USAID Office of Education

SUMMARY CONSULTATION REPORT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON FINANCING GLOBAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

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Education Performance Improvement, Communications, and Knowledge (EPIC)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

DALY	Disability Adjusted Life Year
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPIC	Education Performance Improvement, Communication and Knowledge
G2G	Government to Government
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TRG	Training Resources Group
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

BACKGROUND

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (The Education Commission) is a major new global initiative engaging world leaders, policymakers and researchers to develop a renewed and compelling investment case and financing pathway for achieving equal opportunity for children and young people. For the first year, the objectives are to bring together the best global evidence about what works to expand and improve learning opportunities, agree upon an investment case and agenda for action, and inspire and persuade leaders – at all levels and sectors – to action.

The Education Commission has invited stakeholders to host consultation sessions to gather input into the issues addressed by the Commission's work. U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) consultation process involved gathering feedback from field and Washington-based education officers. This process was supported through the Education Performance Improvement, Communications and Knowledge (EPIC) contract, a USAID-funded contract mechanism, implemented by Training Resources Group, Inc. (TRG). TRG provided logistical, secretarial and facilitation support to the consultation process.

On April 5, USAID hosted an interactive webinar with seven education officers from USAID mission countries, and on April 18, held a focus group with five USAID education office leaders based in Washington, DC. The participants collectively represented more than a century of education sector experience across six global regions. They explored the following questions:

1. **Given that there are clear benefits of education, why do you think people have not acted and invested in education at the level needed?**

2. **What do you think is the biggest obstacle to raising education quality in developing countries? How can we overcome this obstacle?**

3. **For those countries that have made the greatest improvements in education in recent years, what do you think have been the critical factors in their success?**

4. **How do you think education/school will look different in 2030? What implications does this have for the education sector?**

5. **What will be the most important (new) sources of financing for global education over the next decades? How could these sources be harnessed?**

The following sections present a summary of the feedback obtained for the above questions through the consultation process.

1. GIVEN THAT THERE ARE CLEAR BENEFITS OF EDUCATION, WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE HAVE NOT ACTED AND INVESTED IN EDUCATION AT THE LEVEL NEEDED?

<u>Education is almost universally perceived as being a good investment, however, education systems are perceived as being poorly governed, poorly managed and inefficient.</u> Evidence and anecdotes of poor performance, lack of transparency and accountability are pervasive up and down the system, in both centralized and decentralized systems. Education systems, not education, suffer from a crisis of credibility and trust, which creates disincentives for investment.

<u>Investments have not increased because policy makers and stakeholders are not certain of, or do not immediately see, the results of those investments.</u> Unlike other sectors such as health, education does not have a short and direct relationship between its inputs and outputs. For example, in the health sector, policymakers and the public know what vaccines cost, and that vaccines will directly diminish the occurrence of certain diseases. However, in the education sector, increasing or rearranging the inputs for schools (desks, chairs, books, teacher training, class size, teacher salaries, etc.) does not always result in changed learning outcomes. School quality and learning are much more complex and dependent on other contextual and "non-education" factors (e.g., poverty, health-related issues, community and parental engagement).

If we were to measure health using a holistic approach in terms of wellness and not just the absence of illness – which many recognize as valid – then health also has similar problems regarding inputs, outputs, and measurement. Whereas it is oft repeated that the health sector is "ahead" of the education sector in systems, resources, political commitment, policies and institutional arrangements, the parallels can be overstated. It is important to learn from other sectors about what works in systems reform, service delivery and how they address access, equity and quality. However, the benefit will be less in applying recipes and more in understanding context and how change occurs.

> *We have a hard time budgeting and accounting and we're really inefficient. When you look at the system you think, will my money really get to that child? If you see inefficiency, that's not where you want to put your money.*

<u>Educational investment, therefore, suffers from mutually reinforcing disincentives: a lack of compelling evidence, awareness of what works, champions and a critical mass of increased and sustained support.</u>

If awareness of evidence and what works increases, and there is a positive perception of return on investment, then engagement, political will and commitment will increase. This will make a compelling case for more resources.

Below are recurring disincentives among different stakeholders (host country governments, donors and private sector) that explain, in part, why they have not acted and invested in education at the level needed.

