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Fulfilling our collective responsibility: Financing global public goods in education

This paper argues that global public goods in education – such as internationally comparable data and statistics, basic research addressing the challenge of improving learning outcomes for sustainable development, and networks for peer learning – are in short supply, poorly funded and rarely coordinated. It calls on the international community to develop a joint vision and finance their provision sustainably to alleviate major constraints to achieving Education 2030 targets.

Key messages:

- Global public goods are the institutions, mechanisms and outcomes that provide benefits to all, transcend borders and extend across generations.
- One cross-cutting global public good is knowledge for global development. In the case of education, such knowledge takes three forms: comparable data; research on issues of global relevance; and peer learning networks. These need to build on local capacity.
- Multilateral institutions, and the World Bank in particular, have played a major role in scaling up interventions related to global public goods. But such support has been plagued increasingly by lack of vision and a stronger focus on short-term results.
- Financing modalities that focus on short-term results, which also come with increased donor control and alignment to their strategic objectives, may not support the purpose global public goods are supposed to serve.
- Successful global public goods initiatives in other sectors suggest that their case has to be championed at the global level through strong institutional and intellectual leadership, and that such initiatives need to stay flexible to motivate continual fundraising.
- It is time for strong institutional and intellectual leadership, building on a consultative approach, to help prioritize a range of global public goods in education that are fit for the purpose of achieving SDG 4 and establish the appropriate governance and funding structures to support their provision. Examples are provided as a starting point for discussion.

Global public goods are institutions, mechanisms and outcomes that provide near universal benefits, reach across borders and extend across generations (Kaul et al., 1999). They share two main properties with other public goods: they are non-rivalrous, which means that if one person consumes them, the ability of other persons to consume them as well is not diminished; and they are non-excludable, which means that it is difficult, if not impossible, to exclude any individual from consuming that good.

However, global public goods differ from others in that the benefits they confer do not stop at national borders. The International Task Force on Global Public Goods, established by France and Sweden in 2003 in response to the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals, defined them as 'issues that are broadly conceived as important to the international community, that for the most part cannot or will not be adequately addressed by individual countries acting alone and that are defined through a broad international consensus or a legitimate process of decision-making.' (Zedillo et al., 2006).

In its 2006 report, the International Task Force focused on five key global public goods, which are echoed in some of the key targets of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development: controlling infectious diseases; tackling climate change; enhancing international financial stability; strengthening international trade; and achieving peace and security. But the Task Force also drew attention to a sixth cross-cutting global public good: generating knowledge for global development. Knowledge is the clearest example of a global public good, since, in principle, its diffusion should not stop at national borders (World Bank, 1999; Dalrymple, 2003). The generation and sharing of knowledge and information is arguably the global public good that has most direct relevance to the education sector.

This paper aims to help achieve consensus on a definition of global public goods in education. With the objective of identifying constraints in providing global public goods in education, it discusses experiences of the provision of similar goods in other sectors. And it reviews general trends in the financing of global public goods and the implications for financing such goods in education.

Defining global public goods in education

It is important to say from the outset that poor countries have significant capacity constraints that prevent them from using knowledge and information to their full

benefit. This problem is linked to the weaknesses of their education systems. Indeed, ensuring equitable attainment of high levels of education of good quality, in and of itself, generates benefits that transcend borders. These benefits include poverty reduction and economic growth, improved health outcomes, climate resilience, women's empowerment, political consciousness and conflict prevention (UNESCO, 2013, 2016a).

The lack of quality education and the perpetuation of low skills can be framed as a global ill that is as dangerous as the spread of infectious diseases or war and insecurity. But since the delivery of education takes place at the national level, this paper does not focus on education in general. Instead, it looks at specific types of knowledge generation that need international coordination in their financing and delivery. For the purposes of this paper, global public goods in education are defined as belonging to three broad groups:

- Data, including standards and measurement tools, which help monitor and report progress against common international commitments.
- Research, which generates knowledge that is critical for addressing the constraints education systems face for contributing to sustainable development.
- Networks, which diffuse existing knowledge and help countries exchange lessons from the implementation of education policies for capacity development and system improvement.

A common thread linking these types of global public goods is the comparative perspective in addressing global education challenges.

This definition shares several features with that proposed in the report of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity that had also recommended greater investment in global public goods (Education Commission, 2016). However, in that proposal, networks, which are branded as an 'ecosystem' to 'promote cross-border learning and sharing of innovations', are seen as mechanisms to strengthen the capacity of non-state organizations to collaborate and scale innovations (Boston Consulting Group, 2018). While acknowledging the contributions these actors can make, this paper focuses on the respective roles of institutions that already have the mandate to propose actions to resolve global challenges and of governments that bear the ultimate responsibility to fulfil the right to education.

DATA

Internationally comparable data and statistics have always been critical to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of national education systems and highlight the issues that need the most attention. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) measurement and monitoring agenda poses fresh challenges, because it expands the scope of its predecessor, Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG 2), in at least three respects: it covers education levels beyond primary; it aims to assess multiple learning outcomes; and it estimates inequality by several characteristics.

The increased scope and the relatively large number of indicators compared with the MDGs present a considerable challenge for countries in monitoring their progress towards SDG 4 and for the international community in comparing relative progress. This challenge is complicated by the fact that there is no established methodology for several indicators in the SDG 4 monitoring framework.

The process for compiling data and reporting progress has an established architecture. Clear international mandates have been given to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), with the support of other custodian agencies in selected cases, for compiling data, and to the *Global Education Monitoring Report* team for reporting progress. However, as will be argued below, even the minimum activities needed are insufficiently financed. In addition, efforts are not adequately coordinated at the international level to facilitate the systematic production of internationally comparable data.

