

23 January 2026

Hon. John Mbadi,
Cabinet Secretary, The National Treasury and Economic Planning,
Kenya

Dear Sir,

**RE: KENYA'S ROLE IN THE 2026 GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION (GPE)
REPLENISHMENT**

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, welcome the news that the government of Kenya is hosting a GPE replenishment event on 'Investing in Our Future' on 26th January.

The government of Kenya played a crucial role alongside the UK in the last replenishment of the [Global Partnership for Education](#) (GPE) and we hope that this can set a powerful example for the next replenishment, to be co-hosted between Italy and Nigeria later this year.

In the last GPE replenishment, co-hosted by Kenya and the UK, President Kenyatta developed a [Heads of State declaration on education financing](#) and it would make sense for Kenya to encourage and support the government of Nigeria to do something similar, galvanising commitments and pledges from GPE partner governments around the world.

A logical and key reference point to shape these new commitments should be the [Call to Action on Financing Education](#) which was agreed at **the UN Heads of State Transforming Education Summit (TES)** in 2022 – which emphasises the importance of action on tax, debt and public sector wage bills for transforming education financing. TES was the highest-level global education meeting ever and laid out a crucial agenda on the financing of public education, which should be strategically advanced in the build up to and at the replenishment of GPE in 2026:

1. On TAX

The TES Call to Action calls for governments to '*commit to reach an adequate tax-to-GDP ratio as required, through ambitious and progressive tax reforms with linked commitments towards financing educational investment*'.

It also called for the international community to '*prioritize global actions on taxes, supporting international reforms that can help countries increase their tax income in a rapid and progressive way*' including through '*global action on tax loopholes, agreements on a global asset register, the reduction of illicit financial flows, unfair trade taxation, acting on tax havens and promoting a process for setting fair global tax rules*'.

In the **GPE replenishment** the importance of these commitments should be reiterated, with partner governments encouraged to give examples of how expanding tax revenues through progressive reforms can help to transform the financing available for education systems. It would be important also to reference the crucial role of the Africa Group at the UN in pushing the UN General Assembly vote for a UN Tax Convention in 2022/3 and how the negotiations on this convention in Nairobi in 2025 helped to keep up momentum. This momentum needs to be sustained through 2026 to final approval of the UN Tax Convention in 2027 - as changing global tax rules is crucial to enabling every country to raise more domestic revenue for transforming the financing of education.

2. On DEBT

The TES call to action was very clear about needing to address debt if countries are to finance quality public education. It urged the international community to '*Support action on debt relief, restructuring, and in some cases, cancellation, for any countries spending more on debt servicing than education.*' It also called for governments to help '*revise the*

international financial and debt architecture ...including by removing conditionalities that require cutting expenditure on education as a pre-requisite to attain new financing’.

In the **GPE replenishment**, the government of Kenya, along with Nigeria and many other countries must highlight how damaging it is when they are forced to spend more on servicing external debt than on education. The level of debt across Africa today is one of the biggest obstacles to increasing spending on education. With 54 countries in debt crisis and 50% of all lower income countries spending more on debt servicing than education, this is a common story that needs urgent attention. We hope that the Kenyan government can work with the Nigerian government and others to join forces to call for bold debt restructuring, debt cancellation and an overhaul of the debt architecture as a key means to make progress on education financing. At the UN Financing for Development Summit in Seville in June 2025, Kenya and Nigeria joined other African nations in calling for a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt. This was blocked in the final consensus outcome document from Seville, but Kenya and Nigeria could emphasise the importance of progressing this for supporting the financing of education – for example calling on all GPE partner governments to support a vote for a UN Debt Convention at the UN General Assembly.

3. On **AUSTERITY** and **TEACHERS**

The TES call to action called on the international community to ‘*Urge the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial institutions to address obstacles such as public sector wage constraints that prevent increased spending on education; and champion policies that will allow significant new recruitment of professional teachers wherever there are shortages.*’ This agenda was reinforced by final recommendations from the [UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on the Teaching Profession](#) in 2024.

In the **GPE replenishment** there is a chance to push back against the often-coercive policy advice of the IMF – to cut or freeze public sector wage bills – that has a devastating impact on the ability to recruit more teachers, despite teacher shortages. The government of Kenya should work with Nigeria to call for the IMF to support active increases in the % of GDP spent on public sector wage bills to address teacher shortages and also call for the IMF to come to the table in a sustained dialogue with the global education community (which the IMF continues to avoid).

Focusing attention on the wider strategic financing agenda that was agreed at the Transforming Education Summit makes sense for a GPE replenishment Heads of State initiative. Kenya as previous co-hosts can work with the government of Nigeria to build a positive and transformative narrative on education financing at the GPE replenishment. The replenishment event on 26th January would be a powerful place to show such commitment and cooperation.

Of course, any collective statement from partner governments should also **call on donors to maintain or increase their commitments to GPE**, reminding them of the 0.7% GNI target for ODA and the TES benchmark that 20% of aid should be allocated to education – and reasserting the importance of aid effectiveness principles. Many of those present on 26th January will be bilateral donors and it is essential that they feel the collective pressure from developing partner governments to reverse the worrying trends in cutting aid.

With Kenya’s role as a regional leader on girls’ education and youth empowerment, we underscore the importance of ensuring that all financing commitments made at the GPE replenishment are gender-responsive, transformative and inclusive. We urge the Government of Kenya, in partnership with Nigeria, to champion education financing strategies that dismantle barriers faced by girls particularly those affected by early marriage, pregnancy, and/or disability and to prioritize the recruitment and retention of teachers trained in gender-responsiveness. By placing gender equity and youth participation at the heart of education financing, Kenya can reaffirm its continental leadership and set a transformative precedent for the global education community.

Whilst this is an opportunity to raise strategic issues on the global stage it is also a moment for the government of Kenya to increase its own domestic commitments to finance education for example by making commitments in relation to the [4 S Framework](#):

1. Maintaining the **share** of the budget spent on education to a minimum of 20% of their annual budget to education
2. Increasing the **size** of the government budget overall (through action on tax, debt & austerity)
3. Increasing the **sensitivity** of spending on education – to reach the most excluded and marginalised, including girls and those who are married early or pregnant
4. Increasing the **scrutiny** of education spending - e.g. through independent audits / community budget tracking, disability mainstreaming tracking etc. – to make sure the funds arrive in practice, especially in marginalised communities.

As we commemorate International Education Day on 24th January, we look forward to the event on 26th January and hope that the government of Kenya can work with the government of Nigeria to make the most of this historic opportunity for leadership on the global education stage.

Yours sincerely

ActionAid

Elimu Bora Working Group

Elimu Yetu Coalition

Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Kenya Chapter

Global Campaign for Education (GCE)

Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Kenya Human Rights Commission

Plan International

Tax & Education (Tax Ed) Alliance