

**Finn Church Aid 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event**  
**27 September 2017**

**Event theme:** Courage

**Speaker:** Alice Albright

**Keynote theme:** Education

**Duration:** 30 minutes, followed by 15 minute Q&A

- Prior to Alice Albright's keynote the following video on education and courage will be shown <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNUxvtlieFs&feature=youtu.be>
- Texts will be changed into English for the anniversary event.

Good afternoon Prime Minister Sipilä, Archbishop Mäkinen, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues.

Thank you Baba Lybeck for your kind introduction and for inviting me here today.

I am honored to be invited to address you today, and to pay tribute to the work of Finn Church Aid.

I want to congratulate Finn Church Aid – I won't try to say it in Finnish – on the occasion of your 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

I am particularly honored to be here as you celebrate one hundred years of Finland's independence. Your success and prosperity are no doubt due in large part to the importance you have attached to education.

Courage is a fitting theme for this event to commemorate the achievements of so many on behalf of the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

From Finn Church Aid's beginnings, Helsinki endured with courage the air raids of the second world war, defying the worst expectations of many.

With courage Finn Church Aid mobilized in the aftermath of war to face the dire needs of a country in ruins, choosing to be part of the solution to rebuild.

And today as a nation, Finland is well recognized all over the world for the quality and success of its education system.

In the years since its early days, Finn Church Aid has looked courageously beyond its borders to the needs of others, stepping into the places of greatest need to help others build their nations.

I would like to again congratulate Finn Church Aid for its many decades of achievement, and especially for your work on the right to quality education, as well as to peace and improved livelihoods.

We share a commitment in that regard – the Global Partnership for Education or GPE also dedicates the greater part of its resources to countries affected by conflict and fragility – including Somalia, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic where I know you work as well.

Unfortunately, violence and danger blights the lives of far too many children in this world. But it is organizations like Finn Church Aid – and many other people of great courage, that are making a difference.

Just a few weeks ago, I was in Honduras – one of the poorest countries in Central America.

On the outskirts of Tegucigalpa I met a woman of courage, who was the director of a primary school; and a teacher for 35 years.

- On a narrow hill top, she had made use of every single inch of flat ground to build classrooms, plant a vegetable garden, build toilets for boys and girls, and start a community based pre-primary feeder school.
- She was incredibly determined in her work, because she knew that her efforts meant the difference between a future and no future for the kids in her classrooms.
- She also spoke of how every day is a struggle given the violence in her country, but that school provides a safe haven and a community center for the children at the school.
- She spoke about how tragic it is when a young boy or girl does not get to transition onto the next school for various reasons.
- And how difficult it is to get the job done without having enough resources to teach the kids what she knows they need to learn.
- Meeting her was a powerful reminder of why we are here and how much is at stake.

Even though this director's efforts were remarkable, the world still has too many situations like the one she faces in Honduras.

- Latest estimates show that there are 264 million children and youth who are out of school.
- There are an additional 130 million children who can barely read or write, even though they are attending primary school.

Without immediate action, over half of the world's upcoming youth generation – 825 million of the 1.6 billion young people who will be alive in 2030 will simply not be equipped to work and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The result is that hundreds of millions of young people are being left behind,

- never to acquire the skills they need to break out of poverty or
- to compete successfully in an increasingly globalized world.

And, the countries they live in are deprived of the human talent essential to building economically dynamic, stable, and sustainable societies.

As a result, we are all less well off. Given our increasingly interconnected world,

- wherever there is inequality of opportunity,
- there is a risk of discontent and conflict,
- which in turn can spill over national and regional borders.

This means that we all have a responsibility to invest in education – whether we are from traditional donor countries, emerging economies, developing country governments, foundations, civil society, or the private sector.

The reasons to do so are first and foremost ones of principle: education is a right and we have an obligation to support the most vulnerable.

But self-interest – and I would also add national interest – also play a role:

Investment in human capital and talent is an investment in prosperity and sustainability for all of us.

- I doubt that anyone in this room needs much convincing that achieving the sustainable development agenda depends on achieving better education outcomes. Sustainable Development Goal 4, the global education goal that among 17 global goals represent the world's commitment to end poverty by 2030, is a key enabling goal to help meet the other goals.

The World Bank's annual flagship report, the World Development Report, known for its robust research and use of data, focuses this year on education. As a close partner of GPE, we were

pleased to see the launch of the Bank's report just this week. Among its findings, it emphasized addressing the technical and political challenges facing education systems. To do so is a powerful way for countries to escape the low-learning trap that is so typical of the learning crisis. This approach to systems is in fact at the heart of what GPE does.

