REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
March 31, 2020
Via Videoconference

INTRODUCTION

The agenda and documents for the Board extraordinary audioconference can be found on the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) website. A list of participants can be found in Annex 1.

This report presents a high-level summary of key outcomes and decisions made.

The Board Chair, Julia Gillard, called the meeting to order at 6:00 am (DC Time).

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE CALL

1.1 The Board Chair opened the meeting and thanked participants for taking the time to convene at such short notice in such challenging times. She recalled the main objective of the meeting: to focus on the proposed GPE response to the coronavirus pandemic, and turned to the Vice-Chair, Minister Thiam, and DCP partners to get a sense of the impact of the pandemic in their countries and how GPE can best support them in these trying times.

2. A VIEW FROM COUNTRY PARTNERS

2.1 The Board Vice Chair commended the swift response and stressed the urgency of the situation. He reported back on the situation in Senegal and, outlining equity challenges faced by many countries, emphasized the importance to address the needs arising from country demand. Board and Alternate Board members from Togo, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nicaragua also reported on the situation in their countries and the challenges and measures taken for the continuity of schooling.

3. GPE PROPOSED RESPONSE TO COVID-19

3.1 The Board Chair turned to the CEO, Alice Albright, who presented the proposed GPE response. The Secretariat Chief Financial Officer, Padraig Power, and the Chief of Effective Partnership, Margarita Focas Licht introduced the detailed approach while the Deputy CEO, Charles North, reported on Secretariat preparedness. The Board representative from UNICEF, Robert Jenkins, updated on progress of the UNICEF-managed US$ 8.8 million planning grant approved by the Secretariat under delegated authority to support coordination efforts and immediate actions across 87 GPE eligible countries.

Discussion:

3.2 The following key points were raised:

- **Alignment and coordination** were deemed critical by Board members. The Secretariat reiterated its continued dialogue, engagement and coordination with other partners working to respond to the crisis, including ECW and UNESCO, in addition to the country-level coordination enabled by the US$ 8.8 million grant to UNICEF.

- **Framing GPE's action.** The Board Vice-Chair stressed GPE's decisive role in this context and the need for its quick action and response to stand out. He suggested that the COVID-19 crisis will have long-term implications, including for strategic plan discussion, namely around flexibility, responsiveness and resilience. The need for agile and flexible processes was further raised, both in terms of COVID funding application processes, as well as with respect to required grant restructuring and revisions, while maintaining due diligence and transparency.

- **Demand driven/first come first serve v. needs basis.** Several Board members argued in favor of a needs-based approach as concerns emerged that countries might lack the capacity or explicit guidance to put forward their demand in a timely manner. To strike the right balance between answering the most pressing demands and supporting countries in formalizing their needs, the Secretariat proposed and the Board agreed that the US$250 million envelope be composed of a first tranche of US$150 million, with a second tranche of US$S100 million to be reserved for a needs-based approach in the event that demand was likely to exceed supply which would be developed for approval by the Coordinating Committee; it was also agreed to consider the principles of fairness and equity in the allocation of funds, while not signifying an equal distribution of funding among all member countries.

- **Delegation of authority.** While Board members acknowledged the need for rapid grant approvals, some suggested that the delegation of authority to the CEO be time-bound and stressed the importance of adhering to governance procedures and transparency. It was confirmed that the CEO delegation would be time-bound, and that the CEO would report to the Coordinating Committee.

- The Board Chair noted the balance of opinion in favor of the option recommended by the Coordinating Committee on eligibility (67 ESPIG Eligible Countries).

- The European Commission abstained from the decision because of a technical point regarding the waver of accreditation to INGOs as not eligible to funding based on EU financial regulation.

Decision:

3.3 The Board Chair declared the following decision approved:

BOD/2020/03-04–<u>COVID-19 Supporting Response and Early Recovery</u>: The Board of Directors recognizes the serious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning, particularly on girls and the most marginalized. Considering the role of GPE in support of partner governments planning, responding and coordinating action to mitigate impacts on education, the Board:

