

Annual Report

2021-2022





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About Global Schools Forum

Global Schools Forum is a collaborative community of non-state organisations working to improve education at scale for underserved children in low-and-middle-income countries.

Our vision is that all children can realise their potential through safe access to quality education.

Our work comprises three key areas:

1.



Strengthen and grow a global learning community

Strengthen and grow the community

GSF nurtures leadership, talent and diversity to strengthen our community and grow a mission aligned and globally representative community.

Deepen engagement and learning within the community

GSF deepens engagement with and between the community via formal and informal connections, communities of practice and other means.

2.



Test promising solutions and diffuse evidence

Test promising solutions with potential to scale

GSF supports the testing of promising solutions with potential to scale by providing flexible funding and expert coaching.

Generate and diffuse evidence and best practice

GSF distils best practices from practitioners, generate evidence on 'what works' in education and what makes organisations more effective.

3.



Partner strategically to shape policy and scale solutions

Shape Policy

GSF engages in, and shapes, global policy processes and discussions on how non state capacity can be harnessed to improve education outcomes equitably.

Foster partnerships for scale

GSF builds relationships with key strategic partners, including funders and policy makers, and amongst the community to support the scaling of promising solutions.

Reflections from the CEO

Dear Friend of Global Schools Forum,

Welcome to our Annual Report, where we reflect on our year from September 2021 to August 2022 and share exciting updates for the coming year ahead.

This year has been a momentous one for us in many ways - a testament to the work of our growing team and support from our Board, a reflection of enduring partnerships with our funders, and without a doubt the incredible (and growing) community of members we engage with on a daily basis.

Things kicked off in high gear as we consolidated the process to spin out as an independent organisation from Ark and strengthened our team and Board of Trustees, providing us with a foundation for growth in the years to come.

We welcomed some fantastic new members into our community too, which now includes 78 organisations from 53 countries around the world. Feedback from our community has been very positive, with 82% of respondents to our annual memberships survey telling us that being a member of GSF addresses their organisational needs and requirements.

It was also a year where we refreshed our strategy. The GSF team took stock of what we had achieved and where we wanted to go in consultation with the Board, external stakeholders and our community. With this new strategy, GSF becomes a learning and action community. Not only will we support organizations in our community to learn from each other, we will also fund and support them to collaboratively test out new approaches to scale, share evidence to support replication, and broker strategic partnerships with funders and policymakers.

As part of this strategic shift, we have built GSF's capabilities to act as an innovation accelerator and were delighted to select three fantastic organisations to be a part of our first Impact@Scale Lab, from a highly competitive global application pool. We have also laid the foundations of several strategic partnerships, on regulation, innovative financing, and early childhood in emergencies.

My personal highlight for the year was bringing our community together at our Annual Meeting, our first in-person event since the global pandemic, which saw over 80 entrepreneurs, funders, investors, policy makers and representatives from bilateral and multilateral organisations coming together in Johannesburg.

The year ahead promises to build on this tremendous momentum as we prepare for our second Impact@Scale Lab, launch exciting initiatives to support stronger partnerships and engagement between governments and non-state actors, and continue to cultivate meaningful and relevant learning opportunities for our community.

I hope you enjoy reading more about our work in the pages ahead.

Onwards and upwards



AASHTI ZAIDI HAI

Chief Executive Officer, Global Schools Forum

Key achievements

Learn about GSF’s key achievements and highlights from the last year, and discover how we work with our global community to improve education outcomes for children around the world.



OCT

COVID-19 impact report
 ‘COVID-19 and the non-state education sector: Innovation in the face of precarity’. GSF and Education Development Trust (EDT) published research that provided new evidence and insights on the experience of non-state school provision during the pandemic.



DEC

UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report
 GSF were invited to engage and input into the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR). The report highlighted that all actors – state and non-state – should be viewed as part of a “single system”.

FEB

Launched Impact@Scale Labs
 Launched Impact@Scale Labs to search for innovations that tackle learning loss experienced by children in low-and-middle-countries.



