GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP for EDUCATION

Secretariat Chief Executive Officer
April 29, 2020

Final Decision

CEO/2020/04-02–Allocation for an Education Sector Program Implementation Grant and Multiplier Grant to Maldives: The CEO, in her delegated authority from the Board of Directors, with respect to the application submitted by Maldives in the second round of 2020:

1. Notes compliance with the requirements for accessing the maximum country allocations for an ESPIG and a Multiplier grant (MCAM), as described in the application and assessed in the Secretariat quality assurance review phase III report, including the requirements of co-financing, additionality, and debt sustainability for accessing the MCAM.
2. Approves an allocation from GPE trust funds for an ESPIG and multiplier grant, as described in the application submitted and summarized in Table 1, subject to:
   a. Availability of funds.
   b. Board decision BOD/2012/11-04 on commitment of trust funds for ESPIGs in annual installments.
   c. Review Meeting's recommendation for funding, including (all amounts in US$):
3. Requests the Secretariat to:
   a. Include in its notification of grant approval to Maldives the requests for report-backs and observations as recommended by the Review Meeting and set out in Table 2.
   b. Include an update on the issues listed as "report backs" in the Grant Performance Report in accordance with the specified timeline.

Table 1: Application Summary and Allocation Recommendations (in US $)		
a.	ESPIG Maximum Country Allocation	2,500,000
b.	Multiplier Maximum Country Allocation	1,000,000
c.	Allocation Requested (100%)	3,500,000
d.	Fixed Part	3,500,000
e.	**Allocation Recommended**	3,500,000
f.	Grant Agent	World Bank
g.	Agency Fee % - Amount	1.75% or 61,250
h.	Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs	400,000[1]
i.	Period	4 years

[1] This amount is to be funded from the grant and is not in addition to the grant amount

j.	Expected Start Date	July 1, 2020
k.	Funding Source	GPE Fund
l.	Multiplier Co-financing Institution(s) - Amounts	World Bank 10,000,000

Table 2: Review Meeting Observations and Report-Backs	
Observations	The Secretariat welcomes the first ESPIG and Multiplier ESPIG application from the Republic of Maldives and appreciates the Government of Maldives leadership and close cooperation with the education partners in the development of the program in line with Maldives Education Sector Plan. The Secretariat notes the Government of Maldives efforts in strengthening the education sector dialogue in the country through the broadening of the National Education Consultative Committee (NECC), which acts as the Local Education Group (LEG) for Maldives and includes representation of all key stakeholders including the teacher association and civil society organizations. The Secretariat notes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education systems. The Secretariat invites the government and the grant agent, in consultation with the local education group, to consider adapting the proposed program to emerging issues, notably the impact on children's learning as a result of school closures, as needed. Other adaptations to consider could relate to mitigation measures on potential delays or other constraints that the pandemic may have on program implementation.
Report Back	On the results framework the Secretariat confirms the relevance of proposed output and outcome indicators for measuring program implementation and results. Recognizing, however, that some activities will be designed in the first year of the program, the Secretariat requests the GA to share an updated version of the results framework within six months of the approval of the grant. The updated results framework should further clarify measurement of PDO indicators 4 and 5 (see Annex 2) and elaborate on the methodology for the use of classroom-based assessment to measure improvements in student learning.

Annex A – Secretariat quality assurance review phase III report

Quality Assurance Review Phase III

Proposed GPE Grant Amount: US$3.5 million
Regular ESPIG Amount: US$ 2.5 million; Multiplier ESPIG Amount: US$ 1 million
Fixed Part: US$3.5 million, of which US$0.4 million as Grant Agent's Implementation Support Costs
Variable Part: N/A
Implementation period: 4 years
Projected implementation start date: July 01, 2020
Grant Agent: World Bank

1 ESPIG

1.1 Country / Sector Context

The Republic of Maldives is a multi-island nation in the Indian Ocean, consist of nearly 1,200 small islands of which 199 are inhabited by a population of approximately 500,000 inhabitants. More than 35 percent of the country's population lives in Malé, the capital. Malé is the single most populous island of Maldives, with a density as high as 53,700 people per square kilometer against an average of approximately 1,900 people per square kilometer for the rest of the archipelago. Maldives is one of the world's most geographically dispersed states and is the smallest Asian country by both territory and population. The population of Maldives is young with 47 percent of the population under 25 years of age. However, as per the Education Sector Analysis (ESA), the annual population growth rate has been declining, which can be attributed to the falling fertility rate, from 6.4 children in 1985-1990 to 2.1 in 2014.

