

# Building Resilience: Transforming and Financing Education after the COVID-19 Pandemic



**H.E. Jakaya Kikwete,**  
Board Chair, Global Partnership  
for Education and former  
President of Tanzania

**The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a massive emergency in global education, threatening the futures of millions of girls and boys. World leaders and international organisations have sounded alarms over steep learning losses, increased drop-out rates and children missing out on what is often their only meal of the day because their schools were shut.**

Sadly, the crisis existed well before the pandemic; countries were not spending enough on education and low- and middle-income countries faced a severe learning crisis, with more than half of all 10-year-olds unable to read and understand a simple story.

The pandemic then dramatically exposed the vulnerability of education systems worldwide. It also revealed the central role schools play in their communities, well beyond learning itself. More than 370 million children globally missed out on school meals during the

months of closures. For other children, isolation at home also left them exposed to physical violence. And for too many girls, the crisis brought early marriage that will deny them a chance of ever resuming their education.

Transforming education systems so that they are fully inclusive and resilient to crisis should be the foremost priority for all governments across the Commonwealth and the world. True change demands that we prioritise education as being crucial to recovery and development, matching that commitment with increased domestic funding that will deliver real transformation, beginning with our most vulnerable children.

In Commonwealth countries, as with other parts of the world, teachers and school administrations were unprepared when hit by the abrupt and sweeping impacts of COVID-19 and were forced to quickly devise learning alternatives. For its part, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) quickly mobilised more than \$500



**// The international community should be redoubling its efforts to provide support to education in low-income countries, rather than redirecting it elsewhere.”**

million to support partner countries with planning and implementing their responses to the pandemic. This funding is helping governments sustain learning for up to 355 million children in 66 countries, while also building the resilience of education systems to cope with future shocks.

But with COVID-19 waning, such emergency assistance is also nearing an end. The international community should be redoubling its efforts to provide support to education in low-income countries rather than redirecting it elsewhere.

Ultimately, however, education depends on domestic funding. Even amid crisis, governments must put education among their highest priorities when allocating domestic resources and

deliver on every child’s fundamental right to 12 years of quality schooling.

Before the pandemic, GPE partner countries in 2019 directed just 18 per cent of total government expenditure to education. However, around one-third of these expenditures was judged to be inefficient. This is why GPE uses incentives and results-based financing to support governments in both increasing domestic spending and ensuring that it is spent equitably and efficiently.

In recognising the need to attract more and better financing to education, GPE offers innovative and catalytic financial tools such as the GPE Multiplier. Partner countries can use the promise of matching funds from the Multiplier to mobilise new and additional investment in education programmes. Since 2018,

GPE has allocated \$458 million in Multiplier grants to 39 countries, unlocking more than \$1.9 billion in additional co-financing from a range of partners, including foundations and multilateral development banks.

Amid rising economic uncertainty, debt sustainability is rapidly becoming more challenging for many low- and middle-income countries. The global community needs to be doing more to ensure that education budgets are not sacrificed as fiscal belts tighten. The Multiplier’s Debt2Ed feature allows partner countries to leverage debt restructuring into additional resources that are applied directly to education.

Tools like these give GPE partner countries the ability to expand their fiscal space significantly in ways that

do not drive up their debt burden. What is needed now is the political determination to recognise and overcome the barriers that deny an education to children most at risk: girls, children living in poverty or with disabilities and those forced to flee conflict or climate change.

There are some positive signs. In the past year, 20 GPE partner countries

signed on to the Heads of State Declaration on Education Finance, a statement of intent to allocate at least 20 per cent of national spending to education. More countries need to join their ranks.

The COVID-19 pandemic created the largest education calamity in our lifetime. Recovery will depend on determined local leadership

and investment, strengthened by coordinated, sustained and innovative international support. But recovery is not sufficient. Driving education system transformation is at the heart of how we work and GPE will continue to leverage our global, and national relationships in support of our partner countries in ensuring that all their children learn and learn well. ■

**// Driving education system transformation is at the heart of how we work and GPE will continue to leverage our global and national relationships in support of our partner countries in ensuring that all their children learn and learn well."**



# Commonwealth Educational Report 2023

University of Venda, South Africa



Dr. Bernard Nthambeleni,  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal,  
University of Venda

In commemoration of its 40th anniversary, UNIVEN shares success stories and contributes to shaping the future. Over its four decades of existence, the University has produced many graduates who hold positions of responsibility and influence in politics, business, and society in general.



## VISION

University Leading in Engaged Scholarship

## MISSION

The University of Venda produces graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive



**University of Venda**

*Creating Future Leaders*

 University of Venda  
 @univenofficial