



The UK's investment in the Global Partnership for Education

In 2021 the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will seek to raise at least \$5bn to turn the tide on the global education emergency. The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to contribute £600m over the five year replenishment to ensure that GPE can support the delivery of quality, equitable learning for the world's most marginalised children.

1. The Education Emergency

Education is in crisis. In April 2020, to stem the Coronavirus pandemic, schools closed to over 1.6 billion learners globally.¹ This has placed the futures of the world's most marginalised children in jeopardy. A quality education is fundamental to children's safety, their hopes and their ability to reach their potential. However, millions of children now stand to never return to school by the time the pandemic has passed, including up to 20 million girls.²

We are witnessing unprecedented interruptions to learning, compounding the already dire progress on Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4). Despite the global commitment to guaranteeing a quality education for every child, poverty, conflict, climate change, violence and discrimination all continue to exclude children from school and disrupt their learning. Even before COVID-19, one in five children and young people were entirely

excluded from education: almost a quarter of a billion children, including 130 million girls.³ Further, between one quarter and one half of children with disabilities are estimated to be out of school, representing up to one third of out of school children.⁴

However, interruptions to education are not limited to those out-of-school. Even when children are in school, they are not learning: in 2019, the World Bank estimated that 53% of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a simple story by the end of primary school.⁵ There are also significant inequalities, with children with disabilities on average 19% less likely to achieve minimum proficiency in reading than those without disabilities.⁶ If children cannot read then global education goals cannot be attained, undermining the entire sustainable development platform.

>> School closures enforced by COVID-19 have exacerbated the learning crisis for all children, particularly for the most marginalised: Save the Children found that four out of five children felt they were learning little or nothing while out of school with girls, displaced children, and those living in low-income households most likely to report learning nothing at all.⁷ The economic impact of this lost learning cannot be overstated, with the World Bank predicting a \$872 reduction in annual earnings for today's primary- and secondary-aged children, totaling a long-term economic loss of up to \$10 trillion.⁸

As a result, children are facing generation-defining disruptions to their learning and with just nine years to meet SDG4, UNESCO's prediction that next to zero progress will be made on reducing the number of out-of-school children between now and 2030 is a hammer blow to the hopes of children around the world.⁹

A significant driver of the poor progress on reducing the number of out of school children and poor learning outcomes is the downward trend in aid to education.¹⁰ Globally, aid to education has been stagnant since 2010 and has often been poorly targeted, failing to reach the most in need countries.¹¹ In 2015, low- and lower middle-income countries were estimated to face an annual financing gap of \$39bn over 2015-2030. Since 2015, the annual financing gap to education has inescapably increased. Dire progress means the gap now stands at \$148bn a year.¹² Additional costs due to COVID-19 mean that this could rise even further - by up to a third.

Investing in GPE

The stakes have never been higher. Facing high poverty rates, deepening inequalities and now dealing with the social and economic fallout of COVID-19, governments in the poorest countries need ambitious, strategic, and robust support to accelerate progress. **The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the world's largest education partnership and fund dedicated exclusively to quality education in lower-income countries, focuses on delivering such support.**

This year GPE is seeking a replenishment of at least \$5bn to support its work from 2021 to 2025. If the replenishment target is achieved, GPE will be able to help transform education systems in up to 90 countries and territories, which are home to over 1 billion school-aged children. Over the next five years, the partnership will help get 88 million more children – including 46 million more girls – in school, train 2.2 million teachers and, in the long-term, this would lift 18 million people out of poverty.¹³

The UK, alongside Kenya, will co-host this fourth GPE replenishment in what will be a major opportunity to demonstrate the UK's leadership on the global stage. The replenishment arrives with the UK having made clear its intentions to prioritise global education, committing in its manifesto to supporting 12 years of quality education for girls. The world will therefore be looking to the UK to set the benchmark for a financial pledge that reflects the seriousness of the education crisis.

There is no time for holding back, there will be no second chances: we must urgently act to turn the tide on the global education emergency. The Send My Friend to School coalition is therefore calling on the UK Government to pledge £600m to the replenishment in order to ensure that GPE can support the delivery of quality, equitable learning for the world's most marginalised children.



2. UK leadership & the Global Partnership for Education

GPE is both the largest global fund solely dedicated to education and a unique, multi-stakeholder partnership. By mobilising billions of dollars and convening hundreds of partners, GPE helps lower-income countries accelerate change so that every girl and boy can get the quality education they need to unlock their full potential and contribute to building a better world.