Maldives has often been cited as a development success. In late 1970s, the country was ranked among world's 20 poorest countries with a GDP per capita of US$ 200, however, today it is classified by the World Bank as an upper-middle income country with a GDP per capita of US$ 11,890 (2018). The country has provided high-quality and affordable public services for its people, resulting in impressive health and education indicators with a literacy rate approaching 100 percent, and a life expectancy of over 77 years. Maldives is ranked 104th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (2019).

Maldives is the newest member of GPE and formally joined the Partnership in June 2019 with the final endorsement of its education sector plan (ESP). The ESP covers pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education. It has a strong vision statement with a clear mission focused on the universality of access, equity and quality: "All young Maldivians and adults have the right to equitable inclusive access to quality education and lifelong education opportunities that will provide with the learning and 21st century skills and well-being for a productive life, supporting the country's development and shared prosperity." The vision is aligned with Maldives' national development goals, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The country's education system is comprised of 2 years of foundation or pre-primary education, 6 years of primary, and 6 years of secondary education (4 years of lower secondary and 2 years of higher secondary). Education services are delivered through a network of public and private schools with government schools accounting for 83 percent of primary and secondary school enrollment in 2018. The public schools in Malé and the main islands offer a combination of primary and secondary

level education. Some island schools are not able to offer lower secondary education and usually provide education through multi-grade schooling to guarantee access for all children. Children from some islands tend to move to Malé or other islands for better schooling opportunities. This is most common in higher grades. According to the ESP, higher secondary is offered only in 3 designated schools in the country. Therefore, the education system faces a sharp drop in enrollments at the higher secondary level with a net enrolment rate of 44.5 percent. At this level, girls significantly outnumber boys with a net enrolment rate for girls at 50.4 percent as compared to 38.9 percent for boys. The sector analysis notes that higher dropout of boys at the higher secondary level reflects demand-side constraints (i.e., economic conditions, family stressors/ migration/ violence) and supply-side constraints (i.e., access to/relevance of secondary schooling), among other things. Boys engagement in economic activities is one of the main reasons for dropout at this level, with dropout more prevalent in rural regions or remote islands in comparison to the capital Malé. While access to higher secondary education remains a concern, the most pressing challenge now faced by Maldives is to improve the quality of education. The main indicator of the low quality of education is weak learning outcomes at all levels of the general education system. The 2017 National Assessment of Learning Outcomes (NALO) reported that 56.8 percent of fourth graders performed above the mean scale. The score in English and Math was 53.17 and in Math was 57.04 percent respectively. Girls outperformed boys in all three subjects in both grades 4 and 7 across the Maldives. However, a number of students ranging between 15-31 percent performed below standards, and the ESA indicates that strong regional disparities exist.

Maldives has so far reported 23 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19), mostly among tourists or expatriate resort staff. The Government of Maldives (GOM) declared a national health emergency on March 12, 2020 and since then several measures have been put in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These include: social distancing; restriction in air or sea travel; closure of schools, non-essential business, parks and cinemas. The most recent information available indicates that the government is slowly easing restrictions and economic activity is resuming in several places.

The Education Sector in the country is coordinated through the National Education Consultative Committee (NECC), which acts as the Local Education Group (LEG) for Maldives. The NECC is co-chaired by the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, and includes relevant government agencies for the education sector, such as: the Ministry of Gender and Family, the Ministry of Finance, and the Local Government Authority from the Ministry of Home Affairs. In addition, NECC also includes representation of other important education national civil society and private sector stakeholders, including: the Islamic University of Maldives, the Teachers' Association of Maldives, and Care Society of Maldives. DP members of the LEG include: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (Coordinating Agency), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Bank.