Increasingly, there is also a better understanding of the data collection efforts required. The expanded scope of the measurement and monitoring agenda calls for many more sources of information than was the case before 2015. These include assessments of different learning outcomes, household and school surveys, as well as special tools for particular aspects of the agenda. However, data collection is plagued by problems of financing and coordination. A recent UIS study estimated that the global annual cost of collecting data for the SDG 4 monitoring framework is US\$280 million (UIS, 2018). Better synergies between different sources are clearly needed.

As a result of these challenges in data collection and compilation, major gaps exist that preclude the estimation of baselines and jeopardize the monitoring of progress. In 2017, with several of the 43 SDG 4 indicators still only having provisional definitions, no countries had data for 10 indicators. For 19 indicators, 50% or fewer of all countries reported data. Only 7 indicators (one global and six

thematic) had more than 75% national coverage (UIS, 2017). These gaps do not just prevent global monitoring; they also thwart policy dialogue over education system priorities.

RESEARCH

One underestimated challenge of the expanded SDG 4 monitoring framework is that many of the proposed indicators do not yet have strong analytical underpinnings. Their relevance across countries and cultures has not been sufficiently investigated. For example, SDG target 4.1 calls for ensuring that ‘all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes’. Agreeing what these ‘relevant and effective learning outcomes’ are and how a ‘minimum level of proficiency’ is to be set is one – if only the best documented – of many challenges of comparative educational measurement research.

More generally, SDG 4 puts education systems in front of their responsibilities to respond to the challenges of sustainable development. Two sets of challenges stand out. First, raising learning outcomes in the world’s poorest countries, where currently up to nine in ten children of primary school age do not achieve minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, according to one definition. Second, identifying the skills, including social and emotional ones, needed globally for sustainable development and how education systems can deliver them.

Pioneering research that could help the current generation escape from a trap of no functional skills is taking place but almost exclusively in rich countries. In the few cases where innovations are carried out in poor countries, they are dominated by researchers from rich countries and the implications for policy are not taken up by the countries most affected.

This problem is not exclusive to education. In health, the Global Forum for Health Research has argued that about 10% of global health research resources are spent on diseases that affect 90% of the world (Zedillo et al., 2006). In 2012, biomedical research and development expenditure was US\$242 billion, of which nearly two-thirds was funded by the private sector. Less than 2% of that was spent on research on diseases of particular concern to low and middle income countries. In 2014, of all public funding for neglected disease research and development, 71% (or US\$1.5 billion) went to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, while diarrhoeal diseases received just 5%, even though they result in the highest loss of disability-adjusted life years (Reynolds, 2016).

In agriculture, subsistence crops are particularly important for food security, yet both private and public research investment is concentrated in those commodities that are most likely to be traded. In 2011, over 1,300 researchers in sub-Saharan Africa focused on major tradeable cereals such as rice, maize and wheat, while fewer than 800 researchers studied all other roots and tubers. Private sector spending focuses on cash crops.

NETWORKS

Even when data and research results are available, weak capacity thwarts the improvement of education system performance in poor countries. Many aid programmes focus on strengthening capacity in education ministries but more could be done to help countries “acquire, adapt and use existing global and regional knowledge as well as to foster knowhow about how to address political economy constraints on implementation”. Interventions that facilitate peer learning and knowledge exchange through networks can play a key role in overcoming these constraints (Fredriksen, 2016).

Peer learning describes ‘public officials or other practitioners with some responsibility for reform design gaining practical insights into technical reform options and tactical modes of implementation from each other’ (Andrews and Manning, 2016). Such learning can occur through meetings, focused discussions (supported by expert papers or joint comparative assessments of education systems), experience sharing, formal training sessions and high quality technical support.

One option is to create thematic networks, such as the recently-established Early Childhood Development Action Network (Bassett and Nieto, 2017). Another option is to work through regional inter-governmental organizations. Many regions have common educational contexts and shared objectives. An interest in regional economic integration drives much of the comparative education policy work of these organizations. For example, in the European Union, the network of Eurydice national units acts as information hub on contextual factors and qualitative aspects of education systems. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization sponsors regional centres of excellence (UNESCO, 2017).

However, in other regions, such as in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia, where capacity development needs are bigger, such initiatives have not been sufficiently supported. More resources need to be dedicated to cover the considerable coordination costs of peer learning

mechanisms and allocated in a way that motivates countries to actively take part.

Other sectors have been more pro-active in responding to such needs. For example, the International Monetary Fund has established several regional technical assistance centres, of which six in sub-Saharan Africa, to improve the performance of economic and financial institutions (IMF, 2017). A group of countries focused on major health system reforms established the Joint Learning Network for Universal Health Coverage as a hub for research, support and exchange on implementing related reforms (JLN, 2018). The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery is a partnership that helps countries reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and adapt to climate change. It provides technical assistance grants, training and knowledge sharing to mainstream disaster and climate risk management in policies and strategies. One of its activities aims to improve school construction practices (GFDRR, 2015).

The supply of global public goods tends to be less than optimal, especially in education

The level of provision of global public goods is considered less than optimal. The problem is not only that some countries may free-ride on other countries’ efforts or that countries with weak capacity may not be able to support the overall effort.

Global public goods are as much political and social as they are economic constructs. Some governments may be unwilling to accept and support their production. For example, they may resist monitoring of their compliance with international agreements and may discourage production of comparable data that would allow this monitoring. Moreover, even if there is agreement on the ultimate objective, it may be difficult to reach consensus on what the right approach should be for delivering a global public good. And countries may differ on the priority they place on individual public goods: ‘What might be a highly desirable public good for one country or group of people might not be so for another’ (Zedillo et al., 2006).

