

PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN INNOVATION AND PRACTICE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

GOALS

This document outlines the goals of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) and frames our theory of change.¹

A. GOAL

The PSIPSE is a funder collaborative that seeks to increase secondary education access and improve learning outcomes for marginalized populations.

The PSIPSE works towards this goal by funding in-country interventions that accelerate innovation, support evidence-based policy reforms, and capture and disseminate learnings to key stakeholders.

Funders working together can accomplish more than working alone. Forging a shared agenda leverages the resources of the group and allows the “mixed economy” of diverse funders to apply their individual skills and expertise toward a common goal.

Through the PSIPSE, donor partners aim to bring greater focus, resources, and intellectual capital to enable various stakeholders to provide high quality and relevant formal and non-formal secondary level learning opportunities to youth in developing countries. We expect that our collaboration will inform the work of the broader secondary education field, engage other funders in efforts to improve learning outcomes at the secondary level, and offer lessons to other institutions that want to improve the impact of their grantmaking.

B. THEORY OF CHANGE

Innovation is needed in the secondary education system to ensure more marginalized young people are able to access and complete quality, relevant,

¹ This is the 2014 version of the PSIPSE Long Term Goals. Donors anticipate that this will be a living document that will be updated on a yearly basis.

secondary education, and demonstrate learning. Durable improvements in access and learning outcomes must be supported by organizations grounded in the national fabric.

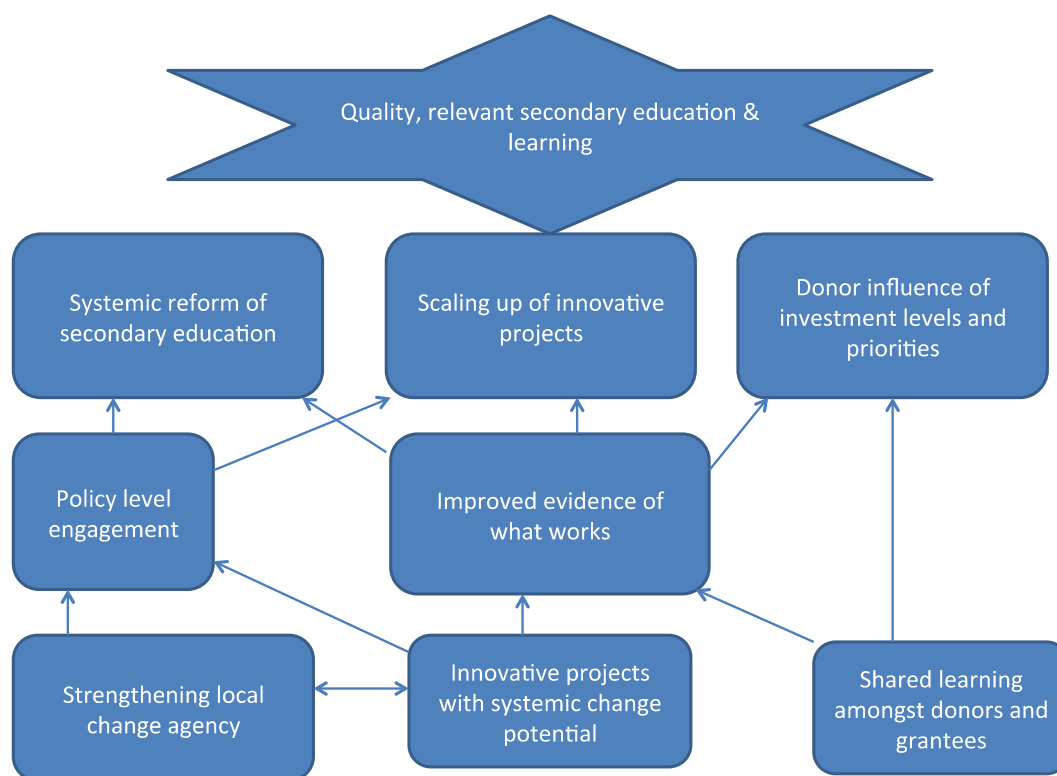
Therefore PSIPSE will:

1. Identify and support projects that have systemic change potential;
2. Strengthen local groups and officials to serve as agents for systemic change within their own countries;
3. Create opportunities to link grantees to policy makers and program implementers;
4. Build grantee evidence base and share learnings.

These interventions are intended to lead to an improved evidence and knowledge base of what works in secondary education access and learning as well as form the foundation for engagement with policy makers.

Specifically, these efforts are expected to result in:

- scale up of promising projects to reach greater numbers of marginalized young people;
- creating systems-level change at the national/subnational levels;
- and
- influencing donor investment levels and priorities for secondary education support.



This theory of change is based on a number of key assumptions:

- Lack of innovation in the secondary education system is a key driver of poor access and learning.
- Innovation—novel ideas—alone are insufficient to effect systemic change and must be complemented by planning for scale-up and technical support.
- Projects identified through competitive calls for proposals are indeed innovative, and represent a sufficient critical mass that can affect systemic reform.
- Governments have the capacity, resources, and desire to focus on, and scale, new models that have the potential to improve secondary education delivery.

PSIPSE will support four categories of projects:

- **Pilot project:** A new or early stage project that develops and tests new models, partnerships, or approaches to identified problems that meet critical gaps in secondary education; or seeks to expand to new sites; or refines, tests, and simplifies a new or existing early stage model
- **Expanding and adapting projects:** A project that has been operational for 2-3 years and has clearly articulated model which is past the development

stage and is ready to undergo rigorous evaluation. The organization is working to further adapt model based on expansion process and learnings and it has a clear plan for strategic expansion to multiple sites.

