

Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with Global Partnership for Education (GPE) 2023-2026

DRAFT

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Danish Organisation Strategy 2023-2026 for Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

Introduction:

This 2023-2026 Organisation Strategy for Denmark's engagement with Global Partnership for Education (GPE) describes the strategic objectives and choice of priority areas that Denmark's partnership with GPE will be guided by in that period. It builds on the previous Danish strategy for GPE and on GPE's own 2025 Strategic Plan. Denmark has supported GPE since 2007.

GPE is a multilateral partnership and fund that finances and supports solutions to build strong and resilient education systems in lower-income countries so that more children, especially girls, get the education they need to thrive and contribute to building a more prosperous and sustainable world. GPE's 2025 Strategic Plan focusses on improving learning, equity and inclusion for the most marginalised children, including girls, children affected by crises and displacement and children with disabilities.

GPE's key results:

- Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact
- Mobilize coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change
- Strengthen capacity, adapt, and learn, to implement and drive results at scale

Justification for support:

- GPE's mandate and work is highly relevant for key Danish priorities and interests – quality education, gender equality and ensuring the right to education as an enabler for development, reducing inequalities, strengthening resilience and ending poverty. Education is a fundamental building block for developing democratic societies and crucial for ensuring children equal opportunities.

How we will ensure results and monitor progress:

- Engaging strategically and actively with GPE and its constituents through our seat on the Board of Directors and via bilateral dialogues.
- Engaging actively in GPE's informal working groups within prioritised areas, such as 'gender'.
- Monitoring of progress within prioritised areas.

Risk and challenges:

- Fragility, conflicts and crises, creating challenges to education systems building and funding for education.
- Aid architecture being 1) unstable with donors more often than previously changing commitments, and 2) fragmented.
- Gaps in coordination and collaboration across the sector, most notably with Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

File No.

Responsible Unit

MNS

Mill. DKK

	2023	2024	2025	2026	total
Commitment	250	250	250	250	1000
Projected ann. Disb.	250	250	250	250	1000
Duration of strategy	2023-2026				
Finance Act code.	§ 06.36.04.10				
Desk officer	Line Friberg Nielsen/Rikke Møller Mikkelsen				
Financial officer	Antonio Ugaz-Simonsen				

SDGs relevant for Programme

 No Poverty	 No Hunger	 Good Health, Wellbeing	 Quality Education	 Gender Equality	 Clean Water, Sanitation
 Affordable Clean Energy	 Decent Jobs, Econ. Growth	 Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure	 Reduced Inequalities	 Sustainable Cities, Communities	 Responsible Consumption & Production
 Climate Action	 Life below Water	 Life on Land	 Peace & Justice, strong Inst.	 Partnerships for Goals	

Budget

Annual budget 2021:

Total: to be added

Danish involvement in governance structure

- Denmark is a member of the Board of Directors and shares donor constituency with Sweden, with Sweden as alternate board member. Estonia is also a part of the constituency as observer.

Strat. objectives

Accelerating access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century.

Priority areas

- Gender equality
- HDP-nexus
- Climate change

Core information

Established: 2002

Headquarters: Washington DC

Human resources: +160 staff members in 2022

Financial resources in USD mil. (2021): to be added

Chief Executive Officer: Laura Frigenti (December 1st 2022)

Board member: DK shares seat with Sweden as alternate board member.

1. Objective

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: *Quality Education* is the overarching, strategic aim of Danish development assistance to education. This goal is critical because of its transformative effects on so many of the other SDGs. Sustainable development hinges on every child receiving a quality education. A quality education offers children the tools to develop to their full potential, enabling upward socioeconomic mobility. Without quality education, children are more likely to suffer adverse health outcomes and less likely to participate in decisions that affect them, threatening their ability and opportunity to shape a better future for themselves and their societies.

During the past three decades, the world has seen a massive expansion of access to education across the world, contributing to upholding people's rights and advancing social, political and economic development. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous negative impact on education in low and middle income countries, exacerbated by conflicts and climate change and now also inflation and food insecurity. Today, 244 million children and young people are not in school. In crisis affected contexts alone, 78 million children are out of school. Millions of the children that *are* in school are not learning. This leaves the education related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda severely off track and risk leaving children and young people very poorly equipped to navigate uncertain futures.

With its global reach and focus on strengthening national education systems in low-income and crisis affected countries, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a key partner in Denmark's efforts to contribute to better access to quality education for marginalised children. GPE is committed to accelerating progress and achievement by 2030 on equity, inclusion and learning. GPE is uniquely positioned to lead on this as the largest fund dedicated to education and with its track-record of achieving tangible results on the ground.

This Organisation Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with GPE 2023-2026 is based on previous years' partnership dating back to 2007. The strategy identifies key strategic priorities for the partnership and dialogue between the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and GPE in the period 2023 to 2026, supported by continued Danish financial contributions. The strategy outlines specific goals and results that Denmark will pursue in cooperation with GPE and together with like-minded partners. The strategy will last four years (2023-2026) as opposed to three because GPE will develop its next strategic plan in 2025, enabling Denmark's GPE organisational strategy period to be better aligned to that of GPE.

