

 **NOVEMBER 30, DECEMBER 1 AND 3, 2020**

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

MEETING REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The agenda and documents for the Board meeting can be found on the GPE website. A list of participants is included in Annex 1.

This report presents a high-level summary of key discussion points and decisions made.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2020

1. Opening of the Board Meeting

1.1 Board Chair Julia Gillard called the meeting to order at 5:00am Washington, D.C time. She confirmed there was quorum and welcomed meeting participants, including new Board representatives from Africa 2, Asia-Pacific and Donor 5. She noted that the Vice Chair was not able to join the first day of the meeting.

1.2 The Chair thanked the government of Germany for hosting the meeting and introduced Dr. Maria Flachsbarth, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany.

1.3 Dr. Flachsbarth welcomed meeting participants. She noted the dramatic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems with school closings in 190 countries, resulting in a loss of learning, as well as an increase in gender-based violence, limited access to health services and feeding programs, child labor, early marriage and pregnancies, with those most vulnerable the most impacted. She commended the Board for establishing the COVID-19 funding window and applauded the Secretariat's efforts in

operationalizing the fund quickly. She noted the need to further increase efforts to address the education crisis in the new strategy with a quality education for every child a key criteria for funding. She welcomed the priority of gender equality in the strategy as empowering girls leads to empowering families and societies. Finally, she noted that education depends on effective partnerships and effective use of resources and welcomed GPE's close collaboration with others in the education architecture. She affirmed that Germany would remain a reliable and strong partner for GPE in the next replenishment period.

1.4 Two donor representatives announced new contributions to GPE. Pekka Hirvonen on behalf of Finland announced a contribution of two million Euros to the COVID-19 funding window before year-end, with a further contribution forthcoming in the 2021 financing conference. The representative noted Finland had regretted not having been able to contribute to the current replenishment and was particularly pleased it was now in a position to support and reengage with GPE once again. Line Baagø-Rasmussen, donor 2 Board representative announced an additional contribution of 35 million Danish Kroner from Denmark and, on behalf of Sweden, a contribution of 14 million Swedish Krona to the COVID funding window.

1.5 The Chair next gave the floor to the Board members from Kenya and Donor 3, Elyas Abdi Jillaow and Alicia Herbert respectively, as representatives of the GPE 2021 replenishment hosts, Kenya and the United Kingdom. They noted the enthusiasm and firm commitments of their respective governments to the replenishment and called on all Board members and the global community to come together and meet the replenishment target to address the silent crisis in education, severely exacerbated by COVID-19 and with enormous consequences for the future. The Board member from Kenya noted that developing country partners are committed to enhance domestic financing for education while noting the challenges of fragile and conflict-affected states in this regard.

1.6. The Chair noted the objectives of the first day of the meeting, including approval of the consent agenda, an update from the CEO, a report-back from DCP ministers, and a discussion and decision on the operating model.

2. Consent Agenda (BOD/2020/12 DOC 02)

2.1 The first order of business was the approval of the consent agenda, which included the budget of the 2021 financing conference and the priorities for CEO feedback. The consent agenda was approved.

BOD/2020/11/12-01 – Financing Conference Budget: The Board of Directors:

1. Notes the intention of the GPE Secretariat to reallocate anticipated FY21 (July 2020 – June 2021) budget savings towards the costs of the Financing Conference and authorizes the carryover of such funds to FY22 (July 2021–June 2022).
2. In the event that the Secretariat determines there may be insufficient funds available, delegates authority to the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) to approve up to US\$1.5 million in incremental funds for the Financing Conference.

BOD/2020/11/12-01 – GPE Priorities for CEO Feedback: The Board of Directors:

1. Noting that the CEO search process and the finalization of the strategic plan impacted the Board-approved CEO Performance Feedback process for the period of June 2019–June 2020, as enshrined in [BOD/2017/06-07](#);
2. Recognizing the need for an interim assessment and setting of priorities until the next assessment cycle is initiated in accordance with regular schedule;
3. Endorses the proposed GPE Priorities set out in Annex 2 as the basis for the CEO feedback process for the period from December 2020 to June 2021 and requests the Secretariat to launch the assessment.

2. Operationalization of Human Rights

2.1 The Chair reported back on Coordinating Committee deliberations on the question of the operationalization of human rights principles, noting that the Secretariat had received a letter on this topic from the CSO, private sector and private foundations constituencies in late September. The letter was later discussed by the CC at its October 20th meeting.

2.2 In its consideration of the letter, the Coordinating Committee noted the importance of the topic and focused on how it might be optimally taken forward in the strategic plan process. The committee encouraged constituencies to engage in the strategic plan consultation process, including identifying entry points for strengthening attention to human rights, but also noted that many operational guidelines and details will be piloted and worked on during 2021 and recommended that the further work on the operationalization of human rights begin in 2021.

3. Report from the Secretariat CEO (BOD/2020/12 DOC 03)

3.1 The CEO, Alice Albright, presented her report to the Board.

Discussion

3.2 A Board member noted the importance of finalizing the GPE policy on the protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH), a topic that is of particular interest to donors. Later in the meeting, the CEO noted that the policy will be finalized in early 2021. Until the policy is fully operational, PSEAH cases will be handled following the misuse of funds policy protocol.

4. Report-Back from DCP Ministers

4.1 The Chair invited Ministers Sengeh and Sahondrarimalala from Sierra Leone and Madagascar respectively to provide framing input from the developing country partner ministerial meeting that took place on November 23rd. They noted that the meeting was marked by strong support for the strategic plan, including the operating model, the financing and funding framework, the funding window for gender and the MEL learning framework, as well support for a lean governance structure to reduce transaction cost while maintaining accountability and transparency. They acknowledged that further detail on the operating model should be considered in the operationalization and piloting phase, and that the success of the plan would depend on mutual accountability and buy-in from all partners.