- **Scale-up projects:** A project that has already been piloted and has expanded in terms of reach, geographic scope or adoption at a policy level, and has a clearly developed model that articulates the desired change and impact and has been operational for more than 3 years. It also must have a clear scale-up plan that includes advocacy, policy work and a clear mechanism for promoting and disseminating learning.
- **Research:** Research topics considered in scope include: (1) rigorous external impact evaluations conducted in partnership with and connected to projects funded by PSIPSE or proposed for PSIPS and (2) direct policy implications and that address themes covered in the PSIPSE RFPs.

Not all organizations will go through every phase. Some grantees will enter into partnership as pilot projects, some as expanding and adapting projects, and some as scale-up projects. PSIPSE actively seeks opportunities to support organizations to advance their projects to the proof of concept or scale-up phase. Research projects that inform and advance understanding of key PSIPSE thematic approaches relevant at all three stages are also supported.

C. LEARNING

To support national and global level learning, PSIPSE works with a learning partner. This partner synthesizes grantee strategic approaches, provides technical assistance to grantees (monitoring and evaluation, programmatic expertise, etc.), and facilitates learning among grantees. These learnings are shared among: (1) PSISPE grantees to better strengthen programmatic work on the ground, (2) PSIPSE donors to better inform funding strategies, and (3) the wider secondary education field via the [Center for Education Innovations \(CEI\)](#), conferences, and other venues.

Additionally, the work of the collaborative is informed by its own learning. This learning is focused around the following four questions:

1. What is the added value in working as a funders collaborative, particularly for: (1) advancing the global secondary education agenda, (2) programmatic level work in the field, and (3) operational level work within our own processes?
2. What works to increase access and retention in secondary education for marginalized groups especially: (1) demand and transition, particularly for female students, and (2) effective delivery models?
3. What works to improve learning at the secondary level, particularly for: (1) educational attainment, (2) livelihoods skills, and (3) the surprises that we

- had not anticipated?
4. How to best feed the secondary education ecosystem with (1) promising new interventions, (2) evidence, and (3) best practices in scaling?

Learnings from these questions inform our work and help us realize our Theory of Change.

D. STAKEHOLDERS

In order to affect the changes that the PSIPSE seeks to catalyze, secondary education stakeholders in target geographies are engaged and consulted by either PSIPSE donors or their grantees. Special attention is paid to the inclusion of marginalized populations, particularly girls, who are disproportionately left out of conversations about education opportunities.

Among the following are key stakeholders that grantees and funders regularly engage and consult:

- *Policymakers and policy implementers*: To produce a systemic transformation of secondary education and to ensure that identified best practices are incorporated in education policies, both funders and grantees will work to actively engage policymakers and policy implementers.
- *School administrators and teachers*: Empowering teachers and securing the support of schools' administrators is necessary to influence change at the school level.
- *Parents and communities*: Parental involvement in children's learning is critical to success. In areas where most parents are not educated themselves, grantees must explore ways to support parents, caregivers and communities to best support their children.
- *Civil society and Education NGOs*: Engagement of these critical allies occurs through regional convenings and grantee interaction.
- *Education Funders*: The PSIPSE engages and collaborates with other education funders in order to influence funding decisions and contribute to a common alignment of education sector work.
- *The Learners*: These central beneficiaries must be empowered to learn. It is critical that they be involved so that their views, suggestions and feedback are given serious consideration by project implementers.

APPENDIX

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

There is clear evidence that a high-quality, relevant secondary school education is associated with positive effects on young people's health, child mortality rates, and economic growth. While progress has been achieved in realizing Millennium Development Goal 2, universal access to primary education, 69 million adolescents are still out-of-school, and low transition and completion rates at the secondary level persist.

For those students that make the transition to the secondary level, millions enter without the foundational literacy and numeracy skills needed to succeed. Additionally, students often graduate without the technical and transferable skills needed to successfully transition to the workforce, to create their own opportunities, and to navigate the knowledge economy and information age.

Current education systems in many developing countries are unprepared to respond to these gaps and are under-resourced to meet universal needs at current costs. Teachers, themselves often constrained by low levels of education and inadequate training opportunities, are also ill equipped to meet these challenges. And, for poor families, where the cost of schooling represents a significant portion of their household resources, the promise of education for their children remains unfulfilled. Addressing these gaps and challenges requires additional resources.

Relative to primary education, less is known about how to improve *demand* for secondary education, and how to *supply* education (teachers, pedagogy, and technology) that improves learning outcomes. Additionally, even less is known about how to do this cost effectively and at scale.

The urgency of these questions and the need to set a new post-2015 agenda for education has led to the emergence of several key policy frameworks.² Core emphases of these frameworks include: a) the interconnectedness of all levels of education, b) quality and relevant learning outcomes, c) transition to and completion of lower secondary education, and d) reaching marginalized populations, including girls, with educational opportunity.

The Global Partnership for Education Strategic Plan expands the focus of this multilateral education funder to encompass lower secondary education.³ Together these policy frameworks provide new opportunities for funders and other stakeholders to strengthen secondary education.

² A Global Compact on Learning (2011), Global Education First Initiative (2012), Global Partnership for Education 2012-2015 Strategic Plan

³ GPE Strategic Objective #2 (of 5) is: "All girls in GPE-endorsed countries successfully complete primary school and go to secondary school in a safe, supportive learning environment."

Improvements to secondary education can only occur through stakeholder engagement, particularly national, state/ municipal governments, and lead actors in the provision of education. Governments however are preoccupied with basic challenges such as building schools, training teachers, and designing curricula—inputs rather than the outcomes and impacts of their policies. Most governments have not had the opportunity to focus on innovation or new models that have the potential to improve secondary education delivery, including reducing per-student cost barriers that have slowed the growth of secondary education provision.