

July 2020

COVID-19 is a serious threat to aid to education recovery

Just as a sense of optimism was returning, the COVID-19 pandemic hit – the second major disruption to global development in a dozen years. A recession, with detrimental effects on public revenue-raising capacity and budget allocations, is inevitable. In advanced economies, the gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to decline by 8% in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook. Even if we assume that education does not become a lower priority in total aid, squeezed budgets could translate into a fall for aid to education of up to US\$2 billion by 2022. It may be six years until 2018 levels are reached again.

Aid to education experienced robust growth throughout the 2000s, but stagnated after 2010, at least partly because of the great financial crisis of 2007–2008. The collapse of the banking sector in the United States led to the collapse of international banking, massive government bailouts and a recession in the Global North. The downturn also affected the Global South in many ways: it slowed down growth and reduced financial flows, including foreign direct investment, private debt and portfolio equity, remittances and, to a much lesser extent, official development assistance (ODA), the smallest of the four flows. The 2010s were almost over before aid volumes began to return to the growth rates of the past.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have even greater consequences than the last crisis. Economic activity has slowed down, and it remains uncertain when it will resume and what the long-term effects on trade and on other sectors will be.

The education sector will face an uphill task. During the pandemic, to mitigate the risk of infection, schools closed in 194 countries. In spite of some successful and innovative efforts to reach students, the crisis has widened the gaps in learning opportunities and will push back progress towards reaching Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), including the commitment to achieving high-quality primary and

secondary education by 2030. Aid to education will arguably be more important than ever to ensure that the financial struggles of the poorest countries do not take their toll on education progress.

Recent memory offers no comparable historical episode to help predict the effects of school closures, not least since closures have affected countries differently depending on the school calendar, with some countries affected at the beginning of the school year and others at the end. If school closures last for three months, then the effect on participation might be zero and the effect on learning no more than that of an end-of-year break. If school closures extend over a full school year, their effects might resemble those of humanitarian crises.

The *Global Education Monitoring Report* has estimated that US\$39 billion more per year would be required on average between 2015 and 2030 if low- and lower-middle-income countries were to achieve one year of pre-primary and universal primary and lower secondary education completion, which would necessitate a sixfold increase in the level of aid that goes to basic and secondary education in those countries. The Addis Ababa Action Plan 2015 advocated a global framework for funding SDGs, including SDG 4 on education, which focused, among other things, on boosting multilateral international partnerships, such as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

In recent years, the education sector has taken some steps in that direction, through Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a fund that is dedicated to education in emergencies, as well as through discussions on establishing an International Financing Facility for Education, a mechanism to leverage more education lending through multilateral banks. The question is whether this trend will accelerate in view of the additional challenges of post-COVID-19 recovery, or whether it might be reversed, as some fear a retreat from multilateralism and new obstacles due to increased levels of public debt.

This paper reports information up until 2018 on trends of aid to education reported to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) through its Creditor Reporting System (CRS), complemented by information from GPE and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA). The last section covers the impact of COVID-19 on aid availability and allocation by analysing the experience of past economic crises.

AID TO EDUCATION APPEARS TO HAVE RECOVERED SINCE ITS 2012 SLUMP

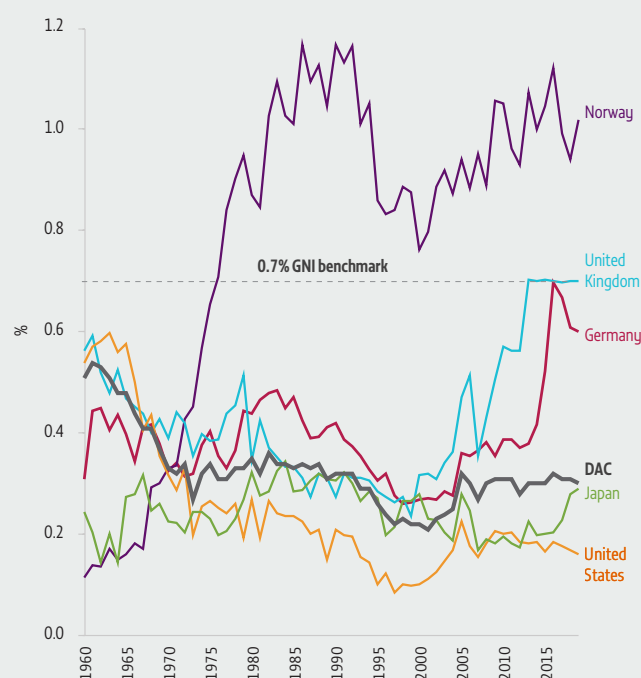
Aid experienced a period of decline in the 1980s, which accelerated in the 1990s, but between 2001 and 2005, it recovered a lot of the ground it had lost. Since then, the share of total ODA has remained constant at around 0.3% of DAC countries' gross national income (GNI). Of the 30 DAC countries, only Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom met the target of 0.7% of GNI in 2019. Germany and the Netherlands spent over 0.6%, although the spike in Germany's aid is associated with its role in the Syrian refugee crisis. The United States is the largest donor in absolute terms (US\$35 billion) but one of the smallest in relative terms (0.16%) (Figure 1).

While it has remained stagnant in relative terms, total net ODA disbursed by the 30 DAC member countries increased from US\$134 billion in 2005 to US\$153 billion in 2018. According to the latest data released by the OECD in April, total net ODA increased by 1% in 2019 to US\$156 billion.

With respect to education, total ODA disbursements reached the highest amount ever recorded,

FIGURE 1:
Aid has stagnated at 0.3% of gross national income for the past 15 years

Net official development assistance as a share of GNI, selected DAC countries, 1960–2019



Note: The figure shows the five DAC countries which provide the largest absolute amounts of ODA to basic education.

Source: OECD (2020b).