5. Operating Model (BOD/2020/12 DOC 05)

5.1 Jo Bourne, Chief Technical Officer, provided a brief overview of the different components of the strategic plan and noted that critical operating model components still require further development, including details on assessing requirements, the independent review panel, guidance on the partnership compact, and strategic capabilities.

5.2 The Secretariat next presented on the partnership compact, system capacity grant, system transformation grant and strategic capabilities, followed by separate Board discussions on each segment.

Discussions

5.3 Overall, there was broad support for the model with Board members noting that EPR principles and findings from the independent summative evaluation are reflected in the model. The Board acknowledged that detailed guidelines, including roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of partners, need to be developed and that the pilot phase would provide an opportunity to test assumptions and adapt based on lessons learned.

5.4 Other key comments from Board members included:

Partnership Compact

- **Education Sector Plan.** Several Board members noted the importance of maintaining the sector plan as a core country-level document and ensuring the compact is not seen as the de facto ESP. A double requirement should be avoided. A Board member suggested a clear framework for the compact that ensures equity. The Secretariat agreed on the importance of the ESP and noted that the compact would focus on prioritization within the plan to ensure due implementation of the plan.
- **Timeline.** Several Board members noted the ambitious timeline for the government to lead the development of the compact. The Secretariat noted that the proposed timeline did not consider prior groundwork by the Secretariat with ministers on agreeing on meetings, timelines, and participation. The Secretariat acknowledged the need for a strong communications component.
- **Local education groups.** Several Board members expressed concerns on how the compact is operationalized given the critical role of the LEG, in particular since many LEGs face challenges in terms of effectiveness and representation. It was noted that challenges with the LEG can be addressed in the pilot on the compact via the requirement on sector coordination.
- **Alignment.** Board members noted that the compact included the potential for greater alignment, harmonization, coordination and efficiency at country level.
- **Sector coordination.** Some Board members noted the omission in the Board document of the need for alignment of the compact with existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms at all stages and avoid a parallel GPE system and requested its insertion in various places. Others emphasized the need to articulate sector coordination and harmonization more broadly and develop a comprehensive approach with actors like UNESCO and ECW.
- **Pilot.** Board members supported the launch of the pilot. It was noted that a strong MEL framework would be critical to foster evidence-based decisions regarding the pilot.
- **Gender equality.** It was noted that a clearer framework is required on the expectation of inclusion of gender quality in the compact. The Secretariat noted that it would engage the LEG on a series of questions on gender equality, which was integrated in all components but would be included in more detail in the MEL framework early 2021.

System Capacity Grant

- Board members emphasized that developing country partners, in consultation with the Local Education Group (LEG), should determine the areas that require strengthening and the need for consultants with regards to training and capacity support.
- In the context of addressing the underlying causes of inequity in the education system, the bar on data collection to inform the sector plan should be set beyond quantitative indicators and include social and gender norms.

System Transformation Grant

- Board members expressed broad support for the grant overall in leveraging systemic change by focusing on unlocking system bottlenecks.
- **Domestic financing requirements.** While recognizing the need for a contextualized approach, several Board members expressed support for maintaining the requirement that 20 percent of the national budget be progressively allocated to education to reduce aid dependency and make progress on SDG4. It was noted that a clear framework for the assessment of requirements is needed to ensure consistency in decision-making. Domestic tax revenue was also cited as an area of importance.
- **Independent Technical Advisory Panel.** There were mixed views about the use of an independent review panel to provide advice on whether requirements were met. Those in support cited the need for independent assessment in particular given the inherent conflicts of interest in the partnership itself, while those concerned favored retaining existing structures. In setting up a panel, it was suggested to consider the experiences of other organizations and to include both local experts and generalists for neutrality and comparability.
- **Results-based financing (RBF).** Several Board members expressed concern with the increase in results-based financing in the model and the possibility of grants that are fully results-based. They noted RBF is transaction-heavy and might risk funding for low-capacity countries. The Secretariat recognized the concern but clarified that RBF in addition to outcomes can also fund policies and processes that are transformational and are in the government's control and predictability. Further, experiences with the variable part do not show predictability issues and countries have met targets. The current model already allows modalities that are fully results-based to accommodate existing country funding mechanisms. Finally, the Secretariat noted that under the new model, low-capacity and fragile countries remain exempted in addition to exemptions based on grant size. Some Board

members requested exemptions be defined. With regard to the level of funding for low-income countries, the Secretariat noted it could not engineer the variable part and top-up to guarantee a certain level for LICs while noting that the overall allocation for LICs is two-thirds of the envelope for system transformation grants. The Secretariat noted it would consider the issue in the pilot.

- **Roll-out and delegation.** While recognizing the governance review would revisit committee and Secretariat mandates, some Board members noted the importance of a Board Committee in overseeing the roll-out of the model while others noted that the independent summative evaluation had recommended that the Board determine the 'what' and delegate the 'how' to the Secretariat, and that this should be the modus operandi moving forward. A Board member emphasized that any delegation should include accountability measures.
- **Quality of Teaching.** A Board member requested that quality teaching be given due attention as a GPE priority, noting it is not referenced in the operating model document. The Secretariat noted it was included in the MEL framework.

