Harnessing non-state actors for quality and equitable education

The provision of quality and equitable education cannot be done alone.

It requires participation from the whole of society - from government, charities, companies, ordinary citizens, and social movements.

Over the next year, five key questions will challenge the sector:

1. **How can public private-partnerships be used to expand access to quality early learning?**
   In low-income countries, only one in five children between the ages of three and six years old have access to pre-primary education, with preschool education almost entirely provided by informal enterprises in many countries.

2. **As countries 'build back better', how can low-fee private schools and preschools be better regulated to ensure that children who need the most support are not excluded?**
   While there are notable exceptions, in many countries even low-fee private schools remain inaccessible.

3. **How has covid-19 affected the operations of low-fee private schools and preschools, and what can be done to support them?**
   These schools account for nearly a quarter of primary school enrolments in low-income countries, and many have been bankrupted by

lockdown measures and reduced class sizes. Without support the closure of these schools could erode progress to universal primary enrollment.

4. **How can the private sector be leveraged to close the 'funding gap' to meet SDG4 (Inclusive and Quality Education)?**
   Covid-19 risks widening the 'funding gap' needed to meet SDG4 in low- and lower-middle-income countries to $200 billion annually. In an already difficult fiscal environment, governments will need to leverage a share of the estimated $12 trillion available from the private sector.

5. **How can private foundations invest more effectively as international aid declines?**
   The total aid to education is predicted to decline by 12%, following the economic fallout of covid-19. Philanthropies can help offset this shortfall, through careful, strategic, and evidence-based investment.

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) provides rigorous analysis and practical technical assistance, grounded in our commitment to improving education for the most hard-to-reach and marginalised groups. Our expertise is rooted in a long track record of success in research, policy development, and capacity-building. With our **global network of offices and associates**, we combine this world class expertise with an investment in deep, contextual knowledge and long lasting, responsive partnerships with our clients.

How can we support you?

1. Market analysis. Our market assessments investigate the availability, quality, costs, and usage of the education services currently avaliable by non-state actors

As part of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded *Education Operational Research and Evaluation (EDOREN)* programme, we undertook an assessment of low-cost private school provision in Lagos to evaluate the learning outcomes, costs, and cost-efficacy of different service providers.

Through the FCDO-funded *Developing Effective Education Programmes in Nigeria (DEEPEN),* we collected qualitative data from a cross-section of families attending low-fee private schools to explore how they paid for these services, and gauged the education provided.

2. Policy development. Our policy analysis identifies how non-state actors can be used for public benefit, and what capacity government needs in order to manage them.

In the *Early Learning Partnership,* supported by the World Bank, we undertook a comprehensive diagnosis of the state of early childhood education provision in Liberia. We investigated learning outcomes, teacher training, and classroom resources, as well as how the relationships between government, principals, teachers, and families affected learning quality.

In Pakistan, we manage the FCDO-funded *Sub-National Governance (SNG) programme.* We support institutional reforms and build capacities to improve the way governments carry out their functions and allocate resources linked to people's needs, such as through better financial management, increased transparency, and improved accountability.

3. Public-private partnerships. We assess the feasibility of public-private partnerships to ensure they deliver high quality, equitable education.

We are currently undertaking a feasibility study with UNICEF on the *use of public-private partnerships to expand preschool* to underserved communities in Serbia. We are analysing current enrollment patterns and costs, reviewing policy and regulations, documenting 'best practice' in the region, modelling demand, and providing a suite of workable options.

We have been providing technical support and supporting the evaluation of FCDO's *Sindh Education Non-State Actors (SENSA)* programme. This explores the effectiveness of public-private partnerships to improve primary education for 50,000 of the poorest children in the Sindh province of Pakistan with three non-state education providers. We have also provided technical support to these providers ensure provision of quality education.

4. Organisational learning. We support organisations to reflect on and improve the effectiveness of their work.

We are currently working with *Porticus*, a philanthropic foundation, to reflect on the effectiveness of their Global Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme. We are working with key stakeholders to develop theories of change, collect data to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement, and facilitate learning workshops with the programme team.

In our assessment of the *Human Development Innovation Fund* in Tanzania, we evaluated a range of education, sanitation, and health interventions delivered by non-state actors. This included the use of low-cost private schools, and education technology such as the delivery of teacher training via SMS, and children's programming on TV.

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