Three additional problems stand out in the case of knowledge generation as a global public good. The first problem is institutional leadership. Historically, the supply of global public goods has depended on catalytic action from responsible leadership, which helped provide adequate financing and build effective institutions.

A review that fed into the report of the International Task Force assessed the capacity of lead agencies for each of the other five key global public goods to fulfil three core functions: “managing the setting of standards, policies and guidelines; overseeing surveillance, monitoring and reporting on implementation; and ensuring that an agenda for addressing emerging and future problems permits timely action by the international community”.

Six criteria were used as a basis for the assessment of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Security Council: the clarity of their mandates (including in relation to competing institutions), institutional governance, monitoring mechanisms, budget, human resources, and independent evaluation mechanism. It found most of them fit for their purpose (Shakow, 2006).

No institution was analysed on the knowledge public good perhaps because responsibility for its delivery is dispersed across many institutions. In the case of education, where UNESCO has a clear mandate, several reviews have pointed to resource and other constraints that limit its ability to fulfil core functions (Burnett, 2010; Menashy and Manion, 2016). In 2016-2017, the education sector in the organization’s headquarters had a budget of just US\$33 million from the obligatory contributions of member states (UNESCO, 2016b).

The second problem is the tradeoff between the free flow of knowledge and innovation. Although development is best supported when knowledge flows freely between countries, strict intellectual property rights protection mechanisms increase knowledge gaps between rich and poor countries. Efforts to promote innovation lead to the privatization of knowledge, which impinges on its role as a global public good (Maskus and Reichman, 2003).

The International Task Force recommended two types of interventions for knowledge generation. First, common knowledge platforms should be enhanced through international partnerships, in particular by building the global research and information capabilities that are needed to overcome some crucial problems in the poorest countries. Second, multilateral agreements should be made to provide access to basic science and technology to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and information to developing countries, whereby rich countries would help develop the capacity of poor countries to assimilate, diffuse and generate knowledge.

The third problem is the effect of an increasing focus on short-term results, which distort financing decisions, an issue that is addressed in the next three sections.

Financing global public goods requires a long-term perspective

It is not easy to estimate the level of financial support to global public goods because, as this discussion has already suggested, there is neither a globally accepted definition of global public goods nor any identifiers in official development assistance projects indicating whether they supported global public good objectives. One study estimated that US\$14 billion was spent in 2012 on development-related global public goods in four of the six areas identified by the International Task Force: global health, environment, peace and security, and data or research for global development (Birdsall and Diofasi, 2015).

Another estimate pieced together information on global public goods provision in health and education by combing through individual projects in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) database. In 2013, it was estimated that only 3% of aid to education (or US\$242 million) was spent on global public goods, compared to about one-fifth of aid to health (or US\$4.7 billion) (Schäferhoff and Burnett, 2016).

Global public goods are primarily funded by governments, mostly through their official development assistance programmes, whether bilateral or multilateral. Examples of specific channels include contributions to the United Nations and other international organizations for activities of global scope; spending by national or international organizations on global public goods activities, such as data collection and research; and contributions towards enforcing and monitoring international agreements with shared global benefits (Birdsall and Diofasi, 2015).

There is a strong case for using official development assistance to finance the provision of global public goods, as these support the process of development. However, most global public goods require ‘secure, sustainable and predictable resources’ (Jacquet and Marniesse, 2006). Country-specific projects, which are the standard funding modality, may be running counter to the objective of global public goods provision. Some critics call for the establishment of a new financing modality specific to global public goods, which would be separate from official development assistance. Funds would ideally come from

the national budgets of all countries rather than from the aid budgets of donor countries. A separate body would track the financing of global public goods, in the same way that OECD DAC tracks aid (Kaul, 2017a, 2017b).

MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE LED EFFORTS TO FUND GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

Multilateral development banks have historically played a central role in the provision of global public goods. The World Bank, in particular, has recognized that it needs to play a prominent role (Development Committee, 2007). More recently, one of the objectives of its governance reform, which reorganized its services into Global Practices and Cross Cutting Solutions Areas, was to ensure that its existing knowledge and expertise would more effectively fulfil global public good functions (Stoiljkovic and Hansen, 2014).

The World Bank has over the years either provided direct funding or managed the funding provided by other sources for global public goods. It is therefore instructive to trace the evolution of two key, if dissimilar, financing mechanisms: the self-funded Development Grant Facility (DGF) and the multiplicity of trust funds.

The rise and fall of the Development Grant Facility...

The DGF, which was established in 1997, was funded from the administrative budget of the World Bank and provided grants to support innovative global partnership programmes that could not be supported adequately through regular country-specific lending. It brought together the pre-existing Special Grant Programme and other activities funded by the Bank's net income. It enabled the World Bank to fund global and regional public goods with partners (World Bank, 1998).

In 2002, DGF-funded programmes were split into:

- Global public goods priorities (communicable diseases, environment, international financial architecture, trade and integration, information and knowledge).
- Corporate advocacy priorities (investment climate, public sector governance, empowerment and inclusion, education, health).

Most DGF-funded programmes supported knowledge, advocacy and standard-setting networks. In the case of education, DGF funded all three types of global or regional public goods as defined in this paper: data (for example, the UIS and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, IEA), research (for

example, the African Virtual University, AVU) and networks (for example, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa). In 20 years, the DGF provided US\$17.8 million to UIS, US\$17.2 million to AVU and US\$10.1 to ADEA.

Over time, under pressure to reduce the number of long-standing programmes, DGF ceased being an umbrella grant facility. Many significant programmes saw their support end or be switched to other funding arrangements. In 2009, it shifted its orientation towards a venture capital, high-risk/high-reward approach to support new programmes with time-limited funds.