Host Country Government

<u>Host country governments often face a range of disincentives.</u> Countries in protracted conflict or emerging from conflict often suffer from depleted economies, disrupted systems and infrastructure in disrepair, resulting in a large number of hard-to-reach populations. Even stable countries that have resources, are often confronted with intense sector competition and an abundance of demands. Resources that are made available for education frequently *"do not have the data to prove if they were or were not spent efficiently."* Furthermore, the modalities of donor funding can be disincentives for host countries. *"It is ironic that many governments will do anything they can to get a Global Partnership for Education grant. Even though much of our bilateral and donor funding is considerably larger, there is very little engagement. It's telling that there is a different incentive structure going on."*

Donors

<u>Donors have conflicting priorities and interests that may not align with host countries.</u> They often have short-term time frames to see results that may take 10-20 years in the education system and unrealistically high expectations for host government and field realities. Donors have been in search of the right role and investment*, but investments have not gone up because it's easier to answer the question "what am I buying" with other sectors. We don't have adequate costing information regarding policy choices and their results, and this inhibits donors*.

Curriculum development is seen to be part and parcel of reaching strategic learning outcomes, but donors should be respectful of the national perspective. Tensions often exist between donor technical expertise and local political sensitivities surrounding education. *Maybe we're over-stepping our bounds, curriculum is sensitive. Ownership lies in the host-country government, so it is difficult for us to dive in fully*.

Donor fragmentation inhibits synergies across investments, has high transaction costs for host governments, and can cause confusion and competition up and down the system (from the school to districts to provinces to national ministries). Lack of coordination has been a major issue over time. Within the last 10 years, donors have begun to talk and work with each other, coordinate and break down siloes. There is a growing recognition that no single actor can bring about the scale and kinds of change that are proportionate to the scale and complexities of the problems and challenges.

The Private Sector

<u>Lack of certainty on return on investment</u>. The private sector faces a progression of disincentives, one of which is the lack of certainty on the "return on investment" in education. It is frequently not evident what education inputs and processes will yield the most learning outcomes. Furthermore, many national tax structures do not build in incentives for private sector investment in education and *"often*

the private sector does not know how to engage with the government and distrusts government systems, especially in education."

The role of the private sector is increasing in many countries, bringing some degree of relief to resource scarce environments as well as the hope for an alternative to perceived inefficiencies of government delivery systems. On the other hand, experience and evidence suggests that privatization may increase access, but this increased access is accompanied by increased inequalities and inequities in some contexts. The government needs to recognize its primary role to provide education for all. It also needs to recognize the important role of the private sector. The government can play a critical role in providing the regulatory framework and oversight to the private sector, particularly, those that are delivering education services.

2. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO RAISING EDUCATION QUALITY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES? HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THIS OBSTACLE?

<u>The lack of professionalization of teaching and teachers is seen as the biggest obstacle, and the way to overcome this is by recruiting and training the best students to become teachers</u>. One participant noted, *"Education is not valued, and seen as a second class profession in many countries. In Ghana, people say they go into education as a last choice."*

All participants were in agreement that there are not enough appropriately trained teachers. In part this is due to the capacity of the teacher training system, but a bigger issue is that society does not value teachers enough. Low teacher salaries are a disincentive therefore society does not attract the best of each generation. *Teachers are key to what happens in school, and in every country I've been to, there's an issue around attracting and retaining teachers.* (The 2007 McKinsey study on "What the world's best school systems have in common" highlights: 1) getting the right people into teaching; 2) developing them into effective teachers; and 3) ensuring that the system is equipped so that it enables teaching to support all learners.)

<u>The lack of political will creates obstacles to implementation up and down the system.</u> Not only does change lack support and direction, resistance or passivity undermines the efforts of other stakeholders. Good policies are either not developed or not adopted, and those that are adopted are not implemented. Education systems are embedded within complex societies, political economies, and vast cultural and physical geographies.

<u>Solution</u>: Political will has to extend all the way from national leadership to schools and classrooms, providing and driving the kind of institutional commitment and level of resources that leads to change at a scale that is more responsible and significant. Leaders must be committed to the national education system, but *decision-makers and those in positions of power are often disconnected, don't have children in the public schools and/or their own children are in private schools. Perhaps if their kids were in public schools, they would feel more accountability or urgency.*

<u>Corruption and the absence of transparency and accountability leads to distrust and the ineffective use of resources.</u> At all levels of the school system, transparency and accountability in financing and management are needed to inspire trust in the system. Stakeholders at all levels need information, data and evidence to make, guide and monitor decision-making, especially around resources.

<u>Solution</u>: Organizations need to apply political pressure and loan conditions when they are disbursing funds. Credible and widely shared data are needed to monitor progress vis-à-vis goals. The innovative use of the media can enhance outreach and engagement and shed light on what is happening within the

system. Perhaps a financial expenditure indicator and/or quality or performance index is needed in education, like health has in the DALYs (Disability Adjusted Life Year).

