

Interview with Julia Gillard - Educaid.be Conference, 18 May 2017

What are the benefits of investing in education?

Today, we face a global learning crisis. More than 263 million children of primary and secondary school age are out of school, and 130 million more can barely read or write, even though they are attending primary school.

Without immediate and dramatic action to invest more in education, more than half the world's upcoming youth generation will simply not have the skills and knowledge to work and thrive in the 21st century.

Their predicament is especially acute when you consider that tomorrow's jobs will require higher, skill levels than ever. An estimated 2 billion jobs will be lost by 2050 due to automatization and technology. These higher skills will in most cases require at least a secondary education, it follows, then, that children in the poorest countries who aren't currently in primary and secondary school will have little opportunity to break out of poverty and desperation they and their families face.

Inequality and joblessness, especially among young people, have been cited for several years as top global risk factors by the World Economic Forum.

The stakes are high. If African countries can substantially expand the pool of children with the basic education they deserve, these countries could reap an enormous social and economic dividend from the energy and talent of its young people. If not, they face significant potential economic losses, brain-drain and social and political unrest that could keep at least a generation or more from prosperity and stability.

The benefits of investing in education are clear. Individual earnings rise by about 10 percent for each additional year of schooling a child receives; and if every child in low- income countries completes secondary school by 2030, income per capita will increase by as much as 75 percent.

What is GPE's role in improving quality basic education?

The Global Partnership for Education, the only global fund dedicated to basic education, GPE is uniquely equipped to help low-income countries do the hard, patient work of creating strong education systems that enable all children to go to school and learn.

With more than a decade and a half of experience, GPE knows what it takes for countries to make robust national plans that guide the creation of a strong education system.

First, GPE supports developing country governments' efforts to analyze the existing conditions in its education sector and to determine the scale of need.

GPE also helps bring all the relevant parties – including government, donors, local civil society and think tanks, teachers and private sector philanthropists – into a single planning process that ensures their efforts are consistent and complementary.

And GPE funding gives governments the resources to implement the initiatives spelled out in their education plans.

GPE amplifies donor investments to break down the biggest barriers to education (especially for girls and the poorest and most disadvantaged students) including: fragility and conflict, one of the leading reasons children aren't in school; scarcity of early childhood care and education programs that

prepare children to perform well in school and in later life; lack of quality and appropriate learning materials; gender friendly infrastructure; and initiatives that make schooling affordable.

Moreover, GPE incentivizes developing country governments to increase the share of their national budgets that goes to education.

[Do you think that ICT makes education more qualitative and inclusive?](#)

If information technology is well-tailored to local contexts and integrated into the curriculum, it can provide additional, powerful resources for teacher development and student learning.

But while digital technology cannot replace well trained, qualified teachers, it can certainly extend and deepen students' learning.

To be effective, ICT must be built into strong education systems, and the benefits of the digital revolution must be equally spread. If it is not, the digital revolution has the potential to intensify inequalities and exclusion.

[Why is 2017 so important for education?](#)

More than a decade and a half of intensive investment into the global education sector has yielded encouraging results, including significantly fewer out-of-school children and stronger gender equity in the education systems of many countries. If we fail to seize on that momentum, we will fall short of reaching the goal of education for all. We also put at risk the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, whose progress depends on more of the world's children getting a quality education.

The GPE replenishment marks the beginning of a new era in education financing to reverse the trend of declining aid for education. It is an opportunity to show a new commitment not just to the children of the developing world but to global security and prosperity.

Change is possible, but donors must step up: traditional donors, new donors, philanthropists. Education aid needs to increase AND be better targeted, notably by strengthening education systems.

Developing countries themselves also need to spend more of their domestic budgets (20% of budget expenditures) on education. While many of them are stepping up they need help from external partners.

The International Commission on Educational Opportunity, on which I served alongside many global business, former government and NGO leaders, has recommended that GPE receive \$2 billion a year in donor funding by 2020 and \$4 billion a year by 2030.

To get to this goal, GPE is asking for \$3.1 billion from existing and new donors for its upcoming replenishment. This level of funding for three years (from 2018 to 2020) will enable GPE to support better learning and equity outcomes in 89 countries, which are home to 78 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.

Donors – new and existing – can accelerate education progress more than ever in history. Doing so is essential not only to future of hundreds of millions of children but also to countries everywhere that will benefit when we give people the education they need and deserve. We hope they will all provide strong support for GPE's replenishment.