In 2011, an evaluation by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) further recommended that DGF-funded programmes develop sustainable institutional arrangements to survive the end of financial support from the World Bank. Yet, at the same time, the evaluation was sceptical that the World Bank, as a bureaucratic organization, had the ability to embrace innovative and entrepreneurial programmes. In 2016, the Development Grant Facility was discontinued in order to cut costs (Independent Evaluation Group, 2017).

...contrasts with the growth of trust funds as funding mechanisms

In contrast to the DGF's decline, World Bank trust funds, which manage finance provided by donors for specific activities, have been growing in significance over the years. They are administered by the World Bank and are often used to promote global public goods. Financial Intermediary Funds (FIFs) form a subset of the trust fund portfolio of the World Bank. Through them, among other objectives, the World Bank provides financial management services to international organizations and entities, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Global Environment Facility, which are oriented towards the provision of global public goods. While DGF grants flowed to partnerships outside the World Bank, trust funds have supported partnerships located inside the World Bank.

FIFs tend to be larger than standard trust funds. The main role of the World Bank is to receive, hold and transfer funds at the instruction of these organizations. However, the World Bank is not responsible for disbursement decisions and does not oversee the end use of the money spent. Rather, the governing bodies of the Fund, made up of contributors to the Fund and other key stakeholders, select the implementing agencies that receive financing and manage the projects. In some cases, a Fund's governing body has selected the World Bank to be an implementing agency in addition to its trustee role.

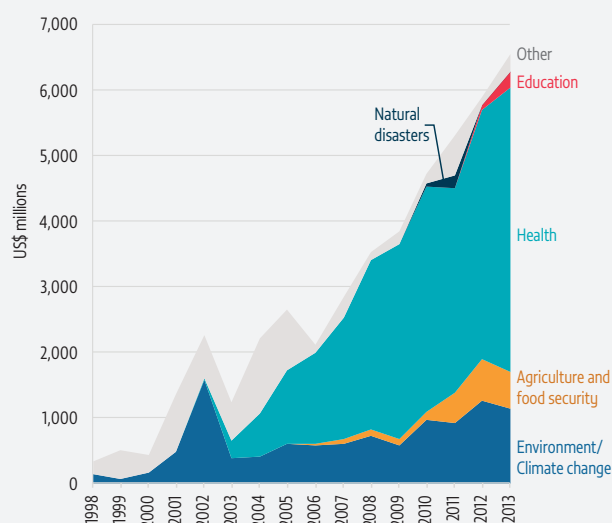
The single example of a FIF in the case of education is the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Fund, which was established in 2011. As of February 2018, at US\$3 billion, the GPE Fund had received only 3% of total contributions to all FIFs, compared to 49% for the health, nutrition and population sector.

However, it should be noted that even the GPE Fund does not fund a global public good, in the definition used in this paper. Indeed, as mentioned above, precision is lacking on what exactly constitutes funding for global public goods, as opposed to investments in national public goods. For example, it is estimated that the vast majority of the US\$5.8 billion ostensibly spent on global public goods in 2011 was used to fund country-level rather than global investments (World Bank, 2011a).

Trust funds and FIFs have grown rapidly. For example, donor contributions to trust funds between 2002 and 2010 exceeded even their contributions to the International Development Association (IDA), which provides concessional loans to low income countries. Between 2006 and 2013, disbursements through FIFs grew from about US\$2 billion to over US\$6 billion. As of the end of 2016, the World Bank had US\$23 billion under management for 29 different organizations. However, the share received by education has been small (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1:
Education receives a small share of growing World Bank trust fund financing

Cash transfers through World Bank Financial Intermediary Funds, 1998–2013, US\$ million



Source: World Bank (2017).

An IEG evaluation of the World Bank's trust fund portfolio in 2011 recognized that trust funds provide donor countries with a means to earmark and pool existing aid for specific issues, such as global public goods. Another evaluation of the World Bank Global and Regional Partnerships Program Portfolio also argued that most programmes support the provision of global and regional public goods (World Bank, 2011b). In fact, their value was most evident precisely when they supported global public goods rather than supplemented national development efforts, since that helped them to go beyond what could be achieved through the country-based lending model. However, the IEG also argued that trust funds that are global in scope lack clear outcome objectives and have insufficient participation from recipients in designing their modalities (World Bank, 2017).

Lessons can be drawn from financing a global public good in agriculture

One example illustrating the demise of the DGF and the growth in trust funds is the financing of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), which holds useful lessons on governance, financing and decision-making processes that can be applied to the provision of global public goods in education.

Faced with the grave challenge of raising food production in the 1960s and the need to prioritize food security over profitability, the international community pulled resources together to establish the CGIAR, which today has 15 international research centres. The World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agreed in 1971 to scale up the successful agricultural research work pioneered by the Rockefeller and Ford foundations in Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria and the Philippines. To this day, the CGIAR is a unique long-term international research network that has had global impact on global food security.

The evolution of how the CGIAR has been funded over 45 years shows not only how donor expectations have changed but also how the World Bank has changed its own view of its grant-making and trust fund-related roles. A main transition has been a significant shift away from research related to global public goods towards issues that are valued by donors. The CGIAR has moved from being a research network that relied on official development assistance to a trust fund in which most of the funding is provided for donor-specific interests in specific global public goods.