JUN

Transforming Education Pre-Summit
 GSF CEO Aashti Zaidi Hai participated in a panel discussion at the Transforming Education Pre-Summit in Paris. During the session, Aashti called for ‘all hands-on deck’ to improve education around the world.



MAR

Strengthened GSF team
 GSF grows team with seven new appointments in the last financial year. 100% of the team agreed that GSF is an inclusive place to work.

AUG

Increased annual website visitors
 Our website received +30% increase in annual visitors.

AUG

Grew the community to 78 organisations
 GSF ends the financial year with 14 new members, building our global network to 78 organisations in total and expanding our reach to improve education outcomes around the world.

AUG

GSF-Ark Fellowship programme
 GSF facilitated a Fellowship programme with Ark and GSF member organisations Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) and Dignitas.



Our community

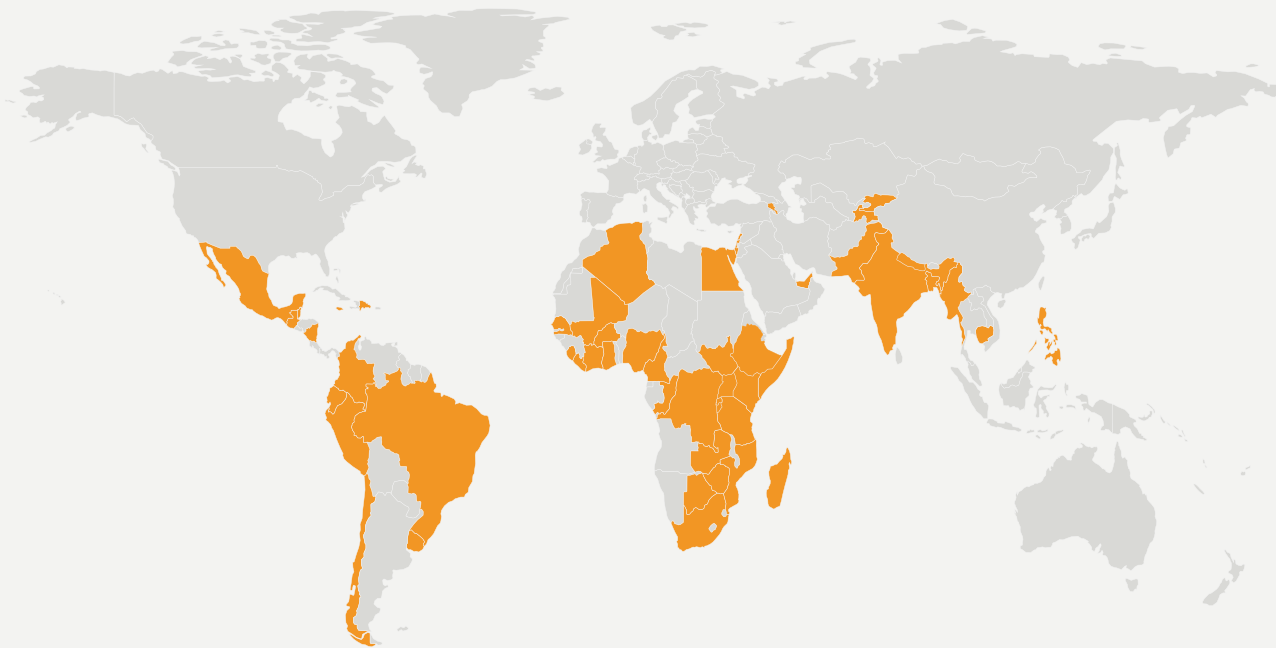
GSF continues to expand and grow its community, adding 14 new organisations in the last financial year. The GSF community now stands at 78 members from 53 countries, running or supporting nearly 55,000 schools and impacting over 7.5 million children. This comprises 52 School Networks, 6 Standalone Schools and 20 Intermediaries.