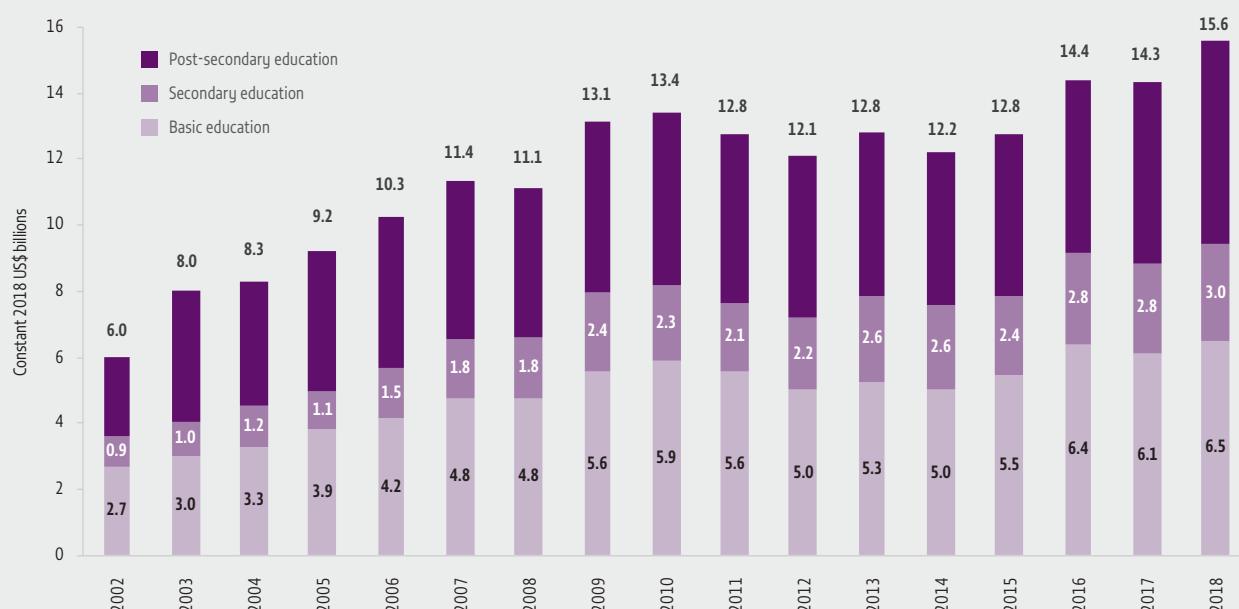
US\$15.6 billion, in 2018, the most recent year for which sector-level data are available. This is an increase of 9%, or US\$1.25 billion, relative to 2017 (Figure 2a). Between 2017 and 2018, total aid increased by 6% in basic education, by 7% in secondary education and by 12% in post-secondary education.

Compared to 2012, aid to education in 2018 has increased by 29%, while aid to secondary education has grown more rapidly, at 37%. Compared to 2010, when it hit its previous high point shortly before the great financial crisis's impact on ODA started to be felt, aid to education has grown by 16%, while aid to basic education has grown more slowly at 10%.

The decline in aid to education seems unrelated to the financial crisis. Total ODA declined by 6% between

FIGURE 2:
Aid to education reached a historical high in 2018

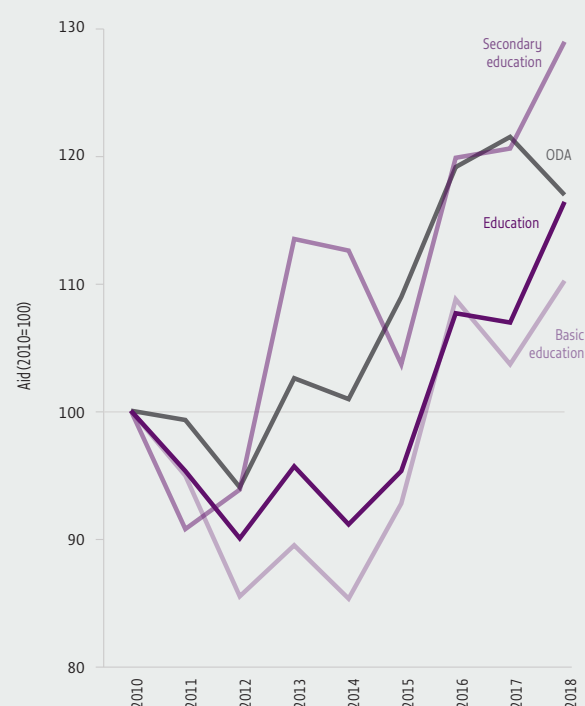
a. Total aid to education disbursements, by level of education, 2002–2018



2010 and 2012 and had recovered to 2010 levels by 2014, while it increased by 21% in 2017. By contrast, aid to education in 2014 was still 9% lower than 2010 levels and still lagged behind total ODA in relative terms by 2017. Only in 2018 did education at last catch up with global aid trends. And basic education, which at its lowest point in 2014 was 15% below 2010 levels, is still behind the trend (Figure 2b).

Rather, education has been losing ground as a donor priority, a trend that had already begun before the great financial crisis and continued for a few years after it. The share of education in aid that is clearly allocated to sectors ('allocable aid') fell from 14.8% in 2003 to 11.7% in 2010 and by another two percentage points to 9.7% by 2013. It has since recovered a little to 10.8%, but it is still below 2010 levels. The share of basic and secondary education in allocable aid is 6.3% (Figure 3a). According to the *Global Education Monitoring Report*, if this share were 10% and all DAC plus selected non-DAC donor countries (Brazil, China, India, Kuwait, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates) dedicated 0.7% of their GNI to ODA, then the education financing gap would be filled.

b. Disbursements, total aid, education and basic education, 2010–2018 (2010=100)



Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

The decline of education is particularly notable since other sectors have generally maintained their share of direct aid over time. Only a few sectors have gained ground, such as energy (whose share increased from 3.6% in 2003 to 8.7% in 2018) and the health, population and reproductive health sector (whose share increased from 15% in 2004 to 19.6% in 2013) (Figure 3b).

DONORS PRIORITIZE DIFFERENT EDUCATION LEVELS

Aid to **basic education** reached US\$6.5 billion in 2018, the largest amount ever recorded. Primary education accounts for about 90% of that sum; the rest consisted of small shares to early childhood education, life skills and school feeding programmes. Of that amount, low-income countries received 31%, or US\$2 billion, a sharp increase from 2015, when they received 23% of the total, or US\$1.3 billion. Lower-middle-income countries have seen their share decrease from 46% to 33% during this period, equivalent to a decline of US\$0.3 billion.

