamics, and the deficiency of CA activity due to lack of resources or time. In situations where roles appear to be clear in practice, this seems to be a result of good communication between CAs, DCPs, and GAs at the country level.

It is apparent from interviews and written responses that there is not only a challenge with clarity on the CA role but tension due to conflicting expectations from different actors about what the CA role should entail. CAs, GAs, and DCPs spoke specifically of the tension between CAs and GAs, and how a lack of relationship negotiation poses problems for the roles of each actor and the overall operational model.

There is confusion over where the roles of the CA, GA, and Secretariat begin and end, as well as implied duplication between actors. While the actors would speak to an overstepping of roles, they often did not mention communication to clarify these roles. It was suggested by a few DCPs and GAs that GPE may need to institute protocols that reflect what actors should do in practice that ideally prevent an expansion or duplication of roles.

### 5.1.1 CA roles: clear documentation and ambiguous reality

**Many respondents stated that the expected roles and responsibilities of the CA were clearly defined.** GAs, DCPs, CSOs, and CAs all reported that they understood what CAs were ideally expected to do within the country model as a result of documentation. In interviews and written feedback, it was often DCPs who commented on these written roles. At a DCP Consultation in 2017, DCP members expressed the view that the CA is key in facilitating education sector planning and policy dialogue and facilitates dialogue with stakeholders; this description aligns with the mapping of CAs' roles. DCPs stated that the CA is regarded as a 'good mechanism when it is a good agent' – essentially, when there is effective engagement and leadership. Some DCPs discussed the CA in terms of coordination of partners, harmonisation of donors, and inclusion of the LEG in dialogue, while another DCP discussed the CA support to local coordination with the Secretariat.

CSOs and a few DPs also commented on the varied roles outlined for the CA. CSOs reported that the role of the CA is to engage all partners. These actors noted that the CA is thus intended to facilitate communication. A few DPs highlighted the role of CA as a LEG chair, and described how they work on the grant process, help run the LEG, and build capacity. While a number of actors discussed the CA's chairing of the LEG, it is important to note that this is not explicitly outlined in the CA ToR. The ToR state that the CA has a central role in facilitating the work of the LEG under government leadership; the LEG coordinating role is implicit. This ambiguity could be more explicitly addressed in the model and guidance.

**There were a few specific instances where some actors felt that GPE could provide more clarity on the roles of the CA in written guidelines, specifically in**

**relation to implementation and the variable part.**<sup>18</sup> Some CAs said that they are not sure what is expected of them at different stages of the process, especially at implementation. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) pointed out that a lot of the roles are written around developing the plan and grant, but that there is less detail about implementation. Some respondents expressed confusion over the CA role with the variable part. Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and the Department for International Development (DFID) both said that they are confused about what roles the CA and GA are meant to take in regard to the indicators for the variable part. At the design stage, partners feel it is unclear who decides how robust the indicators need to be and the methods of verification. Then, during implementation, the monitoring of indicators could fall to CAs or GAs, depending on whether they are aligned sector-wide performance type indicators or project-disbursement fiduciary type indicators respectively. The lack of clarity is a challenge for actors in terms of their knowing their roles and could lead to high tensions, although there was an awareness that GPE is working to provide greater guidance for the actors.

When describing the understanding of roles, people would use clarifying phrases such as 'in theory', 'on paper', or 'in documents'. These phrases point to the layered reality of the CA: the one on paper, the one expected from other actors, and the one enacted in practice. While almost every actor said they viewed the role of the CA as clear in the documentation, clarity broke down when discussing the work in-country and as experienced in relation to other actors.

**A variety of actors expressed the view that there is a distinct lack of clarity regarding the performed roles and responsibilities of CAs.** As DFAT explained of its colleagues acting as CA, while the ToR document reads clearly, in practice that is not what is expected from the CA. Once the reality of the model is not in line with the ToR it stops being clear how much a CA should step in and take the lead on situations. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) reported that while the ToR are clear about the CA relationship with the GA and respective roles, in practice it is unclear where one role starts and the other ends. This role fluidity is due to multiple factors, including the role of the government, DPs, context, and the structural arrangement in the country relative to what is written in the ToR. The very purpose of the CA role was described differently in people's discursive understanding depending on context and expectation. As DFID identified, there is a variation in how the CA role is seen in practice in different countries; in some, the CA role is seen as coordinating people and material, and in others the CA is regarded as more of a technical role. AFD, Norad, and Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) reported that there is less clarity in how CA roles are interpreted on the ground by key actors and how CAs invest themselves in the role. USAID went further to say that it is unclear how much it should steer the process as a CA when no one else is taking the work on.

Many actors, including CAs, expressed confusion over roles resulting from practice, and the question the World Bank raised in its interview when asked about CAs was echoed by others: Who is responsible for what? There are a few examples of the written roles not manifesting in reality. The World Bank reported that usually the government and the GA prepare the application, endorsed by the LEG. The policy and guidelines of GPE say that the CA should submit the final package of ESPIG documents for QAR III; however, in reality the government together with the GA usually

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<sup>18</sup> See section 2.3 for an explanation of the variable part.

submits them. Due to the disconnect between practice and stated guidelines, there is thus a lack of clarity on who should submit the grant.

For some interviewed, there was a lack of understanding of what the CA should be responsible for; a few DCPs and GAs were not sure what the role of the CA was, or how they were expected to work together. The uncertainty points to a lack of communication and relationship negotiation on the ground. One DCP discussed how they were not aware which agency was the CA, and credited this to a lack of discussion on roles and responsibilities. Some DCPs say they do not know what CAs are doing because they are doing less than expected. The feedback on CA responsibilities appeared heavily dependent on the amount of communication and role discussion performed by the CA and other actors in-country, and varied considerably depending on the individuals concerned.

### **5.1.2 Shifting and unclear responsibilities: duplication between actors**

When discussing the work of CAs, the various actors described how a shifting of roles and responsibilities sometimes leads to duplication within the country model. Some CAs and GAs, such as the World Bank and UNESCO, said they were not sure where roles began and ended. CAs and other actors described stepping into each other's roles when role delivery breaks down, which in turn confuses further who is responsible for what. When asked about duplication of roles in regards to CAs, CAs and GAs had more feedback to discuss on this topic; most DCPs said that they perceived little or no duplication in the work. Some did perceive, however, specific relationship difficulties between the CA, Secretariat, and GA leading to altered roles.

**Some CAs reported taking over the responsibilities of the DCP and the LEG.** CAs reported that they are often seen as an authority or in-country leader. This caused the DCP and LEG to defer to them in ways that are outside of their roles, thus leading to duplications and a rewriting of roles. A few CAs, including UNESCO, mentioned that if the government does not take up involvement with the LEG, the LEG is left to the CA or most prominent donor partner, which is problematic for the model and creates shifting responsibilities. DFAT and a few other CAs mentioned that if the LEG is not performing, the CA ends up taking on some of its responsibilities as well. There was also a different type of role confusion operating around CAs and the LEG: a few interviewees reported an implicit blurring between the CA's chairing of DP groups and LEG responsibilities. For example, DFID reported that colleagues communicated they are less clear about how the role works when there are two groups, i.e. the LEG and the DP group. In such situations there is ambiguity between the chair of the DP group and the GPE CA role.

**A reoccurring theme in interviews was how the CA role involves some functions of the Secretariat.** The EU feels the responsibilities are clear but situations sometimes require the CA to act as the Secretariat, which does not normally lie within the CA's responsibilities. While DFAT says that the Secretariat is not present enough to have duplications with it as a CA, it does in turn argue that this obliges the CA to take on some roles of the Secretariat. Therefore, in this respect, there is a perceived shifting of Secretariat roles onto CAs. A few CAs mentioned that this shifting of responsibility takes place because the Secretariat has constraints for its work, and the CA ends up picking up work that falls outside those parameters.

It emerged from the interviews that some CAs perceived a duplication occurring with the Secretariat's responsibilities, and preferred not to get involved with some aspects of the communication. A few CAs stated that they did not want to act as a messenger or 'mailbox' for DCPs to the Secretariat. A few CAs recommended that the roles between the Secretariat and the CA need more definition to ensure fulfilment of roles and to stop an overlap of responsibilities, especially in the realm of communication. USAID reports that it is unclear who is leading communication and relationship building with the government, and feels that the Secretariat should be leading this coordination and not the CA. Some DCPs stated that it was not clear how much the CA communicates with the Secretariat, and they wanted more clarity on how often this communication takes place.

**The most significant and reoccurring responsibility-shifting and role duplications experienced by CAs occurs with GAs.** The relationship between the GA and CA, and how their working dynamics influence the CA's ability to fulfil its responsibilities, appear variable but impactful in a number of ways. Many CAs reported that this duplication is a result of the CA picking up GA responsibilities when they underperform, and that as a result their own designated responsibilities are not sufficiently dealt with. Some actors, such as UNICEF, said that the roles and responsibilities of the CA are clear, except in regard to how they operate in relation to the GA. UNICEF also made the distinction that the relationship and role distributions between CAs and GAs vary widely and depend more on personalities than the relevant ToR. UNESCO relayed that it is unclear about who has the final say as adviser to the LEG during consultation for the ESPDG application, sector analysis, programme development, ESPIG, and variable part justification. This confusion is due to the distinct but somewhat overlapping roles of the GA and CA; while the GA provides TA, the CA facilitates the consultation. DCPs also identified that complementarity with the GA is not always the case for the CA, and note that when one of them does not play its expected role in the grant processes tensions will arise when 'unwanted overlaps' occur. The challenges resulting from this duplication will be addressed in more detail in the following section.

## 5.2 Bottlenecks and enabling factors

The bottlenecks and enabling factors present for CAs are varied and wide ranging. Some of them are inherent to the construction and framing of the role and some are completely dependent on individual dynamics.

CAs consistently highlighted overwork and a lack of resources as challenges affecting their ability to carry out effectively the multiple demands the model places upon them. Additionally, relationship dynamics with GAs, DCPs, and the Secretariat were mentioned repeatedly by multiple actors as either enabling factors or barriers to the CA's work. Relationships between the CA and other actors appear to present both support and challenges; the context, level of trust, and engagement present seem to determine which state manifests. The on-the-ground, enacted role of the CA is affected by the multiplicity of donors, role inconsistencies, turnover rates, conditions in the government, and effectiveness of the Secretariat country lead.

In situations where CAs were working effectively, or were perceived by DCPs or GAs to work effectively, actors highlighted the same characteristics that ushered in success: communication, cooperation, leadership, and collaboration. Others emphasised transparency and openness in reporting for supporting effective working relationships.

Communication and engagement of partners was mentioned by many DCPs, CAs, and GAs as helpful for the effective functioning of CAs.

### 5.2.1 Relationship with DCPs

**CAs discussed the level of engagement and the strength of communication with DCPs as a bottleneck or enabling factor.** UNESCO said that the relationship with the government is the biggest determinant in fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of the CA. CAs reported that previously established working relationships with the Ministry help them effectively work with DCPs. DFID said it believes it is helpful for CA relations with DCPs and the LEG when the chosen CA is already involved with the LEG, and thinks agencies should be chosen based on their level of integration with the country context. CAs also stated how an active DCP was an enabling factor for success. DFAT described how the commitment of the Ministry to the sector plan was an important enabling factor for the CA and overall GPE work, while BMZ said that government ownership of the process enables its success. These enabling factors turn to challenges when dialogue with the Ministry is not present, when there is difficulty coordinating meetings, and when there is a lack of trust in the working relationship<sup>19</sup>. CAs also mentioned that coordination is made more challenging when balancing the national and subnational levels or fragmented donors.

CAs highlighted different elements of uncertainty working with the Ministry that can create challenges: there are high turnover rates, shifting political climates, and changeable priorities. This uncertainty causes bottlenecks in their work, could set back progress, and lengthens the overall process. DFAT spoke about how government buy-in can be consistently challenged by fluctuations, depending on competing interests and priorities. Norad and other DPs noted how a lack of capacity within the Ministry affects the work, as does the occurrence of positions being left unfilled for long periods of time. As USAID emphasised, staff turnover in the Ministry, NGOs, and LEGs present challenges to effective CA work. The EU also discussed how turnover in DCPs requires reoccurring relationship-building processes. There is a lack of institutional memory and systemic approach that makes work harder for CAs and other actors. While some of these challenges imply a possible duplication of roles between the CA and DCPs, it was not discussed as such but rather as a challenge to the work of CAs. Some actors discussed DCPs as not being in the 'driving seat' of the work, but this comment was expressed more explicitly in relation to GAs, and therefore will be more fully addressed in that chapter.

**Some DCPs described the ability of the DP acting as CA to select an appropriate nominated individual as the CA lead as an enabling factor in the CA work.** An enabling factor consistently referenced by DCPs to support the successful functioning of CAs is an engaged CA lead who is already knowledgeable about the sector context and is engrained in the Ministry. Such individuals were said to be marked by leadership and were effective at fostering collaboration. Some DCPs that spoke of successful CAs completely credited this effective work to the strength of the CA lead; they viewed them as driving the CA process, and would compare CA experiences with different organisations based on the strength of the CA lead's leadership.

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<sup>19</sup> GPE has issued a conflict resolution policy which may provide guidance for such circumstances.

DCPs expressed appreciation or frustration with the CA depending on their experience with the CA lead. When the CA was viewed as active and engaged, some DCPs credited them as propelling the effective functioning of the model. One DCP described an organisation's previous lead as engaged, integrated into the Ministry, and key to positive relationships with Ministry staff and DPs. The DCP marked this lead's tenure as one of achievement and open communication. When the lead was replaced with someone who did not know the context well and was not integrated into the systems, the effectiveness of the CA declined. Another DCP talked about the difficulty of planning meetings with the CA, and even recounted how they became so exasperated with the CA that they communicated to them that they do not need to be a CA, and reemphasised how the CA voluntarily took up this commitment themselves. In such instances, of DCPs experiencing difficulty collaborating with CAs, they reported turning to the GA to support work completion or to seek information. DCPs want guidelines and monitoring to prioritise the need for an engaged CA lead.

## 5.2.2 Balancing demands and resources

**Many CAs report struggling with staffing issues, overwork, and a lack of resources.** In interviews, respondents discussed the importance of CAs and how they are crucial to the model's functioning; however, they also discussed how the demands placed upon the CA in the model are burdensome and it is not always feasible for them to fulfil all demands. As the EU explained, in some cases the CA's responsibilities exceed the capacity of the agency involved, especially due to a lack of financial support and the heavy workload of the CA. Some DPs, including BMZ and USAID, reported that their own work must take priority over the CA responsibilities, as the CA work is done in addition to their regular, full-time job. At the DCP Consultation in 2017, it was stated that the CA is often overstretched and therefore cannot be involved in the grant processes as it should be. Some CAs also cite frustration due to the tension of what they can offer the role, which may be limited but fulfilling the basic roles of the CA, and other actors' expectations of what the CA role should be. A few CAs discussed how they will use their own resources to ensure that they effectively fulfil their roles, but that there are many demands upon them in the model and it is challenging to fulfil them without compensation. UNESCO advocated that if the CA is going to provide a secretariat-like function, and be a means of support, the role and time commitment should be reflected in the GPE grant. Comments on the need for financial resources will be expanded upon in the subsequent section on suggested changes.

A significant number of CSOs, DCPs, and GAs also expressed the view that CAs were overworked and not fulfilling their roles as a result. CSOs said the confusion over the CA role leads to processes breaking down. When the CA is not active and CSOs seek information from the CA, CAs sometimes say it is not their responsibility and the CSO should speak to another actor. CSOs felt that there should be more clearly stated protocols for how the CA should work with the LEG. In instances where CAs were not fulfilling their roles, some GAs reported taking on the CAs' responsibilities, and DCPs noted the negative impacts this breakdown has on communication.

## 5.2.3 Role dynamics with GAs and the Secretariat

**The relationship with the GA appears to either effectively support successful work or cause tension and bottlenecks for CAs.** Some CAs perceive the success of their role as dependent on how open GAs are to involving them. The duplications of the

CA and GA vary by country, and DPs expressed different degrees of concern about their overlaps. AFD feels that ambiguities, especially for the new variable part, put the roles of the CA and GA on a 'collision course'. However, a few CAs and GAs described duplication as a positive situation; for example, DFID argued that it results in more collaborative work. Productive 'overlaps' were mentioned only when communication and role discussion were present, which occurred in just a few cases. More often, communication gaps were reported by CAs and GAs. Even in countries with no duplications between the CA and GA, an information disconnect between the two actors was mentioned – especially when GAs do not have an in-country presence – causing an extension of one of the actor's responsibilities and therefore a bottleneck in their own work.