The strategy is anchored in Denmark's overall commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular *SDG 4 Access to quality education for all* and *SDG 5 Gender equality*. It is furthermore anchored in the Danish Strategy for Development Cooperation 2021-2025, "The World We Share", which includes a strong focus on education as a driver for human rights, democratic societies and economic development: *Access to education and particularly the quality of education is important for enabling each individual to exercise their rights. The ability to read makes it easier for a citizen to claim their rights to health treatment, engage in meaningful political participation, and start their own company. Like health, education is a lever for ensuring social equality.* [One of five preconditions for a good life, p.17]

Education is a fundamental building block for developing democratic societies and is crucial for ensuring children equal opportunities in the future. For each year a girl attends school, her expected income increases by 10-20 percent. Nevertheless, far too many children do not have access to schooling and quality education. For example, half of the world's refugee children do not go to school. In addition, the lack of schooling puts young girls in particular at higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence, teenage pregnancies and child marriages. In some crisis contexts, more than 70 percent of women are subject to gender-based violence. [p.25]

Work to ensure quality education for children and young people in humanitarian and development interventions. Denmark will work to ensure equal access to education, with focus on vulnerable groups, higher quality education as well as gender equality in and through education, enabling boys and girls to grow up as equal citizens. [p.29]

Source: *The World We Share, August 2021*

2. The organisation

Background. The Global Partnership for Education was established in 2002 (then Education for All – Fast Track Initiative). GPE is a multilateral partnership and fund that finances and supports solutions to build strong and resilient education systems in lower-income countries so that more children, especially girls, get the education they need to thrive and contribute to building a more prosperous and sustainable world. Denmark's contribution to Global Partnership for Education (GPE) started in 2007 and is part of the multilateral cooperation.

Vision, mission and principles. GPE operates with the overarching vision to achieve *quality education for every child* (SDG 4). The mission is to bring together developing countries, donors, international organisations, civil society, teacher organisations, the private sector and foundations *to mobilise partnerships and investments that transform education systems in lower-income countries, leaving no one behind*. The goal is *to accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century*.¹

The organisation's work is guided by its 2025 Strategic Plan, which focusses on improving learning, equity, and inclusion for the most marginalised children, including girls, children affected by crises and displacement, and children with disabilities. It supports countries to make transformational change and improvements to education systems, recognizing the long-term character of such ambitions and need for diversified financial partnerships.

GPE's key principles

1. Education as a **public good, a human right** and an enabler of other rights
2. Focusing our resources on **securing learning, equity and inclusion** for the most marginalised children and youth, including those affected by fragility and conflict
3. Achieving **gender equality**
4. Enabling **inclusive, evidence-based policy dialogue** that engages national governments, donors, civil society, teachers, philanthropy and the private sector
5. Providing support that promotes **country ownership** and nationally identified priorities, and is linked to country performance in achieving improved equity and learning
6. Improving **development effectiveness** by harmonising and aligning aid to country systems

¹ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/who-we-are/about-gpe>

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Promoting mutual accountability and transparency across the partnership8. Acting on our belief that inclusive partnership is the most effective means of achieving development results |
|--|

Source: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/charter-global-partnership-education>

Governance arrangements. The Board of Directors (BOD), chaired by former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, is the supreme governing body of GPE responsible for setting policies and strategies. The Board mirrors the diverse nature of the GPE with 20 constituencies representing different GPE partners (development country partners, donor partners, multilateral agencies and regional banks, and non-governmental, i.e. civil society, teachers' unions, private sector/foundations). A BOD member and an alternate member represent each constituency. There are three committees under the BOD: Executive Committee, Finance and Risk Committee, and Performance, Impact and Learning Committee. The BOD meets twice a year. Denmark shares a seat with Sweden and since 2021 also with Estonia as observer. Responsibilities of the Board include review of annual objectives, mobilisation of resources, monitoring of financial resources and funding, overseeing secretariat budget and work plan, and advocating for GPE.

Organisational structure. The Secretariat runs the day-to-day business of GPE. It numbers 160+ staff divided into seven departments: Country Engagement and Policy, Governance, Secretariat Operations, Finance and Grant Operations, External Relations, Results and Performance, and Partnerships. Denmark previously had a secondment in the secretariat from March 2019 to February 2021. Three Committees support the Secretariat and prepare submissions for the Board's decision: Executive Committee, Finance and Risk Committee, and Performance, Impact and Learning Committee. Denmark previously had a time-bound seat in the Finance and Risk Committee. GPE is a fund hosted by the World Bank as a Financial Intermediary Fund (FIF) with headquarter in Washington and satellite offices in Paris and Brussels.

GPE's operational model. At the national level in developing countries, GPE brings together all education partners in a collaborative forum, the Local Education Group (LEG), led by the Ministry of Education. The LEG supports the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the national education sector plans and programs financed by GPE, and it leads the preparatory process for the Partnership Compact². A Coordinating Agent (chair) is selected by the LEG members to facilitate the support from the partners and to coordinate with the GPE Secretariat. Once financial support to a partner country is being provided by GPE, the LEG selects and approves a Grant Agent, from the group of partners, to oversee the implementation of the GPE grant.

The GPE Secretariat is not an implementing agency, but is staffed with education specialists ("Country Leads"), organized in the Country Engagement and Policy Team providing guidance and support to the partner countries' governments and the LEG. This is done throughout the programming and implementation of GPE grants. The process of developing the Partnership Compact and programs for grant support is aligned to national processes and the modalities of the Grant Agent, for instance the

² The Partnership Compact is a new development and seeks to become the foundation for GPE support in developing country partners.

World Bank (the World Bank is the Grant Agent of more than 50% of GPE's grants). However, GPE applies a rigid, independent quality assurance process before the approval of a grant by the GPE Board.