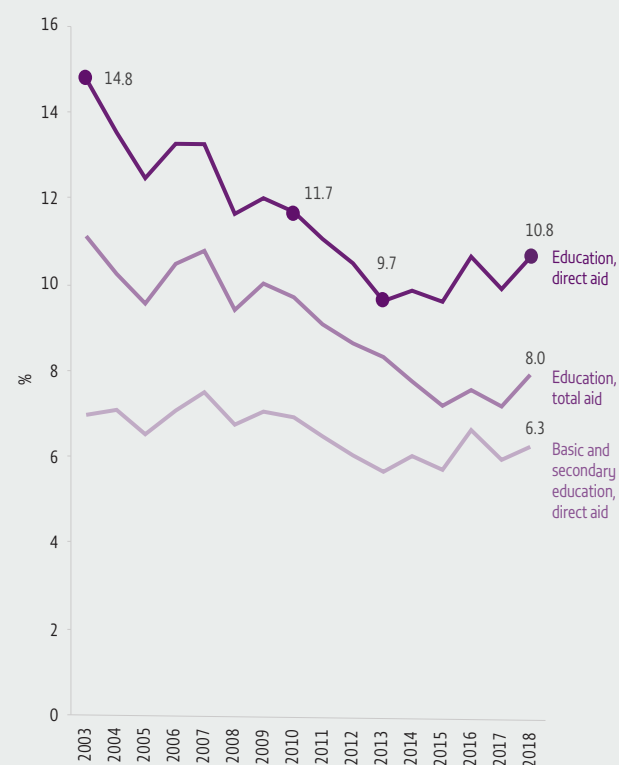
A growing share of aid to basic education – 19%, or US\$1.1 billion, in 2018 – is not tied to specific countries (Figure 4a). Analysis for this paper estimates that GPE may account for two-thirds of the growth in aid to basic education with unspecified recipients between the 2000s and 2010s, although this effect may have weakened in recent years (Box 1). The share of aid to secondary education that had unspecified recipients was only half the size of that of primary education (Figure 4b).

Even if it is assumed that all unspecified recipients of aid to basic and secondary education are low- and lower-middle-income countries, the total amount of aid to basic and secondary education was US\$7.4 billion in 2018. The rest went to upper-middle- or even high-income countries and to post-secondary education. In other words, only 47% of aid to education goes to the two sub-sectors and the two groups of countries most in need.

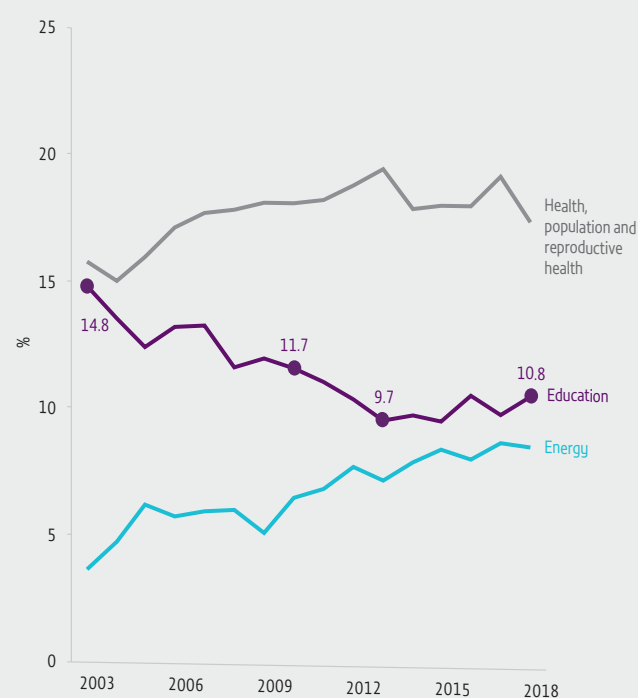
A large share of the increase in aid to basic education in 2018 is explained by two countries, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which together gave US\$627 million in 2018. This reflects their increased level of budget support to Yemen, of which 10% is assumed to be allocated to basic education according to the *Global Education Monitoring Report's* methodology.

FIGURE 3:
Education continued to lose ground as a donor priority after 2010 and has yet to recover its share

a. Share of education in aid, alternative definitions, 2003–2018

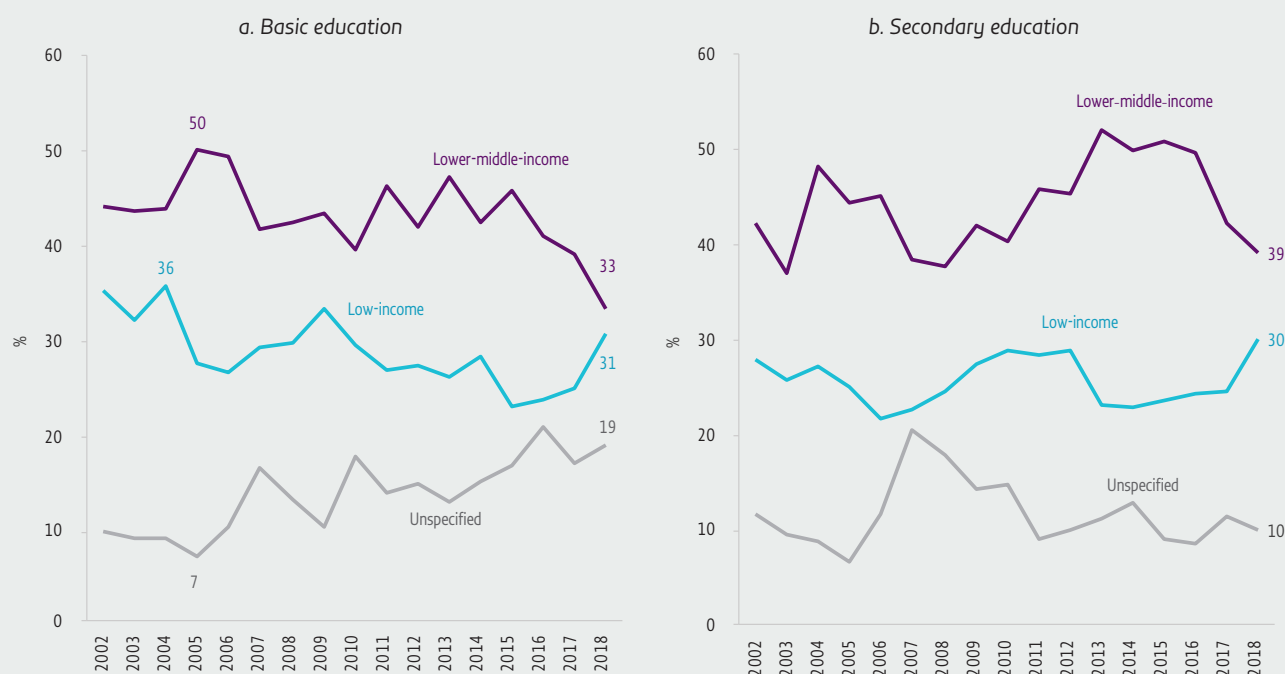


b. Share of selected sectors in allocable aid, 2003–2018



Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

FIGURE 4:
The share of low-income countries in aid to basic education has increased
 Aid disbursements, by recipient countries, 2002–2018



Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

Of total aid to basic education, DAC member bilateral donors accounted for 57%, non-DAC bilateral donors (such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) for 11%, and multilateral donors for 32% in 2018. The United States, the World Bank, the United Kingdom and the European Union institutions together accounted for over 50% of total aid to basic education in 2016–2018. The United States allocated US\$1.3 billion to basic education in the period, more than twice as much as each of the other three donors, whose spending amounted to about \$630 million on average (**Figure 6a**). The bulk of the United States' education aid (84%) is allocated to basic education, while the next three donors, as well as the two large non-DAC donors, allocated just half of their education aid to basic education; Germany and Japan allocate an even lower share. Among the top 10 donors to basic education, only Norway has the same focus on basic education (**Figure 6b**). These figures include, but do not distinguish, the amount of aid that bilateral donors channel through GPE.