**Many DPs acting as CAs reported that they needed to expand their roles in the country model to fill gaps and ensure effective functioning.** Many reported needing to perform responsibilities outside their prescribed roles to address gaps caused by the failure of other actors, as referenced in the previous discussion about GAs. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) representatives described how, in situations where the GA was not present and government capacity was low, as CAs they had to take on unexpected roles to fill needs. CAs reported that they found it difficult to perform their roles and the roles of GAs, and that they felt the GA work should be more formally monitored. A few DPs acting as CAs also said that CAs take on more work than the GAs, and do so without financial compensation. UNESCO highlighted a different issue involved with a challenge posed to CAs: the GA may initially take on certain functions of the CA, but there is not a smooth transition of responsibilities from the GA to the CA and some responsibilities are left unaccounted for. Interviews show that tension between GAs and CAs creates frustrations not just with CAs, but with DCPs as well.

Some CAs describe how the GA takes charge in the process, oversteps its role boundaries, and does not leave room for the CA to become involved appropriately or take up designated roles. In this scenario of the GA excluding the CA, it was reported that CAs seem to lose legitimacy. A few CAs stated that the GA acts as if GPE funds are their own funds, and as a result do not include CAs in the processes. One CA reported that the GA decided to use its own funds because the process to access GPE funds was too cumbersome. As a result, it did not include the DPs or CA in this process, and the CA was left unsure how best to be involved.

A few CAs mentioned that implementation and CA involvement rely on how the GA is performing and no one is holding the GA to account. CAs feel left to ensure everything is running smoothly, which can create issues for them in knowing their position. DFAT stated that GAs do not see the CAs as monitoring them, and argued that the mechanisms for holding GAs accountable should be strengthened. DCPs raised another navigation challenge: GAs apply their own bureaucratic process to the role, leaving CAs in a space of uncertainty about how to proceed both in their role and in the general GPE processes. Therefore, some DCPs recommend that CAs understand the rules and regulations of the GA to ensure effective working.

**CAs spoke of the Secretariat as capable of being both an enabling factor or a bottleneck in their work.** Some CAs described how the GPE CL holds great influence in-country and has the potential to be an enabling factor. UNESCO relayed how, when the CL visits, this affects how the CA in-country conducts its role. CAs described how when the Secretariat is present, it legitimises the actors and their work. The EU argued that Secretariat support is impactful to CAs because it has unique positioning working

in different countries and can share this knowledge with CAs. Other actors acknowledged the helpfulness of the Secretariat and said they can be an enabling factor, but also explained that, because they have constraints in their own work, they can only be helpful to a certain degree. USAID reported that while the Secretariat provides quality and sound technical capabilities and support, they are 'stretched thin.'

Interviews revealed that the helpfulness of the Secretariat was often dependent on the individual characteristics, experience, and flexibility of the CL. Because the responsibilities for the GPE CLs are broad, they lead to very individualistic interpretations of the role and how they should act in-country. Some CAs said that the buy-in and support from the CL determines if the Secretariat is an enabling factor. UNESCO discussed how there is a wide continuum of experiences with the CL, ranging from them controlling all processes and undermining CA authority to being respectful and supportive of the CA's work.

### 5.3 Respondents' suggestions for changes

Throughout the interviews, respondents provided suggestions for how the position and functioning of the CA could be improved. CAs advocated that the lack of resources provided to CAs should be addressed; many felt that, given the role's obligations and time commitment, they need resources and additional staff to carry out the role. Other actors, mainly DCPs, focused on offering recommendations for CAs to strengthen their leadership and coordination functions. Another category of recommendations centred around the roles of the CA and GA, and how they could work more effectively together. The last group of recommendations from actors revolved around the Secretariat's relationship with the CA, and advocated for the Secretariat to provide more support, technical instruction, and follow-up for CAs.

#### 5.3.1 Resource support to CAs

**Organisations that act as CA dedicate time, money, and human resources to delivering the role effectively, and they say that without adequate resource support they either fail to fulfil all outlined responsibilities or they must reallocate their organisation's resources to effectively fill the role.** Many argued that, in the current way the role is envisioned as a purely voluntary position, there are a disproportionate number of responsibilities designated to the CA without any compensation. The EU said that CAs are committed to their work and will try to complete the role with whatever means they have and may hire an additional person, an occurrence corroborated by other CAs during interviews. They argue that GPE helping compensate for costs and allocating administrative support to agencies would help with commitment and engagement in the CA role. Many CAs feel that currently it is a struggle for their organisations to provide the resources needed to meet the role's expectations. UNESCO made the distinction that, overall in GPE, resources should be used more efficiently and effectively; however, they argued that in the case of CAs additional resources are necessary.

A few CAs contended that because the CA role is key to leveraging the GPE partnership model, its work and the added value of making the role more feasible is a justifiable cost. Respondents that brought up compensation for the CA role did so because they feel there is value to the role and that it should be supported in its functioning within the model. Various actors felt that the CA possessed context knowledge and relationships with the government that were key to the partnership's

functioning, and felt their work should be supported. The CA's work coordinating DPs, both as part of the GPE partnership and outside the partnership, enables the CA to form relationships and garner respect within the sector that are important for the GPE partnership. The sentiment that the CA is an important role that requires time commitment was expressed, along with the feeling that there is a gap in how CAs are treated in relation to other actors. Some CAs pointed to the fact that the GAs are funded and CAs are not, arguing that this does make a significant difference in what is possible for the CA within the operational model. DFID said it believes the CA actor is the one that is the least developed, and that it can be further developed with resources, including staff time and finances, as well as the opportunity to play a greater technical role in processes. They stated that this investment would add value in some contexts, especially where there is a large grant in place, it is a high-risk context, or the GA has less staff in-country, but it may not be a necessary response in all contexts.

UNICEF accepts that the CA function is an unfunded mandate, and views this position as part of its contribution as a partner in GPE. UNICEF was the only organisation to discuss the perception of this unfunded position as part of its organisational contribution to GPE, and implied that this is the organisation's investment at a global level to ensure country offices perform better. This level of investment should however be commensurate with realistic expectations for country offices and not duplicate the functions of other key actors. UNICEF also discussed what it means to be a 'CA that adds value', one that privileges this role, and stated that investment in the role is necessary to have dedicated personnel and a budget. Resources are needed to take on the role effectively, and UNICEF said this may be a matter of the organisation itself investing in the role to support good performance. UNICEF did not ask for additional GPE resources, but did say that GPE resources could definitely be a potential option to support an effective CA.

When CAs spoke about financial difficulties and were asked if the role should also change to accommodate these challenges and realities, responses were mixed. A few advocated that both should take place: the role of the CA should shift and resources should be designated to the CA. Some made the distinction that if allocating resources to the CA is not possible, then the role of the CA should be altered to take some burden off CAs. However, as one CA said, if that happens the question becomes who will take on the work, and other actors such as an out-of-country GA may not be as well placed to take on these responsibilities.

### **5.3.2 Strengthening CA leadership and coordination**

**Some DCPs talked of the need to strengthen the CA position to more effectively work with the LEG, foster inclusive dialogue, and help the DCP in the grant process.** The DCP request for strengthened CA leadership was discussed as a vehicle through which to increase coordination and effectiveness in the GPE process. DCPs pointed to the many parties involved in the GPE process, and said that it is the CA's responsibility to ensure better and more open communication between them. A few DCPs talked of CAs facing challenges with other donors within the LEG trying to propel their own agenda. DCPs discussed the harmonisation that needs to happen between donors, and then, once donors are coordinated, between donors and the government. They argue that a stronger CA will help the sector harmonise donors, and this can only come from CAs that are well respected and have established trust and buy-in for the work.

Other DCPs argued that there needs to be a change in the frequency of coordination between DCPs, the Secretariat, and CAs. They felt the CA does not appropriately fill its communication and coordination function with the DCP, and advocated that this is an important and under-addressed part of the CA's role. Furthermore, DCPs thought that, in coordinating DPs, the CA could also play a more active role in managing and coordinating TA organised by DPs.

**CAs, DCPs, and CSOs all suggested that the CA should do more to formally include a variety of actors, as stated in the official mapping of CA responsibilities.** These actors all reported that CAs need to help with the inclusion of civil society in dialogue, and NGOs should be increasingly included in the processes taking place. BMZ, acting as a CA, said that CAs in general need to do more to include teachers and civil society, as well as other actors such as students and parents. BMZ also felt that teachers and civil society should be included not only in discussions but also in the planning and implementation of the grant. CSOs reported that CAs should help foster the involvement of all actors in strategic dialogue, be conscious of what actors they have included and excluded, and play a role in coordinating the inclusion of a variety of voices. Specifically, CSOs reported that they felt only CSOs that agree with government priorities are included in dialogue, and the CA should facilitate greater inclusion of NGOs, CSOs, and teachers' unions.

A few CAs suggested that the Secretariat should do more to support them in facilitating the coordination process. One CA suggested that the Secretariat could provide feedback on how to get other actors involved in the coordinating structure and that this support would help the CA better carry out this function. This was especially mentioned in relation to FCAS; CAs in such contexts noted that enabling factors for carrying out coordination work could be extra resources, creating a coordinating position, or for GPE to review the overall process to ensure success.

### 5.3.3 Clarity between CAs and GAs

**To ensure better working relationships and foster efficiency in work, actors called for clarification of CA responsibilities in practice, especially in relation to the GA.** Following from the previous discussion on CA and GA dynamics creating bottlenecks in GPE processes, actors felt that the roles of the CA and GA in practice should be clarified within the context to ensure there is no overlap. When actors made suggestions about clarifying CA and GA roles, they were indicating clarification that goes beyond the set guidelines; they called for more context-specific information that speaks to the cross over and ambiguity of these two actors' roles in practice. Some interviewees called for more information on these roles in the wider context of the GPE grant, namely within the education sector and the DCP context. UNESCO stated that the broad guidelines that exist are satisfactory, but that more contextually developed operational modalities are needed. UNESCO and a few other DPs suggested that CAs and GAs should have specific objectives based on an analysis of the country context, with accompanying information on key issues for each role.

Many suggestions were made by actors to increase understanding and efficiency between the actors. Some DCPs suggested it be made clear 'on the ground' that CAs focus on facilitating dialogue and GAs focus on TA, while another said that clarifying the roles of each ensures everyone involved knows what is expected and no duplications ensue. Some DCPs asked for specific clarification on the implementation phase, while a few CAs, such as the EU, called for establishing and strengthening CA and GA responsibilities in relation to capacity building. DCPs, CAs, and GAs all stated

that increased communication between CAs and GAs could improve the country model. To increase communication, a CA suggested joint planning and monitoring between the actors. Other CAs, including the EU, suggested that to improve working relationships the CA should be given a more prominent role in the M&E to hold the GA more accountable. A few CAs suggested that some capacity development and sensitisation of GAs and CAs in their roles would be helpful for their working relationships.

**Following from the comment on greater clarity of roles in practice, actors called for CAs to better understand the 'rules' and protocols around the GA and the LEG.** Some DCPs reported that CAs did not understand the rules and modes of functioning of the GA, making it difficult for them to effectively monitor the GA and help them implement the grant. A few DCPs asked why this information was not provided to CAs, while others pointed to this information flow and transparency issue as due to the GA having its own processes, procedures, and ways of managing the grant. As a result, there cannot be one set of information provided to all CAs, as they have different GAs with different practices. Even so, DCPs felt that it would be helpful for the CA to understand these procedures, and a few thought the Secretariat could help with increasing information flows around protocols. CSOs also discussed concerns about protocols, and expressed a desire for CA requirements regarding how they work with and influence the LEG. A few CSOs said that clear protocols and operational guidance on roles would be helpful to the DPs acting as CAs, as well as to LEGs.

### 5.3.4 Secretariat: communication and support to CAs

**DCPs, CAs, and GAs recommended that the Secretariat increase communication transparency, support, and country visits to buttress the CA's work.** DCPs felt the Secretariat and the CA are not transparent enough in their communication, and should notify DCPs on when and what type of communication takes place. UNICEF said that better streamlined processes and support would ensure expectations were better understood. DCPs and CAs also called for more interaction with the Secretariat, mainly in the form of instruction, support, and technical guidance. DFID and UNESCO called specifically for more technical support from the Secretariat as part of creating an empowered CA.

In following from the previous discussion on bottlenecks with the Secretariat, many CAs offered suggestions around the idea that the Secretariat should visit in-country more frequently. Some CAs viewed the Secretariat as a neutral, legitimising force, and said that an increased presence could help them more effectively carry out their work. The EU believed that more visits from the Secretariat could increase coordination and information sharing, while spreading knowledge about lessons learned from other countries. CAs did specify that this would only be helpful if done in a way that respects the CA and country processes, and does not encourage top-down and heavy-handed processes. In addition to in-country visits, actors wanted more regular follow-up from the Secretariat with the CA.

## 5.4 Conclusions

Interviews and correspondence with different actors in the operational model revealed that while CAs' roles are clearly expressed in documents, there is a great variability in how they are performed. This ambiguity occurs particularly in relation to other actors in the model. Roles and responsibilities shift from one actor to another, leading to

duplications and confusion over where one role begins and ends. Specifically, CAs feel they fill roles they believe should be for the Secretariat, and take on the responsibilities of the GA when their role delivery breaks down.

CAs and DCPs both reported challenges and enabling factors for CAs based on their relationship dynamics. The level of DCP engagement and communication is either a bottleneck or supporting element in CAs' work. Additionally, high turnover within the Ministry and the political climate can negatively affect their work. For DCPs, CAs are more effective when they identify one person as CA lead, who has strong leadership skills and contextual knowledge. DCPs want CAs to know more about GA rules and protocols, and feel the Secretariat could help in this matter.

Staffing issues, high workloads, and a lack of resources are significant challenges to fulfilling the CA role. CAs have to allocate their own staffing and resources to the role to fulfil their responsibilities. Furthermore, CA staff need to put their own programming first so limited capacity may prevent them undertaking CA activities. CAs feel that for a voluntary position, there are a disproportionate number of responsibilities for the CA.

Many CAs feel that they need to carry out the responsibilities of the GA and/or Secretariat, causing frustration and a burdensome amount of work. On the other hand, some CAs feel they are being excluded by GAs from decision making. The Secretariat can be a source of support or tension, and individual dynamics play a part here.

Respondents called for resource support for CAs, strengthening the leadership of the CA, and an improved understanding of roles and communication between actors in practice. In terms of challenges with resources, CAs said that if GPE helped cover CA costs it would allow for greater commitment and engagement in the role. Various actors felt that the CA position needs strengthening in terms of leadership; CAs should be more effectively coordinating and communicating with actors, and should do more to formally include a variety of actors in dialogue. To ensure that communication takes place and effective working relationships are fostered, actors called for clarifications of the CA role in practice, especially in relation to the GA and Secretariat.

## 6 Grant Agents

The operational role of GAs, according to their ToR (GPE, 2017c), is to disburse the GPE transferred funds to the implementing government and provide fiduciary oversight and technical support in line with the specific purpose of the grant and given context. Before presenting findings from interviews and responses on the perceptions of the GA role, a condensed description of the normative roles and responsibilities of the GA is outlined in Box 4. A complete mapping of GA responsibilities is attached in Annex J.

This chapter presents study findings in relation to the GA around the first three framework questions in Section 3.3. It begins by setting out the level of clarity of GA roles and responsibilities, exploring ambiguities in practice as well as duplications with the CA and Secretariat. The chapter then outlines bottlenecks and enabling factors experienced by the GA, specifically GPE processes, relationships with other actors, selection of the GA, and accountability. Respondents' suggested changes about how to improve the model with respect to the GA role are then given. The chapter finishes with overall conclusions.

### Box 4: Roles and responsibilities of GAs

The GA supports the government in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the GPE-funded ESPs and education sector programmes, and supports GPE in capacity development and knowledge-sharing activities. The GA is approved by the government and endorsed by the LEG. The GA's main counterpart in-country is the DCP, but GAs work with the CA, DPs, and LEG at strategic points in grant design, implementation, and monitoring. The primary responsibility of the GA is to ensure that GPE funds are used efficiently and effectively to support national education sector plans. The GA ensures that funds are used appropriately and align with broader education sector developments.

The GA is expected to prepare grant application packages with government and in consultation with the CA and the LEG, and ensure that programme designs are technically strong. During the ESPDG, the GA works with the government in a government-led process and uses ESPDG to build capacity in analysis and planning. Additionally, the GA is intended to monitor the ESPDG-funded activities. The GA is expected to support capacity development during ESPDG by building government capacity and providing technical support, fostering full government ownership and leadership, considering what capacity assessments are relevant, and working with the LEG throughout the process. If there are any delays or issues with the application, it is the GA's responsibility to inform the Secretariat and the LEG.

During the ESPIG (and PDG), the GA is expected to develop a programme with the government that is consistent with the ESP and supports system strengthening. The GA provides fiduciary oversight of grant implementation and continued technical support and resources to the government and implementing entities. During this process, the GA works with the CA to solicit LEG members, sources domestic and regional expertise, and identifies capacity risks to ensure a transfer of skills. The GA develops the justification for the variable part, in close coordination with the government and in consultation with the LEG. The GA reports to the LEG on GPE investments, provides implementation reports to the LEG and Secretariat annually, and supports the CA in promoting effective JSRs and the government in taking the leading role. Additionally, the GA provides fiduciary oversight and ensures the programme design is sustainable. The GA is expected to use harmonised approaches for monitoring and reporting of the grant.

