



International
Parliamentary
Network for
Education

Protect and prioritize financing for education A briefing for developing country MPs

In July the international community will come together in London for the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021 – 2025.

The Summit seeks to galvanize action on two fronts:

1. Protect domestic finance for education and increase spending towards the 20% of total public expenditure global benchmark or beyond.
2. Raise \$5 billion for the Global Partnership for Education, which it will use to help transform education systems in up to 90 countries and territories, where 80% of the world's out-of-school children live.

This briefing focuses on the first of these two objectives and sets out what members of parliament can do to encourage their government to prioritize, protect and increase financing for education.

Progress at a crossroads

In the past two decades, the world has made major progress in delivering quality education to all girls and boys. Millions more children are attending school and the gender gap is narrowing, especially at the primary level.

But there is much unfinished business. In lower-income countries hundreds of millions of girls and boys are in classrooms but not learning even basic reading skills by the time they leave primary school.

Over a quarter of a billion children are still completely excluded from education.

Confronted with young and growing populations, fragility, high poverty rates and deepening inequalities—and now confronted with the social and economic impacts of COVID-19—governments in lower-income countries need both urgent support and to prioritize, protect and grow the domestic resources they allocate to education.

Political support for education financing

When the world promised to deliver a quality education for all of the world's children as set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4 it recognised that doing so would require a step change in the volume and quality of funding for education.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action subsequently set out financing benchmarks that committed governments to spending at least 4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of total budgets on education, and recognised domestic resourcing as the most important way of funding education.

In order to address issues of quality and equity in education, the Framework also recognised a need for greater efficiency, better targeted spending and increased accountability.

Public finances under unprecedented pressure

Even prior to the pandemic, domestic financing faced major equity and efficiency challenges, whilst more than a quarter of countries failed to meet either of the global benchmarks. The economic impact of COVID is now straining national economies and budgets even more so, risking decades of education progress.

According to an analysis conducted by UNESCO, two-thirds of countries have cut education budgets after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 65 percent of low- and lower-middle-income countries compared to only 33 percent of high- and upper-middle-income countries, despite the additional costs of reopening schools safely.

The education financing gap, which is a primary driver of children's inability to access education, could now rise by up to one-third, unless there is urgent investment to get children back in school and learning.

An opportunity to build political commitment for education financing

The Global Partnership for Education's fourth financing campaign poses an unprecedented opportunity for governments around the world, both donor and developing, to recommit to prioritizing, protecting and increasing financing for education.

Under the political leadership of President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, GPE is asking partner countries to make political commitments to:

- Protect domestic finance to education to pre-COVID levels
- Increase education budgets towards the 20% global benchmark or beyond
- Commit to policy areas, including equity and efficiency

In advance of the Education Summit, members of parliament have a vital role to play in encouraging their government to prioritize education.

There are two ways for governments to demonstrate their commitment which members of parliament can help achieve.

1. Support the Head of State Call to Action on Education Financing

President Kenyatta of Kenya, who is co-hosting the Education Summit with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, has written to heads of state or government in all of GPE's partner countries inviting them to endorse the Call to Action on Education Financing which he authored.

The Call to Action:

- Recognises education as central to the achievement of sustainable development and the challenges countries currently face in securing a quality education for all children.
- Calls on development partners to increase their support for education.
- Commits countries which have spent more than 20% of their annual expenditure on education to continue to lead by example and protect this level of investment by maintaining education budgets at this level.
- Commits countries which have previously spent below 20% of their annual expenditure on education to progressively increase their funding over the next 5 years towards the 20% threshold.
- Commits countries to focus on the marginalised, especially girls; to improve learning outcomes and to spend their funding as efficiently as possible.

Encouraging your Head of State or Government to endorse the Call to Action in advance of the Education Summit will help to super charge this recommitment to more and better national financing for education.

As a member of parliament you can help by:

- Writing to your head of state of government asking them endorse the Call to Action. You could do this as an individual or with other members of parliament, including from other parties, to demonstrate the extent of support for the issues in the Call to Action.
- Asking a question or moving a motion in parliament, encouraging your government to endorse the Call to Action.

2. Ensure your government makes a pledge at the Education Summit

All of the Global Partnership for Education's partner countries have been invited to share their commitment to national financing for education at the Education Summit.

Ministers of Education have been written to by GPE's Chief Executive Officer, Alice Albright and have been asked to make a pledge which:

- Demonstrates how their country will either maintain levels of education expenditure at pre COVID levels, or work to increase levels of expenditure towards the 20% global benchmark;
- Highlights additional policy commitments on significant reforms to improve the equity and/or efficiency of public finance for education.

Once again, encouraging your Minister for Education to make this pledge will be vital in securing as many quality pledges as possible.