The initial World Bank contribution, which to encourage other donors was not to exceed 10% of all contributions, was unrestricted in use and untargeted to provide flexibility. Until 1981, the grant was made out of IDA. Early reviews and impact studies of the CGIAR found that by 1983, the use of modern varieties of wheat and rice increased production by 40 million tons. More than 16,000 scientists were trained in CGIAR institutions. Another review found that between 1972 and 1997, US\$5.2 billion invested in CGIAR helped nearly double food production in developing countries. One study showed that every dollar invested in CGIAR research meant US\$9 worth of additional food being produced in developing countries (Ozgediz, 2012). An early World Bank review of the CGIAR concluded by saying that ‘the private sector, guided as it is by profit, will never show the same degree of interest in research in the poorer areas of the world as it does in the more advanced regions’ (Anderson and Dalrymple, 1999, p. 79).

In the 1980s, the CGIAR’s funding sources expanded beyond traditional aid. Over this period, the World Bank acted as donor of last resort, alongside the US Agency for International Development, filling gaps in CGIAR centre funding. However, despite the spectacular results associated with unrestricted funding, the World Bank became increasingly concerned that it was not exerting sufficient influence over decisions. This led to changes in funding modalities from balancing donor to matching donor and the rise of restricted funding, which began to weaken the CGIAR’s means to enforce system priorities.

In the 1990s, therefore, any incremental funding had to be matched and tied to specific projects – but this was done indiscriminately, whether the projects supported system-wide priorities or not. Over less than ten years, the percentage of restricted funding increased from under 20% to almost 60%, which constrained financial flexibility and increased the cost of management and reporting. The expansion of non-core funding resulted in part from pressures within donor agencies to demonstrate efficiency and value for their CGIAR investments.

In the 2000s, restricted funding is believed to have shifted the agenda of the CGIAR away from the generation of global public goods towards the donor-favoured adaptive and development end of the research spectrum (Pingali and Kelley, 2007). This development gradually distorted the character of the CGIAR. It had made its mark because its strategic research had a global or regional public good nature, with benefits that could not be obtained through private, national or regional research, and because of its

practical, problem-solving focus on bringing the best of known science to address global problems in a spirit of international cooperation. But now, while the CGIAR’s political support was broadened, it ‘created a chaotic marketplace for global public goods research and shifted the composition of the overall program from strategic research to development and dissemination activities tied to short-term donor agendas’. A review recommended abandoning the matching grant model and instead allocating the resources of the World Bank ‘strategically in support of global and regional public goods that contribute to agricultural productivity and poverty reduction, based on long-term priorities’ (Lele, 2004).

Concerns about aligning funding with system priorities ultimately led to further proposed changes, including a programmatic (rather than institutional) approach to funding, a collective donor fund and the assignment of system-level management responsibilities. The CGIAR Trust Fund was established in 2010. As of 2014, the CGIAR Fund is a multi-donor trust fund, administered by the World Bank and governed by a Fund Council. But the funding structure remains complex. There are three ‘windows’:

- Window 1 (‘portfolio investments’) is unrestricted and is allocated across the entire portfolio of approved investments as collectively prioritized through the Council.
- Window 2 (‘programme investments’) is more restricted; donors earmark funds for use in specific areas but funds are allocated to approved investments, collectively prioritized by the Council.
- Window 3 (‘project investments’) is the most restricted; it is allocated to projects defined by the donors themselves.

However, while Windows 1 and 2 were intended to provide stable programmatic core funding, donors are not confident that Window 1 funding is linked to outcomes with tight requirements for accountability and reporting and are not keen for CGIAR centres to cover their staff costs through Window 2 funding. In turn, centres are not confident that Windows 1 and 2 represent a reliable source of funding and prioritize the bilateral, but restricted, Window 3 in their fundraising efforts.

About two-thirds of contributions to the CGIAR Fund went through the restricted Window 3 in 2016. Donors differ in the extent to which they contribute their resources

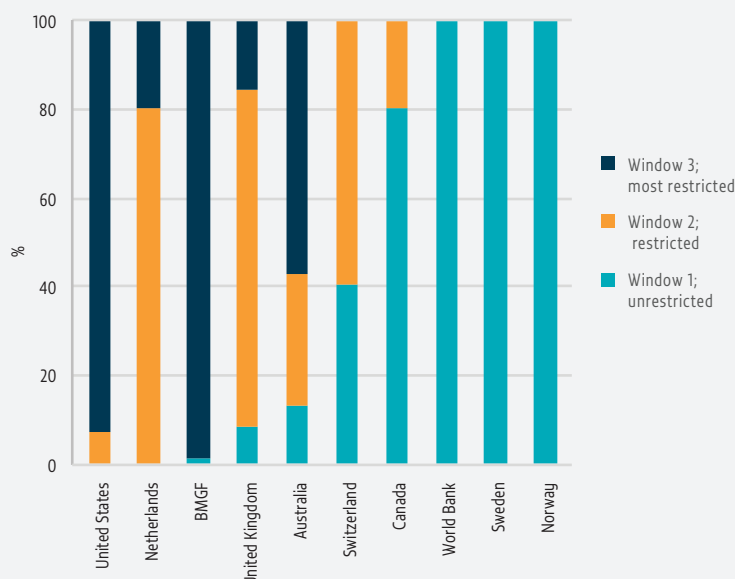
through restricted or unrestricted channels. The World Bank, which has drastically cut its share of CGIAR funding from 12% in 1972–2011 and came close to exiting altogether in 2015, remains nevertheless the funder that makes the largest contribution to the unrestricted Window 1: it provided US\$30 million in 2016. Other donors who commit their entire support to Window 1 are New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. By contrast, the United States and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which jointly provided 60% of the Fund's total income in 2016, channel their support overwhelmingly through the restricted Window 3 (Figure 2).

As of 2017, a new System Council has been established, in which donors share responsibility for collectively deciding Window 1 priorities. The new system resembles the mechanisms found in the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in its potential for joint rather than bilateral decision-making (CGIAR Consortium, 2016).