Source: GPE (2017c) (see Annex J)

## 6.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

Interviews with GAs suggested that they feel their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, but they identified ambiguities in other roles (i.e. the Secretariat, CA, and LEG) that cause duplication, especially in contexts with low capacity. This view was not corroborated by all of the CAs, and some pointed out areas of the GAs' roles that lack clarity or need improvement. DCPs generally found the GA role to be well defined and carried out, although there were instances of DCPs feeling that, while the role is clear, it is not executed as well as it could be.

### 6.1.1 The role of the GA: clarity and confusion

**Many DCPs said they do not perceive any duplications between the role of GA and other actors and stated that the GA's responsibilities are clear.** They highlighted the fact that the GA mainly works on implementation of the grant and offering technical support to ensure the grant is utilised for its intended purpose. Others pointed to their review of financial reports, and some DCPs described the GA as the link between the country and the GPE Secretariat. At a DCP Consultation in 2017, DCPs discussed how GAs bring knowledge and comparative practices from other countries, provide inputs for stakeholders to learn, and hold knowledge regarding responsibilities with grant processes. One example from a DCP expressed the view that the role of the GA is very clear, well-conceived, and enables them to be supportive to the government. In this particular country context, there was a lapse in the DCP's conformity and, due to the GA's fiduciary oversight, the GA was able to support the government to return to the proper processes while upholding transparency. The DCP's view is that, although GPE processes and the GA role are time consuming and complex, they are worthwhile as they keep standards high and all actors are on the same page.

**Some GAs also felt that their role was clear, but with significant variation and ambiguity.** Save the Children reported that the roles of GA appeared clear at both the HQ and in-country level, and felt their responsibilities in relation to other actors were clear. They did, however, also express confusion over what roles the GA should take during the implementation of the grant, and specifically the responsibilities taken in regard to supporting the MOE. DFID agreed that roles were clear, but noted that there could be confusion over the DCP and GA's responsibilities with implementation, with DFID feeling that the mapping does not clearly distinguish the DCP's role in this regard. CSOs pointed to this ambiguity of roles as putting the GA, and not the Ministry, in the 'driving seat' of the grant. UNICEF stated that the GA is clearly accountable for grant implementation and communication between the DCP and GPE, and as signatory to the grant is accountable for resources. It did, however, feel that while the GA role is clear to its staff it can vary due to personalities and use of communication. This trend, of the stated roles being clear but with variation coming from the strength of individuals or organisations, was present in other interviews as well. During the DCP consultation in Maputo, several examples suggested that GAs followed their own organisational guidelines and procedures, and were not well-versed in GPE processes, such as the variable part.

**Some DPs suggest that confusion about the role of the GA arises when they are running their own programmes in-country at the same time as GPE.** For Norad, World Bank staff do not always clearly differentiate between their role in their own programmes versus GPE's. Norad points out that it is also not possible for other actors

to distinguish between the time spent by GAs on GPE from that spent on other programmes, and specifically it is not clear how to classify whether capacity development was done under the GPE banner or another. DFAT pointed out that this blurs the distinction between what GAs are being paid for by GPE versus their other work. One DCP cited a GA wanting to use GPE money as if it was its organisation's money, and to run its own implementation programmes. DCPs added that this can cause confusion for them as there are not always clear distinctions between programmes and the protocols that must be followed for each.

**However, the presence of GAs' own programmes can also be beneficial.** DFAT emphasised that having other programmes, along with the positive relationships with the government that this brings, could be used as a strong enabling factor in the work that GAs do, rather than as an obstacle, as it is now. Other DPs also highlighted pre-existing work with the government as an enabling factor, but did state that this could create an expansion of roles. One GA discussed their national colleagues helping the government with the development of documents outside of their GA role, but pointed out that this work has synergy with their role within the GA. Another GA also reported going beyond its official roles and responsibilities at times, and said that GPE acknowledged this and has been flexible to the situation. A few GAs said they felt that this expansion in the role had to do with their productive relationship with the government, and thought CAs and LEGs did not experience the same expansion.

## 6.1.2 GA and CA roles

**When discussing the roles of the GA in relation to the CA, there was variation in the level of duplication perceived between the two actors.** Reports of duplication ranged considerably, from only a few respondents advocating absolutely no overlap in roles to others stating an overlap so significant it made completing responsibilities difficult. One DCP reported that the roles of the GA and CA are distinct, and that actors worked to avoid duplications with other actors in the model. A few DPs acting as GAs said that in practice there is overlap between the GA and CA. UNESCO expressed the view that while there is clarity in the ToR, and that the GAs and CAs are supposed to have their distinct and respective implementation and coordinating roles, the boundaries are not always clear and vary by country. AFD stated that any inconsistencies are a matter of how individuals take on their roles. In 'taking up these roles', there appears to be overlap necessitated by a lack of appropriate action by the CA. Specifically, AFD mentioned that GAs will take on a greater role if the CA is not fulfilling its responsibilities, leading to the GA playing coordination roles it should not have to fulfil. CAs also expressed frustration at having to take on GA responsibilities, an occurrence discussed in the CA chapter.

**Some DPs mentioned that there are cases when CAs and GAs compete with each other to influence the government.** The specific roles and responsibilities of the GA in terms of TA to the government are relatively clear. But since both GA and CA provide support to the government, broadly in TA and coordination respectively, there are cases where partners compete with each other in order to influence the government. In such cases, it is a dilemma for the government – which may have weak capacity and be struggling with which and whose advice to take. This is typically the case where the technical and political considerations do not find a common voice, and the coordination of partners is challenging. An unfortunate outcome of an example like this was that the decisions were made in line with the voice with the heavier weight between the GA and CA.

**Some DCPs have identified ambiguity in the roles of the GA, CA, and their communication with the Secretariat.** A number of DCPs related stories of delays in the preparation and submission of grant applications as there was a lack of clarity in the roles and tasks that had to be fulfilled, particularly related to communication with the Secretariat. A few DPs said that clarifying the responsibilities would help to streamline the processes and timelines. The ambiguity of roles and delays were attributed by CARE and a few other DPs to an issue with information flow. They advocated that increasing information between actors could ensure that duplications in GPE communication could be addressed. Other DPs attributed the delays they experienced entirely to individual dynamics and not a systemic issue connected to the country model.

**As a DP that performs the role of both GA and CA, UNICEF asserts that the role of the GA is more empowered than that of the CA.** It says that the various actors all know that the GA monitors the implementation of the ESP, which is the key step in translating the programme into learning outcomes. The GA is a signatory to the grant agreement with GPE and is clearly accountable for certain resources, which puts it in a strong leadership position. UNICEF's way of working is to engage with different partners, but it claims that other GAs focus heavily on communicating with the DCP and Secretariat. Being in such a central position, the GA receives feedback from other actors and there is an expectation among other actors that these ideas will be taken into account, but this may not always be the case.

### 6.1.3 Duplications with the Secretariat

**The World Bank identified a duplication of efforts with the Secretariat in the QA process of the ESPIG application development.** This duplication in QA was brought up by multiple actors, but respondents did not specify which processes in QA mechanisms are duplicated; they discussed QA in general being duplicated between the Secretariat and GAs, especially the World Bank. Norad said it was not sure if the QA roles of the GA and the Secretariat are efficient and effective. While Norad described how the GA and Secretariat duplicate QA processes, they also stated the Secretariat ensures they learn from these experiences. It appears actors and the Secretariat are aware of the duplication and are working to address it. UNICEF said that QA is a major theme they are working on and discussing, and Norad and the World Bank discussed the pilot project to address parallel systems. Since GPE is hosted by the World Bank Group, by design their protocols are very similar to those of the World Bank. When acting as the GA, the World Bank has to follow processes prescribed by GPE on top of those it usually follows – this results in large transaction costs and, in their view, no extra benefit. A new, more streamlined system is being piloted by the Secretariat with the World Bank and UNICEF. The pilot is being carried out in four countries to check where duplications lie and eliminate overlaps in QA for the World Bank. Other DPs acting as GAs identified that this duplication is specific to the World Bank in this role and does not extend to them. UNICEF mentioned that QA is an area that it is looking to upgrade, but did not reference any duplications in its processes and stated that CLs usually provide excellent advice on GPE processes.

## 6.2 Bottlenecks and enabling factors

Respondents identified challenges pertaining to GAs, areas of effectiveness, and factors contributing to both. The inconsistencies that arise while working with other key actors not only cause confusion but often result in delay. The selection and

accountability of GAs were other issues brought up by some of the DPs as a possible contributor to the bottlenecks and enabling factors discussed in this section.

### 6.2.1 GPE processes and other key actors

**GAs stated that following GPE protocols and processes is extremely time consuming. This can be exacerbated when GPE processes clash or duplicate with an organisation's own processes, creating challenges for GAs as well as DCPs.** Multiple GAs mentioned that GPE's processes, particularly in the lead up to the grant application, are not only time consuming in the first instance but also present duplications. Since all organisations acting as GAs have their own protocols and processes, having to take additional steps to fulfil GPE requirements can be direct repeats of the original process without bringing additional value to the Partnership. As discussed earlier, World Bank representatives in particular felt there is a duplication in their QA processes, leading to unnecessary repetition. Furthermore, the addition of organisations' own requirements can be extremely burdensome on the DPs and governments for small grants in particular. As a result, DCPs have at times expressed reluctance about applying for grants as the benefit barely outweighs the time commitment required.

**The involvement of the Secretariat was seen to be relevant to the effectiveness of the GAs, but to varying degrees.** A member of the LEG in one country felt that the GA is not consulting the LEG sufficiently and the Secretariat is too hands-off in this case. This can lead to confusion and lack of donor coordination. However, other DPs reported cases of the GA identifying the Secretariat as being overly involved in the country-level management of the GPE application process to the point that it was undermining the GA's role as the in-country GPE lead regarding communication with DCPs. Even the DPs that mentioned ways that the Secretariat could act as a bottleneck went on to say that the Secretariat was generally also a source of support.

**Additionally, feelings towards CLs are varied, with some GAs viewing them as interfering with country ownership when they arrive for their missions.** GAs usually have strong relationships with DCPs, especially when they are based in-country, and this rapport can be undermined by GPE representatives who intermittently arrive in person and take over leading the discussions about sector plans and GPE grants. Having the Secretariat arrive in person is thus not always helpful, and can even be detrimental to progress that has been made in-country. Both the World Bank and UNICEF pointed out that CLs usually provide sound advice about GPE processes, but they say the GA is best placed to make judgement calls about technical components of the programme and what should be focused on. The World Bank expressed this while acknowledging the varied GA roles and responsibilities: the GA bears responsibility for programme design, including technical, fiduciary, and implementation arrangements. Due to these factors, as well as because the GA develops the programme together with the government and with multiple consultations with the LEG, the World Bank feels the GA is well placed to make decisions about the technical components of the programme. DFAT reports having received mixed messages about processes from the GA and Secretariat and the confusion is further compounded by the Secretariat not being present in-country most of the time.

**Ambiguity about the decision-making power of the LEG has severe time implications for the GA.** A great deal of time is required for the preparation of the grant application, which the World Bank has identified as being compounded by confusion about whether the LEG has veto power over the grant application. They

reported a case of going through 15 rounds of reviews on the ESP with the LEG, when regular International Development Association-funded projects generally have three. The World Bank expressed that it would be able to improve its efficiency as a GA if others, in this case the LEG, had roles that were more clearly defined and carried out.

## 6.2.2 GA and DCP relationships

**GPE 2020 encourages the use of government systems, but this is not always feasible.** The World Bank acknowledged that using government systems is not always possible and it forgoes this ideal in an effort to maintain high standards. UNICEF stated it is willing to make further compromises to use existing systems, even at the expense of quality in some instances.

**The commitment and capacity of the government can have implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of the GA in fulfilling its responsibilities.** A lack of government ownership and commitment can cause delays to the preparation and finalisation of the ESP and the grant application, as previously mentioned in the CA chapter. This was brought up by a number of DPs and DFAT mentioned that some DCPs have opted to outsource the preparation of the ESP by bringing consultants in to do most of the writing. Both DPs and CSOs argued that it may be worthwhile to opt for the alternative of having a less eloquent sector plan with more government ownership. Furthermore, outsourcing the preparation of the ESP detracts from a potential opportunity for capacity building, as the time for the GA to work closely with and support DCPs during preparation is lost.

**The consequence of having a high turnover of staff in ministries and DPs is slow progress.** DP staff as well as staff within the ministries change frequently and all processes are slowed down as new individuals have to 'catch up' by relearning what was already established among previous staff. A DCP pointed out that it makes planning for beyond three years abstract and unrealistic (and at local government level even planning a few months ahead can be in vain). While this is not a bottleneck specific to the GA, UNICEF suggested that the GA could play a part in incentivising Ministry staff to remain in their positions for longer, if they felt they were gaining worthwhile skills throughout the planning and implementation stages.

## 6.2.3 Selection of the GA

**The GPE model suggests that the GA is selected on the basis of their capability to meet mutually agreed criteria as per the ToR for GAs, but this is not always the case.** In reality there are instances when there are limited options of DPs who could take on the role of GA. DFAT, from their perspective as CA, pointed out that DCPs are supposed to choose the agency they feel has the best offer and is most capable of the tasks, but often there is only one offer on the table. This point was reiterated by UNICEF and the World Bank, which have both taken on the roles of CA and GA simultaneously in some countries due to the lack of alternative options. DFAT's concern was that, when there are very few options, no other measures are taken to ensure that the GA chosen has the capability of fulfilling the role effectively. This concern was reiterated by the DCPs during the Maputo consultation (Annex L). Some DCPs noted a confusion as to whether candidate organisations had to have been or be

a LEG member to apply, a confusion which is reflected in the GA selection guidelines in GPE documentation.<sup>20</sup>

**Another downside to having so few organisations available and able to fulfil the role of GA is that this can lead to conflicts of interest.** In cases where an organisation is playing an active role in the preparation of the ESP as a key member of the LEG, at the same time as preparing a bid to become the GA, the DCP can be strongly influenced by politics rather than considering technical capabilities only. DCPs indicated during the Maputo consultation that they would benefit from a broader choice in GA candidates as well as a more neutral process (e.g. introduction by a third party, such as the CL). A CSO pointed out that with such a high share of funds being sent through the World Bank, the programme looks and performs like the World Bank. This is at odds with the GPE policy picture of national inclusion.

**For some DPs there is seen to be substantial benefit to having a small number of agencies taking on the GA role across countries.** This means that other actors become familiar with these agencies' ways of working. In addition, the GAs themselves become more familiar with the steps in the GPE processes, thereby reducing the time and effort required by them and other actors. A DCP mentioned the benefit of having a GA that brings knowledge and comparative practices from other countries through its exposure to different contexts. SDC advocated that there is a need to diversify the GA candidates, and said there should be more than just mainly the World Bank and UNICEF. At the same time, while some actors saw benefit in a small number of GAs, they still highlighted positive aspects involved with diversifying the organisations that become GAs. BMZ discussed how, with the World Bank's share of GA roles decreasing and different organisations taking on the GA role, there will be additional working challenges associated with adjusting to different protocols and models of working. However, BMZ also indicated it was a good shift to include different organisations to play the role of GA.

## 6.2.4 Presence and accountability of the GA

**When the GA is not based in-country, it is viewed as negatively impacting work and relationships.** While it is unclear how many GAs are not based in-country, many DPs and some DCPs brought up the issue of GAs being based elsewhere and the implications for actors' ability to work well. In particular, USAID mentioned an 'information disconnect' when the GA is not present, and how challenging it is to function as a CA when there are limited updates from a key actor. The EU also brought up the issue of GAs not being in-country, and said that without a country presence it would be difficult for them to do an efficient job. The EU stressed that when the GA is not in-country, there is a significant piece missing in the links between the government, the CA, and the LEG. This disconnect plays out similarly when there are large regions in a country that GAs are restricted from visiting. DFAT highlights that GAs are often based outside of FCAS and the already challenging circumstances for the CA are compounded by having the additional pressure of the GA flying in and out, which likely also means a weaker relationship between the GA and DCP as compared to elsewhere. The challenge of placing staff in FCAS was also brought up by DFID. DFAT

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<sup>20</sup> Neither the GA ToR nor the standard GA selection process guidelines for ESPIG clearly state the need to a LEG member. The criteria selection for GA includes a point on "Commitment to joint sector dialogue and coordination" which can be measured by an "example indicator" such as "the Level and extent of previous participation in the LEG and joint sector dialogue" (GPE, 2016f, 2017f).

recommended that there should be clearer outlines about staffing requirements needed to fulfil the GA role, although DFAT expressed that having a hard-and-fast rule for GAs to be based in-country may result in programming challenges.