Strategic Capabilities

- Board members expressed broad appreciation for the proposal, which could assist sector reform at the national and global level. Board members welcomed leveraging partner expertise to find solutions for countries and avoid duplication of efforts. It was noted that expertise should be leveraged at the national, regional and global level. Board members also commented that:
 - New mechanisms should have a clear focus on transformation and enhanced systems beyond KIX and EOL and include cross-sector operations such as health and protection.
 - Violence in schools is not sufficiently discussed as a cross-sector element whereas education has a clear role to play.
 - Any private sector engagement should be aligned with GPE priorities and shared with the Board.
 - Any memorandums of understanding should be processed following relevant GPE policies with the Board informed as appropriate.

5.5 The next day, the Board discussed the recommended decision language, including revisions suggested by Board members. However, given the difficulty of the discussion in the virtual context, the Chair invited constituencies to consult and, based on the Board discussion, send further proposed revisions to the decision language to the Secretariat.

5.6 On the last day of the meeting, the Board considered the amended decision

language informed by submissions from constituencies and Secretariat review, as circulated via email the previous day.

Discussion

- A Board member noted the need to emphasize more strongly the element of a credible and participatory sector plan in the context of maintaining the requirement on progressively allocating 20 percent of the national budget to education and with governments severely fiscally constrained due to the pandemic.
- Several Board members opposed an amendment that provides preferential treatment to UN institutions over other organizations, including leveraging resources within the partnership itself. The proposed amendment was withdrawn.

5.7 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-03-Operating Model: The Board of Directors:

1. Approves the GPE 2025 operating model framework as set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05, including the decision-making process to determine final allocation amounts and subsequent grant approvals with the explicit knowledge that the relevant delegations will be handled through the governance review which will be concluded by March.
2. Recognizing that the pilots offer a significant opportunity for learning and adaptation, the Secretariat should provide a rollout plan including opportunities for committee engagement to the Coordinating Committee for review at their January 2021 meeting. Requests the Secretariat, in consultation with the relevant Board committees and partners, to pilot and operationalize the following aspects of the proposed model, emphasizing the need to embed the Effective Partnership Rollout principles in operationalization:
 - a. The Partnership Compact as set out in Annex 1 to BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05. In humanitarian crisis contexts, foster coordination and alignment between the LEG and humanitarian planning and coordination mechanisms through the Compact and its implementation.
 - b. The System Capacity Grant as set out in Annex 2 to BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05.
 - c. The System Transformation Grant and approach to operating model requirements and incentives as set out in Annex 3 to BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05, with the understanding that the variable part should be at least 30%. Depending on country capacity and appetite for results-based funding, as determined at the country-level, governments can opt, in consultation with the LEG, to increase the share of the variable part.

- d. The Secretariat to develop (a) criteria for exemptions from the variable part in very low-capacity and fragile contexts and b) detailed criteria and methodology for assessing requirements, to be peer reviewed by experts.
 - e. The requirements should maintain a clear commitment to progressively meet the allocation of at least 20 percent of their national budget to education and the implementation of a credible education plan, developed through an inclusive and participatory process in the local education group.
 - f. Acknowledging the importance of human rights, the Board affirms the Coordinating Committee's decision to request that the Secretariat seek expertise within the partnership as well as outside in 2021 to review ways to strengthen human rights principles in GPE operations and report back to the Board.
 - g. The Independent Technical Advisory Panel to assess operating model requirements, with a full proposal for the Independent Technical Advisory Panel and its terms of reference to be presented for Board decision in February 2021.
3. Approves the countries, and the corresponding indicative allocations, proposed for the pilot of the GPE 2025 operating model starting in January 2021, as set out in Annex 7 to BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05. Requests the Secretariat to update the Board on lessons learned and proposed adaptations from initial experience in implementing the operating model in June 2021.
 4. To galvanize global, regional and national capabilities and resources needed to support the achievement of country reform priorities, the Board agrees to mobilize strategic capabilities to address key constraints to transformational change as described in Annex 4 to BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 05. Specifically, the Board:
 - a. Approves an initial allocation not to exceed US\$2 million to commence implementation of the approach to mobilizing strategic capabilities, in consultation with relevant Board committees and partners. Requests for additional funds will be considered by the Board based on an analysis of needs and initial implementation progress.
 - b. Delegates authority to the CEO to approve such funds to applicable organizations in the form of grants from the GPE Fund or as Secretariat Administered Operating Expenses based on its assessment of the most efficient modality, provided they have been selected as part of an open and transparent process.
 - c. Requests the Secretariat to report to the Grants and Performance Committee semi-annually on any arrangements that have been entered into to facilitate oversight and to include reporting on financed strategic partnerships in annual reporting on grants to the Board of Directors.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2020

6. Opening of the Meeting

6.1 The Chair summarized the discussions of the previous day and reviewed the objectives for the day, including making decisions on the operating model¹ and financing and funding framework elements.

7. Financing and Funding (BOD/2020/11-12 DOC 04-06-07)

7.1 Padraig Power, Chief Financial Officer, presented the first part of the financing and funding elements for immediate Board consideration, as set out in DOC 06 and DOC 07. To contextualize the discussion, Mr. Power did a brief presentation of the Financial Forecast, as set out in DOC 04.

Discussion

7.2 The Board discussion took place during the second day which the following points were raised.

Financial Forecast

- Board members welcomed the acceleration of disbursements done during this record year that showed the GPE ambition to deliver in the middle of the pandemic and the need for resources for next year's replenishment.
- The Board commended the progress made between the World Bank, the trustee, and GPE on the Memorandum of Understanding to mitigate the foreign exchange risk management and looked forward that it would be ready for the next round of pledges.
- The World Bank representative and the Secretariat confirmed that the proposal would be presented for consideration to the Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) in the following months.