Aid to **secondary education** reached US\$3 billion in 2018, again the largest amount ever recorded. Vocational training accounted for 56% of the total volume. Low-income countries received 30%, or US\$0.89 billion, a marked increase from 2015, when they received 24%, or US\$0.56 billion of the total. Lower-middle-income countries have seen their share decrease from 51% to 39% during this period, which means that aid has stagnated at US\$1.2 billion.

Germany is the largest donor: it allocated US\$412 million on average in 2016–2018, slightly more than the World Bank, which disbursed US\$405 million (**Figure 7**). Unlike in basic education, the Asian Development Bank, Japan and the Republic of Korea ranked within the 10 largest donors in this category, implying their aid priorities are placed on secondary education.

In terms of regional allocations, the main development since 2010 has been the increasing share of Northern Africa and Western Asia as a result of

GPE disbursements slowed down abruptly in 2018 and 2019

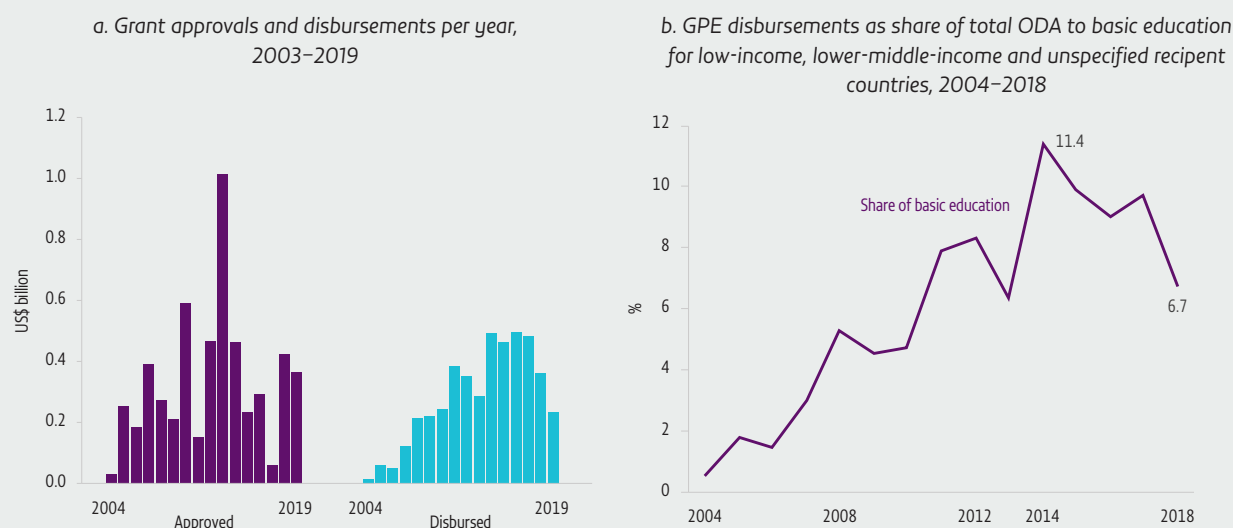
Between 2003 and 2019, GPE approved implementation grants worth a cumulative US\$5.5 billion. It had disbursed US\$4.3 billion by December 2018 and US\$4.5 billion by December 2019. There is a lag of about three years between approvals and disbursements. For instance, the record rate of approvals in 2013, which exceeded US\$1 billion, helped sustain high disbursement rates of about US\$0.5 billion per year in 2015–2017. However, the growth of cumulative grant approvals slowed down considerably to single-digit numbers between 2015 and 2019, which has been reflected in a decline of 38% in the annual volume of disbursed grants in 2018–2019 relative to 2014–2017 (**Figure 5a**). Total disbursement was US\$363 million in 2018, which represents only 6.7% of total aid to basic education to low-income, lower-middle-income and unspecified countries, down from a high of 11.4% in 2014 (**Figure 5b**). When aid to education figures for 2019 are released, they will show that the share has since fallen even further.

Despite GPE attempts to address core issues of aid effectiveness, such as alignment behind national education sector plans, donors continue to channel the vast majority of aid to basic education through other mechanisms. The third external evaluation in the GPE partnership's history, which has been commissioned to inform the development of the GPE Strategic Plan 2025, addresses the question why, 15 years after its establishment, GPE has not yet become as strong a vehicle of donor coordination as originally envisaged, but from a country rather than a global perspective.

FIGURE 5:

GPE disbursements have slowed down

Selected indicators of GPE implementation grant approvals and disbursements



Source: GPE data and GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

One factor that might have contributed to the slowdown in disbursements is the transition to the new GPE financing and funding framework. While there is no direct evidence on GPE, the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network's institutional assessment of another global financing mechanism, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, suggested that their transition to a new funding model may have contributed to lower than expected disbursements (MOPAN, 2017).

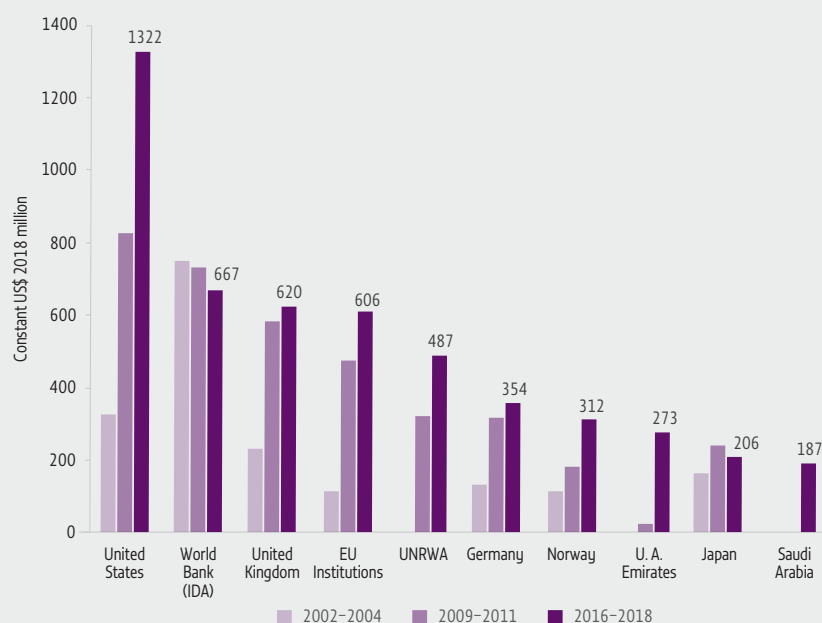
That said, another lead indicator of future GPE activity, donor contributions to the GPE Fund, which follow shortly after the pledges made in replenishment rounds, suggests that disbursement levels should pick up, unless affected by the pandemic. At the GPE Financing Conference held in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2018, donors pledged US\$1 billion more for 2018–2020 than they had for the preceding three-year-period, 2015–2017. In its aftermath, the donor contribution to the GPE Fund in 2018 (US\$638 million) was 50% higher than the average donor contribution over the preceding decade 2007–2017 (US\$426 million), although only 15% higher than the second highest year (US\$553 million in 2014). The grants approved in 2019 do not yet reflect the record-high donor contribution made to the GPE Fund in 2018.