**A range of opinions about the accountability of the GA were expressed by respondents, with some actors addressing the lack of GA accountability as a weakness in the operational model.** DFAT expressed the biggest concern, saying that, from its experience as a CA, the GA is not accountable to it nor is the GA's performance being monitored by anyone else. DFAT further pointed out that there are many checks for the quality of the ESP and the grant application process, but they perceived no actor as having oversight of the GA performance.

UNICEF's position is nearer the middle, observing that GAs are contractually bound to fulfil some roles but that the accountability chain is not comprehensive. It views the role of the GA as one beyond an arrangement of mutual responsibility, since the GA is contractually responsible for fiduciary oversight. But when it comes to certain parts of the GA's responsibilities, like capacity development, there are no repercussions if they are not reported on or fulfilled to an adequate standard. DCPs suggested that, since the GAs are remunerated for managing GPE grants (and part of these costs are now taken from the maximum country allocation (MCA)), regular country-level evaluations of the GAs should be undertaken to ensure accountability and transparency and improve GA practices. Echoing UNICEF's concerns about the GA communicating with all actors, some DCPs added that they would like a system of accountability that ensures that the GA engages sufficiently with the LEG.

**There is a perceived lack of clarity around the 'payment' of the GAs.** On paper, there are guidelines in place for accessing the MCA and for leveraging the grants more broadly, and how GA supervision fees should be calculated since they are deducted from the ESPIG MCA. In practice, CAs state that there is a lack of clarity involved with the funding and how it varies across countries. DFAT suggested that even the Secretariat and GAs themselves might struggle to explain exactly how respective shares were calculated. This can act as a bottleneck when there is also confusion about what the GA fees should be spent on in one country versus another. Since the role of GA often requires a lot of time and resources, the lack of transparency around fees makes it unclear whether GAs are insufficiently funded or under-delivering for other reasons. The World Bank notes that it follows GPE's standard allocation formula for supervision costs, and provides justification when the required sum exceeds those guidelines.

### **6.3 Respondents' suggestions for changes**

As part of the discussions on the issues presented above, a number of suggestions were raised by respondents. These are presented here as suggestions that pertain specifically to the GA.

**CSOs, DPs, and DCPs emphasised that the MOE should be in the driving seat and that the process should not be driven by a donor agency.** They pointed out that the model works best when there is a strong government with clear priorities. Some DCPs advocated that the priorities set should be discussed and aligned with the government. AFD advocated for the GPE partnership to be more intentionally aligned with national strategies, and said that such an action is both strategic and technical; GPE processes can be used to drive the sector and bring donors together. UNICEF argues that not having the government in the 'driving seat' has negative impacts on

building capacity and GPE's long-term vision. One CSO goes further to say that DCPs should be responsible for the grants themselves, claiming that country ownership and contextually driven processes are not encouraged if projects are simply copy and pasted from GAs working in various contexts. In part, this could be addressed by using government systems and procedures whenever possible. Given that GAs, including the World Bank and UNICEF, already aim to use government systems where possible, this recommendation could be about further emphasis on this objective, or about GPE transferring grants to national actors directly. The issue of 'direct access,' whereby funds would be transferred directly to national actors without a GA in some circumstances, is being considered by the Board through the institutional arrangements process.

**Various actors suggested a need for both clarifying and better monitoring the key actors' role to improve efficiency and transparency in GPE processes.** The idea of 'clarity' in roles discussed here refers to a better understanding of enacted, on-the-ground roles. As previously discussed in Section 5.3.3, some actors called for contextually driven understanding for the roles and operational modalities. Some DCPs said that all actors need to know what is expected of them, and, as described in other sections of this report, this is especially true for those in the GA and CA roles. The World Bank discussed how it would be helpful to know the roles of the other actors in the model better, and called for the Secretariat to be clear about where its role stops and starts. Additionally, a few DCPs recommended that the role of CA and GA not only be defined separately from each other in practice but that the same organisation should not be able to fill the roles of GA and CA in the same country.

Many DCPs and CAs called for regular country-level evaluations of the GA. Participants in a DCP Consultation in 2017 said that GAs should be held accountable both by their national counterparts and the Partnership, through in-country evaluation of the GA to learn from and improve GA practices. A DCP suggested that the Secretariat follow up and track what the GA and CA are doing in-country, and asked for the Secretariat to update the DCP accordingly. Norad said that GPE has processes in place to follow up on grants, but that it still seems hands off. They suggested that monitoring the process more closely could ensure the process stays on track and would enable issues to be uncovered more quickly. DFAT also said there should be a strengthening of the accountability and monitoring process, and greater oversight of the GA – not just once in the grant cycle but regularly. Some respondents specifically mentioned increasing monitoring at the implementation stage to ensure aspects of the work, such as capacity development, are being carried out; however, respondents were not specific about what this monitoring should look like.

**Improving the visibility of GPE in-country and having an active and in-country GA may improve the effectiveness of the operational model.** A DCP suggested that GPE should strive to be well known down to the school level so that beneficiaries are aware of who is financing the programme and that there are external global objectives. A few DPs also spoke about the importance of the visibility of GPE in-country. While visibility was sometimes mentioned during interviews, more actors mentioned the importance of addressing the need for GA presence within the country. As mentioned previously in the CA chapter, some DPs, such as the EU, said that they could not believe GAs could effectively fulfil their roles outside of the country. DCPs and DPs alike highlighted a need for the GA to have designated staff with clear expectations in-country to carry out GPE-related work. DFAT called for more staffing for the GA and for an end to the 'fly in, fly out' method. Additionally, there was another

layer of concern present: it was not just visibility and presence that was an issue, but active engagement in the role. In one interview, a DP described how a Board member went on a country visit to see progress. In conversations with the GA it became apparent that they only spend a handful of days a year on GPE and they hardly knew about the processes. This DP advocated that the work could be strengthened by having in-country staff in the form of designated staff members who are committed to the work and are held accountable.

**Representatives from the Secretariat should lead talks in the recipient countries on next stages and expectations once grants are approved.** Some DPs expressed the need for more support from the Secretariat in facilitating coordination between key actors. Both Save the Children and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) brought this up as a suggestion. GAC went on to mention that, in the past, retreats and discussions were held by the Secretariat in-country and this was used as an opportunity to sensitise GAs and CAs to their roles and build capacity.

**DPs feel the model needs adapting to fit FCAS contexts, since these countries will be the main share of DCPs in the near future.** Many DPs brought up how much more complex it is to work in FCAS and that adapting the model suitably is a challenge that still has to be tackled. DFAT pointed out that there is currently no differentiation in the model and that this will be key to making GPE effective in different contexts.

**A great deal of attention is focused on the preparation of the ESP and GPE grant application, and partners feel more focus should be placed on the implementation phase of the ESP and GPE grants.** As DFAT pointed out, GPE places a lot of importance on having a sound sector plan to reach the ultimate goal of quality education for all. It follows that the focus of the GA is on the preparation of the plan as well as on the GPE grant application process. This is perceived as having greater emphasis than the GA supporting and monitoring the implementation of the GPE grant, which some (DCPs and donors alike) see as equally, if not more, important. This 'misplaced' emphasis is echoed by the GPC in its focus on the grant application approval process at the cost of more attention being directed to the implementation of the grant. Some DPs acting as GAs and CAs called for GPE to provide clarification to GAs on their roles in implementation, and to put more emphasis on the implementation part of their work. Respondents called for the Partnership to put a greater emphasis on implementation of both the GPE grant and the sector plan, and to ensure the grant and sector plan are aligned. Respondents were not clear about which actor should be responsible for ensuring that implementation of the GPE grant is emphasised, but rather described it as a shift necessary within the Partnership and GPE processes.

## 6.4 Conclusions

The roles of GAs were perceived to be largely clear by various actors, but a lack of clarity sometimes emerges during implementation or when the GA has its own programmes in-country. GAs felt that their responsibilities are clear, except in particular situations: some GAs expressed confusion about whether they should be monitoring MOE in implementation. Some DPs feel it is not always possible to distinguish between GAs' work on GPE and their own programmes, and also that GAs sometimes act like they are dealing with their own funding.

Reports of duplications between the GA and CA ranged considerably, with some saying that the boundaries between the two roles are unclear and others reporting that GAs need to take on the coordination functions of the CA if they are not fulfilling their functions. GAs and CAs sometimes compete with each other to influence the government.

A number of bottlenecks and inefficiencies for GAs emerged. GAs feel the GPE protocols are not only time consuming but also present duplications with their own procedures and protocols, in particular in QA processes. The Secretariat is sometimes felt to be overly involved at the country level, disrupting the rapport GAs establish with the DCP. The capacity, commitment, and high turnover rate of the DCP has implications for the effectiveness of work. GAs reported that, while they do want to use government systems, this is not always possible.

The absence of the GA member in-country is viewed as creating information disconnects between actors, and CAs reported that GAs could not adequately fulfil their roles while out of country and that CAs may need to take on some of the GA roles in their absence. It was also said to weaken the GA's relationship with the DCP. GA absence is particularly pronounced in FCAS due to the difficulties of placing full-time staff in-country. In regards to the LEG, it was reported that some GAs are not consulting and engaging with LEGs sufficiently.

The selection and diversification of GAs is considered an issue. In reality, there are limited options for who can take on the role of GA, and few measures are taken to ensure the GA chosen has the capability to fulfil the role effectively. Accountability of GAs is an issue identified by partners who feel that the lack of GA monitoring is a weakness of the model. CAs expressed concerns about how GAs do not see themselves as accountable. GAs have contractual requirements, such as fiduciary oversight, but other responsibilities are said to carry no repercussions for poor performance. Some CAs suggested they be given a more prominent role in monitoring, while DCPs suggested regular country-level evaluations of the GA to ensure accountability and transparency. In regard to transparency, partners also felt there should be greater clarity around the payment of GAs. Actors often discussed GAs being 'paid', but GAs are expected to receive only cost-recovery, in addition to the agency overhead fees.

Actors had a number of suggested changes to address the challenges outlined above. Many respondents wanted DCPs to be in the driving seat of the process and not the GA. Various actors suggested that roles be clarified and monitored in practice to improve efficiency and transparency. Part of this monitoring would ensure the GA fulfils its functions, and ideally would require GAs to be in-country if possible or at least have dedicated staff working on the role. Some DPs called for more support from the Secretariat, while others want GPE to pay more attention to grant implementation.

## 7 GPE Secretariat

The GPE Secretariat carries out the day-to-day business of GPE, serving the interests of the Partnership as a whole (GPE, 2016b). The broad roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat are set out in GPE's Charter. Reflecting its various functions, the Secretariat is itself made up of staff in different roles and teams, who are not based in-country but nevertheless are involved at various points in the country-level model. A recent estimate indicates that 42% of Secretariat time and budget is on country-facing work (i.e. country advisory, grant management and monitoring, quality assurance, technical advisory, knowledge exchange, and measuring impact; see GPE, 2018a; Annex K). The officers most relevant for the country model are the CLs, members of the Country Support Team (CST) who are each assigned to countries as the focal person in the Secretariat. Currently, according to the Secretariat's mapping of its own roles, CLs work with five countries on average.

As an input to this study, the Secretariat conducted a mapping of its own activities against its roles and responsibilities in the Charter. This full mapping is given in Annex K and a summary is given in Box 5 below.

This chapter seeks to answer the first three framework questions set out in Section 3.3 with respect to the Secretariat. This includes whether roles and responsibilities are understood, what is working well or not, and suggestions from respondents about how changes could be made to the Secretariat's role in the model. The rest of this chapter is structured according to these three questions, and finishes with brief conclusions.

### Box 5: Roles and responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat provides support to members of the Partnership to help them fulfil their roles and responsibilities, including through support to DCPs. This support includes providing oversight of the efficient and effective expenditure of GPE resources with appropriate safeguards, accountability, and reporting. This specifically involves developing and accrediting GAs against minimum standards, reviewing audit and implementation progress reports, and following up with GAs to verify that significant issues have been addressed.

The Secretariat provides monitoring of results at country and global levels, which includes developing the annual results reports and portfolio review reports on grant data. M&E of GPE-funded grants also requires regular missions to DCPs, close engagement and dialogue with CAs, GAs, LEGs, and other partners, and active participation in JSRs. As mentioned, M&E also requires review and follow-up on all grant progress reports and completion reports.

The QAR of grant applications is carried out by the Secretariat, including in-country missions (QAR I) and document review (QAR II and III).

The Secretariat provides support to the LEG and CAs to strengthen in-country processes, such as through engagement and guidance on country processes leading to ESP endorsement (for example, ESP guidelines). This also includes support to navigate GPE processes like grant application, support to policy dialogue through the LEG, and providing guidance and tools to support and monitor JSRs. The Secretariat participates in LEG meetings during missions, develops guidance for LEGs, and promotes participation of civil society and teacher representatives in the LEG.

Finally, the Secretariat promotes and supports knowledge exchange and sharing of good practice across the Partnership. This includes organising and facilitating opportunities for south–south learning through semi-annual DCP meetings, as well as various other workshops and exchange opportunities between countries.

Source: GPE (2018a) (see Annex K)

## 7.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

The Secretariat's roles and responsibilities are listed in the GPE Charter and among the guidelines for various GPE grants. However, there is no distinct public document such as a ToR setting out the roles of the CLs or other parts of the Secretariat, and the Secretariat's exercise to map its own activities as an input to this study was the first such attempt we are aware of.

While a few DCPs felt that the separation of roles and responsibilities between the Secretariat and other key actors is clear, many respondents spoke about various ways in which confusion exists. A lack of certainty about where the Secretariat's responsibilities start and stop, and how they relate to others, in some cases leads to confusion for all partners and friction between actors.

### 7.1.1 Facilitation or direct involvement?

**There is confusion among partners about whether the GPE Secretariat is meant to play purely a facilitation role or to step in and take more direct positions on issues and decision making.** Different agencies raised this issue, including DPs that act as CAs, and CSOs. It is unclear to some respondents whether the GPE model is really relying on partners on the ground or if processes are actually meant to be channelled through the Secretariat. This issue is part of the basis of many of the following findings on the Secretariat's role and confusion between partners.

**One reason given for the confusion is that the guidance on responsibilities for CLs is very broad, allowing different interpretations of how to carry out the role by individual CLs.** UNESCO reported based on its experience, largely in CA roles, that CLs interpret how they should behave in-country across a wide continuum. At one extreme, the CL plays a heavy handed role, intervening in government processes and enforcing rules; at the other end of the spectrum, however, CLs take a more distanced position and try to listen and support actors on the ground in a supportive manner. This position was supported by DCPs during the DCP consultation in Maputo.

**Sometimes the Secretariat is seen as distorting and interfering in country processes.** In-country actors already have technical expertise, and GA and CA roles are there to guide GPE processes. Thus, the Secretariat role is seen by some as often duplicating and even interfering with country ownership, and missions by directive CLs may override and undermine the authority of the GA and CA, as mentioned by DPs across these two roles. One country example given by a CA involved the GA feeling that the CL was too involved in country-level management of the GPE application process and that this was undermining the GA's role as the in-country GPE lead. The GA held a meeting with the CL and CA to agree to a communication protocol in which the CL should only communicate with the GA and CA, although there are apparently still tensions.

**On the other hand, the Secretariat can help distinguish the GPE grant from other activities of the GA.** A few DPs who act as CAs discussed situations where donors have felt that the GA is taking over use of the funds and GPE-funded activities are not sufficiently identifiable as being from GPE. Where partners in-country cannot differentiate between what is the GA agency working and spending from their own HQ-funded programme versus for GPE – particularly mentioned in regard to the World Bank in West Africa – it causes confusion for other partners and the DCP about roles and responsibilities and leads to the GA taking decisions without consultation. In these cases, DPs feel the Secretariat is too hands off.

**There are diverse views on how prescriptive GPE as a Partnership should be more generally.** Given the principle of country ownership, there is an argument that GPE should not be pushing specific actions. Two CSO representatives spoke about how 'GPE' (presumably through the Secretariat) sometimes breaks the barrier of country ownership by putting forward GPE's own priorities and agenda rather than letting the country itself lead, and how it needs to stop adopting its own priorities. However, one DCP focal point spoke about how GPE has become an 'awakening call' in demanding that the government delivers critical services to the most vulnerable. In this country, the focal point felt that they would not be talking about equity, out-of-school children, and learning outcomes without GPE's involvement. This partner thus seemed grateful for the demands of the GPE model in influencing national education priorities.

## 7.1.2 Overlaps and gaps

**As discussed previously in Section 6.1.3, the QA processes in grant development are seen by some as duplicative.** This was raised particularly by the World Bank, which sees the GPE processes as merely a repetition of its own processes, and reinforced by Norad, which has observed these processes through the GPC. One DCP spoke about how in this process the involvement of the Secretariat on top of the CA and GA led to things taking a lot of time.