GPE provides performance based financing, where part of a grant is subject to achievement of defined indicators. GPE support to country partners has a strong focus on sustainability, and GPE requires beneficiary governments to gradually increase and maintain their domestic spending on education with a target of 20 percent of their respective national budgets. The GPE model is heavily focused on capacity building in the partner countries. Further to this, there is strong fiduciary oversight through both GPE's in-country Grant Agents and the GPE Secretariat. GPE's partnerships are rooted in mutual accountability. Every partner must meet clear, specific goals and objectives, and GPE systematically measure the impact of actions through a results framework. Progress against national education sector plans is assessed periodically at country level in a joint sector review, a thorough and inclusive process involving all partners.

Budget and financial resources. GPE relies entirely on voluntary contributions for its funding. Its principal donors are governments, philanthropic foundations and development banks. The latest replenishment conference took place in London in July 2021, where donor commitments to GPE reached 4 billion USD of the expected USD 5 billion for the 2025 Strategic Plan. The five main donors representing 64 percent of the overall contributions among a total of 27 contributors are the European Union (21 percent), United Kingdom (15 percent), France (10 percent), Germany (10 percent) and USA (8 percent) with Denmark as number 8 on the list with 4 percent of the total contribution.³ The overall financial contribution from Denmark to GPE for the 2018 to 2021 period was approximately DKK 1.3 billion.

GPE grant structure. GPE supports countries to plan and prioritise reforms that have the potential to achieve transformation in the education system. When a country lacks sufficient financing to make focused, evidence-based investments in programs that unlock system bottlenecks, GPE can provide financial support in the form of grants. Unlike most traditional grant mechanisms, GPE has a keen focus on process – a feature reflected in the recently introduced *System Transformation Grant*, which is tailored to match the new country-led operational model, where the preparatory analysis of enabling and hampering factors is part of the Partnership Compact development process. This funding modality will over time substitute the *System Capacity Grant*, which has focussed on the elaboration of Education Sector Plans and institutional capacity. GPE also provides *Programme Development Grants* for specific program development initiatives; *Accelerated Funding* as crisis response; *Multiplier grants* to match other external financing on a one-to-three basis; *Debt2Ed* (currently explored in Côte d'Ivoire) supports countries to transform bilateral debts into new investments in education (launched in 2022); and the *Girls' Education Accelerator* (GEA) specifically focused on girls' education during the process of applying for a system transformation grant or a Multiplier Grant. Denmark played a key role in the establishment of the GEA. Beyond support to governments, GPE also allocates grants to promote civil society's voice (*Education Out Loud* - EOL) and to generate new knowledge on key issues and solutions for the education sector (*Knowledge and Innovation Exchange* - KIX).

³ Cumulative Donor Contributions, GPE, December 2021; and <https://www.globalpartnership.org/financing-2025/pledges>

GPE grants

- **System capacity grants.** Countries can receive up to USD 5 million to support capacity strengthening in terms of gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact, including system diagnostics and education sector analyses as well as planning for system resilience and inclusion of refugees; mobilizing coordinated action and financing to enable transformative change, such as strengthening sector coordination, development of pooled funding mechanisms, strengthening budget processes, analysis of efficiency of education expenditure; and strengthening of government capacity to adapt and learn, to implement and drive results at scale, including data system strengthening. From 2021, the grant can also be used to develop the partnership compact, a policy framework that articulates priority areas for reform.
- **Programme development grants.** Countries can receive USD 200,000 (up to USD 400,000 in exceptional cases) for the design of an education program that will help the country implement its priority reform.
- **System transformation grants.** These have been piloted in five countries (DR Congo, Kenya, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uganda) from January 2021. New allocations are currently being considered on a cohort basis. These countries can receive up to USD 162.5 million to finance priority programs that can help unlock bottlenecks and achieve system transformation. Application for the grant is preceded by the development of a partnership compact, which is a policy document that articulates how the country intends to work together with partners around a priority reform that has the potential to catalyze system change.
- **Accelerated funding** provides partner countries flexible support when a crisis emerges or escalates. It aims to support governments and partners to sustain continuity of the education system, build back better and institutionalize response capacities. It prioritizes vulnerable populations, including girls, and promotes the inclusion of crisis-affected children into national systems. Given the time sensitive needs in a crisis, the accelerated funding application process is meant to be agile and swift. It is expected to be completed in 8 weeks, starting from the notification of intention to apply to a decision on the funds.
- **Multiplier grants** are available to countries that can mobilize at least USD 3 in new and additional external financing for every USD 1 from the GPE Multiplier. Maximum grant levels are determined based on school-age population and can reach up to USD 50 million. As a tool to unlock supplemental grant finance from the GPE Multiplier, an innovative finance approach Debt2Ed (currently explored in Côte d'Ivoire), which supports countries to transform bilateral debts into new investments in education, has been launched in 2022.
- **Girls' Education Accelerator** is a modality specifically focused on girls' education during the process of applying for a system transformation grant or a Multiplier grant.

Source: GPE website <https://www.globalpartnership.org/funding/applying-for-grants>

3. Results, lessons learned and key challenges

The Danish collaboration with GPE in the 2018 - 2022 period focussed on three areas: 1) access to quality education for all (SDG 4) with a focus on girls, 2) a results-based, effective organisation with a strong risk management, and 3) expansion and deepening of GPE's partnerships to better address education in the humanitarian-development-nexus with specific focus on marginalised groups (including girls). To monitor results in these specific areas, six of the 37 indicators from the GPE Results Framework were selected, related to impact rather than outcome-level and global rather than country-level objectives.