Some general lessons can be drawn from this historical account of a global public good. First, intellectual leadership is necessary to establish institutions and mechanisms that provide global public goods; in the case of the CGIAR, multilateral institutions moved to scale up the initiatives of visionary philanthropists before bilateral support flowed in, from both developed and developing countries. Second, unlike in the 1970s, when bold steps with long term outlook were the norm, the growing tendency to expect recipients to account for concrete results that are outside their control has led donors to demand results achievable in the short term, which run counter to the nature of the global public good they are aiming to provide. Third, when it comes to global public provision, there is no alternative to collective decision-making on priorities; the absence of joint vision is likely to lead to support for projects that may be preferred by single donors but have fewer global public good attributes.

FIGURE 2:
Donors differ in the extent to which they restrict the use of their funds

Distribution of funding by type of mechanism, top ten donors to CGIAR Fund, 2016



Note: BMGF = Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
Source: CGIAR System Management Office (2017).

Lessons can be learned from attempts to finance global public goods in education

Formed as an autonomous institution in 1999, the UIS has the mandate – reiterated in the Incheon Declaration at the World Education Forum in 2015 – to provide globally comparable statistical information to inform decision-making (UNESCO, 2015). However, despite its clear role in providing a global public good, its financial situation has been vulnerable in recent years. There have been two key moments. First, the refusal of the United States to pay its membership dues to UNESCO starting in 2011 led to a loss of 34% of the UNESCO contribution to the UIS in 2012. Second, the end of the DGF meant the loss of 23% of non-UNESCO voluntary contributions in 2016.

The UIS 2014–2021 medium-term strategy estimates that at least US\$12.5 million is required per year to provide core services, although ideally this should reach US\$15 million by 2018 given the growing demands of the SDG 4 agenda (UIS, 2014). However, the funding situation has only worsened. In 2017, UIS income was US\$10.2 million,

23% below its 2011 level (**Figure 3a**). In view of this funding crisis, the UIS shed one-third of its staff between June 2015 and October 2017 (UNESCO, 2017b).

The lack of support shown by donors is all the more surprising considering that the UIS has been rapidly adjusting to the requirements of the new SDG 4 agenda on data, providing new estimates based on learning assessments and household surveys, two areas which it had not covered before 2015. In addition, it has set up new institutions, the Technical Cooperation Group and the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning, which are critical for building consensus.

The withdrawal of multilateral institutions, in particular, is striking (**Figure 3b**). The World Bank pulled out as a UIS funder after the dismantling of the DGF, even though the World Bank remains one of the UIS’s major clients, relying on UIS data for its EdStats online database and its flagship 2018 World Development Report on education.

At the same time, the World Bank is investing resources in activities that are related to if not duplicative of the UIS’s work, such as the Human Capital Project, which will produce

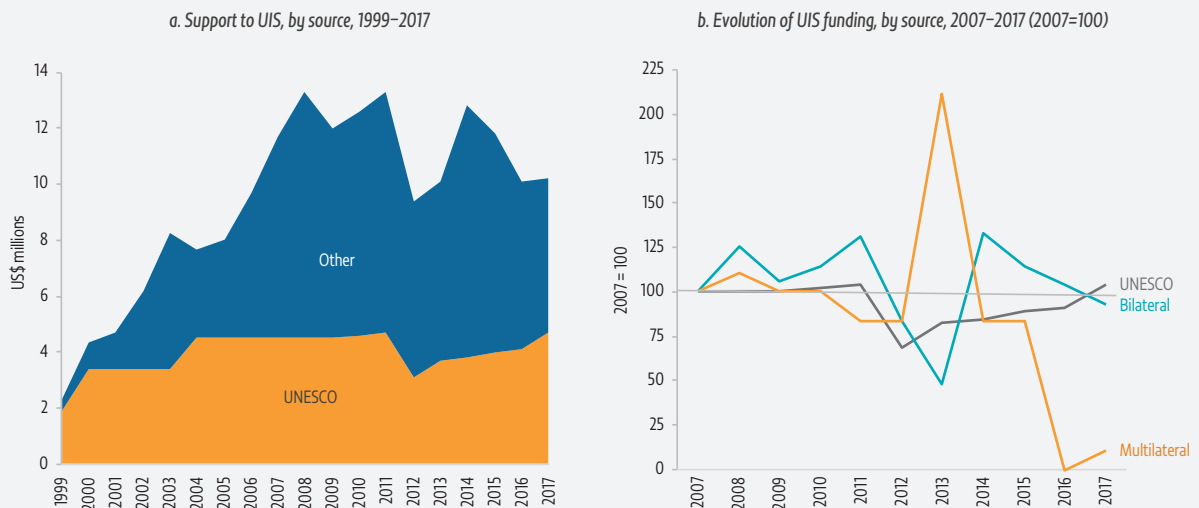
country rankings, ‘one focusing on the stock of human capital, and another where we measure the flow – the investments countries are making today to build human capital’ (World Bank, 2017). The UIS provides the education component of the UNDP Human Development Index.

The World Bank’s withdrawal of support is also inconsistent with the importance it assigns to data and evidence as foundations for development policy and effective programme implementation. The conclusions of the recent IEG assessment of World Bank support for development data production, sharing and use at the global level clearly stated that ‘the sustainability of funding from global data partnerships ... for some global data efforts is at risk’ (IEG, 2017).