Responsibility for communication with government creates some confusion between the Secretariat and CAs. A specific example from one DP related to working in a context of decentralisation where both central and local government units receive GPE grants. The CA found it hard to know which of the CA or Secretariat should be communicating with various levels of government.

**The Secretariat's role in the implementation phase of grants, after ESP development and grant application, is seen as underdeveloped by some CAs and GAs.** The World Bank noted that little is said about this in the Secretariat's own mapping of its role. There seems to be little clarity on the nature and outputs expected of the Secretariat in implementation, and whether this is a monitoring or problem-solving role. The Secretariat is seen by a few DPs that are not themselves GAs as 'stepping back' after the ESP and grant development, with implementation relying on the GAs. UNICEF, which does act as a GA, reinforced this view with the observation that the Secretariat does not consistently respond to UNICEF country offices' progress reports submitted to GPE, and that this is a missed opportunity to follow up on significant issues raised around implementation, as well as on ways to improve the reporting.

## 7.2 Bottlenecks and enabling factors

Respondents referred to a number of areas where the Secretariat is seen to be particularly effective and key factors contributing to that success, as well as challenges in being effective. In some cases, the same factor was mentioned both as enabling (when it is present) and a bottleneck (when it is absent). The technical expertise of Secretariat staff was highlighted as contributing to effective operation of the model, as well as CLs' role in unblocking bottlenecks and acting as an independent arbitrator. Factors that cause challenges for efficient and effective operation of the Secretariat in the model include poorly organised missions and limitations on CLs' availability to be really supportive.

### 7.2.1 Technical expertise of Secretariat staff

**Secretariat staff are generally recognised as having great expertise and skills, which contributes to efficient functioning of the country-level model.** Some DPs, including those representing the majority of CAs, spoke about the quality and soundness of staff technical capabilities. In the written consultation, USAID wrote that, 'The Secretariat has phenomenal people who are doing great work'. This is demonstrated by giving excellent advice on GPE processes, providing good and timely responses on documents, as well as making use of the unique position of having an overall view of GPE in different countries.

CLs are mentioned as being particularly effective when they also have deep knowledge of the country context. UNICEF gave an example of a CL spending time building a long-term relationship with the government and partners for effective working in one country.

As well as general education expertise, the CLs are viewed as giving guidance and support to country actors on the procedures, as well as the roles and responsibilities, of the key actors. For example, AFD spoke of how the CL is a great support for the CA if needed, to remind all actors about the key aims and strategies of GPE.

**Conversely, inconsistencies in knowledge and skills across CLs can mean that DCPs and other key actors do not receive the same level of support.** UNICEF identified that CLs come from different backgrounds and bring different professional interests and experience, which means their advice will differ – such as some focusing more on technical education than others. This finding was reiterated during the DCP consultation in Maputo, where some DCPs commented that CLs are not always well-trained in new and existing GPE grant processes (e.g. variable part).

**A specific alleged gap in Secretariat knowledge is the understanding of UN policies and procedures in humanitarian contexts.** UNICEF's position is that GPE processes do allow flexibility for fragile and conflict-affected contexts, but CLs need an understanding of the humanitarian principles guiding how the UN operates in such circumstances to be able to adapt the processes appropriately.

Despite this, there were specific mentions about how the Secretariat has been known to be flexible particularly in fragile contexts. CARE and Save the Children spoke about appreciating the Secretariat for being very responsive and for going with the flow when a situation is political and involves difficult negotiations. Likewise, one of the DCPs spoke about the need for flexibility in responding to GPE's priorities in vulnerable contexts, such as being flexible about what a classroom is when it may not be possible to bring all out-of-school children into a traditional classroom.

## 7.2.2 Interaction with the actors based in-country

**The Secretariat is seen by some as having difficulty in ensuring the LEGs are effective.** Some CSOs and the World Bank note that, as LEGs are owned by governments, they are not accountable to GPE. The Secretariat's role is only in promoting and supporting LEG processes. Without a direct accountability mechanism to GPE, the Secretariat is limited in how it can influence events on the ground. However, GPE processes require certain criteria and actions from LEGs. One example of the implications of this lack of accountability is in the transparency of the GA selection process. The World Bank said it has heard anecdotal evidence that GA selection is not always as transparent as GPE's policies require, yet there is little the Secretariat can do to mitigate this.

**CL presence in-country is seen by the EU as endorsing and giving legitimacy to the LEG,** and one CSO spoke about the Secretariat engaging in 'soft diplomacy' when in-country to make sure the LEG is as broad as possible and functioning. That said, CLs do not always make time to meet with other members of LEGs on their country missions. One CSO referred to how CLs use their missions to sit with the CA and GA and solve problems, but this leaves a gap in terms of oversight of overall processes and ensuring processes are inclusive. Another CSO felt it is a problem if CLs are not meeting with teachers on their visits.

**The Secretariat's presence in-country can help to untangle disagreements and facilitate progress.** Respondents from DPs spoke about the Secretariat as an 'honest broker that acts in the best interests of global education development' (taken from the World Bank's written submission) and as having neutral convening power, which is particularly useful in politically contentious contexts.

However, one comment from civil society noted that GPE needs to also think about its role as a political actor, particularly at the global level. One CSO felt that GPE is sometimes endorsing a certain political stance. The hypothetical example given was

when GPE shows a non-democratic country to be doing well, such as by having a well-functioning LEG, yet at the same time that government is violating human rights (in the example, killing activists or students). The member suggested that respect for human rights should be considered as an element in the GPE operational model, although did not explain further how this should be done.

**A challenge to the operational model that affects all the key actors is the number of processes required for GPE grants and the time they take to complete.** While some of these have been discussed elsewhere, such as potentially duplicative QA mechanisms, other examples are useful here. The SDC spoke of a country where the GA had worked on developing the ESP using the GPE criteria. However, at the last minute the Secretariat brought new evaluation criteria to the table, by which time it was too late to include them. Both the government and the CA were then angry and the confusion that arose was felt to be inefficient. A CA gave another example that, while the CL provides good and timely comments on GPE documents, these are often quite extensive and require an unrealistic level of effort to respond to. The CA felt that expectations need to be adjusted to match the reality of what is possible and reasonable within the country context. One DCP had an experience of being told their grant application was incomplete, but the Secretariat did not provide assistance with correcting the application.

**There are instances of the Secretariat holding country missions with poor advance communication, affecting the efficiency of these visits.** The World Bank's feedback from task team leaders is that missions sometimes happen with little advance notice and/or coordination with the GA, and the back-to-office reports are irregularly shared (although they note that on the whole the Secretariat has much improved in this regard). One DCP gave a specific example of a GPE mission that the MOE focal point was only told about one week beforehand. As a result of not consulting with MOE in planning the mission, MOE was unable to participate in some of the meetings. In this case, the GA apparently knew about the mission further in advance so it was unclear who was meant to communicate with the government.

### 7.2.3 Limited availability

**For a number of respondents who represent CAs, the Secretariat is not able to provide as much support as they feel would be beneficial for the effective functioning of the operational model.** Respondents spoke about CLs having many countries to represent, and also having their own limitations and constraints. With so many countries, CLs are not able to engage in week-to-week issues, which we presume restricts both their understanding of the issues as well as the time available to help respond to them. This was recognised by DCPs too, with one mentioning that having three to four countries (when the average is actually even higher at five, according to the Secretariat's mapping) can cause difficulties in efficacy and timing. One DCP in the Maputo consultation mentioned waiting several weeks for an answer to a seemingly urgent request. UNICEF spoke of the 'fly in, fly out' model of CL support not being conducive to capacity building. USAID also acknowledged that the Secretariat has a difficult balancing act to manage – needing to support the CAs when necessary but not upset other members of the LEG.

## 7.3 Respondents' suggestions for changes

A number of respondents spoke about things the Secretariat should (or should not) do and as a result what they should do more (or less) of. Before exploring this further, however, it should be noted that a few donors acknowledged the effort the Secretariat has made in responding to different demands from the Board, trying to improve processes, and the difficult balancing of expectations this involves. As USAID wrote: '[The Secretariat] is pulled in lots of directions with different views from all its various partners each who feels their view is the correct one. They need to respond to DCPs, donors and civil society who don't all agree and they try to find consensus, which is time consuming.' USAID and Norad recognised that the requirements of the Secretariat, and those they demand of key actors in-country, come from Board decisions.

### 7.3.1 Clear responsibilities and support in-country

**The World Bank and UNICEF suggested that the confusion about roles should be eliminated through having specific ToR and clearer guidance on roles set out for CLs.** The ToR for CLs should be based on the roles and responsibilities of other actors too. Clarity on where the Secretariat's role starts and stops is expected to reduce duplicative effort and friction between partners, as well as lessen confusion for recipient governments.

**More support from the CLs is necessary where key actors need help addressing issues.** There is a view from a DCP as well as from USAID that the Secretariat should be ready to step in to help unblock problems that need to be solved. In particular, this is seen as something CAs would appreciate: when CAs are trying to find a balance between other actors, having more support from the Secretariat would be beneficial. However, it is noted that this will not be needed in all countries. DFID's solution to this was that the Secretariat could use the data it collects about country and grant performance to scale up its support when a country is not performing well.

Again, there were mixed views on the nature of the Secretariat's role in this support. For UNESCO, the CL should be a facilitator, so coming in to help the other key actors rather than bringing their own agenda. The involvement should be at the request of the CA, GA, and DCP. On the other hand, USAID asked whether the Secretariat should play less of a neutral broker role and stake out positions more, while one DCP encouraged the Secretariat to be there to guide DCPs in key decision-making points 'like an external auditor'.

There were a couple of suggestions that the Secretariat could do more to share best practices from other countries on how to operationalise the Partnership. One DCP spoke about how the Secretariat could do more to summarise its learning and what factors worked in other countries.

**For some respondents, the Secretariat does need to be available and visible in-country more frequently.** One DCP felt that CLs should go to visit their countries more often for M&E of GPE processes, and if this was not logistically possible then they could hire local consultants to do this on their behalf. DPs that act as CAs specified the need for CLs to visit more often, and for each to represent fewer countries. For some donors, there was a sense that GPE (as a partnership and funding source) needs to be more visible in-country for it to be recognised as different from other donors, and especially to separate it from the GA.

There were two specific suggestions about how this might be managed in terms of resourcing. The EU proposed that the Secretariat could have staff based in regional offices, making it easier to coordinate and provide more country visits. UNESCO suggested that the CST could be organised into clusters whereby a small number of staff work together as support for a larger number of countries, but each with different expertise to be brought in as needed.

### 7.3.2 Greater oversight of GAs, CAs and LEGs

**The strongest suggestion coming from DCPs was the need for the Secretariat to follow up on GAs and CAs.** DCPs talked about the need to remind the key actors of their roles and responsibilities, and to act as arbitrators in the case of confusions or disagreements. In one country where the DCP was unclear what, if any, responsibilities the CA was undertaking, it was suggested that the CL could provide more instruction for CAs, as well as monitoring their performance and reporting back on this to the DCP. During the Maputo consultation, DCPs suggested that the Secretariat have a more active monitoring role of the GA's operational and fiduciary activities (Annex L).

A few donors that are CAs, such as DFAT, felt that greater oversight of GAs is needed by the Secretariat, since at the implementation stage GPE relies on how well the GA is performing and no one is holding the GA to account. Similarly, Norad has seen shortcomings in the monitoring of grants by GAs and asks if this could be picked up earlier by the Secretariat. One DP emphasised the importance of engaging directly with other donors in the sector, as a feedback mechanism on implementation. This suggestion should be seen alongside the World Bank's view that Secretariat missions can be a duplication and lead the government to not listen to the GA, even though they have fiduciary responsibility.

While there was clearly demand for more monitoring of – and support to – the performance of CAs and GAs, it was not explicitly mentioned that this had to require in-country presence.

**The Secretariat should play a role in strengthening the LEGs.** CSOs suggested that, if the LEG is a priority for GPE, then CLs could reinforce this by having it as an agenda item for regular discussion as part of their country support. This relates to comments mentioned earlier about the importance of meeting with teachers and wider LEG members separately, and engaging with other donors than the GA and CA. One CSO spoke more generally about the Secretariat acting as the 'guardians' of GPE processes, tracking whether countries meet minimum standards.

### 7.3.3 Ensure streamlined reporting requirements

**Participants feel the Secretariat should continue making efforts to streamline the processes and reporting requirements.** UNICEF mentioned the successful efforts to develop one grant monitoring template through consultation with GAs. However, there may be further to go, as one DCP felt there should be a single reporting requirement rather than having duplicates to submit to the GA and the GPE Secretariat. A CA suggested that the application process should be streamlined and become more flexible to align with and adapt to country context. If this were to happen, then by reducing the heavy GPE requirements there would actually be fewer capacity development needs for DCPs. This also suggests that this respondent feels some of these processes do not have inherent value in building systemic capacity.

## 7.4 Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the analysis and findings related to the roles of the Secretariat.

In terms of mutual understanding of the Secretariat's responsibilities, there is a notable confusion among partners about where the Secretariat's role starts and finishes in the country model. This is perhaps not surprising given the lack of ToR for CLs. Within this confusion, it is unclear what the nature of CLs' involvement is supposed to look like, i.e. whether it is about providing support and facilitation for the country-based actors or if it is meant to be more directive.

The Secretariat staff are recognised as having substantial technical expertise and providing guidance on GPE processes, and CAs in particular value their support in resolving issues and being a neutral convener. However, partners find the CLs stretched too thinly across countries to be as available and involved as they might like.

DPs are keen to see clear ToR set out for CLs to remove ambiguity and tensions. There are some calls, particularly from DCPs, for the Secretariat to play more of a role in monitoring GAs, CAs, and LEGs, seeking information from actors in-country and sharing this back with the government and other partners.

## 8 Capacity development

A specific objective for this study was to examine the current efficiency and effectiveness of capacity development by key actors in the GPE country model. The focus was the capacity development that may occur through the roles and responsibilities of key actors, which are mapped out in Annex J. Respondents for the study were asked about the approach taken by key actors to capacity development, as well as their success stories and challenges, and for suggestions on how capacity development could be provided more effectively. While these questions were asked of each of the key actors, a number of the emerging themes relate to capacity development more generally, so have been analysed and incorporated here. We note that capacity development is also funded by a large portion of GPE grants, which is outside the scope of this study, and so this provides only a partial view of GPE's contribution to capacity development.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the understanding of responsibilities for capacity development. The roles of LEGs, CAs, GAs, and the Secretariat, as viewed by respondents, are each discussed. The chapter moves on to the bottlenecks and enabling factors for successful capacity development. Enabling factors are broadly identified as government ownership and coordination, appropriate use of TA, and opportunities for cross-country learning. Specific bottlenecks to capacity development, particularly within the GPE model, are then discussed. The main suggestions from respondents for improving capacity development in the GPE model are set out in Section 8.3, and this is followed by conclusions.

### 8.1 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

As the starting point for this study, we adopted the definition of capacity development used by the Secretariat in its consultation with DCPs in 2017: 'the process of strengthening the abilities or capacities of individuals, organisations and institutions to develop sustainable systems with effective and efficient use of resources' (GPE, 2017i). The original mapping of roles and responsibilities of GAs, CAs and LEGs, carried out by the Secretariat, indicates there is no specific repository of expectations about capacity development; however, there are both explicit and implicit responsibilities and opportunities for developing capacity.

The mapping (Annex J) shows there are some specific, explicit capacity development type activities. For example, the GA 'Uses ESPDG process to build capacity in analysis and planning' and 'Applies for a PDG if relevant, to ensure consultations and technical support for program development process'. The CA 'Facilitates gathering of feedback and lessons learnt from the LEG on grant implementation' and the LEG 'Brings technical expertise, experience and innovation as relevant to the implementation of the ESP.' These examples make explicit reference to the key actors' roles in providing capacity development and technical support.

The mapping also showed that capacity development *could* occur across many of the other responsibilities. Many activities could be a channel for capacity development, even if it is not outwardly stated as an objective. For example, the CA 'Supports governments in organising effective JSR process (preparation, process and follow-up)'. This type of activity can be an opportunity to build national capacity in planning and

organising events, like JSRs, for maximum impact on improving education outcomes. However, these activities have a more implicit link to capacity.

**Given the scattered and somewhat implicit nature of these references to capacity development, it is perhaps not surprising that stakeholders – DPs in particular – perceive ambiguity about what is meant by and expected of capacity development in the GPE model.** Some DPs and DCPs commented that capacity development is so broadly defined, it 'gets thrown into everything' when partners do not really know what is meant by it or what GPE is hoping to achieve.