1.2 Multiplier

In July 2019, GPE's Grants and Performance Committee (GPC) approved an Expression of Interest (EoI) from the Republic of Maldives for a Maximum Country Allocation from the Multiplier (MCAM) of US$ 1 million based on reported co-financing of US$ 10 million.

According to the application form, the GPE Multiplier has helped mobilize US$ 10.4 million in reported co-financing for the education sector, consisting of an IDA (World Bank) grant of US$ 10 million and an UNICEF grant of US$ 0.4 million. No additional information has been provided on UNICEF co-financing, so while the Secretariat recorded the total value of co-financing, only the US $10 million in World Bank financing reviewed at the time of the EOI is identified as financing mobilized by the GPE Multiplier. As indicated in the Multiplier EoI, the World Bank and GPE funding will support

two complementary programs: The GPE funding will support the basic education sub-sector, while the World Bank funding is focused on TVET and skills' development.

There has been no change in Maldives debt sustainability rating. The country remains at "High" risk of debt distress per the most current available IMF-World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA). There has been no change in the implementation modality from the time of the EOI.

2 ESPIG DESCRIPTION

The requested grant amount of US$ 3.5 million is in line with the country's Maximum Country Allocation (US$ 2.5 million) and within the framework of the approved Multiplier ESPIG EOI (US$ 1 million). The World Bank was selected as the GA by the Ministry of Education in consultation with the NECC. This is Maldives' first application for an ESPIG.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) of the proposed four-year (2020-2024) GPE funded Learning Advancement and Measurement Project (LAMP) is "to promote learning focused curriculum implementation and strengthen the measurement of learning outcomes." The PDO directly contributes to the ESP 2019-2023. Specifically, the project aims to support Maldives in improving learning through: i) effective implementation of the new curriculum; ii) improving the performance of teachers by strengthening both pre-service and school-based teacher development; and iii) strengthening the country's system for measuring student learning and school performance.

The project will be implemented across 93 schools in 12 atolls, reaching 27,600 students (63 percent of the primary student population) and 1,000 teachers (22 percent of primary school teachers) at foundational levels for basic education, and across the National Institute of Education, and two universities. In addition, approximately 5,900 foundation (pre-primary) school students (43 percent of the foundation student population) will also benefit from curriculum interventions. Schools targeted for support by the project have been selected because of low performance on the 2017 National Assessments of Learning Outcomes (NALO) learning assessment.

There are four components of the project:

Component 1 will support the country to improve learning outcomes in three key subjects at the stages of foundation and primary education: English, mathematics, and Dhivehi. To ensure equitable access to learning, under this component support will also be provided to children with special needs (with the interventions focused in nine schools) and by conducting a study to support the development of alternative learning pathways for at-risk adolescents. The project will support capacity development of 40 Special Education Needs (SEN) master trainers in strategically selected atolls covering the entire country. These master trainers will adopt a cascade model of training. Each master trainer will train a further set of teachers in her/his catchment area (e.g. an atoll or group of islands). Each atoll has an Atoll Education Center and a Teacher Resource Centre, and these will be used as hubs to provide the SEN training.

Component 2 will target the improvement in teacher quality and performance with initiatives aimed at improving both pre-service teacher education and continuing professional development of teachers. The school-based professional development program (in-service teacher education) and the pre-service teacher education activities will include multi-grade teaching. Multi-grade teaching is part of the Education Sector Plan and development of the necessary skills among teachers will be supported by the project.

Component 3 is designed to advance the measurement of student learning and school performance with specific initiatives aimed at modernizing the system for learning assessment and developing the

school quality assurance system. The Project will support the design and implementation of national assessments of learning outcomes in Grades 4 and 7 according to a regular cycle for the key subjects of mathematics, English and Dhivehi, and use the results and findings for education policy and program development.

