

LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

Invest in the early years

This profile is structured slightly differently to the other nine donor profiles in this study. This is for two reasons, firstly, GPE only focuses on one of the overall multi-sector domains of early childhood development, namely the health, nutrition, education and sanitation sectors, and, secondly, due to a lack of comparable financing data.^A

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the **world's only multilateral partnership and fund exclusively dedicated to dramatically increasing the number of children who are in school and learning.** The partnership is dedicated to uniting governments, multilateral agencies, international organisations, foundations, the private sector, and civil society to mobilise technical and financial resources towards the areas of greatest need in education. At a country level, GPE brings together all actors in the field of education, including donor country governments, civil society, members of the teaching profession and the private sector, in order to pool resources, as well as knowledge, in support of the local national education plan, led by government. In mobilising actors through **a partnership-approach, GPE is able to facilitate co-ordinated and strategic assistance for nationally-led education plans which aim to provide every child with a quality basic education.**

GPE's support to early childhood development

GPE's strategic plan for 2016 to 2020, known as GPE 2020¹, outlines the organisation's goals and objectives. Within the strategic plan, GPE identifies early childhood care and education (ECCE) as one of its priority focus areas, and:

- Names two indicators focused on improving the number of children below the age of five who are developmentally on track.^B
- Commits to ensuring that close to three-quarters of all children living in developing countries

partnered with the GPE are on track to meet the targets, by 2020, of three out of four domains constituting well-being and development. The individual domains are literacy and numeracy, physical and social-emotional development, and learning. Almost 75% of the children who will be reached by this ambitious commitment are girls.

Less than a third^C of all GPE developing-country partners have data available tracking the development of children younger than age five, and consequently the partnership clearly faces a challenge in gathering suitable data for reporting on this indicator. However, the Early Childhood

^A Given that the GPE is an education-only multilateral agency, this profile only covers their commitments towards investments in ECCE and does not look at investments in the broader multi-sectoral domains within early childhood development (ECD). Moreover, as they do not report into the OECD DAC, we have not been able to assess their investments using the same dataset as for other donors. As such, this profile is structured differently to the other donor profiles in this set, and has less comparability with other profiles (data and structure).

^B GPE uses the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI), developed by UNICEF from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and implemented since MICS 4 for this, which measure progress across four domains, namely literacy-numeracy, physical and social-emotional development, and learning.

^C This is only for 22 of 72 countries.

Development Index (ECDI) surveys conducted in the 22 developing-country partners between 2011 and 2014 have shown that for:

- **Indicator one:** Two-thirds (66%) of children between the ages of three and five were developmentally on track. The percentage for girls was higher, at 68%.
- **Indicator two:** Progress on access to pre-primary education through the pre-primary gross enrolment ratio. The target is to reach an average of 32.2% by 2020 and is currently on track.

Based on its strategic plan and the country-level evidence on indicators, there is little doubt of GPE's strong strategic commitment to early childhood education. This, coupled with a clear measurement and accountability framework, enables progress to be made at both country and global levels. GPE is also invested in supporting the development of a greater body of work on ECCE. This is being achieved from within the partnership and, at the same time, GPE is also reaching out to other actors globally to help grow number of activities in this area.

There are two examples of how this is already happening:

1. The **Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS)** is an initiative enabling GPE to help support capacity development for integrating existing effective approaches, tools and models into national planning and policy implementation cycles. This includes providing 1.3 million US dollars in financing to UNICEF for piloting relevant tools in four partner countries, accompanied by tailored in-country capacity development activities and several peer learning exchanges and events related to ECCE planning and implementation in 2019.⁹ In addition, GPE intends to create case studies and a global toolkit for the benefit of other developing-country partners.
2. GPE has recently launched:
 - a. A **Knowledge and Innovation Exchange** to inform both practice and policy advocacy. Through this, GPE has invested five million US dollars to harness successful knowledge and innovation in ECCE policy planning and implementation across the partnership.
 - a. A **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**^E on mainstreaming early childhood education (ECE) into education sector planning for ministry of education officials, with the intention to promote widespread inclusion of ECCE in education sector plans.

Both initiatives aim to build global knowledge and good practice in bringing quality early childhood services to scale within national education systems, particularly in developing countries.

GPE financing for pre-primary^F

Between 2004 and 2017, the GPE provided 4.1 billion US dollars in grants. A portion of the grant funds, 265 million dollars, which was equal to 6.5% of all GPE funding for this period, went towards ECCE activities. In 2017, the latest dataset available, this was around 5% of the total.^G

The foundation of GPE's operational model is to provide technical and financial support to produce good quality and nationally-owned education-sector plans. Furthermore, the model provides funds for particular areas identified in sector plans, and these have remained relatively stagnant over time. The allocation of grant funding, therefore, also shows that developing-country partners are demanding funding for ECCE. Several countries have even dedicated their entire GPE implementation grant to ECCE activities. These countries include Guyana, the Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Mongolia and Nicaragua.

In addition, there is a growing level of inclusion of ECCE among developing country partners. In 2018, 24 out of the 27 active education sector grants had an ECCE component.^H Most of the GPE partner developing countries with current active implementation grants financing ECCE activities are in Africa. Half of these countries are affected by fragility or conflict; therefore, this is almost certainly where the greatest need and the largest challenges may be found for scaling up ECCE.

⁹ Information provided by GPE on the BELDS project to authors of the report.

^E Further information about the Massive Open Online Course is available at: www.iiep.unesco.org/en/join-our-mooc-planning-early-childhood-education-5055.

^F Unfortunately, GPE does not provide sufficient breakdown of its financing to allow for a comparable analysis in relation to other donors. Please note that it was not possible to identify total spending by GPE in comparisons to other donors as, it only allocates funds to education (and thus a total is not comparable to other donors) and, secondly, they do not report into the OECD DAC CRS.