A **review** of Danish support to and partnership with GPE 2018-2022 was commissioned by the Danish MFA in 2022 to assess the continued relevance of the partnership and inform the next Danish GPE Organisation Strategy 2023 - 2026. The review focused on GPE's efforts to promote gender equality, work in fragile contexts and the HDP nexus, and on synergies with other education sector actors.

Overall, the review found that the Danish contribution to GPE yielded the expected results in particular in terms of an increased prioritisation of gender equality and girls' education and reinforcement of the new country-led model. At the same time, it found that the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted negatively on the goal to ensure efficient and effective delivery of GPE support at country level.

In the area of **gender**, the review found that the GPE secretariat gender expertise capacity has been strengthened, and that there is an increased focus on gender at country level, e.g. by applying gender analysis as an integral part of the Partnership Compact preparation processes. There is, however, still a need for further strengthening of gender equality efforts in implementation, e.g. in terms of focusing more on achieving normative changes.

GPE's *new operating model* which focuses on **country ownership** has demonstrated its potential for improved accountability and sustainability, as well as more effective and efficient implementation. The roll-out of the model, however, is still incipient and there are challenges that need to be addressed, including when it comes to securing national funding for education and cross-sector collaboration (e.g. with Ministries of Finance).

GPE has an explicit focus on 'leaving no one behind', i.e. vulnerable and marginalised children including girls, and a focus on fragile and crisis affected contexts. Yet the review concluded that there is still some way to go for GPE in terms of 'bridging' across development and humanitarian emergency relief, and taking a **humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus** approach. This is found to be rooted mainly in the fact that GPE's operational model, at its core, is long term system transformation. Thus more coordination and pursuit of complementarity with other actors continues to be needed, such as the humanitarian education initiative under the UN, Education Cannot Wait (ECW).

In terms of GPE's aim to be more *results-based and effective organisation, with a strong risk management*, the review found that there is a need for continued focus on fundraising and fund diversification to ensure financial resilience.

While recognising that support to education is through multilateral cooperation, the review found that there were limited *linkages and synergies with other Danish development initiatives* in the 2018-2022 period. That said, Denmark does liaise with those Danish organisations with Strategic Partnership Agreements that work with education and/or are also represented on the GPE Board. The formalised partnership with the LEGO Foundation launched in early 2022, is pointed out as a move in the direction of cooperation beyond multilateral partners, and as something that could attract other similar actors into the education 'space'.

Finally, Denmark was found to have conducted effective *donor coordination and policy dialogue* with visible influence, in particular on agendas related to gender equality and 'leaving no one behind'. This has been achieved through active engagement in the GPE Board and the GPE Finance and Risk Committee, and through networking with other Board members, i.e. like-minded bilateral donors and other constituencies (civil society, private sector, teachers' associations, and developing countries). A requirement for such successful engagement is allocation of sufficient resources in terms of time and technical capacity.

The review highlighted a few **lessons learned**, one being related to the *secondment of an adviser* to GPE 2019-2021. The seconded advisor was a senior education specialist, however, the MFA had expressed an expectation that the advisor would also achieve policy influencing. With GPE being a well-established organisation, such influencing at management level was not possible. Should management level policy influencing be desired, it would be necessary to first explore GPE's interest in the contribution of a capacity at that level. That said, the seconded advisor was successful in strengthening GPE's technical capacity specifically linked to GPE's work in focus on fragile and conflict affected contexts.

Another lesson learned is related to the application of GPE's Accelerated Funding window during the *COVID-19 pandemic*. This demonstrated that that small interventions can make a significant difference, with the provision of school meals in Kenya after the pandemic effectively encouraging parents to send their children back to school, allowing them to reduce their education gap and continue their learning.

The numerous persistent **challenges** listed in the GPE 2021-2025 Strategic Plan are not specific to GPE but describe what is experienced on the ground, and these include: immediate challenges for learners (access to education for girls, children with disabilities and children in displacement situations), challenges related to learning (basic skills capability, curriculum contextual adequacy), and systemic challenges (lack of evidence-based policy-making, harmful gender norms and practices, education financing).

At the organisational level, GPE faces *challenges related to financial resilience* in terms of donor diversification and long-term commitments. The global education agenda faces a chronic funding gap. 39 billion USD per year is needed for all children in low- and lower-middle-income countries to complete that year of pre-primary and universal primary and lower secondary education. The financing gap for low- and lower-middle income countries to achieve SDG4 is currently 148 US billion per year (UNESCO 2020). Nearly 90 percent of the resources needed to reach SDG4 by 2030 will need to come from domestic sources (Education Commission, 2016). This still leaves a funding gap that needs to be filled by traditional donor and other sources of funding. However, the share of earmarked aid to education has declined over the past 10 years: the share of education in total aid (not including aid devoted to overall budget support) fell from 11.7 percent in 2010 to 9.7 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2022). Needless to say, this is a challenge for GPE and for the education sector at large, making the *competition for funding* particularly difficult, most prominently between GPE and ECW.

The fact that GPE is hosted by the World Bank and must adhere to their rules and regulations, and the fact that GPE is mainly focused on transformative, long-term change and development processes, represents a *challenge where flexibility and agility is necessary* in order to adapt to sudden changes on the ground, e.g. conflicts, pandemics and natural disasters. One of the ways to address this is to support efforts by GPE and ECW to coordinate better.