GPE HAS BEEN AMBIVALENT ON ITS ROLE AS A SUPPORTER OF GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS

While the World Bank does not fund global public goods in education, it manages the GPE Fund, the only FIF dedicated to education. Views diverge on whether GPE should support the provision of global public goods. The operational model of GPE is focused on country-level interventions. However,

FIGURE 3:
Despite a more ambitious education agenda, multilateral institutions have withdrawn support for official education statistics



Source: Report of the UIS Director to the Governing Board.

many constituencies expect GPE to fund global public goods in education, and this presumed focus was one of the premises of its last evaluation.

The GPE funding instrument with the potential to fund cross-national initiatives was the Global and Regional Activities (GRA) programme (2010–2017), which allocated US\$33 million to ‘engage education stakeholders in applying new knowledge and evidence-based practices to resolve education challenges’. It organized projects in three areas: learning outcomes; education financing and systems building; and out-of-school children, access and equity.

The GPE evaluation was critical of the process used to select projects, which it found ‘highly inefficient and poorly designed’. The projects themselves were mostly focused at the country level. Only a subset of outputs, such as a series of guidelines and methodological tools, resembled a global public good. The evaluation noted that ‘efforts to support the development of global or cross-country public goods have been negatively affected by differing views within the Partnership on its role in supporting such goods, and by the absence of a coherent strategy that articulates GPE’s comparative advantage in this area. As per its Strategic Plan, GPE aspires to contribute to the creation of global or cross-country public goods To that end, the Partnership has made several attempts to cultivate and share knowledge, tools and best practices to help strengthen partner capacity, albeit with mixed results’ (R4D and Universalis, 2015). The evaluation further concluded that there was no direction as to the ‘why, where and how’ of GPE support to the creation or dissemination of global public goods.

This ambivalence about global public goods has continued during the process of designing the successor programme to the GRA for 2018–2020 following the GPE Fund replenishment. The document submitted to the GPE Board for the establishment of the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) mechanism recognized that it had to address three challenges, of which one was ‘the relative lack of funding for regional and global public goods that foster knowledge exchange in global education’ (GPE, 2017).

Yet, despite this objective, the new mechanism faces similar challenges to its predecessor. The emphasis continues to be on a projectized, country-based approach, with less emphasis given to interventions with cross-

border benefits. And although four themes have been proposed for support as part of an ‘iterative’ approach to prioritization, no clear statement has been made about where the Partnership wants to make a difference.

At least on paper, the second major multilateral funding mechanism in education, the Education Cannot Wait fund, provides a contrast. The fund was established in 2016 to transform the delivery of education in emergencies and has an ‘acceleration facility’ to which it plans to allocate up to about 5% of its total funding. Its aim is to invest in global public goods, providing ‘core funding for existing mandate holders to expand the scope and improve the quality of their work’ (Education Cannot Wait, 2017).

Reach consensus on the global public goods in education that matter

This paper has already offered broad definitions of global public goods in education and has hinted at those that need support. However, further discussion is needed if a consensus is to be reached on a set of concrete activities that should be supported.

DATA

The SDG 4 monitoring framework has two components: the global indicators, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and the complementary thematic indicators, adopted by countries through the Education 2030 Framework for Action. The framework is an ambitious undertaking that has expanded the scope of how countries should assess their progress on education development. Back in 2015, only indicators based on administrative data were monitored – and even those were monitored with gaps and with delays, particularly on the indicators related to public finance.

If the expansion is to be successful, its foundations must be firm, and more work is needed to ensure that they are. The new framework requires the introduction of new sources, notably assessments, to monitor the achievement of a wide range of learning outcomes, as well as surveys, primarily to monitor disparities but also to collect other information in a more efficient way than administrative data. However, there are large coverage gaps.

For example, four years after it became clear that learning outcomes would be a cornerstone of the new education agenda, efforts to increase coverage remain piecemeal and uncoordinated, both in building support mechanisms for national assessments as well as in strengthening the links between cross-national assessments. For example, in spite of the value it would add, a proposal estimated at US\$7 million to link the IEA assessments with regional assessments in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and South-eastern Asia has struggled to find support.

By contrast, the three international household survey programmes, which have partially served the education sector's data needs, namely the Demographic and Health Survey, the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey and the Living Standards Measurement Study, established a collaborative group in 2015 to share information on data collection activities and to harmonize existing and new tools. However, it will be important to review to what extent there are information needs for education that are not currently served by these mostly health-focused instruments.

Pulling together resources to support countries in implementing new tools may be primarily a national capacity-building effort, but it would also have cross-border benefits. One such example is a recent UIS proposal to establish web-based information systems for education statistics, along the lines of the FAO CountrySTAT (FAO, 2018). Coordinated efforts would help countries to adopt the new indicators and integrate them into their current measurement systems.

RESEARCH

There are two priorities in this area. First, the expansion of the education monitoring framework requires sound research underpinnings. Many targets have not yet been measured on a global scale. Indicators, especially those related to learning outcomes, have not yet been fully developed; even where they have, corners have been cut. Differences in culture and context mean that there is a long way to go before coming up with clear definitions of concepts such as early childhood development, digital literacy and skills for global citizenship.

In the rush to meet deadlines for global reporting, it is important to avoid carrying out piecemeal research

without a clear vision. Research produced by international institutions has been often criticised as methodologically weak or politically shaped (Zedillo et al., 2006). So, more should be done to ensure that research that provides the underpinnings of international statistics remains sufficiently rigorous. In this, the importance of independent research cannot be underestimated. The 2016 *Global Education Monitoring Report* recommended that the UIS, with the support of the Technical Cooperation Group, formulate a research agenda on the challenges of comparative measurement in education. While much national expertise exists, resources are rarely pooled to address questions in a comparative manner. A research programme linking institutions in the North and South should be established to focus on issues related to the major gaps in the global monitoring of education.