School report cards have been tried in different parts of the world, where user-friendly ways to engage parents, students, and communities in the monitoring and evaluation of school quality and progress has been developed. Traditionally, the emphasis in education management information systems (EMIS) and other systems has been on producing macro level data for national level discussions and measuring national progress. However, change also needs to take place and be owned, championed and monitored at the school and classroom levels. Timely and accurate data and information are needed to inform, empower and engage local stakeholders to take actions to improve school quality and learning.

<u>Lack of donor focus, coordination and clarity of roles.</u> Donor interests vary widely: school quality, early grade reading, teacher professionalization, systems reform (at different levels), pre-service education, in-service support, instructional leadership of head teachers/principals, teacher clusters in school districts, information management systems, parental engagement, community engagement, children and youth agency, and new schools/active schools, to name a few. This variety of approaches, if not linked, leads to fragmentation, duplication and inefficiencies in raising education quality. While each approach may have merits, a systemic, coordinated and country-led approach, with a focus on learners and learning outcomes, needs to frame donor support.

Donors have pushed reforms that are perhaps laudable, but not always owned, realistic, contextually appropriate, or sustainable. The capacity of the education system has not kept pace with student population growth. *As you've had a massive increase in enrollment, you've exploded the system's ability to rationally intake and provide quality teaching and training. The supply hasn't met the demand. The system is stretched to its limit and is inflexible.* Furthermore, the education community has had difficulties in measuring quality.

<u>Solution</u>**:** Within the context of the Paris Declaration, the Addis Conference, and the sustainable development goals (SDGs), donors need to rethink what it means to support nationally owned, led and driven solutions – which are the ones that matter if we are serious about scale and sustainability. Led by national stakeholders, an understanding of, and agreement on, education outcomes and priorities for the country should guide implementation and resources. *Together, we should identify two or three things we want to tackle in the next five years.* Donors and host country governments need to prioritize the cluster of approaches that are the best areas to focus on in a context, and have an understanding of what is the appropriate sequencing. *Solutions are not always either/or. Sometimes you have to do multiple things at the same time.*

3. FOR THOSE COUNTRIES THAT HAVE MADE THE GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS IN EDUCATION IN RECENT YEARS, WHAT DO YOU THINK HAVE BEEN THE CRITICAL FACTORS IN THEIR SUCCESS?

Ministry and centrally led processes that map, engage and coordinate stakeholders, at each level and across levels. Successful strategies have brought people together to agree upon goals and/or a vision and joint actions across a range of stakeholders, including ministry officials, teachers, head teachers/principals, and even students. Stakeholders also include parents, teacher unions, community leaders, book publishers, local private sector, local civil society, and various education governmental agencies (special education, curriculum development, teacher service commission, in-service and pre-service teacher education entities, etc.)

Bottom up processes that engage parents, teachers, communities, and students as agents of change and educational quality. In Colombia, Nicaragua and other countries, the "escuelas nuevas"/ escuelas activas" (new schools/active schools) movement has resulted in significant learning outcomes on a scale that goes beyond micro regions. Similarly, non-formal primary school in Bangladesh and six other countries represents an alternative model to education service delivery for disadvantaged children who are left out of the formal education system.

Education strategies/education sector plans that are nationally and ministry led and driven. *Nothing happens unless the ministry is 100% leading the effort, and the donors are leading from behind. This may have been critical to the success in Morocco.* Similarly, South Korea and Chile are examples where governments were clearly in the driver's seat and had great improvements and made comparatively strong advances in achieving the MDGs in education by 2015. In both cases, there was:

- one nationally-driven, education sector plan,
- donors led from behind

Prioritize early grade reading (EGRA). It is impossible to succeed in school without knowing how to read. Students who do not read are more likely to drop of school than their reading peers. In Guatemala, World Bank reports that early grade reading competency is critical for continued retention and success in future grades. Failing to learn to read lowers attendance, increases drop-out rates, and results in an unsuccessful school experience that can limit potential. In the Philippines, EGRA data was used to design a pilot early grade reading activity and the follow-on scale up, with an overall improvement of 55 percent in students' reading skills. In Nepal, Afghanistan, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, evidence-based reading programs are enhancing students' reading skills and outperforming programs not grounded in those approaches.

Investment in broad-based human resource development is key. Countries made strategic decisions in how they thought about funding and the delivery of education. They had a pragmatic approach and universal primary education was important. Secondary education gained greater government support once the economy was developed.

Professionalization of teachers. Teachers are critical for a country's development. Donors can help governments learn from the experiences of Finland, Singapore and other approaches, and adapt those learnings to the context of their countries. Latin American countries are trying alternative pathways to the teaching profession, and transforming in-service and pre-service training.

Making education more accessible by abolishing school fees. African countries made education free and declared no school fees. This dramatically improved access, but today there is a crisis in quality.

