

MOPAN

2017-18 ASSESSMENTS

Organisational Performance Brief

**Global Partnership for Education
(GPE)**

Published May 2019

Key findings

GPE's strategic vision is clear and aligns well with normative frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with achieving SDG 4.

GPE's strategic plan, GPE 2020, outlines the Partnership's comparative advantages, including the ability to encourage sector co-ordination, planning and finance to improve education systems and outcomes. The strategy has led to the development of a theory of change that illustrates how GPE works with its partners at the country, cross-national and global levels to achieve improved and equitable learning for all, with an emphasis on ensuring feedback loops, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge exchange to support the process.

Among the cross-cutting issues, advancing gender equality is a stated priority for GPE, but evidence to date is limited. There are positive intentions to ensure that education data are sex-disaggregated and that policies and strategies will further integrate the Partnership's commitment to gender equality. However, reporting from 2017 found that a number of education sector plans supported by GPE do not contain strategies for girls' education. While gender equality is widely referenced in GPE documentation, little evidence was found outlining the objectives of gender equality for GPE or of the changes that need to unfold to have it realized. GPE also addresses other relevant cross-cutting issues through its internal structures and mechanisms. Both good governance and human rights are reflected in the charter. There is room for greater consultation with partners and articulation of how these cross-cutting issues are embodied in the work of the Partnership.

MOPAN's survey of external partners confirms the value of the partnership modality of GPE. GPE has put forth considerable effort into increasing engagement with an array of partners. It supports several platforms that promote inclusive dialogue, joint planning and review at the country level. GPE is successfully leveraging financing from a wide range of partners, including the private sector, and is using creative strategies to do so. The Partnership's dedication to working in conjunction with other organisations aims to ensure that resources are being used in the most effective manner and to avoid fragmentation and duplication of effort. However, coherence is difficult to achieve when relying on external partner systems. The tools and models for Partnership working are not always effective across a diversity of country contexts and institutional arrangements with different partners. In areas such as capacity assessment, risk management and conflict resolution, they demand more fine tuning and nuancing in their application.

GPE KEY FACTS

MISSION AND MANDATE: The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multi-stakeholder global partnership and funding platform that aims to strengthen education systems in developing countries in order to increase the number of children who are in school and learning. The Global Partnership for Education Fund (the Trust Fund) is a multilateral financing mechanism to support the work of GPE. GPE works actively with donor countries and agencies, civil society organisations, members of the teaching profession, private foundations, and the private sector that focuses on accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.

GOVERNANCE: GPE is governed by a Board of Directors that reviews the Partnership's annual objectives, mobilises resources, monitors financial resources and funding, advocates for the Partnership, and oversees the Secretariat budget and work plan. The Board is made up of members from developing country governments and all development partners including donors, civil society organisations, the private sector and foundations, and multilateral agencies and regional banks. Board committees support the Board in fulfilling its functions in a strategic, transparent and efficient manner.

STRUCTURE: The headquarters of GPE is in Washington, DC, and serves as the base for the majority of its staff of approximately 100 employees. Established in 2002 as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, GPE has grown and evolved to become the only global partnership and fund entirely focused on education in developing countries. A Secretariat provides administrative and operational support to the Partnership and facilitates collaboration with all partners.

FINANCE: GPE plays an important role in mobilising more resources to finance education in developing country partners. GPE has allocated USD 4.9 billion in grants since 2003, including USD 2.4 billion to partner countries affected by fragility and conflict. Donor contributions to GPE almost doubled from 2016 to 2017, from close to USD 250 million to USD 462 million. GPE launched a new financing and funding framework in 2018 and has successfully diversified the funding base.

Striking a balance between supporting the Partnership and ensuring the efficient use of the financial flows remains a challenge. There is an inherent tension between GPE's role as a partnership and as a funding mechanism. While GPE's main asset is its availability of funds to support the education sector in the world's poorest countries, a growing portion of staff focus their work on technical assistance, knowledge generation and sharing lessons. At the time of the assessment, limited evidence was available on the value of developing a knowledge platform, yet it was understood to serve as a response to better understand models of good practice and contribute to understanding of results achieved. Furthermore, monitoring of grants is largely a financial accountability exercise and does not entail full monitoring on the quality of education sector plans or their implementation.