Finally, GPE 'hosting arrangement' with the *World Bank* has been a continuous and unresolved challenge for GPE and its BOD for several years now. The issue has been prompted by several members of the Board calling for greater autonomy of the Board and GPE as such, as well as greater flexibility in terms of funding arrangements (i.e. desire to not be restricted by World Bank rules and regulations). The hosting arrangement was under review in 2022, and based on the analysis and options presented, the GPE Board decided in January 2023 to maintain the World Bank as its trustee (and 'host'), as well as Grant Agent at country-level where pertinent, throughout the remainder of GPE's current strategy period. The donors

on the Board shared concerns regarding the negative implications of a major institutional change, not least considering the global learning crisis and the competing priorities and scarce funding. That said, the GPE CEO has been given the mandate to explore opportunities with the World Bank to increase flexibility and autonomy. By 2025 the Board will again discuss and agree on the future institutional set-up of GPE, ahead of GPE initiating a new strategy starting 2026.

4. Priority areas

The GPE 2025 Strategic Plan identifies eight strategic priority areas⁴: 1) Access to education for the most marginalised children, including refugees and displaced people across all partner countries; 2) Learning - to achieve improvements along each stage of a child's education, including e.g. distance learning; 3) Equity, efficiency, and volume of domestic finance - being the most significant and sustainable source of funding education; 4) Gender equality - to systematically identify and address the barriers to education that affect boys and girls differently through e.g. gender-responsive planning and disaggregated data systems, recognition of the intersectionality and "gender hardwiring"⁵ into GPE support; 5) Inclusion - by transforming schools so that all children can learn in a safe and healthy environment free from discrimination, e.g. by including children with disabilities in education data systems and by advocating for the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national education systems; 6) Early Learning - by ensuring that all children have access to at least one year of quality pre-primary education; 7) Quality teaching - by support to professional development of teachers and inclusion of teachers' organisations in education policy dialogue; and 8) Strong organizational capacity - by applying GPE investments in building and strengthening government capacity in areas critical for efficiency, effectiveness and resilience, e.g. data and diagnostics, analysis, policy development, planning monitoring, public financial management, sector coordination and alignment, as well as cross-sectoral partnerships to leverage synergies.

GPE's overall performance vis-à-vis its own 2025 Strategic Plan is a stand-alone priority in the strategic partnership between Denmark and GPE. GPE measures its results using a significant number of the indicators for SDG 4 on Quality Education, just as it measures its achievement of 'enabling' results including amount of donor commitments fulfilled and co-financing leveraged through GPE innovative financing mechanisms.

In addition to GPE's overall performance, this Organisation Strategy identifies three thematic priorities. Two of these thematic priorities are a continuation from the previous GPE Organisation Strategy (2018-2021, extended until 2022) and also reflect the convergence between what GPE and Denmark prioritises, i.e. that gender equality would be at the core of GPE's business and that GPE's would better address education in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The third thematic priority – climate change – is identified in light of the continuing devastating impact of climate change in many of the world's most fragile and crisis affected countries and on education specifically, and in light of the role that education can play in addressing the climate crisis.

⁴ The order of the priority areas is different in the 2025 Strategic Plan and in the list under GPE Indicator # 14 in the Results Framework. The Results Framework order is used here.

⁵ "Gender hardwiring" is by GPE defined as: Comprehensive country dialogues on gender equality, domestic financial commitment to gender equality, and putting gender equality at the centre of partnership discussions.

As such, the three thematic priority areas for Denmark's contribution to GPE in the period 2023-2026 are:

- 1) **Gender equality.** Gender equality and the rights of women and girls are crosscutting priorities in Danish development cooperation in accordance with *The World We Share*, and the role of education is herein identified as key to this end. Ensuring girls' access to education, and promoting gender equality in and through education, is a longstanding strategic aim of Danish development cooperation. Part of GPE's overall aim with its 2025 strategy is to accelerate gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century. In the 2018-2021 period, Denmark has contributed significantly to advancing GPE's prioritisation and operationalisation of this ambition, yet continuous attention and support is required.
- 2) **HDP-nexus.** The HDP-nexus approach is a prominent feature of Denmark's international cooperation, particularly in light of the growing number of protracted conflicts and crises. The GPE operational model is designed to achieve long term system transformation and thus not easily applied in conflict or crisis affected settings. Yet more than 60 per cent of GPE funding goes to countries affected by fragility and conflict. The need for bridging development assistance and humanitarian emergency relief is recognised by GPE, but the interface remains a challenge. Support to GPE's efforts in this area will include a focus on GPE's cooperation and complementarity with ECW and GPE's contribution to the strengthening of local actors.
- 3) **Climate change.** In *The World We Share*, Denmark sets out to strengthen action to support climate change adaptation and build local resilience in the poorest and most vulnerable countries. Through a focus on the link between climate change and education, the aim is to support GPE in its efforts to build climate-smart and resilient national education systems and strengthen the role that education can play in addressing the climate crisis (curriculum, teacher training, etc.). Attention to climate change is absent in GPE's current strategic plan, yet both GPE itself and several like-minded donors have flagged that it needs attention, and should be a focus area in GPE's next strategic plan. Complementarity with ECW will be key in this area.

It should be noted that in the GPE Organisation Strategy 2018-2020 it was also a priority for Denmark that GPE would become a results-based, effective organisation with a strong risk management. This was linked to the seat that Denmark had in GPE Finance and Risk Committee (FRC) up until recently. Sweden now has a seat on the FRC, and with Denmark and Sweden being in the same BOD donor group, it is assessed that rather than continuing to have this as a stand-alone priority, it will be addressed via the donor group with Sweden taking the lead.