The UK Government has historically been a world leader in funding education. It has a strong track record in supporting GPE, and other global education funds. In the last replenishment cycle, the UK pledged £225m (\$320m), capped at 15% of total pledges.¹⁴ This was approximately 13% of the final share of pledges.¹⁵

In the 2021-25 replenishment, GPE is seeking to raise at least \$5bn, approximately £3.7bn at the time of writing. To deliver on its manifesto commitment of 12 years of quality education for all girls, and continue its commitment to the Fund, the UK must make an ambitious commitment to the five-year replenishment.

A UK pledge of £600m would represent approximately 16% of GPE's global target. Having contributed 13% of the share of pledges at the last replenishment, and 19% of total contributions to the Fund, £600m at 16% of the target would be a strong and exemplary pledge that reflects the UK's seminal role as co-host, sets a level of ambition that other donors should match, accounts for the UK's historic leadership, and would allow the Government to make headway on its manifesto priorities.

We know from the UK Government's early and strong pledge to Gavi, and its hosting of the highly successful Global Vaccine Summit, that UK leadership in announcing

an early and ambitious pledge is critical in encouraging other G7 and donor countries to step up their efforts.

Likewise, UK leadership is essential to achieving GPE's target of \$5 billion. The potential of a UK contribution of £600m, to transform lives and drive-up ambition in other markets, cannot be overstated. These funds would directly contribute to ensuring trained teachers serve marginalised communities, that inclusive schools are built where they are most needed and that children are armed with materials for 21st century learning.

The UK's £600m contribution to help transform education systems would:

- Build 13,000 classrooms
- Distribute 84 million textbooks
- And reach 9 million children with trained teachers

If the \$5bn target were achieved, a UK pledge of £600m would also significantly support the GPE fund to catalyse the following major outcomes by 2025:

- Enable 175 million children to learn
- Reach 140 million students with professionally trained teachers
- Get 88 million more children in school, including 46 million more girls
- Save \$16bn through more efficient education spending.¹⁶

Leading the global community to achieve these outcomes, with less than ten years left to achieve SDG4, would be a pillar of Global Britain and be central to delivering the UK's manifesto commitment.



3. Delivering on the UK Government's Manifesto Commitments

The UK Government has committed to delivering 12 years of quality education for all girls in the Conservative Manifesto, and the Prime Minister has made it his personal priority.¹⁷ The Secretary of State for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office restated this commitment in his Statement to the House following the 2021 Spending Review.¹⁸ When announcing the proposed cuts to the 0.7% commitment last year, which could put these commitments at jeopardy, the Government promised to protect funding for seven priority areas, including girls' education.

If it is to deliver on its promises, the Government must step up its own global education financing to fill the global funding gap, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Since 2015, the annual financing gap to education has increased, while UNESCO estimates that global aid to education is likely to further decrease by 12% from 2018 - 2022, due to the recession caused by the global pandemic.¹⁹ In a context of declining allocable aid to education, DAC members (and others) must step up with commitments to education ODA that reflect the severity of the education crisis.

With such a large financing gap, the Government was right to commit to "[doing] more to help countries receiving aid become self-sufficient".²⁰ ODA alone cannot make up the shortfall in education financing.

A commitment to leveraging billions more in domestic financing is therefore a crucial feature of GPE's model, recognising that more and better domestic financing is the most significant and sustainable form of funding for education.

GPE partner countries must commit to significant investments in education. On average, partner countries direct almost 20% of total government expenditure to education - in line with the UK Government's ambition to help countries receiving aid become self-sufficient.