Eligibility and Allocation

- The Board of Directors expressed broad support for the proposal presented.

¹ The full discussion and decision on the operating model is set out under Day 1.

- **Allocation to low-income countries.** Some Board members highlighted the importance of ensuring high allocation of funds to low-income countries (LICs), noting a comment from the September meeting report where it would be desirable to at least maintain the share at 65 percent. The Secretariat assured that in all of the scenarios presented for System Transformation Grants potential allocations exceed 65%. However as there may be differences in terms of what countries eventually receive, the Board agreed that the Secretariat should develop a tracking and response mechanism to safeguard against reductions to LICs
- **Joint Grant Application to reduce transaction costs.** Another comment was the proposal to reduce transaction costs by proposing joint grant application with one Grant Agent (GA) for the System Transformation Grant, Multiplier, and Thematic Window resources. The Secretariat stressed that while this was desirable and likely in many cases, imposing this could end up having unintended consequences such as one GA dominating the portfolio, reducing choice of suitable GAs in the most fragile contexts, and therefore, in line with the Effective Partnership principles, it would be desirable not to be prescriptive and to leave these decisions at the country level.
- **Use of Harmonized Learning Score.** There was a concern regarding the use of the Harmonized Learning Score for the allocation formula instead of the SDG indicator 4.1.1. The Secretariat informed that the choice of the Harmonized Learning Score was due to the availability of broadly comparable data for the majority of GPE eligible DCPs. The Board accepted this approach while expressing its desire to use SDG indicator 4.1.1 for future allocation formulas, calling on partners to work to address the data gaps to facilitate this.

7.3 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-04 Eligibility and Allocation of Funds for GPE 2025: The Board of Directors:

1. Approves eligibility for GPE Funding for the 2021-2025 Financing period as set out in Table 1 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 noting that while additional countries may become eligible based on updated data as of 1 July 2021, no countries will be removed from eligibility as a result of this data.
2. Approves the following needs-based allocation formula -
$$\text{Needs Index} = \frac{\text{PrimAgePop} \times (1 - \text{PCR} \times \text{HLS625}) + \text{SecAgePop} \times (1 - \text{LSCR})}{\text{GDP per Capita (PPP)}} \times \sqrt{+15\% \text{ FCAC adjustment}}$$
 - As further described in Annex 1 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 for calculating the share of available resources that countries eligible to receive a Systems Transformation Grant may apply for, subject to the following adjustments:

- a. The maximum allocation for any one country shall not exceed 5% of the overall available resources used to calculate each indicative allocation.
 - b. For any eligible country where the allocation formula produces an indicative allocation below the allocation floors for country categories set out in Table 2 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 Annex 1, they shall be eligible to apply for the corresponding floor.
 - c. For any country that would see a reduction in their allocation compared to their original allocation as calculated in 2017 for the 2018–2020 period, that reduction shall be limited to 25% of the previous maximum country allocation.
3. Approves the use of Harmonized Learning Score as a temporary solution to make the case for learning outcomes as a determinant of resource allocation. However, expresses its desire for future allocation formulas to use SDG indicator 4.1.1 and to this effect, calls on all partners to commit to fill data gaps through coordinated action towards a coherent support mechanism to learning assessments.
 4. Approves the allocation criteria and ceilings for the Multiplier as set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 Annex 2 including the reduced co-financing threshold of US\$1 to US\$1 applying to additional grant funding from the business community and private foundations.
 5. Approves eligibility for the System Capacity Grants as set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 Annex 3, with maximum allocations ranging between US\$1 million to US\$5 million for country categories. Delegates authority to the Secretariat to approve such grants. Delegates authority to the FRC to approve the limited criteria in which allocations above the ceilings may be acceptable.
 6. Recognizing that the outcome of the 2021 Financing Conference will be the key determinant in forecasting available funds for allocation, the Board's intention to make up to 20% of grant funds available for the Multiplier and related approaches, and considering that funds need to be reserved for future decisions on allocations the Board may make to support the enabling objective of GPE 2025, requests the Secretariat to develop prioritization criteria for FRC review and recommendation to the Board in the event that available resources for Systems Transformation Grants are forecasted to be less than US\$2 billion.
 7. During the piloting and implementing stages, the secretariat will develop a tracking and response mechanism to safeguard against reductions of the overall proportion of the financing to low income countries.

Thematic Window for Gender Equality with a focus on Girls' Education

- The Board Chair acknowledged the donors' note supported by several constituencies on hardwiring gender equality throughout the GPE 2021-2025 strategy. For reference, the note *"Proposals to strengthen the gender equality hardwiring approach throughout GPE's 2021-2025 strategy"* is included as Annex 2.
- **Hardwiring gender in GPE.** Several Board members raised the importance of hardwiring gender in all GPE financing mechanisms and that this window should be used to reinforce this approach. In this sense, the Secretariat modified the decision language and expressed that its implementation would be monitored and evaluated to avoid unintended consequences.
- **Thematic Window's funding.** A Board member suggested the need to consider reducing the levels of donor' targeting to prevent a single donor from funding all of the window. However, this change was not adopted as other members requested the original decision language be kept.
- **Balanced approach.** A Board member requested more focus on the thematic window for gender equality with a focus on girls' education in the Low-Income Countries only. The Secretariat explained that the proposal would have a balanced approach based on gender equity indicators to identify where girls' lag boys the most, and several constituencies supported it.
- **Focus on marginalized groups.** A few members expressed the need to use this window for the most marginalized groups such as girls with disabilities, refugees, early pregnancy and marriage, and gender-based violence circumstances.
- **Demand-driven approach.** Several Board members appreciated that the window is demand-driven strengthening DCPs' ownership.
- The Secretariat assured that the approval of the window should not be considered as a precedent for other thematic windows.