Monitoring of results will be in line with Danish multilateral guidelines and based on GPE's 2025 Strategic Plan and corresponding Results Framework. Ideally, the Organisation Strategy will be subject to a review prior to the formulation of the next GPE strategy beyond 2025, which will include an assessment of the continued relevance. As such, it will inform Danish priorities with regards to assessing the viability and relevance of a next GPE Organisation Strategy.

See Annex 1 - Results matrix, using selected GPE goals and indicators to the furthest extent possible.

Below is an elaboration of the three priority areas for Denmark's contribution to GPE in the period 2023-2026.

4.1 *Gender equality*

A key goal in *The World We Share* is reaching those most in need with the aim of leaving no one behind and with a specific focus on marginalized groups, particularly girls. A core pillar in SDG 4 on Quality Education is the elimination of gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access, linking to SDG 5 on Gender Equality, a core Danish development policy priority along with ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). The reality is that girls are 2.5 times more at risk of not going to school in crises than boys. Cultural norms, lack of safety and inadequate sanitation facilities at school as well as economic constraints are all contributing factors. Out-of-school girls are at risk of experiencing sexual violence, early forced child marriage, teenage pregnancies and maternal death, and this is particularly the case in crisis affected contexts. Conversely, educated girls are often married later and have fewer and healthier children.

This GPE Organisation Strategy prioritization of gender equality with a focus on girls' access to education is enabled by GPE's efforts to support countries to systematically identify and address the barriers to education that affects boys and girls differently. Further, GPE works with its country partners to put gender equality at the heart of planning and implementation of education systems and supports gender-responsive planning and disaggregated data systems, recognizing that gender barriers to education intersect with other forms of exclusion. To incentivize progress on girls' education and the hardwiring of gender equality, financing will be available to those countries where girls are the furthest behind through the thematic funding window Girls' Education Accelerator.

Denmark will leverage its influence as one of the largest donors in the education space, including to GPE, and advocate for a strong focus on quality education in dialogues with other donors and partners. Denmark will use its seat on the BOD to ensure that programs aimed at quality rather than quantity are selected for GPE grants and ensure that strong GPE monitoring and evaluation tools are in place, especially with regards to gender. Furthermore, Denmark will participate actively in informal thematic groups in order to push forward gender equality and the focus on girls' education. Finally, Denmark will work closely with its donor group partner, Sweden and Estonia, on a strong, common voice to this end.

Denmark will aim to second or fund a technical advisor to the GPE to pursue the promotion of gender equality in and through education, in particular in fragile and crisis affected contexts. Such a role will support the achievement of priorities outlined in GPE's 2025 strategy and this organizational strategy, including linkages with the other thematic priorities, i.e. HDP-nexus and climate change. Further, such a capacity can ensure meaningful linkages to relevant Danish representations and relevant strategic civil society partners.

4.2 *HDP-nexus*

To ensure access to quality education in fragile, conflict and crisis affected states is particularly challenging due to several factors including poor infrastructure, poor access, limited teaching capacity, sensitivities in working with authorities or host governments, and difficulties related to risk management and measuring impact. Nonetheless, these are the contexts in which the most marginalised and at-risk groups are found, and with a commitment to leave no one behind, they remain a priority. As such, the demand for more and better interventions here is critical and they need to be achieved through partnerships with education-focussed organisations already active in the respective countries.

The HDP-nexus approach is a prominent feature of Denmark's international cooperation. In fragile, conflict and crisis affected contexts, coordination, coherence and complementarity between actors is critical, in order to be able to simultaneously deliver humanitarian relief, long-term development cooperation, and peacebuilding interventions.

At the country level, GPE works through the local education groups (LEGs), through which in-country education partners, including locally based civil society actors, support government efforts to strengthen education sector planning and policy implementation.

Through the support to, and partnership with, GPE, Denmark will support GPE in its efforts to contribute to coordination, coherence and complementarity between actors and across the fields of humanitarian aid, development aid and peacebuilding.

While GPE is the largest fund dedicated to education, focusing on the longer-term development aspects, the UN-education fund Education Cannot Wait (ECW) focuses on education in emergencies and protracted crises. ECW aims to connect immediate relief and longer-term interventions through multi-year programming.

Since its inception, GPE has shifted its focus towards more fragile and/or conflict-affected contexts, and these now comprise approx. 60 percent of GPE partner countries. Still, the GPE model is to support transformative, long-term change and development processes, i.e. GPE's strong suit is not the flexibility required to respond to sudden changes on the ground, e.g. conflicts, pandemics and natural disasters. It is therefore key that GPE and ECW work closely together, to ensure coherence and complementarity. The GPE Secretariat has commenced a series of internal brainstorms specific to enhancing GPE-ECW coordination, with the aim to present an action plan within the first half of 2023. Moving forward, it will be important to broaden this conversation to also include donors and other key stakeholders.

As a donor of both GPE and ECW, Denmark is in a good position to advocate for a stronger working relationship between the two funds, contributing to a more coordinated approach to education delivery in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

In line with Danish priorities in the education space, support to GPE's efforts to take an HDP-nexus approach should pay particular attention to the inclusion of marginalised groups including girls, just as it should pay particular attention to the consideration of climate change. Finally, it may also be pertinent to apply an additional focus on select countries in which Denmark has a particular interest in partners' application of an HDP-nexus approach, and where the issues of gender inequality and climate crisis are also prominent, for instance in the Horn of Africa.

