

Executive Summary

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) mobilizes global and national efforts to contribute to the achievement of equitable, quality education and learning for all. This report is the fourth of five annual results reports on the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (GPE 2020). It presents progress against the results framework as well as the work of the partnership in 2019. Of the 37 indicators in the results framework, 28 were scheduled to report against the 2019 milestone, and the Results at a Glance on page 8 provides an overview of indicator performance. As GPE prepares its next five-year strategic plan, the challenges and successes documented in this monitoring report will inform its direction.

IMPACT LEVEL: ACCESS, EQUITY AND LEARNING

GPE monitors sector-level results in access and learning across partner countries to track progress toward the partnership's strategic goals at the impact level. These results are trending in the right direction, but the pace must pick up, and will require the concerted and coordinated efforts of all partners. The proportion of children completing basic education continues to improve, although progress at the primary level is slower than previously estimated. The proportion of children completing primary school across partner countries has increased steadily from 72 percent at the 2015 baseline to 75 percent against the 2019 milestone. While girls and children in partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFCs) are less likely to finish school, both groups are gaining ground and gaps in access are narrowing at the primary level. Progress since the 2015 baseline has been stronger at the lower secondary level than at the primary level, with the proportion of children completing school rising from 48 percent to 52 percent and the gender gap shrinking as well. However, the rate of improvement has been leveling off since 2016, and children in PCFCs are still at a significant disadvantage.

Girls are disadvantaged on average on all the indicators that measure girls' and boys' outcomes, and gender gaps are narrowing slowly. Girls in PCFCs face even greater challenges:

Less than 65 percent complete primary school, and only 41 percent complete lower secondary. At the same time, there are four partner countries with fewer than 85 boys for every 100 girls completing primary school and five such for lower secondary school.

GPE contributes to the advancement of equity, gender equality and inclusion in education through technical and financial support to sector planning and implementation as well as through a variety of global and regional efforts. The implementation grants active as of June 2019 allocated more than US\$379 million to activities specifically promoting equity, gender equality and inclusion.

Gender mainstreaming of GPE's country operations continues to advance into a number of areas, from grant guidance to quality assurance. GPE has supported 28 partner countries to engage in gender-responsive education sector planning workshops co-convened with the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and partners. GPE is also providing funding for an expanded suite of support, to include the development of additional gender-responsive sector planning tools and minimum standards for gender-responsive implementation grants. This work is designed to complement the G7 Gender at the Center Initiative (GCI), which supports gender equality in and through education systems.

GPE also prioritizes expanding support for the inclusion of children with disabilities in quality education. In 2019, the Secretariat finalized "Leaving No One Behind," a Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) discussion paper on equity and inclusion, and the related concept note listing areas for investment, and then performed a review of equity and inclusion in education sector analyses, plans and program implementation grants across partner countries. In addition, GPE commissioned a study from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) outlining how global data from the UIS and national data from education management information systems (EMIS) could be better used to monitor inclusive education.

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is a crucial investment to improve not only outcomes for children but equity, as it reduces the impact of social inequality on educational outcomes. Pre-primary enrollment has continued to rise, reaching 41 percent at the 2019 milestone, up from 39 percent the previous year, with nearly as many girls as boys enrolling. In addition to technical and financial assistance to partner countries, GPE's support for ECCE at the global level advanced on multiple fronts in 2019. The Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative is well underway with a US\$1.3 million grant to UNICEF to strengthen education sector planning for early childhood education through in-country capacity building and learning exchange, and it will be scaled up further in 2020. The KIX discussion paper on ECCE was completed in fiscal year 2019 following extensive consultation, and a free five-week massive open online course, *Mainstreaming Early Childhood Education into Education Sector Planning*, produced in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF, debuted in fall 2019.

GPE places a high priority on supporting partner countries affected by fragility and conflict, which account for nearly half of all partner countries at the time of writing. GPE weights its funding allocations toward PCFCs so that these countries get more support from the outset: As of December 2019, 76 percent of all active implementation grant allocations were for PCFCs. In December 2019, the Board approved an expansion of accelerated funding to enable eligible countries to access additional financing. GPE also promotes the inclusion of refugees and displaced children in national education systems. In December 2019, GPE, Education Cannot Wait and the World Bank announced a joint pledge to improve the coordination and financing of the Global Compact on Refugees, in support of education for refugees and host communities.

Improved learning outcomes are the first strategic goal in GPE 2020. Since data on learning, including learning outcomes and learning assessment systems, are next scheduled for reporting against the 2020 target, no new data are available for reporting in this interim year; the most recent analyses can be found in *Results Report 2019*. However, GPE's efforts to support learning have seen several important advancements in 2019. The implementation grants active as of June 2019 allocated more than US\$442 million to activities to improve learning, and 95 percent of grants supported learning assessment systems or EMIS. In October 2019, GPE launched the Analysis of National Learning Assessment Systems (ANLAS), a toolkit to support countries in conducting comprehensive analysis of their learning assessment systems.

OUTCOME LEVEL: EFFICIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS

A key component of support to improved equity and learning is strengthening education systems. A strong education system has accurate and timely data to inform sound policy. It also

requires sufficient financial and human resources, efficiently used, to ensure effective policy implementation. The implementation grants active as of June 2019 allocated more than US\$423 million to activities supporting system strengthening, including technical assistance, school grants, teacher training and data systems.

