



International
Parliamentary
Network for
Education

Australia and the Global Partnership for Education A briefing for members of parliament

A shared commitment to ending the world's learning crisis

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the world's only education partnership and fund dedicated exclusively to quality education in lower-income countries.

For nearly two decades, GPE has been delivering funds and supporting solutions to build strong and resilient education systems so that children in the poorest countries - especially those who are marginalized by gender, poverty, displacement or disability - get the education they need to fulfil their potential.

At the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025 in July 2021, GPE aims to raise at least US\$5 billion to transform education systems in up to 90 countries and territories, where 80% of the world's out-of-school children live.

GPE is also advocating to protect domestic finance to pre-COVID levels and increase spending towards the 20% global benchmark or beyond.

The stakes have never been higher

In the past two decades, the world has made major progress in delivering quality education to all girls and boys. 160 million more children in GPE partner countries are in school, including 82 million girls.

But unfinished business remains. More than half a billion children and young people are completely excluded from education or in school but not learning even basic reading skills - and that was before COVID-19 caused the greatest disruption to education in history.

Progress on global education is at a crossroads

The combined impacts of school closures and economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to entrench educational inequality and roll back two decades of progress on learning. With less than a decade left to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, the number of out-of-school children could now grow substantially for the first time in decades, disproportionately affecting girls.

The education financing gap, which is a primary driver of children's inability to access education, could because of the additional costs associated with COVID now rise by up to one-third, unless there is urgent investment to get children back in school and learning.

More than ever, governments in lower-income countries need concerted support to accelerate progress towards inclusive, equitable and quality education for all children. The world's poorest countries are counting on a fully funded GPE.

The time to invest in education is now

The Global Partnership for Education's replenishment will be a test of the international community's preparedness to support the education of children living in the world's poorest countries.

GPE is calling on world leaders to "Raise Your Hand" and pledge at least \$5 billion for the next five years to help GPE transform education in up to 90 countries and territories, which are home to more than 1 billion children.

With funding of at least US\$5 billion the Global Partnership for Education would:

- Enable 175 million girls and boys to learn
- Reach 140 million students with professionally trained teachers
- Get 88 million more children, including 46 million more girls, in school

A fully funded GPE would also support partner countries to build 78,000 classrooms, buy 512 million textbooks and train 2.2 million teachers.

GPE's ripple effect on economies and communities

An investment in education is the best investment a government can make. Each additional year of education boosts a person's income by 10 per cent, on average, and up to a fifth for women, whilst also increasing a country's GDP by 18 per cent.

GPE makes investment in education go even further. A fully-funded GPE would add an estimated \$164 billion to partner country economies - lifting millions out of poverty - and leveraging billions more in domestic and international financing for education.

GPE has a unique focus on leveraging more and better domestic financing as the most significant and sustainable form of funding for education. To receive GPE's large-scale grants, governments must commit to significant investments in education. On average, partner countries direct nearly one-fifth of total government expenditure to education.

GPE's unique approach in the Indo-Pacific

GPE has significantly increased its footprint in the Indo-Pacific to help partner countries strengthen their education systems and get the most vulnerable girls and boys in school, improve teaching and learning, and build resilient education systems.

Eight Pacific Island countries have joined GPE since August 2020 and have secured much needed COVID-19 funding (US\$0.75M for each country): Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the Federated States of Micronesia. GPE recently approved a US\$15 million grant to support the "PacREF" regional educational framework as well as US\$2.5 million for Micronesia for compulsory early childhood education, and US\$3 million for teacher development and inclusive education in Vanuatu. Fiji also recently became eligible for GPE funding.

GPE has provided more than US\$100 million in the Indo-Pacific region through its COVID Accelerated Fund to support countries in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic and help continue learning opportunities for every boy and girl.

GPE brings together all key partners at the country level under one national strategy that minimizes the fragmentation and inefficiencies caused by multiple programs and approaches. Ensuring that children have access to education during conflict and crises is a top priority with over 60% of its support directed to countries in crisis. With support from Australia, GPE has provided more US\$1.1 billion to more than twenty Indo-Pacific countries.

Australia plays an active role in GPE's partnership. Australia is represented on GPE's Board and serves on its Coordinating Committee. Australia is also a key partner at the country level, active through Local Education Groups. As Coordinating Agent for grants in PNG, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Vanuatu, Tonga and Tuvalu, Australia serves a leadership role in ensuring partners are aligned, facilitating grant applications and building capacity in country. Moreover, GPE and Australia are strengthening broader Pacific regionalism in education together through the development of the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) - which will serve as a guidepost for all 15 countries in the region - with GPE funding support.

Australia's support to GPE is more critical than ever

Australia joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2008 and has since contributed more than US\$444.1 million to improve education for the world's most vulnerable children through GPE. Australia is an important supporter of GPE but its year on year contributions are in serious decline and have been criticised by education advocates in Australia.

At GPE's 2018 financing conference, Australia pledged AUD 90 million (US\$72.5 million) for the period 2018-2020, amounting to just 2.71% of total pledges to the replenishment. This was a significant reduction on Australia's previous pledge of AUD 140 million at GPE's 2015-18 replenishment and AUD 270 million at GPE's 2011-14 replenishment.

With a growing number of Pacific countries partnering with the GPE to strengthen their education systems and get the most vulnerable girls and boys in school, Australia's leadership is critical for the prosperity of the region.

To prevent the erosion of decades of global progress and help ensure that every girl and boy receives a quality education, Australia will need to step up and pledge ambitiously to GPE. Plan International are calling on the Australian Government to rebuild its standing as a leading donor to GPE by committing to a replenishment of \$70m per year over the period 2021 - 2025.