78
MEMBERS

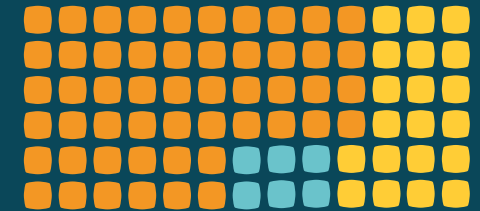
53
COUNTRIES

54,972
SCHOOLS

7,586,159
CHILDREN

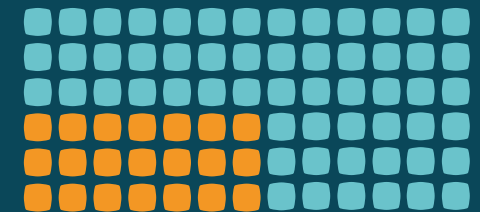


MEMBER TYPE



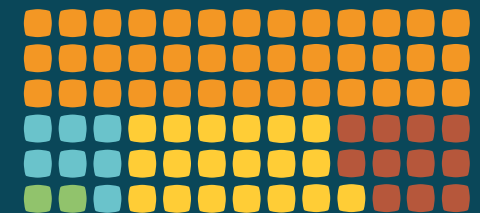
52 School network
6 Standalone school
20 Intermediary

OPERATING MODEL



21 For profit
57 Not for profit

REGION



39 Africa
7 Latin America
19 South Asia
2 South East Asia
11 Multi-region

Our community

GSF builds, engages and supports a vibrant and diverse community of mission aligned organisations working towards a shared vision of improving education outcomes for children around the world.

“ GSF continually creates meaningful, interactive, and productive spaces for school leaders, funders, and intermediaries to collaborate. Since becoming members a few years ago, we have benefited from joining everything from a small group conversation focused on child protection, to annual meetings reflecting on the COVID-19 crisis. More than any other convening, we look forward to those with GSF the most – knowing that we can be among colleagues that deeply understand the collective work we are each doing across the globe.”

RESHMA PATEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IMPACT NETWORK.





OUR WORK

Strengthen and grow a global learning community

GSF's work in this area is focused on:

Increasing engagement and learning opportunities across our network of organisations through formal and informal connections and communities of practice.

Nurturing leadership, talent and diversity to strengthen our community.

PAGE 1 OF 2

Annual Meeting

- In October 2022, GSF held its 6th Annual Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting, held in-person for the first time since 2019, brought together over 80 attendees from 30 countries representing GSF's global community of non-state organisations, funders, and policymakers.
- The Annual Meeting was built around the theme of Nurturing Collective Action and each day of the Annual Meeting was focused on one of GSF's strategic priorities: nurturing community, nurturing promising solutions and nurturing partnerships. As with previous years, the aim was to foster deep and meaningful connections, broaden our thinking and push the community further in our collective agenda to provide children and young people the education they deserve.

[READ MORE](#)

Growing the community

GSF has continued to expand and grow its global network of non-state organisations over the last year, increasing our community to 78 organisations in total across 53 countries.



Muriel Mafico of UNICEF South Africa at our Annual Meeting



OUR WORK

Strengthen and grow a global learning community

GSF's work in this area is focused on:

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PAGE 2 OF 2

Strengthening organisations and leadership

- We have co-designed and delivered communities of practice (CoPs) aimed at strengthening organisational and leadership capacity within the community, on topics such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ). Nearly 86% of participants in these communities of practice said they would implement strategies and resources from the CoPs in their work.