7.4 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-05 Thematic Funding Window for Gender with a focus on Girls' Education.

The Board of Directors:

1. Instructs GPE Secretariat to hardwire gender equality throughout GPEs model and operations. Subject to securing sufficient funding, instructs GPE to create a thematic funding window for gender equality, including girls' education. The said window will be used as an incentive to hardwire priorities. The implementation of the thematic window will be monitored closely, and evaluated to ensure it is achieving its purpose, there are

no unintended consequences, and it does not become a separate 'gender equality component

2. Subject to securing at least US\$100 million in new resources, approves the creation of a thematic funding window for gender equality with a focus on Girls' education as set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 07.
3. Sets an initial funding target of US\$250 million for the window and authorizes the window as eligible to be fully financed with targeted contributions per the Contributions and Safeguards Policy (CSP).
4. Permits donors to target up to 50% of their pledge or US\$50 million whichever is higher until such time as the target is reached and subject to compliance with the CSP.
5. Eligibility for funding from the window shall be based on the "Balanced Approach" set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 07.
6. The approval of this window should not be considered as a precedent for the creation of similar thematic targeted windows.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2020

8. Opening of the Meeting

8.1 The Board Chair summarized the discussions of the previous day and noted that the objective of the day was to finalize decision language on the operating model², Financing and Funding Framework, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and Strategic Plan Narrative.

9. Financing and Funding – Second part (BOD/2020/11–12 DOC 08–09)

9.1 Padraig Power, Chief Financial Officer, presented the second part of the financing and funding elements for immediate Board consideration, as set out in DOC 08 and DOC 09.

Discussion

9.2 The Board discussion took place during the third day during which the following points were raised.

Innovative financing

- At the outset of the session, Alice Albright, Chief Executive Officer, relayed comments sent by Minister Sengeh that reaffirmed the commitments presented in the Ministerial

² The full discussion and decision on the operating model is set out under Day 1.

Aide Memoire. In particular, and in view of the profound impact of COVID -19 on education systems and the tremendous challenges faced by countries, the need for the Board to consider sources of additional financing, promoting countries' ownership and reducing transactions costs.

- Overall, the Board supported the innovative financing proposals that complement GPE's instruments presented by the Secretariat, with the view of strengthening responsiveness to country needs and ensuring that no one is left behind.
- A few Board members expressed that GPE should focus more on the options that have more promising outcomes, as the Finance and Risk Committee suggested. Others noted the risks of increased transaction costs and human resources costs associated with the various proposals. The Secretariat noted that the impact and traumatic shocks of COVID-19 require more innovative finance approaches to help DCPs tackle the scale of the challenge at the country level.
- **Impact Bonds.** Some Board members raised concerns regarding the Impact Bonds option considering that it could create inequality and expressed that it was too early to establish formal partnerships that could generate reputational risks for GPE. The Secretariat noted that Impact Bond arrangements would only be pursued in those cases where DCPs requested it, and subject to full compliance with all applicable GPE policies and quality assurance standards. The Board amended the decision language to remove references to any formal partnerships, and encouraged the Secretariat to identify demand from DCPs and present the operational details for any Impact Bond modalities involving GPE funds for FRC consideration and recommendation to the Board.

9.3 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-06 Innovative Finance. The Board of Directors, considering that GPE should focus on the most promising tools:

1. Approves the approach to facilitate debt forgiveness for education as set out in Annex 1 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 08
2. Approves the approach to matching funds for the Multiplier and Gender Education Window to incentivize contributions from the business community and private foundations as set out in Annex 2 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 08.
3. Notes the potential interest for enhanced convening as set out in Annex 3 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 08 and requests the Secretariat to outline the necessary resources to pilot the initiative in up to 3 countries in FY22 (July 1 2021 – June 30 2022).

4. Notes the potential for frontloading Multiplier resources and authorizes the Secretariat to develop the proposed operational details in accordance with the parameters set out in Annex 4 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 08 for consideration by the Finance and Risk Committee and recommendation to the Board in 2021.
5. Notes that GPE funds could be used as part of an impact bond modality as described in Annex 5 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 08 provided such arrangements would fully comply with the GPE operating model and all applicable and proposed safeguards. Encourages the Secretariat to identify demand from eligible Developing Country Partners in order to present operational details for consideration by the Finance and Risk Committee and recommendation to the Board in FY22.

Contributions and Safeguard Policy

9.4 The Secretariat proposed decision language that outlines the proposed modifications to the Contributions and Safeguard Policy (CSP) necessary to operationalize the approach to financing and funding GPE 2025. The Secretariat noted that the proposed amendments to the policy had benefitted from suggested improvements from the FRC which were incorporated.

9.5 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-07 Contributions and Safeguards Policy. The Board of Directors:

1. Approves the relevant changes proposed in Annex 1 of BOD/2020/11/12-09 to the Contributions and Safeguards Policy and requests the Secretariat to update the provisions of the policy and assessment template accordingly.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (BOD/2020/11-12 DOC 10)

10.1 Nidhi Khattri, Lead Evaluation Officer, presented the Monitoring, Evaluating and Learning Framework for immediate Board consideration, as set out in DOC 10.