4.3 *Climate change*

As is argued by GPE and other actors in the child rights and education space, education is an undervalued part of the climate change response. It is assessed that climate change related disasters disrupt the education of almost 40 million children a year, predominantly in low and lower middle-income countries (Save the Children). The effects are both direct and indirect: Flooding destroys schools, storms force people to flee their homes; droughts result in children having to go further to collect water or look after animals, leaving less time available for education; and financial impacts of climate shocks mean families

cannot afford to keep children in school. Time spent out of school due to the impact of disasters has been shown to have severe consequences for learning, lasting much longer than the disruption itself. For millions of children in school, environmental changes such as rising temperatures affect their ability to learn, as children's physical wellbeing and ability to concentrate are compromised. Poverty and inequality is also exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation. Marginalised groups, including girls, are disproportionately affected due to various forms of inequalities. In climate change emergencies resources are used to survive instead of learn, trapping marginalised children in conditions of poverty and vulnerability, facing school drop-out, child labour and early marriage. Climate change emergencies often create or increase displacement, and displacement increases children's risk of experiencing violence and exploitation, especially for girls. At the same time, while climate change poses risks to education, education can equally play a role in reducing climate change and its impacts and strengthen adaptation and preparedness for future changes. Recent research shows that education, and particularly secondary education for girls, is important for successful climate adaptation (Brookings).

Thus, in support of the ambition to reduce communities' vulnerabilities and improving their resilience and adaptive capacity, and to avoid education goals slipping further out of reach, in particular for girls, it is pertinent to pursue the linkages between climate change and education in the context of Denmark's partnership with GPE.

GPE already supports lower-income country governments to prepare for, and respond to, crisis including in the wake of climate-related disasters. Examples include building school flood defence mechanisms, and training teachers and students in conservation and sustainability. GPE is also developing ways to support countries to integrate climate change and environmental considerations into education sector plans, budgets and strategies. Further, according to GPE, they are in dialogue with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) about the preparation of education and climate project proposals, that may later be considered for financing (GPE is not yet accredited to the GCF). Such initiatives by GPE have emerged in the last few years, despite climate change not featuring in GPE's current 2025 strategy. Several partners to GPE, in particular in the donor space, are pointing to the need for GPE to take a strategic approach to the integration of climate change considerations into their education partnerships and to the financing of such integrated programmes.

Considering the significant impact of climate change on education, and the opportunities provided by education in terms of climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience, this GPE Organisation Strategy sets out as a priority that Denmark will work with like-minded partners to ensure that climate change is a strategic focus area in the next GPE strategic plan. More specifically, Denmark will encourage GPE to increase efforts to work with partner countries to make education systems climate-smart (dedicated funding for contextually relevant climate change mitigation and adaptation into education sector plans, budgets and strategies) and incorporate contextually relevant climate change risk reduction and resilience learning into curricula and teacher training. This focus on climate change links to the other two thematic priorities, i.e. gender quality and HDP-nexus, in that it reinforces the focus on the most vulnerable and marginalised and responding to emerging crises through long-term solutions.

5. Danish approach to engagement with the organization

Doing Development Differently (DDD) constitutes Denmark's ambition to improve synergies between Danish multilateral and bilateral cooperation, use all the tools in the toolkit, including humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and climate related instruments, break down siloes and strengthen collective outcomes, improve monitoring of results as well as learn from best practices. Denmark's engagement with GPE will be based on the principles of DDD. This entails firstly, aiming towards a more holistic approach to, and use of, Denmark's development instruments, including ensuring stronger cohesion between Danish missions and Copenhagen, multilateral and bilateral development assistance and various partnership instruments. Secondly, striving towards an adaptive approach with an increased emphasis on more effective use of lessons learned and available resources. These principles suggest opportunities for new programme synergies that are based on a more holistic and integrated model of development that address emerging challenges when creating more conducive conditions for desired development outcomes.

In line with DDD principles, Denmark will aim for policy influence through dialogue and lobbying among donors and other constituencies at the GPE BOD level, combined with participation and/or observation at country-level in those contexts where GPE's engagements are relevant to Danish interests, whether it be sector specific, partner specific or otherwise. Secondment or placement of a technical advisor to the GPE Secretariat would further contribute to the capacity in the areas of gender equality and HDP-nexus.

6. Budget

Denmark remains a committed partner of GPE and will continue to provide reliable and predictable funding for its programmes and grants. The contribution is provided as core funding, while possibilities of additional contributions to support specific initiatives may be considered, similar to the 2022-funding of the Girls' Education Accelerator matching the contribution of the LEGO Foundation.

Additionally, Denmark will aim to second or place a technical advisor with expertise in promoting gender equality in and through education in fragile and conflict-affected countries, at the Secretariat level, to support the activities of GPE within these prioritised areas of work agreed between Denmark and GPE.

Danish core contribution to GPE in the period of 2023-2026, subject to annual parliamentary approval

2023	2024	2025	2026
250 million	250 million	250 million	250 million

7. Risk and assumptions

Institutional risks: While the Board has decided that GPE will stay hosted by the World Bank for the remainder of the strategy period (until 2025), there is a risk that GPE staff will losing motivation to remain with the fund while continuing to wait for clarification as to the future of GPE's institutional arrangement in the next strategy period, starting 2026. Further, there is a risk that the postponement of a decision regarding GPE's hosting arrangement will deepen the existing divide across the Board,

between the constituents that are eager for GPE to become independent and those who do not agree that such a development is in the best interest of the fund and its core mission, not at this time with multiple crises and competing priorities.