Cementing the UK Government's leadership role in Girls' Education

GPE is in a unique position to support the UK Government in delivering its manifesto pledge: the UK Government has committed to the right of all girls to receive 12 years of quality education and since 2002, GPE has helped partner countries enroll an additional 82 million girls in school, including 39 million girls who are living through crises and conflict.²¹

Through its Girls Education Action Plan the UK Government has promised to tackle structural inequalities that keep girls from accessing a quality education. GPE's tailored approach supports accessible and safe schools, with partner countries hiring and promoting female teachers to serve as role models, and engaging communities through mass campaigns. GPE's new operational model will also have a renewed focus on secondary school so that every girl can access 12 years of quality education, including one year of pre-primary.²²

Recent Malala Fund research reveals that donors rarely allocate funding for girls' education to the countries in greatest need: only about 10% of total education ODA goes to the places where girls are facing the biggest barriers.²³ Using data from 2018, The Girls' Education Challenge Index shows that around 6% of UK education bilateral ODA went to those countries that have the greatest girls' education needs.²⁴

A strong pledge to GPE would increase UK Government funding in countries with the greatest need and help reach the most marginalised boys and girls. GPE focuses its support in low-income countries. More than 60% of GPE funding goes to countries affected by conflict and fragility that have some of the highest rates of out of school children and the lowest levels of learning.²⁵



>> Universal girls' education would help end child marriage, and drastically reduce early childbearing, overcoming some of the main drivers of gender inequality.²⁶ It would also more than halve infant mortality, contributing to the Conservative manifesto commitment of ending preventable deaths. Twelve years of quality education for every girl would boost economies by as much as \$30 trillion in increased lifetime earnings. Greater gender equality in education also decreases a country's likelihood of conflict by as much as 37 percent.²⁷ If fully funded, GPE could help ensure an additional 46 million girls enroll in school in partner countries and contribute to creating inclusive education systems fit for a more equal, peaceful and sustainable future.²⁸

With the world off-track to achieving SDG4, the COVID-19 pandemic has made the need to strengthen education systems in the face of health, conflict, or climate induced crises clear. GPE's focus on systems strengthening in partner countries will rapidly accelerate the UK's contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, including a more resilient and inclusive recovery from COVID-19. 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.

Leadership on disability inclusion

The UK Government has committed to becoming a global leader on disability inclusion and has demonstrated this commitment through the development of DFID's

ambitious Strategy for Disability Inclusive Development, the hosting of the Global Disability Summit, and through influencing other development actors to be more disability inclusive. The UK has played a critical role in influencing GPE to do more to ensure that children with disabilities are benefiting equitably from its work, through both previous funding pledges and through its role of the board. GPE plays a critical role in ensuring that education systems are strengthened to be inclusive of all children. However, there is still more to be done to ensure that GPE and education sector planning is fully inclusive. This replenishment is a critical opportunity for the UK to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to delivering education for children with disabilities.

Shaping the education architecture

In the face of this education emergency, greater coordination across the global education architecture is critical if all children are to realise their right to 12 years of quality education and we're to move toward SDG4. The UK Government is uniquely placed to promote this coordination through its leadership role in GPE, as well as Education Cannot Wait (ECW), and the International Financing Facility for Education (IFFEd). The UK presidency of the G7 in 2021 is an excellent opportunity for the Government to bring these Fund's leading donors together to promote coordination and secure ambitious financial commitments to education globally. The majority of GPE funding comes from G7 nations, and early pledges at the G7 Summit will encourage other partner governments to offer strong pledges and new donors to come on board in the summer.



4. Recommendations to the UK Government

The Send My Friend to School Coalition calls on the UK Government to increase its commitments to education financing and pledge £600m to GPE for its 2021 – 2025 financing period.

This pledge would make a powerful statement about Global Britain's values and commitment to 12 years of quality education for girls. It would promote recovery to the destruction of education caused by COVID-19, and promote future economic growth, stability and social justice in partner countries across the world. Crucially, it would focus UK Government investment in the poorest countries facing the biggest education crises.

Investing in quality and inclusive education for all children is not only a manifesto commitment, it is the smart and right thing to do. Without investment in education we have no hope of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, ending poverty, addressing migration and security concerns, ending gender inequality, creating inclusive societies, and ending the abuses of child labour and marriage.

To fully realise the promise of this pledge, the UK Government should:

- use its role in GPE to promote political leadership in cross-cutting issues including gender equality, climate change, displacement, ending violence against children and disability inclusion
- influence other Governments through direct bilateral advocacy by the Prime Minister, and advocacy through the G7 Presidency
- play a leading role in coordination of the global education architecture, ensuring a cohesive, collaborative, and comprehensive approach to get every child learning
- couch its pledge in a greater package of support for education globally. If the Government is to deliver its manifesto commitment of 12 years of quality education for all girls, it must commit to rapidly scaling up the proportion of education funding to 15% of its overall ODA budget.



Endnotes

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