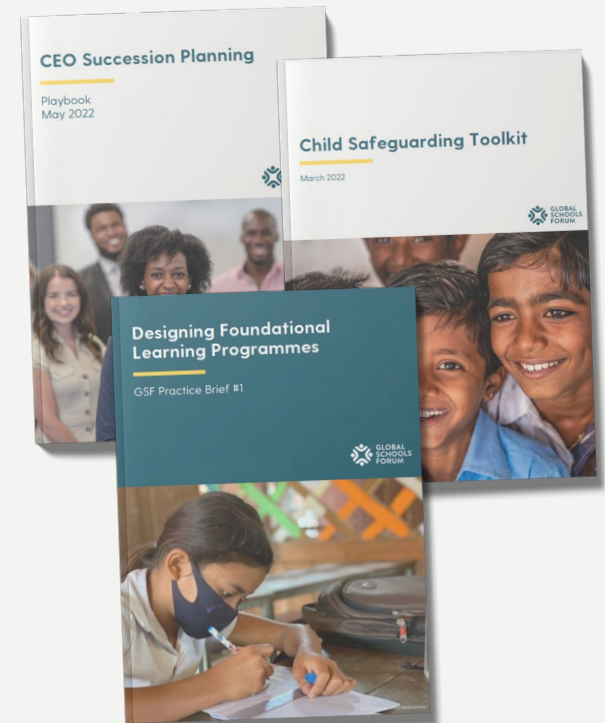
[READ MORE](#)

- We have compiled resources and playbooks for our community to help them improve their own work.
- GSF piloted a new Fellowship programme in partnership with Ark, where a team of two Ark staff each spent the summer working with Dignitas (Kenya) and PEAS (Zambia) on projects aimed at fostering peer knowledge between the two organisations.

[READ MORE](#)

Increased membership engagement

We facilitated over 100 connections for our community, including connections to other members, funders and external experts, and have had over 30 requests for support (including feedback into organisational strategy, participation in research, speaking invitations), indicating that GSF continues to be top of mind for support and collaborations.



Examples of resources we have compiled for our community



OUR WORK

Test promising solutions and diffuse evidence

GSF's work in this area is focused on:

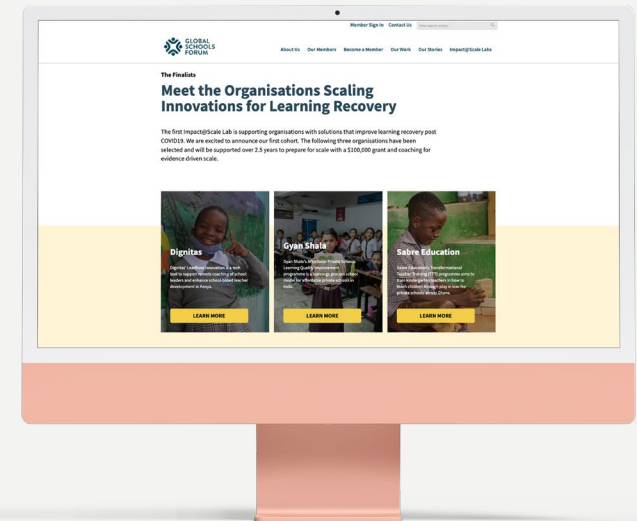
Supporting the testing of promising solutions with potential to scale by providing flexible funding and expert coaching.

Distilling best practices from practitioners and generating evidence on 'what works' in education and what makes organisations more effective.

Supporting innovations to scale

- We have significantly enhanced GSF's capabilities to act as an innovation accelerator for education organisations looking to equitably improved learning outcomes at scale. We will be supporting education innovations with funding and coaching to design revenue models and partnerships for scale, to put in place agile evidence systems, and to design the right teams for growth.
- The first Impact@Scale Labs is supporting finalists [Dignitas](#), [Gyan Shala](#), and [Sabre Education](#) over 2.5 years with USD 100,000 and coaching, expertise and connections for scale. The organisations' innovations focus on learning recovery post Covid-19.
- We are preparing to launch our second Lab in 2023, focused on early childhood education innovations by locally founded organisations in East Africa.

[READ MORE](#)



Distilling best practices from our community

We have increased our focus on distilling and sharing the best practice that resides within the broader GSF community, building on existing efforts such as the Foundational Learning Practice Brief. In the coming year, we will be launching several evidence hubs and documenting learnings on how innovations scale.