Discussion

- The Board expressed broad support for the proposal regarding the framework presented by the Secretariat.
- Some Board members welcomed the approach of countries at the driving seat of the process and having gender and disability indicators, but they requested more intersection with inclusion.
- Several Board members raised the need to strengthen the capacity at the country level through the System Capacity Grant, especially if the Secretariat will request high standards for data, evidence, and learning.

- DCPs introduced the need to have a baseline post-COVID-19 reflecting the shock of the impact, while CSOs presented several indicators for consideration by the Secretariat as it moves forward with the work
- The Secretariat expressed that work will be done during the next month with the Strategy and Impact Committee to accommodate these requests. It confirmed that DCPs would be supported to strengthen their systems through the Operating Model.

10.2 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-08 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework: Based on the approval of the strategic plan included in Annex 1 of BOD/2020/09 DOC 03 and in order to support GPE's strategic direction of becoming a learning partnership, the Board approves the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and requests the Secretariat to begin the work outlined in section 7 of BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 10.

11. Strategic Plan Narrative (BOD/2020/11-12 DOC 11)

11.1 The Chair recalled that the Board had agreed on the vision, mission, goals and objectives in June, and had agreed the overall outline in September, highlighting some areas for further emphasis and requesting the Secretariat present a final draft in December. The narrative presented for final Board approval would need further revision to reflect discussions during the present meeting. She noted that the recommendation to delegate the finalization of the strategy to the Chair and CEO is consistent with the previous strategic planning process.

Discussion

11.2 Board members strongly supported the narrative, citing the focus on a country-led model, reduction of transaction costs, thematic areas, including gender, teacher training and retention, GPE's comparative advantage, and searching for opportunities to invest across sectors.

11.3 Suggestions from Board members to strengthen the narrative included:

- **Holistic sectoral approach.** Include reference to protection, psychosocial, sexual reproductive health and rights and support, and prevention and response to gender-based violence as working. These components can be considered transformative as they can incentivize behavioral change and new ways of working by DCP staff and partners organizations.
- **Safe learning spaces.** Several Board members welcomed the references to safe learning spaces and encouraged stronger language on GPE prioritizing ending violence in schools, including linkages with other sectors, as a prerequisite for achieving transformative education systems.

- **Gender equality.** Articulate fully GPE prioritization of gender equality, including an action plan as an annex that sets out clear objectives for work on gender equality and inclusion, expected results and activities.
- **Resilience.** Clarify in the discussion of the COVID-19 crisis the need to contribute to the resilience of education systems and reference increased migration, refugees, internally displaced persons, and conflict crisis.
- **GPE Role.** Emphasize more GPE's role and unique position in the global education architecture.
- **Right to education.** Include a firm focus on human rights within the context of education whereas the results framework should focus on indicators that are most strategic and that can provide information on results.

11.4 The Board Chair declared consensus on the following decision:

BOD/2020/11/12-09-Strategic Plan: The Board of Directors:

1. Approves the GPE 2025 strategic plan as set out in BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 11
2. Requests the Chair and CEO to finalize the strategy narrative informed by the feedback received and decisions made at the November 30 – December 3, 2020 Board meeting.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 The Board Chair announced that Julie Cram and Marjeta Jager would be leaving the Board and thanked them for their invaluable contributions.

12.2 There was no other item for discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00am by the Vice Chair due to technical difficulties on the part of the Chair.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Name	Constituency	Role
Board Members		
Elyas Abdi Jillaow	Africa 1	BM
Tumisang Thabela (in lieu)	Africa 1	ABM
Marie Michelle Sahondrarimalala	Africa 2	BM
Awut Deng Acuil	Africa 3	BM
David Moinina Sengeh	Africa 3	ABM
Gopi Nath Mainali	Asia and Pacific	ABM
Attaullah Wahidyar (in lieu)	EEMECA	BM
Usman Sharifxodjayev	EEMECA	ABM
Luis Hernandez Cruz	LAC	BM
Didacus Jules	LAC	ABM
Donatienne Hissard	Donor 1	BM
Sabina Handschin	Donor 1	ABM
Per Magnusson (in lieu)	Donor 2	BM
Line Baagø-Rasmussen	Donor 2	ABM
Alicia Herbert	Donor 3	BM
Louise Holt	Donor 3	ABM
Camilla Fossberg	Donor 4	BM
Rashed Mohamed Awadh Al Hemeiri	Donor 4	ABM
Marjeta Jager	Donor 5	BM
Ingolf Dietrich (in lieu)	Donor 5	ABM
Daniel Braun (in lieu)	Donor 5	ABM
Julie Cram	Donor 6	BM
Sarah Lendon	Donor 6	ABM
Kira Boe	CSO 1	BM
Yona Nestel	CSO 1	ABM
Laura Gianneccchini	CSO 2	BM
Helen Dabu	CSO 2	ABM
Gifty Apanbil	CSO 3	BM
Haldis Holst	CSO 3	ABM
David Boutcher	Private Sector	BM
Emily Friedman	Private Sector	ABM
Randa Grob-Zakhary	Private Foundations	BM
Imad Sabi	Private Foundations	ABM
Stefania Giannini	MLA 1	BM

Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa	MLA 1	ABM
Robert Jenkins	MLA 2	BM
Mamadou Balde	MLA 2	ABM
Luis Benveniste	MLA 3	BM
Amadou Thierno Diallo	MLA 3	ABM
Jawara Gaye (in lieu)	MLA 3	ABM

Board and Committee Chairs

Julia Gillard	Board	Chair
Serigne Mbaye Thiam	Board	Vice Chair
Frédéric Depetris	FRC	Chair
Nesmy Manigat	GEC	Chair
David Archer	SIC	Chair
Sally Gear	GPC	Chair

Annex 2:

Proposals to strengthen the gender equality hardwiring approach throughout GPE's 2021–2025 strategy

Note for the GPE Partnership in advance of the 2020 December board meeting

Dear GPE partnership,

We are very pleased to see the broad interest in and efforts to secure gender equality in GPE and hope that this note can contribute to achieving this. The note is intended as a constructive contribution with concrete examples as to how the hardwiring of gender equality can be secured throughout GPEs model.