Slower than expected disbursements in 2018–19 may have had an unexpected benefit: they may explain why GPE was well positioned to respond flexibly to the COVID-19 crisis by providing more than US\$500 million to help countries mitigate the impact of school closures. These grants will contribute to 2020 becoming the year with the largest amount of grant approvals, in the range of US\$1.5 billion (GPE, 2020). The new GPE replenishment campaign is due to start again in autumn 2020.

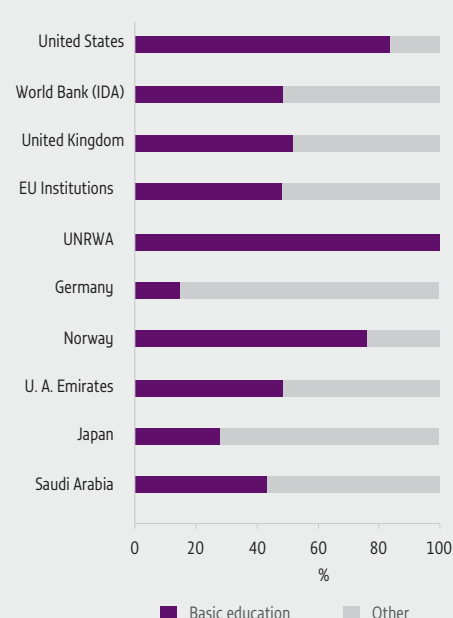
Tracking funds channelled through the GPE in the OECD CRS database is not straightforward. Donors who contribute to the GPE have been specifying neither the country that is the ultimate beneficiary (which is not possible) nor the fact that the transfer was made to the GPE (except in the narrative project description). The OECD has created a code to record GPE as a donor, but even the latest release in April 2020 did not in fact identify GPE as a donor. As the dates of disbursements in the GPE and OECD databases are not identical, there is some slight inconsistency. However, the overall picture can still be gleaned from GPE-reported data.

FIGURE 6:**The United States and Norway have prioritized aid to basic education**

a. Aid to basic education, top 10 bilateral and multilateral donors, 2004–2006, 2009–2011, 2016–2018



b. Share of basic education in total aid to education, top 10 bilateral and multilateral donors, 2018



Note: The top 10 donors are those with the highest disbursements on average in 2016–2018.

Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

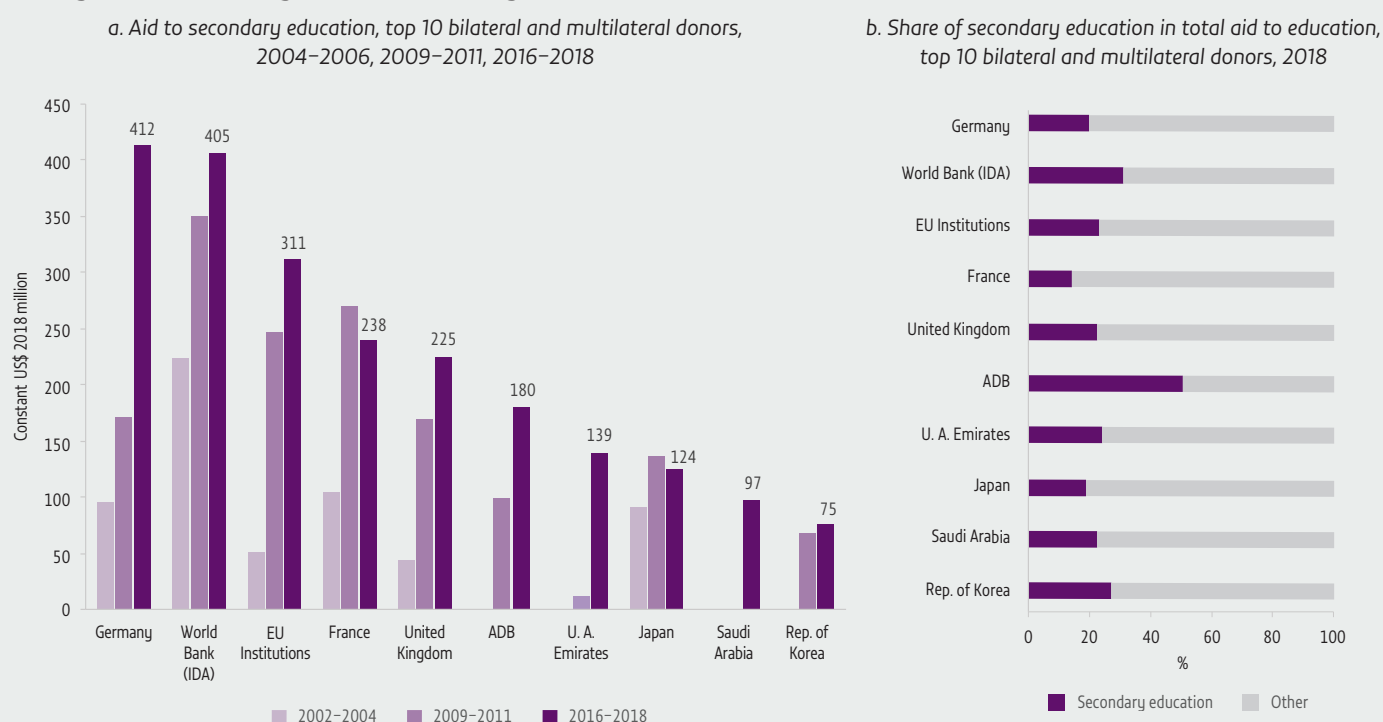
the crises in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Between 2010 and 2018, the share of the region increased from 14% to 27% in aid to basic education and from 10% to 23% in aid to secondary education. The rise in 2018 reflects a significant increase of US\$3.2 billion in budget support to Yemen, 20% of which is allocated to education, according to the GEM Report's established methodology. The share of sub-Saharan Africa in aid to basic education appears to have fallen by 10 percentage points in the last 10 years but this is probably accounted for by the commensurate increase in the share of aid to unspecified regions during this period (Figure 8). The analysis does not include humanitarian aid, which has continued to increase (Box 2).