Component 4 will cover coordination, operations and monitoring support, technical expertise, policy research and evaluation, and communication.

Table A: Components, sub-components and key activities

Components/ Sub-components	Key activities
Component 1: Strengthening Curriculum Implementation (US$ 1,260,000)	
Subcomponent 1.1: Improving Learning Outcomes in Key Subjects for Primary Education	a. Support the development of a program to improve English language learning outcomes in the foundation and primary education with a focus on vital language skills (e.g. vocabulary, reading, and writing). b. Strengthen early grade mathematics learning to ensure that children leaving the primary education stage have a strong grasp of fundamental mathematics by improving mathematics teaching and learning environments within schools. c. Create a rich Dhivehi language environment that facilitates children's language acquisition and learning by building a digital library with resources for children to develop literacy skills and parents to engage.
Sub-component 1.2: Assisting Children with Special Needs and Providing Alternative Learning Pathways for At Risk Students	a. Support the Department of Inclusive Education (DIE) to improve opportunities for special needs children from the foundation stage (ages 4-5 years) upwards to the end of Key Stage 2 (Grade 6) by setting up nine special needs schools as part of a pilot study, four HUB schools in the Malé Region, and 5 focus schools, each serving a cluster of islands together with providing teacher and principal training. b. Conduct a study to identify the barriers children and adolescent boys and girls face to remaining in school, identify those students who need alternative learning pathways and develop a program for alternative learning pathways based on the findings of the study.
Component 2: Improving Teacher Education and Development (US$ 675,000 million)	
Subcomponent 2.1: Improving School-based Professional Development of Teachers	a. Support the strengthening of the School-Based Teacher Professional Development (SBPD) program to improve teacher motivation, pedagogical skills, competencies and performance.
Subcomponent 2.2: Strengthening Pre-Service Teacher Education	a. Enhance the quality of pre-service teacher education offered by the Maldives National University (MNU), Islamic University of Maldives (IUM), and non-state Higher Education Institutions by developing reading materials/textbooks in Dhivehi for courses, providing ICT training for student-teachers to understand how to use ICT for

	education, developing academic human resource; and purchasing equipment for teaching and learning.
Component 3: Advancing the Measurement of Student Learning and School Performance (US$ 780,000)	
Subcomponent 3.1: Modernizing Learning Assessments	a. Design and implement National Assessments of Learning Outcomes (NALO) in Grades 4 and 7, according to a regular cycle for the key subjects of mathematics, English and Dhivehi, and use the results and findings for education policy and program development. b. Build the capacity of policy makers and education specialists within the MoE to use the results and findings from national and international assessments for strategic policy and management decisions and of academics from universities to undertake policy analyses using the information, especially the data, from NALOs. c. Support the analysis of factors that contribute to learning outcomes, such as school-related factors, classroom-related factors, and child-related factors.
Subcomponent 3.2: Strengthening Quality Assurance for Learning	a. Measurement of school performance through Quality Assurance (QA) reviews.
Component 4: Coordination, Monitoring, Policy Analysis, Technical Assistance (US$ 385,000)	
a. Coordination, operations and monitoring support, technical expertise, policy research and evaluation, and communication	

Table B: ESPIG Components and Costs

		GPE Financing US$	% of total GPE
	Fixed Part		
A	**Component 1:** Strengthening Curriculum Implementation	1,260,000	36.00%
B	**Component 2:** Improving Teacher Education and Development	675,000	19.29%
C	**Component 3:** Advancing the Measurement of Student Learning and School Performance	780,000	22.29%
D	**Component 4:** Coordination, Monitoring, Policy Analysis, Technical Assistance	385,000	11.00%
F	**Grant agent implementation support costs***	400,000	11.43%
GRAND TOTAL		**3,500,000**	**100.0%**
	Agency Fees**	61,250	

* Include Grant Agent's direct costs, such as Program Management, Administrative and other direct implementation costs.

** Agency Fee is not included in the MCA and is calculated as percentage rate (agreed with each GA) from the Total Fixed Part and Total Variable Part