4. HOW DO YOU THINK EDUCATION/SCHOOLS WILL LOOK DIFFERENT IN 2030? WHAT IMPLICATIONS DOES THIS HAVE FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR?

Education and schools will see an increase in the kinds and qualities of divides in 2030. As the role of technology and web-based learning increases in education, the largest language groups will have more access and the smaller language groups will not find the same amount of materials in their language. These language gaps will create more of a digital divide. The greater economic divide will contribute to growing inequality. The inequality of girls' and boys' education will take different forms in different contexts, with boys falling behind in some contexts, and girls in others. The rural and urban divide will still exist, as will the divide between large urban centers and smaller towns. More private schools are seen as both a cause and an effect of the divides and inefficiencies. Conflict and crisis create more out of school children and youth, and the same generation in different countries and contexts grows up with dramatically different opportunities.

The role of the market and private sector in driving education and delivering services will be an increasing trend. This will take many forms: philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and the delivery of education services by for profit companies. Furthermore, the market will, to a great degree, drive and define what skills are needed, curricula, and the preparation of children and youth for the market. The perception of government inefficiency will lead to greater support for an increase in private schooling. Many of the gains in enrollment in the past twenty years have been in community schools and alternative systems. Achieving the SDGs will require new approaches. The challenge from now to 2030 will be to continue the gains in access, but with quality, equity, and relevance.

Implications for the Education Sector

Prioritize learning environments that work best for children. We should be focused on what learning environments work best for children. *Learning environments should be tailored to best fit the children. For example, different school calendars, curriculums tailored to the local environment and education in the mother tongue.*

Find ways to mobilize more resources from varied sources. Who should pay, how much and why? The bulk of resources will come domestically. In the local context, there are a variety of potential funding sources such as parents, taxes from communities, businesses, etc. Donors and governments need to be make a concerted effort to first identify these resources and then mobilize them using appropriate and innovative financing mechanisms.

Work on the "non-educational" solutions and contextual issues. If we are to address the growing numbers of children and youth in crisis and conflict environments - the extreme poor and most

marginal - strategies need to be holistic and take into account areas beyond education, such as health, economic issues, infrastructure and safety.

Improve access with quality across the life cycle of learning. The education sector will need to make a case for early childhood care, education and development, primary education, upper primary and secondary education, and tertiary education. *With population growth and globalization, the amount of children and youth who will seek access to education is going to grow exponentially, and what we have now is not going to be able to keep up with that growth and the requirements for quality. So, how kids will have access to education is going to look different.*

Focus more on change and transformation. *It is difficult in our sector to make change. Many schools have not changed how they are organized and how instruction is given.* In order to be effective in 2030, the sector needs to be intentional about making change and be bold about not just tweaking the existing system.

5. WHAT WILL BE THE MOST IMPORTANT (NEW) SOURCES OF FINANCING FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION OVER THE NEXT DECADES? HOW COULD THESE SOURCES BE HARNESSED?

Effective education systems are funded by broad based tax systems. We must recognize that education is a right, but it costs all stakeholders something. Increasing taxes and domestic revenue (government and households) is a key source of resources that needs to be better mobilized. Other important sources of finance will come from the private sector, including community assets. Diaspora funding and remittances will also be funding sources.

The power of evidence in mobilizing resources and driving change. Until we demonstrate and bring to light the greater and comparative efficiencies and effectiveness of specific education inputs and processes, we will have limited success in harnessing more resources. Solutions that require less money need to be explored.

> *If we could focus on efficiency, we could double our impact. The education sector needs to know the data, know how much things cost, have a monitoring system, identify and share what works, and know the saturation rates. We need systems that are trackable all the way down. We need better ways of ensuring that the monies you think are being expended are being expended (transparency/accountability). The country education system should collect the data. Look at health, they don't tell the countries to support the DHS. Other sectors have put more money into global performance data. Health delivers services, but our job is not to do that. Everyone can be on the same page when you have performance data.*

Support inclusive spaces for dialogue, decision and action. An appropriate role of the USAID Education Sector and other donors within host country/national contexts - where the discussion is about the gap in finance, access, quality, and equity – involves using their convening power to bring stakeholders (global and national, at all levels) to the table to share evidence and knowledge on what works, and explore more effective government-to-government (G2G) and multilateral programming. By supporting "spaces" for national and local stakeholders to have a conversation about the kind of education and future they want, and by bringing more and better evidence to the table regarding what works in education, interest and ownership of the SDGs and national goals and aspirations will grow. A trust in the education system and a confidence in policy choices and the cost effectiveness of certain education investments will grow. Greater domestic stakeholder engagement, commitment, and resources will grow to make take good practices and policies to scale, and make national and local goals a reality.