Julia Gillard, former Prime Minister of Australia and Chair of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

In the days before COVID-19, we were focused on the learning crisis. We knew that there were about a quarter of a billion children of school age who were not in school. And we knew that in low-income countries, around 80% of 10-year-old children could not meet reading benchmarks. That was a huge challenge.

We knew then that the face of that challenge was most likely to be the face of a girl. The most marginalized child, the child the most likely to miss out, was a girl child. During those days, the Global Partnership for Education was at work in almost 70 countries to improve access to education, to improve quality of education and to particularly reach out to the most marginalized children, including girls.

Through the work of the Global Partnership for Education, we are able to say that 160 million more children were able to access schooling.

Then, the virus COVID-19 became the phenomenon in our world which we are all to familiar with today. Alongside that health crisis runs both an economic crisis and an education crisis.

At the height of the pandemic, billions of children were out of school. Even now, in many countries in the world, children continue to be out of school because of COVID restrictions.
We know from earlier epidemics that when schools close, there is the risk that the most marginalized children never return. The days of lost schooling are not only measured in lost learning, but they’re measured in a loss of time children have in a safe place in conflict-driven societies, and how much children can access vital things like school feeding programs.

Knowing that this was going to be a huge education crisis at the outset, the Global Partnership for Education mobilized to provide US$500 million to countries to help them maintain educational continuity, to continue to be in contact with children, and to be able to open schools safely for all children to see all children return when the virus conditions permitted it.

We are and remain concerned that there are estimates that up to 24 million children may not return to school without special efforts, and overwhelmingly, they will be girls.

As we continue to mobilize during this COVID crisis, we are looking ahead to the future with a new strategic plan, which we think will enable the Global Partnership for Education to expand its efforts to increase learning. We are looking, over the next five years, to increase the quality of education for 175 million children, to get into school 88 million children, 46 million of which will be girls, and we intend to do that in our unique partnership model – a country-led development model that brings all stakeholders around the table in a spirit of partnership.

We are absolutely delighted that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President of Kenya have stepped forward to co-host this event. That, in and of itself, speaks of the importance of educational continuity and the kind of spirit of partnership that marks GPE as a unique player on the international landscape.

Every child has a right to a great quality education.

Practically, we know that educating children is correlated with better health outcomes, with better climate outcomes, with better peace, prosperity and security.

In the middle of this year, it will be time to ask people to raise their hands for education. We are asking the media to raise their pens and raise their cameras in support of education to make sure that this vital case is heard.

Helen Grant MP, UK Special Envoy for Girls’ Education and Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Nigeria

Thank you Geoff. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone on this call. It really is a delight to be sharing this platform with Julia and Dr Kipsang.

When I was a little girl, there was one particular day at school that changed my life forever.

There was a group of us on the school playing field having a running race. And when my teacher saw how quickly I could run; she called me over and said:
“Helen, we’d better buy a stop-watch, and we’ll start training you for the Olympics”

You know she actually bought the watch…and I actually believed her. I believed I was going to the Olympics.

And although, sadly, I didn’t make it to the Olympics the belief that my teacher showed in me had a huge impact for my self-confidence and self-esteem, motivating me not just in my sports but in my academic work too.

And that experience has always stayed with me. It reminds me that school is, of course, about learning. But it’s also about inspiration, aspiration, motivation, teamwork and friendship.

And developing all those skills that allow young people to go on in life, to get jobs, to get good jobs, and to participate in society.

As Julia said, I was able to go to school, like many of you, and get an education, and gain from everything school offers a child.

But there are millions of children around the world who will never go to school and they will never have those opportunities, unless we as a global community act now.

I’m in no doubt that while the world is facing this Covid crisis, there are other crises brewing as we fight this battle. The biggest of them all could well be the unprecedented education crisis.

Even before Covid hit us, nine out of 10 children in low income countries were unable to read a simple text by age 10. This is a tragedy.

Many of these children are girls, and many of them will never return to school, or even start school, lowering their chances of future employment and decent livelihoods. Out-of-school girls are at greater risk of violence, sexual abuse, early and forced marriage and FGM.

