

## Background Note for the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities Task Force on the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Disability carries multiple stigmas that are the basis for exclusion from society and school. Attitudes toward children with disabilities, as well as a lack of resources to accommodate them, compound the challenges they face in accessing education.<sup>2</sup> While lack of access to school is an issue, an equal concern is the ability of children with disabilities in school to get a quality education. UNESCO estimates that 98% of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, and that 99% of girls with disabilities are illiterate.<sup>3</sup> In addition, almost half of the schools in developing countries do not provide healthy learning environments with water and sanitation facilities that are accessible for children with disabilities. No matter what mode of education children with disabilities receive, they are entitled to a full and equal education.<sup>4</sup>

A child's right to equity should be realized in and through education. While the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Education For All framework aim to meet the learning needs of all children and youth, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recalls those obligations and further specifies that "States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children"<sup>5</sup>, and "ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning".

### Why working with the GPE on Disability-Inclusive Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) was established in 2002 and is comprised of 50 developing country partners and over 25 international public and private sector partners, including civil society. The GPE's vision is to ensure a good **quality education for all children** so they fulfil their potential and contribute to society. The mission is to galvanise global efforts to deliver a good education to all boys and girls, prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable. **The GPE has a focus on providing (1) Access for All, (2) Learning for All, (3) Reaching Every Child** (resources focused on the marginalized), and **(4) Building for the Future** (strengthening national systems).

### GPE's Key Objectives

GPE supports the development of education sector plans and education partner coordination at the country, regional and global levels. It provides developing country partners with incentives, resources, and technical support to build and implement sound education plans.

**Strategic goals** as of June 2012 include: improving education in fragile states; improving girls' education; increasing the number of students learning basic skills like literacy and numeracy; improving teacher effectiveness; and, expanding and improving financing for education. GPE is built on the principles of country ownership and local-level empowerment, as well as mutual accountability and donor harmonization in education.

### GPE's Progress to Date

The **partnership has fundamentally transformed international cooperation in education**. At the GPE Pledging Conference held in Copenhagen in November 2011, US\$1.5 billion was pledged to the partnership, with additional pledges since Copenhagen, the total pledged is \$1.75 billion. GPE developing country partners pledged to increase their domestic education budgets by over \$2.5 billion. Civil society and teachers' organizations

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<sup>1</sup> <http://globalpartnership.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Epstein, A (2010) Making the Case for an Equity Focus in Education, New York: UNICEF

<sup>3</sup> United Nations (2007) From Exclusion to Equality: Realizing the rights of persons with disabilities – Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, United Nations, Geneva [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/ipuhb.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/ipuhb.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO. Education for All. <http://www.unesco.org/new/index.php?id=18646&L=0>

<sup>5</sup> UNCRPD – Article 7 and 24

pledged \$2 billion worth of organizational investments. The leading donors – the UK, Australia and Denmark - together provide over 50% of funding, followed by the Netherlands. In 2011 the GPE Fund dispersed \$400 million and 45 countries are in the funding pipeline for the next three years. Yet this is a partnership with a fund, not a fund alone.

### **GPE's current Partners**

All major donors, multilaterals and banks, UNESCO, UNICEF, developing country partners (those with education sector plans endorsed), and private foundations and civil society. Partners participate through constituencies (i.e. six donor constituencies, six developing country partner constituencies, one private sector, two civil society, multilateral banks and multilateral UN organizations constituencies).

### **Potential areas where the GPCwd may influence the GPE agenda:**

#### **Disability-inclusive education**

The GPE is in the process of finalizing policies in its Strategic Plan. The following areas, to be articulated immediately, may be considered for GPCwd to influence the new GPE Strategic Plan:

- **Using existing funding to build accessibility and inclusion instead of barriers: promoting accessible and inclusive learning spaces**

#### **Advocacy for the adoption, by the GPE Board and inclusion in the Strategic Plan, of the principles of accessibility and universal design as criteria for school construction.**

Ensure physical accessibility for children with disabilities, including commuting, moving around in the school environment and having safe access to water and sanitation facilities while being at school.

- **Investing in teacher training for disability-inclusive education**

**Advocacy for the adoption, by the GPE Board and inclusion in the Strategic Plan, of a recommendation that all teacher training efforts include a module on disability-inclusive education.** Overburdening teachers is not the aim of Inclusive Education for children with disabilities, and therefore transformative efforts must be integrated into existing change agendas in teacher education and across education systems broadly. Preparation and orientation of educational staff for inclusion should happen through **teacher training** which, besides the **child-centred pedagogy will also address attitudes** towards children with disabilities, and how to prepare/support families for them to be encouraged to keep their children in school and informed about their children's potential.

- **Collecting data for evidence building and progress monitoring**

**Advocacy for the adoption, by the GPE Board and inclusion in the Strategic Plan, of methodologies and strategies to collect school data inclusive of children with disabilities.** In order to have evidence for advocacy for inclusion and create a baseline for monitoring progress in disability mainstreaming in the educational system, it is required to collect and **disaggregate data** on the patterns of enrolment, attendance, completion, attainment and drop out by disability (next to gender, ethnicity, income level, geographical location etc.). Also other **qualitative and quantitative studies**, like one on Out Of School Children, provide important baselines and as such must become regular aspect of monitoring schooling standards. Findings from research are defining strategies to reach specific target groups: e.g. While all children with disabilities are in need of school readiness, it is anticipated that among groups where school readiness is already a concern (such as in

some indigenous and minority communities; or in impoverished rural areas) the needs of children with disabilities may be compounded and interventions even more needed.