[READ MORE](#)



OUR WORK

Partner strategically to shape policy and scale solutions

GSF's work in this area is focused on:

How non-state education can be harnessed in an equitable way to get more children learning.

How innovative and promising approaches from the non-state sector can be scaled through partnerships with governments and other actors.

PAGE 1 OF 3

Impact of COVID-19 on non-state schools

We published a policy report in partnership with Education Development Trust on the impact of COVID-19 on the non-state education sector. Drawing on a global survey, and fieldwork in Kenya, Nigeria and India, the report highlighted the urgent need for action to support schools to avoid permanent closure, and to help children make up the learning time they have lost. Our Head of Policy & Partnerships also presented the findings of the research at the UKFIET conference.

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UNESCO GEM Report

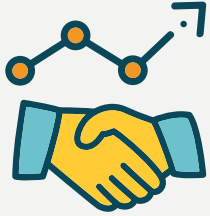
- We continued to engage with UNESCO on the Global Education Monitoring Report on non-state actors – and were pleased to see that the Report set out a vision for all education institutions, students and teachers to be seen as part of a single system.
- We hosted a roundtable meeting at the CIES Conference in the United States where leaders from the GSF network explored the implications of the Report for practice.
- Writing for Devex, we welcomed the report and called on policy makers to invest in the capacity to regulate better, to use the sector as a test bed for educational innovation, and to focus on equity.

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Education Financing

We worked with the World Bank to develop two new modules for the Bank's Education Financing Policy Academy on sources of education financing, and value for money in education spending.





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PAGE 2 OF 3

Transforming Education Summit

- GSF represented the non-state education sector in policy discussions ahead of the UN's Transforming Education Summit. This included our CEO speaking at the Pre-Summit in Paris, and work to successfully influence the outcomes of the Summit's financing track.

[READ MORE](#)

- We also convened a roundtable breakfast discussion following the Summit in New York, discussing how the non-state education sector might help to make the commitments made by member states a reality.

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Supporting local partners

- We have supported four Low-Fee Private School Associations to develop their capacity for policy engagement, through a small grants programme, relationship-building, and engaging them in GSF offer. Grantees include the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia, the Ghana National Association of Private Schools and the Association For Formidable Educational Development (AFED) in Nigeria.
- With IDP Foundation, we have also begun work on a project exploring how to support country-level initiatives that are leading to more inclusive, connected, transparent, and far-reaching education systems.

Regulation

We have established a new workstream exploring how the non-state education sector can be more effectively regulated. Over the next 12 months we will publish new research looking at school leaders and Ministry official's perspectives on regulation – and work with USAID's Education Finance Network to co-convene a working group on 'Enabling Regulation'.





OUR WORK

Partner strategically to shape policy and scale solutions

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PAGE 3 OF 3

Brokering partnerships to scale solutions

- We have worked with partners Kaizenvest, IDP Foundation, and Varthana to begin design for a Finance for Education Fund, aimed at improving access to impact-linked financing for low-fee private schools, working through banks and other financial intermediaries.
- We have partnered with Street Child, the Moldovan Government and UBS Foundation to rapidly design an initiative which will ensure access to essential early education for Ukrainian refugees and host communities. also The initiative will also collect real-time evidence to expand the global evidence base on early education in emergencies.
- In partnership with aeioTu, Kidogo, Smartstart, Mobile Creches, UNICEF and IDInsight, we are looking for partners to to scale up promising social franchising models that can deliver childcare and promote better employment opportunities for women.



Amplifying insights from the chalkface

We have increased engagement with organisations in our network to ensure that insights from their experience of delivering education at the chalkface underpins our policy work. This has included engaging members in policy research, regular discussions with individual member organisations, and actively sharing external opportunities to engage in policy work.

Our impact

GSF members' shared feedback on being part of our global community.

94%

of survey respondents agreed that through GSF their organisation is better connected to a network of peers.

over **70%**

of respondents agreed that GSF provides relevant and practical learning & development opportunities to their organisation.

70

Our average Net Promoter Score across the Communities of Practice (CoP) was 70 ("good") and is a reflection of the quality and relevance of the sessions.