Robust domestic financing is a cornerstone of a strong education system, and GPE requires partner countries applying for implementation grants to commit to maintaining the share of their expenditure on education at or above 20 percent, or to increase education spending toward the 20 percent benchmark, and tracks execution on this commitment. In 2018 (the most recent year for which data are available), 70 percent of partner countries with available data maintained education expenditure at or above 20 percent or increased the share of their education expenditure from the 2015 baseline. This represents an increase over the previous year, but progress on this point has been erratic since the baseline. Still, the total volume of public expenditure among partner countries increased by US\$4.8 billion between 2015 and 2018. In 2019, 96 percent of Secretariat missions to partner countries addressed domestic financing issues, up from 83 percent in the previous year.

Thirty percent of partner countries reported at least 10 out of 12 key indicators to the UIS in 2019, down from 34 percent in 2018. This indicator has not been improving steadily since the 2015 baseline, but of the 43 countries reporting fewer than 10 indicators to the UIS in 2019, 19 are reporting eight or nine. Overall, reporting on education finance and service delivery indicators, especially by level of education, seems to be a challenge for most partner countries.

In addition to leveraging its funding model to help partner countries fill gaps in data reporting, GPE partners with other organizations at the international level to strengthen data systems. In 2018 and 2019, the Secretariat convened the multi-stakeholder Education Data Solutions Roundtable to leverage government, civil society, private sector and development partners' expertise to improve the availability and use of accurate and timely data for education planning both in developing countries and at the global level. In response to the bottlenecks identified by partner countries affecting their education data systems, the roundtable developed recommendations for sustainable solutions and capacity-building strategies, and two partnerships between GPE and private sector companies were announced in September 2019 to take these forward.

Recognizing the central importance of quality teachers, GPE provides significant support to teacher training and tracks the ratio of students per trained teacher in primary education. In 2019, 34 percent of partner countries with data available had a pupil-trained teacher ratio below 40, up from 25 percent in 2015. On average, PCFCs register 68 students per trained teacher, compared with 45 for non-PCFCs. Despite the overall

progress in partner countries, there is a need for continued effort on teacher training, especially in PCFCs.

COUNTRY-LEVEL OBJECTIVES: SECTOR PLANNING, MONITORING AND POLICY DIALOGUE

The quality of education sector plans is a key focus for GPE, and this is monitored along multiple dimensions. While the next formal reporting is scheduled against the 2020 target, an interim update found 100 percent of plans meeting minimum required quality standards in 2018-2019. The “achievable” quality standard still lags behind the rest, met by 62 percent of these plans. The proportion of plans meeting the GPE benchmark for quality teaching and learning, equity and efficiency strategies has continued to improve, at 92, 92 and 100 percent, respectively. From the inception of GPE’s education sector plan development grant in 2012 through December 2019, GPE has granted US\$32.3 million to partner countries to support the planning process, and the overall quality of plans has been improving since the beginning of GPE 2020.

Joint sector reviews (JSRs) are critical to the monitoring of plan implementation, and the average quality of JSRs rose substantially in 2019. Seventy-one percent of the JSRs assessed met sufficient quality standards, reflecting substantial improvement over previous years. While the cause has not been formally evaluated, increased attentiveness to JSRs across the partnership, especially by partner country governments, may have contributed to this progress. Representatives from 13 partner countries attended JSR peer-learning events facilitated by the Secretariat in 2019, resulting in improvements for many of the participant countries. About half of partner countries still do not hold JSRs, however, and significant additional efforts are required to see further improvements in both the frequency and quality of JSRs. Recent country-level evaluations have identified important issues with regard to plan implementation and monitoring, such as the need for stronger sector monitoring data collection and use, and the Board approved a new funding window for JSRs in December 2019.

GPE partner countries have continued to improve on the degree of stakeholder participation and inclusion in local education groups (LEGs). The proportion of countries and federal states with both civil society organizations and teacher organizations represented in their LEGs increased to 64 percent in 2019, up from 59 percent in 2018 and 44 percent at the 2016 baseline.

GLOBAL-LEVEL OBJECTIVES: FINANCING AND PARTNERSHIP

Since its inception in 2002, GPE has allocated US\$5.5 billion to 175 implementation grants in 63 partner countries, and the countries with the greatest needs are prioritized for these funds. In 2019, 60 percent of all implementation grant disbursements went to partner countries affected by fragility and conflict, 85 percent to partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 69 percent to low-income partner countries.

Of the implementation grants active as of June 2019, 34 percent of total funding for active implementation grants in fiscal year 2019 was allocated for activities related to learning, 29 percent to activities supporting equity, and 33 percent to activities related to system strengthening. Since the approval of the new funding model in 2014, 24 grants have adopted results-based financing. The overall performance of implementation grants remains positive, with 86 percent rated as on track with implementation. The most common causes for delays are external risks outside the control of the program, such as conflict and political instability.

The alignment and harmonization of implementation grants continues to be a challenge. In fiscal year 2019, only 36 percent of grants were aligned with the partner country system, representing no change from the previous year, although the volume of aligned funding was at 42 percent. The proportion of grants that were cofinanced or used sector-pooled funding has decreased slowly from 40 percent in fiscal year 2015 to 31 percent in fiscal year 2019. Since 2017, however, the partnership has been implementing an alignment road map in relevant partner countries, and the GPE Multiplier grant is expected to yield increased cofinancing as the grants cofinanced through this new incentive become active.

In 2019, donors contributed US\$566 million to GPE, recording the second-highest annual contribution since GPE’s inception. The cumulative contributions by nontraditional donors, such as foundations or nonmembers of OECD-DAC, dramatically increased in fiscal year 2019 to US\$50 million, up from US\$12 million the previous fiscal year.

Taken together, these results show that despite challenges, the partnership is making progress overall, but that this progress must be accelerated to bring Sustainable Development Goal 4 within reach. How to do this effectively is the focus as GPE develops its new strategic plan through 2025, to deliver on our commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education for all children.