Second, the international education community needs to formulate a broader research agenda, one fit for the purpose of achieving the SDGs, and to set up the institutions to deliver it. Major questions remain. How to teach basic skills in resource-constrained environments to children who have grown up in poverty and conflict or have to learn in a language other than the one they speak at home? Or how to ensure our education systems have an impact on individual behaviours to help curb unsustainable consumption, prevent climate change and learn to live together? It is striking that these questions do not yet feature in any global education research initiative, even though education systems are not currently geared to teaching the appropriate skills.

For that, an institutional set-up that mirrors the strategy, results framework and governance of CGIAR is needed. And as in the case of the CGIAR, research efforts should be moved to the South to build the capacity of a new generation of researchers and apply the findings to education systems in the respective countries. Currently, research into global issues takes place exclusively in high income countries, often with generous funding from foundations. For example, there is a great deal of interest in socioemotional skills but large research initiatives, such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, are based in the United States. The interdisciplinary field of educational neuroscience seeks to apply our increasing knowledge of how the brain works and learns to education policy and practice. But again, high

income countries are leading the way. The National Science Foundation in the United States has been providing grants to establish multidisciplinary Science of Learning Centers since 2004, with the objective of fostering collaboration between scientists and educators to develop teaching methods to improve science education. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced in late 2017 that it would invest US\$1.7 billion to support schools in the United States develop and test new approaches to teaching.

NETWORKS

Under-provision of global public goods in education should not be seen as limited to just data and research. The fact that education sector performance continues to be so weak in some countries is not simply down to their absence. In fact, the need to increase funding is higher for a third education global public good function: sustained technical support to countries to help build national capacity, especially through peer learning mechanisms at the regional level and related networks. Such support networks can enable countries to use data and research results for national planning and policy formulation purposes to help improve system performance.

An important first step is to leverage existing networks. Indeed, in many ways the total volume of aid to education may not need to change, as long as scattered, country-specific efforts are re-allocated to serve regional priorities and benefit more countries at the same time. Leadership from global and regional organizations can encourage countries to exchange information on their education systems to better understand policy priorities. Members of regional entities are more likely to demonstrate stronger political commitment to regional or sub-regional peer learning processes. The results of such processes are then more likely to be used in policy-making and sustained over time, not least because governments have an interest in the performance of neighbouring countries. Drawing lessons from the evaluation of one of the largest attempts to establish a peer learning network, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, would be necessary (Universalia, 2011)

Re-stating the case for support to global public goods in education

The *Global Education Monitoring Report's* concern with the insufficient attention paid to global public goods dates from the 2016 edition, as is clear from the examples on data, research and networks mentioned in this paper. This concern was only intensified when the report itself, just like the UIS, went through a challenging financial situation in 2017, which threw into sharp focus the fact that even global public goods with a clear mandate struggle to secure necessary funds. And these thoughts linked well with the 2017/8 *Global Education Monitoring Report* on accountability and some of its key themes on shared responsibilities and the preoccupation of funding agencies with results whose horizon is far too short-term.

Global public goods are essential to achieve the SDGs, the collectively determined and predominant objectives of our time. Nevertheless, the term 'global public goods' has been loosely defined and loosely interpreted in funding discussions. As a result, many actors can claim to be working on or contributing to global public goods, even as they are primarily meeting their own strategic objectives (e.g. increasing agricultural productivity for tradeable crops). A consensus on the global public goods that matter for delivering on our global promises is still pending.

Once agreement has been reached on the importance of specific global public goods, it is necessary to establish institutions with the right governance and funding mechanisms to support the provision of these goods. Supporting global public goods in education will require visionary leadership from the wealthier countries, combined with support from philanthropic institutions that value the complexity of learning and the need for objective data and statistics.

The *Global Education Monitoring Report*, which had estimated in 2012 that private giving from foundations and corporations was in the range of US\$700 million per year, has confirmed using more recent OECD-DAC data that the allocations remain at similar level in 2015, which means they correspond to about 5-6% of the total aid to education. It is a good moment to consider how this investment can be better aligned with the SDGs.

In brief, the following recommendations can be made:

- Strong institutional and intellectual leadership must be combined with a consultative approach to set priorities on a range of global public goods in education that are fit for the purpose of achieving SDG 4. This can ensure the provision of global goods that are public in consumption, provision, decision-making and utility.
- Education-related global public goods in data, research and networks need to be supported.

To support comparable data for SDG 4 monitoring:

- Support the institutions that have a mandate to collect data and monitor education in the SDGs and link this support to the achievement of long-term results.
- Review and endorse the estimate made by the UIS on the cost of collecting comparable data for the SDG 4 monitoring framework and allocate resources accordingly to implement a coordinated plan to fund the necessary learning assessments and household surveys.

To support research for SDG 4:

- Based on the SDG 4 monitoring framework, especially with reference to learning outcomes that have yet to be compared at the global level, set out and implement a research programme that will provide the analytical foundations of the respective indicators.
- To consider key education questions of our time, notably those related to the acquisition of basic skills in early years in poor countries and of socioemotional skills that are critical for sustainable development, design a consortium of research institutions along the lines of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research with pooled funding, joint priority setting mechanisms, and a plan to develop research capacity in the South.

To support networks for SDG 4:

- Establish regional centres that will help countries acquire, adapt and use existing global and regional knowledge on education policy implementation.

- Promote the role of regional organizations in establishing peer learning mechanisms where member states can exchange their respective education policy experiences and draw lessons from other countries.
- Once priorities have been agreed upon, shared commitment to the achievement of long-term results must be ensured, and piecemeal, short-term, project-based approaches to financing must be avoided, or the achievement of results may be put at risk.

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