Raise Your Hand for GPE

Members of parliament in donor countries have a vital role in advocating for protecting and growing overseas development assistance to education and encouraging their governments to contribute to the upcoming replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education.

There are a variety of ways MPs can show their support for GPE:

1. Ask your government to increase Australia's support to the Global Partnership for Education and pledge at least \$70m per year for GPE's 2021-2025 replenishment.
2. Ask your government to achieve the globally agreed target of spending at least 15% of their aid budget on education, including by investing ambitiously in the Global Partnership for Education.
3. Write to your government to express your support for an ambitious investment in the Global Partnership for Education, and encourage your colleagues from as many different political parties to add their name to show bipartisan support.
4. Table a motion in parliament setting out your concerns about the global education emergency urging your government to ensure that GPE meets its replenishment target.
5. Encourage the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to conduct a parliamentary hearing on the global education crisis and invite a briefing from the Global Partnership for Education.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT GPE

Which countries does GPE support?

GPE works in the countries with the greatest need, focusing its support on low-income countries that have the highest rates of out-of-school children and the lowest levels of learning but lack the resources to sustainably build their education systems. In 2019, 76% of GPE funding went to countries affected by conflict and fragility in 2019.

90 countries and territories are eligible for GPE support. Countries join the partnership after developing a comprehensive education sector plan, endorsed by their partners. To receive GPE's large-scale grants, governments must commit significant increases in domestic funding to education.

What has been achieved in GPE partner countries?

Since GPE was established, 160 million more children, more than half of them girls, are in school in GPE partner countries. The Partnership has also:

- Increased primary enrolment for girls by 65 percent.
- Supported almost three quarters of partner countries to achieve gender parity in school completion rates.
- Reached 67 million more children with quality teachers.
- Enabled governments to save US\$6 billion through more efficient education spending, making resources go further.

How does GPE support governments to transform education?

To create lasting change, GPE focuses on improving education at a systems level to leverage the profound transformations required to deliver 12 years of quality education, including one year of pre-primary education by:

Building stronger, more effective education systems: GPE helps countries develop effective education plans, establish robust data and monitoring systems, and identify solutions to pressing problems in order to improve teaching and boost learning for the most marginalized students, as well as providing essential financing to enable governments to pursue reforms.

Improving the volume, equity and efficiency of domestic resources: GPE focuses on leveraging more and better domestic financing as the most significant and sustainable form of funding for education. The Partnership creates incentives for partner countries to develop financially sustainable education sector plans, increase national budget allocations and improve the equity and efficiency of education expenditure. By monitoring domestic financing through an equity lens, GPE also supports governments to ensure education spending reaches the most marginalized and address inefficiency enabling them to invest more in schools and learning.

How does GPE support the education of girls' and other marginalized groups?

GPE has a strong track record of helping partner governments eradicate the barriers that prevent girls and other marginalized groups from getting a quality education and realizing their full potential.

Increased equity, gender equality and inclusion in access to education are fundamental to GPE's mission, with all GPE partner countries embedding equity and inclusion principles in their national education plans to ensure that all children can enjoy their basic human rights.

By putting gender equality at the heart of education systems, GPE helps countries to identify and address the specific obstacles faced by girls and boys in achieving education, close gender gaps, and enable countries where girls lag furthest behind to make bigger strides.

The solutions that GPE help implement drives significant progress for the most marginalized children, enabling an additional 82 million girls to enrol in school, including 39 million girls who are living through crises and conflict.

Reaching the most vulnerable children

Since 2011, GPE has worked with Afghanistan to get more girls in school, directing support to 13 high-need provinces with the lowest education rates and highest gender inequalities.

GPE's support has focused on strengthening community mobilization for education, expanding and reinforcing multiple pathways into education, increasing numbers of qualified female teachers, and streamlining ministry of education policy and administrative systems.

GPE has also helped the government create accelerated learning centres and community-based schools closer to girls to reduce the safety risks of traveling long distances to their classrooms. GPE's direct support has resulted in 20,000 more girls enrolled in school.

While primary enrolment in Afghanistan has improved dramatically, many provinces continue to have very low numbers of female students, as low as 14% in some areas. GPE will continue to finance community-based classes in hard-to-reach-areas to accelerate access to education in remote areas and help mitigate the security or distance challenges.

How has GPE responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?

From the onset of the pandemic, GPE mobilized its most rapid and largest-ever emergency response to support partner countries deliver continued learning, ensure the safe reopening of schools and strengthen the resilience of education systems to respond to future crisis.

As the largest provider of education grants in the global COVID-19 response, GPE provided more than half a billion U.S. dollars to partner countries to help sustain learning for up to 355 million children in the poorest countries, with a sharp focus on those hardest hit by school closures, including girls, children with disabilities and children from the poorest families.

Further information

The International Parliamentary Network for Education is working with parliamentarians across the world on the vital task of protecting and growing financing for education, including by convening MPs regionally and globally to learn, share best practice and agree on joint and individual actions to build political support for protecting and growing financing for education.

We are supporting MPs to advocate to national authorities and the international community to help protect and grow education financing by:

1. Strengthening domestic revenue mobilization and increasing the share of expenditure for education.
2. Protecting and increasing overseas development assistance for education.
3. Strengthening international coordination to address the debt crisis.

We are also advocating for governments and donors to prioritise equity and inclusion in their education budgets, and target public resources to the children and countries that are furthest behind.

To view all of our resources for MPs on education financing please visit www.ipned.org/financing, where we will be uploading standalone briefings on each part of IPNEd's three-point plan for protecting education financing.

Education financing is one of the many issues the Network works on. For more information or any questions about the Network, including our work on education financing, please contact: Oliver Mawhinney - oliver.mawhinney@ipned.org

To become part of IPNEd's global network of parliamentary champions for education please email the address above or visit www.ipned.org/join-the-network