**This raises the question of whether capacity development is seen by key actors in the country model as central to GPE's aims.** For some it certainly is. One DCP spoke about feeling proud of GPE because it puts more faith in the government's capacity than other funders. For this DCP focal point, GPE is putting effort into building the DCP's capacity in order for the country to implement the programme 'to the best international standards'. The respondent went on to say the most important point of GPE is to develop national capacities so that the government is able to implement its education programmes in a transparent and acceptable manner. Along similar lines, the EU emphasised how important ownership and capacity building are to the sustainability of the programmes and any progress in systems strengthening. However, UNESCO's position was that there is no current expectation of dedicated training or capacity development processes in the Education Situation Analysis (ESA) and ESP phases, and no indicators to measure this. They feel it is more implicitly expected in the ESPIG, yet still not explicit enough given the requirements such as introducing new learning assessments, which would need system strengthening. Given the ESPDG guidelines do suggest that activities should seek to build government capacity in sector analysis whenever possible, this aspect of the guidelines may not have been taken on board as widely as intended.

**Most respondents who spoke about capacity development could identify a range of different ways in which capacity development does take place.** These range from hearing the ideas of stakeholders for policy and implementation, learning of best practices in other countries, and on-the-job support and training all the way through to more structured and formal training provision. These will be discussed in more detail below.

The responsibility for capacity development is seen as largely falling to the GAs, but with some shared responsibility. The next sections look in more detail at capacity development in relation to each of the key actors.

### **8.1.1 LEGs' role in capacity development**

**According to the DCPs, LEGs are not expected to be responsible for capacity development, and their role in capacity development is not clearly defined.**

Even though it is not seen as a responsibility of LEGs, some DCPs did speak about capacity development coming from sharing feedback, advice, and best practice from experience elsewhere by LEG members. The DCP Consultation in September 2017 heard that LEG meetings allow sharing of tools and facilitation of implementation arrangements, advice, and knowledge-sharing. One of the DCP focal points spoke about their country being young and the education system still developing, and that participating in different meetings allows exchange with other countries and partners and the sharing of good practices. Within the LEG one can learn from hearing other

members share their experience and ideas, and how to successfully implement the project, or how to successfully fulfil the plan. One DCP spoke about how technical working group sessions on specific themes represent a platform for capacity development under the LEG.

In terms of GPE guidance documents, LEGs' entry points for capacity development are largely around support to processes and knowledge-sharing (see Annex J). For example, during ESPDG, LEGs 'agree on improvements required in the short term (prior to endorsement) and, if needed, during plan implementation,' and during ESPIG, 'provide meaningful and effective support to the implementation of the ESP, bringing technical expertise, voice, innovation and experience.' The LEG also has a role in ensuring capacity development is leveraged by GPE grants: 'Endorse the selection of the ESPDG GA ensuring that it can provide technical support and build capacity for analysis and planning' and 'Determine the most appropriate funding modality for ESPIG, balancing risks with the need to optimize capacity development and country ownership.'

### 8.1.2 CAs' role in capacity development

**There are mixed views on the extent to which capacity development is part of the role of CAs.** For some DCPs, it is not really expected of CAs because – unlike for GAs – they feel there is nothing written about what CAs have to achieve. DCPs recognise that CAs are too busy to take on this responsibility when it is not a formal requirement. DPs that take on the CA role in-country feel similarly: one DP said they see no capacity development component when reading the ToR, unless capacity development is regarded more generally as 'support to the government'. However, many CAs noted that capacity development is a priority for their staff anyway, even if this is not as part of the CA role. Many agencies see it as central to the sustainability of the education sector, so as financial partners they support various programmes that include capacity development. This includes funding other capacity development institutions like the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), and CONFEMEN's Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC). Going even further, one DCP notes that all partners are accountable for supporting government capacity for GPE processes since they are all members of GPE.

**However, some respondents see a role for CAs in coordinating the capacity development efforts of other partners.** DCPs see this as something CAs should be doing, as part of their role coordinating DPs. AFD spoke of the CA's responsibility for encouraging sectoral dialogue and exchange of information so that capacity development programmes across partners are complementary and not overlapping.

Looking at the kinds of capacity development the CAs are doing, these can broadly be categorised into the organic processes of **on-the-job exchange** and **proactive programming** through their own funds, which can be leveraged to support the work of the CA but would most likely happen anyway.

**CAs build the capacity of government staff through their meetings with government and support to GPE processes.** This is recognised by DCPs in various ways. One DCP spoke about the CA playing the role in co-managing the LEG meetings, developing a joint agenda that is shared before the meeting. Another spoke about the cooperation and frequent meetings held by the CA during the preparation of

the grant application, as well as the fact that by working with the experts from the CA they learn about the models that are performing well in other countries.

**For the DPs who act as CAs, this capacity building is identified as taking place particularly through the planning phase in conducting ESAs and ESPs, but also during implementation and monitoring of GPE grants.** One DP explained this as helping the beneficiaries to establish routines, familiarise themselves with new approaches, use new tools, and support the development of inclusive and participatory processes. A specific example came from one CA about their support to the JSR. The respondent worked closely with government partners to revise the JSR planning process and ensure that there was better coordination of the reviews of DP and government initiatives. The JSR was evaluated by participants as being greatly improved over previous years, and the meeting led to concrete recommendations and an action plan. All this experience has left the government with ToR and reporting documents to use as models for subsequent JSRs. For DFID, this organic process of capacity development by the CAs is where the most value can be added.

**CAs are also recognised for the capacity development they provide via their bilateral programmes.** Frequently, when DCPs spoke about the capacity development activities of their CAs, they were activities funded by the agencies' programmes. For example, one DCP mentioned the CA's involvement in providing experts to support the development of the teacher training policy and curriculum reform. For bilateral and multilateral DPs in this role, it seems to be a benefit to have capacity support provided through their bilateral programme, which goes towards helping their aims as CA. An example is UNESCO, which takes the position that capacity building is part of its overall approach to engagement, and it does this through avenues such as the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) programme. If UNESCO is the CA and leading development of ESA or ESP, it will provide joint support from IIEP, UIS, or consultants, as well as integrated training for government staff (such as projection models and financial projections). UNESCO feels it is important that any support it is involved in through GPE be aligned with the broader support it has been providing in a country over the years.

### 8.1.3 GAs' role in capacity development

Capacity development is seen to sit squarely among the responsibilities of GAs, or the consultants they hire, according to DPs in the CA and GA roles. Save the Children spoke about how GAs understand that MOE is responsible for implementing the GPE projects, and the GAs' role is to make sure they can do that. How exactly the GA supports the government will depend on the capacity needs of the Ministry.

**Similar to CAs, a part of the capacity development that GAs are seen to do is through on-the-job interaction and processes.** For example, one DCP spoke about the GA working in a hands-on way with the relevant Ministry teams during grant application and implementation, leading to skills transfer. The underlying factor was the need for ownership. This sort of approach was felt to be effective as MOE staff were proactively involved and then had a full understanding of the programme design. The importance of this type of capacity development was stressed by a number of DPs. They feel that GA staff or consultants should be working with MOE and encouraging government ownership of the ESP, and not just using external consultants who get the job done.

**GAs are also recognised for supporting Ministry staff with training on specific skills**, such as one country where the focal point felt that training on statistics and analysis had been very successful. UNESCO sees access to training workshops and distance learning (particularly through IIEP) as major parts of its capacity development component. UNESCO sometimes provides this support through the CapEd programme, while making sure the courses are aligned to the priority areas identified for the GPE funding.

**The World Bank is recognised for its capacity building of government staff, particularly in the finance and procurement domains.** One focal point said that these capacity gaps were identified during project design and factored into the project appraisal document. The GA then supported the government with training before starting implementation, and over the course of the grant the Bank's experts in finance and procurement offer assistance to Ministry staff at any time, as well as giving information to MOE regarding relevant international training courses. Another DCP spoke of similar support from World Bank consultants or staff, with Ministry officials able to email the World Bank for help; sometimes they will work with specialists to solve problems. Both of these DCP focal points said this support comes out of the Bank's own funds rather than the GPE grant, and the Bank explained that monthly training on World Bank procurement is held in most countries to support government staff in applying it to their own systems. The World Bank itself feels it is in an advantageous position, because it can work through other projects in addition to GPE. This allows it to provide more fiduciary, procurement, and financial oversight and support when they are GA.

An area that this study did not always get clarity on is who pays for these aspects of capacity development by GAs. While DCPs sometimes said 'the GAs pay for this themselves', it was not entirely clear if this comes out of the grant agent fee (which is part of the GPE grant value, i.e. a slice of the MCA). It could alternatively be coming from the GAs' general country/programme budget, or other programmes. For example, UNESCO's CapEd programme is a separately funded programme for capacity development.

#### **8.1.4 The Secretariat's role in capacity development**

**For DP respondents who touched on this topic, it was not clear that the Secretariat has or should have a role in capacity development at country level.** The CLs' model of remote support is not seen as conducive to supporting capacity development. However, the Secretariat is recognised for its role in communicating GPE policies and procedures, which is necessary knowledge for governments working on applications and implementation. The guideline documents are mentioned as being complete and clear, but sometimes overwhelming with too much detail. There are conflicting responses on whether the Secretariat goes further than sharing guidelines to supporting the conduct of processes. AFD said that the Secretariat helps regularly and notably in the design of grant applications; however, one DCP said it was told it was not allowed help from the Secretariat in its application, with little explanation given as to why this was the case. The Secretariat is also seen to support capacity development by sharing information, knowledge products and lessons learned. A particular channel for this is the DCP forums, facilitated by the Secretariat but not an intrinsic part of its role in the country model.

UNICEF identified a particular weakness of the Secretariat's support to capacity development in crisis contexts. Its view is that, while individual CLs may have expertise

in education in emergencies and crises, the GPE policies and procedures for these contexts are only now emerging. UNICEF's position is that reforms in operating procedures should take account of capacity development in humanitarian contexts.

## 8.2 Bottlenecks and enabling factors

The factors enabling successful capacity development tend to have quite general applicability and are not specific to the GPE country-level operational model. These factors relate to government ownership and demand as a recipient, having a strategic and coordinated approach to capacity development efforts, and tailoring technical support to allow further government ownership of processes and plans. Equally, the absence of these things can mean capacities are not developed, at least not optimally.

Some specific bottlenecks to successful capacity development include a pressure to meet deadlines that pushes out the focus on capacity, high turnover of government staff, and lack of transparency of GAs' plans preventing collaboration and accountability. Some challenges to capacity development are particularly acute in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

This section goes on to explore the evidence from respondents about these enabling factors and challenges specific to capacity development. There are additional bottlenecks to engaging in capacity development, which are the same as those related to delivering all the roles and responsibilities of key actors. These are not explored again in depth here. Briefly though, the general issues for key actors which limit capacity development are:

- For LEGs, respondents spoke about the importance of a well-functioning LEG, with regular meetings, government leadership and commitment to inclusivity, other partners' commitment to engage and share information, as well as good organisation and transparency surrounding LEG meetings.
- CAs are limited in the capacity development they can provide given the other demands on their time from their country programmes, in particular given that the CA role is not funded.
- General issues affecting the effectiveness and efficiency of GAs, which also relate to providing capacity development, include situations where the GA staff lack country knowledge, are working remotely, and when they have limited engagement with the LEG.
- For the Secretariat, the challenge again is that not having 'on the ground' presence, and having CLs representing many countries, means staff are unable to spend significant amounts of time in or supporting one country.

### 8.2.1 Government ownership and strategic coordination

**Capacity development is perceived to be most effective when it is owned and requested by the recipient government.** This was heavily stressed by some DPs – that there needs to be genuine interest on the part of the recipient – but often capacity development is donor rather than demand driven. Demands from governments themselves for advice on capacity development, as well as eagerness to be involved in GPE processes, make it easier for CAs since the capacity development is then a response to government's request. When DPs spoke about success stories in capacity

development, they mentioned that strong ownership by the MOE was a factor in making this happen.

**A strategic and coordinated approach across partners is seen as a key factor in successful capacity development.** Often speaking more about what they would like to see change, DCPs feel that donor projects could be better coordinated. One DCP spoke about how various donor projects each run capacity development elements yet are designed in siloes, run in different areas, and at times duplicate efforts. Further, capacity development should be considered holistically and not only as part of GPE processes, since the LEG members (including the GA and CA) may be supporting the government with funding much larger than the GPE grant. By being more strategic, support such as TA could be focused more on system and institution building rather than just project implementation.

**Some DCPs feel that carrying out *ex ante* capacity assessments is effective for planning capacity development.** This was mentioned in the DCP Consultation in September 2017, and one DCP spoke about a proposal it developed to conduct an assessment of gaps in MOE before funding capacity development. The assessment would look at each department and what can be done by existing civil servants, identifying where TA is needed to either deliver tasks or build the capacity of civil servants to do it. The MOE proposes that this could then lead to a plan for capacity development to be funded by donors through a pooled fund, with clear indicators and results-level monitoring.

**Capacity development is seen to be particularly successful when there is a pooled or common fund approach, given the alignment and coordination this brings.** GAC's experience is that, where there are sector-wide approaches, the partners' groups tend to be larger, stronger, and more coordinated. Examples of successful pooled funds, some as specific as a 'capacity development pooled fund', came from DCPs and DPs covering countries across Asia, West Africa, and the Middle East. AFD gave an example of a Treasury Special Account (Compte d'affectation spécial du Trésor) with four donors, stressing that the mechanism led to stronger and more efficient policy dialogue with the government.

**Part of the route to a more coordinated approach is through the LEGs.** One DCP spoke of the opportunity that the creation of the LEG presents to get members to sit together at a table and collectively look at how capacity development activities can be done. This focal point went on to explain that relationships between LEG members can be a limiting factor for capacity development. Members need to share information, particularly about their activities, or else it limits the ability to work well together. Getting this information from CSOs (via the CSO coalition) was seen as particularly difficult.

**Coordination of the capacity development under the GPE grant is an important element in this approach, and GAs are not always seen to be forthcoming in this.** One DP spoke from their position on the wider LEG in a country where the GA is developing a multi-million dollar capacity development initiative without consultation. It feels the GA should be proactively sharing its plans (and details such as ToR) with other donors in order for these initiatives to be aligned.

**A number of respondents across DCPs, DP CAs, GAs, and INGOs felt that capacity development requires a long-term approach to be successful.** In relation to GPE, UNESCO spoke about seeing GPE's grants in phases (of three or four years), and that capacity development needs to be linked across those phases of grants. A DCP member similarly felt that continuation of funds is important for a plan since

capacity building is a long process. For CARE, GPE's view of capacity development requiring long-term engagement is one of the reasons they were interested in becoming a GA.

## 8.2.2 Use of TA and government-owned GPE processes

**Respondents feel strongly that TA is best when tailored to support the development of national staff capacities.** One DCP focal point spoke extensively and passionately on this issue. This respondent explained a preference for a small number of consultants to work with MOE, by guiding the Ministry's own staff on how to do things for themselves, rather than hiring a firm to carry out this work in its entirety. The focal point gave examples of times when only one consultant was hired, which allowed closer working with MOE's team on issues like the new curriculum and textbook development. The country was frustrated that previously external staff were hired for activities like collecting data, and then the data were analysed in Washington. GPE has now supported the capacity building of government staff so that they can do the data collection and analysis themselves, and the number of consultants required to support the MOE team is reducing each year. Another DCP spoke about MOE having achieved its ambition to carry out sector reviews on its own, without needing international consultants as it had in the past.

**Further, respondents stress that any sort of technical support should be working with MOE, rather than instead of MOE.** DFID feels that part of the capacity development process is in supporting MOE to own the ESP development and its priorities. Norad went even further by asking whether it would be better to not use consultants at all in supporting MOE, possibly sacrificing some quality in the ESP but at the benefit of greater ownership. Some DPs spoke of how they perceive there to be cases where partners – GAs in particular in the GPE model – use consultants to get things done. An example from a DCP related to a few years ago when the GA (which was also CA) used its own engineers, hired locally and internationally, without consulting MOE except on some field visits. The focal point felt that MOE should not be presented with a finished product, and was pleased that things have changed since that time.

**Some countries see a benefit to having a long-term TA position in MOE to support coordination.** One of the DCPs has a long-term person (hired in this case by the CA) to link work across relevant government bodies in implementation of the ESP and provide advice and technical support. Another spoke about how it was effective when they had a long-term consultant sitting in the technical management division of the MOE which was responsible for the GPE project. This consultant had supported the technical leadership in terms of planning and monitoring activities. In this case, the focal point felt that the move towards using more short-term consultants who come in to give training has weakened the technical leadership of MOE. Similarly, a small number of CAs suggested that GPE grants should finance a long-term position in the MOE to account for the reporting requirements and requests coming from GPE, given the constraints on availability of Ministry staff time. These responses suggest that some partners see a full time TA role embedded within the MOE as helping develop capacity, in contrast to fully outsourcing tasks to external TA.

**Where the GPE model is able to make use of government systems, this is seen as being a route to capacity development.** As one DCP said, where funds go through government to MOE, it uses the government's people, and they in turn improve their skills as they overcome difficulties like disbursement. Another spoke about having

no problem with the World Bank as GA because it usually has national entities manage the grants, whereas other GAs still face trust issues with governments. For AFD, aligning with national systems and avoiding parallel or substitute modalities is core to capacity development. However, AFD – and other GAs – recognises that it is not always possible. It gave a case of a country in a crisis where finances had to run through a separate entity than the treasury. UNICEF notes that when it cannot use government systems this creates a bottleneck to a longer-term view of capacity development.

