An introduction to the Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the only global fund for education that brings together 61 developing countries with donor governments, civil society, international organizations, students, teachers, foundations, and the private sector to develop better education systems in the poorest countries and get more children in school.

How does it work?

Donor governments, like the UK, provide funds to the GPE that then gives grants to its 59 developing country partners to support their national education plans. This is a really effective way of providing aid to education, as it means all work is carried out according to an individual government’s priorities. A country can only receive funding if it has a national education plan that has been agreed with the GPE and if all partners in the country (like donor agencies, NGOs and teachers) agree to support the national plan to get children into school and learning.

The GPE also supports members to consider certain areas as priorities, such as ensuring that more girls access education, when developing their plans. The GPE’s major focus areas are girls’ education, children with disabilities, and education in conflict affected and fragile countries, as well as supporting teachers to improve the quality of education.

What Makes the GPE’s Approach Unique?

The GPE model is unique – no other large international organisation works in the same way - and it has helped countries achieve better education outcomes. Here are some of the ways the GPE has a real advantage.

01 By uniting everyone working on education in a country, the GPE creates consensus and ensures the best use of scarce resources. If reforms are needed, the GPE helps ensure they are strongly endorsed by all stakeholders and deeply rooted in the national system, to ensure sustainable change.

02 The work the GPE does is reaching children in fragile or conflict-affected countries; nearly half of the countries the GPE works with are considered at risk of conflict. By the end of 2013, more than 40% of GPE’s total aid disbursements supported children’s education in fragile and conflict-affected countries. GPE has also developed mechanisms to respond quickly with emergency funding when countries encounter humanitarian crises.

03 Putting local knowledge to work by enlisting civil society. The GPE encourages and provides financial support to civil society organizations in developing countries to participate in the partnership at country level, so that they can monitor plans and help ensure democratic oversight of education policy.

04 Monitoring results. GPE focuses on building the ability of education ministries to monitor whether their country is making progress towards their education goals. Through its Sector Monitoring Initiative, the GPE has provided training to education officials from 54 developing countries to better monitor plans and carry out education assessments.

05 Increasing domestic funding. Any country the GPE works with is asked to increase its own spending on education in order to create sustainable, long-term funding. This encourages countries to prioritise education spending and develops internal capacity.
What has the GPE achieved?

Since 2002, GPE partners have achieved remarkable results and helped million more children enrol in school for a quality education. Here are some important results:

- 61 million more children were in primary school in 2013 in GPE partner countries compared to 2002 with a 72% primary completion rate up from 63% in the same period.

- 69% of girls in GPE countries completed primary education in 2013 compared to 54% in 2000. For every 100 boys who completed primary school, 91 girls also did in 2013. An increase from 81 girls in 2002.

- 60% of GPE partner countries have established teacher development programmes.

- There has been an 11% increase in domestic financing for education in GPE partner countries after they joined GPE.

- 23 million more children have been enrolled in lower-secondary school in 2013 compared to 2002.

What is the role of the UK Government?

The United Kingdom is one of GPE’s main donors. At the last GPE replenishment in 2014 the UK pledged £300m over 4 years dependent on continued reform of GPE and with a requirement that other donors also increase their pledge so that the UK does not exceed 15% of the total amount pledged.

Inclusive Education in Cambodia

In the past eight years, Cambodia made significant progress in education, including a substantive jump in the primary school completion rate. Despite these improvements, many of the most marginalised groups - such as ethnic minorities and children with disabilities - were still not accessing an education.

Supported by a GPE grant of US$57.4 million, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport decided to address this problem and do more to understand the needs of marginalised and disabled children. To do this, the department conducted a survey piloting state-of-the-art methodology for screening and referring children with disabilities and impairments. In addition, the survey also provided high-quality data on disability for the first time, which enabled the ministry to plan and budget appropriately.

As a result, this GPE-funded project has helped make children with disabilities more visible and a higher priority. Grasping a better understanding of the needs of children with disabilities paired with hard data from the survey, has enabled the Cambodia education minister to set concrete targets, monitor progress and, ultimately properly integrate these children into the country’s education system. Indeed, recent figures have shown that the out of school population has been halved between 2007 and 2011 largely as a result of these policies and interventions.

Moreover, since joining the GPE in 2006, the Cambodian government has increased its public education expenditure on education as a share of GDP by 23.5%. This will help ensure the country continues to increase the enrolment of children with disabilities and the most marginalised in society.