The financial framework is aligned to support the implementation of the Partnership's mandate and the achievement of expected results. A new financing and funding framework (FFF), approved in 2017 and launched in 2018, aims to support the allocation of GPE funds in a consistent manner so as to target funds towards countries and communities where the needs are greatest. The FFF has three complementary financing approaches: unrestricted and targeted grant financing, financing leveraged by GPE and domestic financing. The framework uses a needs-based allocation formula and is supported by the 2017 Contributions and Safeguards Policy that outlines the different ways in which contributions can be made and how targeted financing offers are assessed. Sufficient evidence is not yet available to demonstrate the impact of the new FFF and/or whether it improves results. There are, however, positive indications that the country programme allocations and efforts to provide more responsive and variable funding models are helping GPE to work more effectively with its member countries. This is evidenced by the applications received from countries for the different financing approaches.

The operations of GPE are supported by strong management processes and financial controls. In terms of fundamental operational systems, GPE relies heavily on World Bank systems and procedures. The Secretariat staff are contractually World Bank staff and are subject to the same standards of human resources management. Independent internal and external audits

of the Partnership are taking place and comply with established international standards and promote financial transparency. Processes are in place to deal with audit concerns, and issues raised are adequately addressed. Management responses and lessons learned are recorded, although not always broadly shared. Funding flows are transparent, although implementation and disbursement delays are frequent.

GPE's monitoring and evaluation strategy is one of the central pillars of GPE's improved results-based management (RBM) approach. GPE has recently established a comprehensive results monitoring system, having produced its first results report and its first monitoring and evaluation strategy in 2016. Since that time, these processes and outputs have garnered increased attention and interest from members of the Partnership. The goal of the GPE monitoring and evaluation strategy is to understand the extent to which the Partnership is achieving the objectives of GPE 2020, as well as to produce data to capitalise on learning opportunities and take informed decisions. It responds to the recommendations of the GPE Independent Interim Evaluation (2015), which called on the Partnership to develop a strategic management framework that is based on the new strategic plan and that includes a results framework, monitoring plan, formal feedback mechanisms and an evaluation plan.

Systems to track and report on results as well as learn from performance still require attention. The GPE annual results reports track progress against 37 indicators, but data availability and attribution are challenges to reporting. The process of developing the indicators was participatory and is helping to demonstrate results, but it still does not fully reflect the impact pathways that GPE supports. Progress against each indicator is assessed at output, outcome and impact levels, when possible. There are difficulties in aggregating results for the Partnership, as it is the member countries that determine both how grants are used and who provides data on results. Furthermore, the visibility of GPE results at the country level are often difficult to capture, as they are administered via grant agents, usually partner organisations, that apply their own implementation and reporting systems. While this modality seeks to avoid duplication, it makes it difficult for GPE to have a cohesive overview of the work they fund and support.

The evaluation function is now adequately resourced but still does not operate as a fully independent section with a director and independent reporting line to the Board.

The work programme of the evaluation function is governed by the Strategy and Impact Committee. This Committee sees that a number of quality assurance review and evaluation processes are in place to ensure that lessons are learned from country-level projects and that this evidence base is used to inform new projects. At the time of assessment, only two completed evaluations were available. Nonetheless, substantial progress in this regard has been achieved since 2016, and a full evaluation work programme has now been prepared. The systems for validation of evaluations have been established, and therefore systems for data gathering, quality assurance and validation are now expected to improve. Concerns remain, however, regarding the processes and systems for country-level data generation and tracking, and the limited availability of performance data and results means that GPE is not yet fully able to demonstrate how it is delivering on its mandate.