Overall, in 2018, funding from the United States and the World Bank, and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, dominated aid flows to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa. Flows from other

bilateral donors were low, which may partly reflect relatively low spending by GPE in 2018. While the United States spreads aid to education relatively evenly across different countries, the World Bank and the United Kingdom have a clearer focus on countries with the largest populations. For instance, the largest single flow, worth US\$143 million, was the World Bank's support to basic education in Ethiopia. Other bilateral donors maintain aid relationships with specific target countries unrelated to their size. For instance, France and Germany focus on Cameroon with a traditional focus on post-secondary education, either through scholarships or imputed costs. European Union support disproportionately went to Malawi and Mali (Figure 10).

Aid to **post-secondary education** reached US\$6.1 billion in 2018, also the largest sum on record. Excluding budget support allocated to post-secondary education, it consists of direct aid to

FIGURE 7:
Germany has become the largest donor in secondary education

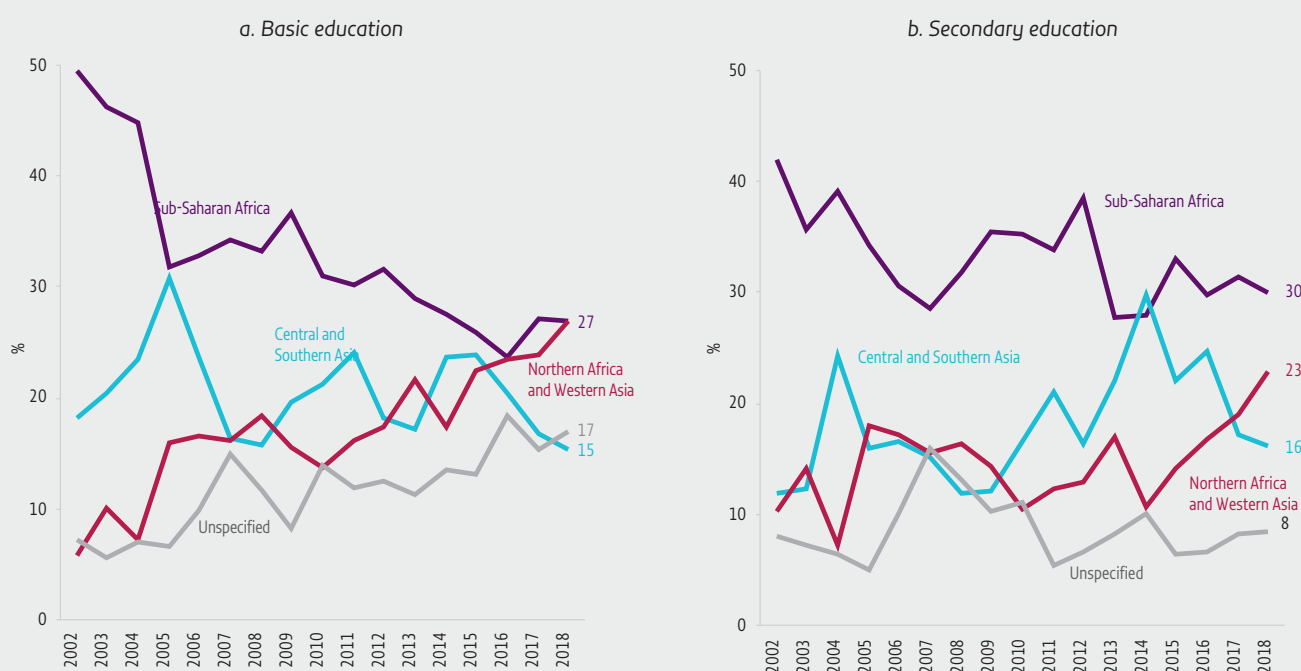


Note: The top 10 donors are those with the highest disbursements on average in 2016–2018. ADB = Asian Development Bank.

Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

FIGURE 8:
The Syrian crisis has increased Northern Africa and Western Asia's share of basic and secondary education aid

Share of aid to education disbursements by region, 2002–2018

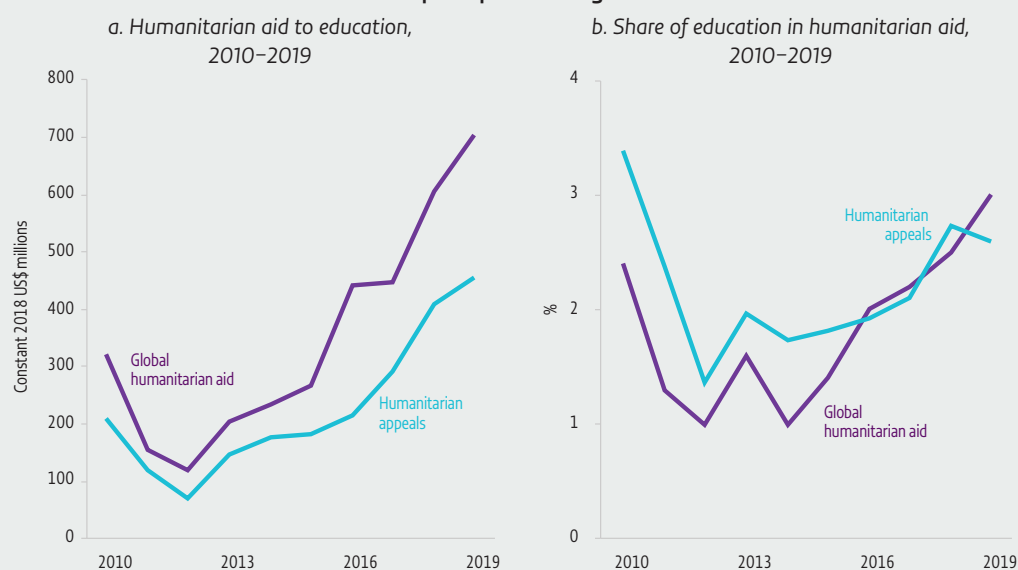


Source: GEM Report team analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

BOX 2:**Humanitarian aid has continued its upward trend**

In response to the world's growing number of prolonged crises, humanitarian support for education has increased in recent years. According to the UN OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS), total humanitarian aid amounted to US\$705 million in 2019. Humanitarian aid based on appeals and plans reached US\$457 million, both the highest since records began (**Figure 9a**). The total amount of humanitarian assistance increased sixfold between 2012 and 2019. The increase is not only the result of greater volumes of humanitarian aid but also of an increase in the share given to education. Education's share in global humanitarian aid has tripled from 1% 2014 to 3% in 2019 (**Figure 9b**).