### 8.2.3 Cross-country learning

**Although falling outside of the key actors' responsibilities in the country-level operational model, learning from peers in other countries is seen as an important part of capacity building.** Knowledge sharing is a central part of GPE 2020.

There were a number of references to this type of capacity building coming from learning from other countries directly, through DCP meetings and cross-country exchanges. DCPs variously spoke about the DCP meetings as a way to learn about the GPE model and its processes and procedures, and also learn lessons about how to carry out steps like ESA and ESP development and implementation. Some DPs also felt that regional meetings and trainings organised by the Secretariat had been constructive for peer exchange and knowledge management, although the fact that only one person attends from each country is seen as a limitation. The evaluation of DCP pre-Board meetings carried out in 2017 found that these meetings have increased the knowledge and understanding of GPE's policies, goals and objectives and have increased participants' understanding of proposed Board decisions (Universalis, 2017). However, despite the views of respondents in our study, the evaluation found that the meetings are not effective, in their current format, to support knowledge and good practice exchange and peer-to-peer learning between the participants.

In addition to DCP meetings, DCPs feel that south–south learning through country visits is beneficial, such as swapping experiences on school attendance monitoring with sector-wide monitoring.

### 8.2.4 Bottlenecks specific to capacity development

**The deadlines and pressure to carry out all the steps in the ESP and grant application are seen as squeezing the time available for capacity development.** The primary responsibility, particularly of GAs, is to get the documents ready within deadlines, and as one DCP said this can put capacity development on the 'back burner' as it is a secondary objective. A DP representing CAs also spoke about the rush associated with GPE processes, such that for GAs capacity development becomes 'easy to skip' given it is not an emphasised priority. UNESCO acknowledged the difficult balancing act for its GAs between timelines, completeness, and quality in GPE processes, which affects the ability to develop capacity.

**Turnover of government staff is seen by DCPs and DPs alike as a challenge for capacity development.** When staff leave, the capacity they have built is lost, along with institutional memory and a systemic approach. Multiple GAs and CAs spoke of the difficulties of trying to build the capacity of individuals in the education sector who move on to different ministries, and how frequent changes in leadership positions slow down

these processes. This can stop key actors from taking a long-term view on capacity development.

**While GAs are generally expected to be carrying out capacity development, CAs and other partners are frustrated by lack of transparency about the plans.** CAs feel that GAs are not disclosing what capacity development or technical support they plan since it is outside programme activities. This is exacerbated when GAs use their own funds rather than GPE funds. As a result, CAs cannot judge whether GAs are delivering against plans and find it difficult to engage with GAs in planning a coordinated approach.

**The political situation can also make a difference to the ability to carry out capacity development.** Although only mentioned by one respondent, it is a noteworthy view that in fractious political contexts, given the relationships between the respective governments, a bilateral donor may not be in the best place to take on the GA role and try to carry out traditional capacity development with the national government. In these cases, this sort of bilateral GA is better targeting capacity development at subnational levels of government or on specific technical aspects like the education management information system. Alternatively, the respondent felt that the multilateral agencies are in a better position.

**A number of bottlenecks were identified as particularly acute in fragile contexts:**

- Turnover of government staff is exacerbated. One DCP spoke of the fluidity in the country meaning that the staff who have been trained could be gone very soon, thus losing the value of the training. This makes multi-year plans difficult, and at local government level you cannot even plan 'for one month'. A GA working in a conflict-affected setting spoke of being mindful of the massive turnover, due to salaries, migration and violence, and stated that it tries to prepare for huge turnover.
- Providing international expertise is harder in fragile and conflict affected settings. This is due to issues of attracting talent, additional costs, and bureaucratic barriers to placing long-term staff in insecure environments. BMZ spoke of the limitations meaning it cannot place staff in one country and has to work from a distance, which is obstructing for any capacity development work. While some DPs feel that in-country presence is very important for effective capacity development, they recognise that it may not always be feasible to find a GA with staff in-country.
- Partners may have to work with multiple governments and groups in the political context, expanding the scale of capacity development needs. This also relates to the need to roll out capacity development at lower levels of the education system, where beneficiaries are harder to identify and therefore support in a meaningful way.
- Travelling to insecure parts of the country for capacity development is difficult and more costly for the government and partners supporting these activities.

### 8.3 Respondents' suggestions for changes

Respondents made suggestions about how to improve capacity development through GPE's model that largely followed on from the findings presented above. The more prominent among these suggestions were a call for more emphasis and clarity to be given on what is meant by capacity development, and what is expected from key

actors, a greater role expected from CAs in coordinating capacity development by partners, and requests for more international networking and cross-country exchange.

**GAs and CAs would like to see clearer guidance from GPE about what is meant by capacity development and system strengthening, and what contribution is expected from GAs and CAs.** At the moment, partners feel it is not emphasised enough. They would like to see this guidance be detailed about the expectations throughout the GPE processes, in order for it to be given greater priority by key actors and so strengthen this responsibility (mentioned in particular by UNICEF and the EU). Some partners recognised GPE's reluctance to use very directive language in its guidelines given the need for flexibility and adaptation to context. However, DPs feel that leaving guidelines so vague can mean 60 or more countries each have to work things out for themselves, which is not efficient.

**UNESCO's position goes further to suggest that there should be a dedicated amount of funding for capacity development of DCPs in GPE processes.** It suggested that this should be treated separately from other grants and the GA should receive this specifically and only for capacity development. The funding would be attached to capacity development objectives and deliverables, to ensure that these interventions, which can be time consuming, are prioritised along with the other grant requirements of meeting application deadlines. One DCP also suggested that capacity development should be integral to the application and have specific milestones and indicators. Several countries during the Maputo DCP consultation suggested the use of an initial capacity development assessment to better structure and monitor capacity development activities. Related suggestions came from others – including a proposal of a joint mechanism for providing capacity development and TA in order to be able to quickly respond to needs as they arise. However, in this case the respondent stressed that it should be open and transparent for all DPs to be involved in decisions about managing the support. A third suggestion was that this coordination type of role may not be best baked into the GA and CA roles. As they said, a person (and agency) who makes an effective GA may not be the right person for skills transfer.

**DCPs feel that it should be within the CA's role to ensure that capacity development efforts are coordinated across partners.** This is seen as a leadership role in which CAs need to be strong in helping the sector to harmonise donors. In particular, getting CSOs to share information on their activities for better coordination is something that the CA could apparently help with. One country spoke of how the CA could coordinate across funding sources where international training courses are identified that are relevant to MOE officials. UNESCO also raised this coordination role for CAs, suggesting that CAs should be making sure capacity building is consistent across donor efforts, facilitating this integration rather than an expectation of direct provision of capacity development by CAs.

**Governments in particular were eager to see more exchange across governments as a way to develop capacities, and some DPs suggested more of this form of capacity building too.** DCPs are keen to learn from good practices. Focal points recognised areas where they had been successful that could be shared with other countries, and they could learn from other experiences in return. This sort of learning could take place on country exchanges or through DCP meetings. One DCP specifically suggested sharing lessons about the GPE tools, guidelines, and ESP development (as opposed to education sector strategies and implementation) at DCP meetings. DCP respondents from African countries mentioned the DCP meetings more than other DCP respondents, and a DCP from elsewhere mentioned that the Africa 2

and Africa 3 constituencies appear to have more regularly organised meetings, which it would like to see replicated elsewhere.

## 8.4 Conclusions

This chapter focused on the responsibilities of the four key actors for capacity development. A key finding is that while respondents can identify various types of activity that fall under capacity development, there is no one or clear understanding of what capacity development is expected under GPE. This includes clarity on the meaning of capacity development and what modes should be employed, as well as on what the specific responsibilities of key actors are when it comes to developing capacity. Generally, however, GAs are seen as holding the main role for capacity building through the grants.

Prominent factors for successful capacity development are seen to be government demand and ownership: it should not be donor-imposed. A coordinated, strategic, and long-term approach among partners is seen to be more effective, focusing on an assessment of capacity needs. TA to the government is most valued when it is limited to supporting government staff to increasingly carry out activities themselves, although long-term embedded TA may be necessary to support governments with responding to the demands of GPE and resulting increase in workload. Respondents place high value on the opportunity for countries to learn from each other, and the DCP meetings are an important platform for this. Specific bottlenecks to capacity development include a pressure to meet deadlines pushing out the focus on developing capacities, high turnover of government staff, and lack of openness from GAs about their plans for capacity development. Fragile and conflict-affected contexts face more acute and some additional challenges to developing capacities.

The main suggestions from respondents for improving capacity development in the GPE model relate to clarifying and emphasising the expectations and meaning of capacity development in the model. Part of this could be having an explicit expectation for GAs' capacity development efforts, as well as giving CAs a general capacity development coordination role. Finally, continued and more opportunities for cross-country learning are welcomed.

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# Part C: Conclusions and recommendations

## 9 Conclusions

This chapter aims to bring together the key conclusions from across the five findings chapters. It begins with some of the overarching findings that relate in general to the operational model and the interaction of key actors. It then moves on to focus on the four key actors. As many of the study's questions concern how the roles of key actors interact with each other, this chapter tackles each key actor both in terms of findings specific to their own individual roles and then how they relate to others. The chapter thus deals first with LEGs, CAs, and GAs, then the interaction between CAs and GAs, and then the Secretariat and its interaction with CA and GAs. A section focusing on capacity development follows. Discussion of the interaction of these actors with DCPs is of course spread throughout the chapter. The final section is used to highlight findings that relate to fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

These findings, and a set of recommendations, were presented to GPE's Board in June 2018. The recommendations are given in Annex M.

### 9.1 Key overarching findings

**A first predominant point is that there were no demands to overhaul the current design of the operational model.** Many of the key findings about LEGs, summarised below, support the ideals behind a LEG and seeing those operationalised in practice. For GAs, CAs and the Secretariat, the findings relate to ambiguities that come about in practice, which might be resolved by clearer guidance about what to do in specific situations, rather than changing the responsibilities themselves.

There were no loud calls to remove a key actor role or combine key actors in the model, or introduce new key actors. Indeed, a few respondents expressed the view that the model needs more time to bed in, as well as reinforcement. As one DCP said, the structure of the operational model is correct, it only 'requires enforcing and reinforcing the roles of various groups'. Another DCP said that the GPE mechanism is 'very enriching,' and just more work is needed 'on how to operationalise it correctly'. A third said there should not be any changes to the mechanism, but there should be more thought about coordination. Equally, DFID's position is to let the various changes that have happened take root, and that now is not the time for 'radical reform'. Instead, the Partnership should be focusing on making sure the existing changes work in practice and tweaking them to provide more support to countries where delivery is at risk. Norad observed that there is too much variety in how things are working at the country level, so GPE needs to bring more consistency to the model's functioning. For UNESCO, the existing broad guidelines are reasonable, but there may need to be more contextually driven operational modalities.

**Most responsibilities seem to be broadly clear on paper, and challenges and confusions occur in practice due to individual circumstances.** Most of the time, we have heard that the guidelines set out the expected roles and responsibilities for key actors – particularly the CAs and GAs. There is more ambiguity about the Secretariat's role since the CLs do not have publicly available ToR. However, the challenges seem to come more in practice, where context – particularly individual characteristics – affects how key actors address their role and thus how others have to respond accordingly. To some extent, this variation in interpretation and behaviour is anticipated with the sort of model that GPE has, and in fact some flexibility to adapt for what works

best is appreciated by partners. However, a number of strategies for helping reduce confusion, and the inefficiency and tension that result, have been mentioned. The first is having the Secretariat give more active advice and reminders to key actors of their roles, which some respondents have called a type of training. Another strategy is to have the Secretariat (along with the LEG) carry out more monitoring of the performance of these key actors.

**The DCP government's leadership and ownership is frequently seen as critical to effective and efficient operation of the Partnership.** Government's commitment to leading and driving the LEG as a consultative and inclusive platform is a strong factor for LEG effectiveness. Commitment and ownership by the government can enable successful and more efficient ESP finalisation and grant application, which supports GAs in fulfilling their responsibilities. Likewise, CAs feel that engagement and communication with the government is a major determinant of their success as a CA. Capacity development is perceived to be most effective when it is owned and requested by the recipient government rather than donor-driven.

For both CAs and GAs, having an existing good relationship with government through the operation of other programmes is seen as beneficial for them in fulfilling key actor roles. Characteristics of MOE that bring uncertainty – such as high turnover of staff, shifting political climates, and changeable priorities – can set back GAs and CAs in their roles.

## 9.2 LEGs

According to GPE documents, the mandate of the LEGs encompasses a policy dialogue platform formed by a collaborative group, connecting national education partners and DPs with the government. **Yet, in practice, understanding of the role of the LEGs among key actors proves to be more complex, and can lead to LEG inefficiency and ineffectiveness.** LEGs sometimes exist in parallel to other multi-stakeholder groups, and with varied composition of members, meaning it can be difficult to identify the LEG. Securing meaningful participation of varied groups, in particular CSOs, is still a challenge.

Regular and well-prepared LEG meetings are seen to make the LEG more effective and encourage greater participation. There is some confusion around the functions of the LEG. LEGs sometimes operate like a GPE project oversight body rather than as a sector-wide alignment platform, as is intended in the GPE documents. The guidance also leads to disagreement over the extent to which the LEG is a decision-making body, as opposed to a consultative body to assist and support the government.

Government ownership and leadership is key to the efficiency and effectiveness of LEGs and is seen as a means to mutual accountability. Where the LEG leadership is weak, the CA or most dominant DP may take over from the government in leading the LEG or even become a substitute entity for the LEG in GPE processes. Where LEG members are seen as bringing technical capacity, this makes a LEG more effective, and governments should maximise the benefit they get from this expertise.

**Respondents largely stressed that the normative aims for LEGs were the right ones and should be pursued.** This includes the idea that the LEG should be recognised by stakeholders as the only central, multi-stakeholder entity for education planning, implementation and monitoring, which would enable a more efficient process for developing and following an ESP. LEG leadership by the government needs to

ensure that the LEG is defined in terms of its contribution to achieving national education objectives and not only GPE oversight. Governments need to lead the LEG effectively to benefit from its members' comparative advantages.

**Having meaningful representation and participation on LEGs across the range of national and international stakeholders is considered essential for effective planning and implementation.** This is also expected to improve coordination among projects. However, some DCPs are concerned that a more inclusive LEG may become unwieldy or inefficient. Allocating specific roles and objectives to individual members, determined by each LEG itself, might make the platform more effective.

**Finally, there were calls for accountability in GPE grant processes through monitoring by the LEG.** Respondents suggested having joint monitoring practices set out for all LEG members to take part in, and to shift attention from a focus only on planning towards also looking at performance and results.

### 9.3 CAs

**While CAs' roles are felt to be clearly expressed in documents, in reality there is variation in how the roles are seen in different countries, particularly in terms of the balance between technical input, coordination, and steering processes.**

Various actors described how a shifting of roles and responsibilities sometimes leads to duplication within the country model, with confusion over where roles begin and end. CAs and other actors described stepping into each other's roles when another's delivery breaks down.

**For DCPs, a significant factor for successful CAs is identification of one nominated individual as CA lead, and the characteristics of that individual.** When they are engaged, integrated into the MOE, knowledgeable of the context and sector, and committed to fostering collaboration, their leadership can drive CA processes. Where DCPs see their CA as being active and showing leadership, they generally seem to be satisfied with the role played in coordinating and harmonising country level partners. DCPs also feel that CAs should know the rules and protocols of the relevant GA; although they recognise that there cannot be one set of information given to all CAs, they feel the Secretariat could share more information with CAs about how the grants and GAs are expected to work.

**Staffing issues, high workloads, and lack of resources are felt to prevent CAs from fulfilling their roles effectively.** In some cases the CA's responsibilities surpass the capacity of the organisation, and staff have to put their own programmes and priorities first. CAs themselves are frustrated by the tension between fulfilling the basics and meeting the expectations of other actors. Some feel that if the CA is expected to provide a secretariat-like function in terms of support, the role and time commitment should be reflected in the GPE grant.

**Many argued that, in the current way the role is envisioned as a purely voluntary position, there are a disproportionate number of responsibilities designated to the CA without any compensation.** CAs say they are committed to their work and will try to complete the role with whatever means they have, including contributing their own resources if they can. Providing this resource is often a challenge, however, and many feel that GPE should help cover CAs' costs to allow greater commitment and engagement in the role. On the other hand, UNICEF, which represents a large portion of CAs, views the voluntary fulfilment of the CA role as part of its contribution to the

Partnership. However, UNICEF notes that the responsibilities should be manageable and not duplicating Secretariat functions. UNICEF also recognised that investment in personnel and budget is needed by CAs if they want to take on the role effectively, and for some DPs an allocation of GPE resources may be a solution for this.