An overarching principle, through which the note should be read, is that which recommendations are implemented and how will also rely on input from Developing Country Partners.

Executive summary of recommendations for the GPE board and secretariat to consider

- 1. Run a simulation on including a gender equality index for primary and lower secondary school completion in the needs-based allocation formula**
- 2. Use the 'Compact' as a key route through which gender equality is hardwired**
- 3. Make available/mobilise the system capacity grant to support capacity strengthening of Ministries of Education to take on the gender equality agenda**
- 4. Support LEGs to prioritise gender equality as part of Joint Sector Reviews**
- 5. Ensure progress on gender equality is tracked through key performance indicators contextualized to the country context**
- 6. Ensure a strong learning agenda on with the thematic window as part of the MEL strategy**
- 7. Secure an early evaluation of the thematic window**
- 8. Ensure that the hardwiring is directly linked to the gender equality thematic top up grant, and the thematic window does not become a separate 'gender equality component'**
- 9. Give further consideration to the eligibility/targeting criteria, to ensure this will direct funds towards greatest need**
- 10. Draw on social and behavioural science to inform the approach to 'hardwiring' of gender equality and address social and gender norms**

Each of the above recommendations are further elaborated on in the below with concrete suggestions as to how to implement and operationalize them in GPEs model.

Suggested key actions for the Secretariat and Board:

- **Change decision language to commit to hardwiring gender equality throughout GPEs model and use the window as a means to strengthen the already hardwired priorities**
- **Consider the recommendations proposed in this note**
- **Secretariat to add note and suggested recommendations as an annex to the GPE Strategic Narrative**
- **Secretariat to report back on considerations and next steps at forthcoming board meeting**

Overall principle:

We find that hardwiring is a pre-condition for the thematic window to support gender equality efforts and believe it is critical to recognise that the big wins are achieved through leveraging large investments in education at national level. In other words, gender equality should be promoted and included throughout all of GPEs operations, not just the thematic window. This is in particular considering that the largest gender equality funding would come through the System Transformation Grants. We would want to encourage ambitious approaches for gender equality in the *core work* of GPEs partners, and avoid that a result of the dual approach ('hardwiring' + 'gender equality funding window') would result in smaller, targeted interventions through the gender equality thematic window.

On this basis, we would like to focus efforts on the hardwiring of gender equality in GPE and use the window as a means to strengthen the already hardwired priorities.

In order to strengthen the hardwiring component we suggest the following:

Recommendation on the needs- based formula:

1. **We would like to ask the Secretariat to run a simulation on including a gender equality index for primary and lower secondary completion in the needs-based allocation formula.** We note that the Secretariat's current position is not to specifically include gender disparities in the allocation formula 'for valid technical reasons (see BOD/2020/11/12 DOC 06 Annex 1)' and we would like to receive more information on this. We believe including gender equality explicitly in the allocation formula would send a clear message on the importance of the issue and that all GPE grant funds should be contributing to address gender equality imbalances. Since the formula represents the need of a given country for education, differences in needs between boys and girls should be considered. We would not envision that the simulation alters minimum allocations to countries, and we suggest that the simulation is used to inform whether a gender equality index for primary and lower

secondary completion, as part of the needs-based formula, would have the intended effect of directing funding where it is needed or would have perverse effects and/or impacting allocated amounts to countries in need.

Recommendations for integrating gender equality in education sector planning:

2. **The ‘Compact’ identifies priority areas on which a country will focus. This makes it a key route through which gender equality should be hardwired.** Recognizing that the work on the compact should be streamlined, we suggest a high-quality gender equality analysis should be required as part of the diagnostics to inform the Compact. We would also advise that the concept of intersectionality (for example between gender and poverty/conflict/disabilities/refugee and IDP backgrounds) is included in the diagnostics approach to ensure that all priorities translating into policies and implementation are planned and implemented in a way that effectively addresses gender inequalities and multiple discrimination. Here we in particular call for attention to intersectionality with respect to reaching the most vulnerable girls. We would like to understand how the Secretariat will ensure this is done to a high standard, that the analysis adequately informs country level education sector plans and that prioritized actions are implemented.

Recommendations for gender capacity enhancement:

3. **Capacity strengthening** is a key pre-requisite to enable partners to address the complexity of issues that enabling gender equality entails. We suggest to **make available/mobilise the system capacity grant** to support capacity strengthening of Ministries of Education to take on the gender equality agenda including skills and competencies to make the necessary changes in policy and practice.
4. **Additionally we suggest to support LEGs to prioritise gender equality as part of Joint Sector Reviews.** We propose that GPE considers an increased role for civil society organizations in undertaking gender analysis, contributing to gender-responsive or gender transformative education system planning and monitoring/accountability during implementation, through their inclusion in the Local Education Group and via additional EOL funding for this purpose. This could include explicitly giving marginalized girls a voice in these processes.