FIGURE 9:
Global humanitarian aid to education has quintupled in five years

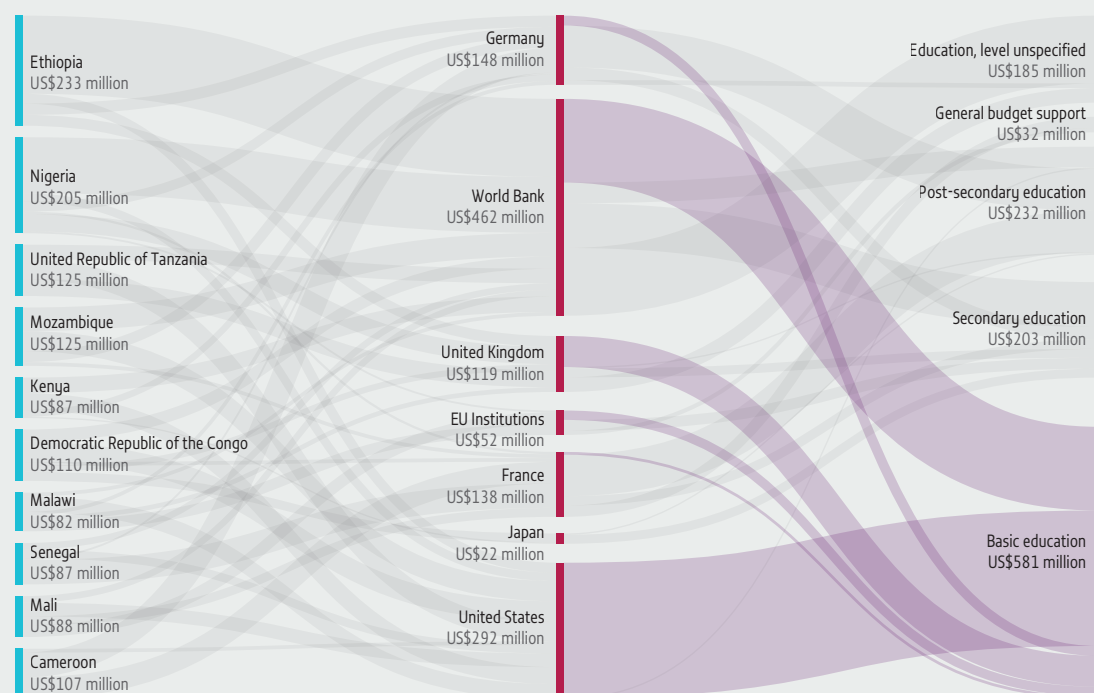


Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020).

As discussed in the 2019 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, it is difficult to estimate the amount of aid that goes to education in emergencies, because of a combination of inadequate sector documentation in reporting mechanisms, multisectoral interventions, joint use of development and humanitarian aid, and the considerable amounts allocated to Turkey which are not captured in the usual data. Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the global multilateral fund established in 2016 that aims to mobilize US\$1.8 billion by 2021, had raised US\$640 million by May 2020. As with GPE, ECW flows are not identified in either FTS or CRS.

post-secondary education (31%), scholarships for students in recipient countries to study abroad (21%), about one-third of which is not allocated to specific countries, and imputed costs for students studying in institutions of donor countries (48%). Upper-middle-income countries receive around 29%, or US\$1.8 billion, a larger share than in basic or secondary education.

Germany and France are the largest donors: they reported disbursements of US\$1.5 billion and US\$1 billion, respectively, on average per year between 2016 and 2018. Over 80% went to imputed student costs; Germany spent 6% on scholarships and France spent 14%. However, COVID-19 is likely to have a severe impact on the volume of scholarships and imputed costs, since travel restrictions are expected to reduce student mobility.

FIGURE 10:**The United States and the World Bank dominate aid to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa***Aid to education in sub-Saharan Africa, by education level and main donor and recipient countries, 2018*

Source: SCOPE education-progress.org analysis based on OECD CRS (2020).

CAN PAST CRISES HELP PREDICT THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AID TO EDUCATION?

Aid to education appeared to be finally returning to a sustainable growth path when the COVID-19 crisis struck. The pandemic is expected to put significant pressure on aid budgets. Alongside the global health crisis, the pandemic has led to significant economic disruption, large drops in economic output, increases in unemployment and underemployment, and a fall in household income. Governments are facing overwhelming demands to provide emergency funding to their health systems as well as to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic. It is estimated that, globally, over US\$8 trillion has been committed to pandemic responses so far (IMF, 2020). As a result of falling government revenue and increased demands for public spending, many countries have seen their budget deficits increase significantly in 2020.

Additional development assistance, debt relief or suspension of repayments could provide additional fiscal space for developing countries to respond effectively to the pandemic. But the pandemic will hit the economies of donor countries hard. The top 10 bilateral donors for education¹ have contributed 85% of total aid to education over the last 10 years. The recession in their economies is expected to be more than twice as large as it was during the great financial crisis (**Figure 11**). For instance, the United Kingdom's GDP is expected to fall by 10.2% in 2020, which could lead to a drop of US\$100 million in its total aid to education.

Economic crises in donor countries have in the past had large and persistent negative effects on aid levels (Dabla-Norris et al., 2015). An analysis of crises prior to

¹ Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States.

the financial crisis of 2007–2008 estimated that aid levels were 18% lower 5 years after and 28% lower 12 years after the start of a crisis than they would have otherwise been. Beyond the total volume of aid, sector and country allocations are also affected. Education and humanitarian aid seem to suffer less than other sectors, but aid may shift away from low-income and towards middle-income countries (Dang et al., 2013).

In the case of the great financial crisis, total aid mirrored the recession in 2009, while aid to education continued to grow rapidly in 2009 (by 19%) and 2010 (by 10%). But both total aid and aid to education then declined in 2011 and 2012, the only two-year negative spell in the past two decades, even if – as argued above – the decline in education was more marked because donors made it a lesser priority (Figure 12).