1. Allocates an initial amount of **US$250 million** from the GPE Fund for the creation of a dedicated funding window focused on COVID-19 response and early recovery (COVID Accelerated Funding Window) as outlined in BOD/2020/03 DOC 02.
2. Approves the eligibility criteria for and maximum allocation size from the funding window as outlined in BOD/2020/03 DOC 02. Specifically, the Board approves eligibility for the 67 ESPIG Eligible Countries outlined in Annex A.
3. Recognizing the need for rapid response in exceptional circumstances:
   a. Delegates authority to the CEO to approve all applications from the funding window through September 30, 2020, including for global and regional response mechanisms. The Board affirms that the delegation thresholds in place for all other types of grants remain unchanged. The CEO will report to the Coordinating Committee on the delegation.
   b. Waives the requirement for a formal grant-level assessment of pre-accredited international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) for allocations above US$5 million, noting the Secretariat will assess risk as part of the review of any such allocations.
   c. Delegates authority to the Coordinating Committee to oversee the roll-out of the funding window and to approve the following modifications to the funding window if necessary, to successfully respond to the emerging crisis:
      i. Adjustments to maximum allocation sizes.
      ii. The amount of funds available for global and regional public goods.
      iii. Modifications to the *Contributions and Safeguards Policy*[1] to facilitate additional contributions.
      iv. Review the use of the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window every three months on whether to continue the fund and activities or to recommend to the Board to discontinue the fund and make unallocated funds available to the Board for reallocation.
4. Noting that the COVID-19 response is likely to disrupt the implementation of current grants and result in delays to the application pipeline, deferring some disbursements into the next financing period, agrees to increase the maximum financial carryover from 25 percent or

[1] https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/contributions-and-safeguards-policy

US$500 million to 37.5 percent or US$750 million for the current 2018-2020 financing period. This is based on the Secretariat's assessment that GPE is likely to have sufficient liquidity to continue to commit and disburse funds for existing and new programs through June 30, 2021.

5. Noting that potential demand for the mechanism may significantly exceed the available funds, determines that the COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Window is an eligible activity for targeted funding per the *Contributions and Safeguards Policy*, and calls on new and existing sovereign donors, private foundations and the private sector to make additional contributions to the GPE Fund. Such contributions may be notionally allocated to increase the size of the funding window, and there is no restriction on the maximum contribution size that may be provided from a donor.

Requests the CEO to provide regular updates to the Board on GPE's response to the pandemic and the impact on operations.

3.4 The meeting adjourned at 9:00 am (Washington time).

Annex 1: Participants List

Board and Alternate Board Members

	Name	Constituency	Role
1	Elyas Abdi Jillaow	Africa 1	BM
2	Tumisang Thabela attending *in lieu of Ndabazekhaya Cain Ginyilitshe Mathema*	Africa 1	ABM
3	Andriamanana Josoa Iaritsambatra Rijasoa	Africa 2	BM
4	Affoh Atcha-Dedji	Africa 2	ABM
5	Awut Deng Achuil	Africa 3	BM
6	David Moinina Sengeh	Africa 3	ABM
7	Akram Al Hossain	Asia and Pacific	BM
8	Mahesh Prasad Dahal	Asia and Pacific	ABM
9	Mohammad Balkhi	EEMECA	BM
10	Luis Cruz	LAC	BM
11	Jules Didacus	LAC	ABM
12	Donatienne Hissard	Donor 1	BM
13	Guigone Devey attending in lieu of Sabina Handschin	Donor 1	ABM
14	Anna Rosendahl	Donor 2	BM
15	Signe Skovbakke Winding Albjerg attending in lieu of Line Baagø-Rasmussen	Donor 2	ABM
16	Alicia Herbert	Donor 3	BM
17	Nancy Smyth	Donor 3	ABM
18	Kari Hauge Rissoen	Donor 4	BM
19	Rashed Mohamed Awadh Al Hemeiri	Donor 4	ABM
20	Marjeta Jager	Donor 5	BM
21	Ina von Frantzius	Donor 5	ABM
22	Sarah Lendon	Donor 6	BM
23	Julie Cram	Donor 6	ABM
24	Stefania Giannini	MLA 1	BM
25	Mami Umayahara	MLA 1	ABM
26	Robert Jenkins	MLA 2	BM
27	Mamadou Balde	MLA 2	ABM
28	Luis Benveniste	MLA 3	BM
29	Amadou Diallo	MLA 3	ABM
30	Kira Boe	CSO 1	BM
31	Yona Nestel	CSO 1	ABM

32	Camilla Croso	CSO 2	BM
33	Maria Khan	CSO 2	ABM
34	Gifty Apanbil	CSO 3	BM
35	Haldis Holst	CSO 3	ABM
36	David Boutcher	Private Sector	BM
37	Randa Grob-Zakhary	Private Foundations	BM
38	Imad Sabi	Private Foundations	ABM
39	Celine Place	FRC	Chair
40	Nesmy Manigat	GEC	Chair
41	David Archer	SIC	Chair
42	Sally Gear	GPC	Chair