But there is more. Research has consistently found that individual returns to schooling are positive and that returns tend to be higher in low- and middle-income countries than in higher-income countries. And as the World Development Report shows, beyond just getting kids into school, there are large and stable associations between reading proficiency as a measure of learning and employment earnings across a sample of eight low- and middle-income countries.

Education is indeed the foundation for

- ending extreme poverty,
- improving health outcomes and fighting the spread of disease,
- creating jobs and
- spurring sustainable growth,
- as well as enhancing security.

While the case for investing in education has never been more persuasive, the best ways to make a difference are also clear.

At the Global Partnership for Education, our mission is defined by SDG 4 – ensuring inclusive, quality education for all – because we know that without significant progress on education we have no chance of fulfilling all the other Sustainable Development Goals.

At the heart of our work is a laser focus on strengthening education systems, on financing, and on innovation – all targeted towards improving learning outcomes and, critically, equity.

For those who are not familiar with us - the Global Partnership for Education – we are the only global fund dedicated solely to education in developing countries.

- We are one of the world's biggest funders of school education and we focus very much on the lowest income countries, where out of school numbers are highest and where educational inequality is most acute.
- GPE is particularly focused on fragile contexts – 60 per cent of our funding was directed to countries affected by conflict and fragility in 2016.
- We have so far been able to support education in some 65 countries – and hope to increase that to over 80 countries in the next few years.

Just as important as the fact is that we are a fund, is our founding principle of partnership.

- The GPE board of directors includes donors and developing country partners, international organizations, civil society, the business community and philanthropy.
- Each constituency has a seat at the table and a voice in decision making - quite different from top down traditional donor-recipient arrangements of the past.

After a significant reform effort, I am confident that GPE is better now

- at the complex work of investing in
- and strengthening education outcomes
- than it has ever been before.

I'd like to share with you the headline areas of our work and the highlights of our first annual results report from our current strategic planning cycle.

## **Financing**

The first headline of our work is very clear – increasing financing.

Finns have a reputation for straight talking so let me be blunt. On financing for education we are falling short. Right now, we are not investing enough globally to achieve SDG4.

A new report from UNESCO shows that the share of aid allocated to education

- is still lower NOW than IT WAS in 2010,
- and aid to low income countries in particular has fallen.

To start to bridge the funding gap, GPE is campaigning right now to ramp up its support to developing country partners to 2 billion US dollars a year by 2020.

A full replenishment for the next three years – 2018-2020 –

- would enable the partnership to support up to 89 countries,
- which are home to 870 million children and adolescents
- and 78 per cent of the world's out-of-school children.

We would be able to put more than 25 million additional children through primary and lower-secondary school, including almost 15 million in countries affected by conflict and fragility.

### ***Systems strengthening***

GPE's second headline area is the patient work of strengthening and investing in education systems to improve how they deliver results.

- Governments must be in the lead here, determining their own national priorities and being held accountable for them.
- We have learned from the investments in global health that strengthening the system is key to sustainable change.

GPE's business model is all about strengthening and financing education systems and looks at such questions as

- Where children are out of school and why?
- What is preventing the most vulnerable and most excluded children from getting a quality education?
- are children moving from one level to the next, and if not why not?
- Are children achieving appropriate learning for their grade?
- Are there enough trained teachers?
- How well are administrative and oversight functions performed?
- Is data collected and used?
- Is the infrastructure sufficient?
- How will it all get paid for so that a plan is not a wish list?

And we look at these challenges over the long term, not just as a set of quick fixes.

- Our work starts with planning.
- GPE's first step is to help put in place a strong education sector plan.
- These take time to develop – but the aim is to rally all players around a common vision and flesh that out in detail, with countries in the lead.
- What GPE does is ensure countries have the support, both financial and technical, internally and externally, to succeed. [Honduras]

Once education sector plans are in place, countries become eligible for major implementation grants.

- These grants are results based.
  - 30 percent is linked to the achievement of agreed improvements in equity, efficiency and learning. That means making real progress on better education systems, better access to

schooling for the most vulnerable, and improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

- Plans must include a financed proposal to systematically collect data and report learning results.
- And in order to qualify for implementation funding, countries are also required to step up their *own* expenditure on education.

While we urgently need to scale up *aid* for education, it is domestic funding that is, and will continue to be, the source of the vast majority of funding to meet education expenditure.