This scenario makes the following assumptions. In 2019, aid to education will have increased at the same rate as in 2012–2018. It will stagnate in 2020: even though the need is higher, the ability of donors to spend may be reduced. It will fall by 12% in 2020–2022, more than it did in the aftermath of the great financial crisis in 2010–2012. Finally, from 2023 onwards, it will resume its growth at the average rate of 2012–2018. This scenario would see 2018 aid to education levels

FIGURE 11:
Growth is forecast to drop drastically as a result of COVID-19

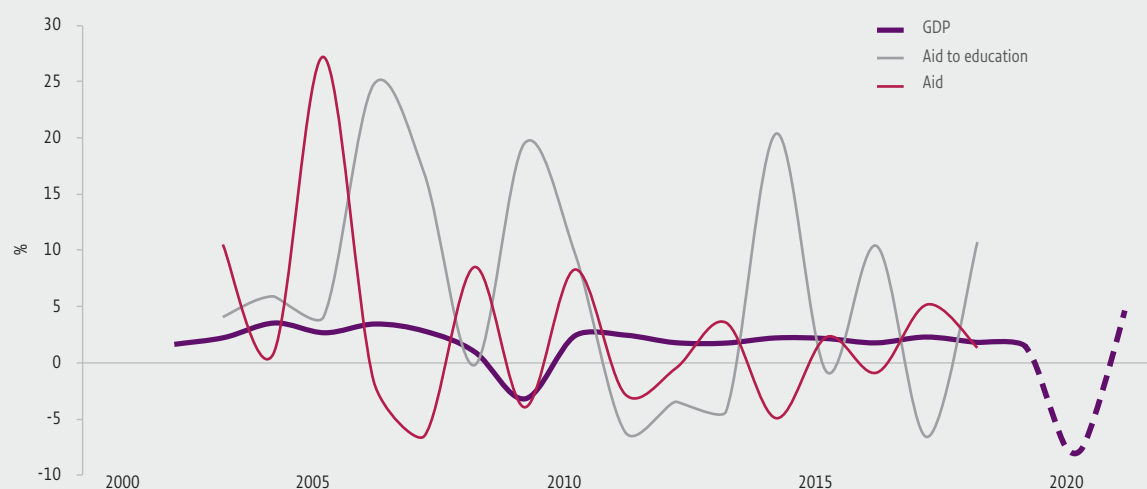
Real GDP growth rate, 10 largest donors to education, 2008–2010 and 2019–2021



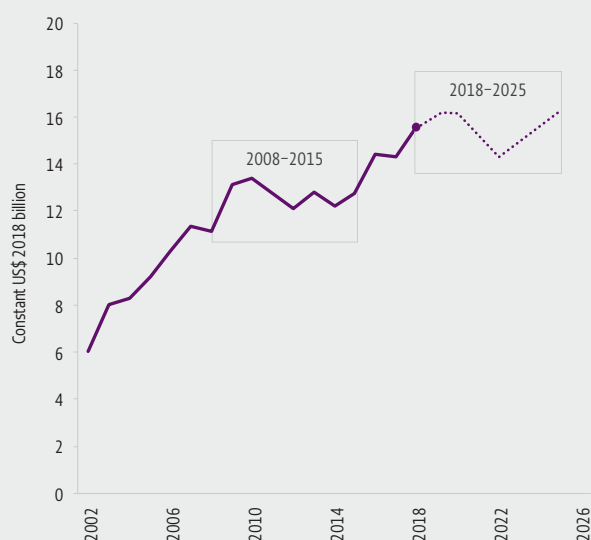
Note: Estimates for 2020 and 2021 refer to the 8 largest donor economies.
Source: GEM Report team estimates based on IMF World Economic Outlook.

FIGURE 12:
Aid is much more volatile than growth – but is affected by its downturns

Real GDP, aid and aid to education growth rate, 2002–2021



Source: GEM Report team estimates based on IMF and OECD CRS (2020).

FIGURE 13:**Aid to education could take six years to return to 2018 levels***Aid to education projection for the period 2018–2025*

Source: GEM Report team estimates.

reached again by 2024. This illustrative projection assumes that aid to education in 2018–2025 will follow a similar course as in 2008–2015: even though the recession in 2020 is expected to be more than twice as large as in 2008, the return to growth is also expected to be more than twice as fast (**Figure 13**).

In the short term, many development partners are making additional funding available or frontloading existing support for COVID-19 response plans. Education systems in developing countries will require additional short-term funding to address the COVID-19 crisis, for instance to provide distance learning opportunities or to cover the additional costs associated with reopening schools safely. GPE has set up a US\$509 million fund for COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plans. To date, 14 country grants totalling US\$42 million have been approved and 36 country grants are under review for a further US\$379 million. Development partners are also restructuring existing projects to make additional funds available in 2020. So far, the World Bank has COVID-19-related projects worth US\$2.6 billion in 69 countries, although a

large proportion of this funding is restructuring of existing projects.

It is too early for donors to have formulated a medium-term response to the pandemic beyond 2020.² It remains unknown whether reallocations from future funding commitments or to other sectors to counter the pandemic's immediate health and economic shocks in developing countries will reduce aid levels to education. If this happens, it will only deepen the learning crisis that many developing countries already faced before the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Just as aid to education seemed to have recovered its lost momentum, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely slow it down again, if not entirely reverse the trend. Although the last great financial crisis did not reduce aid volumes, the looming financial crisis is expected to be more severe. As donor countries reallocate funds to deal with increased unemployment and enterprise bankruptcies, aid volumes will inevitably be reduced – not least because some of the donors will suffer the consequences of reduced revenues from taxes or natural resources. Moreover, travel restrictions and continuing uncertainty will hamper the implementation of technical assistance programmes, despite increased needs to support the response to the pandemic, through distance learning mechanisms or the implementation of school reopening protocols. Donor priorities may shift to health or other emergency priorities. International student mobility, which accounts for US\$3.1 billion of total aid to education, will be curtailed. Even without these final two effects, aid to education levels may not return to 2018 levels for another six years.

Three donor policy responses will be key over the next 12 months. First, the share of education in total aid must be protected. This factor accounted for the slow pace with which aid to education resumed its growth path after 2010. This is not to say that support to health and social protection does not also help education. But education should not be singled out for cuts as was the case in 2003–2013.

² A short questionnaire was sent to the five largest donors to gauge the potential impact of the pandemic on aid to education.

Second, countries will need additional funding for COVID-19 responses that were previously not programmed. As some donors have already started doing, it is necessary to ensure flexibility in support so that existing programmes can be restructured and realigned to help countries ensure that COVID-19 is only a temporary setback. It should not be forgotten that this health crisis has exacerbated the effect of intersecting inequalities on education opportunities.

Third, obstacles in the implementation of traditional bilateral aid programmes may provide a chance for bilateral donors to consolidate fragmented aid efforts, shifting a larger portion through multilateral channels. The GPE and ECW replenishment rounds about to begin in the coming months present such an opportunity. Major advocacy efforts are required to ensure donors do not forget that the pandemic has also brought about an education crisis: school closures have pushed further back our chances of achieving universal primary and secondary completion with relevant and equitable learning by 2030.

Global Education Monitoring Report
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