As a member of parliament you can help by:

- Asking your Minister for Education, either in writing or in parliament, whether they are preparing a pledge, whether they will be consulting on the pledge and how they will be monitoring it and reporting on it, including to Parliament.
- Asking your government to commit to regularly collecting and publishing data on education expenditure as well as reporting on the equity and efficiency of expenditure

The final commitment should be submitted to GPE by July 9 to Ms. Victoria Egbetayo at email vegbetayo@globalpartnership.org who can also answer questions relating to the pledging process.

Growing political leadership for education

Thank you for your leadership to transform education in your country, including through your commitment to increasing the volume and quality of domestic funding for education.

This is a critical time for education as the impact of the COVID pandemic on education systems and the pressure on public finances has put future progress at risk.

The [Education Summit in London](#) is an opportunity to minimise those risks and commit to grow national resources for education and to fully fund the Global Partnership for Education's next operating period with at least \$5 billion of funding.

As a member of parliament you have a vital role to play in supporting this effort.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT GPE

Which countries does GPE support?

GPE works in the countries with the greatest need, focusing its support on low-income countries that have the highest rates of out-of-school children and the lowest levels of learning but lack the resources to sustainably build their education systems. In 2019, 76% of GPE funding went to countries [affected by conflict and fragility](#) in 2019.

[90 countries and territories](#) are eligible for GPE support. Countries join the partnership after developing a comprehensive education sector plan, endorsed by their partners. To receive GPE's large-scale grants, governments must commit significant increases in domestic funding to education.

What has been achieved in GPE partner countries?

Since GPE was established, [160 million more children](#), more than half of them girls, are in school in GPE partner countries. The Partnership has also:

- Increased primary enrolment for girls by 65 percent.
- Supported almost three quarters of partner countries to achieve gender parity in school completion rates.
- Reached 67 million more children with quality teachers.
- Enabled governments to save US\$6 billion through more efficient education spending, making resources go further.

How does GPE support governments to transform education?

To create lasting change, GPE focuses on improving education at a systems level to leverage the profound transformations required to deliver 12 years of quality education, including one year of pre-primary education by:

Building stronger, more effective education systems: GPE helps countries develop effective education plans, establish robust data and monitoring systems, and identify solutions to pressing problems in order to improve teaching and boost learning for the most marginalized students, as well as providing essential financing to enable governments to pursue reforms.

Improving the volume, equity and efficiency of domestic resources: GPE focuses on leveraging more and better domestic financing as the most significant and sustainable form of funding for education. The Partnership creates incentives for partner countries to develop financially sustainable education sector plans, increase national budget allocations and improve the equity and efficiency of education expenditure. By monitoring domestic financing through an equity lens, GPE also supports governments to ensure education spending reaches the most marginalized and address inefficiency enabling them to invest more in schools and learning.

How does GPE support the education of girls' and other marginalized groups?

GPE has a strong track record of helping partner governments eradicate the barriers that prevent girls and other marginalized groups from getting a quality education and realizing their full potential.

Increased equity, gender equality and inclusion in access to education are fundamental to GPE's mission, with all GPE partner countries embedding equity and inclusion principles in their national education plans to ensure that all children can enjoy their basic human rights.

By putting gender equality at the heart of education systems, GPE helps countries to identify and address the specific obstacles faced by girls and boys in achieving education, close gender gaps, and enable countries where girls lag furthest behind to make bigger strides.

The solutions that GPE help implement drives significant progress for the most marginalized children, enabling an additional 82 million girls to enrol in school, including 39 million girls who are living through crises and conflict.

How has GPE responded to the COVID-19 pandemic?

From the onset of the pandemic, GPE mobilized its most rapid and largest-ever emergency response to support partner countries deliver continued learning, ensure the safe reopening of schools and strengthen the resilience of education systems to respond to future crisis.

As the largest provider of education grants in the global COVID-19 response, GPE provided more than half a billion U.S. dollars to partner countries to help sustain learning for up to 355 million children in the poorest countries, with a sharp focus on those hardest hit by school closures, including girls, children with disabilities and children from the poorest families.

Further information

The International Parliamentary Network for Education is working with parliamentarians across the world on the vital task of protecting and growing financing for education, including by convening MPs regionally and globally to learn, share best practice and agree on joint and individual actions to build political support for protecting and growing financing for education.

We are supporting MPs to advocate to national authorities and the international community to help protect and grow education financing by:

1. Strengthening domestic revenue mobilization and increasing the share of expenditure for education.
2. Protecting and increasing overseas development assistance for education.
3. Strengthening international coordination to address the debt crisis.

We are also advocating for governments and donors to prioritise equity and inclusion in their education budgets, and target public resources to the children and countries that are furthest behind.

To view all of our resources for MPs on education financing please visit www.ipned.org/financing, where we will be uploading standalone briefings on each part of IPNEd's three-point plan for protecting education financing.

Education financing is one of the many issues the Network works on. For more information or any questions about the Network, including our work on education financing, please contact: Oliver Mawhinney - oliver.mawhinney@ipned.org

To become part of IPNEd's global network of parliamentary champions for education please email the address above or visit www.ipned.org/join-the-network

