We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform education in lower-income countries, to transform the lives of millions of girls and boys. Working with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the business community can compound its impact on education through shared priorities and co-investment.

Quality education is a powerful force for building better lives, healthier families, stronger economies and more peaceful and stable societies.

The progress toward ensuring a quality education for all girls and boys in lower-income countries has been steady over the past two decades. Millions more children are in school and learning. Since 2002, GPE has been mobilizing funds and partnerships to support governments in lower-income countries to achieve lasting results. 160 million more children in partner countries have set foot in classrooms for the first time. Twice as many girls are in school. $6 billion has been saved through efficiencies in education spending. And, when the pandemic hit, GPE quickly mobilized over $500 million for the COVID-19 global education response.

But there are many more who need us. Young and growing populations put pressure on education systems. High poverty rates, deepening inequalities and fragility keep millions from getting an education. At the same time, because of the pandemic, the number of out of school children could increase substantially for the first time in decades.

Business—through strategic capabilities or financial support— can be a powerful force for ensuring a quality education for more children, more quickly. And GPE offers ways for business to maximize return on investment.
Strategic Focus and Coordination

GPE is both the largest global fund solely dedicated to education and a unique, public–private partnership. By mobilizing 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.

Together, through GPE, we can help transform education systems in up to 90 countries and territories, home to 1.1 billion school-aged girls and boys. GPE aims to raise US$ 5 billion through our 2021–2025 replenishment campaign to do just that. The ripple effects of this investment include adding $164 billion to these countries’ economies, lifting 18 million people out of poverty, saving three million lives and preventing early marriage for two million girls.

It’s about getting the right resources to the right places at the right times and achieving progress at scale. With support from GPE, education ministries in partner countries have identified the strategies that can make transformation happen. They’ve singled out the key areas of investment and work that will dramatically boost the effectiveness of entire national education systems—ensuring that investments achieve far-reaching, disruptive change. GPE is also quick to mobilize resources in emergency situations, such as the coronavirus pandemic.

Working with GPE, the business community can effectively focus CSR and related initiatives in ways that advance countries’ transformational priorities. And working with GPE, the business community can also be sure that in-kind and financial investments make deep and lasting change.

Applying Business Strategic Capabilities:

Education Data Solutions

The value of good data in forms that can be easily understood by decision makers cannot be overestimated. Many lower-income countries lack strong data systems and capabilities. To take on this challenge, a GPE convening brought together top representatives of the business community, including from Econet, HP, Intel, Tableau Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and Microsoft; other key players such as UNESCO’s Institute for Statistics; and senior representatives of eight countries’ education ministries. The group co-created an action agenda and also set into motion the production of a much-needed guide for ministries on how to acquire and use data systems. In addition, at the request of The Gambia’s ministry of education, InfoLab data scientists, in partnership with the Tableau Foundation, cleaned up ten years of historical data and created powerful ways to visualize key trends.
OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

GPE delivers two main, high-return avenues for companies to make impact on education: through applying strategic capabilities and resources to help solve education challenges, and through leveraging GPE to co-finance CSR initiatives.

1. Apply your strategic capabilities

Businesses have valuable competencies and other assets that can be put to work to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education systems. Strategic capabilities can be used to assess challenges, then create and implement game-changing solutions. Business' voice can be influential in advocating for important objectives such as adequate national education budgets or prioritizing girls’ education.

GPE is working with companies on applying strategic capabilities and voice in three key areas: aligning initiatives with national education priorities, with a special focus on girls' education and empowerment; building resilient education systems; and ensuring that children are prepared for the 21st century economy.

GPE convenings are powerful platforms for developing action agendas, co-creating solutions and launching initiatives. Getting involved in a convening can help companies determine the best ways to bring capabilities and assets to bear, based on what countries need most. The convenings bring companies together with high-level ministry of education officials and other major players in the education space, both local and global. GPE convenings are action-oriented, developing specific ways companies can contribute toward changing the course of education in GPE partner countries—and connecting companies with partners to help make that change happen.

Girls’ education is the focus of an initiative to leverage business competencies that is taking shape now, growing out of a convening co-hosted by GPE and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. An immediate action agenda item: to mobilize and apply marketing prowess and other assets to combat harmful social norms that keep girls from school.

2. Leverage GPE as a co-investor

Through GPE, there are outstanding opportunities to compound your financial investments in education.

- Trigger a one-to-one match for programs you support in partner countries: When you invest in CSR initiatives in partner countries, GPE makes available dollar-for-dollar matching grants for qualified projects or programs related to country-identified strategic priorities.

- Trigger a one-to-one match for a contribution to girls’ education: Gender equity is still far off for many countries. A special GPE dedicated funding initiative focuses on girls’ education in partner countries. You can have a direct impact on girls’ education by contributing through this mechanism—which triggers a 1:1 match from the GPE Fund.

- Earmark GPE Fund contributions for specific countries: Companies have an opportunity to contribute to the GPE Fund and earmark those contributions to support specific countries of interest. By pooling investments through GPE, initiatives are not only well-focused but well-financed and go further.

“Across the public and private sectors, we all have critical roles to play in tackling the global learning challenges before us and find paths forward together.”
—Michael Froman, Vice President and Chairman, Strategic Growth, Mastercard
“Innovation is indispensable in this crisis. GPE’s work creating active partnerships with private sector players in Africa is a highly valuable way of compounding innovation in education.”

—Strive Masiyiwa, Founder and Group Chairman, Econet

APPLYING BUSINESS STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES:

Advancing Girls’ Education

Together with the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development office, a GPE convening brought senior executives from the business world together with high-level ministry of education officials. The objective: Explore ways that companies can align social responsibility and related work in education with countries’ national strategies and priorities aimed at getting more girls in school and learning. The Dialogue produced an action agenda for the business community. It also launched a process that is developing specific initiatives. Participating ministries were Kenya, Maldives and Nigeria. From the business community are leaders from Rotary International, and companies including Econet, Ecobank, PwC UK and Vodafone.

TRANSFORM EDUCATION

By making ambitious pledges, and by providing support through corporate social responsibility initiatives with and through GPE, leaders are raising their hands to protect past gains, pursue future progress and unlock every child’s full potential. Together we can create a more peaceful, secure, sustainable and equal world for all, powered by education.