**Respondents felt that the CAs need to show stronger leadership.** CAs should be coordinating and serving as the communication link between the Secretariat, the LEG, and the DCP, and this is not always satisfactorily fulfilled at present. DCPs feel it is the CA's job to ensure open communication between the many parties in the GPE process, and to help harmonise the donors in the sector. Furthermore, some partners feel CAs should do more to formally include a variety of actors in dialogue, including CSOs, teachers, students, and parents.

## 9.4 GAs

The key findings about GAs focus around the lack of visibility of GPE, competition for the GA roles, presence of GAs in-country, and accountability of the GAs. Many of these findings echo conclusions made in the 2015 Norad evaluation and the 2015 Interim Evaluation.

**A concern arising with some partners is that it is not always possible to distinguish the GAs' work on GPE from that of their own programmes.** As a result, GAs are sometimes felt to act as though they are dealing with their own funding and do not effectively collaborate with other partners, which also has implications for accountability. It also means that GPE is not 'visible' in-country as a multilateral development partner.

**Diversification of GAs continues to raise the same issues as in previous evaluations.** Despite the increase in number of accredited GAs, in reality, the DCP and LEG are often given little choice from which to choose the 'best offer.' This means there is less competition to make sure the GA has the capability to fulfil the role effectively, and less room to hold the GA to account after selection. At the same time, some respondents feel that having a small number of GAs across countries brings familiarity of those GAs' systems and processes to other actors.

**The absence of the GA staff member based in-country is viewed as negatively impacting the GA's work and relationships.** This can create disconnects between the GA and other actors on the ground, and can also make the CA's role more difficult. GA absence is particularly pronounced in FCAS due to the difficulties of placing full-time staff in-country. While one DP felt that staffing requirements for GAs should be more clearly outlined, another recognised that any hard-and-fast rules may make programming unfeasible in certain contexts. The Board considers a lack of consistent GA technical representative presence and oversight in-country (Corporate Risk 2.3.1) as a criterion in assessing a country's overall level of grant risk, and hence grant risks tend to be higher in these countries (Operational Risk Framework, GPE, 2017).

**Accountability of GAs is an issue for some partners, who feel that while the ESP and grant application are subject to QA, the performance of the GA is not.** In some areas GAs have a contractual requirement, such as fiduciary oversight; however, other responsibilities can be poorly fulfilled with no repercussions. In some cases CAs feel they are left to monitor the GAs, yet this is not part of their recognised role and this can create tensions. Some CAs suggested the CA should be given a more prominent role in M&E to hold the GA accountable. DCPs suggested that there should be regular

country-level evaluations of the GAs for accountability and transparency, particularly since GA fees come from the MCA. Related to this, partners generally feel that there should be more focus on the implementation phase of GPE grants, from GAs as well as from other actors, rather than letting attention wane after development of the ESP and grant application.

**Finally, it is perhaps notable that 'direct access' was little spoken about by respondents.** Two respondents – CSOs in the webinar – spoke about the possibility of grants being managed by DCPs directly. This was raised as necessary to overcome the challenge of a small number of multilaterals dominating the implementation agenda as GAs, and as a route to capacity building of DCPs. During the DCP consultation in Maputo, the point was also made that GPE's objective should be to develop DCPs' capacity so that they can eventually manage their own grant, but this was seen as a longer-term outcome of capacity building rather than an immediate prospect.

While the Board has requested the Secretariat to look into the options for 'direct access', partners do not seem to be placing emphasis on this change of approach for DCPs to access funding; at least, this opinion was not raised in response to this study.

## 9.5 GAs and CAs

**While DCPs tend to see the GA and CA roles as clearly separate, some DPs feel that the boundaries between the respective implementation and coordinating roles are not always clear and vary by country.** There are instances of GAs and CAs appearing to compete for influence, putting the government in a difficult position of deciding whose advice to take. Some CAs have found the GA takes charge, oversteps its role boundaries, and does not leave room for the CA to become involved appropriately. Another challenge comes in communicating with the Secretariat, where confusion about responsibilities between GA and CA has led to delays in grant application.

**A particular area of ambiguity for GAs and CAs is in the variable part of ESPIGs.** There is confusion about their relative roles in designing the indicators and verification procedures, and in who should carry out that verification. As the GPC is currently overseeing work to support countries with guidance on the variable part, it is anticipated that this finding is already being addressed.

In carrying out the roles in reality, CAs and GAs feel they overlap or take on each other's roles when the other actor is not fulfilling their responsibilities. How this manifests itself depends on the individuals' personalities rather than the ToR. Communication gaps appear to be key to these circumstances, especially when the GA does not have presence in-country.

**Actors called for the specification and clarification of CA and GA responsibilities in relation to each other, in order to improve working relationships and efficiency.** Examples of areas where clarity is needed include whether CAs focus on facilitating dialogue while GAs focus on TA, and the CAs' role in the implementation phase. Clarification is felt to be needed beyond the generic guidelines, to context-specific information that speaks to the crossovers and ambiguities in practice. Respondents want to see increased communication between CAs and GAs, such as through joint planning and monitoring, and some suggested greater capacity development and sensitisation for GAs and CAs about their roles.

## 9.6 The Secretariat and its interaction with GAs and CAs

**In the absence of specific ToR for CLs, and as only broad Secretariat responsibilities are given in the GPE Charter, many respondents spoke about areas where confusion exists.** The Secretariat's role in the implementation phase of grants is seen as underdeveloped by some DPs, and this is reflected in the Secretariat's mapping. More clarity on the nature and outputs expected from the Secretariat, around monitoring and problem solving at all stages, is felt to be needed.

**A particular question raised is whether the Secretariat is meant to play only a facilitation role or to step in with more directive positions.** The variation in interpretation and experience in practice comes down to individuals as well as the lack of clear ToR. Where the CL is more forceful in-country, this can be seen as interfering and distorting country processes. On the other hand, the presence of the CL in-country can help distinguish the GPE grant from the other activities of the GA, helping clarify the situation for other partners.

**An enabling factor for the Secretariat's effectiveness is the deep technical expertise and skills of its staff.** Secretariat staff are appreciated for giving excellent advice on GPE processes, guidance on key actors' roles, and sharing cross-country experiences, as well as being particularly effective when they build country knowledge and relationships. However, inconsistencies in knowledge and skills across CLs can of course mean that DCPs and other key actors do not receive the same level of support.

**There are frustrations for other actors in the number of processes required by GPE and the time they take to complete.** This is compounded when the Secretariat is seen to change requirements (an example being the evaluation criteria) mid-way through the process, or to send extensive comments that require unrealistic effort to respond to. Other key actors also expressed frustration at missions that were seen to be organised with poor advance communication. This meant that some key actors (including the government) were unavailable for meetings and ultimately the mission was less effective than it could have been.

Many of the ambiguities about the Secretariat's roles, including the duplications with GAs and CAs that follow, could be addressed through having specific ToR and guidance for CLs.

**CAs feel they often have to take on some responsibilities of the Secretariat, or at least responsibilities they feel should be for the Secretariat.** CAs are displeased with this duplication, and in particular do not want to act as a messenger for the Secretariat. Meanwhile, some DCPs say they do not know if the CA is communicating with the Secretariat. A few CAs recommended that the roles between the Secretariat and the CA need more definition to ensure their fulfilment and to stop an overlap of responsibilities, especially in the realm of communication.

**The Secretariat can be an enabling factor for CAs, providing them with support, from a neutral and unique position given the CLs' cross-country perspectives, and the ability to help resolve bottlenecks.** However, this is seen as dependent on individual CLs' characteristics and experience, where in the worst case, CLs have been controlling of processes and undermining the CA's authority. Generally, DCPs and CAs called for more interaction with the Secretariat, mainly in the form of instruction, support, and technical guidance, to empower the CA.

**The main issue of duplication and thus inefficiency between the Secretariat and GAs relates to the QAR processes.** This seems to be specifically an issue for the World Bank as GA, since GPE's processes are modelled very closely on the Bank's. Other GAs do not appear to face such strong duplication. Respondents recognised that the QA piloting currently underway by the Secretariat is expected to address this issue. The pilot is tailoring the QA processes to complement GAs' own QA systems, focusing on the World Bank and UNICEF, and informed by variation in country context by risk/FCAS status, MCA value, and co-financing or presence of the GPE multiplier. In addition, the workstream is reviewing the Secretariat's QA system with the intention of streamlining it, as well as developing a differentiated QA approach for small MCAs.

**For a number of CAs and DCPs, more support from the Secretariat would be valued.** They feel CLs are not able to provide as much support as would be beneficial, given the number of countries each CL represents and their being based remotely. More support would help key actors in unblocking problems, although some respondents note this must be at the request of actors in-country, and remain facilitating rather than directive. More support may not be needed in all contexts, and DFID mentioned that the data in the Operational Risk Framework and Results Framework could have the potential to drive resources to support the country model. Greater presence in-country is also wanted by actors who feel the Secretariat's presence makes GPE more visible and distinguishes GPE from the GAs' own programmes. Suggestions on how the Secretariat could be more visible included having regional offices and having clustered teams, where a small number of CLs can be flexible across a group of countries depending on the expertise needed.

**A strong suggestion from DCPs was that the Secretariat should be doing more to follow up on GAs and CAs.** Key actors need to be reminded of their responsibilities, and the CL could provide advice and instruction as well as feedback to the DCP on the GA's and CA's performance. Some donors also felt that the Secretariat should have greater oversight of GAs and the implementation phase of GPE grants.

## 9.7 Capacity development

The partners interviewed for this study could give examples of capacity development activities taking place, yet they largely struggled to define what was meant by capacity development in GPE's country-level model, or who, among the key actors, holds responsibility for this. Capacity development is seen as a very broad term and lack of clarity can mean misaligned expectations as well as a neglected focus from key actors. GAs and CAs would like to see clearer guidance from GPE about what is meant by capacity development, and what their expected contribution is. While respondents understand the Secretariat's reluctance to use directive language, they see a risk that very broad guidelines are too vague and leave each country needing to establish its own interpretation. Some partners went further in saying there should be funding attached to capacity development, with linked objectives and indicators. This would give capacity development priority along with meeting GPE grant process deadlines.

**At present, DCPs do not see CAs as having a major role in capacity development given it is not a formal requirement.** Nonetheless, DCPs recognise that capacities can be developed through on-the-job exchanges with the CA. Meanwhile, CAs often carry out a number of capacity development activities but because this is core to their organisation's strategy, and part of their bilateral programmes, rather than *because* they are in the CA role. DCPs would like to see CAs take more of a role in coordinating capacity development across DPs and CSOs.

**The responsibility for capacity development is seen as falling more to the GA.** As with CAs, the on-the-job nature of interactions and processes is felt by DCPs and GAs to be a source of skills transfer to Ministry staff, particularly when encouraging Ministry ownership of GPE-supported processes (like ESA, ESP development, grant application and joint sector reviews). DCPs appreciate the training and capacity development provided by GAs on specific skills and areas of education technical expertise, as well as particularly the procurement and financial support provided by the World Bank. It was not always clear whether these GA activities are funded out of the grant agent costs (part of the MCA) or GAs' own programmes and budgets.

DPs do not see a strong role for the Secretariat in capacity development given the remote model. CLs are recognised for their role in sharing GPE policies and guidance.

**Factors for successful capacity development apply generally rather than only in the context of GPE processes.** Government ownership and demand is key to successful capacity development activities. DCPs want to see a strategic and coordinated approach, with capacity needs set out by government and partners harmonising their efforts to fill capacity needs. Ways to successfully pursue this coordination are through pooled or common funds and making use of the LEG as a coordination forum and encouraging members to share their information. Related to this, GAs are not always seen to be forthcoming in sharing their plans for capacity development with other partners, which limits the possible alignment between initiatives.

**TA is seen as most valuable when tailored to support the capacity development of national staff.** This may mean small numbers of consultants working with the MOE's teams rather than fully outsourcing to firms or having consultants implement things instead of the Ministry. A DP raised the question of whether the quality of the ESP might be less important than having an ESP that is fully owned by the MOE. Some DCPs and DPs see a benefit to having a long-term TA position in MOEs to support coordination of GPE grant activities, especially given the additional requirements and workload related to the GPE grant.

**Use of government systems is itself an important route to capacity development.** DCPs say that when funds go through the government, it is government staff who are improving their skills and learning how to solve problems. This builds individual capacities but can also lead to stronger organisational capacity as practices and procedures within MOE are improved or new ones adopted. DPs recognise the value and benefit in aligning with national systems and avoiding parallel modalities, and likewise the limitation on capacity development when the context means the GA is not able to run finances through the treasury. The Secretariat's workstream on alignment is identifying actions to enhance the alignment of GPE grants, given that currently only a third of ESPIGs are significantly aligned (see Annex I).

As with the enabling factors, many of the bottlenecks affecting capacity development are general contextual challenges. For example, high turnover of government staff means that any capacity built may soon move on, and it is hard to take a long-term approach. However, a specific challenge in the GPE model is that capacity development takes a back seat when the GPE grant processes have a number of steps and strict deadlines. For GAs, the primary responsibility is the completion of application documents, leaving less time for capacity development since this is not the first priority.

**Learning from other countries is a highly valued route to capacity development for DCPs.** Cross-country exchanges and DCP meetings are ways to learn about the GPE processes, lessons learnt about steps like ESA and ESP development, and what works for education system improvement. DCPs would like to see more of these opportunities, including through the regional DCP constituency meetings.

## 9.8 Findings from FCAS

**There were mixed views about the current ability of the Secretariat, and the GPE model, to work with fragile contexts.** UNICEF's position is that GPE processes do allow flexibility for fragile and conflict-affected contexts, but Secretariat staff need an understanding of humanitarian needs and how to operate in such circumstances to be able to adapt the processes appropriately. However, CARE and Save the Children both spoke about the Secretariat being very responsive and flexible in tense political situations that involve difficult negotiations. Generally, many DPs mentioned how much more complex it is to work in FCAS, and with no current differentiation in the model, there is a risk of inefficiency or ineffectiveness in such contexts. GPE's policies and procedures are felt to need adapting for crisis and humanitarian contexts.

This type of feedback has already fed into the Board's decision to review and update the 2013 Operational Framework for Effective Support in Fragile and Conflict-affected States (see Annex I). The 2013 framework offers 'accelerated support', whereby a country can draw down up to 20% of their MCA to meet immediate needs when a crisis strikes, and accelerated process to shift funds from an approved grant to cover emergency needs. However, with over half of ESPIG funding going to countries affected by fragility and conflict, the Board recognises that the model needs further adjustment to respond to these contexts. A consultant is being recruited who will look at the following, among other tasks:

- current policies and practices on support and funding to FCAS;
- challenges of the current policies in supporting FCAS and emergency situations and refugee responses in more stable countries;
- quality standards for assessing the ESPIG proposals coming from fragile countries;
- consulting with other partners to avoid overlaps with mandates and funding mechanisms of other partners; and
- developing options for broadening and improving the operational framework for FCAS.

**There are particular difficulties with placing full-time staff in fragile and conflict-affected situations,** associated with finding the right expertise, the necessary remuneration, the security costs, and appropriate levels of risk. These challenges lead to situations where there is little choice among partners about who can take the CA and GA roles. The issue of GAs not having presence in-country is particularly pronounced in FCAS. While one DP felt there should be clearer outlines about staffing requirements for GAs, another recognised that any hard-and-fast rules may make programming unfeasible in certain contexts. GAs are already funded by GPE, so additional resources may not solve the problem; however, additional resources for CAs in FCAS contexts may make a difference to fulfilling their responsibilities.

**A number of bottlenecks to capacity development were found to be particularly relevant in FCAS contexts.** Turnover of government staff is particularly acute in FCAS

due to salaries, migration and violence. This makes sustainable and long-term capacity development very challenging. The work becomes more complex as partners need to work with multiple governments and groups in the political context, expanding the scale of needs. Rolling out capacity development at lower levels of the education system is also more complicated where beneficiaries are harder to identify. Furthermore, travelling to insecure parts of the country for capacity development is difficult and more costly for the government and partners supporting these activities. Finally, the challenge of international staffing discussed above further impedes capacity development.

## **9.9 Conclusions**

The findings from this study have shown that the current design of the country-level operational model is broadly felt to be the right one for delivering GPE 2020. The changes that partners feel are needed are mostly around supporting the key actors to deliver their responsibilities in practice and to reinforce the accountability arrangements. We also found that partners do not currently have a common understanding of the expectations for capacity development.

This report was shared with the Board and discussed at the Board meeting on 13 June 2018. The report and presentation included OPM's recommendations which have been moved to Annex M to differentiate them from the Board's own recommendations. OPM's recommendations are grouped into four themes: (i) Provide additional guidance and detail in various ToR. (ii) Strengthen mutual accountability. (iii) Differentiate support from the Secretariat. (iv) Create a strategy for capacity development.

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