Letter from the Director

This last year has been a milestone year for Global Schools Forum. We doubled our membership, and our 48 members run or support over 17,000 schools in 32 countries across Latin America, South and East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa providing quality education to over 2.2 million children.

Our members are diverse — including large international networks operating across multiple countries, networks in various types of partnerships with government, and intermediary organisations supporting single proprietor schools to strengthen their quality. The membership is testament to the scale and variety of the non-state education sector that has grown rapidly over the last two decades, and now provides education to at least one out of five children around the world.

We exist to support and strengthen these non-state organisations by providing opportunities for networking and collaboration, greater access to expertise, a focus on improved data and evidence and by advocating on behalf of the sector.

Our member offer in 2018–19 deliberately sought to provide our members with multiple ways to engage and partner with each other and more widely across the education sector. The offer included our Annual Meeting in Nairobi, a Study Tour to India, the GSF-Teach for All Fellowship Programme, and our Child Protection Toolkit among others.

Having consolidated our member base, we began engaging externally to advocate on behalf of the sector. This ranged from inputting into identified education policy documents, convening and facilitating sessions in global conferences, and meeting key global education stakeholders to discuss the ways that our members and the wider non-state sector can support governments in their goals to provide access to quality basic education for all children.

We are preparing for the coming year to be bigger and better — deepening our engagement with our members and offering more opportunities, both face-to-face and virtual, for them to collaborate and share best practices. Our efforts to engage and influence policies affecting the wider sector are also set to intensify. And finally, the team is set to grow to accommodate our growing ambition and appetite to support our members and the wider sector.

Aashti Zaidi Hai

Founding Director

Global Schools Forum
Global Schools Forum is an independent, not-for-profit membership organisation of education entrepreneurs who are running and supporting innovative and inclusive schools across the developing world.

Global education goal

The Sustainable Development Goals were established by the United Nations in 2015 as an urgent call to action by all countries — developed and developing — to ensure a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. The Education SDG demands all girls and boys should complete free, equitable and quality primary education. GSF exists to support this goal.

Need for non-state education

Non-state education organisations bring additional investment to the education sector. They provide capacity where state systems face constraints, and they are well-positioned to innovate and find ways to raise standards, increase access and reduce costs.

The sector is vast, growing and fragmented

There are approximately 1.5 million non-state schools in low- and middle-income countries. This sector is vast and growing, and the demand for education continues to grow commensurate with population growth. The growth of the non-state education sector in low- and middle-income countries is twice that of state education sector.

GSF was established in response to the rapid growth of the non-state school education sector in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
We strongly value our membership in Global Schools Forum and look forward to the annual meeting each year. Networking with organisations with shared challenges gives us perspective and a sense that we are all working together towards a greater global mission.

GSF School Operator Member

GSF Members have a lot in common

- A focus on delivering affordable quality education to children from low-income backgrounds. Three quarters of our school operator members and all our intermediary members are focused on serving children from low-income families.
- Partnership with government. More than half our school operator members and two-thirds of our intermediary organisations are partnering with government in some capacity.
- Additionally, there are specific values that our members collectively share and care about: continuous improvement; improving the outcomes of the students we serve; and connecting and collaborating with their peers in the GSF network.

GSF Members represent a diverse group of organisations

GSF Members differ in terms of:

- Business model: non-profit or for profit.
- Type of organisation: school operators or intermediary organisations supporting schools.
- Scale: organisations range in size from operating one school to operating or supporting thousands of schools.

The Challenge

GSF Members’ global efforts address existing education challenges:

- Access: 1 in 5 children are out of school.
- Quality: 57% of children are not achieving minimum proficiency in reading and maths.
- Equity: There are 123 girls for every 100 boys not in primary school.
Capacity Building & Collaboration

Highlights from GSF’s 2018–19 Member Offer

Child Protection
Given the vital importance of Child Protection and Safeguarding for children and the wider school community, GSF curated resources to strengthen our members’ policies and processes in this area.

Study Tour
Representatives from our African members spent a week learning about the Indian education landscape.
Time was spent conducting deep-dives into four member school networks in Mumbai and New Delhi and engaged in evening roundtables and discussions on working with government, social entrepreneurship and school leadership.

Annual Meeting
One hundred delegates, including school operators, intermediary organisations, investors, funders and other key stakeholders spent three days in Nairobi, Kenya. Highlights from the Annual Meeting included school visits and opportunities to learn and share the ways in which the non-state sector provides an equitable and quality education for its students.

GSF-TFA Fellowship
GSF Members could draw on the entrepreneurial talent and educational expertise of the Teach for All alumni for short term projects.

“...

The GSF Annual Meeting is the best conference I have been to... Relationships with other school operators deepened, and I can just call on people now to get advice or help. It’s great to be part of something bigger; running a school chain can be quite lonely.”

GSF School Operator Member
We are very happy to be part of the ecosystem you are creating. Collaborations are critical for system reform and each of us contributing in our own small way will add up to a large whole.

GSF School Operator Member
GSF continues to work towards growth and financial sustainability. In 2018-19, GSF was generously supported by private donors but began generating a small income from events. GSF is diversifying its cost base and will be launching a membership fee in September 2020.

The organisation is managed by a small but growing team based in London and governed by a global Board, composed of representatives from its funders. In 2019/2020 GSF will strengthen its Board by bringing on both member and external representation.

GSF is currently incubated by Ark Ventures, part of the education charity Ark. Ark Ventures incubates, launches and supports organisations that have the potential to deliver widespread change in education and society. Ark retains fiduciary and legal oversight for GSF until it spins out.

GSF started formally admitting members in 2018 and has grown rapidly almost doubling its members over the last year. In 2018–19, we see some early evidence of success in building a stronger non-state education sector. Members report being better connected with one another and with the wider sector: Our Annual Survey finds that 84 percent of members have been connected with other members, funders, investors or other education stakeholders.

GSF has also increased opportunities for peer learning and sharing of best practice. While 85 percent of GSF Members reported that attending the Annual Meeting was a very valuable experience, approximately half of the members have engaged with one or more peer learning groups and 90 percent reported contributing to the GSF community in a meaningful way.

A clear benefit of GSF is to receive and share the perspectives of those who are operating on a global or regional scale — for me the opportunity to collaborate, with GSF as the facilitator of the relationships, is invaluable.”

GSF School Operator Member
GSF Members

School Operators

Intermediary Organisations