

The Global Partnership for Education¹: forging a stronger partnership between the health and education sectors to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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1. The goal of the [Global Partnership for Education \(GPE\)](#) is to dramatically increase the number of children in developing countries who are in school and are learning. It is the only global fund solely dedicated to education in developing countries, and seeks to build partnership around a single point-of-entry in support of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of educating all the world's children by 2030.

2. In February this year, the unprecedented success of the [GPE Financing Conference in Dakar, Senegal](#), signalled a new phase of global political support for education. This conference, the first of its kind to be co-hosted by a G7 leader, President Emmanuel Macron of France, and the leader of a developing country, President Macky Sall of Senegal, attracted more than 10 heads of state, 1,200 participants and 100 government ministers. Over 50 developing countries announced an increase of their domestic financing for education to a total of US\$110 billion (2018-2020), up from US\$80 billion in the previous triennium, while initial donor commitments to GPE rose to US\$2.3 billion (2018-2020), up from US\$1.3 billion over the previous three years. For a sector that has seen its financing share in global aid steadily decline since 2010, this is a remarkable outcome. But large funding gaps remain and it is now critical that financial investments follow the renewed political commitment to education that GPE was able to garner in Dakar.

3. In an aid-constrained environment this step up in resources provides an exceptional opportunity to make a difference, and holds us all to a higher standard to find new ways of leveraging opportunities to deliver impact. As GPE evolves its strategy towards 2030 there has been increasing focus on human capital development, and on recognizing that from a development perspective the education and health of children are two sides of the same coin. In 2016, GPE launched a \$3 million program with the World Bank, bringing together representatives from Ministries of Education and Health from GPE countries in Africa and Asia, to explore the synergies between learning and good health for school age girls and boys.² In the same year, the report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, led by Gordon Brown, listed health interventions as key to optimize learning outcomes.³ The more recent World Bank World Development Report 2018, *Learning to Realize Education's Promise*,⁴ also highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration between the health and education sectors to accelerate human capital development

¹ The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform that mobilizes global and national support for education in developing countries, focusing on the most vulnerable children and youth. GPE helps developing country governments improve equity and learning by strengthening their education systems.

² Global Partnership for Education. Press release, June 16, 2016, "World Bank, GPE and Civil Society Partner to Improve Education through School Health Initiatives." GPE, Washington, DC. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/news-and-media/news/world-bank-gpe-and-civil-society-partner-improve-education-through-school-health-initiatives>

³ International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity. Published report, 2016. "The Learning Generation: Investing in Education for a Changing World." New York. <http://report.educationcommission.org>.

⁴ World Bank. World Development Report, 2018. *Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>.

4. These changes in education sector perspective have been mirrored by the health sector. GPE has pioneered a systems-strengthening approach to education sector planning and implementation, policy dialogue and financing, which the global health funds have since championed. In 2016 the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing published its report,⁵ pointing out the centrality of secondary education as a social support for adolescents, especially girls, and as a point of entry for appropriate health services.

5. All these analyses conclude that there are currently under-exploited yet powerful opportunities for synergy between the education and health sectors. On the one hand education promotes health: educated girls and young women are usually healthier than girls who have not been able to go to school - and they raise healthier children, who are likely to survive past the age of 5; the increases in girls' education between 1970 and 2010 likely account for 14% of the reduction in child mortality in that period, and some 30% of the reduction in adult mortality for both women and men.⁶ On the other hand, good health promotes school attendance and participation, especially for girls, and learning while in school. Investing more in areas like comprehensive sexuality education, reproductive health knowledge and related services, and girl-friendly sanitary facilities, and other community-led initiatives support enrolment and retention as well as improving health and wellbeing.⁷ This opens new opportunities for collaboration and to leverage the scarce resources across both sectors.

6. GPE has adopted as its vision the new [SDG Global Goal for education](#) to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. GPE's strategic plan for 2016-2020, [GPE 2020](#), turns this vision into actionable goals and objectives, hard-wired to the results framework which is the main tool to track progress and hold all members of the partnership to account.⁸ GPE's [Gender Equality Policy and Strategy](#) explicitly highlights cross-sectoral collaboration as critical to achieving gender equality in and through education. GPE recognizes the importance of the health sector for these efforts, and has sought to strengthen education sector understanding of these issues by co-publishing with Disease Control Priorities and the World Bank, an education sector version of Volume 8 of DCP3 under the title, *Optimizing Education Outcomes: High-Return Investments in School Health for Increased Participation and Learning*.⁹ As the former Prime Minister of Australia and GPE Board Chair, Julia Gillard, says in her preface to the education version of Volume 8 "The time is right to work together, across sectors, in a collaborative effort to ensure all girls and boys are healthy and able to complete a free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education." Now, as GPE looks forward to intensifying our discussion and joint efforts with the health sector towards achieving SDG3 and SDG4, perhaps an education sector task force of the Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing would provide a timely and valuable point of entry for that discussion?

⁵ Lancet Commission on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing. Commission Report, 2016. "Our Future," Volume 387 (Number 10036) London, UK, June 11, 2016.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Donald A.P. Bundy, Nilanthi de Silva, Susan Horton, George C Patton, Linda Schultz, Dean T. Jamison, for the DCP3 Child and Adolescent Health Authors Group. "Investment in Child and Adolescent Health and Development: Key Messages from Disease Control Priorities, 3rd Edition," in www.thelancet.com, published online November 16, 2017. [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)32417-0/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)32417-0/abstract).

⁸ GPE, *GPE Strategic Plan 2016-2020*, 2016. Washington, DC. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/strategic-plan-glance-2016-2020>

⁹ Bundy, D. A. P., N. de Silva, S. Horton, D. T. Jamison, and G. C. Patton, 2018. *Optimizing Education Outcomes: High-Return Investments in School Health for Increased Participation and Learning*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

7. The Millennium Development Goals have, to an unexpectedly large extent, been achieved. These major goals were all about the foundation years for children's education and health. It is entirely appropriate that the Sustainable Development Goals for both sectors now aim to build on those foundations:

- addressing education quality for all grades in education
- ensuring that health systems provide universal health care, including school children and adolescents.

Strikingly, this time around, the major targets of the sector goals overlap, and target the same age-groups and populations: children and adolescents.

8. As the SDG agenda gathers momentum we have an extraordinary opportunity for education and health to work together - a chance to leverage both sectors' investments, skills and ideas, and, through collaboration, to dramatically move the needle on the human capital development essential for a sustainable future.