82%

of respondents agreed that GSF continues to address their needs and requirements.

100%

of participants agreed that they were able to build and deepen relationships and learn from other organisations through the Annual Meeting.

86%

of CoP participants said they would implement strategies and resources from the CoPs in their work.

65%

of the respondents see value in and feels represented by GSF's work at the global level to influence the policy, funding and operational space for non-state actors

86

The Annual Meeting received a Net Promoter Score of 86 which is "excellent".

“It has been a transformative year for Global Schools Forum both in terms of organisational development and community engagement. The team has grown considerably with the addition of seven new staff and an expanded network of 78 members globally. Their work towards improving the perception and capacity of the non-state sector will enable the team to continue in their mission to improve education outcomes for children around the world.”

**NIRAV KHAMBHATI,
CHAIR,
GLOBAL SCHOOLS FORUM**

“ GSF plays such an important role in bringing stakeholders together. We’re so stuck in our operational routines that it’s very difficult to get your head above the parapet and meet each other. What a gift GSF is in terms of providing that opportunity, not only in terms of this conference, but in terms of the communities of practice and the multiple forums in which we’re invited to participate.”

**JOHN GILMOUR,
LEAP SCIENCE AND MATHS SCHOOLS**

“ Having access to a network of non-state schools that are driven by an abundance mindset of collaboration is a powerful resource for our organization. The steady flow of information related to innovations, funding, and potential partnerships offers MAIA a global view of our shared cause. Being in the GSF space provides us with unique access to learning spaces and allows us access to the big-picture view of a global community.”

**ANDREA COCHÉ AND LIDIA OXÍ,
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, MAIA IMPACT**



Our people

The last year has been transformational for GSF as we continue to grow our organisation, community, and capacity to collaborate with the non-state education sector around the world.

We have grown our team to 16 members across 4 continents, onboarded our new Board of Trustees and have inducted a new Chair and Vice-Chair to the Board. As part of our ongoing development, we undertook a strategic planning exercise and finalised our strategy and operations for the 2022-2025 period. GSF are also committed to building a diverse and inclusive organisation, with 100% of our team agreeing that GSF is an inclusive organisation in which to work.

“ GSF have been through an incredibly important year this past year full of transition and massive growth both in terms of their team, their board, their membership, and overall their scope and strategy of what they plan to take on in the next chapter. I’m really excited about what the next chapter holds and they have a really clear vision for supporting our community as well as meeting ambitious targets.”

CORINA GARDNER, IDP FOUNDATION AND GSF BOARD MEMBER

GSF TEAM



PETER COLENZO

Senior Advisor



ALINA LIPCAN

Director of Impact & Innovation



ROSS DUNCAN

Policy and Research Associate



JOEL MULLAN

Head of Policy & Partnerships



ANUPAMA GAHLOUT

Community and Partnerships Manager



SANTIAGO ORTIZ-CORREA

Associate, Monitoring and Evaluation



CATARINA GOMES

Head of Operations & Strategy



AJAY PINJANI

Manager (Learning)



URSULA HANKINSON

Senior Manager, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)



KAVITA RAJAGOPALAN

Programme Director



STEPHEN JOBLING

Communications Manager



KIRAN SAHIB

Senior Impact and Innovation Manager



POORNIMA KHARBANDA

Impact and Innovation Manager



ZOE SHEPHERD

Associate (Operations and Programme)



HABEEB KOLADE

Impact and Innovation Manager



AASHTI ZAIDI HAI

CEO

Our people

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Practice Manager, Education, World Bank Group



STACEY BREWER

Co-founder and CEO, SPARK Schools



PAUL SKIDMORE

Founder and CEO, Rising Academies

MICHAEL CLARK (Ark) and **MAYA ZISWILER** (UBS Optimus Foundation) stepped down from the board. We would like to thank them both for their valuable insights and commitment they provided as GSF board members over the years.

OUR SUPPORTERS





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