In terms of results achieved by GPE, the picture is mixed. As a global fund, GPE is putting its funds to good use, and the delivery mechanism for grants is working well. Funds are dedicated to help countries to develop comprehensive education sector plans that

are being used as a basis for further sector investment. In this respect, GPE is demonstrating relevant and positive results. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear whether these resources could be delivered in a more efficient or sustainable way. With regard to specific areas of contribution, GPE has had success in supporting policy and planning processes, in contributing to stronger governance and institutional capacity, in achieving education and financial reforms and in strengthening civil society engagement with local education groups. Results are variable among and within countries, with positive improvements on a number of indicators. The targeting of GPE funds to disadvantaged areas in some country grants has contributed to equity. Projects that target girls also have had success, although the rate of improvement in gender-related indicators at the global level lags behind indicators related to other learning outcomes. There is room for improvement in identifying and reporting on other potential target groups.

Performance at a glance

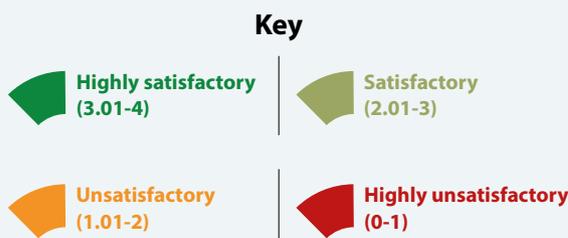
The 2017-18 assessment by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) found that GPE is forging a strategic pathway for improving education across all supported partners, leveraging funds in an unprecedented way and providing strong global leadership for the improvement of education in the world's poorest countries.

GPE's main areas of strength relate to its position as a global leader in the education sector and its ability to create a platform for education sector change. The Partnership model is both accountable and adaptable to conditions at the country level. In terms of areas for improvement, there are gaps in the causal linkages between the main focus of GPE's work and the benefits to end users, and data challenges persist with regard to fully articulating and demonstrating performance.

PERFORMANCE RATING SUMMARY



Although the Partnership is young, it has undergone significant growth in recent years and is naturally working towards stabilisation. During the period of assessment, recent restructuring and process improvements have shown early signs of having a positive effect. Overall the MOPAN assessment found that GPE is delivering critical inputs to the global education sector. GPE is aware of the challenges it is currently facing in its path to maturity, including seeking clarity on each partner's role and allowing the approach to adapt to country contexts and be tailored to grant agents' systems. In light of this, GPE is well-positioned to continue supporting progress in education in the world's poorest countries.



About this assessment

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is a network of 18 countries¹ that share a common interest in assessing the effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations they fund, including UN agencies, international financial institutions and global funds. The Network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on the organisational and development effectiveness of the organisations it assesses. This knowledge base is intended to contribute to organisational learning within and among the organisations, their direct clients and partners, and other stakeholders. Network members use the reports for their own accountability needs and as a source of input for strategic decision-making.

GPE is one of the 14 organisations assessed by MOPAN in 2017-18. This was the first MOPAN assessment of GPE. Norway and the United States championed this assessment on behalf of the Network.

This brief accompanies the full assessment, published in 2019, which can be found on MOPAN's website at www.mopanonline.org. GPE's management response will be made available on the MOPAN website as well.

The assessment of performance covers the work of the GPE Secretariat. It addresses organisational systems, practices and behaviours, as well as results achieved during the period 2016 to mid-2018. It relies on three lines of evidence: a document review, interviews with staff and small groups, and an online partner survey.²

MOPAN's evidence lines for GPE

- Review of 265 documents
- 98 staff interviews / focus groups
- 55 partners surveyed in 6 countries

The MOPAN 3.0 methodology entails a framework of 12 key performance indicators and of micro-indicators. It comprises standards that characterise an effective multilateral organisation. More detail is provided in MOPAN's methodology manual.³

Organisations assessed by MOPAN in 2017-18:

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| ● ADB | ● GEF | ● IFAD | ● OHCHR | ● UNESCO | ● UNHCR | ● WFP |
| ● FAO | ● GPE | ● IOM | ● UN Women | ● UNFPA | ● UNRWA | ● WHO |

1: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States – and two observers, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates.

2: The online survey was conducted among partners of GPE in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Myanmar, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea.

3: Available at www.mopanonline.org