All of this creating a very real risk of a lost generation of girls.

This is why the UK is doing something about it.

Our Prime Minister Boris Johnson has put championing 12 years of quality education for every girl on the planet at the heart of our G7 presidency.

This will focus minds on the transformative power of girls’ education – helping to bring much-needed financial and political commitments.

Our Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has also agreed global targets, which include; Getting one third more girls reading by 10, and 40 million more girls in primary and secondary schools (both in low- and middle-income countries by 2025).

We know too that education interventions must provide more than just learning. And in the UK will continue to be Gender Equality leader, tackling issues that prevent girls from getting to school, and staying in school, like FGM, and sexual and reproductive health rights.
This year, the UK, Kenya and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will co-host a Global Education Summit to urge world leaders to invest in getting children into school to build back better from Covid-19. And I’m absolutely delighted to announce that it will take place on the 28 and 29 of July.

We will work hard with our international partners to ensure we get the replenishment commitments needed for girls’ education for the next five years.

The UK is the leading donor to the GPE and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), giving us unique leverage to influence the global system.

Since its creation in 2002, GPE has already contributed to getting 160 million more children in school and doubling girls’ enrollment in the countries they work in.

Over the next five years, GPE needs at least US$5 billion to transform education systems in up to 87 developing countries. This will give 175 million children the opportunity to learn.

Think of the difference it could make to boosting incomes, levelling society, improving health and reducing global poverty.

With just one additional school year, a woman’s earnings can increase by a fifth.

A child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to live past the age of five, twice as likely to attend school themselves, and 50% more likely to be immunised.

Critically, greater access to education gives girls choice over their bodies by helping them to stand up for their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

And vitally, empowering women and girls reduces violence in society and prevents conflict.

There’s so much more to do of course, but our ability to make change in the world, if we work together, should never be underestimated.

This is an issue I’m hugely passionate about and I’m delighted to have been asked by the PM to take on this role.

If you want to change the world, girls’ education is the best place to start.

Dr. Richard Belio Kipsang, Principal Secretary for Basic Education, Ministry of Education of Kenya

We have seen that the economic, health and education repercussions from COVID-19. As a country, it gave us a lot of challenges. Our hospitals have been strained. Our jobs have been compromised. Incomes have been lost.

Most critically, our children have been out of school for quite some time. Up to 15 million children were out of school for seven months. Out of this, there have been a lot of consequences. The number of cases of teenage pregnancy went up drastically. Cases of early marriages too. We must put in a lot of effort to bring these children back to school.
The support and the work we are doing as a critical member of GPE, is very important. As a country, I want to acknowledge the role that GPE has played with us since 2005. We have been able to be supported to the tune of US$110 million in various programs, the latest being $11 million on COVID response.

In the informal settlements in our country and remote regions, school feeding programs play a very critical role in attracting children back to school. It contributes to more than 10% of enrollment in schools.

As we raise our hands in July to raise US$5 billion for education, it will make a huge difference. Kenya receives various GPE grants that gives us a new opportunity to reengineer how we deliver education.

It is said that when you invest in children, you are securing the future of the country.

As a country, I would like to acknowledge that GPE funding has done a huge thing for us. It has helped us reduce the cost of books by almost 70%. We have been able to change our data management systems. We’ve been able to train more than 112,000 teachers through funding from GPE and better ways of delivering education. We’ve improved our WASH facilities.

Coming from a country that has done so well in athletics, Eliud Kipchoge, the first person to run sub 2-hours in the marathon, said that “no human is limited.” I am so sure that our children are not limited. Education will be able to realize the potential in our children.

So, as we engage ourselves in this discussion, we are unlocking the potential of everybody through education and through raising our hands to ensure we replenish the resources that GPE is able to use to facilitate our developing countries.

**Media contacts:**

- **Tamara Kummer**, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), tkummer@globalpartnership.org +33 7 82 26 07 18
- **Lisa Gill**, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, lisa.gill@fcdo.gov.uk +44 7935 013023
- **Samuel Siringi**, Ministry of Education of Kenya, samuelsiringi@gmail.com +254-720320456