^G These figures are based on GPE data provided to the author. An estimated 265 million US dollars of 4.1 billion dollars has been spent on early childhood care and education between 2004–2017. For ESPIG financing between 2014–2017, approximately 5% of ESPIG financing went to the early childhood care and education sub-sector. For 2017, there has been an estimated 25 million dollars in ESPIG spending towards early childhood care and education of a total 480 million dollars.

^H Portfolio Review, page 13. Only 'co-financed' and 'stand-alone' grants were coded to provide insights into the themes supported by ESPIGs and their alignment to GPE 2020 strategic goals.

Early childhood education and disability

GPE's vision calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including for children with disabilities. At the heart of the GPE's vision and mission is a strong focus on equity; this is complemented with a cross-cutting commitment throughout the GPE 2020 strategy to include children with disabilities. Furthermore, the GPE model has inbuilt incentives for system strengthening. Thirty percent of a country's disbursement is linked to achieving specific results in equity, efficiency and learning outcome. The process, outcome or output indicators are determined by the government and development partners, and could potentially be tied to results to improve disability inclusion.

GPE is supportive of countries planning for children with disabilities and inclusive education. For example, the partnership provides:

- Guidance, support and funding for interventions to include children with disabilities in countries' education systems.
- Funding for teacher training in inclusive education to ensure teachers can provide quality education for all students, and equipment and learning materials.

- Support for improved disability data. While GPE is committed to ensuring more and better-quality disability data are available, there is still a long way to go before this is accomplished.

Overall, GPE has provided 439 million US dollars to support the implementation of plans that include activities facilitating the enrolment of children with disabilities into the education system. Since 2012, GPE has further provided 5.07 million dollars to developing-country partners so that these countries may fund activities specifically for educating children with disabilities.²

In 2017, 51 country-sector plans explicitly addressed the needs of children with a disability.² This demonstrates that disability and inclusion remain central to the GPE's efforts. However, more work is required: of the 51 countries whose plans provide for the disabled, only seven planned to increase co-ordination efforts for children with disabilities within ECCE, and one country has early screening for children with disabilities in their plans.²



Showing the children that Sense International help with deafblindness in Kenya, Kilimani Primary School. Mary Marugi, age five

Conclusions

GPE has a clear role to play in supporting countries to develop both inclusive ECCE and to formulate sector plans. In addition to helping governments raise more funds, GPE should further seek to unlock funds for donors to allocate bilaterally in support of ECCE at a country level. For instance, in 2016, GPE itself noted that there are also absorption issues for the level of donor financing, which can be currently allocated. Clearly, the recent activities aimed at improving ECCE and planning in sector planning processes will assist governments to plan better. It will also, potentially, increase the capacity of systems to scale -up and to absorb higher levels of donor- and GPE grant financing. As a result, GPE has a unique function in the ECD arena, namely to champion ECCE, and to form the link to the broader multi-sector ECD policy field. This would be in line with the recent work to highlight the importance on school health. This will enable GPE to become the leader in the education and learning domain.

Among other agencies or institutions there is minimal leadership or focus being directed towards supporting inclusive ECCE. GPE can, therefore, become a thought leader in this notable field. GPE is currently in the process of developing inclusive education guidelines in partnership with UNICEF and the World Bank³, and it is hoped these guidelines will explore inclusive early education and pre-primary school education – as this can help fill a huge gap in the global policy arena.

COMPENDIUM OF ADVOCACY TOOLS

This Donor Profile is one of 10 advocacy briefs for ODA advocacy. There are also four recipient country profiles for national advocacy, as well as a Global Report and a user-friendly checklist to support the design of inclusive ECD programmes which seek to support the most marginalised children.



A Methodology Note providing more information on the process of analysis along with all the tools may be accessed at: www.light-for-the-world.org/inclusive-ecd-investment

Recommendations

The Global Partnership for Education should:

- Play a leading role in scaling up funding to early education by **increasing early education and pre-primary funding, aiming towards 10% of the total education aid sector budget.**
- **Work with country governments and Local Education Group (LEGs) to prioritise pre-primary and early education in sector planning, with a strong focus on equity,** by including children with a disability.
- **Ensure that GPE's new strategy includes a strong inclusive early education component.**
- Do more widespread awareness on the learning outcome and economic returns.
- Develop tools and sector guidelines to help countries plan for inclusive early education.
- **Continue to incentivise equity through the performance-based allocation to education sector programme implementation grants (ESPIGs)** by prioritising disability inclusion in early childhood education.
- Use Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) funds as an opportunity to share learning and best practices on inclusive ECCE.
- Follow through with their **DFID Disability Summit commitment** and fully support the Inclusive Education Initiative.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REPORT AND DONOR PROFILES

Light for the World and their partners conducted a detailed analysis of the aid disbursements, which 10 donors have committed to support early childhood development. Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, UK and USA are the six bilateral donors reviewed for this report together with four multilateral donors namely, the European Union, World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education. Particular attention is paid in the research to donors' commitments towards children who are vulnerable or at risk of being marginalised or delayed in learning due to a disability. For this reason, donors' strategic frameworks were also analysed, in addition to their aid spend.

Light for the World and their partners have provided input to the donor profiles.

REFERENCES: 1. Global Partnership for Education. *GPE 2020 Strategic Plan*. GPE; 2015. 2. Banham L and Papakosta E. *Disability and inclusive education. A stocktake of education sector plans and GPE-funded grants*. Global Partnership for Education (GPE); 2018. 3. Children with disabilities. Global Partnership for Education (GPE). <https://www.globalpartnership.org/focus-areas/children-with-disabilities>. Accessed July, 2019.