Recommendation relating to monitoring and learning

5. **Ensure progress on gender equality is tracked through key performance indicators contextualized to the country context** at grant and/or country level. This would include process and results indicators at different points in time, with process indicators utilized earlier in the grant cycle. We would also much welcome to see some of the results on gender equality in the COVID-19 response grants. All the key results indicators must be sex-disaggregated, monitored and reported in the Results Report annually.
6. **Ensure a strong learning agenda on with the thematic window as part of the MEL strategy.** This approach provides an opportunity to learn about what works when integrating gender equality interventions within wider systems strengthening programmes. GPE has an opportunity to provide a global public good in terms of evidence on this, with important links to KIX as a regional and global platform for learning and evidence dissemination.
7. **Secure an early evaluation of the thematic window** to understand its impact and whether the window is incentivizing additional ambition and results on gender equality or falling into the risk of disincentivizing wider ambitions on this agenda.

Recommendation relating to disbursements

8. **To ensure that the hardwiring is directly linked to the gender equality thematic top up grant, and the thematic window does not become a separate 'gender equality component',** we recommend that the gender equality thematic top up can only be unlocked if the prioritized issues in the countries' education sector plans address gender inequalities within education systems and the empowerment of women and girls in and through education. This will ensure that each country commits to addressing context specific gender equality issues. Part of the criteria for receipt of the thematic grant could also be linked to the capacity strengthening component and quality of gender-responsive or gender transformative plans already developed by the Government/LEG, and/or willingness to develop or improve such, to be funded through domestic resources or the core GPE grant.
9. **Further consideration should be given to the eligibility/targeting criteria, to ensure this will direct funds towards greatest need, specifically:**
 - a. **Ensuring the most appropriate sex-disaggregated indicators on access and learning (if available) are used.** We particularly encourage going beyond enrollment, to look at completion rates in primary and lower secondary. Furthermore, while recognising that sex-disaggregated data is lacking on

other aspects of learning/quality education outcomes i.e. SEL, MHPSS, we encourage GPE to consider funding this type of data collection as part of GPE funded programming to better inform monitoring of access and learning.

- b. We wonder if *quantitative* data on child marriage rates *alone* are the best way to assess the social norms and behaviors that lead to gender disparities and inequality in the education sector across all countries. Child marriages certainly are a key driver in many countries and reliable data is available in a large proportion of GPE eligible countries. On this basis, **we should look at child marriage rates where available. In addition, we suggest to focus on a broader range of data, including qualitative data from the gender-based analysis and the role of discriminatory practices and laws, including gender-based violence in education settings.** This will be important especially when there is no reliable or recent information on child marriage rates.

Recommendations relating to operationalizing the hardwiring principle and placing GPE at the forefront promoting gender equality in and through education

10. **Linked to point 7a) and 7b) above; we recommend that the GPE partnership draws on social and behavioural science to inform the approach to ‘hardwiring’.**

Mainstreaming of any issue requires changes in the behaviour by people across organisations. It should not be assumed that people will change their behaviours based on provision of new information or increased availability of guidance. GPE could utilise social and behaviour change models and techniques to incentivise new ways of working by GPE staff and partner organisations. There is increasingly available research on **social and gender norms** in many contexts, including local or sub-national level data, and increased focus on developing evidence-based social and behavior change interventions that address these. COVID-19 has further underlined the need for integrated interventions across education, health, protection in particular to ensure and protect the rights of women and girls. The education sector has a key role to play with respect not only to ensure that girls *access* education, but also that education *promotes and ensures* gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment i.e. through curriculum, teaching methods, SEL, citizenship education, CSE, SRHR, and prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and violence in schools. We would like to suggest that GPE adopts an approach that promotes gender equality in and through education and hereby places itself at the forefront as an organization that contributes actively to a more gender equal world.

This can be supported by:

- including research and data on social and gender norms in the proposed GPE gender analysis as part of the Compact (point 2)
- mobilizing the KIX and EOL programmes to provide technical support to countries on data collection on social and gender norms to build an enabling environment
- Addressing identified challenges relating social and gender norms through integrating a gender responsive or transformative approach in education sector plans. The programming and interventions should be adapted to the specific context, consider the whole of the socio-ecological framework, and draw on social and behavior change theory. Additionally, the programme development should consider the role of other sectors including protection, health, and WASH in achieving gender equality outcomes. The component on addressing social and gender norms should go hand in hand with the capacity strengthening suggested in points 3 and 4 to ensure that countries have the needed technical support to implement and monitor outcomes
- Ensuring that there are clear accountability mechanisms for gender equality in place at all levels of the GPE governance structure, including Committees and the Board. In addition, the accountability mechanisms should be put in place to track commitments made to increase gender equality in education.

Requests for further information on the Thematic Funding Window

11. **We are wondering when countries will be able to apply** for the Thematic Funding Window and whether there will be a deadline to apply by. We would like to avoid for countries to receive funds from the Thematic Funding Window on the basis of first-come first-serve and countries who apply late but with arguably more need to miss out.
12. We would like to receive information on **who will assess** which countries will receive funds out of the Thematic Funding Window.

Signatories to the note:

Donor 1: Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland

Donor 2: Denmark, Sweden

Donor 3: Canada, United Kingdom

Donor 4: Finland, Ireland, Norway, United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Donor 5: European Commission, Germany, Italy, Spain

Australia

CSO1: Oxfam Ibis and Plan International

CSO2: Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE), Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)

CSO3: Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and Education International

Private Foundations: Insights for Education and Open Society Foundations

MLA1: UNESCO

MLA2: UNICEF and UNHCR

MLA3: World Bank and Islamic Development Bank