For example, since joining the partnership in 2012, the Democratic Republic of Congo has substantially increased its financing for education -

- going from 9% of the national budget in 2010 to 17.8% in 2014.
- It has committed to increasing that to 20 per cent by 2018.

As well, Niger gradually increased its financing for education from

- 16.7% of national budget in 2002 when it joined GPE to
- 21.7% in 2014.

Let me shift gears and spend a few minutes talking about our results.

We have just issued our first Results Report and it shows that GPE's model is working.

- The report tracks 37 indicators that monitor progress on
- all of the key milestones, outputs, and outcomes that are
- critical to achieving our Theory of Change and the goals of GPE 2020 – our strategic plan.

We actually have a short and a long version of this report – so you can take your pick.

Here are the headlines:

- GPE has fully met 16 of 19 milestones that it has set for itself for 2016.
- GPE is reaching more children in more countries than even a few years ago.
- More of them are completing primary and lower-secondary school - particularly girls and children living in countries affected by conflict and fragility.
- More have now met the overall benchmark ratio of less than 40 students per trained teacher and have exceeded it in countries impacted by conflict and fragility.
- Two thirds of GPE partner countries with available data showed improved learning results between 2000 and 2015.
- And in 22 GPE partner countries, where data is available, two thirds of children between the ages of 3 and 5 were developmentally on track – [that means they were achieving appropriate learning outcomes for their age.]
- GPE partner countries are devoting more domestic resources to education.
  - Our benchmark measures the number of countries where domestic finance is on the rise or is over 20%.
    - This number now stands at 78%
    - Another factor we look at is data collection – why? Not having it gets in the way of all kinds of things: good policy formulation and the ability to track delivery and learning outcomes
  - We set for ourselves a goal that in 2016 30% of the countries would report education data.
    - That number now stands at 43% and
    - 100% of those applying for GPE grants now have a data strategy in place.

On an aggregate level, we take this initial round of results as a positive sign that our model is working.

Beyond the aggregate figures, let me give you a few specifics.

- In Afghanistan, GPE support has led to the hiring of more female teachers, particularly in rural areas, which is encouraging more girls to go to school.
- In Nepal, where Finn Church Aid is working in close partnership with UNICEF, one of our partners too, we have seen reductions of 20 percent in numbers of out- of-school girls in the most disadvantaged districts over a three-year period.
- In Ethiopia, the share of Grade 4 students reaching proficient and advanced levels in math increased from 13% to 19% in the past 4 years.
  - o And in Vietnam, the PISA 2015 results showed that students facing the greatest disadvantage outperformed the most advantaged students in 20 other countries.
- In Sudan, GPE has now supported the establishment of a national learning assessment,
  - o which was rolled out across 18 states in 2015 and
  - o involved approximately 10,000 students in over 450 schools.
- We have also seen some real improvements in student to trained teacher ratios over the past 6 years.
  - o Nepal cut the number by more than half,
  - o Senegal by 40% and
  - o Mozambique by more than a third.

While there are indeed some successes to celebrate, we also know that there are many areas across the Partnership where progress is still lacking. Some of these are:

- Pre-primary school is not available enough and not equitably enough
- Gender issues persist – particularly in transition of girls to lower secondary school, and when we dig into the numbers of children that are still out of school.
- Specific to GPE's model – alignment with government systems.
- Also, disability remains an enormous barrier to learning for children in developing countries. We want to see much more progress on addressing those barriers, not only in school but also looking at the cultural and social barriers, and the difficulties for disabled children in simply getting to school – a very important area where we really need to see more change.

We are making major investments in GPE's M&E capabilities such that we will be able to review whether our overall Theory of Change works and where adjustments and course corrections need to be made.

## ***Innovation***

The third headline area of GPE's work is innovation. We need to invest in new ideas, new partners and new approaches to stubborn problems, recognizing that business as usual won't work.

GPE has much to offer here.

1. We have concluded a major reform effort that puts long-term, durable system change at the heart of our work, shaping
  - how we measure results,
  - how we structure our financing,
  - how we conduct our Quality Assurance process,
  - and where we will focus our evaluation dollars and efforts.
2. GPE is now a major grant-maker in education – and in some countries one of the largest. We deliberately structure our financing to drive results in four ways:

- a. The first is by encouraging system-wide strengthening and reform – with 30 per cent of funds dependent on achieving agreed results on equity, efficiency and learning.
- b. The second area is knowledge. Here we are talking about harnessing and investing in knowledge and innovation in key thematic areas that we know are lacking. As a global partnership, GPE has an unparalleled platform to help partner governments get the information they need to contend with challenges

Through a new knowledge and innovation exchange that we call KIX, GPE is enabling countries to bring promising pilots to scale.