Financial risks: To achieve SDG 4 by 2030, additional funding from both donors and beneficiary countries is required. Denmark can support GPE in reaching its financial targets by advocating for the partnership, especially vis-à-vis untraditional donors in order to attract additional funding. However, there is continued fragmentation in the education sector, with GPE, ECW, UNICEF and UNESCO all being major actors in the education space, each with unique added value. Further, there is significant lack of funding due to many new crises and competing priorities, not least as a result of the development in Ukraine but also the move by many donors to shift an increasing amount of development assistance towards climate change response. Finally, GPE is experiencing that donor agencies more often than previously opt for changing (and reducing) commitments made.

Programmatic risks: With more than 60 per cent of GPE's country partnerships being in fragile contexts, GPE's ability to achieve planned results depends on local developments here. Further, climate change and natural disasters continue to disrupt planned interventions in a number of GPE's partner countries, causing cause setbacks and delays.

The effective and efficient delivery of GPE support at country level is dependent on external agents (such as Local Education Groups - LEGs), since GPE does not have a permanent field presence in partner countries. Hence, the establishment and maintenance of these relations are key to GPE success. Through its Board seat, Denmark is well placed to continuously keep the GPE Secretariat accountable to its Strategy, which underlines the importance of strong partnerships with key stakeholders at country level, including to develop better relations to local education ministries, education groups etc.

A considerable amount of GPE funding is invested in fragile and conflict-affected states without a permanent GPE country level presence. GPE relies on partnerships in these contexts to implement its funding and conduct monitoring and evaluation.

Annex: Results framework and monitoring

According to the MFA multilateral guidelines, the results matrix is based on GPE's own Results Framework, with selected indicators and results covering the selected priority areas of Denmark's particular interest. GPE's results Framework operates with three levels: overall goal, country-level goals and enabling objectives. The selected GPE indicators relate to the overall goal level and country-level objectives.

As reflected, two of the selected priority areas are not reflected in GPE's results matrix for its 2025 Strategy. A dialogue with GPE to identify or formulate appropriate indicators is required.

Danish Priority Areas:	1: Gender Equality	2: HDP-nexus	3: Climate change
GPE goals			
<p><u>Overall:</u> To accelerate access, learning outcomes and gender equality through equitable, inclusive and resilient education systems fit for the 21st century</p>	<p><u>GPE indicator # 3 (ii):</u> Out-of-school rate at (a) primary school age, (b) lower secondary school age, (c) upper secondary school age (SDG indicator 4.1.4) - <i>with a focus on girls and on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline data 2020: Overall: (a) 20.3; (b) 26.0; (c) 45.8 Female: (a)21.0; (b) 27.6; (c) 50.1</p> <p><u>GPE indicator # 5 (ii):</u> (a) Proportion of countries where gender-responsive planning and monitoring is assessed; (b) Proportion of countries making progress against identified challenges in gender-responsive planning and monitoring; (c) Proportion of countries where gender-</p>	<p>GPE results matrix does not have indicators allowing for measuring of process or results specific to HDP-nexus or accountability to local actors, not at global nor country level.</p> <p>Once established that this will be a priority area in present strategy, a dialogue will be had with relevant GPE colleagues to identify or formulate appropriate indicators.</p>	<p>GPE results matrix does not have indicators allowing for measuring of process or results specific to climate change mitigation, adaptation or resilience, not at global nor country level.</p> <p>Once established that this will be a priority area in present strategy, a dialogue will be had with relevant GPE colleagues to identify or formulate appropriate indicators.</p>

	<p>responsive planning and monitoring is assessed that have a legislative framework assuring the right to education for all children – <i>with a focus on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline data 2021: Overall: (a) 3.9; (b) n/a; (c) 100.0</p> <p><u>GPE indicator #6:</u> Proportion of children and young people (a) in grade 2 or 3, (b) at the end of primary education, and (c) at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics (SDG indicator 4.1.1) – <i>with a focus on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline 2020: Overall: (a) 34.8 (i); 36.5 (ii); (b) 27.1 (i); 24.7 (ii); (c) n/a Female: (a) 29.8 (i); 31.4 (ii); (b) 26.4 (i); 21.6 (ii); (c) n/a</p> <p><u>GPE indicator #7 (i):</u> Proportion of teachers in (a) pre-primary education, (b) primary education, (c) lower secondary education, and (d) upper secondary education with the minimum required qualifications (SDG indicator 4.c.1) - <i>with a focus on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline 2020: Overall: (a) 59.3; (b) 77.1; (c) 72.2; (d) 72.4</p>		
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	Female: a) 60.8; (b) 76.1; (c) 72.9; (d) 72.0		
<u>CLO 1</u> : Strengthen gender-responsive planning, policy development for system-wide impact	<p><u>GPE indicator # 9 (i)</u>: Proportion of countries that implement GPE allocation-linked policy reforms in the gender responsive sector planning and monitoring enabling factor as identified in their partnership compact - <i>with a focus on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline: n/a</p> <p><u>GPE indicator # 9 (ii)</u>: Proportion of system capacity grants where activities under the gender responsive planning and monitoring windows are on track - <i>with a focus on GPE partner countries affected by fragility, conflict and crisis</i></p> <p>Baseline: n/a</p> <p><u>GPE indicator #14 (ii)</u>: Proportion of grants with a girls' education accelerator component where the girls' education accelerator-funded component met its objective at completion.</p> <p>Baseline: n/a</p>		