- c. Third, we are crowding additional finance into education. In fact, we have recently created a new multiplier mechanism specifically for this purpose.

How it works is - for each 3 additional dollars a country raises for education from external sources, the GPE Multiplier will leverage an additional dollar.

The idea here is to unlock grant or concessional resources from MDBs, regional development banks, bilateral governments and private capital

We are pursuing an active pipeline of opportunities with this new funding mechanism

- d. The fourth area is investing in better advocacy and accountability – supporting civil society in country, including NGOs, think tanks, to be able to track progress, and ensure funds are well spent. We are designing a new window for this very purpose.

We are also exploring engagement with the private sector to focus on some key areas of challenge. These efforts are in their early days, but beginning to get traction. Two examples are:

I am especially excited about our work with the global insurance industry and private foundations to transform the way school systems prepare for and deal with natural disasters and crises. You need go no further than the disastrous impact of Hurricane Irma on the Caribbean, or the mudslides and floods in Sierra Leone and Bangladesh to see how devastating these events are on education – we need to be better prepared and enable countries to recover quickly so that children can get back to school and learning.

We are also working with private actors to address the data challenge in education.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that GPE has been hard at work at a thorough reform effort.

With much of the developmental work now behind us, we have set out some ambitious goals for our third replenishment and right now, we are in heavy campaign mode

- The targets are ambitious and meet the Education Commission's call on GPE to become organization that deploys 2 billion dollars a year by 2020
- It has three big pillars – all of which involve a stretch for every partner of GPE
  - o Donors – need to contribute 3.1 billion dollars – and I would like to make a very direct appeal to Finland, as a country with a remarkable track record in education and deep commitment to this issue, to join other donors in stepping up its pledge to GPE in our next replenishment.
  - o Developing Country Partners also need to pledge to reach 20% of domestic resources for education.
  - o Foundations – we hope will continue on a growth trajectory in their support for our work (BTW, this has come from a standing start of zero a few years ago)

## ***In conclusion***

Back in the 2000s, I worked in global health, at Gavi. Where education stands today is not unlike where health was soon after the Millennium Development Goals were launched.

Then, we would have never believed it possible that in only 15 years we could

- prevent tens of millions of deaths from vaccine preventable diseases,
- provide treatment for HIV/AIDS,
- stem the spread of malaria and tuberculosis –
- and that we could dramatically cut the number of child and maternal deaths.

With ambition, commitment and support, I am optimistic we can do the same thing for education that we did for health 15 years ago.

I am optimistic because the world has begun

- to realize that education matters
- that the education funding crisis is acute
- that the stakes are high
- and that we are not going to achieve the SDG agenda otherwise

Indeed, the learning crisis I have talked about today held the world's attention last week at the UN General Assembly in New York. There I joined with others gathered to further the momentum for a greater response to this crisis. Of particular note for GPE, at the '*Financing the Future: Education 2030*' high-level event at UN Headquarters, President Macky Sall of Senegal and President Emmanuel Macron of France, in the presence of Secretary-General António Guterres, announced they would co-host GPE's replenishment event to be held February 8, 2018 in Senegal. This was an exciting step forward not just for GPE but for our collective work for children across the globe.

So, I would like to leave you today with a few take aways, whether you work for a government aid agency, a foundation, with a private company, with a CSO, or work in a developing country on the challenges facing education:

1. We have the pieces in place to bring about a transformation in global education that will have lasting benefits across the sustainable development agenda. This is our moment in history.
2. We have a stark choice right now –
  - a. Either continue business as usual and face the consequences of a globe with rising numbers of young people without the skills they need in some of the poorest and least stable parts of the world –
  - b. Or Step up and make the investments that we need to invest in education that will pay dividends of peace and prosperity across the globe.
3. Please leave here resolved to renew our commitment to change the lives of the world's children and youth so their futures are markedly better. Each of us, whether in government, in academia, in the CSO community, with foundations or the private sector, have a part to play.
  - a. And tell your government leadership that you expect them to scale up their investment in education to close the funding gap.
4. And if you are good at social media, which I am not, please use the hashtag #FundEducation.

We can act together to make a real difference but there is no time to lose.



Thank you.